JOHANN GOTTFRIED VON HERDER

Philosophical Writings

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lively way; where more clearly, then less obscurely – that is all obvious, is it not! But the most sensuous condition of the human being was still human, and hence awareness was still effective in that condition, only in a less marked degree; and the least sensuous condition of the animals was still animalistic, and hence despite any amount of clarity of their thoughts awareness of a human concept was never operative. And let us not play with words any further!

I am sorry to have lost so much time merely in order to define and order bare concepts. But the loss was necessary because in modern times this whole part of psychology lies before us so pathetically devastated, since French philosophers have confused everything so much in their preoccupation with a few apparent peculiarities in animal and human nature, and German philosophers order most concepts of this sort more for their own system and according to their own perspective than with a view to avoiding confusions in the perspective of the usual way of thinking. I have also in this clearing up of concepts made no digression, but we are suddenly at our goal! Namely:

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The human being, put in the condition of awareness which is his very own, with this awareness (reflection) operating freely for the first time, invented language. For what is reflection? What is language?

This awareness is characteristically his own, and essential to his species. Likewise language and his own invention of language.

The invention of language is hence as natural for him as is his being a human being! Only let us unfold both concepts! – reflection and language.

The human being demonstrates reflection when the force of his soul operates so freely that in the whole ocean of sensations which floods the soul through all the senses it can, so to speak, separate off, stop, and pay attention to a single wave, and be conscious of its own attentiveness. The human being demonstrates reflection when, out of the whole hovering dream of images which proceed before his senses, he can collect himself into a moment of alertness, freely dwell on a single image, pay it clear, more leisurely heed, and separate off characteristic marks for the fact that this is that object and no other. Thus he demonstrates reflection when he can not only recognize all the properties in a vivid or clear way, but can in his own mind *acknowledge* one or several as distinguishing properties.

The first act of this acknowledgment[m] provides a distinct concept; it is the first judgment of the soul – and **...**

What brought about this acknowledgment? A characteristic mark which he had to separate off and which as a characteristic mark of taking-awareness fell distinctly within him.[37] Good! Let us shout to him the *heureˆka*![38] This *first characteristic mark of taking-awareness was a word of the soul! With it human language is invented*.

Let that lamb pass before his eye as an image – [something that happens] to him as to no other animal. Not as to the hungry, scenting wolf!, not as to the blood-licking lion – they already scent and savor in their minds!, sensuality has overcome them!, instinct impels them to attack it! Not as to the aroused ram, which feels the [she-]lamb only as the object of its pleasure, and which is hence again overcome by sensuality and impelled by instinct to attack it. Not as to every other animal to which the sheep is indifferent, and which[39] consequently allows it to proceed past in light and shade because its instinct directs it[40] to something else. Not so to the human being! As soon as he develops a need to become acquainted with the sheep, no instinct disturbs him, no sense tears him too close to the sheep or away from it; it stands there exactly as it expresses itself to his senses. White, soft, woolly – his soul, operating with awareness, seeks a characteristic mark – *the sheep bleats!* – his soul has found a characteristic mark. The inner sense takes effect. This bleating, which makes the strongest impression on the soul, which tore itself away from all the other properties of viewing and feeling, jumped forth, penetrated most deeply, remains for the soul. The sheep comes again. White, soft, woolly – the soul sees, feels, takes awareness, seeks a characteristic mark – it bleats, and now the soul recognizes it again! "Aha! You are the bleating one!" the soul feels inwardly. The soul has recognized it in a human way, for it recognizes and names it distinctly, that is, with a characteristic mark. More obscurely? In that case the sheep would not be perceived at all for the soul because no sensuality, no instinct directed at the sheep, would compensate the soul for its lack of something distinct with something that

[m] One of the finest essays to throw light on the essence of *apperception from physical experiments* – which so rarely get to clarify the metaphysics of the soul! – is the essay *in the publications of the Berlin Academy of 1764*. [This refers to J. G. Sulzer, *Sur l'apperception et son influence sur nos jugements* [*On Apperception and Its Influence on our Judgments*].]

[37] B: remained distinctly within him. [38] I have found it. [39] Reading *das* with Suphan.

[40] Herder's *ihn* should strictly be an *es*, but gets attracted into the gender of the following word, "human being."

was clear in a more lively way. Distinctly in an immediate way, without a characteristic mark? No sensuous creature can have outer sensation in this way, since it must always suppress, so to speak destroy, other feelings, and must always recognize the difference between two things through a third thing. *With a characteristic mark therefore*? And what else was that but *an inward characteristic word*? "The *sound* of bleating, perceived by a human soul as the distinguishing sign of the sheep, became, thanks to this determination to which it was destined,[41] the *name* of the sheep, even if the human being's tongue had never tried to stammer it." The human being recognized the sheep by its bleating; this was a *grasped sign* on the occasion of *which the soul distinctly recalled to awareness an idea*. What else is that but a word? And what is the *whole of human language* but a *collection of such words*? So even if the human being never reached the situation of conveying this idea to another creature, and hence of wanting or being able to bleat forth this characteristic mark of taking-awareness to it with his lips, still his soul has, so to speak, bleated internally when it chose this sound as a sign for remembering, and bleated again when it recognized the sheep[42] by it. Language is invented! Invented just as naturally, and as necessarily for the human being, as the human being was a human being.

Most people who have written about the origin of language have not sought it in the sole place where it could be found, and consequently many have had numerous obscure doubts floating before their minds about whether it was to be found anywhere in the human soul. People have sought it in the *better articulation* of the instruments of language – as though an orangutan with precisely those instruments would ever have invented language! People have sought it in *the sounds of passion* – as though all animals did not possess these sounds, and any animal had invented language from them! People have assumed a principle of the *imitation* of nature and hence also of nature's sounds – as though anything could be meant by such a blind inclination, and as though the ape with precisely this inclination, or the blackbird which is so good at aping sounds, had invented a language! Finally, the greatest number have assumed a *mere convention*, an agreement – and *Rousseau* is the one who has spoken against this most strongly; for indeed, what sort of obscure, tangled expression

[41] The phrase "determination to which it was destined" translates the single word *Bestimmung* which could here mean any or all of the following: (1) destiny, (2) determining (of the sound as a "distinguishing sign"), (3) determination/property. A simpler solution might be to read *Besinnung* from a with Suphan: "thanks to this taking-awareness."

[42] Reading *es* for *ihn*.

is this, a natural agreement concerning language? These so numerous, unbearable falsehoods which have been stated about the human origin of language have in the end made the opposite opinion almost universal. But I hope that it will not remain so. Here it is no *organization* of the mouth which produces language, for even the person who was dumb all his life, if he was a human being, if he took awareness, had language in his soul! Here it is no *cry of sensation*, for no breathing machine but a creature taking awareness invented language! *No principle of imitation* in the soul; the imitation of nature, if it occurs, is merely a means to the one and only purpose which is supposed to be explained here. Least of all is it *common-understanding*, arbitrary societal convention; the savage, the solitary in the forest, would necessarily have invented language for himself even if he had never spoken it. Language was the common-understanding of his soul with itself, and a common-understanding as necessary as the human being was human being.[43] If others found it unintelligible how a human soul was *able* to invent language, then it is unintelligible to me how a human soul was able to be what it is without precisely thereby, already even in the absence of a mouth and society, *inevitably* inventing language for itself.

Nothing will unfold this origin more distinctly than the objections of the opponents. The most thorough,[n] the most detailed, defender of the divine origin of language becomes, precisely because he penetrated beneath the surface which the others only touch, almost a defender of the true human origin. He stopped immediately at the edge of the proof, and his main objection, merely explained a bit more correctly, becomes an objection against himself and a proof of his [opinion's] antithesis, the human potential for language. He claims to have proved "that the use of language is necessary for the use of reason!" If he had done so, then I do not know what else would thereby be proved "than that since the use of reason is natural to the human being, the use of language would have to be so equally!" Unfortunately though, he has not proved his proposition. He has merely demonstrated very laboriously that such many fine, interwoven actions as attention, reflection, abstraction, etc. can *not properly* happen without signs on which the soul relies; but this *not properly, not easily,*

[n] Süßmilch, op. cit., sec. 2.

[43] This sentence is an example of Herder's use of the rhetorical figure of brachylogy, or "shortening." Without brachylogy the sentence would end something like this: "as necessary as it was necessary that the human being was a human being."

not probably does not yet exhaust anything. Just as we with few forces of abstraction can think only a little abstraction without sensuous signs, so other beings can think more without them. At the least it does not yet follow at all that *in itself* no abstraction is possible without a sensuous sign. I have proved that the use of reason is not merely not properly possible without a characteristic mark, but that not the least use of reason, not the simplest distinct acknowledgment, not the simplest judgment of a human awareness is possible without a characteristic mark; for the difference between two things can only ever be recognized through a third thing. Precisely this third thing, this characteristic mark, consequently becomes an inner characteristic word; hence language follows quite naturally from the first act of reason. – Mr. Süßmilch claims to demonstrate[o] that the *higher* applications of reason could not occur without language, and for this cites the words of *Wolff*, who, though, even of this case only speaks in terms of probabilities. The case is actually irrelevant to the question, for the higher applications of reason, as they take place in the speculative sciences, were of course not necessary for the first foundation stone of language construction. – And yet even this easily proved proposition is only *explained* by Mr. S., whereas I believe that I have *proved* that even the first, lowest application of reason was not able to occur without language. But when he now infers that no human being can have invented language for himself because reason is already required for the invention of language, so that language would have already had to be present before it was present, then I stop the eternal circle, consider it rightly, and now it says something completely different: ratio et oratio![44] If no reason was possible for the human being without language, good!, then the invention of the latter is as natural, as old, as original, as characteristic for the human being as the use of the former.

I have called *Süßmilch's* manner of inference an eternal circle because I can of course just as well turn it against him as he can against me – and the thing revolves on and on. Without language the human being has no reason, and without reason no language. Without language and reason he is incapable of any divine instruction, and yet without divine instruction he has no reason and language – where do we ever get to here? How can the human being learn language through divine instruction if

[o] Ibid., p. 52. [Suphan corrects this to: p. 49.]

[44] Reason and speech.

he has no reason? And of course he has not the slightest use of reason without language. So he is supposed to have language before he has it and before he is able to have it? Or to be capable of becoming rational without the slightest use of reason on his own part? In order to be capable of the first syllable in the[45] divine instruction, he of course had, as Mr. Süßmilch himself concedes, to be a human being, that is, to be able to think distinctly, and with the first distinct thought language was already present in his soul; hence it was invented from his own means and not through[46] divine instruction. – I know of course what people usually have in mind with this divine instruction, namely, parents' instruction of their children in language. But let it be recalled that this is not the case here at all. Parents never teach their children language without the children constantly themselves inventing it as well; parents only draw their children's attention to distinctions in things by means of certain verbal signs, and hence they do not, as might be supposed, *substitute* for them language for the use of reason, but only *facilitate* and *promote* for them the use of reason by means of language. If someone wants to assume such a supernatural facilitation for other reasons, then that is quite irrelevant to my purpose; only in that case God has not at all *invented* language for human beings, but these still had to *find* their language for themselves through the effect of their own forces, only under a higher management. In order to be able to receive the first word as a word, that is, as a characteristic sign of reason, even from God's mouth, reason was necessary; and the human being had to apply the same taking-awareness in order to understand this word as a word as if he had originally thought it up. So all the weapons of my opponent fight against himself; the human being needed to have a real use of reason in order to learn divine language; that is something a learning child always has too unless it should, like a parrot, merely utter words without thoughts. But what sort of worthy pupils of God would those be who learned in such a way? And if they had always learned in such a way, whence would we have got our rational language, then?

I flatter myself that if my worthy opponent still lived[47] he would understand that his objection, made somewhat more determinate, itself becomes the strongest proof against him, and that he has hence in his book unwittingly himself gathered together materials for his own refutation. He

[45] Reading *im* for *in* with Suphan. [46] B: and not mechanically through.
[47] Süßmilch died in 1767.

would not hide behind the expression "ability for reason, which, though, is not yet in the least reason." For whichever way one chooses to turn, contradictions arise! A rational creature without the least use of reason, or a reason-using creature without language! A reasonless creature to which instruction can give reason, or a creature capable of being instructed which is however without reason! A being which is without the slightest use of reason – and yet a human being! A being which could not use its reason from natural forces and yet learned to use it naturally through supernatural instruction! A human language which was not human at all, i.e. which was unable to arise through any human force, and a language which is rather so human that without it none of the human being's actual forces can express itself! A thing without which he was not a human being, and yet a condition in which he was a human being and did not have the thing, which thing was therefore present before it was present, had to express itself before it could express itself, etc. All these contradictions are obvious when human being, reason, and language are taken as the real things that they are, and the ghost of a word 'ability' ('human ability,' 'ability for reason,' 'linguistic ability') is unmasked in its nonsensicality.

"But those savage human children among the bears, did they have language? And were they not human beings?"[P] Certainly! Only, *first of all*, human beings in an unnatural condition! Human beings in degeneration! Put the stone on this plant; will it not grow crooked? And is it not nevertheless in its nature an upwards-growing plant? And did this force for straight growth not express itself even in the case where the plant entwined itself crookedly around the stone? Hence, *second*, even the possibility of this degeneration reveals human nature. Precisely because the human being has no such compelling instincts as the animals, because he is capable of so many kinds of things and is more weakly capable of everything – in short, because he is a human being, was he able to degenerate. Would he, then, have learned to roar in such a bearlike way, and to creep in such a bearlike way if he had not had flexible organs, if he had not had flexible limbs? Would any other animal, an ape or a donkey, have got so far? So did his human nature not really contribute to the fact that he was able to become so unnatural? But *third*, given such a situation,[48] this human nature still remained human nature. For did

P Süßmilch, p. 47.

48 The phrase "given such a situation" tries to capture two senses between which *deswegen* hovers here: (1) therefore, (2) despite this.

he roar, creep, feed, scent *completely* like a bear? Or would he not have eternally remained a stumbling, stammering human-bear, and hence an imperfect double-creature? Actually, as little as his skin and his face, his feet and his tongue, were able to change and turn into a complete bear form, just as little – let us never doubt it! – was the nature of his soul able to do so. His reason lay buried under the pressure of sensuality, of *bearlike* instincts, but it was still human reason, because those instincts were never completely *bearish*. And that this is how things were is indeed shown, *finally*, by the development of the whole scene. When the obstacles were rolled away, when these bear-humans had returned to their species, did they not learn to walk upright and to speak *more naturally* than they had – ever *unnaturally* – formerly learned to creep and to roar? The latter they were only ever able to do in a *bearlike* way; the former they learned in less time *quite humanly*. Which of their former fraternal companions in the forest learned this with them? And because no bear was able to learn it, because none possessed the disposition of body and soul for this, must it not have been the case that the human-bear had still preserved this disposition in the condition of his degeneration into savagery? If mere instruction and habituation had given this disposition to him, why not to the bear? And then what would it mean to give reason and humanity to someone through instruction when he does not already have them? Presumably in that case this needle has given the power of sight to the eye from which it removes cataracts **...** Whatever, then, would we want to infer about nature from the most unnatural of cases? But if we confess that it is an unnatural case – fine!, then it confirms nature![49]

The whole *Rousseauian* hypothesis of the inequality of human beings is, famously, built on such cases of degeneration, and his doubts against the human character of language concern[50] either false sorts of origins or the difficulty earlier touched on that the invention of language would already have required reason. In the first case his doubts are right; in the second they are refuted, and indeed can be refuted out of *Rousseau's* own mouth. His phantom, the natural human being – this degenerate creature which he on the one hand fobs off with the ability for reason, on the other hand gets invested with perfectibility, and indeed with perfectibility as a distinctive character trait, and indeed with perfectibility in such a high

49 B continues the sentence: nature, and through its deviation points to the human possibility of language in a better condition.

