



Mental Language

*From Plato to
William of Ockham*

CLAUDE PANACCIO

*Translated by Joshua P. Hochschild
and Meredith K. Ziebart*

MENTAL LANGUAGE

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CLAUDE PANACCIO

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FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

New York 2017

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This book was first published in French as *Le discours intérieur: De Platon à Guillaume d'Ockham*, by Claude Panaccio © Éditions du Seuil, 1999.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Panaccio, Claude, 1946– author. | Hochschild, Joshua P., 1972– translator. | Ziebart, Meredith K., translator.

Title: Mental language : from Plato to William of Ockham / Claude Panaccio; translated by Joshua P. Hochschild and Meredith K. Ziebart.

Other titles: Discours intérieur. English | Medieval philosophy.

Description: New York : Fordham University Press, 2017. | Series: Medieval philosophy: texts and studies

Identifiers: LCCN 2016013974 | ISBN 9780823272600 (cloth : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Thought and thinking—History. | Knowledge, Theory of—History. | Concepts. | Logic. | Language and logic.

Classification: LCC B105.T54 P3513 2017 | DDC 121—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016013974>

Printed in the United States of America

19 18 17 5 4 3 2 1

First edition

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EDITORIAL FOREWORD

More than a decade after its original publication, Claude Panaccio's book is more actual than ever. This claim is amply justified by the reasons carefully listed by the author in the new Postscript to the English translation—namely, recent developments both in the historiography of and theoretical reflection on the idea of a mental language. Indeed, most of the results of these new developments have been published in English, while until now there has been no comparable study available in English providing a systematic survey of the historical evolution of the idea. It is therefore with great pleasure that I present the long overdue and updated translation of a real “gap-filler” in the English literature on the subject.

Gyula Klima
Series editor

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PREFACE

This book is the result of a project originally much more narrowly circumscribed: it aimed to trace the theoretical discussions of the period (from approximately 1250 to 1320) that led to William of Ockham's theory of mental language (*oratio mentalis*). At the time, I was guided by two motivations that I feel it is appropriate to describe here, as they remained decisive throughout my research.

On the one hand, I asked myself whether these scholastic debates, seemingly so different from our own and quite often conducted in a theological context, nonetheless had some relation to the problem of the "language of thought" that is treated in contemporary cognitive science. The very possibility of an intellectual conversation with authors as distant from us as the medievals was called into question in the 1960s, thanks to the spectacular success of such notions as *rupture*, *incommensurability*, and *paradigm shift*. But perhaps the conclusions and hypotheses of Thomas Kuhn and Michel Foucault have been too readily accepted. The question, it seems to me, should be addressed in terms of detailed analyses of particular cases; indeed, the topic of mental language would especially seem to demand such treatment.

On the other hand, recent work by historians of ideas—in particular, William Courtenay, Zenon Kaluza, and Katherine Tachau—has forcefully demonstrated the need to reevaluate the place of William of Ockham in the history of later medieval philosophy, as well as the impact of his work on his immediate contemporaries and successors. Tachau, for example, maintained (in an important work that appeared in 1988, *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham*) that the Ockhamist theory of knowledge was quite poorly received in the universities of the day and did not lead to the establishment of a philosophical school. However, Tachau's inquiry was restricted to select themes—namely, those surrounding intuitive cognition (*notitia intuitiva*) and the mental image (the *species*). It seemed to me that a similar study of the idea of mental language, central for the *venerabilis inceptor*, could perhaps act as a counterweight and in any case would provide a useful completion of the portrait. My hypothesis was—and still is—that William of Ockham accomplished, in the years 1315–25, a major and highly influential theoretical revolution, precisely through the development of the concept of *oratio mentalis*.

It quickly became clear, however, that I would need to move beyond the limited chronological frame to which I had initially confined myself in order to allow a detailed reexamination of the topic's Greek, Roman, patristic, and Arab sources, as well as of the entire medieval development of the theme since Anselm of Canterbury in the eleventh century. For not only did the texts of Aristotle, Augustine, Boethius, and John Damascene (as well as those of Anselm), on

this topic and others, influence later reflection, but further, no recent work in the history of classical notions of *logos endiathetos* and *verbum cordis* provided an overview that could supply adequate background for my projected inquiry. It was thus necessary for me to venture—with fear and trembling!—into territory with which I was initially less familiar. With that, the feasibility of the enterprise became much less obvious. I believed that I ought to persist, despite the obstacles, only because I was convinced, on the basis of my readings and numerous discussions with colleagues, that it was necessary to evaluate, in a synthetic manner, the large question of interior discourse in ancient and medieval thought. Inevitably, errors will have escaped my attention. I only hope that the completed work will appear, as I believe, sufficiently fruitful that others might be willing to supplement or correct it where needed.

In any case, the project would never have succeeded without the continuing support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Quebec Fund for the Formation of Scholars and the Advancement of Research (FCAR), and the Institutional Research Fund of the University of Quebec in Trois-Rivières. My recognition of these organizations is all the greater for their generous help in permitting many assistants to accompany and stimulate my research, some over many months, others for several years. Here I wish to thank warmly all those students who were indispensable to the work of the bibliography, documentation, and analysis: Ivan Bendwell, Luc Bergeron, Richard Caron, Mario Charland, Guy Hamelin, Marcelo Lannes, Sylvie Laramée, Renée Lavergne, Maxime Lebeuf, André Leclerc, Lyne Neault, Patricia Nourry, and Gilles Ouimet.

I also wish to express my sincerest gratitude to others who helped me in various ways: Jennifer Ashworth, Sten Ebbesen, Russell Friedman, Elizabeth Karger, Alain de Libera, Jean-Marc Narbonne, Calvin Normore, Irène Rosier-Catach, and Joke Spruyt have all had the kindness to provide, in some form or other, detailed comments on one or another part of my research; at the beginning of my work, Jean-François Le Gal kindly gave me many days' access to the remarkable files of the glossary of medieval Latin philosophy at the Sorbonne; over the years, Cécile Juneau has typed each chapter of the book, with as much efficiency as patience as I constantly provided innumerable corrections; Christian Dunn closely read a complete version of the work, and I have benefited in many places from his acute sense of the French language; Thierry Marchaisse, of Éditions du Seuil, kept me on track with valuable advice; finally, throughout this process, my companion, Claude-Elizabeth Perreault, provided considerable technical help in the matter of the bibliography and word processing, as well as crucial and unswerving personal support.

TECHNICAL EXPLANATION

For bibliographic references, I have employed a twofold system that appeared to me the most economical under the circumstances. Editions and translations

used for ancient and medieval sources are indicated in the notes, with a complete description at their first occurrence; the reader will easily find them with the help of the index of names. On the other hand, in the notes for modern works only, I have given the names of authors and dates of publication, while the complete entry can be found in the bibliography at the end of the volume.

When no translator is mentioned in the citations, the French translation of the passage in question is my own.

Lac des Érables, October 1998

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MENTAL LANGUAGE

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INTRODUCTION

Different words sometimes express the same thought. Take these three sentences:

- (1) *Homo currit.*
- (2) *Un homme court.*
- (3) A man is running.

Does it not make sense to say that a Latin speaker who sincerely affirms (1), a French speaker who sincerely affirms (2), and an English speaker who sincerely affirms (3) all share the same belief? Those subscribing to a theory of mental language consider this way of speaking with utmost seriousness. They hypothesize that in individual minds there exist, under one form or another, mental representations that, although independent of the languages of communication, are combinable into more complex unities in precisely the same way that the words of a language are combined into sentences. They would say, in the case of our example, that the three sentences each express, in different words, the same complex mental state (or at least isomorphic mental states), of which neither the whole arrangement nor the constitutive elements depend in principle on the particularities of Latin, French, or English.¹

In this view, mental states are endowed with semantic roles: we say that a belief is *true* or *false*, that a concept, or an idea, *signifies* this or that thing. The position, moreover, holds that the realm of mental symbols has a compositional structure like that of spoken language. In recent analytic philosophy, Jerry Fodor is the great promoter of “the language of thought”; the very burden of his research on this subject is to determine what kind of internal structure it is appropriate to attribute to mental states.² To subscribe to the mental-language hypothesis is to opt for what Fodor calls a “constituent structure,” the model of which is borrowed from linguistic analysis: a population of signifying units articulated in different sequences according to a very precise *syntax* and thus contributing, each in a well-regulated manner, to the *semantic* values of the sequences in question (to their signification, for example, or to their truth-value if required). Fodor thinks that this hypothesis is both natural and successful in explaining many cognitive traits that, empirically, characterize the human

1. Translator’s note: unless otherwise indicated, citations are English translations of Panaccio’s French.

2. See, in particular, Fodor 1987, 135–54, the appendix entitled, “Why There Still Has to Be a Language of Thought.”

species. Learning one's mother tongue, for example, supposes already a capacity for symbol-processing.³

However, there is something strange about the notion of a language common to all that is not a language of communication and whose units are "mental" without being accessible to introspection. At the very least, the idea is not obvious in itself. Fodor comes to it by a complex and sometimes tortuous process of reflection on the actual state of linguistics and cognitive science. Curiously, in the fourteenth century, the Franciscan William of Ockham expounded a very similar idea: that there is a universal *oratio mentalis* ("mental speech") that is independent of languages and yet underlies uttered speech and is itself structured like a language, with syntactic categories (such as nouns, verbs, prepositions, and adverbs), semantic functions (*significatio*, *connotatio*, *suppositio*), and, in the final analysis, a fine-grained compositional structure such that truth-values of mental judgments are a direct function, by means of a precise computation, of the reference (or *suppositio*) of the complex or simple concepts that are their subjects or predicates.⁴

The resemblance to the contemporary language of thought hypothesis is striking. And more astonishing is that today's cognitive theorists rarely cite Ockham and take no inspiration from him. Fodor does say he wants "to resurrect the *traditional* idea of a 'language of thought,'"⁵ but he is probably thinking of Locke or Hobbes, who each occasionally spoke of *mental discourse*.⁶ These authors, however, did not equip their mental discourse with a very precise compositional structure, much less with a syntax, as did Ockham and his successors. From the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, the Ockhamist idea, in its essence, disappeared, and the early modern period knew little of it. Between the *oratio mentalis* of Ockham and the *language of thought* of Fodor there is at once a clear relationship and a discontinuity.

I think even the most stubborn relativist will recognize that this is an especially interesting case for the historian of philosophy. Various projects come to mind. We could, on a theoretical level, attempt to engage past with present doctrines, such that they may clarify one another. This is what I attempted to do in a previous work, comparing often in great detail the Ockhamist theory

3. This argument is developed in Fodor 1975. On the language of thought hypothesis, see also Fodor 1981, 1990, and 1994, as well as the brief presentation of Carston 1997.

4. The Ockhamist theory of truth-conditions is expounded in *Summa logicae* II, ch. 2–20, ed. P. Boehner, G. Gál, and S. Brown, in William of Ockham, *Opera philosophica* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1974), 1:249–317 (English translation: *Ockham's Theory of Propositions: Part II of the Summa logicae*, trans. A. J. Fredoso and H. Schuurman [South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 1998], 86–154).

5. Fodor 1975, 33 (my italics).

6. See, for example: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* III, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 94ff; or John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* IV.5, ed. A. C. Fraser (New York: Dover, 1959), 2:244.

of mental language with Fodor's in order, so far as possible, to draw from the earlier work some insight pertinent to the later discussion.⁷ Alternatively, and with equal legitimacy, we could inquire into the differences, identifying what is specifically medieval—or typically fourteenth-century—in the Ockhamist doctrine and what is contemporary in today's doctrine. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, as each corresponds to a distinct question.

In this book, however, I propose yet another type of inquiry, one more properly historical, but prompted by the same coincidence: how did the medieval philosophical tradition come to give birth to a highly articulated theory of mental language such as Ockham's? What inspired it—and what problems did it solve? Can we, six or seven centuries later, retrace—and understand—the precise, often technical discussions that led to this doctrinal development?

These questions, which could be raised in reference to any past theory, seem especially appropriate in a case like this. On the one hand, contemporary discussions about a language of thought have made us sensitive to certain cognitive or semantic phenomena also noticed by the medievals in a theoretical context that is in some respects analogous: for example, the phenomenon of referential ambiguity, or that of synonymy. The American debates of the last decades between Fodor, Field, Dennett, Putnam, Schiffer, Stalnaker, and many others provide us with a whole arsenal of powerful examples and instructive thought experiments related to the problematic of mental language.⁸ They have drawn out long chains of arguments, located a mass of fine distinctions, contemplated paradigmatic puzzles, and explored strategies of all kinds. There is no doubt that, used with care, this accumulated knowledge can help us to *understand* the medieval texts better than historians could have, for example, fifty years ago. To be sure, when a William of Ockham or a John Buridan reflects on the semantic properties of mental terms and on the syntax of interior language, he does so from the standpoint of the conceptual apparatus offered within the university of his time—Aristotelianism in particular, as well as Augustinianism. Nevertheless, he very often came to consider, with the help of this apparatus, semantic or cognitive phenomena that are still of interest to theorists today: paradoxes of reflexivity (such as the Liar's Paradox, for example), or standard instances of ambiguity, or the special behavior of modal functors and epistemic verbs like "know," "believe," and "doubt." Certain data of this kind are clearly transtemporal. For philosophical semantics and epistemology they play a role comparable to experiments in the natural sciences. Of course, one could not make them into raw observables, and I will not seek here to provide an ontological or epistemological theory for them. But there must be a sense in which a philosopher of today who discusses, say, the Liar's Paradox, encounters certain

7. Panaccio 1992a, 69–164.

8. Especially: Field 1978; Dennett 1987; Fodor and Pylyshyn 1988; Putnam 1988; Schiffer 1987, 1991; Maloney 1989; Stalnaker 1991.

logico-semantic phenomena that were also studied by medieval logicians. If this is indeed the case, then there is every reason to hope that a certain familiarity with contemporary discussions of this paradox could help us better follow the discussions of Ockham, Bradwardine, or Buridan *on the same subject*. So why would it be otherwise in the case that concerns us here? It is true that the idea of mental language is very abstract and that its precise meaning varies with the theories in which it is found. However, if some of the local phenomena it allows us to consider reappear at different times, then recent discussions of the *language of thought* could, *prima facie*, help us grasp more clearly our ancestors' discussions of the *verbum mentis* or *oratio in mente*.

Likewise, the examination of ancient or medieval texts mentioning interior discourse could also enrich present research with forgotten (rather than refuted) perspectives, questions, arguments, puzzles, and hypotheses. The fact is, a theory of mental language apparently quite like those of contemporary Fodorians, a theory with great detail and powerful argument, emerged in the first decades of the fourteenth century. Given that, it seems interesting to ask what problems the theory was actually supposed to solve and whether or not these problems have anything to do with those of our own cognitive theorists—with the question of the compositionality of thought, for example, that so preoccupies Fodor. Whatever the answer turns out to be, there is a chance that it could illuminate ongoing philosophical debate today.

The objective, therefore, is to study the emergence and formation of the theme of mental language in medieval philosophy up to William of Ockham. Medieval philosophy being quite dependent on Greco-Arab and Christian sources, however, this history would be unintelligible if it began downstream, as it were, at the chronological frontier of the Middle Ages. It is necessary for us to go further back, to Plato and Aristotle, and locate the different uses proposed for the idea of interior discourse from there all the way to the fourteenth century, as found in the Stoics, Neoplatonists, church fathers, Arabs, and medieval scholastics themselves. In each case, the task is to identify the problems that authors intended such a notion to treat and to describe the precise roles entrusted to that notion in their theoretical discussions. On a diachronic plan, along the way I will try to retrace the threads by which the idea is transmitted down the centuries. In this way we will see the theme of mental language travel from one context to another, illuminated under various lights, sharpened by the merciless discussions favored by the medieval university. Secondarily, comparison with Ockham's predecessors will permit us to evaluate his originality on this subject.

For this project, the theme—which I variously label “mental language,” “mental discourse,” or “interior discourse”—need not be seen as a sort of abstract object with which the diverse theories under examination will be forced to reckon, each in its own way. We accepted a moment ago the persistence—or better, the repeatability—of certain cognitive or semantic patterns from the

medieval period down to our own day, but those were local phenomena, easily recognizable from one doctrine to another, such as simple paradoxical inferences or cases of ambiguity. None of these is as elaborate as “mental language,” taken in all its generality, or “interior discourse,” or “the word of the heart.” We cannot take it for granted that these expressions are equivalent or that different authors as a rule use them in the same way. In the last analysis, to retrace the history of a *theme* like that of interior language is nothing but to seek the theoretical or historical links between scattered textual occurrences, which are nonetheless alike in certain respects. The theme itself does not exist apart from the linguistic marks that serve to locate it.

In the present case, we will recognize as an occurrence of the theme in question any case where, in the vast body of texts stretching from Greek philosophy up to the Latin fourteenth century, we meet certain typical compound expressions that imply (through one of their components) the order of language or discourse in general and (through the other) the domain of the mental or of interiority: such expressions as *entos dialogos*, *esô logos*, or *logos endiathetos* in Greek and *verbum in corde*, *oratio mentalis*, or *sermo interior* in Latin.

This research started by locating the largest possible sample of such occurrences—there are many—and then simply reading the passages where they appear, when possible with the help of commentators, to try to develop a satisfactory understanding of them and if possible to recognize their theoretical and historical interconnections. As one would expect, in each case this required textual and doctrinal contextualization. Using every precaution I could, I have tried to grasp the sense of each passage in the context of the work in which it is found and to identify in each case the role played there by the idea of interior discourse.