50 B: hence concern.

degree that thanks to it this natural human being can learn from all the species of animals. And now what has *Rousseau* not[51] conceded to this natural human being! [He has conceded] more than we want and need! The first thought – "Behold! That is something peculiar to the animal! The wolf howls! The bear roars!" – this is already (thought in such a light that it could combine with the second thought, "That is something I do not have!") actual reflection. And now the third and fourth thoughts – "Fine! That would also accord with my nature! I could imitate that! I want to imitate that! Thereby my species will become more perfect!" – what a mass of fine, inferentially connected reflections!, since the creature that was able to consider only the first of these necessarily already had a language of the soul!, already[52] possessed the art of thinking which created the art of speaking. The ape always apes, but it has never imitated: never said to itself with awareness, "I want to imitate that in order to make my species more perfect!" For if it had ever done that, if it had made a single imitation its own, made it eternal in its species by choice and intention, if it had been able to think even just a single time a single such reflection **...** then at that very moment it was no longer an ape! For all its ape form, even without a sound of its tongue, it was an inwardly speaking human being,[53] who was bound to invent his outward language for himself sooner or later. But what orangutan has ever, with all its human language instruments, spoken a single human word?[54]

To be sure, there are still negro-brothers in Europe who simply say, "Perhaps so – if only the orangutan wanted to speak! – or found itself in the right circumstances![55] – or could!" *Could*! – that would no doubt be the best formulation; for the two preceding *if*s are sufficiently refuted by the history of animals, and, as mentioned, the ability is not impeded in this animal's case by the instruments.[56] It has a head which is like ours both outside and inside, but has it ever spoken? Parrot and starling have learned enough human sounds, but have they also thought a human word? Quite generally, the outer sounds of words are not yet of any concern to us here; we are talking about the inner, necessary *genesis* of a word, as the characteristic mark of a distinct taking-awareness. But when has an animal

51 B: not hereby. 52 B: in that it already. 53 B: inwardly a speaking human being.
54 B substitutes "human-like" for "human" both times in this sentence.
55 Reading *Umstände* with Suphan.
56 Footnote added by Herder in the B edition of 1789: "It is clear from Camper's dissection of the orangutan (see his translated short writings [i.e. *Sämmtliche kleine Schriften*, 1785]) that this claim is too bold; however, formerly, when I wrote this, it was the common opinion of anatomists."

species ever, in whatever way, expressed that? This thread of thoughts, this discourse of the soul, would still have to be capable of being followed, however it might express itself. But who has ever done that? The fox has acted a thousand times in the way that Aesop makes it act, but it has never acted with the meaning attributed to it by Aesop, and the first time that it is capable of doing so, Master Fox will invent his own language for himself and be able to make up fables about Aesop just as Aesop now makes them up about him. The dog has learned to understand many words and commands, however not as words but as signs associated with gestures, with actions; if it were ever to understand a single word in the human sense, then it no longer serves, it creates for itself art and republic and language. One can see that if one once misses the exact point of genesis, then the field for error on both sides is immeasurably large! – then language becomes now so superhuman that God has to invent it, now so inhuman that any animal could invent it if it gave itself the trouble. The goal of truth is only a point! But, set down on it, we see on all sides: why no animal can invent language, why no God must[57] invent language, and why the human being as a human being can and must invent language.

I do not want to pursue the hypothesis of the divine origin of language any further on a metaphysical basis, for its groundlessness is clear psychologically from the fact that in order to understand the language of the gods on Olympus the human being must already have reason and consequently must already have language. Still less can I indulge in a pleasant detailing of the animal languages, for, as we have seen, it turns out that they all stand completely and incommensurably apart from human language. What I renounce least happily here are the many sorts of prospects which would lead from this point of the genesis of language in the human soul into the broad fields of Logic, Aesthetics, and Psychology, especially concerning the question, *How far can one think without language, what must one think with language?*, a question which subsequently spreads itself in its applications over almost all the sciences. Let it suffice here to note that language is the real differentia of our species from without, as reason is from within.

In more than one language *word* and *reason, concept* and *word, language* and *originating cause* [*Ursache*], consequently also share one name,[58] and this synonymy contains its whole genetic origin. With the Easterners it

57 Or possibly: may. 58 E.g. Greek, in which the word *logos* can bear all these meanings.

became the most everyday idiom to call the *acknowledgment* of a thing *name-giving*, for in the bottom of the soul both actions are one. They call the human being the *speaking* animal, and the nonrational animals the *dumb* – the expression characterizes them sensuously, and the Greek word *alogos*[ɛ̃ːĒ] comprises both things.[ɛ̃eə] In this way language becomes a *natural organ of the understanding*, a *sense of the human soul*, just as the force of vision of that sensitive soul of the ancients builds for itself the eye, and the instinct of the bee builds for itself its cell.

[It is] excellent that this new, self-made sense belonging to the mind is immediately in its origin a means of connection in its turn.[ɛ̃eı] I cannot think the first human thought, cannot set up the first aware judgment in a sequence, without engaging in dialogue, or striving to engage in dialogue, in my soul.[ɛ̃e̯] Hence the first human thought by its very nature prepares one to be able to engage in dialogue with others! The first *characteristic mark* that I grasp is a *characteristic word* for me and a *communication word* for others!

– Sic verba, quibus voces sensusque notarent
Nominaque invenere –[ɛ̃ɜː] *Horace*

Third section

The focal point at which Prometheus's heavenly spark catches fire in the human soul has been determined. With the first characteristic mark language arose. But which were the first characteristic marks to serve as elements of language?

I. Sounds

Cheselden's blind man[ɋ] shows how slowly sight develops; with what difficulty the soul arrives at the concepts of space, shape, and color; how

[ɋ] *Philosophical Transactions* [*of the Royal Society of London*, no. ʒeəe̯, eıɛːe̯ë] – Abridgement. Also in Cheselden's Anatomy, in *Smith-Kästner's* Optics, in *Buffon's* Natural History, the Encyclopedia, and ten small French dictionaries under *aveugle*.

[ɛ̃ːĒ] *alogos*: without speech, without reason.

[ɛ̃eə] B substitutes for "and **...** *alogos* **.. .**" "the **...** *alogos* too **.. .**"

[ɛ̃eı] B: is and must be in its origin a means of connection in its turn!

[ɛ̃e̯] A Platonic doctrine. See *Theaetetus*, eıëĒe ff.

[ɛ̃ɜː] Thus did they invent words and names with which to mark sounds and meanings.

many attempts must be made, how much geometry must be acquired, in order to use these characteristic marks distinctly. This was not therefore the most suitable sense for language. In addition, its phenomena were so cold and dumb, and the sensations of the cruder senses in their turn so indistinct and mixed up, that according to all nature either nothing or *the ear became the first teacher of language*.

There, for example, is the sheep. As an image it hovers before the eye with all objects, images, and colors on a single great nature picture. How much to distinguish, and with what effort! All characteristic marks are finely interwoven, beside each other – all still inexpressible! Who can speak shapes? Who can sound colors? He[ɛ̃3] takes the sheep under his groping hand. Feeling is surer and fuller – but so full, so obscurely mixed up. Who can say what he feels? But listen! The sheep bleats! There a characteristic mark of itself tears itself free from the canvas of the color picture in which so little could be distinguished – has penetrated deeply and distinctly into the soul. "Aha!" says the learning child-without-any-say [*Unmündige*], like that formerly blind man of *Cheselden's*, "Now I will know you again. You bleat!" The turtle-dove coos! The dog barks! There are three words, because he tried out three distinct ideas – these ideas for his logic, those words for his vocabulary! Reason and language took a timid step together, and nature came to meet them half-way *through hearing*. Nature sounded the characteristic mark not only forth but deep into the soul! It rang out! The soul laid hold – and there it has a *resounding word*!

The human being is therefore, as a listening, noting creature, naturally formed for language, and even a blind and dumb man, one sees, would inevitably[ɛ̃ɛ̃:] invent language, if only he is not without feeling and deaf. Put him comfortably and contentedly on a lonely island; nature will reveal itself to him through his ear, a thousand creatures which he cannot see will nonetheless seem to speak with him, and even if his mouth and his eye remained forever closed, his soul does not remain entirely without language. When the leaves of the tree rustle down coolness for the poor lonely one, when the stream that murmurs past rocks him to sleep, and the west wind whistling in fans his cheeks – the bleating sheep gives him milk, the trickling spring water, the rustling tree fruit – interest enough to know these beneficent beings, urgent cause enough, without eyes and

[ɛ̃3] B: The human being. [ɛ̃ɛ̃:] Reading with Suphan *müßte*.

tongue, to *name* them in his soul. The tree will be called the rustler, the west wind the whistler, the spring the trickler. A small vocabulary lies ready there, and awaits the speech organs' minting. How impoverished and strange, though, would have to be the representations which this mutilated person associates with such sounds![r]

Now set all of the human being's senses free, let him simultaneously see and touch and feel all the beings which speak into his ear. Heaven! What a classroom of ideas and language! Bring no Mercury or Apollo down from the clouds as operatic dei ex machina; all of many-sounded, divine nature is language mistress and Muse! There she leads all creatures past him; each bears its name on its tongue, and names itself to this enshrouded, visible god! as his vassal and servant. It delivers unto him its characteristic word into the book of his governance like a tribute, that he may remember it by this name, call it in future, and enjoy it. Iask whether this truth– "Precisely the understanding, through which the human being rules over nature, was the father of a living language, which it abstracted for itself from the sounds of resounding beings as characteristic marks for distinguishing!" – whether this dry truth[ɛ̃ɛ̃] can ever be expressed more nobly and beautifully in an Eastern way than [in the words]: "God led the animals to him that he might see how he should name them! And however he would name them, thus were they to be called!"[ɛ̃ɛ:] Where can it be said more definitely in an Eastern, poetic way: the human being invented language for himself! – from the sounds of living nature! – to be characteristic marks of his governing understanding! And that is what I prove.

If an angel or heavenly spirit had invented language, how could it be otherwise than that language's whole structure would have to be an offprint of this spirit's manner of thought? For by what else could I recognize a picture that an angel had painted than by the angelic quality, the supernatural quality of its traits? But where does that happen in the case of our language? Structure and layout, yes, even the first foundation stone of this palace, betrays humanity!

[r] *Diderot* hardly came to this central material in his whole letter *Sur les sourds et muets* [i.e. *Lettre sur les sourds et muets à l'usage de ceux qui entendent et qui parlent* [*Letter on the Deaf and Dumb for the Use of Those who Hear and Speak*], ɐɪɛːɛ̃ːɐɪ], since he only stops to discuss inversions and a hundred other minor matters. [The B edition is more complimentary here: Diderot's letter is "instructive" and instead of "minor matters" he discusses "subtleties."]

[ɛ̃ɛ̃] "**…** whether this truth **…** whether this **…** truth" is an example of the rhetorical figure of anadiplosis, or "doubling," which Herder uses fairly often.

[ɛ̃ɛ:] Genesis ɐ̽ːɐɪĒ.

In what language are heavenly, spiritual concepts the first ones? Those concepts which would also have[ɛ̃ɛ̈] to be the first according to the order of our thinking spirit – subjects, notiones communes,[ɛ̃ɛ̄] the seeds of our cognition, the points about which everything turns and [to which] everything leads back – are these living points not elements of language? After all, the subjects would naturally have[ɛːeə] to have come before the predicate, and the simplest subjects before the compound ones, that which does and acts before what it does, the essential and certain before the uncertain contingent **...** Yes, what all could one not infer, and – in our original languages the clear opposite happens throughout. A hearing, listening creature is recognizable but no heavenly spirit, for *resounding verbs are the first ruling elements*.[ɛːeı] Resounding verbs? Actions, and still nothing which acts there? Predicates, and still no subject? The heavenly genius may need to be ashamed of that, but not the sensuous, human creature, for what moved the latter – as we have seen – more deeply than these resounding actions? And hence what else is language's whole manner of construction than a mode of development of this creature's spirit, a history of its discoveries? The divine origin explains nothing and lets nothing be explained from it; it is, as *Bacon* says of another subject, a holy Vestal Virgin – consecrated to God but barren, pious but useless![ɛːe̯]

The first vocabulary was therefore collected from the sounds of the whole world. From each resounding being its name rang out, the human soul impressed its image on them, thought of them as characteristic signs. How could it be otherwise than thatthese resounding interjections became the first?[ɛːɜː] And so it is that, for example, the Eastern languages are full of verbs as basic roots of language. The thought of the thing itself still hovered between the agent and the action. The sound had to designate the thing, just as the thing gave the sound. Hence from the verbs arose nouns, and not from the nouns verbs.[ɛːɜ] The child names the sheep not as a sheep but as a bleating creature, and hence makes the interjection into a verb. This matter becomes explicable in the context of the steps of development of human sensuality, but not in the context of the logic of the higher spirit.

[ɛ̃ɛ̈] Reading with Suphan *müßten*. [ɛ̃ɛ̄] Common concepts. [ɛːeə] Reading with Suphan *müßten*.
[ɛːeı] B: ruling elements of the oldest languages.
[ɛːe̯] B adds here: The human origin explains everything and hence very much.
[ɛːɜː] B: the first vivid words [*Machtworte*] of language.
[ɛːɜ] Reading with Suphan for *und Nomina aus den Verbis* instead *und nicht Verba aus den Nominibus*. Suphan gives a compelling explanation from the manuscripts of how the corruption arose.

All old, savage languages are full of this origin, and in a "*philosophical dictionary of the Easterners*" each stem-word with its family, properly presented and soundly developed, would be a map of the course of the human spirit, a history of its development, and a whole such dictionary would be the most excellent proof of the human soul's art of invention. But also of God's linguistic and pedagogical method? I doubt it!

Since the whole of nature resounds, there is nothing more natural for a sensuous human being than that *it lives, it speaks, it acts*. That savage saw the high tree with its splendid crown and admired.[ε:ε̃:] The crown rustled! That is the work of divinity! The savage falls down and prays to it![ε:ε̃] Behold there the history of the sensuous human being, the obscure link, *how nouns arise from the verbs – and*[ε:ε:] *the easiest step to abstraction!* With the savages of North America, for example, everything is still alive: each thing has its genius, its spirit. And that it was just the same with the Greeks and the Easterners is shown by[ε:ë] their oldest vocabulary and grammar – they are, as the whole of nature was to the inventor, a pantheon!, a realm of living, acting beings!

But because the human being related everything to himself, because everything seemed to speak with him, and really acted for or against him, because he consequently took sides with or against it, loved or hated it, and imagined everything to be human, all these traces of humanity impressed[ε:Ē] themselves into the first names as well! They too expressed *love or hate, curse or blessing, softness or opposition*, and especially there arose from this feeling in so many languages *the articles*! Here everything became human, personified into woman or man – everywhere gods; goddesses; acting, wicked or good, beings!; the roaring storm and the sweet zephyr; the clear spring and the mighty ocean – their whole mythology lies in the mines, the verbs and nouns, of the ancient languages, and the oldest vocabulary was as much a resounding pantheon, a meeting hall of both genders, as nature was to the senses of the first inventor. Here the language of those ancient savages is a study in the strayings of human imagination and passions, like their mythology. Each family of words is an overgrown bush around a sensuous main idea, around a holy oak on which there are still traces of the impression that the inventor had of this Dryad. The feelings are woven together for him; what moves lives; what resounds

[ε:ε̃:] B: admired it. [ε:ε̃] B: "That," he said, "is the work of divinity!" He fell down and prayed to it.
[ε:ε:] B: *and simultaneously*. [ε:ë] Reading *zeigt* for *zeugt*. [ε:Ē] Reading with Suphan *drückten*.

speaks – and since it resounds for you or against you, it is friend or enemy; god or goddess; it acts from passions, like you!

A human, sensuous creature is what I love when I reflect on this manner of thought: I see everywhere the weak and timid sensitive person who must love or hate, trust or fear, and would like to spread these sensations from his own breast over all beings. I see everywhere the weak and yet mighty creature which needs the whole universe and entangles everything into war or peace with itself, which depends on everything and yet rules over everything. – The poetry and the gender-creation of language are hence humanity's interest, and the genitals of speech, so to speak, the means of its reproduction.[ëeə] But now, if a higher genius brought language down out of the stars, how is this? Did this genius out of the stars become entangled on our earth under the moon in such passions of love and weakness, of hate and fear, that he wove everything into liking and hate, that he marked all words with fear and joy, that he, finally, constructed everything on the basis of gender pairings? Did he see and feel as a human being sees, so that the nouns had to pair off into genders and articles for him, so that he put the verbs together in the active and the passive, accorded them so many legitimate and illegitimate children – in short, so that he constructed the whole language on the basis of the feeling of human weaknesses? Did he see and feel in this way?

To a defender of the supernatural origin [of language] it is divine ordering of language "that most stem-words have one syllable, verbs are mostly of two syllables, and hence language is arranged in accordance with the measure of memory."[ëeı] The fact is inexact and the inference unsure. In the remains of the language which is accepted as being most ancient the roots are all[ëęˇ] verbs of two syllables, which fact, now, I can explain very well from what I said above, whereas the opposite hypothesis finds no support. These verbs, namely, are immediately *built* on the sounds and interjections of resounding nature – which often still resound in them, and are here and there even still preserved in them as interjections; but for the most part, *as semi-unarticulated sounds, they were inevitably lost* when the language *developed*. Hence in the Eastern languages these first attempts of the stammering tongue are absent; but the fact that they are absent, and that only their regular remains resound in the verbs, precisely this testifies[ëɜː] to the originality and **...** the humanity of language. Are these

[ëeə] B: of its arising. [ëeı] Süßmilch, *Versuch eines Beweises*, p. ęę.
[ëęˇ] B replaces "all" with "usually." [ëɜː] Reading *zeugt von* for *zeigt von*.

stems treasures and abstractions from God's understanding, or rather the first sounds of the listening ear, the first noises of the stammering tongue? For of course the human species in its childhood formed for itself precisely the language which a child-without-any-say stammers; it is the babbling vocabulary of the wet-nurse's quarters – but where does that remain in the mouths of adults?

The thing that so many ancients say, and so many moderns have repeated without sense, wins from this its sensuous life, namely, "that *poetry was older than prose!*" For what was this first language but a collection of elements of poetry? Imitation of resounding, acting, stirring nature! Taken from the interjections of all beings and enlivened by the interjection of human sensation! The natural language of all creatures poetized by the understanding into sounds, into[ë3] images of action, of passion, and of living effect! A vocabulary of the soul which is simultaneously a mythology and a wonderful epic of the actions and speakings of all beings! Hence a constant poetic creation of fable with passion and interest! What else is poetry?

In addition. The tradition of antiquity says: *the first language of the human species was song*. And many good, musical people have believed that human beings could well have learned this song from the birds. That is, it must be admitted, a lot to swallow! A great, heavy clock with all its sharp wheels and newly stretched springs and hundredweight weights can to be sure produce a carillon of tones. But to set forth the newly created human being, with his driving motives, with his needs, with his strong sensations, with his almost blindly preoccupied attention, and finally with his primitive throat, so that he might ape the nightingale, and from the nightingale sing himself a language, is – however many histories of music and poetry it may be asserted in – unintelligible to me. To be sure, a language through musical tones would be possible (however *Leibniz*[s] arrived at this idea!). But for the first natural human beings this language was not possible, so artificial and fine is it. In the chain of beings each thing has its voice and a language in accordance with its voice. The language of love is sweet song in the nest of the nightingale, as it is roaring in the cave of the lion; in the deer's forest it is troating lust, and in the cat's den a caterwaul. Each species speaks its own language of love, not

[s] *Oeuvres philosophiques*, publiées par Raspe [*Philosophical Works*, edited by Raspe], p. ęëę.

[ë3] B: personified into.

for the human being but for itself, and for itself as pleasantly as Petrarch's song to his Laura! Hence as little as the nightingale sings in order to sing as an example for human beings, the way people imagine, just as little will the human being ever want to invent language for himself by trilling in imitation of the nightingale. And then really, what sort of monster is this: a human nightingale in a cave or in the game forest?

So if the first human language was song, it was song which was as natural to the human being, as appropriate to his organs and natural drives, as the nightingale's song was natural to the nightingale, a creature which is, so to speak, a hovering lung – and that was **...** precisely our resounding language. *Condillac, Rousseau*, and others were half[ëẽː] on the right track here in that they derive the meter and song of the oldest languages from the cry of sensation – and without doubt sensation did indeed enliven the first sounds and elevate them. But since from the mere sounds of sensation human language could never have arisen, though this song certainly was such a language, something more is still needed in order to produce this song – and that was precisely the naming of each creature in accordance with its own language. So there sang and resounded the whole of nature as an example, and the human being's song was a concerto of all these voices, to the extent that his understanding needed them, his sensation grasped them, his organs were able to express them. Song was born, but neither a nightingale's song nor *Leibniz's* musical language nor a mere animals' cry of sensation: an expression of the language of all creatures within the natural scale of the human voice!

Even when language later became more regular, monotonous, and regimented [*gereiht*], it still remained *a species of song*, as the accents of so many savages bear witness; and that the oldest poetry and music arose from this song, subsequently made nobler and finer, has now already been proved by more than one person. The philosophical *Englishman*[t] who in our century tackled this *origin of poetry and music* could have got furthest if he had not excluded the spirit of language from his investigation and had aimed less at his system of confining poetry and music to a single point of unification – in which neither of them can show itself in its true light – than at the origination of both from the whole nature of the human

[t] Brown. [J. Brown (ɐɪɛːɐɪɛ̃ː–ɛ̃ɛ̃), author of *A Dissertation on the Rise, Union, Power, the Progressions, Separations, and Corruptions, of Poetry and Music* (ɐɪɛːɛ̃ɜː).]

[ëẽː] B: very much.

being. In general, because the best pieces of ancient poetry are remains from these language-singing times, the misconceptions, misappropriations, and misguided errors of taste that have been spelled forth[ëẽ] from the course of the most ancient poems, of the Greek tragedies, and of the Greek orations are quite countless. How much could still be said here by a philosopher who had learned among the savages, where this age still lives, the tone in which to read these pieces! Otherwise, and usually, people only ever see the weave of the back of the carpet!, disjecti membra poetae![ëɛː] But I would lose myself in an immeasurable field if I were to go into individual observations about language – so back to the first path of the invention of language!

*

How words arose from sounds minted into characteristic marks by the understanding was very intelligible, but *not all objects make sounds*. Whence, then, characteristic words for these [other] objects for the soul to name them with? Whence the human being's art of turning something that is not noise into noise? What does color, roundness have in common with the name which arises from it just as[ëë] the name 'bleating' arises from the sheep? The defenders of the supernatural origin [of language] immediately have a solution here: "[This happens] by arbitrary volition! Who can comprehend, and investigate in God's understanding, why green is called 'green' and not 'blue'? Clearly, that is the way he wanted it!" And thus the thread [of inquiry] is cut off! All philosophy about the art of inventing language thus hovers arbitrarily-voluntarily in the clouds, and for us each word is a qualitas occulta,[ëĒ] something arbitrarily willed! Only it may not be taken ill that in this case I do not understand the term 'arbitrarily willed.' To invent a language out of one's brain by arbitrary volition and without any ground of choice is, at least for a human soul, which wants to have a ground, even if only a single ground, for everything, as much a torture as it is for the body to have itself tickled to death. Moreover, in the case of a primitive, sensuous natural human being whose forces are not yet fine enough to play aiming at what is useless, who, in his lack of practice and his strength, does nothing without a pressing cause, and wants to do nothing in vain, the invention of a language out of insipid, empty arbitrary volition is opposed to the whole analogy of his nature.

[ëẽ] B: the misconceptions that have been spelled forth under the name of errors of taste **...**
[ëɛː] Limbs of the mutilated poet. [ëë] B: just as naturally as. [ëĒ] Hidden quality.

Language Pangs

On Pain and the Origin of Language

IL IT FERBER

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3

Language and Attention

Herder on Besonnenheit

Herder's Two Languages: Sensation and Reflection

In my interpretation of Herder's *Treatise*, the language of sensations and "arti!cial" human language are contradictory, much like Herder's two !gures of Philoctetes—that is, not at all, or at least only on the face of it. Just as the crying Philoctetes and the silent Philoctetes are not mere opposites but bespeak a composite, so too, the two languages are not plainly distinct or separate, and de!nitely not mutually exclusive. Just as understanding Philoctetes means bearing in mind the two versions, his cry as well as his silence, so too in order to understand Herder's philosophy of language it is never enough to merely study the second part of the *Treatise*, which explicitly discusses human language. There is no silencing of the cry if there is no cry; there is no abstract, reflective human expression, if it were not for the immediate animal howl of pain accompanied by immediate sympathy. Language is "already" (*schon*) there from the start.

Before delving into the second part of the *Treatise* in which Herder treats human language, I would like to discuss briefly the relationship between the two languages. When Herder describes the development of human language, his argument takes a clearly anthropological tone: "arti!cial language," as he calls it, or language founded on arbitrary signs "dries out the river of feeling" to replace the original language of expressive immediacy. Herder a&ributes this arti!ciality to what he calls the "civilized (*bürgerliche*) manner of life," which, having replaced the language of nature, brings about a critical change that has "dammed, dried out, and drained o' the flood and sea of passions" (*Treatise* 66/*AS* 698–699). What Herder sees as the overcoming of emotion, speci!cally pain, with the emergence of human language, is thus structured as *suppression* more than *alleviation*. This suppression, however, is not complete. Herder repeatedly uses

violent expressions to describe the diverse ways in which the primordial, a'ective language of sensations continues to appear and reappear in di'erent guises to remind us of the hidden origin of reflective human language.[1] He speci!cally chooses expressions referring to the capacity of human language to neutralize the "sea of passions," the impetuous storms of feeling and the sudden inundation of emotions—all of which reassume their rights from the depths of original human language and continue to resound within their "mother tongue" through emphases (*Akzente*) and intonations: "The sudden accession of joy or happiness, pain and misery when they dig deep furrows into the soul, an overpowering feeling of revenge, despair, fury, fright, horror, etc.—all announce themselves, and each one di'erently according to its kind" (*Treatise* 67/*AS* 699). Herder claims, thus, that the original language poses a continual challenge to human language but cannot wholly overpower it.

Another consequence of the formative engagement between the natural language of sensations and human language is that, to quote Herder in *Fragments*, the more exact language becomes, the more reduced is its emotional richness (*Fragments* 33). Herder's principal concern here is not merely the decline of the expressive quality of language but the radical dilution of the fundamental human capacity to sympathize with the pain of others: when deprived of the immediacy of expression, human language also loses its moral infrastructure (so central to the !rst pages of the *Treatise*). In making this claim, however, Herder in fact suggests a much broader contention: language not merely represents an inner world of emotions and feelings that mysteriously exists prior to its linguistic expression, but rather it constitutes the very essence of that internal universe. There can, consequently, be no categorical separation between the linguistic capacities and the emotional and moral aptitude.

Herder's account of human language in the second part of the *Treatise* is in this sense an argument pertaining to the nature of human beings as such. The two issues, language and humanity, are not only inherently linked; for Herder, they are one and the same thing. This is why in describing the transition from the original language of sensations into human, reflective language, Herder does not focus merely on a di'erentiation between the two languages, or on the ways in which the animal, sensual language of immediacy is inadequate for humans insofar as the la&er are social animals (such an approach would be similar to Rousseau or Condillac). Herder approaches the problem of language from an entirely di'erent perspective, o'ering an account of the essence of the human being. Whereas the !rst part of the text begins with the words "Schon als Tier" (already as an animal), the second part is dominated by di'erent versions of the phrase "als der Mensch ein Mensch war" (when the human being was a human being): "The invention of language is hence as natural for him as is his being a human being!" [Er!ndung der Sprache ist ihm also so natürlich, als er ein

Mensch ist!] (*Treatise* 87/*AS* 722).[2] However, notwithstanding Herder's emphatic denunciation of positions arguing for the language of sensations as the origin of human language, and in spite of the more pro-Enlightenment position which we might expect, Herder's argument boldly implies that human language is not established by reason or the power of abstract thought; it does not come to satisfy a communicative or social need, or function as a means to represent and transmit any form of propositional content. Human language is also not some external characteristic or element added on to the original human animal; it is not about the physics of the human mouth or the ability to produce articulate sounds; it is not a mere animal cry of sensations and also does not amount to an imitation of natural sounds. Least of all, Herder argues, is language a communal understanding (*Einverständnis*) or arbitrary convention (*Treatise* 90/*AS* 725).

Instead, according to Herder, language is the way in which the human being orients himself in the world, positioning himself by way of an act of simultaneous di'erentiation and relation. Language marks how humankind comes to be in tune with the world, !nds itself in it. Man's !rst word is, therefore, neither communicative nor referential but expresses a relationship with the world (and not necessarily with other human beings), so that with language, the world comes to belong to the human being, to ma&er to it.[3] The human being !nds himself, however, not only in relation to the world or his surroundings, but also and more importantly in relation to himself. The appearance of both world and self is !gured linguistically.

Besonnenheit: Awareness and Reflection

Herder names the singularly human characteristic that immediately also becomes the essence of language *Besonnenheit*. This term, a combination of intentionality, awareness, and reflection, is di0cult to render in English. For Herder, Besonnenheit marks the distinctive disposition of the human being in relation to the animal, permi&ing the former to transcend primitive, instinctive, animal existence. Humans, contrary to animals, are creatures of awareness in virtue of the "freely e'ective positive force" of their soul, with Besonnenheit as an orientation and accommodation of all forces in a central direction (*Treatise* 85/*AS* 719). Nowhere does Herder provide an explanation for how this special capacity comes about, yet he treats it as *the* factor de!ning the human being's nature and entity.[4] Herder can be criticized here in the same terms in which he himself criticized Condillac: he assumes what he sets out to prove. Herder introduces Besonnenheit following a lengthy discussion of the distinction between what he calls "the life sphere" (*Kreis* or life circle) of humans and of animals. This type of explanation bears out Herder's keenness to distance himself

from an account in which language is a mere addition to the animal that will then become a "speaking-animal." Instead, Besonnenheit encapsulates the delicate shi1 in the con!guration of humans' relation to the world, compared to that of animals. This di'erence will become a manifestation of human linguistic capabilities.

The life of an animal is concentrated within the limited "life circle" into which it is born and in which it dies. The only linguistic capacity it needs is immediate expression (for instance, of pain or of pleasure). This function is directly shared with those members of its own species that inhabit the same sphere: "The spider weaves with the art of Minerva; but all its art is also woven out in this narrow spinning-space; that is its world! How marvelous is the insect, and how narrow the circle of this e'ect!" (*Treatise* 78/*AS* 712). The narrowness of the animal world is not presented as a limitation or weakness on part of the animal. Herder makes a point of the "marvelousness" of animals' instinctive skills:

> When in!nitely !ne senses are con!ned to a small circle, to uniformity, and the whole remaining world is nothing for them, how they must penetrate! When forces of representation are con!ned to a small circle and endowed with an analogous sensuality, what e'ect they must have! And !nally, when senses and representations are directed at a single point, what else can become of this but instinct? Hence these explain the sensitivity, the abilities, and the drives of the animals according to their kinds and levels. (*Treatise* 79/*AS* 713)

The narrower and more limited the animal's circle (to the e'ect that "the whole remaining world is nothing to them"), the more it manifests its mastery of that circle. It controls everything about it; its senses are sharp and activities accurate. Herder describes this marvel by using terms such as "a&ention" and "focus." The force of the animal and its mastery of its environment renders it a creature to which language is virtually unnecessary. The smaller its life sphere, the less language it requires. Herder describes animal language as a "ruling instinct," and he observes: "How li&le it must speak in order to be heard!" [Wie wenig darf er sprechen, daß er vernommen werde!] (*Treatise* 79/*AS* 714). Animals have, hence, "li&le or no language" (*Treatise* 80/*AS* 714).[5]

This sets the scene for Herder's introduction of human beings. However, the human enters not as a powerful master of nature or ruler of the natural hierarchy (as is customary in eighteenth-century texts about language or society). The human being appears as a weak, limited creature, very unlike the animal with its extraordinarily focused, sharp mastery: "The human being has no such uniform and narrow sphere where only a single sort of work awaits him; a world of occupations and destinies surrounds him. His senses and organization are not

sharpened for a single thing; he has senses for everything and hence naturally for each particular thing weaker and duller senses" [stumpfere Sinne] (*Treatise* 79/*AS* 713). This is why humans are the weakest creatures: while they do not entirely belong to any speci!c life sphere they dominate an in!nite number of such spheres. Humans therefore lack the perspicacity and determination of the life-orienting instinct typical of a narrow and specialized life sphere. The consonance between human and nature maintained in the !rst pages of the *Treatise* falls apart at precisely this point: animals' instincts, speci!cally constituted in relation to their narrow life circles, have no parallel in human beings.

Herder treats animal language as inseparable from other animal skills and drives; all are innate and immediately natural to the animal: "The bee hums just as it sucks, the bird sings just as it makes a nest" (*Treatise* 80/*AS* 714). The human being, in contrast, possesses nothing like such a natural language, as it is deprived of any instinctive drive; it is dumb, "merely set among animals, therefore, it is the most orphaned child of nature. Naked and bare, weak and needy, timid and unarmed" (*Treatise* 80/*AS* 714).[6] Herder, however, is not satis!ed with understanding human essence as a mere negation of the animal's impressive skill. The human being cannot only be a weak, dispersed creature. Herder de!nes the essence of the human being not as a form of compensation for its weakness, dispersion of forces, and lack of natural instincts; the human being, for Herder, is never simply a weak animal working against its shortcomings. The nature of the human being has to be found elsewhere (*Treatise* 80–81/*AS* 715).