It is here especially that choices had to be made. As every historian of thought knows, we can always go further into an interesting passage from a past master, pushing our understanding up another notch, connecting it bit by bit to other writings of the same author or of his predecessors, contemporaries, or successors. One could easily spend the rest of one's life reflecting on the Platonic theory of *dianoia* or on the hermeneutics of Philo of Alexandria. I have been content, in practice, with a subjective test: I have pursued the contextualization of each passage until I had the feeling of having developed a satisfactory understanding of it—that is, until finding it a plausible response to a reasonable problem. This is a risky method. Nothing guarantees that a more expansive or different contextualization could not in some case refute the understanding on which I have settled. But unfortunately I know no other way to conduct a project such as this one. The results are to be judged on actual evidence.

Thus leaning on the examination of many temporally and geographically scattered occurrences, this method avoids the presupposition that the texts studied are articulated in a single progression, cemented by a continuous and linear descent. Rather, the whole picture is more polymorphous, gradually

outlined as connections between given passages are revealed. We will of course find lines of transmission and networks of influence, but also ruptures, losses, recoveries, curious encounters, and, occasionally, the appearance of new problems and original debates. Despite many lacunae in our knowledge, a pattern does emerge from it all. In Part I of the book, through quite diverse projects, we will see put into place a Greek tradition of the *logos endiathetos* common to all schools of philosophy, and then, beginning in the second century A.D., another, Christian, tradition of the interior word, nourished by the first but profoundly transformed by theological preoccupations. In Part II, beyond Greek Neoplatonism and the Arab renaissance, we will witness the encounter between the two traditions within the thirteenth-century university, provoking a range of important theoretical disagreements, discussions, and developments. In relation to this, finally, in Part III we will situate the *oratio mentalis* doctrine of William of Ockham and his immediate successors. What will guide us through this exposition is not so much the theoretical unity of the present theme as the diversity of problematics it allows us to explore, and especially the richness of their interpenetrations.

This approach, it must be stressed, is doubly retrospective: first, moving from a contemporary preoccupation to an inquiry into the past; and second, having located in Ockham a detailed theory of mental language, seeking to trace its formation and gestation in the movements of ideas that preceded it. Many of the results obtained in this book, whether interpretations of texts or historical explanations, remain independent of this double retrospective; but even so, both of these backward glances have precise and recognizable effects on the inquiry pursued and on the synthetic presentation offered in the following pages.

In the first place, references to the contemporary problematic will remain discrete. We will not directly bring the debates of medieval thinkers and their predecessors into conversation with those of today, as this would expand the enterprise to unreasonable proportions. However, even when they would not have brought it up explicitly, we will pose to our ancient and medieval authors the question of the compositionality of interior discourse, which lies at the heart of the present discussion. Is there a place for it? Do they account for it? How do they explain it, when it arises? In other words, do they grant to this postulated mental speech a constituent structure? Whatever the response in each case, this question—which is directly inspired by recent discussions—is, after all, perfectly legitimate and promises to be fruitful: as soon as an author, of whatever time, compares thought with language, we can rightfully ask him precisely what properties and structures he means thereby to transfer from the one to the other. This does not arbitrarily impose upon past texts a foreign problematic. On the contrary, as we shall see in practice, it gives us the means to develop a finer descriptive analysis of certain elements *constitutive* of the theories in question and the means to recognize certain significant shifts in the notion of mental language during the medieval period itself.

The other retrospective glance—that which looks from William of Ockham back through the past to the great Athenian age—might still appear suspect to some. One scholar recently worried about the development of “a new hermeneutic school of medieval thought which sees in Ockham the fulfillment of long wanderings lasting three centuries.”⁹ And one could easily denounce, in the same vein, a teleology of history in which Ockhamist nominalism would “succeed Thomism in the position of privileged reference.”¹⁰ Rest assured, I do not wish to make any such presumption here. One need only grant that, in the wake of the research of the last decades, Ockhamist teaching at least on the theme of interior discourse has generally seemed prominent in relation to those that came before as well as those that followed.¹¹ Under such conditions, is it not admissible to use his teaching for the purpose of surveying the history of the theme in question? And to be sensitized by it to better note the presence *or absence* of certain features in more ancient texts—for example, use, or lack of use, of the vocabulary of signification for describing the functioning of discursive thought; recourse, or lack of recourse, to the grammatical categories of noun, verb, adverb, to characterize interior discourse; identification, or lack of identification, of the mental term with an act or with a quality of the mind? These are three questions that promise to shed light on the body of work we have circumscribed. We could, in principle, carry out the same sort of investigation, *mutatis mutandis*, beginning with any minimally worked-out doctrine, for which we could, with the help of precise linguistic markers, find antecedents in the history of ideas. This could be done (why not?) with the Thomistic distinction between being and essence, with John Duns Scotus’s theory of the will, or with John Buridan’s modal logic. This type of undertaking, by definition, adopts a *point of view*. However, nothing obliges the scholar to extol the aforesaid point of view as being the only legitimate one. Rather, one must ask to what extent the chosen perspective is fruitful and clear. In the present case, what is at stake is to pinpoint where, how, and why there developed, from Plato to William of Ockham, the idea of an abstract and discursive thought, independent of languages but constituted by signs and, like languages, equipped with a syntax and a finely articulated compositional semantics. The wager this book makes is that this question puts in play a rich and philosophically interesting doctrinal history.

9. Michon 1994, 581.

10. De Libera 1996, 25.

11. See, for example: Nuchelmans 1973, 1980; Panaccio 1992b, 1996; Maierù 1996; Meier-Oeser 1997.

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PART I

THE SOURCES

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CHAPTER ONE

PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, three authorities—of no little stature—were regularly invoked in connection with the idea that thought is a type of mental discourse or interior speech. These were none other than Augustine, the intellectual guide of all medieval theology; Boethius, the Latin translator of Aristotle's logic and its appointed interpreter in the eyes of the Scholastics; and John Damascene, the seventh-century Syrian monk who, through the Latin translation of his exposition of orthodox faith—the celebrated *De fide orthodoxa*—would become the Middle Ages' principal transmitter of the theology of the Greek fathers. Examined closely, each prompts, perpetuates, or reveals a distinct tradition—or at least a branch of a tradition—in each of which the theme of interior speech possesses a different range and even a different name. The *logos endiathetos* of John Damascene, the *verbum in corde* of Augustine, and the *oratio animi* of Boethius open to our investigation three original paths—to which we will devote chapters 2, 3, and 4 of this work, respectively. However, upstream of these lines are found, here as in other matters, the immense figures of Plato and Aristotle, and this first chapter turns initially toward these two figures in order to review, however briefly, how the theme that occupies us appears in their works. In the course of subsequent chapters we will see to what extent their small developments—at times, simple allusions—determined the course of our history. At the same time, they will accord us the opportunity to outline some of the principal philosophical motifs that will guide us throughout this study.

THE SOUL'S DIALOGUE WITH ITSELF

The most ancient texts we have in which thought is identified as a sort of interior discourse are Plato's.¹ Apart from a short, rather enigmatic passage from the *Timaeus*²—which had been partially translated into Latin by Calcidius in

1. Citations of Plato in English are from Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997). The translators for cited works are: Donald J. Zeyl (*Timaeus*), M. J. Levett, rev. M. Burnyeat (*Theaetetus*), Nicholas P. White (*Sophist*), Dorothea Frede (*Philebus*), and C. D. C. Reeve (*Cratylus*). Alternative translations, as well as key Greek terms, are occasionally inserted between brackets.

2. Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 37b: "when this contact gives rise to an account [*logos*] that is equally true whether it is about what is different or about what is the same, and is borne along *without utterance or sound* within the self-moved thing, then, whenever the account concerns anything that is perceptible, the circle of the Different goes

the fourth century—these passages were unknown to the medievals. However, one may reasonably surmise that they were taken very seriously in most late Greek philosophy and consequently that, while unknown to the Latins, they had an indirect but crucial influence upon late-medieval thought, which war-rants giving the principal passages some attention.

Today, the most well-known text in this connection is *Theaetetus* 189e–190a:

SOCRATES: Now by “thinking” [*dianoesthai*] do you mean the same as I do?

THEAETETUS: What do you mean by it?

SOCRATES: A talk [*logos*] which the soul has with itself about the objects under its consideration. Of course, I’m only telling you my idea in all ignorance; but this is the kind of picture I have of it. It seems to me that the soul when it thinks is simply carrying on a discussion in which it asks itself questions and answers them itself, affirms and denies. And when it arrives at something definite, either by a gradual process or a sudden leap, when it affirms one thing consistently and without divided counsel, we call this its judgment [*doxa*]. So, in my view, to judge is to make a statement [*legein*], and a judgment is a statement [*logos*] which is not addressed to another person or spoken aloud, but silently addressed to oneself.

The excerpt is indeed arresting, and yet, it must be admitted, not very revealing with respect to the reasons one might have for treating thought as discourse, nor of the exact sense in which this is to be understood: what Plato here launches, and not without some hesitation, is an appeal to intuition. Two features merit emphasis. First, in this “discussion” with itself that constitutes thought, the soul questions and answers, affirms and denies. The action is played out entirely on the level of what are today called *illocutionary acts*—in particular, those characteristic of a dialogue proceeding by way of question and answer. Second, the goal of this process is the adoption of a position, or assent—which is to say, the formation of an opinion, or *doxa*, through which doubt is dissipated. These two rather remarkable ideas figure even more prominently in two further passages from Plato that relate most directly to our matter.

We find in *Sophist* (263d–64a) a passage arising in the course of a discussion between Theaetetus and the Stranger, the objective of which is to demonstrate the existence of, and trace the emergence of, falsehood. Having devoted some pages to external speech (which is composed of nouns and verbs) in order to establish that there is sometimes falsehood there as well as truth (261d–63d), Plato turns to what occurs in the soul: “Well then, isn’t it clear by now that

straight and proclaims it throughout its whole soul. This is how firm and true opinions and convictions come about” [*my italics*].

both true and false thought [*dianoia*] and belief [*doxa*] and appearance [*phantasia*] can occur in our souls?" (263d). To demonstrate this—as proves to be necessary—the Stranger explains, in turn, what constitutes each of the three states, or mental processes, he has just evoked—namely, *dianoia*, *doxa*, and *phantasia*. At this point, he affirms the quasi-identity of thought (*dianoia*) and speech (*logos*): "Aren't thought and speech the same, except that what we call thought is speech that occurs without the voice, inside the soul [*entos dialogos*] in conversation with itself?" (263e). And opinion (*doxa*) is to thought what affirmation and denial are to exterior discourse:

STRANGER: And then again we know that speech contains . . .

THEAETETUS: What?

STRANGER: Affirmation [*phasis*] and denial [*apophasis*].

THEAETETUS: Yes.

STRANGER: So when affirmation or denial occurs as silent thought [*kata dianoian*] inside the soul, wouldn't you call that belief? (263e–64a)

Imagination (*phantasia*) is then defined as opinion that "doesn't happen on its own but arises for someone through perception" (264a), and the conclusion, consequently, is inescapable:

STRANGER: So since there is true and false speech, and of the processes just mentioned, thinking appeared to be *the soul's conversation* [dialogue] *with itself*, belief the conclusion of thinking, and what we call appearing [imagination] the blending of perception and belief, it follows that since these are all the same kind of thing as speech, some of them must sometimes be false. (264a–b, my italics)

Here we find in full and proper form an *argument* for applying the semantic properties of truth and (especially) falsity to the order of that which "occurs as silent thought inside the soul." Truth and falsity are initially recognized as properties of external discourse (first premise of the argument), then, by way of the thesis of the quasi-identity (or isomorphism) of certain mental processes with external discursive processes (second premise), these properties are transposed (in the conclusion) to the level of these very mental processes. *Dianoia* is thus treated as interior *logos*, and *doxa* appears as the mental equivalent of what assertion and denial are for external discourse. Plato is the first to have seen clearly the strong parallel between the order of propositional attitudes, like belief or epistemic assent, and the order of illocutionary acts, such as assertion and negation. It is on the basis of this parallel that he introduces the notion of an interior discourse, once again described in these lines as "the soul's dialogue with itself" (264a).

This approach to thought as interior dialogue is even more explicit in *Philebus* (38c–e), where Plato once again reflects on the process of forming opinion, particularly false opinion:

Do we agree that the following must happen here [i.e., in the formation of our opinions]?

...

Wouldn't you say that it often happens that someone who cannot get a clear view because he is looking from a distance wants to make up his mind about what he sees?

...

"What could that be that appears to stand near that rock under a tree?"—Do you find it plausible that someone might say these words to himself when he sets his eyes on such appearances?

...

And might he not afterwards, as an answer to his own question, say to himself, "It is a man," and in so speaking, would get it right?

...

But he might also be mistaken and say that what he sees is a statue, the work of some herdsmen?

...

But if he were in company, he might actually say out loud to his companion what he had told himself, and so what we earlier called judgment [opinion, *doxa*] would turn into an assertion [statement, *logos*].

Belief appears here in all clarity as the result of an interior exchange of questions and answers, and it is this, once again, that allows Plato to apply to the order of *dianoia* those semantic values *par excellence*—namely, truth and falsity. All of this occurs as though the primary application of these concepts, which will become so crucial for all later Western philosophy, were the evaluation of responses to a questionnaire: the soul may (or may not) be correct in its interior examination, just as a student may (or may not) correctly answer a question posed to him. "Our soul," Plato concludes, "is comparable to a book" (38e). It must be understood here that he is thinking above all of the sort of book that he himself writes, in which discourse does indeed proceed by means of question and answer.

What we have witnessed in these three seminal passages is the transposition of a *linguistic* model for the comprehension and characterization of *cognitive* phenomena—in particular, those of interior deliberation and belief (or opinion). Compared to what one encounters in the fourteenth century, this transposition is but partial; and it is primarily the concepts of truth and falsity whose field of application is thereby expanded. Moreover, it is so expanded on

the basis of what, for Plato, seems to be the original domain—or in any case the domain *par excellence*—of their inscription: the evaluation of answers with affirmations or denials in a heuristic examination. To conceive of thought as an interior discourse, in this context, is essentially to represent it as a dialogue functioning by means of question and answer.

Truth and falsity are the only semantic concepts that profit from this Platonic displacement. Infrapositional mental units, notably, are not characterized as signs. In fact, they are not considered at all, and the notion that the truth or falsity of opinions may be the result of the properties of constitutive units smaller than *doxa* themselves is entirely absent. The linguistic model employed is not that of semantic *composition*.

The question of whether, in Plato's eyes, interior discourse is equipped with something like a syntax is slightly more delicate. Everything depends on the precise range accorded to the thesis of the quasi-identity of thought and discourse posited at *Sophist* 263e. Some pages previously, Plato had assigned to exterior *logos* a characteristic syntactic structure: "there are two ways to use your voice to indicate something about [or: as a sign (*semeion*) of] being. . . . One kind is called names [*onoma*], and the other is called verbs [*rhema*]" (261e–62a); and shortly thereafter he had added that he considered each of these categories necessary for the formation of true discourse: "speech—the simplest and smallest kind of speech, I suppose—would arise from that first weaving of name and verb together" (262c). The question, therefore, is whether this minimal structure of the spoken *logos* is also found at the level of *dianoia*.³ One might easily believe this to be the case, were one to take entirely seriously the identification of thought and discourse affirmed slightly further on: "Aren't thought and speech the same, except that what we call thought is speech that occurs without the voice, inside the soul in conversation with itself?" (263e). Thus it would be necessary to consider that thought is resolutely identified by Plato as a "quiet speech," as in the silent emission of words belonging to a given language. Augustine will later insist on the radical distinction between this *mental representation of external words*—a silent and linguistically determined speech—and the true *mental word*—which, according to him, does not belong to any language of communication and is anterior to any signs (we will return to this in Chapter 3). Plato makes no such distinction; however, as Curzio Chiesa judiciously notes, the reduction of thought to a sequence of *words* uttered very quietly to oneself does not appear at all in conformity with the general spirit of Platonic philosophy, insofar as it would entail "the absolute dependence of thought on language."⁴ The language/thought parallelism evoked in the *Sophist* seems to be limited to the affirmation of a common dialogical structure (ques-

3. On the propositional—or nonpropositional—character of knowledge and opinion in Plato, see, notably, Lafrance 1981, De Rijk 1986, and Chiesa 1996.

4. Chiesa 1992, 21.

tions/answers) and the possibility of an alethic evaluation of both mental answers (opinions) and oral answers (affirmations and denials). The notions of noun (*onoma*) and verb, or attribute (*rhema*), are never explicitly applied by Plato to “the soul’s dialogue with itself”; rather, when they appear, they are always associated with the order of vocal signs (as in *Sophist* 261e–62e) or with the exterior action of speaking (as in *Cratylus* 387c6: “Now using names is a part of saying; since it is by using names that people say things”). Hence, if in fact the master of the Academy did envision the application of the noun/verb grammatical categorization to interior thought, it would seem that he remained very discrete on this point and did not draw from it anything interesting for a philosophical theory of thought.

More probably he did not think of it. What truly interests him, in proposing to describe thought as discourse, is to establish in principle the legitimacy of the evaluation of cognitive states in terms of truth and (especially) falsity. The transfer of the linguistic model to the analysis of thought here exploits neither the semantic principle of composition nor syntactic structuring.

THE LOCUS OF LOGICAL RELATIONS

Aristotle, according to the Dutch scholar Gabriel Nuchelmans, is even less inclined than Plato to treat thought as language.⁵ It is indeed an idea about which the Stagirite hardly wrote. On this issue we find in him no developed arguments like those in the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, or *Philebus*, but only a few allusions across his entire corpus, of which only one is at all explicit. Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, one sees that Aristotle indeed took a step further in this direction than Plato—a step that we will find in the course of our history to be of crucial importance—namely, the introduction of logical relations into mental discourse and the consequent recognition of the latter as the original locus of these relations.

The first Aristotelian text the tradition invites us to notice yields little of consequence. It is a passage in chapter 6 of the *Categories*, devoted to the subject of quantity, wherein discourse (*logos*) is mentioned alongside number as an example of discrete quantity. This is so, the author explains, because discourse is “measured by long and short syllables,” clearly distinguished from one another—adding, as a sort of aside, “I mean here language that is *spoken*” (4b34–35).⁶ It will be traditional, among Greek and Latin commentators on the *Categories* at least up to the fourteenth century, to perceive in this specifica-

5. Nuchelmans 1973, 37.

6. For citations of Aristotle I will use (with occasional modifications to the translations) *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (Rev. Oxford Translation), ed. J. Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton: 1984). The translators for cited works are: J. L. Ackrill (*Categories*, *On Interpretation* [*Perihermeneias*]), A. J. Jenkinson (*Prior Analytics*), J. Barnes (*Posterior*

tion an allusion by omission, so to speak, to the existence of mental discourse. Boethius, notably, is very clear on this point, explaining the significance of Aristotle's claim by way of the fact that "the Greek word 'logos' also applies to the cogitation of the soul [*animi cogitatio*] and to interior deliberation [*intra se ratiocinatio*], as well as oral discourse [*oratio*]."⁷ Toward the close of the thirteenth century and at the beginning of the fourteenth, several authors used this brief statement from the *Categories* as an opportunity, following in the lead of Boethius's second commentary on the *Perihermeneias*, to distinguish three (and sometimes even four) types of discourse, invariably including *oratio in mente*.⁸ Here, according to their accounts, Aristotle invokes negatively—among other things—the idea of interior discourse.

Although Boethius's linguistic argument is *prima facie* plausible, the traditional interpretation would remain rather fragile if Aristotle had not made himself more explicit on this point elsewhere. For in interpreting this famous incidental claim it would have been just as possible to think only of the opposition of spoken to written discourse, which, in fact, is not measured in brief and long syllables in the sense intended here. However, there exists another passage—and only one—in which Aristotle explicitly entertains the notion of an opposition between exterior and interior *logos*. It occurs in chapter 10 of the first book of the *Posterior Analytics* (at 76b24–26) and is much more striking than that found in the *Categories*. In the lines preceding this passage the Stagirite invokes those truths, first principles, or demonstrated conclusions that are neither mere hypotheses nor postulates, and that "one must necessarily believe"; he then adds, in order to explain the idea of an assent that one could not help but make:

Analytics), J. A. Smith (*De anima*), W. D. Ross and J. O. Urmson (*Nicomachean Ethics*), and W. D. Ross (*Metaphysics*).

7. Boethius, *In Categorias Aristotelis*, *Patrologia Latina* 64 (hereafter *PL*), 203.

8. See, for example, Peter of Auvergne, *Quaestiones super Predicamentis*, q. 28, ed. R. Andrews, *Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen Age grec et latin* 55 (1987): 47; or Simon Faversham, *Quaestiones super librum Praedicamentorum*, q. 6, ed. P. Mazzarella, in *Opera omnia* (Padua: CEDAM, 1957), 1:119–22. These two authors from the end of the thirteenth century, like a number of their contemporaries, adopt the division of three types of *oratio* (spoken, written, and mental) advanced by Boethius in his second commentary on the *Perihermeneias*, which will be considered in detail in chap. 4. A fourth type of *oratio*, which is the quantitative measure of uttered speech (*mensura vocis prolatae*), is sometimes introduced by certain authors of the same period in connection with this passage from chap. 6 of the *Categories*. This latter notion, however, has nothing to do with interior discourse, and therefore will not be considered here. See, for example, Martin of Dacia, *Quaestiones super librum Praedicamentorum*, q. 25, ed. H. Roos, in *Martini de Dacia Opera* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1961), 188, and John of Dacia, *Summa grammatica*, ed. A. Otto (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1955), 89.

For demonstration—no more than syllogism—is not addressed to external argument (*exô logos*)—but to argument in the soul (*esô logos en tê psuchê*). For one can always object to external argument, but not always to internal argument.

One can manipulate words and refuse externally to affirm a first principle or duly demonstrated conclusion and lose oneself, if one wishes, in sophistical quibbling; however, interior apprehension is not so easily commanded. It will, in similar cases, impose itself on the mind in an irresistible manner; and this is why demonstration and the syllogism are addressed to the mental *logos* of the interlocutor rather than to the exterior *logos*.

The discourse of the soul appears in these lines as the inner locus of sincere assent; yet for the argument to be relevant, it must also be much more—namely, the very unfolding, in the mind of the interlocutor, of the *comprehension* of the syllogism or demonstration. Oral reasoning composed of words will thus come to correspond, for the listener, to an intellectual process that is precisely what Aristotle here calls the *esô logos*. It is at this level that valid inference must show itself to be constraining; it is here first and foremost that the logical bonds must be woven.

This is confirmed, albeit indirectly, by a very revealing passage in the final chapter of *Perihermenias*, devoted to the contrariety of propositions:

Now if spoken sounds follow things in the mind, and there it is the belief of the contrary which is contrary (e.g., the belief that every man is just is contrary to the belief “every man is unjust”), the same must hold also of spoken affirmations. But if it is not the case there that the belief of the contrary is contrary, neither will the affirmation be contrary to the affirmation, but rather the above-mentioned negation. (23a32–37)

The discussion that follows shows that the second alternative is the correct one; a little further on Aristotle concludes:

If then this is how it is with beliefs, and spoken affirmations and negations are symbols of things in the soul, clearly it is the universal negation about the same thing that is *contrary* to an affirmation. (24b1–4)

In these lines there is no expression that directly invokes the idea of an interior language in the same way as *esô logos* in the *Posterior Analytics*. But what is significant for our inquiry is the fact that the logical relation of contrariety is found localized primarily at the level of “what happens in the mind”—*doxa*, in the present case, considered as that of which oral affirmations and negations are symbols. Does this level correspond to that of the *esô logos* of the *Posterior Analytics*? There is every reason to believe so. Contrariety, after all, is merely the inverse of logical implication, and the place where inferences are understood as such—the locus of interior discourse, according to the *Analytics*—must be

the same as that where the logical relation of contrariety is deployed. Interior discourse, consequently, is comprised of what Aristotle calls *beliefs*. It pertains to the order of that which is symbolized (or signified) by spoken discourse, and it is both anterior to and more fundamental than that speech.

It likewise follows that for Aristotle, mental discourse is not derived from a conventional language of communication, nor is it identified with the mere activity of speaking quietly to oneself in Greek, Latin, or English. The reminder at 24b1–2 that “spoken affirmations and negations are symbols of things in the soul” is a clear reference from the last page of the *Perihermeneias* to the first, where it was posited—in a formula that has become famous—that “spoken sounds are symbols of affections of the soul [*ta pathêmata tês psuchês*]” (16a2–3). Consequently, beliefs and the interior speech composed of them belong to these states of the soul, which, contrary to writing and to spoken words, are “the same for all,” as Aristotle said some lines later (16a8).

Whereas in Plato it remained unclear whether interior language must be posited as anterior to and independent of spoken language (although this seemed to us the most plausible interpretation), in Aristotle the connections one may draw between the *Posterior Analytics* and *Perihermeneias* allow the question to be unambiguously answered: for Aristotle, the *esô logos* (as later the *verbum mentis* of Augustine and the *oratio mentalis* of Ockham) does not depend on conventional languages.

On the contrary, it finds them, insofar as it is the primary locus of assent (symbolized by oral affirmation and negation) but also—and especially—the locus of the logical relations of implication and contrariety, which are then reproduced in a derivative way in spoken and written sentences. In this last point lies Aristotle’s most original contribution to the history of the idea of mental discourse. Plato always posited opinion or belief (*doxa*) as the mental correspondent of what affirmation and negation are in exterior discourse. Aristotle follows his master faithfully on this and reserves the terms *kataphasis* (affirmation) and *apophasis* (negation) for external illocutionary acts. He similarly subordinates these outward acts to those interior attitudes relevant to the silent and nonconventional discourse the soul carries on with itself. What is new is the privileged association of this interior discourse with the order of formal logic.

This should not be seen as a conscious opposition to Plato. On the contrary, Aristotle draws an objective consequence from what his master had advanced when he maintained, as the conclusion of an argument, the legitimacy of applying an evaluation in terms of truth and falsity to certain purely noetic products or processes, as one does in the oral answers to certain types of question. However, from the attribution of truth-values to mental units, it must follow that these same units have logical relations with one another: the truth of certain opinions must entail or exclude the truth or falsity of certain others. In general, the attributions of truth-values in a given discursive domain cannot be absolutely independent of one another; on this precisely rests the entire

Aristotelian logical enterprise, for which the notions of truth and falsity are considered primary. As soon as one admits, with Plato, that counterparts for negation and affirmation exist in the soul, it is inevitable, if we are to apply an alethic evaluation to these mental units, that one also acknowledge relations of incompatibility and implication there.

Aristotle nevertheless goes a step further than Plato in explicitly exploiting this consequence well beyond what his illustrious predecessor could imagine. More than just an interior dialogue, Aristotle's *esô logos* is posited as the primary locus of syllogism and demonstration and the order of judgment in the soul as the primary place of the relations of contrariety (and thus, by extension, of all relations put into play in the famous logical square of opposition). On the one hand, the Stagirite merely draws an ineluctable conclusion from the Platonic position: if the opinion in the soul is the primary bearer of truth-value, then it must also be the bearer *par excellence* of logical relations. On the other hand, in so doing, he displaces Plato's purpose in appealing to the linguistic model for understanding the functioning of cognitive processes. This displacement, in the final analysis, proves radical. The main point for Aristotle is no longer, as it was for his master, that thought is a *dialogue* between the soul and itself—in fact, he does not exploit this notion at all. The theme of interior discursivity still implies for him, as it did for Plato, the idea of thought as progression, of a process leading to new affirmations; however, it is no longer seen as proceeding via question and answer, but rather as a development by way of inference. Interior discourse is no longer dialogue, but reasoning.⁹

THE COMPOSITION OF THOUGHT

This Aristotelian approach to interior discourse brings to philosophical attention a delicate problem, one that Aristotle himself seems not to have noticed and for which he did not provide the means to resolve: it is what I will call the *problem of the composition of thought*. One of the principal theses of the present book is that this problem, already present *in principle* in the earliest approaches to thought in terms of interior discourse, was nevertheless evaded for a long time, until it emerged at the heart of the *oratio mentalis* problematic in the first decades of the fourteenth century. The problem is as follows: precisely how are the logical and alethic properties of mental judgments dependent on the properties of certain smaller units constitutive of the judgments in question? This formulation of the problem is directly inspired by what is

9. From the psychological point of view, the *esô logos* of Aristotle must concern, consequently, that part of the soul called the *logistikon*, in the *Nichomachean Ethics* (VI.1.1139a2–15)—which is to say, the “calculative part,” according to the Ross and Urmson translation. It can be directed either toward action (whereby it is called *praktikon*) or toward pure theoretical reflection (namely, *dianoêtikon*) (*Nich. Eth.* VI.2).

today called the *principle of compositionality*, according to which the semantic properties of complex units (such as phrases or propositions) are a function of the semantic properties of the simple units that are their parts (such as terms or morphemes). This principle, admittedly sometimes contested, has nevertheless been basic for a large portion of contemporary philosophy of language since Frege and Russell; and it is in its extension to the order of mental processes that Jerry Fodor situates the primary theoretical interest of recourse to the idea of a language of thought.¹⁰ As I will try to show, it is not anachronistic to ask what place Aristotle can give to this principle—to pose to him, in other words, what I have denominated the “problem of the composition of thought.”

The question, in a way, can already be raised about Plato. “Thought and speech,” he said in the *Sophist*, are “the same, except that what we call thought is speech that occurs without the voice, inside the soul in conversation with itself” (263e). This is the thesis of the quasi-identity of thought and speech. Now, the Stranger had taught us somewhat earlier (262b) that “smaller speeches” would be composed of at least a noun (*onoma*) and a verb (*rhêma*). To be true or false, spoken utterance requires a minimal compositional structure. Would it not then necessarily follow, were the quasi-identity thesis to be taken seriously, that the same would hold of interior *logos*? Would one not have to find there too the minimal composition of a subject corresponding to a noun and a predicate corresponding to a verb? Mustn’t the *doxa*, even while entirely interior, be taken as a form of propositional cognition? And, if so, how could this avoid—in principle—the problem of composition?

In Aristotle the matter is more obvious, however, and entails greater consequences. Extending logical properties as well as truth-values to judgments in the soul, he must take the components of interior speech to be the basic units of mental computation, which is to say, of reasoning. And if an instance of reasoning—a syllogism, for example—must be composed of units (premises and conclusion) that are true or false, it is necessary, in the Aristotelian context, that these can in turn be decomposed into smaller elements. This requirement is imposed by the theory that accounts for the validity of reasoning—namely, logic itself. The Aristotelian theory of the syllogism—to take the most important and striking example—requires an analysis of true or false units into smaller elements. Take, for example, a typical first-figure syllogism:

Every man is an animal,
every animal is mortal,
therefore every man is mortal.

The formal validity here, contrary to what would occur in a calculation of unanalyzed propositions, depends on the relations *between the terms*: “man,” “animal,” and “mortal.” This is what Aristotle means when he undertakes, in

10. Cf. Fodor 1975, 1987.

chapter 4 of the *Prior Analytics*, to characterize the perfect syllogism in the most general way possible:

Whenever three terms are so related to one another that the last is in the middle as in a whole and the middle is either in or not in the first as a whole, the extremes must be related by a perfect deduction. (25b33–35)

It is therefore necessary—if, as Aristotle proposes in the *Posterior Analytics*, interior discourse is the privileged locus of deductive syllogism—that mental propositions can, like spoken sentences, be decomposed into terms and that these terms can receive, as their oral analogues, certain properties of semantic character.

Aristotle actually shows himself to be entirely conscious of the requirement for interior thought to be composed of infrapropositional units. He returns to it several times in his work and, in particular, in the first chapter of *Perihermeneias*, precisely in the framework of a strict parallelism between thought and language:

Just as some thoughts in the soul are neither true nor false while some are necessarily one or the other, so also with spoken sounds. For falsity and truth have to do with combination [*sunthesis*] and separation [*diairesis*]. Thus names and verbs by themselves—for instance “man” or “white” when nothing further is added—are like the thoughts that are without combination and separation; for so far they are neither true nor false. (16a9–15)

This text expresses in a canonical way the famous theory of the two operations of the soul: those thoughts that are necessarily either true or false are judgments or mental propositions, while those that “are neither true nor false” are their constitutive, infrapropositional elements. Their relation is the same as that which unites a complete sentence, whether true or false, with the nouns and verbs that form its parts.

The principle is generalizable: “for what is true or false involves a synthesis of thoughts.”¹¹ Or, in the slightly more explicit version from *Metaphysics*, E.4:

But since that which *is* in the sense of being true, or *is not* in the sense of being false, depends on combination and separation, and truth and falsehood together are concerned with the apportionment of contradiction (for truth has the affirmation in the case of what is compounded and the negation in the case of what is divided, while falsity has the contradictory of this apportionment) [. . .] (1027b18–24)

Admittedly, there are also passages that suggest the possibility of an intellectual yet nonpropositional access to certain sorts of truth—what Aristotle calls the “thinking of indivisibles”—that “is found in those cases where falsehood is

11. Aristotle, *De anima* III.8.432a10–11.

impossible.”¹² However, this does not rule out, as the author immediately clarifies, that “where the alternative of true or false applies, there we always find a sort of combining of objects of thought in a quasi-unity.”¹³ It is beyond doubt that the *esô logos* of the Stagirite must present a constituent structure.

The truth-value of the mental proposition, therefore, must depend in one way or another on this composition, which is only accomplished by the intellect. It must depend, in other words, on the way in which the mental terms the intellect thus assembles into a propositional complex are related to external reality. What has come to be called the semantic properties of a mental proposition must be a function of the semantic properties of its infrapropositional constituents. *The Aristotelian theory of the soul implies the principle of compositionality*. We may therefore rightly and without anachronism ask Aristotle for an account of this compositionality.