Herder de!nes humans' linguistic capabilities as emanating not from their animal being but rather from whatever it is that sets them apart as humans. This di'erentiating feature, however, is not presented as an additional element external to humans' instinctive animal being but lies rather in the inherent dissimilarity between humans' and animals' relations with their surroundings. The crux of this di'erence will turn out to be language. Herder begins the second section of the *Treatise* with a statement seemingly aligned with the Enlightenment approach to the issue: "If the human being had animal *senses*, then he would have no *reason*; for precisely his senses' strong susceptibility to stimulation, precisely the representations mightily pressing on him through them, would inevitably choke all cold awareness" [Besonnenheit] (*Treatise* 84/*AS* 718–719). Herder claims here that the characterization of the human being as rational is mutually exclusive with his de!nition as a sensing animal, since the animal's extreme sensitivity does not only clash with reason, but it also violently subjugates the human being's rational abilities by "choking" all possible awareness. This however is not where Herder's argument ends. He continues as follows: "But conversely … it was also inevitably the case that: If animal sensuality and restriction to a single point *fell away*, then a di'erent creature came into being, *whose positive force expressed itself in a larger space, in accordance with !ner organization*,

more clearly, and which, separated and free, not only cognizes, wills, and e'ects, but also knows that it cognizes, wills, and e'ects. This creature is the human being" (*Treatise* 84/*AS* 719). Here we have a slightly di'erent formulation: the human being is not categorically di'erent from the animal (as the beginning of the *Treatise* clearly shows); its nature is constituted, rather, as di'erent from the animal's sensual, instinctive, narrow focus, embodying an alternative form of perception and being in the world, a form that Herder describes as linguistic.

This marks the crucial turn in Herder's argument. It is precisely from man's weakness and deprivation (relative to instinctual animals) that his greatest power stems: human beings are the only creatures compelled to create language:[7] "The invention of language is hence as natural for him as is his being a human being!" (*Treatise* 87/*AS* 722).[8] With these claims, Herder distances himself from the simple, expressive model of immediacy featuring in the !rst part of the *Treatise* and replaces it with a more sophisticated, reflective structure in which humans, by dint of their being human, bring to bear their linguistic abilities in creating and expressing their unique relationship with their world. Herder's Besonnenheit is his way to explain how the human being compensates for his lack of animal focus, speci!city, and sharpness of instinct. Besonnenheit's special combination of awareness, a&ention, and reflection allows the human being to master the unimaginable vastness of his life sphere, his expansive, multifarious world.

Herder repeatedly stresses that "reason is no compartmentalized, separately e'ective force," and Besonnenheit is consequently not a separate force that is added to the animal, turning it into a human being. Rather, Besonnenheit is an organization, orientation, and unfolding of all his other forces, abilities, perceptions, and reason and the human being "*must have it in the !rst condition in which he is a human being*" (*Treatise* 85/*AS* 719). Further on in the *Treatise*, Herder returns to his discussion of human and animal, adding yet another feature to the comparison: while the bee was always the same bee and its singular cra1s always and essentially remain the same, the human being, by contrast, never stops *becoming* a human being. Besonnenheit turns the human soul into a "*force of steadily collecting*," continuously building and evolving. Thus the animal has always been and will always be a consummate, accomplished creature, whereas man is "never the *whole human being*; always in development, in progression, in process of perfection" (*Treatise* 130/*AS* 773).

Despite his inclination to de!ne the human being by turning away from his description of animal being, Herder does not fully dismiss the presence of original language's expressive elements in human language. He points out, instead, how, in the framework of human language, they evolve through Besonnenheit. What Herder presents here is in fact an organic model in which the reflexive dimensions of language spring forth from their expressive origins. If we go back to the "classic" picture of the acute division between emotion and reason,

Besonnenheit o'ers an alternative to this binary. Human language contains emotive facets and needs not renounce them in order to evolve.[9] More important, applying this organic model, Herder in fact claims there is no inherent gap between the two languages, even though the "origin" of language (of a clearly affective nature) is manifestly divergent from the stage when it becomes distinctly human. Instead, Herder constructs a continuity between the two linguistic forms through his use of Besonnenheit, which is revealed as a force orienting the a'ective dimensions of language rather than substituting for them. Put differently, the origin of human language is not transcended but remains strongly present: original human-animal language is not replaced by a more advanced instrument of expression but is reorganized and reoriented so as to establish as well as manifest its human character.

Before I continue with a more elaborate interpretation of the Herder's Besonnenheit, I would like to dedicate a few words to the similarity between Herder's theory and Wi&genstein's later philosophy of language. Herder's argument, that human language is not to be understood as a mere instrumental, referential apparatus in which signs designate or refer to objects or states of a'airs, is very close to Wi&genstein's famous refutation of Augustine's conception of language. Quoting Augustine's account of his experience of language acquisition, Wi&genstein remarks, "These words, it seems to me, give us a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: the words in language name objects, and sentences are combinations of such names. In this picture of language we !nd the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands."[10] Instead of the traditional ostensive understanding of language, Wi&genstein suggests that such a conception in fact presupposes a whole array of assumptions underlying the structural complexity of language (which he later de!nes in terms of "language games" and "forms of life"). According to Wi&genstein, when we say that we understand a word, we do not necessarily refer "to that which happens while we are saying or hearing it, but to the whole environment of the event of saying it."[11] Wi&genstein's similarity to Herder lies, moreover, in the idea that there is no preexistent world of objects simply present out there, ready for language to grasp and convey; rather, it is the very activity and use of language that constitute our experience for us. To put this in terms closer to Herder, language has a way of constituting the world for us by way of allowing us to pay a&ention to it linguistically.[12]

Herder addresses similar ideas in his "Fragments on German Literature" (1767–78) where he de!nes language as interdependent with thought, writing that "if it is true that we cannot think without thoughts, and learn to think through words, then language sets limits and outline for the whole of human cognition.…[I]t is indeed obvious that thinking is almost nothing but speaking.…

We think in language, whether we are explaining what is present or seeking what is not yet present" (*Fragments* 49–50). Herder then continues by arguing that each individual speaker of a language cannot but imprint his own thoughts and feelings on the very words he uses. Put di'erently, our words express not merely some external, independent facts but rather convey the individual way in which we, each of us uniquely, approach and, indeed, form the world in our consciousness. In "Cognition and Sensation" Herder addresses the same problem from its other end: the "medium of our self-feeling and mental consciousness," Herder writes, "is—language." In the same vein, language becomes prerequisite to what Herder calls our innermost seeing and hearing (*Cognition* 211). The resemblance to Wi&genstein is clear.

Language and Attention

Herder describes Besonnenheit in terms of a&ention: "The human being demonstrates [beweiset] reflection [Reflexion] when the force of his soul operates so freely that in the whole ocean of sensations [Emp!ndungen] which floods the soul through all the senses [der sie durch, alle Sinnen durchrauschet] it can, so to speak, separate o' [absondern], stop [sie anhalten], and pay a&ention [Aufmerksamkeit] to a single wave" (*Treatise* 87/*AS* 722). The human being is engulfed by a powerful flood of vehement sensations that overwhelm him as they storm through (*durchrauschet*) his soul, leaving him submerged under its power (a few lines later Herder characterizes the flood as markedly less violent when he describes it in terms of a "hovering dream [schwebenden Traum] of images" that lightly touches, even caresses man).[13] Besonnenheit emanates from this scene as a force, in two respects: it is a force in its capacity to distinguish the human being from all other creatures, but it is also a force in that it bestows on man a unique strength or potency in encountering the world. Herder gives a detailed account of this process: Although he is inundated by the flood of sensations, man is able to "collect himself into a moment of alertness, freely dwell on a single image, pay it clear, more leisurely heed" [in helle, ruhigere Obacht nehmen] (*Treatise* 87/*AS* 722). Besonnenheit endows man with the ability to control and organize the world through awareness and a&ention, providing the conditions for introducing a distance between him and his overpoweringly immediate experience of the world. This results in a uniquely human way of experiencing the world. The importance of this argument lies in that Besonnenheit does not constitute a speci!c content of perception which would then somehow be translated into a linguistic expression. Here Herder suggests a view that comes close to twentieth-century ideas following the linguistic turn: Besonnenheit does not provide a content prior to language; it *is*

language since for Herder, humans' perception and experience of the world is tantamount to their linguistic abilities.[14]

Herder's reflective function is crucial for the understanding not only of Besonnenheit itself but also of the very heart of his conception of language. The acquisition of language (here almost completely coeval with the capacity to reflect) inheres not simply in speech or communication. It essentially involves man's unique way of approaching the world and taking it in. Besonnenheit is not merely a capacity of paying heed to or being aware of "a single wave" or image, it is deeper than that, as the sentence continues, and has the power to "be conscious of its own a&entiveness" (*Treatise* 87/*AS* 722). Besonnenheit has a dual function: !rst, it is the human ability to withdraw and stand back, directing attention to a single "wave" out of the totality of the flood. Second, it represents man's ability to single out, beyond the wave or image, himself as well in the very act of paying a&ention. Besonnenheit is, therefore, not only about the human capacity of awareness and a&ention, but also about man's awareness of his "own a&entiveness"—that is, reflection. Herder describes a movement outward of consciousness toward the flood, a movement that stops to pay a&ention to its distinguishable parts: flood, objects and consciousness itself. Herder makes a point of separating between recognition of the distinct properties of the object, and acknowledgment and awareness of the mind's own operation (*Treatise* 87/*AS* 722). Man becomes aware of himself as a creature that is independent from the flood by way of his capacity of awareness and reflection: by way of being a creature of language.[15]

Having language means, therefore, that humans are able to come back to themselves and to reflect on the very act of their being aware of the world. This demonstrates why the primary language of sensations cannot be su0cient for Herder. In order to provide a proper transition between animal and human language, Herder must introduce the element of reflection which he links to the freedom inherent in human self-awareness and intention. In Herder's theory of language, animals and humans are each speci!cally positioned in the world through their unique capacities (linguistic or other); each can experience the world and relate to it. What distinguishes them from one another is the freedom inscribed in man's ability to reflect and thus to be in relation to himself, !nd himself in reflection, not by instinct: man "becomes free standing [freistehend], can seek for himself a sphere for self-mirroring, can mirror himself within himself" [kann sich in sich bespiegeln] (*Treatise* 82/*AS* 717). Von Mücke suggests that we understand this formulation (and others like it in the *Treatise*) in terms of narcissism: whereas Herder de!nes the animal with regard to its outside (albeit narrow) world, "man's faculties are organized and structured only in regard to themselves. In a self-reflective manner, he constitutes the totality of his otherwise di'used and disorganized faculties." Humans' center of gravity resides,

therefore, in a complex combination between the inner and the outer as they appear in the mirror-relation entrenched in Herder's understanding of human reflection.[16]

Although Besonnenheit crucially includes dimensions of reflection and reason, it also comprises feeling among its constituents. Its unique awareness does not amount to a mere extraction of a "wave" or object from the flood: Herder describes it in terms of a certain quiet clarity, a calm, !xed awareness. A feeling of calm and composure accompanies the act of *Besinnung* which is thus revealed as not a merely cognitive or rational moment (*Treatise* 87/*AS* 722). Since Besonnenheit is not just added to the domain of feeling but functions as a constitutive factor, it transforms the sensory stimulus into determinate content. Hence, the system of signs does not contradict perception; rather, perception realizes itself fully only in those signs, in language.[17] And so, to solve the enigma of the transition from natural to abstract language, Herder combines perception and naming and treats them as two continuous segments of the same act: there is no separation or transition between the two phases so that signi!ed and sign *become one and the same thing*.

Herder is very critical of those who have searched for the origin of language in the improvement of primordial instruments of articulation, in the animal sounds of passion or in the imitation of natural sounds "as though anything could be meant by such a blind inclination, and as though the ape with precisely this inclination, or the blackbird which is so good at aping sounds, had invented a language!" (*Treatise* 89/*AS* 724). But he is most !ercely opposed to those who assume that the origin of language is in mere convention or social agreement: "Here it is no *cry of sensation*, for no breathing machine but a creature taking awareness invented language! *No principle of imitation* [Nachahmung] in the soul Least of all is it *common-understanding*, arbitrary societal convention" (*Treatise* 90/*AS* 725). Herder dismisses the imitative and social origins of language; in the *Treatise*, the origin of language lies in the human capacities of reflection and a&ention (grounded in Besonnenheit) rather than in the ability to speak or articulate sounds, or the possibility of being understood by another: "Here it is no *organization* of the mouth which produces language, for even the person who was dumb all his life, if he was a human being, if he took awareness, had language in his soul [so lag Sprache in seiner Seele]! [T]he savage, the solitary in the forest, would necessarily have invented language for himself even if he had never spoken it" [hä&e er sie auch nie geredet] (*Treatise* 90/*AS* 725). Understanding language as an internal con!guration of human perception and mind, Herder emphasizes its inherent detachment from speech and communication.[18] Herder does not dismiss the acoustic elements of language altogether, yet he foregrounds the dissociation between these elements and the *origin* of language. Even if humans eventually come to speak their language and

use it as a means of communication, language's origin or its essence do not lie there. Herder establishes this radical argument by bringing the human soul into the discussion. This provides the basis for his alternative explanation.

From its !rst appearance in the text, Besonnenheit is linked to the human soul and de!ned as a "force of his soul" (*Kraft seiner Seele*) (*Treatise* 87/*AS* 722). The capacity to stand back and pay a&ention, the ability to distinguish one wave from within the overwhelming flood, and !nally, the human faculty of reflection—are all operations of the soul: "where *concepts intersect* and *get entangled*!, where the *most diverse feelings produce* one another [einander erzeugen], where a *pressing occasion summons forth all the forces of the soul* and *reveals the whole art of invention of which the soul is capable*" (*Treatise* 115/*AS* 754).[19]

Though Herder is deeply concerned with the senses and sense perception (as I will discuss in detail) even when he discusses the three central senses (sight, touch, and hearing), the human soul still features as his core notion. Besonnenheit allows man to be open to the world and the world to inscribe itself his soul: "Even if his mouth and his eye remained forever closed, his soul does not remain entirely without language . . . without eyes and tongue, to *name* them in his soul" (*Treatise* 98–99/*AS* 735). The human soul, however, not only conditions humans' openness to their surroundings: more important, it accommodates their reflective faculty. Herder writes accordingly that "language was the common-understanding of his soul with itself [Einverständnis seiner Seele mit sich], and a common-understanding as necessary as the human being was human being" [als der Mensch Mensch war] (*Treatise* 90/*AS* 725). The reflective constituent of language inherent to Besonnenheit manifests itself when the soul stands in relation to itself, reflecting upon itself in, as Herder puts it, *Einverständnis*. This German term signi!es something more than mere common understanding, as the English translation of the *Treatise* puts it, referring, in addition, to an internal accord or unison between man and his soul, and between the soul and itself. This internal, reflective accord is essential to the human being's being human.[20]

"You Are the Bleating One": Language and Sound

Herder illustrates the workings of Besonnenheit and with it, the formation of reflective human language, by way of an elaborate (and renowned) example: that of the bleating sheep (he initially uses "a lamb" [*jenes Lamm*], and then continues with "sheep" [*Schaf*]). Herder is not the !rst to use this example. Moses Mendelssohn used it more than twenty years earlier (1756), in a le&er to Lessing wri&en just a1er he !nished translating Rousseau's "Second Discourse."[21] As Von Mücke points out, Mendelssohn's le&er a&empts to "save"

Rousseau from some of the problematic aspects of his own essay by showing that although he seemingly praises savage man over social man, Rousseau in fact harbors a much more positive a&itude toward human society. The sheep appears as part of Mendelssohn's explanation of the development from a natural to a social state, serving to demonstrate how man learns to associate between images and sounds.[22] Although the sheep proves to be an excellent way into his argument, Herder's choice raises a question: why is it that he chooses a domesticated animal, an animal that is potentially, at least, humanized? We could say that there is a potential "impurity" in this choice, especially because the sound of the bleating is translatable into a human u&erance: Ah, Bha, and so on. Johann Georg Hamann picks this up in his interesting discussions of Herder's *Treatise*, especially *The Last Will and Testament of the Knight of the Rose-Cross* and *Philological Ideas and Doubts*, and *To the Solomon of Prussia*.[23] I will present Herder's example of the sheep in detail, since it not only bears on my previous arguments but also brings out the central role of sound and hearing in his theory of language. In order to substantiate the speci!cally human character of Besonnenheit, Herder introduces his account of the sheep from a dual perspective: the animal and human. This is how he stages the scene: a sheep appears—but it appears in an entirely di'erent manner before the eyes of animals and those of men.

While it is speci!cally the human being, and not the animal, who is overwhelmed by the flood of sensations, the animal too is taken over, not by sensation as such, but by its own instincts. The "hungry, scenting wolf" or "the blood-licking lion" are overpowered by their instincts (Herder writes that "sensuality has overcome them" [Sinnlichkeit hat sie überwältigt] [*Treatise* 88/*AS* 723]) which causes them to see or smell nothing but the sheep's flesh, impelling them to a&ack it. The "aroused ram" too, is guided by his sensuality and instinct, perceiving the female sheep only as a potential object of sexual pleasure. Other animals whose instincts direct them toward a di'erent focal point, are completely indi'erent (*gleichgültig*) to the sheep as it passes by them almost unnoticed. Herder uses the terms "light" and "shade" here, emphasizing the sharp contrast between the indi'erent animal that allows the sheep to pass by in light-dark shades (*klar-dunkel vorbeistreichen läßt*), and the intense directedness of instinct that as it were casts a narrow, focused light beam on its object, not allowing the instinctively driven animal to notice anything else outside this narrow span: it is in this sense that the lion, for instance, does not see the sheep as a whole, but only its edible flesh, whereas the ant passes completely indi'erent to either the lion's or the sheep's existence.[24] This echoes, of course, the previous discussion of the animal's "circles of life" and the sharp and distinct, yet narrow and limited, perspective from which it experiences, or !nds itself in, the world (*Treatise* 78–81/*AS* 712–715).