The difficulty is that Aristotelianism does not provide the means to treat this problem in a general and satisfying way because it does not have at its disposal a fine-grained theorization of the *semantic* relations, which, from this perspective, should be posited between simple concepts of the soul and extramental realities. When Aristotle approaches the notions of truth and falsity directly, he does not set them systematically in relation to the semantic properties of terms, except in an extremely general way. In the *Metaphysics* (H.10, for example—a particularly celebrated passage), he characterizes truth and falsity thus:

The condition of this [*viz.* truth and falsity] in the objects is their being combined or separated, so that he who thinks the separated to be separated and the combined to be combined has the truth, while he whose thought is in a state contrary to that of the objects is in error. (1051b2–5)

These few lines come close to outlining a general theory of truth-conditions for mental propositions. They are indeed about thought, rather than exterior speech, and Aristotle provides here, as a sort of definition, the necessary and sufficient condition whereby a thinking subject would “have the truth” or “be in error.” In concert with the idea—oft repeated, as we have seen—that truth and falsity require an intellectual composition (if the proposition is affirmative) or division (if it is negative), this passage is tantamount to saying that an affirmative mental proposition is true if and only if the intellectual composition exercised there corresponds to a real union in an exterior state of affairs and that a negative mental proposition is true if and only if the intellectual division exercised there corresponds to a real separation in an external state of affairs. Such a theory, however, is not yet compositional. The correspondence required

12. *Ibid.*, III.6.430a27–28.

13. *Ibid.*, III.6.430a28–29; see also 430b28–30: “the thinking of the definition in the sense of what is is for something to be is never in error nor is it the assertion of something concerning something.”

between propositions and states of affairs remains global. No precise role is attributed to the finer semantic relations that would unite the constituents of the proposition to those of the state of affairs.

This problem stems from the fact that Aristotle did not put into place a sufficiently detailed arsenal of theoretical concepts for thinking through the relations of conceptual terms to exterior things, nor even, in a general way, the relations of signifying terms to their extralinguistic referents. The most famous passage in this regard, and the most telling, is that taken from chapter 1 of *Perihermeneias*, in which has often been seen the point of departure, as well as the summary, of all Western semantics:

Now spoken sounds are symbols of affections in the soul, and written marks symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken sounds. But what these are in the first place signs of—affections in the soul—are the same for all; and what these affections are likenesses of—actual things—are also the same. These matters have been discussed in the work on the soul and do not belong to the present subject. (16a3–9)

What we find in these oft-cited lines is, for one thing, that states of the soul—among which must be counted simple concepts as well as mental propositions—are described as likenesses or *images* (*homoiômata*) of exterior things.¹⁴ However, the specific way in which these intellectual concepts are thus “images” of things is not theorized in Aristotle’s work. In any case, the treatise *De anima*, to which *Perihermeneias* refers the reader, hardly takes on the task—at least not in a way that would allow us, even in broad strokes, to discern the proper contribution of simple concepts to the semantic function of mental propositions.

It is noteworthy that for Aristotle the semiotic notions of symbol (*symbolon*) and sign (*sêmeion*), which he uses to designate the relation of spoken words to states of the soul, do not serve to name the relation of states of the soul to exterior things. Neither in *Perihermeneias* nor elsewhere are concepts regarded by him as signs or symbols of exterior reality.¹⁵ It is furthermore striking that the semiotic relations in question do not unite written or spoken words to exterior

14. See, for example, among recent work: Magee 1989, chap. 1; Chiesa 1991b, chap. 3; and Manetti 1993, chap. 5—three studies in which one finds very detailed analysis of the passage in question.

15. This is explained in particular, as is often noted (see, for example, the works mentioned in the previous note), by the sense carried by the terms *symbolon* and *sêmeion* in Aristotle’s day. The sense of *sêmeion*, notably, was still quite distant from that which one today intends by “sign” (or in the Middle Ages by *signum*). The *sêmeion* of something, for the Greeks (Aristotle, among others) is initially the indication that that thing exists (cf. *Prior Analytics* II.27). It is in this sense that speech is *sêmeion* of a state of the soul: it is the (not certain, but probable) indication, the revealer, if you will, of the existence of that mental state in the speaker. The mental state, however, cannot

things: the words are not described in this passage as signs or symbols of their extramental referents. In the end, Aristotle has no specific notion (nor *a fortiori* any interplay of specific notions) whereby to think, in theory, of the reference of simple terms—be they spoken, written, or conceptual—to exterior things that they must nevertheless have the role of representing. Even chapter 2 of *Peri-hermeneias*, dedicated to nouns, passes in silence over the referential relation of nouns to the things named by them.

The Aristotelian notion that comes closest to what would be required here might very well be that which is expressed—particularly in the *Categories*—by the verb *katêgoreisthai*: “to be predicated of,” which indeed seems, in certain of its uses, to invoke a relation of semantic type between general predicates capable of figuring in a proposition and the exterior objects to which these predicates are applied. The notion, nonetheless, is notoriously ambiguous and insufficiently theorized. Even today, it gives Aristotle’s interpreters a great deal of trouble.¹⁶ Aristotle does not always clearly distinguish among: a *logical* relation, uniting the predicate of a proposition to its linguistic subject; an *ontological* relation, between a universal (such as genus or species) and particular entities (such as primary substances); and a *semantic* relation, between a general sign and the exterior things of which it is verified. As made manifest by the whole history of Aristotle interpretation, this well-known ambiguity affects the status of his theory of the categories as well as his position on the question of universals.

Even were one to attempt (following the example of certain contemporary interpreters) a rational reconstruction that isolated—especially from the *Categories* and the *Topics*—a proper semantic notion of predication, this could not by itself provide the entire conceptual apparatus necessary for the elaboration of a compositional theory of the truth-conditions of mental propositions. It would at best concern only general predicates like “animal,” “man,” “white,” or “musical” and would apply neither to singular terms like proper names or demonstratives nor to abstract terms, such as “whiteness,” “number,” or “paternity”—two sorts of terms that, according to chapter 2 of the *Categories*, are not “affirmed of any subject.” Moreover, it would not permit, by itself, differentiation of the semantic contribution of species or genus terms (“man” and “animal”) from those of the predicates Aristotle calls “paronymic” (“white” or “musical”); yet this distinction is absolutely necessary to Aristotelianism, as evinced by the

for the speaker be considered an indication or revealer of the real existence of the state of affairs it represents; this is why it is not a sign (according to this vocabulary).

16. To mention only a few examples, see Moravcsik 1967; Duerlinger 1970; Dancy 1975; Loux 1979; and Brakas 1988. The term *katêgoreisthai* plays a crucial role in the first chapter of the *Categories*, in the entire first part of the *Topics*, and in the *Posterior Analytics* (I.22 especially). It seems to refer, the majority of the time, to a relation between two sorts of “things” (*pragma*).

Stagirite's insistence (in the *Posterior Analytics* as well as in the *Topics*) on differentiating essential from accidental predication. Finally, whatever its interest in other cases, the notion would not be of much use to the semantic analysis of those special cases that would so preoccupy medieval theorists of *suppositio*, such as "man is a species," "'man' is a word of three letters," and "man is the most noble creature."

In the final analysis, if the problem of composition cannot be adequately treated within the framework of original Aristotelianism, neither for interior nor even for exterior discourse, it is because *reference*—that is, the relation that unites a simple term to real things that it is supposed to represent—is hardly thematized therein. Medieval logicians, nourished on many centuries of reflection on the *Categories* and *Perihermenias*, were more sensitive than their mentor to this dimension, and this for the most part explains why, in the fourteenth century, they exploit the theme of mental language in the way they do.

It is time to conclude this first excursion. The most remote sources of the idea of interior discourse we have identified go back to certain texts of Plato, which the medievals could not have known directly, and to a few passages of Aristotle, which the medievals have, by contrast, commented upon at length. It is obviously impossible to affirm with certitude that Plato was the very first to wish to represent interior thought according to the model of spoken discourse; the Greek language itself, by an ambiguity of the word *logos*, seems to invite it. However, it is clear that Plato did not treat this notion as a commonplace: "I am only telling you my idea in all ignorance," says Socrates to Theaetetus, after describing thought as "a talk which the soul has with itself."¹⁷ And at the end of an argument in the *Sophist*, the Stranger concludes that there is truth and falsity in interior thought as well as in discourse. In Aristotle, by contrast, the idea of interior discourse, which appears explicitly in only one passage (*Posterior Analytics* I.10, where the *esô logos* is opposed to the *exô logos*), is the subject of neither hesitation nor justification. It comes rather as something that speaks for itself and will not surprise the reader. And if the commentary tradition was right to see an allusion to the idea of mental *logos* in the short aside in chapter 6 of the *Categories*—where Aristotle, having counted the *logos* among the discrete quantities, clarifies that he is speaking of spoken *logos* only—then this confirms that the conceptual pair, interior/exterior discourse, was accepted by him as a terminological given, to which he admittedly accorded no great importance, but which could be presupposed without risk. Plato, it seems, had been the pioneer of this way of understanding thought according to the model of exterior discourse; however, some years later, when Aristotle worked on the *Organon*, the idea—or in any case the terminology corresponding to it—was already regarded as a commonplace.

17. Plato, *Theaetetus* 189e.

A more attentive examination, however, reveals that, between the two authors, the sense and range of the metaphor of interior discourse shifted considerably. There are several distinct traits one might employ in taking discourse or speech as the model of the cognitive process of deliberation, the dialogue being one. This is what we find in Plato, where thought appears as an interior sequence of questions and responses aimed at making a decision or taking a position, which amounts to opinion or assent. However, interior discursivity takes on a different aspect with Aristotle—namely, that of reasoning. Under the pressure of logic, henceforth articulated as an autonomous discipline, it is the relation between premises and conclusions, more than that between questions and answers, that now serves as a model for representing the optimal functioning of interior cognitive activity. Although the *esô logos* is explicitly invoked only once and in passing in Aristotle's work, this crucial passage, which situates in interior language the privileged locus of syllogism and demonstration, can be brought together with other, no less important, texts from the *Organon*, *De anima*, and *Metaphysics*. These intertextual connections make it clear that the entire dianoetic process is conceived by Aristotle on the model of an argumentative sequence of propositions, each bearing a subject-predicate form.

These two authors show significant affinities with respect to the subject that interests us here. First of all, Aristotle merely drew the necessary consequences of Plato's position; the latter having proposed to make opinions the primary bearers of truth-value, it was thereafter necessary to recognize these as the privileged bearers of logical relations. Both, after all, operated within the framework of the same network of oppositions, in which, on the one hand, are nouns and verbs, affirmations and negations (all notions that Aristotle and Plato associate with the order of exterior speech), and on the other hand, assent and opinion (at the level of mental discourse)—which, being in the soul, have no need of formulation in any language of communication (such as Greek or English). In particular, as neither is willing to transgress this framework in order explicitly to project onto thought the grammatical noun/verb structure, the notion of a grammar of thought remains unexploited. Mental discourse is not yet articulated in a very explicit syntax, nor is it the object of a semantic analysis of the compositional sort. This final point above all was a problem for Aristotle, to the extent that such a semantics seems intrinsically required by the notion of interior discourse as bearer of the logical relations of implication, contrariety, and contradiction. It will, however, take a long time for this theoretical requirement to be fully recognized by Aristotle's successors.

CHAPTER TWO

LOGOS ENDIATHETOS

Of the three authorities medievals most often associated with the idea of interior discourse—namely Augustine, Boethius, and John Damascene—only the last wrote in Greek and, although much later than the other two, offers our investigation a more immediate contact with the terminological tradition of the Greek philosophical schools of the first centuries A.D. Originally from Damascus—as his name indicates—this educated eighth-century Christian (c. 674–749), a monk and preacher well known in Jerusalem (then under Muslim rule), near the end of his life compiled *The Sources of Knowledge*, a history and general synthesis of orthodox Christian theology in the form of a compilation of Greek extracts woven harmoniously together. The third and most imposing part of this work was dedicated to a systematic exposition of theology; under the title *De fide orthodoxa*, it became one of the required references on matters of theoretical theology for Latin scholastics; Thomas Aquinas, for example, often used it.

To be sure, for the most part the medievals did not read Greek, and their access to the terminology employed by Damascene would have been mediated through the Latin translation executed by Burgundio of Pisa around 1150 and revised by Robert Grosseteste at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Relevant to the theme of interior discourse, however, this translation preserves, in a passage from book II, chapter 22, the Greek expression transliterated *endiatheton* modifying the Latin word *sermo*.¹ More than a hundred years later, the great Dominican translator William of Moerbeke, perhaps encouraged by this precedent, will speak, in his Latin version of Ammonius's commentary on the *Perihermeneias*, of an *orationem vocatam endiatheton*.² Through these two passages, one in a major theology text and the other in a logical treatise, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century readers would be put almost directly in the presence of the Greek expression *logos endiathetos* (literally, “discourse laid out in the interior”), which had been an integral part of the common philosophical vocabulary for centuries.

Although for the most part unknown to the medievals, from the first century A.D. to John Damascene in the eighth century there survive a good number of textual appeals to the distinction generally accepted by the Greek philosophi-

1. John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa: Versions of Burgundio and Cerbanus* 36, ed. E. M. Buytaert (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1955), 135.

2. Ammonius, *Commentaire sur le Peri Hermeneias d'Aristote: Traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke*, ed. G. Verbeke (Louvain: Publications universitaires de Louvain, 1961), 42.

cal schools between *logos prophorikos* (spoken discourse) and *logos endiathetos* (interior discourse). In this chapter, I wish to review what we know today on the subject of this properly philosophical tradition in the first three centuries A.D. and to propose, occasionally, some hypotheses of interpretation. I will first examine the delicate question of the role of the Stoics in the history of this terminological pair. I will turn, second, to the most ancient author we know to have made repeated use of it: Philo of Alexandria, in the first century, for whom the philosophical vocabulary came to nourish allegorical exegesis of the sacred texts of Judaism. Third, exploration of the occurrences of our two expressions in the philosophy of the second and third centuries will reveal a concentration of their usage in certain parts of Asia Minor. Fourth, examination of the most significant passages mentioned by John Damascene on the subject of *logos endiathetos* will bring us back—via their sources—to the intellectual milieus of Alexandria, Antioch, Pergama, and especially Ephesus and Smyrna on the Aegean Sea, where Judaism, Christianity, and various Egyptian and Oriental cults continually engaged in fruitful dialogue with Greek—especially Platonic—philosophy, particularly with regard to the notion of *logos*. Many problems remain to be elucidated, and much research must still be done on the appearance and transmission of this terminology. I can offer nothing more here than a review of a given number of texts, assembled by more than a century of scholarship.³ From this review emerges, it seems to me, a general image that, while occasionally sketchy, nevertheless reveals the principal philosophical problems that may have motivated recourse to the pair *logos prophorikos* / *logos endiathetos* through the centuries.

A STOIC NOTION?

Until recently there was quite general consensus among intellectual historians attributing the paternity of this distinction to the Stoic school. However, the recent work of Swiss scholar Curzio Chiesa—continuing that of Max Pohlenz from the 1930s—has shown that the weight of this attribution requires considerable nuancing.⁴ Through a systematic reexamination of the relevant sources, Chiesa concludes that the distinction must have originally been proposed within the framework of an important debate between Stoics and Platonists over the rationality of animals, which arose between the third and first centuries B.C. The state of the texts does not today permit us to determine with

3. In particular: Heinze 1872; Aall 1896; Lebreton 1906; Casey 1924; Kelber 1958; Mühl 1962; and Couloubaritsis 1984; as well as the works mentioned in the following note.

4. Pohlenz 1939, 1965; Chiesa 1991a, 1992. Some other scholars, at other times, have equally cast doubt on the Stoic origin of the distinction: Ebbesen (1980, 130), for example, finds a Platonic origin more probable.

certainty which school was the first to use it, but that question is of minor importance; the terminological distinction, regardless of who proposed it, was accepted by all protagonists and from that point on spread into the general vocabulary of philosophy to become, in the first centuries A.D., a commonplace, entirely neutral with respect to philosophical allegiance.

To establish this conclusion, Chiesa recalls that the attribution of the distinction to the Stoics rests on only two indirect and late sources—Sextus Empiricus (late second to early third century) and Porphyry (c. 232–305)—and invites us to review these two sources closely. The principal text of Sextus that is relevant here is from *Adversus mathematicos* 8, 275–76:

But the dogmatists . . . assert that Man does not differ in respect of uttered reason [*logos prophorikos*] from the irrational animals (for crows and parrots and jays utter articulate sounds), but in respect of internal reason [*logos endiathetos*]; nor [does he differ] in respect of the merely simple impression [*phantasia*] (for the animals, too, receive impressions), but in respect of the transitive and constructive impression. Hence, since he has a conception of logical sequence, he immediately grasps also the notion of sign because of the sequence; for in fact the sign in itself is of this form—“if this, then this.” Therefore the existence of sign follows from the nature and structure of Man.⁵

Porphyry in turn writes, some decades later, in his treatise *On Abstinence* (dedicated to the defense of vegetarianism):

According to the Stoics there are two kinds of *logos*, the internal [*endiathetos*] and the expressive [*prophorikos*], and moreover there is correct and faulty *logos*. So it is proper to state exactly which of these animals lack. Is it only correct *logos*, and not *logos* altogether? Or is it *logos* in all respects, both the internal [*esô*] and that which proceeds to the outside [*exô*]? They appear to predicate complete deprivation of *logos*, not just of correct *logos*, for in the latter case even animals would be not irrational [*aloga*] but rational [*logika*]. . . .

Now since there are two kinds of *logos*, one in expression [*prophora*] and one in disposition [*diathesis*], let us begin with expressive *logos*, *logos* organised by voice. If expressive *logos* is voice signifying with the tongue that which is experienced internally and in the soul . . . what in this is absent from those animals that speak?⁶

5. Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos* 8.275–76 (English translation: *Against the Logicians*, ed. and trans. R. G. Bury [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1933], 383).

6. Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Killing Animals* III.2–3, trans. G. Clark (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 80–81.

The theoretical contexts of these two passages are directly linked; the question at stake is whether and how *logos* distinguishes human beings from animals. Everything indicates that this is the context in which the distinction between the two *logoi* first appeared as philosophically relevant. And this appears to be confirmed by the work of Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 B.C.–50 A.D.), who is the most ancient direct witness regularly to employ the pair in question and who makes the most intensive use of it in his *Alexander*—dedicated entirely, as it happens, to the problem of the *logos* of beasts. The most probable hypothesis today, given the collection of available texts, seems to be the one advanced in 1939 by Pohlenz, according to which this terminology was introduced in the debate over animals around the time that Carneades of Cyrene was the head of the Academy, which is to say, around the middle of the second century B.C.

Chiesa accepts the traditional identification of Sextus's *dogmatikoi*, in this particular context with the Stoics, but remarks that neither the texts of Sextus—even thus interpreted—nor those of Porphyry require of the Stoics any more than an *acceptance* of the distinction between *logos prophorikos* and *logos endiathetos*. The terms, notably in Philo and Porphyry, play the role of an organizing principle for the discussion, allowing one to isolate, on one hand, arguments about the *logos prophorikos* of animals and, on the other hand and more importantly, arguments about who exhibits *logos endiathetos*. Everything indicates that this way of structuring the comparison between man and animal, found also in Sextus Empiricus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (I. 65–77), was admitted by the different participants in the debate.

Indeed, one could go a bit further than Chiesa and dispute the traditional reading that the *dogmatikoi*, in the aforementioned extract from *Adversus mathematicos*, are limited only to the Stoics. This is not the normal usage of Sextus, for whom the *dogmatikoi*, taken together, are usually all of the nonskeptical philosophers, be they Stoics, Epicureans, Peripatetics, or even sometimes Platonists; I see no decisive reason to limit the extension of the term in the passage that concerns us. It is true that in these same lines Sextus uses a way of speaking that is connected to that of the Stoics, but they are certainly not his only targets. Far from it: the problem he discusses concerns the mode of existence of what he calls the “sign” (*sêmeion*), which, following the Greek tradition in general, here corresponds to *index*—namely, to a state of affairs that, *if it is realized*, reveals the existence of another state of affairs: “the sign serves to reveal [*enkaluptikon*] the thing signified, and the thing signified is revealed by the sign.”⁷ From the point of view of logic, this can be represented by the

7. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* 8.273 (Bury trans., 381). On this Greek notion of the sign as index or symptom, see especially Manetti (1993), who himself cites a number of other works on this subject. It is again the same notion, transposed into Latin, that one finds, for example, in the *De signis* of Cicero, or in that of Quintilian. (See also chap. 1, n. 15 in the present book.) Sextus Empiricus, in his *Outlines* (II.100–101), distinguishes

antecedent of a conditional of the form “if p , then q ”: to say that smoke is the sign of fire is to posit the conditional statement “if there is smoke, then there is fire.” The problem that concerns Sextus in these pages is how to know what sort of existence can legitimately be attributed to hypothetical entities of this type. Some, he says, suppose that the sign is something sensible, others that it is a pure intelligible, and yet others that the sign exists neither corporeally nor incorporeally, but in a third way. And it is to these three groups together that he opposes the radical skeptical thesis according to which the sign does not exist at all. The lines that immediately precede those already cited are clear on this subject:

But if the sign is neither sensible, as we have shown, nor intelligible, as we have established, and besides these there is no third [possibility], one must declare that no sign exists. But the Dogmatists remain muzzled as regards each of these objections, and by way of establishing the opposite they assert that Man does not differ in respect of uttered reason from the irrational animals.⁸

It seems natural to me, in this context, to assign to the term *dogmatikoi* its wider extension and consider that it applies to all nonskeptical philosophers, all those (certainly comprising more than just the Stoics) who attribute to the sign some objective mode of existence.

It is true that, strictly speaking, the position Sextus here attributes to the “dogmatists”—namely, that man differs from animal by *logos endiathetos* and not by *logos prophorikos*—was not unanimously held, since some—such as the Alexander discussed by Philo and, later, Porphyry—also wish to recognize a form of interior discourse for animals. However, it is likewise necessary to note that the position Sextus attributed to the *dogmatikoi* does not correspond to that of the Stoics either, which is, according to Porphyry, that animals, despite appearances in certain cases, do not even possess *logos prophorikos*. It seems to me most probable that Sextus is thinking here of the common definition of human beings as rational (*logikon*) animals, accepted by a great number of philosophers of diverse allegiances (allowing for nuances here and there) and according to which the specific *difference* of man is his possession of a form of *logos*.⁹ If such is the case, then it is not specifically to the Stoics that Sextus attributes our distinction. That he associates it more directly with the name of

the commemorative sign, which recalls a past state of affairs, and the revealing sign, which, by its nature, indicates the actual existence of another state of affairs.

8. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 8.275 (Bury trans., 383).

9. Sorabji (1993, chaps. 1 and 2) invokes on this topic the Peripatetics and Epicureans in addition to the Stoics. Even Plato, in fact, refuses to attribute *logos* to animals (cf. *Laws* 963e).

their school in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (I. 65) shows only, as Chiesa says, that he counts them among those who use it.¹⁰

That said, from the testimonies we have—in particular those of Sextus—it is still possible to draw certain significant indications of the proper Stoic interpretation of this *logos endiathetos* that distinguishes human from animal. According to Sextus, the dogmatists in general (thus including the Stoics) identified it with the “discursive and synthetic impression” (*metabatikê kai sunthetikê phantasia*) by which are apprehended in the soul semiotic relations of the form “if *p*, then *q*.” In this view, the *logos endiathetos* was seen by all the philosophers as something psychological, and, furthermore, it was directly associated with the mental capacity of *deliberating* in a sequential manner—what we could call “discursive thought.”¹¹ These two features—although in somewhat different vocabulary—correspond well enough to those found in Aristotle, and quite probably they would also be appropriate for the Platonists and even for those Epicureans Sextus could have known. Nonetheless, the Stoics, as is known, had invoked as a distinctive feature of their logico-semantic theories a type of *nonpsychological* (and nonmaterial) entity that they called the *lekta*, to which they entrusted the trifold role of being privileged bearers of truth-values, contents of cognitive states, and significates of oral statements.¹² Whatever the exact identity of such Stoics (which remains a mystery), those among them who agreed to speak of a *logos endiathetos* of a psychological nature thus had to distinguish it clearly from the *lekton* and consequently to identify it with the sequence of psychological states or processes in which the soul apprehends those abstract contents that are the *lekta*.

10. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I.65–66, ed. and trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1939), 38–41: “Next let us proceed to the reasoning faculty [*logos*]. Of reason one kind is internal, implanted in the soul, the other externally expressed. Let us consider first the internal reason. Now according to those Dogmatists who are, at present, our chief opponents—I mean the Stoics—internal reason is supposed to be occupied with the following matters: the choice of things congenial and the avoidance of things alien; the knowledge of the arts contributing thereto; and the apprehension of the virtues pertaining to one’s proper nature and of those relating to the passions.”

11. The passage of the *Outlines* cited in the preceding note associates the Stoic *logos endiathetos* most especially with the order of *practical* deliberation. However, this insistence is undoubtedly a function of Sextus’s very precise objective here: to show that animals—especially dogs—also display, in a certain measure, a *logos endiathetos*. This restrictive context explains why here he only retains, from the larger conception that he invokes in the *Adversus mathematicos*, the most specifically pertinent elements for the discussion at hand.

12. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 8.11–12 (Bury trans., 244–45). On the Stoic *lekton*, see among others: Bréhier 1962; Watson 1966; Long 1971; Frede 1994.

If this is correct, then it is at the level of the *lekton* rather than of interior discourse that we must first pose to the Stoics the problem of semantic composition, raised in the preceding chapter with respect to Aristotle: how are the truth-conditions of propositions a function of the properties of their constituents? Now, from the presentation given by Sextus, we find that the Stoic school had elaborated a general theory of the truth-conditions for different kinds of *lekta*, simple or composite. Composite propositions—those, notably, that possess the canonical form “if *p*, then *q*”—are treated here as truth-functions of simple propositions. General propositions were summarily reduced to singular propositions called *definite*, which are of the form “this is *F*”; and, regarding the latter, we have what must be considered the most ancient compositional theory known of truth-conditions for a given category of propositions. Thus Sextus writes:

Now as to this definite proposition “This man is sitting” or “This man is walking,” they declare that it is true when the thing predicated [*katêgorêma*], such as “sitting” or “walking,” belongs to [*sumbebêkê*] the object indicated [*hupo ten dextrin*].¹³

To be sure, this is still thin compared with what one finds in medieval logicians; nevertheless, this represents a very clear step beyond Aristotle in the construction of a general semantics on a compositional basis: the relation of terms to things—“belonging to,” in the case of the predicate, and designation (*deixis*), in the case of the demonstrative subject—now plays the foundational role for the theory of truth.

This Stoic semantics of truth-conditions is not initially presented primarily as a theory of *logos endiathetos*: the propositions at issue are the *lekta*, which is to say, the possible *contents* of interior discourse, and not this discourse itself. But this does not prevent, by extension, the theory of logical form from ruling interior deliberation. This latter would indeed surely present, to the eyes of the Stoics, a sequential structure capable of adopting, or mimicking, in one way or another, the logical form of the *lekta*, and of then transmitting it to spoken statements. The *lekton*, after all, only exists for them as the objective correlate of a “rational impression” (*logikê phantasia*) in the soul,¹⁴ and in this framework, everything invites us to see the succession of these impressions in a thinking subject—that is, the *logos endiathetos*—as a structured sequence of mental states or movements of the soul, reproducing somehow on the psychological

13. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 8.100 (Bury trans., 289).

14. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.63, trans. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1972), 173: “By verbal expression [*lekton*] they [the Stoics] mean that of which the content corresponds to some rational presentation [*logikê phantasia*].” On this notion of rational presentation or impression, see especially Imbert 1978.

level the logical form of the *lekta* thus apprehended and thereby preparing the uttering of linguistic units similarly structured.

One question remains: does the sequence of psychological impressions that would thus constitute for them the *logos endiathetos* require, for the Stoics, a given language of communication, or is their interior discourse, like that of Aristotle, “the same for all” and composed of prelinguistic concepts? Chiesa favors the first interpretation, but his argument on this point is indirect and not very convincing.¹⁵ In reality we have no direct way to know middle Stoicism’s true position on this subject; however, as we shall see in the sections and chapters that follow (and as we have begun to see in the preceding chapter), the available texts favor, in general and for Greek philosophy as a whole, an interpretation of interior discourse as independent of languages of communication and as foundational with respect to them. It would thus be surprising if the Stoics had differed on this point. If, as Chiesa has shown, the pair *logos endiathetos* / *logos prophorikos* belonged to the common vocabulary of the schools and, in particular, supplied an organizing principle for the debate over the rationality of animals, there would need to be a minimal consensus among the different parties concerning its range.

From this whole discussion, we may conclude that certain Stoics (whose names we do not know) must have advanced, or at least accepted, the distinction between two *logoi*, probably within the framework of a debate with Platonists in the last centuries B.C. They consequently needed to identify interior discourse in their system with a series of—probably prelinguistic—impressions produced in the deliberating soul by the apprehension or production of *lekta*, a type of abstract content for which they laid out—probably since Chrysippus—an impressive outline of a semantic theory possessing a compositional basis and founded upon referential relations between simple terms and exterior things.

PHILO AND ALLEGORICAL EXEGESIS

The most ancient direct occurrences of the expression *logos endiathetos* known today date from the age of Christ. There are, on the one hand, those relatively numerous occurrences found scattered throughout the work of Philo of Alexandria, and, on the other hand, a single, nearly contemporaneous (or even slightly earlier) mention in the work of someone named Heraclitus. Strikingly, the two authors are allegorists. This reveals from the start the primary context of the appearance, in the surviving texts, of the distinction between *logos prophorikos* and *logos endiathetos* in the first century A.D. Philo, a respected and prolific intellectual from the Alexandrian Jewish community around the years 30 and 40, dedicated nearly all his work to the systematic exegesis of the books of the Bible. As for this Heraclitus, we know little; however, the one

15. Chiesa 1991a, 320.

work attributed to him, the *Allegories of Homer*—of which almost the entire text survives—consists largely of a mosaic of rather naturalizing interpretations of Homeric characters and episodes. The duality of the god Hermes in the *Odyssey* is here explained by saying that “the *logos* is double: interior discourse [*logos endiathetos*], as the philosophers say, and uttered discourse [*logos prophorikos*].”¹⁶

To this apparent coincidence are added the following facts:

After Heraclitus and Philo, our next most ancient witness for *logos endiathetos* is Plutarch—toward the end of the first century—who also associates it with the myth of Hermes, supposed to have given *logos endiathetos* to men.¹⁷

Another author of the first century, himself a Stoic—Cornutus, teacher of the Latin poet Persius and of Lucan—calls Hermes the *logos prophorikos* in his *Compendium of Greek Theology*, a manual of allegorical interpretations of mythology for use by youths.¹⁸

We also have, probably from this period, a fragment of an anonymous commentary on the *Theogony* of Hesiod, in which this time Isis is identified with the *logos prophorikos*.¹⁹

This collection of sources—the only ones from the first century A.D. in which I have found the *endiathetos/prophorikos* coupling—confirms that the distinction between the two *logoi* was already well rooted in the schools: Heraclitus attributes it to the “philosophers”; Philo, certainly, borrows it from someone else; and Plutarch even sees there “a stale commonplace.” All this accords with the hypotheses of Pohlenz and Chiesa invoked in the preceding section.

Bringing together these diverse texts, however, reveals a new tendency—a new venture, even—in the use of our terminological pair: it is henceforth found integrated with the current vocabulary of allegorical exegesis, which relates it to Homer, Hesiod, the Greek or Egyptian myths, and even to the Bible. It was

16. Heraclitus, *Allegories of Homer*, 72 (*Allégories d'Homère*, ed. and [French] trans. F. Buffière [Paris: Société d'Édition “Les Belles Lettres,” 1962], 78–79). Even though the hypothesis has sometimes been advanced, we have no reason to think that this Heraclitus was a Stoic; see on this issue the introduction in Buffière 1962, xxxviii–xxxix, as well as in Buffière 1956, 67–70.

17. Cf. Plutarch, *Moralia* 777B = *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum* 2; Greek text and English trans. H. N. Fowler (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1927), 10:35.

18. Cornutus, *Theologiae graecae compendium*, ed. C. Lang (Leipzig: Teubner, 1881), chap. 16, 24–25.

19. *Scholia vetera in Hesiodi Theogoniam*, ed. L. di Gregorio (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1975), 266:53. These *Scholia*, quite late, seem to be derived from an (Alexandrian?) commentary on the *Theogony* of Hesiod, originally written around the first century A.D.; on this subject see the introduction to the edition of the text by H. L. M. Flach, in *Glossen und Scholien zur Hesiodischen Theogonie* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1876).

one of the grand intellectual exercises of this time to find philosophical—that is to say, physical, psychological, moral, or sometimes metaphysical—significance in all these traditional literary and religious narratives, coming from Greece or the Orient, that circulated in the Roman Empire. The Stoics worked at this, as is clear in Cornutus, with the (somewhat subversive) intention of harmonizing these diverse mythologies at the more abstract level of philosophy and morality.²⁰ However, they were not alone: far from it. Heraclitus, Philo, and Plutarch, for example, were also on a constant search for the “allegorical sense” of narrative texts, a sense that they themselves often explain with the aid of vocabulary of philosophical origin, and in which the term *logos* occupies pride of place. This era was the stage of a genuine hermeneutical conflict, wherein naturalizing interpretations of narratives and myths, such as those of the Stoics, clashed with more spiritual readings favored especially by the Platonists.²¹ Commonly accepted in philosophical circles, the terminology of the two *logoi* was able to play a significant role in this, since it directly associates the key term *logos* with the opposition of interior and exterior that is so crucial for hermeneutics.²²

The case of Philo of Alexandria is especially interesting in this regard. The terms that occupy us are common for him.²³ They are sometimes used in relation to a metaphysico-religious doctrine of the Word of God and particularly appear in the two sorts of contexts that we have so far identified as pertinent to our history: first, the debate over animals, and second, allegorical exegesis in terms of interior and exterior.

The question of animal *logos* is the subject of an entire treatise by Philo, the *Alexander* (or *De animalibus*). It is a dialogue with a philosophical character

20. On Stoic exegesis, see especially Le Boulluec 1975.

21. Plutarch, who is of Platonic allegiance, firmly denounced the tendency of some—he names the Stoic Cleanthes—to promote too exclusively naturalistic interpretations of religious narratives; see *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride* 64–68, edited with an introduction, translation, and commentary by J. Gwyn Griffiths (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1970), 219–27.

22. Grondin finds in the ascent from *logos prophorikos* to *logos endiathetos* the foundational act of the entire history of hermeneutics going back to Philo of Alexandria or even earlier: “In interpretation and comprehension, he writes, the aim is always this interior *logos*” (Grondin 1993, 15).