A human being is not impelled by animal instincts, nor is he indi'erent toward the lamb: "Let that lamb pass before his eye," Herder writes, "as an image [als Bild] — [something that happens] to him as to no other animal" (*Treatise* 88/*AS* 723). Herder's use of "image" emphasizes the middle position that human beings occupy—not too close yet not too far—exactly between the indomitable power of instinct and cold, detached indi'erence. Man is not governed by his instincts, Herder explains, and this is precisely what allows him to grasp the sheep as a whole, and eventually, as an object (this would be categorically different from the forceful, yet partial, perception possible in the case of the lion or ram). In perceiving the lamb as image, man occupies a perfect distance: he neither needs it nor is he indi'erent to it (Herder's use of "image" here is interesting, since as the argument continues, his account steers clear from vision, accentuating instead the sense of hearing). This middle position of man, not too close yet not too far, implies a uniquely human desire to know the object: "As soon as he [man] develops a need [Bedürfnis] to become acquainted with the sheep, no instinct disturbs him, no sense tears him too close to the sheep or away from it" [so störet ihm kein Instinkt: so reißt ihn kein Sinn auf dasselbe zu nahe hin oder davon ab] (*Treatise* 88/*AS* 723).[25]

It is also worthwhile at this point to return to Mendelssohn's interesting use of the same example. In his account of Rousseau's natural state, Mendelssohn describes a "savage" encountering a sheep that stands in a flowery meadow. Upon hearing the sound of the bleating, the savage can perceive it as belonging to the sheep, but he can also associate it with the entire se&ing (the meadow, flowers, as well as the sheep). This demonstrates, Mendelssohn argues, how natural sounds can be transformed into arbitrary signs.[26] In the *Treatise*, as we have begun to see, Herder takes a di'erent line of argument.

Since it is now not merely a tasty piece of flesh (to the lion) or a means for sexual satisfaction (for the ram), the sheep can stand before man "exactly as it expresses itself to his senses" (*Treatise* 88/*AS* 723). It stands as it is in its wholeness, and more important, as it expresses itself, and not as a mirror of man's own instinctive "light beams."[27] Man is receptive to the world, open to it, and the sheep is now active before him: it expresses itself rather than being a mere ful!llment of another creature's need. The sheep does not pass before man's eyes (or ears) as an object satisfying a need or instinct, yet the description of its appearance is extremely palpable and sensuous. It is almost as if Herder renders man's way of perceiving the sheep in its every detail, but in so doing in fact, projects himself as confronting the sheep.

This is a crucial point in the argument, as Herder addresses the distinctive way in which Besonnenheit approaches the sheep. Merely locating the human being as not too close yet not too far does not su0ce. Herder must give an account of the human language, de!ned by awareness and reflection, rather than

the immediacy of instinct. How exactly is the human being aware of the sheep, and in what sense is this awareness linguistic? Man needs to recognize what Herder calls a characteristic-mark (*Merkmal*), which distinguishes the sheep qua sheep, separating it like a wave from the all-encompassing flood of perceptions and sensations. Herder will eventually indicate that this characteristic mark is the origin of the first word; but this word is unrelated to any human utterance, imitation of sound or expression: it is an internally imprinted mark, an inner word in man's soul. Owing to the capacity of Besonnenheit, the soul recognizes the sheep "in a human way," and man is able to turn the characteristic mark into an internal name of the sheep, imprinting it on his soul. What would this characteristic mark be, given humans have no instinct guiding them toward it? It is not the sheep's white color, nor is it its soft wool or distinct size. The human soul finds the characteristic mark in the sheep's bleating—in the sound that it makes, and with the bleating, "the inner sense takes effect" [Der innere Sinn würket] (*Treatise* 88/*AS* 723).

It is evident that bleating is a sound distinctive to the sheep, a sound no other creature produces in quite the same way. But Herder argues that bleating is not merely an example but an exemplar, in that sound is primary here: sound in general and not only that of the sheep. Sound takes a primary role in the human perception of the sheep and the eventual formation of a characteristic mark. Sound, Herder argues, makes the strongest impression on the human soul. The sound quality of the bleating therefore enables it to be torn away (*losriß*) from the sheep as an enclosed (white, soft, woolly) object, leaping forth and making its way directly into the confines of the human soul. Herder uses the word *eindrängen* (penetrate) here, to communicate the violent, irresistible force with which the sound of bleating enters the soul. Neither the sight nor the touch of the sheep has a comparable impact, as only sound can actively move from the object toward the human soul and enter it.[28]

This unique capacity of sound to penetrate the soul emerges on man's first encounter with the sheep. But it reappears, and more forcefully, on the second encounter: the soul recognizes the bleating and makes it into the distinguishing feature of the sheep. This time, however, the bleating is not only seared into the soul but is named with a characteristic mark (*Treatise* 88/*AS* 723). Herder situates language within the soul rather than conceiving it as operating vis-à-vis the external world of perceived sense data, and in doing so he accentuates the complex relations between internal and external, perception and expression, human and world. Although his argument is couched in terms of reflection (the soul "speaking to itself"), Herder provides us with a complex case that challenges the sharp demarcation between inside and outside.

It is important to dwell on this moment of recognition, since it is a key to the understanding of the movement from Besonnenheit as a form of perception, to

its function as language. Besonnenheit opens the human being to the world, enabling him to be struck by it, be astonished by the force of its imprint on his soul. This occurs, in Herder's account, through the unique way in which man pays a&ention. This a&entiveness enables man to identify the sheep as separate and distinct in the flood of perceptions, but it allows him a further and crucial step. The human being is able to re-encounter the sheep and experience it as a uni!ed entity: "you are the bleating *one*." Not only does the bleating penetrate the soul and reveal a characteristic mark of the sheep, but everything that has to do with the sheep is now united around it, and the sheep as "one" crystallizes around its acoustic core. Here the component of awareness and reflection emerges and eventually allows the movement from the indistinct zone of Besonnenheit to the more properly human speci!city of *Besinnung*, from the flood of sensations to a name.[29]

This is why Herder chooses to focus on the human soul here rather than on perception or even abstract thought. The soul is the space into which the "raw" perceptual data flow from the outside and is arranged together and become uni-!ed and a&ributed to the sheep. The characteristic mark of the sheep, its bleating, becomes its name for the soul. This is an eminently linguistic moment, where human Besonnenheit !nally appears as the very thing Herder is looking for, namely, the origin of language: "This *!rst characteristic mark of taking-awareness* [Besinnung] *was a word of the soul* [Wort der Seele]*! With it human language is invented*" (*Treatise* 88/*AS* 723). Herder's "word of the soul" appears several times in the *Treatise* as the !rst and essential condition of language. Since the human being is de!ned as a linguistic creature, it follows that every perception, feeling or thought, also has an inherently linguistic structure: there is "*no condition in the human soul which does not turn out to be susceptible of words or actually determined by words of the soul*."[30]

Herder notes that this internal word is not spoken or acoustically expressed, nor does it need to be communicated to or understood by others; it is imprinted and reverberates internally: "even if the human being's tongue had never tried to stammer it" [nie seine Zunge zu stammeln versucht hä&e] and even if he "never reached the situation of conveying this idea [diese Idee zu geben] to another creature… still his soul has, so to speak, bleated internally" [in ihrem Inwendigen geblökt] (*Treatise* 89/*AS* 724). In a fragment entitled "On the capacity to speak and hear" [Über die Fähigkeit zu sprechen und zu hören] (1795), Herder discusses communication in language, referring to it not as verbal or sonic communication. Rather, it is a communication between souls: "Sprache ist das Band der Seelen" [language is the bond between souls].[31] A few pages later Herder returns to a similar scene, when he describes man as "the learning child-without-any-say," or in German, *Unmündige*. Aside from its literal meaning (mouth-less), the word Unmündige carrieslegal connotations associated with those who (for

instance, due to their being minors) are not allowed to speak in the courtroom, that is, their speech is prevented. In Herder's understanding of language, the Unmündige actually does speak, but it is the human soul that speaks, and to no one else but itself. In this moment, the external bleating of the sheep comes together with the internal bleating of the soul (awareness of the world and the soul's reflection upon itself), and the bleating "rang out! [es klang!] The soul laid hold [haschte]—and there it has a *resounding word*!" [tönendes Wort!] (*Treatise* 98/*AS* 734).

Herder's use of "resounding" here deserves some a&ention. The echo played an explicit and central role in the !rst pages of the *Treatise*. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Herder makes a point of describing the primary language of sensations as a language not only of immediate expression. It also elicits an immediate sympathetic response which he describes repeatedly in terms of echo: the "struck string" of animal feeling is immediately expressed and thereby "performs its natural duty [Naturpflicht]: it sounds! it calls to a similarly feeling Echo—even when none is there, even when it does not hope or expect to be answered by one" (*Treatise* 66/*AS* 697–698). Herder continues with his third formulation of the "law of nature" which becomes a "blessing" when the cry of a single, su'ering creature draws an immediate response from nature in the form of an echo.[32] This is Herder's way of achieving the transformation of the mere mechanical and natural into a moral structure in which the crying animal feels part of nature as its cry echoes, or re-sounds, the response of the whole of nature back to it. Although the *Treatise*'s second section and with it, distinctly human language, has a strong basis in sound and especially hearing, the echo seems to play no role in it. However, despite Herder's argument that speech is not essential for human language, the echo is decidedly present also in the emergence of the human language of Besonnenheit.

The manifestation of echo in the second section of the *Treatise* is independent of speech or the production of sound but must be conceived, rather, in terms of repetition, agreement, and something that is reflected back. Echo is thus much more about a reflective movement within an enclosed space than merely about the repetition of sound. The origin of Herder's human language remains bound up with the echo in three senses. It emerges when man encounters the sheep and hears its bleating for the !rst time. An acoustic space arises between the sheep and the human ear, a space in which the sound of bleating echoes and resounds. Another reference to the echo appears when Herder describes the enclosed, reflective realm of the human soul in which the soul encounters and mirrors itself. Herder treats the reflective element in terms of an echo resounding. The third instance of echo occurs in the dual moment of bleating: the external bleating of the sheep and the internal bleating of the soul. This exempli!es the complexity of Herder's use of the echo structure: the internal bleating of the soul is

neither an imitation of the external sound nor a simple, mechanical repetition. The soul's ability to echo internally establishes Herder's argument that language occurs in the soul, not in the mouth or on the tongue. Reflective human language retains the component of echo so dominant in the language of sensations, but it uncouples the echo from the physical cry or howl of pain, rendering it linguistic in a purely human sense. Language resounds in the very act of reflection and the human soul becomes its echo chamber.

It is clear by now that Herder distances himself from any understanding of language to which speech, especially of a propositional or communicative nature, is essential. But before we delve deeper into the central role for language of the ear and the sense of hearing, it is worth paying a&ention to two, perhaps marginal but nevertheless interesting, other forms of expression related to the mouth rather than the ear. The !rst is song, the second breath. In the *Treatise*, Herder argues for an essential connection between human language and animal expression, and he takes the case of *song* as the crux of his argument:

> So if the !rst human language was song, it was song which was as natural to the human being, as appropriate to his organs and natural drives, as the nightingale's song was natural to the nightingale … *Condillac*, *Rousseau*, and others were half on the right track here in that they derive the meter and song of the oldest languages from the cry of sensation — and without doubt sensation did indeed enliven the !rst sounds and elevate them. But since from the mere sounds of sensation human language could never have arisen, though this song certainly was such a language, something more is still needed in order to produce this song—and that was precisely the naming of each creature in accordance with its own language [Namennennung eines jeden Geschöpfs nach seiner Sprache]. So there sang and resounded [tönte] the whole of nature as an example, and the human being's song was a concerto of all these voices [ein Konzert aller dieser Stimmen], to the extent that his understanding needed them [sofern sie sein Verstand brauche], his sensation grasped them, his organs were able to express them. Song was born, but neither a nightingale's song nor *Leibniz's* musical language nor a mere animal's cry of sensation: an expression of the language of all creatures within the natural scale [natürlichen Tonleiter] of the human voice! (*Treatise* 104/*AS*741–742)

Although according to Herder the human being cannot learn to sing by the mere imitation of animal voices, human language is, nevertheless, closely related to animal voices, but in a wholly di'erent way: "As li&le as the nightingale sings in order to sing as an example for human beings, the way people imagine, just as

li&le will the human being ever want to invent language for himself by trilling in imitation of the nightingale" (*Treatise* 104/*AS* 741). Here Herder calls to mind the biblical scene of Adam's original act of naming, where he names each animal according to its own voice. But Herder's interest is not in the dominion and sovereignty evident in the biblical story where man, in the act of naming, is crowned as nature's ruler. Rather, he addresses the musical character of the scene. Let me refer to David Wellbery's reading of this passage. He calls a&ention to two important aspects of Herder's argument about song: !rst, the human voice is not simply another version of the animal voice, but a unique human capacity that is not only inseparable from rationality or sensibility but constitutes the medium in which they are realized. The human voice "is an autonomous instance," Wellbery writes, "it introduces into the world an expressive *novum* that obeys its own inner dynamic and exhibits its own unique productivity."[33] Second, although the human voice is but one voice in the chorus of nature, Herder stresses its unique ability to translate and thus transpose all of nature's sounds into man's unique tonality. This is what Herder refers to here as the "concerto of all these voices." Predominant in Herder's description is the way in which the acoustic dimension subsumes everything that is human: "Everything the human being sees, feels, smells, and tastes has an inwardly audible tonal correlate, which in turn can be transformed into a voiced expression."[34] This "voiced expression" does not amount to any form of propositional speech, nor is it related to communication. The "concerto" is a sound event in which the whole of nature partakes via its expression in the human voice. The human being, in other words, does not speak (or for that ma&er, sing) *about* nature; he expresses it immediately in song. This description is interesting in the speci!c context of the relationship between human and nature; but its implications regarding human language broadly speaking are no less thought provoking.

The second type of oral expression that does not amount to speech is the case of the breath. A far more intricate account concerning breath appears in the *Ideas of a Philosophy of the History of Man* [Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit] (1784–91).[35] In his *Ideas*, Herder construes an essential connection between hearing and what he calls "a breath of air," the breath marking the nexus of man's speech, song and moan. "All that man has ever thought, willed, done, or will do upon Earth," he writes, "has depended on the movement of a breath of air, for if this divine breath had not inspired us and floated like a charm on our lips, we should all have still been wanderers in the woods" (*Ideas*, Book 9 199). The breath of air links speech and hearing, which Herder takes to be inseparable, and it operates similarly to the conjuncture between body and mind. In both cases, we can only *feel* the connection, but never comprehend the details of its operation. Everything the human being feels (Herder particularly mentions grief and joy), says and perceives, becomes *sound*, so that

> what is heard by the ear moves the tongue; that images and sensations may become mental characters, and these characters signi!cant, nay impressive, sounds, arises from a concent[36] of so many dispositions, like a voluntary league, which the creator has thought proper to establish between the most opposite senses and instincts, powers and members, of his creature, in a manner not less wonderful than that in which the mind and body are conjoined. (*Ideas*, Book 9 199)

This account of *concent* comes very close to Herder's aforementioned description of human song as a "concerto" of all natural sounds and voices. The breath here, however, is not only a song or concerto, but also an image: "The breath of our mouth is the picture of the world" (*Ideas*, Book 9 232). The breath is the human way of expressing a relation to the world, by painting its picture, but not through an act of representation or of referentially pointing at it. The human being relates to the world by way of his and her mere breath.[37]

Interestingly, it is the above sentence from *Ideas* that Heidegger chooses to quote in his "What Are Poets For?"[38] in the context of his discussion of language, song, and poetry. Although I discuss Heidegger's relationship to Herder's thought in detail in chapter 4, a few words are called for here. Without considering for the moment on Heidegger's important account of poetic language in this essay, it is useful to explore his unique reference to Herder at this point and glance at the way in which Herder's thought a'ected Heidegger's later philosophy. Toward the end of his essay Heidegger quotes Herder in the context of his own interpretation of Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*, just a1er his discussion of the di'erence between a concept of language as making propositional assertions and what he calls language as "saying." Bringing together Rilke's sonnets and Herder's *Ideas*, Heidegger contends that the breath is nothing less than the very nature of language. At the end of the third sonnet Rilke writes: "To sing in truth is another breath [In Wahrheit singen, ist ein andrer Hauch]. A breath for nothing [Ein Hauch um nichts] … A wind."[39] Those who "dare," or "the more venturesome" ones in Heidegger's account, are daring by virtue of their very breath, which does not ask or reach for "this or that objective thing." The breath of those who dare is therefore, "a breath for nothing." Heidegger suggests here a surprising link between Herder's two aforementioned accounts of song and breath. "The singer's saying says the sound whole of worldly existence, which invisibly o'ers its space within the world's inner space of the heart. The song does not even !rst follow what is to be said Song itself is 'a wind.'"[40] Singing turns away from propositional speech of assertions and does not solicit a production of anything. "In the song," Heidegger continues, "the world's inner space concedes space within itself."[41] Song and breath come together in Heidegger's reading of Rilke's sonnet and appear as the two extremes of speechless, yet expressive, language in Herder.