23. The most important passages in this regard are the following: Philo of Alexandria, *De Abrahamo* 83; *De specialibus legibus* IV.69; *De vita Mosis* II.127–29; *De fuga inventione* 90–92; *De migratione* 78–80—to which must be added some texts whose original Greek we no longer have, but whose Armenian translations, made between the sixth and eighth centuries, clearly preserve the trace of the distinction that concerns us: Philo, *Alexander*, §12.16.73 and 98; *Quaestiones in Exodum* II.11–116; and *Quaestiones in Genesim* V.96 and 120. I use here the edition and French translation made under the direction of R. Arnaldy, C. Mondésert, and J. Pouilloux, *Les Œuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie*, 37 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1961–92) (English translation: Philo, *The Works of Philo Judaeus*, vols. 1–4, trans. C. D. Yonge [London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855]).

wherein the author, contrary to his usual practice, neither invokes any biblical passage nor proposes any allegorizing interpretation. Its structure is special: one of the characters begins by reading *in extenso* a treatise of a certain Alexander dedicated to the defense of the rationality of animals, which Philo, in the second place, refutes quite quickly. For each of the two parties, the opposition of interior and exterior *logos* serves to order the discussion. Alexander is first concerned to show, in a few paragraphs (§§13–15), that certain animals, such as parrots, are capable of an articulated audible discourse, and then he insists, at much greater length, on the necessity of attributing to animals in general a form—admittedly imperfect—of interior discourse (§§16–71). Philo, in his response, adopts the same division of the debate, but in inverse order, and denies animals any type of reason (or discourse), whether mental (§§77–97) or uttered (§§98–100).

In these pages, interior discourse (certainly *logos endiathetos* in the original Greek, today lost) is identified with discursive thought and reasoning. To show that animals possess it, Alexander emphasizes, with a number of examples, their capacities for learning as well as their aptitude for representing future situations and on this basis devising strategies and plans of action, often conceived with discernment and sometimes even with deceit. In his response, Philo adopts precisely the same notion of interior discourse, questioning only whether the examples invoked by his adversary actually prove the presence of mental *deliberation* in animals. The two protagonists moreover agree in associating *logos endiathetos* with moral responsibility: Alexander wishes to recognize in animals the virtues and vices “of a reasonable soul” (such as temperance and intemperance, justice and injustice), while Philo refuses them any imputation of the ethical order. Interior discourse, in the *Alexander*, is essentially the voluntary mental activity of morally responsible rational deliberation. There is nothing, in either Alexander’s or Philo’s response, to indicate that its existence depends on a language of communication.

This concept corresponds well with that of the “discursive and synthesizing impression” that Sextus, a century and a half later, will attribute—also under the name *logos endiathetos*—to dogmatists in general. From where in particular Philo drew this concept it is difficult to say with precision. We know that certain of his remote sources are the same as those of Plutarch’s *De sollertia animalium* and Porphyry’s treatise *On Abstinence* and probably go up to the period of the debate in the second and first centuries B.C., alluded to on a few occasions.²⁴ Abraham Terian, the French translator of the *Alexander*, advances the interesting hypothesis that the Syrian philosopher Posidonius of Apamea (c. 135–50 B.C.), who was the Stoic Panetios’s student in Athens and who himself became famous (although his works are today lost), is here “the principal

24. See on this subject the introduction by A. Terian to Philo, *Alexander: Les Œuvres de Philon* (Paris: Cerf, 1988), esp. 36:72–75.

authority on whom Philo relies.”²⁵ It is true that the radical position defended by the Jewish master in the debate is exactly that which Porphyry associates with the Stoics; however, we should not forget that the terminology in Philo’s own text is first introduced, under the name of Alexander, in exposition of the opposing position—namely, that of the Academics and Pythagoreans (which Porphyry will also defend at the end of the third century, with similar arguments): animals are equipped with the two *logoi*, but in an imperfect form. Whatever the exact sources, this treatise of Philo on animals puts us in (almost direct) contact with what was probably the original argumentative context of the distinction in question.

Philo, furthermore, regularly resorts to the pair *endiathetos/prophorikos* in his other writings on the allegorical interpretation of certain biblical passages. Inspired by philosophical theories of the soul, throughout his work he seeks to distill from the stories of sacred scripture a kind of human psychology with a moral tone, with the accent most often on the asymmetrical opposition of interior and exterior. It is understandable, in this framework, that the terminology that interests us could appear useful on occasions. For example, he employs it—on repeated occasions—for the interpretation of the pectoral, furnished with precious stones, that the high priest wears in a story from Exodus. This piece of clothing is called *logeion* in Greek, and it is double, according to Philo, precisely “because it represents the two sorts of reasons [*logoi*]: the one having the force of a source, which is found in the soul, and the other being produced from the outside, the uttered [speech].”²⁶ In the same way, more than once he explains that the name of Abraham, when written in three syllables, means “the elect father of sound,” and thus in a way refers, under a symbolic mode, to discursive interior thought (*logos endiathetos* or *dianoia*, depending on the passage) that is, in effect, “the father of uttered discourse.”²⁷ These two examples—which are the most salient in the work of Philo, as each recurs several times—suffice to show what I mean: the biblical text, when one knows how to read it, reveals for him the deep structure of the human soul and the (normative) hierarchy of its functions, with preeminence systematically going to interiority, always seen in relation to exterior manifestations as the source, the parent, or the elder.²⁸

25. Ibid., 36:75.

26. Philo, *Quaestiones in Exodum* II.111; see also *Quaestiones in Exodum* II.116; *De vita Mosis* II.127–29; and *De specialibus legibus* IV.69.

27. Philo, *De Abrahamo* 83; see also *De mutatione nominum* 69 and *Quaestiones in Genesim* III.43.

28. See also, for other significant examples, Philo, *De migratione* (78–80) and *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat* (126–31)—where Moses, the elder brother, and Aaron, the younger brother, are respectively interpreted as symbols of *dianoia* and *logos prophorikos*—as well as *Quaestiones in Genesim* V.120: “the uttered word in relation to the interior word has the status of a tender youth in relation to a adult man.”

This moralizing psychology is connected to a metaphysics with a theological character, in which the Alexandrian, here again, exploits the Greek terminology of *logos* to render certain key ideas of the Judaic tradition.²⁹ It is in this way that he regularly refers to *Logos* as a cosmological creator—the “first-born of God”—who in his eyes is nothing other than the divine Word itself.³⁰ A famous passage from the *De vita Mosis* (II.127)—concerned, again, with the pectoral worn by the high priest—makes explicit the parallel between the duality of human discourse and that of the *Logos* of God in the universe:

And this logeum [the pectoral] is described as double with great correctness; for reason [*logos*] is double, both in the universe and also in the nature of mankind, in the universe there is that reason which is conversant about incorporeal species which are like patterns as it were, from which that world which is perceptible only by the intellect [*noëtos kosmos*] was made, and also that which is concerned with the visible objects of sight, which are copies and imitations of those species above mentioned, of which the world which is perceptible by the outward senses was made.

Again, in man there is one reason which is kept back [*endiathetos*], and another which finds vent in utterance [*prophorikos*]: and the one is, as it were a spring, and the other (that which is uttered) flows from it; and the place of the one is the dominant part [*to hêgemonikon*], that is, in the mind; but the place of the one which finds vent in utterance is the tongue, and the mouth, and all the rest of the organs of the voice.³¹

Here the Platonic inspiration is very clear. The Word of God, under the first form—which is the equivalent of *logos endiathetos* in the human being—is directly identified with the transcendent order of intelligible paradigms, while the derived or manifested form—which corresponds to human *logos prophorikos*—is the immanent order of sensible creation. The duality of human discourse mimics that much more fundamental order of Reason in the universe, without threatening the unicity of God, since these diverse *logoi* are never, for Philo, anything but distinct and derived hypostases. Greek, especially Platonic, philosophy thus furnishes Jewish monotheism with a sophisticated conceptual apparatus, which permits the harmonizing, in allegorical interpretation of sacred scripture, of theology, metaphysics, and psychology.

29. On the relation of Philo to the Judaic tradition, see especially Borgen 1965. Goulet (1986), for his part, tries to show that Philo makes great use of a long philosophical commentary on the Bible, today lost and possibly coming from the Jewish community of the Therapists of Alexandria, of whose monastic life Philo wrote in his *De vita contemplativa*.

30. On the *Logos* of God in Philo, see also the following seminal studies: Soulier 1876; Aall 1896; and Lebreton 1906. Likewise, more recently: Wolfson 1948; Bréhier 1950; Mühl 1962; Farandos 1976; and Couloubaritsis, 1984.

31. Philo, *On the Life of Moses*, books III, XIII (Yonge trans., 3:100).

One thing appears clear: this interior discourse regularly invoked by Philo is not, in the human soul, the mere mental reproduction of the words of a given language, and a grammatical analysis into nouns and verbs—appropriate only for uttered speech—hardly suits it. In his *Quaestiones in Genesim*, for example, our author writes that each of the two discourses “has one voice *which is proper to it*” (V.96, italics mine): “that which we utter has that which expresses itself by nouns and verbs; while that which is interior has what is expressed by thinking in intellective examination”³² The *logos endiathetos* is identified with *dianoia*,³³ which is to say with the deliberative process directly produced by the “hegemonic” intellect, alone with itself. It does not depend on any human conventions, nor does it give rise (as will the *oratio mentalis* of William of Ockham much later) to grammatical structure. *Dianoia*, writes Philo, is an “invisible locus” where thoughts are conserved until the voice ardently masters them “in its desire to make them known.”³⁴ It is like a “virgin metal” upon which language, for the purposes of human communication, “impresses the design of verbs and nouns.”³⁵

Even put to the service of biblical exegesis and attached to a metaphysics of *Logos* (of whose essentially religious character there is no doubt), the distinction between interior and exterior discourse in Philo of Alexandria corresponds to what it had become standard for the philosophers to distinguish: on the one hand, a deliberative thought in the soul, independent of languages of communication and grammatical categories; and on the other hand, audible speech, which is derived from it and to which alone is applied the crucial division of nouns and verbs. Between its two contexts of emergence—that of the debate over animals and that of exegesis—the notion of *logos endiathetos* hardly differs: it is this same idea that Philo borrows—perhaps through intermediary persons—from Greek philosophy, whether Platonic or Stoic.

FROM PLUTARCH TO PLOTINUS

After Heraclitus and Philo, our most ancient source for the distinction between the two *logoi* is the Platonist Plutarch of Chaeronea (c. 50–125), who mentions

32. I follow the Latin version established by J.-B. Aucher in 1826 from the Armenian text (republished in the volume of the Éditions du Cerf), which reveals, in this particular case, the precise allure of the original Greek, now lost. The division of noun (*onoma*) and verb (*rhêma*) is equally associated properly with the voice “which is addressed to hearing” in the *De migratione* (48).

33. This is clear especially from the fact that the expression *logos prophorikos* is indifferently opposed sometimes to *logos endiathetos* and sometimes to *dianoia* in the same kinds of contexts. One could compare on this subject the different sources cited in n. 27, concerning the interpretation of the name of Abraham. In Philo, *De fuga et inventione* (92), the *logos prophorikos* is opposed, this time, to *logos kata dianoian*.

34. Philo, *Quod deterius* 128–29.

35. Philo, *De migratione* 79.

it in passing as an already venerable commonplace.³⁶ In subsequent decades, to which we now turn our attention, the philosophical texts available to us provide only a few occurrences of the terminology in question; all the same, everything indicates that it was still in current usage in the schools and that in the analysis of cognitive functions, so very popular in that age, the terminology would even play a renewed role. We see here confirmed the intimate connection between interior discourse and *dianoia* (already put into place by Plato), and its privileged relationship to logical operations (more directly emphasized by Aristotle).

Let us consider the explicit mentions of the expression *logos endiathetos* itself. If we leave aside the doxographic developments of Sextus Empiricus—of which we have already spoken—and the more theological uses made of it by the church fathers Irenaeus of Lyon and Theophilus of Antioch—to which we will have occasion to turn in the next chapter—I know of only five authors who used the expression between Plutarch and Porphyry: Theon of Smyrna, Ptolemy, the rhetorician Hermogenes, Galen, and the Platonist Albinos. Still, it should be noted that the only still extant occurrence from this last author seems not very significant in its content: in his very short “Prologue” to the work of Plato, undertaking to define the genre of dialogue itself, Albinos characterizes it as a “discourse [*logos*] composed of questions and answers on political and philosophical subjects”; “but,” he immediately adds, “since discourse is either immanent [*endiathetos*] or uttered [*prophorikos*], we understand that it concerns uttered discourse.”³⁷ The purpose of the reference to *logos endiathetos* here is only to dismiss it from the discussion in progress: no positive indication of it is given. Nor will the case of Hermogenes occupy us; unconnected to the philosophical tradition, he makes the expression that interests us a technical term of rhetoric: a *logos endiathetos*, for him, is an oral sequence presenting the appearance of spontaneity and sincerity, as in an exclamation of indignation for example.³⁸ This is a usage that we do not find elsewhere in our corpus.³⁹

36. Plutarch, *Moralia* 777B. The same author, in his *De sollertia animalium* (19.973A), attributes to certain birds the *logos prophorikos* (Plutarch's *Moralia* XII, ed. and trans. H. Cherniss and W. C. Heinbold [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1957], 400).

37. Albinos, *Eisagôgê eis tous Platônos dialogous*, in *Platonis Dialogi*, ed. C. F. Hermann (Leipzig: Teubner, 1892), 6:147. And for a French translation: R. Le Corre, “Le Prologue d'Albinus,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 146 (1956): 33.

38. Hermogenes, *Peri ideôn logou* II.7, ed. H. Rabe, in *Hermogenes opera* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1969), 352–63. The passage, abundantly illustrated with examples, contains no less than thirty occurrences of the term *endiathetos*. Patillon (1988) translates Hermogenes's *logos endiathetos* as “spontaneous discourse” (“discours spontané,” 112) or “discourse coming from the heart” (“discours . . . venu du coeur,” 265).

39. There is indeed mention of the *logos endiathetos* in some much later Greek rhetorical treatises (between the sixth and eleventh centuries), but in the passages I

In Galen, we find this expression only in isolated instances: one, notably, at the very beginning of his *Protreptikos*, again in relation to the old question of the *logos* of beasts,⁴⁰ and still another in his commentary on Hippocrates's *De medici officina*. The much more revealing context of this latter merits our attention. Having invoked that cognitive faculty—*gnomê* or *dianoia*—"which men also commonly call mind [*noûs*], thought [*phrena*] or reason [*logos*]," Galen immediately undertakes to explain the sense of this latter term:

But since there is also a *logos* amongst things of the voice, philosophers, to indicate what comes in first place, call it *endiathetos*; and it is by this *logos* that we recognize consequences and oppositions, such as, notably, division, composition, analysis, demonstration, and all things of this sort.⁴¹

Certain things about these lines strike us. First, the terminology of *logos endiathetos* is attributed, as in Heraclitus and Sextus, to philosophers in general. This suggests that it was still in current usage in the philosophical schools around the mid-second century and that it was considered doctrinally neutral. Next, interior discourse is explicitly identified here with *dianoia*—as we have already found in Plato, as well as Philo—but more especially still with the cognitive recognition of logical connections of all kinds, which shows that our author had integrated the lesson of Aristotle—for whom, we recall, interior discourse (*esô logos* in his case) was first and foremost the locus of the mental treatment of logical relations.

As for Theon of Smyrna, the sole relevant passage of his is a very short chapter from his *Exposition of Mathematical Knowledge Useful for Reading Plato*, in which he enumerates the many senses of the word *logos* in philosophy. Here are the most significant lines for our purposes:

The word *logos* is taken in several senses by the Peripatetics: there is the *logos* emitted by the voice which the most recent authors call *prophorikos*; there is that which is interior [*endiathetos*] and which is localized in thought [*dianoia*] with neither speech nor voice; and there is also the relation of proportion [*analogia*]. . . .

For the Platonists, the word *logos* has four senses: it designates thought [*dianoia*] without speech, the discourse which flows in the voice from

have been able to examine the expression is taken in the philosophical sense of "mental discourse" rather than in Hermogenes's sense (see chap. 4, n. 43).

40. Cf. Galen, *Protreptici quae supersunt* I.1, ed. G. Kaibel (Berlin: Weidmann, 1963), 1: "Without doubt, in fact, even though they do not share with us the *logos* which is in the voice, which is called *prophorikos*, they nevertheless have that which is in the soul, which we call *endiathetos*, some more and others less."