An Ear for Language

Herder devotes a lengthy discussion to the sense of hearing, comparing it to sight and touch (*Gefühl*) (I use "touch" rather than "sense" here to reserve the la&er word for Herder's comparison between the three *senses*), so as to establish hearing's primacy over the other senses as well as its being what Herder calls the only "sense of language." A1er establishing the central role of hearing in the development of human language, Herder seeks to establish that hearing is the only "sense of language" by way of a detailed comparison between the sense of hearing on the one hand, and sight and touch on the other.[42] Herder presents this comparison in terms of six features: distance, distinctness and clarity, relationship between human and world, temporal structure, the need to express, and humans' physical/biological development. For each feature, he presents a detailed comparison between the three senses—and in each case, he reaches the conclusion that hearing is the "middle sense," not too cold and far (like vision) and not too close (like touch). The sense of hearing is precisely in the middle, thereby connecting between the di'erent senses, forming perception into language.

Herder begins with an account of the "sphere of sensibility from outside," to which the sense of touch brings us too close (sensing everything only in itself), whereas the sense of vision opens too large a distance (taking us too far out of ourselves). Being placed exactly in the middle, the sense of hearing positions the human being precisely at the right distance from the world so as to be able to take it in, unite it into a single, distinct experience that, in turn, becomes language: "We become, so to speak, hearing through all our senses! . . . [W]hat one sees, what one feels, becomes soundable as well. The sense for language has become our middle and unifying sense; we are linguistic creatures" [Sprachgeschöpfe] (*Treatise* 109/*AS* 747). The second argument in his comparison of the senses refers to the "distinctness and clarity" of perception. Touch is too obscure, whereas sight is too clear—both senses are un!t to supply man with the necessary capacities to distinguish the wave from the flood, or bleating as the sheep's characteristic mark. In this case too, hearing is the sense that brings it all together, clarifying what is too obscure, and unifying the dispersed, "and since this acknowledgment of the manifold through one, through a characteristic mark, becomes language, hearing is language" [or, in the !rst version of the *Treatise*: the organ of language: *Organ der Sprache*] (*Treatise* 110/*AS* 748).

Skipping the third proposition, which I discuss in more detail later in this chapter, Herder's fourth characteristic of hearing relates to its temporal form. With both the sense of touch and sight we take everything in at once, touch stirring "our strings strongly but briefly and in jumps," and vision intimidating our

pupils, "through the immeasurable canvas of its *side-by-side*." In hearing, on the other hand, nature "counts sounds into our souls only one a1er another, gives and never tires, gives and always has more to give. . . [S]he [nature] *teaches progressively!* Who in these circumstances could not grasp language, invent language for himself?" (*Treatise* 110/*AS* 748–749). Hearing is the only sense through which, Herder claims, the soul can experience the sequence of impressions, its flow that can only be experienced in time.[43]

The following, !1h proposition accounts for hearing's unique correspondence to the human need to express itself. When touching, humans are concerned only with themselves; they are "sel!sh and self-engrossed"; vision is inexpressible since the viewed object remains before the eye even if it is never expressed. The objects of hearing, conversely, are connected with movement and thereby must resound: "They become expressible because they must be expressed, and . . . through their movement, do they become expressible." As Forester notes, Herder's use of "because" here denotes a need or purpose, whereas "through" refers to the enabling conditions of means of expressions.[44] We are again faced with hearing's distinguished status as the sense for language.

Finally, hearing is also the middle sense in terms of humans' physical development. Although touch is the !rst sense operative in the embryo, it is only through hearing that these !rst sensations can unfold, "since nature awakens the soul to its !rst distinct sensation through sounds . . . awakens it out of the obscure sleep of *feeling* and ripens it to still !ner sensuality." Hearing is where touch and vision cooperate, since the human being "took the path from feeling into the sense of his visual images [Phantasmen] no otherwise than via the sense of language, and has hence learned to sound forth what he sees as much as what he felt" (*Treatise* 111/*AS* 750).[45]

Let me go back now to Herder's third proposition about the sense of hearing. Herder's comparison here is between the ways in which the world thrusts itself onto the human soul via the three senses at stake. The sense of touch has an overpowering quality (*überwältigen*) due to which the outside world almost a&acks the sensitive human soul, penetrating it too forcefully. The sense of sight, on the other hand, has a cold and distant quality, which renders man somewhat indifferent to what he experiences as it remains "too much at rest before us." These two possibilities put the human being at a remove from his linguistic nature. Hearing, once more, !gures as the "middle" way: "we can for longer and almost for ever hear, think words with hearing, so to speak; hearing is for the soul what green, the middle color, is for sight" (*Treatise* 110/*AS* 748). When man hears he is not overwhelmed, but neither does he remain indi'erent. When man hears its bleating, the sheep comes to ma&er to him—not because of its meat or wool but because the sound of its bleating has entered his soul. This idea is interestingly echoed in Herder's remarks on sound in *Fourth Grove*. There he speaks

of what he calls the "inwardness of hearing." Comparing between the senses, he situates touch, vision, and hearing in the intermediate between external and internal. Touch marks the physical perimeter of our bodies and is therefore the most "external" of the three senses. As for vision, although I perceive the visual image of an external object through the eye and it is, as it were, taken in, the object of that image remains external to me. A sound, on the other hand, is not inseparable from the object that produced it and can thereby come closer to our interior, the ear being closest to the soul. Nature acknowledges this, Herder continues, "for she knew no be&er path to the soul than through the ear and through language."[46] The sound of the bleating tears itself away from the animal that originally produced it, so that it achieves independence and moves toward the human ear. Hanly writes in this context that Herder uses the sheep's bleating as a paradigm constituting the origin of the !rst word in sounding, thereby turning listening not merely into a conceptual starting point but rather into the very "nexus around which the entire possibility of the human will gather[s] and coalesce[s]. Besinnung, in this sense, *is* precisely a listening."[47]

In the !rst pages of the *Treatise*, when Herder speaks of sympathy and the cry of pain, he discusses what is commonly addressed in the eighteenth century as the problem of "sense deprivation," speci!cally the case of blindness. Herder argues with Diderot's claim that since the visual scene of su'ering and pain is shrouded for those who are born blind, they are doomed to be less sensitive to it than those who see. According to Herder, the opposite is the case: "There he listens in darkness, consequently, in the stillness of his eternal night, and each moan penetrates his heart that much more deeply and sharply, like an arrow!" (*Treatise* 73/*AS* 706). The encounter with the pain of another visually as well as acoustically is too intrusive and overwhelming for the human soul. The deprivation of sight in the case of the blind suggests an alternative in which the sense of hearing, divested of all visual distractions, becomes more a&entive, acute, and penetrating. Hearing the painful cry, rather than seeing the entire scene, emerges as the condition of possibility for genuine, deep human sympathy. Herder ends by adding the sense of touch to the blind person who when touching the shaking, su'ering body, makes it entirely his own, feels the other's pain as it "shoots through" his own body as well as his "inner nerve structure," producing a deep sense of sympathy (*Treatise* 73/*AS* 706).

Another version of this argument in the *Ideas* is the example of those born deaf and dumb. Herder explains, that lacking the ability to hear and speak, they cannot accomplish their potential of human reason, and more crucially, they are unable to distinguish between their own human species and other animal species. "We have more than one instance," he writes, "of a person born deaf and dumb, who murdered his brother in consequence of having seen a pig killed, and tore out his bowels with tranquil pleasure" (*Ideas*, Book 9 87). Herder's very

speci!c emphasis here is thought provoking if not problematic: the absence of hearing and speech in the deaf and dumb generates not only violent behavior, but more importantly, an inability to empathize with the su'ering of members of their own species.

Another reason that hearing is crucial for Herder is that it is the only sense capable of transforming sonic sense data into words, thus becoming the original sense of, and for, language. Herder dwells on sound's uniquely intimate capacity of penetrating the human soul so that "it inevitably becomes a characteristic mark, but still not so stunningly that it could not become a clear characteristic mark" [Der Ton des Gehörs dringt so innig in unsre Seele, daß er Merkmal werden muß; aber noch nicht so übertäubend, daß er nicht klares Merkmal werden könnte]. The sense of hearing enables sounds to penetrate the soul and take hold of it, without violating or impinging on it; in Trabant's words: "Hearing is an unviolent sublimated form of erotic touch."[48] This erotic "intimacy" that Herder describes here is a speci!c form of closeness which, while not threatening or intrusive, nevertheless creates a shared space of kinship. Within this space sound becomes, or rather, must become, a *clear* characteristic mark (and not a mere characteristic mark). The sheep's bleating can become an internal bleating of the soul, which in turn, is the very beginning of language: hearing is therefore "the sense for language" (*Treatise* 110/*AS* 748).

Ah! and Aha!

The question of the kinship between Herder's original, primary language of sensations and reflective human language reopens when one considers the central role of hearing in both. Trabant discusses what he calls Herder's rediscovery of the ear for language philosophy in terms of a philosophical revolution:[49] "If it is language which makes man human, and if the ear is the organ of that human thing, then the ear is the human sense par excellence [T]he ear is—no ma&er what Derrida says—the most important organ for the humanization of man."[50] Herder's striking claim that human language exists independently of speech or communication does not dissociate his theory of language from sound altogether. Quite the contrary, as both the primary language of sensations and reflective language include a crucial sonic element. In the language of sensations, this element is Philoctetes' cry of pain or what Herder describes later in the text as the exclamation "Ah!"; in the case of human language, the sheep's bleating captures man's a&ention and triggers the process of linguistic a&ention and reflection, leading man to the "Aha!" of recognition. In both cases, however, the origin, essence, and development of language are determined not by the capacity to produce sound, but rather by the ability to hear it; or more boldly put: by

the inability not to hear it. But before I present Herder's arguments about the sense of hearing and its inherent kinship with language, I would like to dwell on what I take to be the essential relationship between the emergence of sound in Herder's linguistic theory and the problem of pain.

In the first part of the *Treatise*, the cry of pain is deemed fundamental insofar as it elicits an immediate sympathetic feeling in all of nature. This shared feeling, which serves as the ground of the language of sensations, is not determined by any specific content communicated by the suffering man or animal but by the very act of expressing it. The pained "Ah!" immediately penetrates and moves all other creatures, drawing them into a form of participation. When Herder asks "Who is there who, faced with a shaking, whining tortured person, with a moaning dying person, and even with a groaning farm animal when its whole machine is suffering, is not touched to his heart by this 'Ah!'?" [dies Ach nicht zu Herzen dringe?], rather than posing a moral problem, this rhetorical question describes the natural state of the language of sensations. The sound of pain creates and assembles the linguistic community around it so that "they really share each other's pain mechanically" (*Treatise* 72/*AS* 705–706). The intensity of pain's expression undermines the enclosed singularity of every individual (man and animal), bringing them together in what Herder would understand as nothing less than language.[51]

Despite Herder's insistence on the categorical separation between the language of sensation and language of reflection in the two parts of the *Treatise*, both figure in a surprisingly similar manner if we consider the sense of hearing. Human language is formed on the basis of Besonnenheit's capacity to call man's attention from the flood of sensations. Separating the sheep's bleating from all other sense data becomes therefore the condition under which alone the first word is formed: "But listen! [Aber horch!] The sheep bleats! There a characteristic mark of itself tears itself free from the canvas of the color picture in which so little could be distinguished" (*Treatise* 98/*AS* 735). When man encounters the sheep for the second time, he recognizes it: " 'Aha! You are the bleating one!' [du bist das Blökende!] the soul feels inwardly" [fühlt sie innerlich] (*Treatise* 88/*AS* 723).[52] In addition to the bleating here the "Aha!" associated with the soul's recognition of the sheep's characteristic mark plays a crucial role. In the context of his linguistic abilities, the world appears before the human being neither in visual images, nor by way of touch; it appears in sounds, cries, hisses.

Herder's emphasis on sound is significant not only as the sense through which the world appears and is experienced but because sound, specifically, has the power to penetrate the human soul: "Nature herself," he writes in *Fourth Grove*, "knew no better path to the soul than through the ear and through language" (250). Sound constitutes a space within which the human encounters the world: the bleating "has penetrated deeply and distinctly into the soul [in die

Seele gedrungen]. "Aha!" … now I will know you again. You bleat!" … Reason [Vernun1] and language took a timid step together, and nature came to meet them half-way *through hearing*. Nature sounded the characteristic mark not only forth but deep into the soul!" (*Treatise* 98/*AS* 734). Perceiving the world, the human being is situated *in it* rather than facing it. Humans are in accord with the world via a profound sense of taking part in it—by means of their ability to hear it, listen to it. The ear becomes the center of the universe, so to speak, holding it together, harmonizing it.

The emphasis here is on the fact that the sound of bleating is not only voiced "forth" but also reaches "deep" into the soul—and this is precisely what distinguishes sound for Herder: its unique capacity to move forth from its original object and penetrate another, becoming an integral part of it. The sense of hearing plays a dual role for Herder: !rst, through hearing the world seems to speak to man, to address him in sounds. Second, the sense of hearing creates an internal linguistic space in which humans appear before themselves as beings-in-the-world. Instead of appearing an external, foreign entity confronted by the human, the world, through hearing, appears as an integral part of the human soul, it appears *for* human beings. In the intersection between these two functions, the "Ah!" of the language of sensations comes together with the "Aha!" of Besonnenheit and human language. In both cases there is a decisive sonic element: the immediate cry of pain that evokes primary natural sympathy which is the characteristic mark of the language of sensations: Ah! and on the other hand, the sound of bleating which the human soul recognizes and makes into a characteristic mark, a word of the soul: "Aha!"

The relationship between the Ah! of the *Treatise*'s !rst section and the Aha! of the second, gains an interesting perspective when we compare the role of the sheep in the *Treatise* to its altogether di'erent appearance in Herder's *Ideas*. Whereas in the *Treatise*, Herder makes a point of distancing humans' way of relating to the sheep from that of the instinctive animal that relates to the sheep solely in terms of its needs, in *Ideas*, the human's a&itude to the sheep (representing animals in general) is thoroughly instrumental. Herder describes the human being as

> bene!ting himself by such [animals] as were useful, and rendering himself the general lord of every thing in nature: for in every one of his appropriations he does nothing in reality but mark the character of a tameable, useful being, to be employed for his own convenience.… In the gentle sheep, for instance, he remarked the milk sucked by the lamb, and the wool that warmed his hand, and endeavored to appropriate each to his own use. (*Ideas*, Book 9 240)

This is a very di'erent account from that in the *Treatise*. The sheep appears before the human being only insofar as it is useful to the la&er, and the human being indeed appropriates, in Herder's words, the sheep—or for that ma&er, any other animal or natural object. In the *Ideas*, the human closely resembles the blood-licking lion or the aroused ram, overcome by their instinct and sensuality, impelled to a&ack the sheep (*Treatise* 88/*AS* 723). Although in both texts, the sheep exempli!es something about the origin of the human relationship to the environment, these texts give a very di'erent account of this relationship. In *Ideas*, man experiences the sheep in terms of the potential satisfaction of his needs, an approach that comes to be the de!nition of his situatedness in the world. In the *Treatise*, on the other hand, the sheep is precisely *not* conceived in relation to need: here it is the fact of its being situated at the right distance, according to Herder, neither too far nor too close, that ma&ers: a distance permi&ing calm, collected reflection.

Kelly Oliver uses the above quoted passage from the *Ideas* as a basis for a critique of Herder's choice to refer to an abstract, generalized animal which he can thus approach from a functional point of view. Considering speci!c animals (or, for that ma&er, human beings) would have enabled further variation and continuity in the account of human-animal relations. Oliver continues with a !erce critique of what she identi!es as Herder's blind spot, namely, the fact that despite his insistence on humans' godlike superiority over animals, in fact he completely depends on them for the constitution of their own language: "Man's unique capacity for understanding, knowing, reason, transcending instinct, emulation, speech, di'erentiation, observation, recognition, recollection, and ownership—everything that de!nes man as man and as human—comes through an encounter with the sheep."[53] Herder's use of the animal as an example, in other words, comes to deal with the threat the animal poses to the human's alleged autonomy. While Oliver's criticism may be justi!ed in the context of her overall concern, namely, the importance of animals in how we learn to be human, in the context of Herder's argument in the *Treatise*, her interpretation can be somewhat misguiding. Let me try to o'er a di'erent explanation of the role of the animal in Herder's conception of language.

Since I take the *Treatise*'s !rst two sections *not* to be mutually exclusive, though this is how Herder himself presents it in the *Treatise*, I would like here to demonstrate how primordial animal-human language remains closely intimate with distinctly human, reflective language. The appearance of the sheep in the account of human language is crucial in this respect. Herder presents the sheep, from the outset, to elucidate his broader claim regarding human language and, in many respects, the human being as such. And yet it is no mere example. Herder's choice to locate the origin of human language in the human's encounter

with an animal rather than with another human being is signi!cant, !rst, since it underlines that for Herder human language does not originate from the need to communicate or as part of any other form of intersubjectivity. Foregrounding the encounter with an animal is all the more signi!cant by providing Herder with a way of not altogether abandoning the primordial language of immediate expression as external to human language. Obviously when the human being hears the sheep bleat, language can be said to emerge and develop in a wholly human realm, namely, the soul into which the characteristic mark is sonically imprinted. The sheep's bleating, however, also serves to retain a central element from the language of sensations. Human language comes into being when the human being hears and responds to the primordial animal-human language. The clearly human act of reflection emerges subsequently at the moment the human being experiences (not contemplates or thinks about, but feels) something of its own, and not the merely animal, original language of sensations. To return to Oliver's claim: the relevance of the sheep (or any other animal for that ma&er) lies not in how it demonstrates that man learns to be human from the animal but rather, in its bleating sound, in confronting the human being with himself, with their original language which is inseparable from that of the animal. In other words, humans !nd themselves in language and reflection only insofar as they !nd themselves in relation to an immediate expression that they share with the animal. The animal here features speci!cally with reference to the sound it makes (and not, say, to its warming wool or nourishing milk). Sound for Herder is responsible for the connection between the two languages, a necessary connection since, as he speci!cally indicates, human language cannot arise directly from the primordial language of sensation; it cannot simply develop out of it. The sheep's bleating is precisely what Herder needs to give an account of the complexity of the relations between the two languages.

Rousseau on Language and Pain

In his description of man's encounter with the bleating sheep (as opposed to the instinctual, animal engagement with it), Herder argues that reflective human language does not originate in a spoken word nor as part of a confrontation with another human interlocutor, that is, it does not emerge in a communicative and social se&ing. The human being's !rst word, according to Herder, is called forth by his encounter with the sound of the bleating sheep, which in turn, institutes an internal linguistic space. The human *soul*, and not the human *mouth*, is indispensable for the emergence of language. This translates, however, not into a purely solipsistic image of language. Despite the fundamental absence of a fellow human interlocutor, Herder makes a point of positioning speaking man within a

life sphere, a world. The sense of hearing signi!es precisely that: man has to hear the sheep's bleating in order for an internal linguistic movement to be set o'. He also has to identify the sheep *again* (the Ah!—Aha! movement) in order for a word to be seared into his soul, creating a characteristic sonic mark.

Notwithstanding the acoustic weight of this scene, another important element of Herder's thought emerges: although human language is not grounded in communication or reference, it has everything to do with the world of which humankind is part. Considering Herder's lengthy discussion of the life spheres and humans' weakness in comparison to animals, the !rst word, rather than being a representation of an object (say, the sheep), signals the constitution of a human relation to the world, a relation that emerges in the *Treatise* against the background of the animal's relation to its surrounding. As a result, the human is re-created as having-a-world rather than being deprived of it. The ability to hear the bleating and allow its sound to enter the soul and impress itself on it signals a rede!nition of the human being's relationship with the world, with his life sphere. The original word, therefore, is not about the sheep as object; it neither describes it nor communicates something about it. For Herder, language marks the distinctive way in which humanity is positioned in relation to the world. In this sense, though it !gures as an important example, the sheep's bleating also carries the risk of misunderstanding. The sheep is important only insofar as it sets into motion the human ability to orient oneself in the world, to get hold and arrest the overwhelming flood of sensations. Language, in other words, fundamentally does not concern "aboutness" (reference or communication), but rather, it constitutes a relationship.[54]

This account of language as constituting the possibility of relationality as such is not unique to Herder. It appears in a contemporaneous account of the question of the origin of language, wri&en by Jean Jacques Rousseau, one of Herder's foremost rivals in the *Treatise*. Herder a&acks Rousseau several times, criticizing his theory of the origin of language for turning "human beings into animals" (*Treatise* 77/*AS* 711). Herder is not only critical of Rousseau's positions; he is also sarcastic, sometimes even scornful, referring to his ideas as "deceptively dazzling" and "a bubble which he drives along before him for a time but which to his own surprise bursts on his way" (*Treatise* 86/*AS* 720). Elsewhere he despairs, asking rhetorically who can "endure" Rousseau's lengthy, unnecessary "sermons" (*Treatise* 142/*AS* 787).[55] Herder contends that Rousseau's de!nition of the "natural human being" (i.e., "his phantom" Herder writes), su'ers from a crucial indeterminacy: "On the one hand, [he] fobs o' with the ability for reason; on the other hand, [he] gets invested with perfectibility, and indeed with perfectibility as a distinctive character trait" (*Treatise* 94/*AS* 730). Instead of de!ning human uniqueness by way of its singular composition of thought and perception (like his own use of Besonnenheit), Rousseau simply adds reason to

a natural creature, whose di'erence from the animal Herder therefore cannot grasp. Either this creature is an animal and can therefore not possess language, or it is human in the !rst place (and "necessarily already had a language of the soul!, already possessed the art of thinking which created the art of speaking" [*Treatise* 95/*AS* 731]), namely, not an animal miraculously transformed into a human being by way of adding the faculty of reason to its otherwise animal nature.[56]

Although his criticism is viable to an extent, it is clear that for the most part, Herder uses Rousseau as a straw man in the presentation of his own argument. As a consequence, he misses some crucial and fascinating similarities between Rousseau's arguments and his own. Herder's criticism is directed toward Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* (generally known as the *Second Discourse*) (1754),[57] a text with which he was well familiar and of which he was highly critical. In my following discussion, however, I refer to two other texts by Rousseau which I !nd illuminating in the context of Herder's *Treatise*. The !rst is *Emile, or on Education* (published in 1762, then banned and publicly burned);[58] the second is *The Essay on the Origin of Languages in Which Melody and Musical Imitation Are Treated*,[59] a text published only posthumously (1781), almost ten years a1er Herder's *Treatise*, and therefore not known to Herder at the time of its writing. Given the very speci!c context of my discussion here, I do not intend to o'er a new interpretation of Rousseau's philosophy of language, nor do I deal with Herder polemically, defending Rousseau's position in view of Herder's criticism. This digression serves me, rather, to cast light on some points in Rousseau's argument which I !nd important and illuminating for my interpretation of Herder's *Treatise*.[60]

In one of Herder's critical comments, he explains the problematics inherent in Rousseau's treatment of man's relationship to the world and the description of his capacities: "Posit the human being as the being that he is, with that degree of sensuality and that organization, in the universe: from all sides, through all senses, this universe streams upon him in sensations. [Not] through human senses? [Not] in a human way? Does this thinking being [not], therefore, in comparison with the animals, get less flooded?" (*Treatise* 86/*AS* 721). Herder is looking for what he thinks of as the "human way" of encountering the world which he does not !nd in Rousseau. This is, however, a rather partial and crude engagement with Roussau that misses out on some of the complexities of the la&er's claims. I would like to follow up on these and propose to take a look at another relevant text which Herder does not address, namely, Rousseau's *Emile*.

In *Emile*, Rousseau gives a fascinating complementary account of such a flood of sensations and describes language as emerging in consequence of human beings' "discomforts." This description appears in the !rst book of *Emile*, when Emile is still an infant, that is, he does not speak as yet. Rousseau writes that the child initially has only one language "because he has, so to speak, only one kind

of discomfort" (*Emile* 65). For the child, prior to a&aining language, all needs, wants, pains, and sorrows join into one overwhelming feeling Rousseau refers to in terms of "discomfort" or "only one sensation of pain" (*Emile* 65). The child is incapable of di'erentiating between being hungry or cold, tired, or stirred. Rousseau describes human wants and pains as the marks the world leaves on the child's experience, when the world strikes it, so to speak: so long as children "are awake, they are almost unable to remain in an indi'erent state. They sleep or are a'ected" (*Emile* 64).[61] The infant feels only one thing: that something in what Rousseau calls "his mode of being" causes him su'ering and needs change, needs intervention. Devoid of language, the child is completely exposed to the world, unable to hold back the strong flood of sensations the world unleashes on him.[62]

It is interesting to contemplate this description against the backdrop of the more prevalent Romantic view of childhood, which hinges on the child's innocent, primordial, and original experience of the world. In the adult view of the child's concentrated, pure gaze, it a'ords a glimpse into a prelinguistic, blissful mode of experiencing the world, an experience no longer possible for one who has lost this unique gaze once language was gained. Rousseau, in Emile, o'ers an entirely di'erent account: instead of being calm and composed, the prelinguistic stage (common to infant and savage) is marked by violent outbursts of pain, fear, and su'ering. With the child's entrance into language, these pains gradually lessen as they come to enter the linguistic space of expression.[63]

This is the background to Rousseau's argument: language emerges as a shield against the overwhelming flood of perception. Only when equipped with language, is the child able to position itself facing the world rather than being completely submerged by it. Without proper linguistic distance from the world there is, so to speak, no world at all, or at least—the world cannot become part of human experience. Rousseau's argument here is strikingly similar to Herder's description of the di'erence between humans and animals in the context of the la&er's discussion of the "life spheres." For Herder too, language is born from a human weakness, not strength, and he too formulates human frailty in terms of humans' relationship to their surrounding world. Herder introduces Besonnenheit as the capacity that determines the uniquely human way of encountering the world, allowing man to appropriate it from the overwhelming flood. For Rousseau, the story unfolds somewhat di'erently: the infant lacks language and is therefore unable to keep the world at bay or experience it as di'erentiated. Language not only shields or protects us by means of providing a barrier to absorb the shock of the immediate encounter with reality, but it also has the power to soothe this encounter and alter the very experience it yields. With this claim, Rousseau raises an issue that is also formative for Herder's argument: for both authors, the frailty of the not-yet speaking infant is not social

or communicative in nature. It involves, rather, an impaired ability to experience the world. The authors do not formulate the intersection between language and world as semiotic: that is, a relationship in which language describes, refers to, or signi!es the world. Rather, for both thinkers, the relationship between language and world evinces a conundrum: their linguistic abilities protect humans from the forceful flood of an allegedly preexisting world, but at the same time humans can only *have* a world insofar as they have language.[64]

It is worthwhile to turn to Agamben's idea of "infancy" here. Although Agamben mentions the term in relation to neither Herder nor Rousseau, his understanding of the interrelations between infancy, language, and experience is important in the context of my discussion. Agamben poses the question of experience as a linguistic problem, arguing that the two—language and experience—cannot be separated. The possibility of human experience is essentially linked with the acquisition of language, since experience "cannot merely be something which chronologically precedes language and which, at a certain point, ceases to exist in order to spill into speech. It is not a paradise which, at a certain moment, we leave for ever in order to speak; rather, it coexists in its origins with language—indeed, is itself constituted through the appropriation of it by language in each instance to produce the individual as subject."[65] There is, in other words, no extra-linguistic paradise, no possibility to experience outside language, or in-fantly (Agamben here refers directly to the Latin *infantia* designating the inability to speak, a state of being without language).[66] Agamben uses Humboldt's theory of language, speci!cally the la&er's claim that our naïve image of a language-less human being who gradually and naturally formed its own language is a fantasy. According to Humboldt, humanity can never be separated from language; it is, rather, "language whereby man is de!ned as man."[67] On this Agamben elaborates that since it is only through language that the individual is constituted, there is no form of anteriority to language.

Rousseau's interesting use of pain as exemplary for the "flood" demonstrates an emergent reciprocity at the convergence between pain and language: language is constituted and comes about by pain, but pain is also re-formed and transmuted by language. When the child learns to speak, it also learns to feel; what changes therefore, are its sensations themselves and not only their expressions. Once we have subjected the sensation of pain to its linguistic expression, we also experience it di'erently. In this sense, the u&erance "I am in pain" does not represent the pain but actually changes the very way pain a'ects us, how it is felt in and on our bodies. What lies below the threshold of intense pain can apparently dissolve into the u&erance of the word "pain," that is, the physical sensation is molli!ed as it dissolves into language. Such expression, according to Rousseau, would be a new, "appropriate," or proportionate understanding and articulation

of the experience of pain. Where there is a cry or scream of pain, it would signal not merely the presence of pain but its intensity as well.[68]

Yet even for Rousseau, such a replacement has the structure of a residue: "As soon as Emile has once said, 'It hurts,' very intense pains indeed will be needed to force him to cry" (*Emile* 77). In moments of extreme pain, the now-speaking child is overwhelmed by an intensity of pain that cannot be "replaced" with speech. With this, Rousseau sets a clear threshold beyond which linguistic substitution no longer operates; the sensation of pain can be enclosed and encompassed within the word "pain" only up to a certain degree. In cases of intense pain, no words will su0ce to express the sensation in such a way that the sensation is, literally, expressed. At such a level of pain, even those possessing language will burst into inarticulate cries. This demonstrates how, despite his account of the development and progression of language, Rousseau still retains language's essential connection to its point of origin. Even a1er Emile acquires the linguistic capabilities to express his pain in words, he does not lose his ability and need to immediately voice his pain in an inarticulate and passionate manner.

Rousseau points to what he understands as two forms of expression here—the cry and the word: "When children begin to speak, they cry less. This is a natural progress. One language is substituted for the other. As soon as they can say with words that they are in pain, why would they say it with cries, except when the pain is too intense for speech to express it?" (*Emile* 77). With this, Rousseau not only refers to the transition from a state of nature to a socially constructed form of expression: from the natural inarticulate cry to socially constituted speech; but also, and more important, he suggests there is an unequivocal di'erence between cry and word. Rousseau here does not merely wish to point at two di'erent forms of language; he has a more decisive claim at stake—namely, that these two languages are mutually exclusive. Speech does not represent the cry or even the sensation of pain; instead, it *replaces* them.[69] Rousseau's argument can almost read as if the very u&erance of the word "pain" itself were powerful enough to weaken and soothe the intensity of the actual physical pain. Emile learns that speaking of his pain (instead of wildly screaming it out) is an acceptable social behavior. And learning to speak is always coupled with entry not only into language but also into the linguistic community. Over and beyond this, Rousseau's argument also implies, taking a somewhat Wi&gensteinian turn, that for Emile, rather than consciously suppressing or smothering his cry of pain in order to behave "socially," he !nds that the advent of speech actually alters the experience of pain. Here the interesting implication is that the child's entry into language also marks a reentry into its own world. In contrast with his discussion of the origin of language in the *Discourse*, in *Emile* Rousseau proposes a view that is neither limited to the representational, referential, and communicative functions of

language nor to humans' ability to imitate nature with language (precisely what Herder criticizes). *Emile* o'ers a di'erent argument: by acquiring language, the child acquires the world anew, becoming re-oriented and re-positioned within it; and more explicitly, the child now has a di'erent *relation* to it.

This, I believe, is a key element in the present imagined encounter (or, re-encounter) between Herder and Rousseau. Language enables human beings to make distinctions in a world that assails their exposed senses.[70] Similar to Herder's uniquely human Besonnenheit, which di'erentiates a wave, singling it out as something with which the soul entertains a relationship, Rousseau's formulation of language provides us with an account in which the child's acquisition of language marks his having a world and, simultaneously, being able to orient himself within it. One intriguing aspect of this understanding of language is that here language appears not only as a relationship but also as providing the human being with a type of *measure* or yardstick. Rousseau invokes this idea in a long and telling footnote in the second book of *Emile*, where he cites Bu'on's *Histoire Naturelle* to elucidate some points in his own discussion of fear and speci!cally his claim that fear is a consequence of "ignorance of the things which surround us and of what is going on about us" (*Emile* 134). Bu'on's writings o'er an interesting account of how the initial appearance of objects around us may be far more threatening and frightful than they "really" are, as Rousseau formulates it. Using examples such as horses, flies, and sheep (!), Bu'on explains how our misjudging of the proper distance between us and the object of experience can directly a'ect our perception, or more precisely, determine whether our perception is "appropriate." Rousseau quotes Bu'on as follows: "From this come the terror and kind of inner fear that the darkness of night causes almost all men to feel. On this is founded the appearance of specters and gigantic, frightful !gures that so many people say they have seen This must, indeed, surprise and frighten him up until he !nally gets to touch the object or to recognize it, for at the very instant he recognizes what it is, the object which appeared gigantic will suddenly diminish and will no longer appear to be anything but its real size" (*Emile* 134–135 fn.).