41. Galen, *In Hippocratis De medici officina commentariorum* I.3, ed. D. C. G. Kühn, in *Opera omnia* (Leipzig: 1830), 18B:649–50.

thought, the explication of the elements of the universe, and, lastly, the relation of proportion.⁴²

The passage is admittedly not very explicit, but the idea of a mental discourse without speech, directly associated with *dianoia*, is here clearly attributed to the Peripatetics and the Platonists. The expression *logos prophorikos* (and this probably applies to the expression *logos endiathetos* as well, although Theon's language is rather ambiguous on this point) is presented as a terminological contribution of "more recent authors [*neôteroi*]," which in the end only rehearses an old idea of Aristotle and his school.⁴³

More interesting still, the little treatise *Peri kritêrion kai hêgemonikon*, of the astronomer Claudius Ptolemy (c. 90–170), makes repeated use of *logos endiathetos* within the framework of an epistemological discussion of the mental criterion of truth.⁴⁴ The author here recognizes five external or internal components of the act of judging: the thing that is; truth; sensible perception; intellect (*noûs*); and, finally, *logos*—this last corresponding to thought proper, formed by the intellect within itself:

Amongst those things which concern the rational faculty, by which one defines what is proper to man, there is first of all, thought [*dianoia*], which is a sort of discourse developed on the interior [*logos . . . endiathetos diexodos*], an analysis and a verdict about remembered things.⁴⁵

This interior *logos* can take two forms: when it is simple and confused, it is only opinion (*doxa*), but it becomes knowledge (*episteme*) when it is methodically elaborated and firmly grounded.⁴⁶ Ptolemy positions himself in this treatise as the promoter of scientific rigor, and science itself can exist in his view only as *logos endiathetos*. Closely comparing the cognitive process with a legal proceeding, he relates mental discourse to deliberation and verdict. And since he continually and markedly opposes it to uttered speech, composed of words,

42. Theon of Smyrna, *Exposition des connaissances mathématiques utiles pour la lecture de Platon* 18, ed. and French trans. J. Dupuis (Paris: Hachette, 1892), 116 and 119.

43. On the use of the term *neôteroi* in the second century, see Kieffer 1964, 130–33: "Appendix: *Who are the neoterioi?*" I see no reason to think that the label had a special meaning in Theon, other than a purely chronological one. The author probably invokes here, very knowingly, a terminological usage commonly still admitted in his age amongst philosophers. If he uses *neôteroi* rather than *philosophoi*, as Heraclitus and Galen do in related contexts, this is simply to indicate in passing that the *prophorikos/endiathetos* vocabulary was not yet present in Aristotle.

44. Cf. Claudius Ptolemaeus [Ptolemy], *On the Kriterion and Hegemonikon*, ed. and trans. H. Blumenthal et al., in *The Criterion of Truth*, under the direction of P. Huby and G. Neal (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), 179–230.

45. Ptolemy, *Peri kritêrion* 2.5.

46. Cf. *ibid.*, 2.6, 3.2, and 12.4.

which merely reveals it to others, we must conclude that for him too this interior discursivity is totally independent of languages of communication.

Taken together, these diverse passages, all of which date from the second century, confirm that the distinction between the two *logoi* was treated then as a commonplace of philosophical psychology. At the same time, in relation to the occurrences in the preceding century, their appearances show a certain change of context, which no longer concerns allegorizing hermeneutics, as in Philo, Heraclitus, and Cornutus, but principally the fine-grained analysis of gnoseological processes. Nevertheless, this is no rupture with the tradition, as the *logos endiathetos* continues to be associated—sometimes even identified—with *dianoia*, by Theon, as by Galen and Ptolemy. It consists in a sort of private deliberation, or weaving, of analyses, evaluations, and logical relations of all sorts, and it results in the taking of an intellectual and prelinguistic position, which is to say, in judgment.

These texts have further interest for our history. The geographical distribution of the sources indicates a striking concentration around two principal poles, Alexandria and Smyrna, which perhaps suggests that in these places there was a new and more thorough theorization of the already old idea of interior discourse. It is worth looking into this a little more closely.

Claudius Ptolemy, the celebrated mathematician and cosmologist, author of the *Almageste*, *Planisphere*, and so many other writings that played a major role in the development of Arabic and medieval science, spent his entire career in Egypt—a good part in Alexandria itself—where between approximately 125 and 140 A.D. he made important astronomical observations. This alone would not be very significant, admittedly, were we not to add the following elements. Philo was from Alexandria, after all. Plutarch was from Boetia, in Greece, but we know that he stayed in Alexandria for some time, and the master who most influenced his philosophical studies in Athens around the years 60 or 70 A.D. was a certain Ammonius, who seems to have been “a product of Alexandrian Platonism.”⁴⁷ As for Sextus Empiricus, who also uses our terminological pair around the end of the second century or the beginning of the third, we do not know his precise origin, but it is established that he too spent some time in Alexandria. Finally, Plotinus, who studied philosophy in Alexandria in the years 230–40, never uses the very terms *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos*, but comes close in the *Enneads*, distinguishing twice between *logos en prophora* and *logos en psuchê*.⁴⁸ We may conclude that in the first three centuries A.D. these were current notions in the intellectual milieu of the great Egyptian port.

The other path is even more interesting. Galen, who was the friend and doctor of Marcus Aurelius, originated from Pergama, near the Aegean Sea,

47. Dillon 1977, 190. On Plutarch's visit to Alexandria, see Flacelière 1987, xxvii–xxix.

48. Plotinus, *Enneads* I.2.3 and V.1.3. These two passages occupy a crucial place in the study of Heiser 1991.

the great rival of Alexandria as intellectual hotbed. It is in this first-rate center of study, he tells us, that, still as a youth, he was initiated into philosophy by, successively, a Platonist (a disciple of Gaius), a Peripatetic, and even an Epicurean.⁴⁹ In the year 150 in Smyrna, a little to the south, Galen, then in his twenties, heard the lessons of someone he calls "the Platonist Albinos,"⁵⁰ who is, for that time, one of our rare other witnesses to a direct philosophical use of the expression *logos endiathetos*. This Albinos, furthermore, is a somewhat mysterious figure whom scholars long identified with Alcinous, author of an important Platonist manual, the *Didaskalikos*. Recent scholarship, however, calls this identification into question,⁵¹ and, if we abstract from it, there remains from him only the few pages of his short "Prologue" to the work of Plato, from which we cited one of our occurrences of *logos endiathetos*. He was a Platonist, as Galen confirms, and probably was himself the student of Gaius, an important Platonist teacher whose works (if he wrote any) are lost today, but whose thought was known by Plotinus and Porphyry.⁵² And we know above all that Albinos taught philosophy in Smyrna around the middle of the second century, precisely where Galen said he heard him. Regarding Theon, the Platonist philosopher, he undoubtedly lived in the first half of the second century and is likewise associated with Smyrna by the very name under which he is known to us.

In addition to this, Irenaeus, future bishop of Lyon—whom we will speak about in more detail in the following section and who uses the term *logos endiathetos* more than once in his important treatise *Against the Heresies*—probably spent a good part of his youth in Smyrna, where we may surmise that he studied some rudiments of philosophy, precisely around the year 150.⁵³

These coincidences are intriguing. They indicate that the very great majority of occurrences known today of *logos endiathetos* or *logos prophorikos* in philosophers of the first to third centuries A.D. lead, directly or indirectly, toward either the schools of Alexandria or the city of Smyrna on the Aegean Sea. This is an improbable concentration that permits us to believe not only that the distinction continued to be habitual in these milieus (especially among Platonists) but that it might, moreover, have aroused renewed interest in one or another theorist of the human soul who, in the second century, knew a certain notoriety in Asia Minor, especially in the area of Smyrna. Here the Platonists Gaius and Albinos are plausible candidates.

49. Cf. Galen, *Galen on the Passions and Errors of the Soul*, trans. P. W. Harkins (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1963), 57–58.

50. Cf. Galen, *De propriis libris* I.38, in *Opera omnia*, 19:16.

51. See on this subject Whittaker 1984, chaps. 20–21, and Whittaker 1987.

52. Cf. Dillon 1977, chap. 6, "The 'School of Gaius': Shadow and Substance," 266–340.

53. Cf. Colson 1993, 11.

JOHN DAMASCENE AND HIS SOURCES

Around the beginning of the third century, a crucial bifurcation marks our history. On the one hand, the idea of interior discourse will appear with regularity after Plotinus in the Neoplatonic commentaries on Aristotle's logic, be it first in Porphyry or his successors (like Ammonius, John Philoponus, and Simplicius) on the Greek side, or again, on the Latin side, in Boethius (who will become one of its principle sources for medieval philosophy, as we will see in Chapter 4). On the other hand, the expression *logos endiathetos* (and then, starting with Augustine, the expression *verbum cordis*, "word of the heart") plays a primary role until late in the Middle Ages in the attempts of Christian theology more closely to discern the mystery of the Trinity (a theme to which we will likewise return several times in this book, in particular in Chapter 3). However, before thus exploring each of these two avenues, relatively independent of one another, we can still enrich the inquiry into the common philosophical idea of *logos endiathetos* by examining its various appearances in the *De fide orthodoxa* of John Damascene in the eighth century.

Damascene does not practice original thinking, which in the present case is actually why he is of interest to us. Patiently, and not unskillfully, assembling selected pieces, he provides a revealing mirror of Greek thought in the first centuries A.D., especially on the subject of theology, but also on occasion on lay philosophy proper. It is all the more relevant to our study that, unlike most of the texts discussed so far in this chapter, the writings to which we will now turn were well known to medievals by way of some Latin translations—in particular, that carried out by Burgundio of Pisa around the middle of the twelfth century. Since, unlike Augustine and Boethius, he himself wrote in Greek, and because most of the time he was content to repeat his sources almost exactly (unfortunately without identifying them!), John Damascene represents the most direct historic connection we know between the Greek treatment of *logos endiathetos* and the Scholastics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁵⁴

The expression appears, to the letter, in three distinct passages of the *De fide orthodoxa*, which, because the author reproduces different sources each time, we must examine separately.⁵⁵ The first occurs in chapter 13 of book I:

54. The Greek text of John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* or *Expositio fidei*—which constitutes the third part of the great treatise *The Sources of Knowledge*—was the object of a critical edition by B. Kotter, in the series *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973). The Latin edition of Burgundio of Pisa (twelfth century) was edited by E. M. Buytaert (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1955), but note that the chapter numbers are not the same as in the original Greek. For a French translation (but one not without problems), see Damascene, *La Foi orthodoxe*, trans. E. Ponsoye (Saint-Denis: Institut orthodoxe français de théologie, 1966).

55. There also exists another passage, in chap. 30 of the *Dialectica*—which is the first part of the treatise on *Sources of Knowledge*—where Damascene uses *logos prophorikos*,

The *Logos* is that which always coexists substantially with the Father. However, in another sense, the *logos* is also a natural movement of the mind [*noûs*] by which it is moved and thinks and reasons, as if it were in a sense the light and illumination of the mind. In still another sense, there is the interior [*endiathetos*] *logos*, which is articulated [*laboumenos*] in the heart. And there is also the *logos* which is the messenger of thought. Now, the divine *Logos* is at once substantial and subsistent, while the other three are powers of the soul and cannot be considered in their proper hypostases: the first is a natural product [*gennêma*] of the mind, continually flowing from it in a natural way; the second, we call *endiathetos*; and the third, *prophorikos*.

The first division here is between the divine *Logos* (which in Christian theology is the second person of the Trinity, consubstantial with the Father and eternally begotten by him) and the human *logos*, which is in turn subjected to a tripartite division, of which the *logos endiathetos* is the second type. We can, for the moment, leave aside the theological branch of this classification to concentrate on the psychological and secular side, which is totally independent from it.

The exact sources of this are not known. We know that the first sentence of this passage, the third (in which the first occurrence of *logos endiathetos* appears), and the fourth (concerning the messenger of thought: *angelos noêmatos*) are found almost word for word—and side by side with each other—in an alphabetical florilegium of Greek theology from the beginning of the eighth century, which Damascene probably used.⁵⁶ However, the second sentence, on the natural movement of the soul (and *a fortiori* the development of the last lines on the tripartite division of human *logos*) are absent from it. The critical edition of John's text, on the other hand, directs us to the first lines of a chapter entitled "*Peri Logou*" from the *Viae dux adversus Acephalos* of Anastasius Sinaita, a seventh-century theologian. This text does exhibit important affinities with the passage at hand and even speaks of *logos endiathetos* but does not distinguish it, as Damascene did, from the natural and continued movement of the mind, and it proposes, in addition to the theological sense, only a binary division of human *logos* into *endiathetos*—articulated in *dianoia*—and

but not *logos endiathetos*: cf. *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, ed. B. Kotter (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969), 1:93–94. Uttered discourse is described there as that by which human beings, in virtue of their essential nature, transmit to one another thoughts that they have in their heart (*ta en kardia noêmata*), while angels, on the other hand, have no need for it to communicate among themselves. The *Dialectica* of Damascene—at least one of its versions—was translated into Latin in the thirteenth century by Robert Grosseteste: cf. St. John Damascene, *Dialectica: Version of Robert Grosseteste*, ed. O. A. Colligan (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1953). (The relevant passage is found in chap. 11, 12–13.)

56. *Doctrina patrum de incarnatione verbi*, ed. F. Diekamp (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1907), 263.

prophorikos—here also described as the “messenger of thought.”⁵⁷ It is therefore not the source of the threefold distinction conveyed by *De fide orthodoxa*.

Now, there is something puzzling about this distinction: how should we understand the idea of interior discourse that is its second item? Following Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas (who explicitly addresses this passage in his *Commentary on the Sentences* and *Summa theologiae*), identifies the *logos endiathetos* of Damascene with what he himself calls the *imaginatio vocis*,⁵⁸ which is nothing but the mental representation of exterior words by the imagination, and which therefore depends on a particular language—contrary to what, until now, has seemed to us to prevail in the Greek tradition. But this reading, which seems to be obvious for Aquinas, does not impose itself on us in such a decisive fashion. It must be noted, first, that in the corresponding passage of Anastasius Sinaita, the *logos endiathetos* is clearly independent of spoken languages, since, in addition to being localized in *dianoia*, it is identified with the discourse of angels, where it must evidently be of a purely intellectual nature.⁵⁹ This shows at least that Greek theology immediately prior to Damascene still conveyed the traditional philosophical notion that we have retraced in Philo, Ptolemy, and Galen, for example. Let us note, in addition, that Damascene’s text only allows this interpretation of *logos endiathetos* as *imaginatio vocis* because it opposes it to another, yet more interior, *logos*, which would be the continued product of the intellect. However, this distinction could just as well have another meaning—more probable, it seems to me—demarcating, on the one hand, the uninterrupted psychic movement of the mind—its interior light, so to speak, as the text itself says—and on the other hand, the reflections, deliberations, or meditations thus engendered in the light of the intellect, the particular intellectual products thus illumined.

This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by reading this text in light of a similar distinction we find in the tenth century in al-Fârâbi, whose ultimate source could be the same as that of Damascene.⁶⁰ Now, in al-Fârâbi, the second sense of the Arab term corresponding to *logos* (*al-nutq*) refers to the “statement fixed

57. Anastasius Sinaita, *Viae dux* II.6, ed. K.-H. Uthemann (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981), 60: “Logos is said in three ways: there is the substantial *logos*, which is the divine *logos*; the *logos endiathetos*, which is that of angels and also what is articulated in our thought; and finally, the *logos* uttered [*prophorikos*] through language. . . . This *logos prophorikos* is the messenger of thought.” The florilegium *Doctrina Patrum* mentioned in the preceding note is also sometimes attributed to Anastasius Sinaita.

58. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sententiarum*, dist. 27, q. 2, art. 1, and *Summa theologiae* [hereafter *ST*] I, q. 34, art. 1; Albertus Magnus, *In I Sententiarum*, dist. 27, art. 7. I discuss these texts in chap. 5.

59. See Anastasius Sinaita, *Viae dux* II.6, 60.

60. Al-Fârâbi, *De scientiis* (Latin version of the twelfth century by Gerard of Cremona), ed. and Catalan trans. A. G. Palencia, under the title *Catalogo de las ciencias* (Madrid: University of Madrid, 1932), 136.

in the soul" (*logos endiathetos* in the Greek source, undoubtedly) that the author then identifies with "concepts which the words designate" (and not with the representation of the words in the imagination), while taken in the third sense "it concerns the natural psychic power created in man, by which we discern good and evil and by which we acquire concepts, sciences, and arts," thus the rational faculty itself, which corresponds to what Damascene calls the "light of the mind."

It is difficult to settle the point with certainty, and I am afraid we must for the moment leave the problem in suspense. If Thomas Aquinas's interpretation was correct, this would mean that between the time of Philo and Galen and that of Damascene there would have emerged a new notion of *logos endiathetos*, more immediately linguistic, that coexisted in Greek culture with the older, more purely intellectual one. In the alternative scenario, which seems more probable to me, the text of Damascene still reveals a very interesting development in the philosophy of mind: the introduction by one or many unidentified authors of the idea of a *logos* yet more intimate to the soul—and nondiscursive—that would be for it like a permanent light and whose echo is found in al-Fârâbi.

As for the second passage from the *De fide orthodoxa* to occupy us here, it appears in book II, chapter 21. This time, we know its exact provenance: it is the *Treatise on the Nature of Man* by Nemesis of Emesa (end of the fourth century to the beginning of the fifth), large extracts of which Damascene uses for his psychology. Here is the one that interests us:

The rationality [*logikon*] of the soul is divided further into *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos*. The *logos endiathetos* is a movement of the soul engendered in its discursive faculty [*dialogistikon*] without vocal expression. Often, in silence, we develop in ourselves an entire discourse [*logos*], and it sometimes happens that we discuss in our dreams. We are all in this regard entirely rational. For those who are born mute, just as those who have lost their voice due to a sickness or accident, are not thereby less rational. As for *logos prophorikos*, it happens in voice [*phonê*] and conversation [*dialektos*].