Although language is not at the center of Bu'on's discussion, his argument is nevertheless thought provoking in regard to Rousseau's account of pain and fear. What Bu'on describes as "mastery" of the experience of the world by the "correction" or counterbalance one must make of one's initial, inaccurate, and inappropriate experience is precisely echoed in Rousseau's discussion of the relationship between the sensation of pain and its articulation in words. In Bu'on's account, fear of an unknown gigantic object in the dark provides us, !rst, with an "inappropriate" perception and judgment; only subsequently, this inappropriate perception may transform into knowledge of the object's appropriate or proper nature, so that it can be recognized for "what it is" (not a monster but

a sheep). In Rousseau's account, however, unlike in Bu'on's, the correction or transformation of the initial overwhelming sensation into a manageable and con!ned linguistic u&erance is achieved not by observation but as a result of the very acquisition of language. Bu'on's notion of the inappropriateness of our perceptions in the dark reappears in Rousseau's account, referring this time not to the dark of night but to the dark of language-less-ness. For Rousseau, the correction of experience, the moment in which we can make the experience "appropriate" or neutralize it, is a *purely linguistic moment*. Our perception of the world as well as our experience of pain or fear, in this example, can only become *appropriate* when they are *appropriated* by language.

Language as Relation: Herder and Rousseau

This notion of language as !rst replacing the initial feeling or emotive reaction, and second, being capable of assuaging or "down-sizing" the intensity of the reaction, can also be found in Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. In the celebrated third chapter of the *Essay* ("That the !rst language must have been !gurative"), Rousseau is preoccupied with !gurative and literal language, tackling the question of precedence, or in this case, which came !rst. Rousseau argues that !gurative language precedes literal language, and, moreover, that literal language can only appear a1er the !gurative, emotive encounter with the world has initiated the !rst linguistic u&erance (*Essay* 253–254). But here, Rousseau encounters a logical di0culty: how can !gurative expression, usually considered to be constructed around literal meaning, in fact precede an object's literal meaning (which Rousseau also calls "proper meaning")? How can the metaphoric and !gurative expression be a *condition* for a "proper" or "true" linguistic u&erance, rather than the other way around? To account for this problem and justify his argument, Rousseau provides an example:

> A savage meeting others will at !rst have been frightened. His fright will have made him see these men as larger and stronger than himself; he will have called them *Giants*. A1er much experience he will have recognized that since these supposed Giants are neither bigger nor stronger than he, their stature did not !t the idea that he had initially a&ached to the word Giant. He will therefore invent another name common both to them and to himself, for example the name *man*, and he will restrict the name *Giant* to the false object that had struck him during his illusion. This is how the !gurative word arises before the proper [or literal] word does, when passion holds our eyes spellbound and the !rst idea which it presents to us is not that of the truth. (*Essay* 254)

I suggest that we read this passage in light of Rousseau's argument in *Emile*. What we have here is not a child but a savage, whose role in the story is that of a "child of humanity," or one in his pre-social, infantile phase (literally "infantile": the inability to use language). Here Rousseau describes the savage's very !rst encounter with another human being. This is a surprising and passionate moment giving rise to a strong emotional response that takes the form of fear.[71] The intensity of this fear leads the savage to construe the other as "larger and stronger" than himself. The resulting u&erance marks a moment in which, in Rousseau's words, "passion holds our eyes spellbound," or in a di'erent translation, "our gaze is held in passionate fascination" (*Essay* 254). This fascination does not lead to language but rather to a play of images that keeps language suspended. Language can only begin when this spell of fascination is broken. "Giant" is hence neither a linguistic description nor some other representation of the object encountered. It is an expression that completely escapes any propositional or communicative structure, giving voice to the deep fear the encounter with the other arouses.[72]

The !rst u&erance, "giant," according to Rousseau, fails in two signi!cant ways: !rst, it fails to *di.ferentiate* the encountered object (a man) from the overwhelming passion it induced (fear); and second, it fails in accurately judging the nature, and especially the size, of the object at hand. Rephrased in terms of Rousseau's initial problem, when the savage !rst encounters another man, his initial word "giant" expresses !gurative meaning, whereas the following word "man" indicates the literal or "proper" meaning of the object. The essential error or misjudgment is expressed in the word "giant," which is later *corrected* in the word "man." Rousseau sums up his example as follows: "Since the illusory image presented by passion showed itself !rst, the language answering to it was invented !rst; subsequently it became metaphorical when the enlightened mind recognized its original error and came to use expressions of that !rst language only when moved by the same passion as had produced it" (*Essay* 254). But this important example not only establishes Rousseau's argument regarding the relationship between !gurative and literal meaning. I want to suggest here that it also, and foremost, demonstrates something about the structure of language itself. The word "giant" did not, in e'ect, refer to the other man at all; rather, the word referred to the *passion* that the encounter with the other man induced, namely, fear. Only when the feeling itself has subsided, when it is "purged" of the distortion of the initial emotive response, can the described object receive its "proper" or "true" name: "man."

This might clarify Rousseau's insistence on the primacy of the !gurative. If the !gurative or metaphorical is the way in which language expresses something by means of its relation to something else — and marks language's return to the object *through* something else — then, the possibility of saying "man" can only

become feasible a1er "giant" is expressed. It is in this sense, as Friedlander points out in his discussion of Rousseau's *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, the vehemence of the strong passions might suggest an excess of meaning, inherent to language itself: "To face the predicament, to be truthful in the face of such excess, would demand in the !rst place le&ing yourself be exposed to it. [T]he exposure to meaning requires precisely giving up intention, withstanding the excess."[73] A proportionate linguistic appraisal of the object at hand can therefore only come about with the counterbalancing or evening-out of the excessive expression of passion. Friedlander continues to explain that the linguistic detour by which the !gurative has the power to return us to its object by way of something else, ostensibly false, is in fact necessary when there is no way to speak directly of the thing itself.[74]

Comparing this argumentation with the former discussion of pain in *Emile*, we can trace a con!guration in which Rousseau's *psychological* intuitions about the child prior to his entry into language (in *Emile*) are adapted into *linguistic* ones (in the *Essay*). The replacement of the child's inarticulate cry with a word is consummately echoed by the substitution of "giant" with "man." In both cases, the substitution essentially has a soothing or calming e'ect, with the initial excess of feeling neutralized through the equanimity or composure of the word. The **!**rst cry or exclamation of fear—here the word "giant" is considered an exclamation, not a word—marks a heightened emotional response. The second u&erance, however—whether a sentence "I'm in pain" or the new word "man"—is a composed, "collected" u&erance, expressing the neutralization of the initial strong emotive response.

But Rousseau's explanation of the way in which the linguistic u&erance "downsizes" the object, restoring it to its "true size"— takes into account only the measures of the object at stake (the other human being or, in *Emile*, the child's speci!c want). The linguistic sign representing this object indeed transforms from the !gurative to the literal, and thus, precisely con!rms Rousseau's hypothesis about the primacy of the !gurative. But what this account overlooks is that the initial u&erance can be considered un!t only insofar as the *object* at hand is concerned, but *not* when it refers to the emotion that this object induces in the subject. That is to say, when the child cries or the savage exclaims "giant," these expressions might be linguistic exaggerations in reference to the object of expression (whether hunger or man), but they are a perfectly accurate rendering of the child's or savage's emotive and passionate response to it. The hungry or tired child *in fact* cries out in pain, and the savage is *undeniably* scared. Articulate language can be said to enter the passionate scene so as to downsize the appearance of the object or neutralize the terror with which it strikes us; what it describes, however, is not the object itself (that can now be "resized") but rather the passion (in our case, fear, pain, or a more general experience of

su'ering). "Giant," therefore, denotes fear whereas "man" points at another human being, similar in size, confronting the savage. The transformation of the child's cry and the savage's exclamation into "literal" or "true sized" words is therefore not merely a transition between di'erent languages as Rousseau has it; it relates, rather, to a change in language's very object of reference: instead of referring to the object encountered, it refers to the passion engendered in the speaker by the encounter.

In his famous interpretation of this scene,[75] Derrida explains the importance of the "inadequacy" of metaphor:

> it is the *inadequation of the designation* (metaphor) which *properly expresses* the passion. If fear makes me see giants where there are only men, the signi!er—as the idea of the object—will be metaphoric, but the signi!er of my passion will be literal. And if I then say "I see giants," that false designation will be a literal expression of my fear. For in fact I see giants and there is a sure truth there."[76]

Derrida's emphasis here is on the unique way in which the true (a'ect) comes together with the false (reference to an object), forming the metaphoric structure: the word "giant" might be a false or inadequate designation of the object (another man) yet it is a proper and thereby literal expression of the passion that this object induces in the savage (fear). The word "giant" refers, therefore, not to the object standing before the savage but rather the fearsome manner in which the other man appeared before the savage, namely, *as* giant, fearsome, stronger, and so on.

This is the meaning of Derrida's aforementioned claim about the inadequation of the designation: fear is, therefore, not an object in itself, nor does it arise from the mere di'erence in size between the two men. It is the inadequacy itself that expresses the fear, so that the gap between (1) the signi!er's inadequacy in relation to the signi!ed, and (2) its adequacy and accuracy in regard to what the object in fact induces in me (fear)—this very gap represents the structure of passion. Derrida criticizes positions that situate the passions somehow within the subject, as if it were some internal "content" that is then, in turn, expressed linguistically: "The fact that 'giant' is literal as sign of fear not only does not prevent, but on the contrary implies, that it should be nonliteral or metaphoric as sign of the object. It cannot be the idea-sign of the passion without presenting itself as the idea-sign of the presumed cause of that passion, opening an exchange with the outside."[77] Fear is not *in* the subject and not *in* the object: it emerges from the gap between them or perhaps inheres in the moment the speaking subject experiences the object. Derrida's claim implies that language does not represent the passion qua object, since the passion is always about a relationship

between people, man, and world, and so forth. The vehemence of passion is felt, and represented, only from within a di'erence, a gap. Derrida's account is not only consequential for our understanding of Rousseau but also pertinent in that it provides a perspective on the nature of the encounter between passions and language in general: passions emerge from, and appear in, the in-between, in the relation, and therefore cannot be captured or expressed with a demonstrative gesture, as referential content.

In his critique of Derrida,[78] Paul de Man accuses him of producing an interpretation that dangerously resembles Rousseau's own text. However, instead of reading the "real" Rousseau, he deconstructs a "pseudo-Rousseau," thus providing what de Man calls "a classical case of critical blindness."[79] De Man agrees with Derrida that the word "giant" "may be objectively false (the other man is not in fact any taller) but it is subjectively candid (he seems taller to the frightened subject); the statement may be an error but it is not a lie, as it "expresses" the inner experience correctly."[80] However, de Man criticizes Derrida for remaining trapped in the traditional understanding of passion as a kind of bridging between inside and outside when he claims that "giant" refers to an inner feeling of fear. According to de Man, Derrida fails to understand that the reason for fear has to do with a concrete appearance of something in the external world, with "observable data" (de Man understands Derrida as o'ering an internal state of a'airs as fear's object, a disputable interpretation). Fear results from a fundamental distrust: what appears before me is a man who seems similar to me in size, yet despite this apparent similarity, he may in fact pose a threat. In other words, fear is the result of my suspecting a *possible* discrepancy between the external and internal properties of entities and has to do with an inherent "fear" that things are not as they appear to be, that the "reassuringly familiar and similar outside might be a trap."[81]

De Man o'ers an alternative understanding of the function of passions and emotions by employing an epistemic frame of reference:

> The fear of another man is hypothetical; no one can trust a precipice, but it remains an open question, for whoever is neither a paranoiac nor a fool, whether one can trust one's fellow man. By calling him a "giant" one freezes hypothesis, or !ction, into fact and makes fear, itself a !gural state of suspended meaning, into a de!nite, proper meaning devoid of alternatives. The metaphor "giant," used to connote man, has indeed a proper meaning (fear), but this meaning is not really proper: it refers to a condition of permanent suspense between a literal world in which appearance and nature coincide and a !gural world in which this correspondence is no longer a priori posited. Metaphor is error because it believes or feigns to believe in its own referential meaning.[82]

For de Man, "giant" refers to a moment of epistemic suspension or indeterminacy. It therefore designates neither the object nor the passion but the epistemic oscillation between the two. The savage uses the word "giant" to refer to the man facing him, but what the word actually designates is the state of a suspension of meaning within which the savage !nds himself, overwhelmed by fear.

De Man criticizes Derrida for using passion to compensate for the inherent discrepancy between the outward appearances of objects and their "true" inner properties, since for de Man, this discrepancy is precisely what cannot be resolved. For Rousseau, de Man continues, "all passions—whether they be love, pity, anger, or even a borderline case between passion and need such as fear—are characterized by such a discrepancy; they are based not on the knowledge that such a di'erence exists, but on the hypothesis that it might exist, a possibility that can never be proven or disproven by empirical or by analytical means. A statement of distrust is neither true nor false: it is rather in the nature of a permanent hypothesis."[83] De Man's argument in these last lines illuminates something crucial about the relationship between language and the passions: our fear or distrust does not stem from an actual breach or contradiction. It originates, rather, from the *possibility* that such a discrepancy exists. "Giant" therefore, does not designate an object or its size, or even what I feel toward it; it expresses, rather, the potential risk that what I see is not, so to speak, what I get. This potential is clearly inherent in, and essential to, language as such. The origin of language cannot be discussed without taking into account this risk.[84]

It is no wonder then, that Rousseau chose to focus on problems of proportion (whether problems of a disproportionate evaluation of size or an allegedly exaggerated emotive response). Such problems highlight the fact that language is always about an encounter with an *other* (whether man, animal, or object) and is therefore always an expression of a relationship between speaking man and something or someone other than himself, a way to assess and express the implications of such an encounter. (This is also true where languages do not communicate outwardly but express "inner content" such as feelings and thought; this would be what Herder refers to as cases of the "soul speaking to itself"). Moreover, as Bruns a&entively remarks, fear and pain are the "hidden meaning of all human speech, as if it were so that the very words I am speaking now contained a secret expression of fear."[85] Fear and pain are therefore the latent but fundamental content of human speech, its point of origin but also, and foremost, its innermost nature. Rather than ignoring it as merely nostalgic, Rousseau retains the emotional, original linguistic u&erance as the infra-structure of language as such—a structure that is revealed in extreme moments of passion and linguistic moments alike: in the experience of deep su'ering, in intense pain, as well as (and not less important!) in !gurative and metaphoric language. What all these moments share is that they touch on an extreme; pushing the limits of

the human ability to bear its su'ering and to give it expression. In this sense my reading of Rousseau crucially !gures moments in which language itself, and not only the feeling of su'ering, reaches its limits. In these moments, where language does not function as a mere signifying apparatus, something essential about its origin and internal structure stands revealed. And the same goes for the very experience of being human: its contours grow sharp and its nature unfolds only at its extremes, when it strikes the limits of the experience of being human—and su'ering is one such salient limit.

My point in bringing together Rousseau and Herder is that the word "giant," much like the sheep's bleating, demonstrates that in language the object and its impression cannot, essentially, be experienced in isolation from one another. Therein lies the uniqueness of Herder's and Rousseau's theories of language. For both, language constructs a space of experience whose con!guration does not enable crude distinctions between objects, perceptions, and a'ects. Rousseau's savage fearing the giant other, as well as Herder's bleating which is forcefully imprinted on the human soul, demonstrate precisely this. The bleating sheep is perhaps singled out and separated from the flood of sensations by the human being who has language, but it is not and cannot be separated from this same human being who experiences it. The word "giant" expresses neither the other man as object nor the passion that it induces in the speaker; it is a vehement exclamation expressing the passionate content of the *encounter itself*—savage and other man, man and bleating sheep—experienced in an indivisible linguistic expanse. Moreover, both thinkers similarly contemplate the problematic inherent in the encounter between language and passion. Considering such an encounter in terms of the relationship between language and pain, we could say that for both Herder and Rousseau, the question at hand is not so much whether language is capable or incapable of fully or accurately encapsulating a given sensation or passion. Rather, for both Herder and Rousseau, the strong eruption of passion becomes the condition of possibility for the emergence of linguistic expression. This is not because language is capable of representing or referring to the passion but because the la&er provides an extreme case in the face of which alone language can emerge.