Nemesis, who was the bishop of Emesa in Syria, was a convert and was well-versed in philosophy. His *Treatise on the Nature of Man* proposed a selective synthesis of Greek philosophical anthropology, conceived and written for Christians and aimed, notably, at elucidating the status of the human soul, rational and immortal.⁶¹ His own sources are varied, and he cites a number of philosophers, from the pre-Socratics to Porphyry and Iamblichus, but by far

61. Cf. Nemesis Episcopus Emesenus, *De natura hominis*, ed. M. Morani (Leipzig: Teubner, 1987), chap. 14, 71–72. The text of this treatise was known in the Middle Ages especially through a Latin translation, thanks to Burgundio of Pisa—who attributes it to Gregory of Nyssa, with whom Nemesis was confused throughout the medieval period (cf. Nemesis of Emesa, *De natura hominis: Traduction de Burgundio de Pise*, ed.

the most frequently cited are Plato and Aristotle, and to a somewhat lesser extent Galen, the “admirable physician” (chap. 2). In this text the *logos endiathetos* is related to a faculty he calls the *dialogistikon* or *dianoêtikon*, which becomes, in Burgundio’s Latin translation, the *excogitativus*.

What does it concern? Quite simply, the rational part of the soul as a whole. The principal division of cognitive powers adopted by Nemesius opposes, on the one hand, what arises from the irrational soul—imagination and the five senses (chaps. 6–11)—and, on the other hand, *dianoêtikon* (chaps. 12–15). It is, he says, the power of the soul where “judgments, assents, denials and resolutions, and, more specifically, thoughts of things, virtues, understanding, technical knowledge, and the capacity to deliberate and choose” are produced.⁶² The reference to dreaming in the previously cited passage concerns the fact that this deliberative faculty is, for our author, also what through dreams makes possible the only true divination. Once again, then, the *logos endiathetos* is found attached to discursive and deliberative, morally responsible thought. With respect to interior discourse, Nemesius (whose text reappears three and a half centuries later in the work of John Damascene) fits squarely within the grand old tradition of Greek philosophy as we have understood it so far, a tradition with which he was in direct contact, thanks to his deep knowledge of the work of Galen, among others.

Finally, the third occurrence of *logos endiathetos* in John Damascene’s work is found in the following chapter (II.22), in a context especially pertinent for us and upon which we shall now dwell in a little more detail. It aims to exposit a theory of the five movements of the mind that the Syrian monk borrows directly, or nearly so, from the opusculum *Ad marinum presbyterum*, by Maximus Confessor, a seventh-century Christian theologian. Maximus himself had taken it, with some modification, from another, more ancient source: we find almost the same text in the treatise *Against the Heresies*, by Irenaeus of Lyon, which dates from the second century and to which we referred already in the previous section. The differences between Irenaeus’s version and those of Maximus and John are not all negligible, and a detailed examination of these is instructive in many respects.⁶³ However, in order not to slow our pace, I will cite *in extenso* only that of Irenaeus, the oldest of the three:

G. Verbeke and J. R. Moncho [Leiden: Brill, 1975]); in this Latin version, the text that interests us appears in chap. 13. On the psychology of Nemesius, see Siclari 1974.

62. *De natura hominis* 12. The term *dianoêtikon* was used by Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (VI.2), to designate the capacity of the mind to produce reflection of a theoretical character (*theôrêtikê dianoia*). In the preceding chapter of the same work, the Stagirite employs *logistikôn* to name the reasoning part of the soul as a whole, both practical and theoretical, that corresponds approximately to the sense Nemesius gives to *dianoêtikon*, or *dialogistikôn*.

63. The editors of Irenaeus of Lyon’s treatise *Against the Heresies* in the collection “Sources chrétiennes” themselves proceed to this comparison in appendix 2 of their

the first movement of the intellect [*noûs*] relative to a determined object is called “thought” [*ennoia*]. When it lasts, intensifies, and wholly seizes the soul, it is called “consideration” [*enthumêsis*]. This consideration in turn, when it lingers on the same object and is, so to speak, put to the test, takes the name “reflection” [*phronêsis*]. This reflection, in extending itself, becomes “deliberation” (*boulê?*). When this deliberation grows and extends itself further, it takes the name “reasoning” [*dialogismos*], which is likewise justly called “interior discourse” [*logos endiathetos*]; and it is from this that uttered speech [*logos prophorikos*] is outwardly expressed.⁶⁴

Originally written in Greek, although the author was then bishop of Lyon, the treatise *Against the Heresies* has been transmitted to us only in a Latin translation from the third or fourth century and in Greek, Syriac, and especially Armenian fragments. For the excerpt that concerns us, we have an Armenian version. The Greek vocabulary, partially preserved as such in the Latin translation, can be almost entirely reconstructed from the parallel passage of Maximus Confessor. The latter retains the division of the five movements of the soul and Irenaeus’s way of describing their relations to each other, but it calls the first *noêsis* instead of *ennoia* and then shifts the names of the following three (*ennoia* in place of *enthumêsis*, *enthumêsis* in place of *phronêsis*, and *phronêsis* in place of what the editors think was *bouleusis* or *boulê*), finally returning, in the fifth place, to the *dialogismos*—also called *logos endiathetos*—of Irenaeus, to which he joins a definition not found in the bishop of Lyon but given, except for one word, by Nemesis of Emesa in chapter 13 of *De natura hominis* to *logos endiathetos*: “the most complete [*plêrestaton* added by Maximus] movement of the soul, produced in its discursive faculty [*dialogistikon*] without vocal expression.” One might guess at what may have encouraged Maximus (or another, unknown intermediary) to introduce these modifications into Irenaeus’s text, reasons that are probably significant for the general history of cognitive psychology, but what is important for our project is that we see manifested here in Irenaeus—and thereafter in Maximus the Confessor and John Damascene—a properly philosophical and very-well-articulated classification of the movements of the mind, which goes up to the second century at the latest, and which integrates interior discourse under the very name of *logos endiathetos*.

This typology related by Irenaeus does not seem to be of his own invention. If it had been, he would have argued for it and probably would not have written so categorically on the subject, since he hardly bothers to defend firm ideas on properly philosophical matters, let alone to invent them. So where does he get it from? A first hypothesis would be that he borrows it from those Gnostic

edition of book II, ed. and French trans. A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, SC (Paris: Cerf, 1982), 1:366–70.

64. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against the Heresies* II.13.2 (I lightly amend the French translation of Rousseau-Doutreleau here).

authors he sharply criticizes throughout his book.⁶⁵ It is true that some of them resorted to a related vocabulary to name the intermediary entities that they so freely multiplied between God and material creation: *noûs*, *logos*, *ennoia*, and *enthumêsis*, according to Irenaeus himself (one of our principal sources on the subject), figure among the key terms of the strange cosmotheogony of the school of Valentinus, the famous Alexandrian Gnostic and principal target of the treatise *Against Heresies*.⁶⁶ We know, moreover, that a quintet almost identical to Irenaeus's was current in the later Manichean tradition, itself undoubtedly influenced by the Gnosticism of the second century.⁶⁷ However, this is not nearly enough to substantiate the hypothesis in question, which to my mind comes up against decisive objections. It is difficult to imagine that the bishop of Lyon should have adopted without hesitation such a very speculative psychological theory, which would have come to him from detested adversaries whose slightest developments he relentlessly denounced. Moreover, when he recalls, in the following lines, the psychological terminology of the "heretics," reproaching them for unduly transposing unto God "what happens in man," he attributes to them only the single, tripartite series that he had already associ-

65. This seems to be suggested by Paissac 1951, 85.

66. Cf. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against the Heresies* I.1.1–2 and *passim*. In addition, Irenaeus mentions (I.2.4.3) another Alexandrian Gnostic of the first half of the second century, Basilides, in whom we likewise find, also for naming the intermediary gods, a quintet of gnoseological character that partially intersects with that which concerns us: *Noûs*—*Logos*—*Phronêsis*—*Sophia*—*Dunamis*. See, on this subject, Orbe 1958, 1:366–86n1, who discusses at length the relations between the five movements of the soul enumerated by Irenaeus and the various writings of the Gnostic tradition.

67. This is the sequence *noûs*—*ennoia*—*phronêsis*—*enthumêsis*—*logismos* that we find, especially, in the Greek version of the *Acts of Thomas*, an apocryphal gospel of the third century, originally written in Syriac and much in favor with the Manicheans (cf. *Acts of Thomas*, introduction, trans., and commentary A. F. J. Klijn [Leiden: Brill, 1962]), and in the *Acta Archelai*, an anti-Manichean treatise from the third or beginning of the fourth century, written by one Hegemonius (ed. C. H. Beeson [Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1906]; see especially chap. 10, 15). We also find the Coptic and Syriac equivalents of these terms in the books of Manichean psalms from the same period, which frequently enumerate, under a poetic and incantatory mode, what they call the five intellectual "members" (see especially *A Manichean Psalm-Book*, part 2, ed. C. R. C. Allberry [Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1938], index D, 46*, *sub verbo* "Five Intellectual Members"; as well as *Kephalaia 1 Hälfte*, ed. C. Schmidt and H. Ibscher [Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1940], chap. 25, 76). And we have, finally, the Chinese version of this vocabulary in what specialists call the "Chavannes-Pelliot treatise" discovered by these two researchers in China in 1908 (cf. Chavannes and Pelliot 1911, especially 559, where the terms in question are rendered in French by "pensée" ["thought"], "sentiment," "réflexion," "intellect," and "raisonnement" ["reasoning"]). On all these terminological correspondences, see especially: Cumont 1908, 10n3; Widengren 1945, 21–22n3; Puech 1978, part 2, 100–102; and Orbe 1958.

ated, at the beginning of the previous book, with the wild theogonic imaginings of the Valentinians: *Noûs—Ennoia—Logos*.

What is striking in this Irenaeus presentation of the five movements of mind is the quiet confidence with which the author describes—not without finesse—the complex mental process carried out from the intellectual apprehension of objects to the production of exterior speech. If he had found it in the pagan philosophers or, *a fortiori*, in the followers of Valentinus, Basilides, or Marcion, he would have at least shown himself to be more circumspect. The most probable solution, it seems to me, is that it had come to him from a *Christian* source that he held as an authority without reservation. I would readily propose, by way of hypothesis, the name of Justin, martyred in Rome around 165: we know that Irenaeus used writings of his that are lost today (especially his treatise *Against All Heresies*). He could have known him personally in Smyrna, Ephesus, or Rome, and obviously manifested a genuine “veneration” toward him.⁶⁸ Justin himself, unlike our polemicist bishop, was keenly interested in philosophy. Before converting to Christianity, he had had Stoic, Peripatetic, and Pythagorean masters, successively, somewhere in Asia Minor, and above all was profoundly enamoured of Platonism.⁶⁹ His role is immense in the encounter of nascent Christian theology with Greek philosophy, especially Platonism, and we will return to it in the following chapter. In any case, here is someone who could very well have adopted—from a teaching we do not know—this famous typology of the movements of the soul that is subsequently found in Irenaeus of Lyon, Maximus Confessor, John Damascene, and even Thomas Aquinas,⁷⁰ and that will be transmitted, albeit by a different path, in the Manichean tradition from the third century.

The theory in question is very well thought out and does not resemble the improvisation of a mere amateur in matters of philosophy. In these lines, the principal theme Irenaeus opposes to the Gnostic’s inveterate tendency to multiply entities is that *diverse cognitive acts* (when considered at the level of human psychology, their only legitimate place) do not constitute truly *distinct realities*:

All the movements of which we have just spoken are one and the same; they take their principle from the intellect and receive diverse names as they intensify.⁷¹

68. The expression is from Lebreton 1926, 116. Prigent 1964 also supports with much detail the thesis that Irenaeus (like Tertullian after him) was much inspired by Justin Martyr’s treatise *Against all Heresies* (cf., for example, 199–201, but it is one of the central theses of his work).

69. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 1, trans. Thomas B. Falls (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), esp. 149–50. We know by his own testimony, moreover, that Justin wore the typical mantle that, in that period, identified philosophers (147).

70. Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 79, a. 10, ad 3.

71. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against the Heresies* II.13.2.

Most captivating for us is the very classification advanced here and the place that interior discourse occupies in it. From the characterization of the first “movement” of the mind, *ennoia*, the inventor of the typology shows remarkable philosophical acuity in locating at the source of all intellectual activity what we today would call *intentionality*: the simple fact that the mind is *related* to some object—that it is *about* something (*peri tinos* in Greek, or *de aliquo* in the Latin version). As for the second movement, *enthumêsis*, it must correspond to the *attention* that the mind carries to the object or the situation, and the third, *phronêsis*, to the *comprehension* of it that it thus acquires, which had been “so to speak put to the test” (*basanisasa*). Beginning with the fourth movement, however, the dynamic changes orientation, and this is highly significant for us: while the movements were up to this point connected in an *intensification*—a progressive deepening in the apprehension of the object—now the metaphor of *expansion* takes over. Just as before, the fourth movement—*boulê* (?)—is presented as being identical, at base, with what preceded it, yet stronger and greater, except that now the increase is expressed by the term *platuntheisa* (*in multum dilatatus*, in the Latin version), which gives the idea of a *spreading*, or better, a *display*, rather than an intensification: the fourth movement of the mind is a comprehension displayed. And the text preserves the same term, *platuntheisa*, to qualify the relation of the fifth movement—*dialogismos* or *logos endiathetos*—to the fourth.

What is to be understood is that, even within the intellect itself, comprehension is clarified in something like a deliberation (*consilium*, in Latin), which constitutes the fourth movement, and that this, in turn, is displayed in a discursive plurality, which the Latin version calls *cogitatio*, and which is the very interior discourse from which the uttered word will finally emerge. Here as in a good number of the other Greek texts we have examined, *logos endiathetos* seems to correspond to discursive thought articulated in argumentation or reasoning. In spite of the diversity of Damascene’s sources, the philosophical notion of interior discourse that he conveys in *De fide orthodoxa*—and that goes back to much earlier times—is not as disparate as we may have feared. Precise characterizations differ from one passage to another, to be sure; but we always return to this idea of an intellectual and prelinguistic discursivity—the order of *dialogismos*, according to Irenaeus’s vocabulary—in which logical connections are organized and reflection is structured or disposed, spread out or displayed, in a plurality of parts rationally arranged with one other.

Such is the common notion of *logos endiathetos* that runs through the whole of Greek philosophy in the first centuries of our era. It perhaps goes back to the famous debate over the rationality and dignity of beasts, which set various schools against each other around the second century A.D. and in which framework thinkers quickly sensed the need, out of a healthy concern for terminological clarity, to distinguish between uttered *logos*—namely, exterior speech—and thought proper—interior *logos*. In any case there is no reason to

see in this distinction—as a number of commentators have—the exclusive or principal prerogative of the Stoics, and some indications even suggest a Peripatetic origin.⁷² Nevertheless, whoever proposed it originally and whatever his allegiances, the distinction was compelling in itself and ended up being adopted by all philosophers. We have every reason to believe that the Platonists of Asia Minor—especially of Alexandria and Smyrna—remained attached to it for a long time.

We have seen that, beginning with the discussion about animals, philosophical contexts for this distinction diversified through the centuries. There was, for example, a general interest, in the first century A.D., in allegorical exegeses of sacred texts, religious myths, and literary stories, as in the enterprises of Philo of Alexandria, Heraclitus, or sometimes Plutarch—in whom the opposition of interior and exterior discourse was to play a determinant role. Then, especially from the second century, there was a sort of renaissance of the old attempts to elaborate a detailed cognitive psychology wherein diverse “powers of the soul” or “movements of the mind” were enumerated and ordered, as appear in doxographies, so popular in that age, or in authors like Ptolemy, Galen, Irenaeus of Lyon, and, later still, Nemesius of Emesa.

What recurs consistently through all this is the idea of a purely intellectual discursivity. Whether it concerns the “discursive or synthesizing impression” of which Sextus Empiricus speaks, the capacity for recognizing “consequences and oppositions” invoked by Galen, the deliberation, judgments, and resolutions mentioned by Ptolemy and Nemesius, or the *dialogismos* of Irenaeus, those authors who are most explicit on this subject always associate interior discourse with reasoning and with the production, apprehension, or recognition of logical connections in the broadest sense. It is true that it regularly presents a clearly defined moral dimension—the authors in question do not isolate practical reason from theoretical reason—but only insofar as *rational deliberation* in view of action can be regarded as morally relevant.

What is more, it seems clear that, in all cases where we can plausibly decide between a *linguistic* interpretation of interior discourse (which identifies it with speech uttered quietly in a given language) and a purely *intellectual* interpretation (which makes it something prelinguistic and independent of languages of communication), it is the latter that must be privileged. We have seen this clearly in Philo of Alexandria, where even the grammatical division of nouns and verbs is explicitly reserved for the side of *logos prophorikos*; in

72. Recall that Theon of Smyrna in the second century associates the *prophorikos/endiathetos* terminology with the Peripatetic school. Porphyry attributes to the Peripatetics a threefold distinction between written discourse, spoken discourse, and “that which is articulated in the soul” (I will discuss this passage in chap. 4). And an anonymous author attributed to Theophrastus—the student of Aristotle and his successor as the head of the Lyceum—the notion of *logos endiathetos* (see chap. 4, n. 43).

Nemesius of Emesa, for whom interior discourse arises directly from the rational faculty that he calls *dianoêtikon*; or again in one Anastasius Sinaïta, who identifies *logos endiathetos* with the discourse of angels. It was probably likewise for other authors for whom there are less decisive indications on this subject, particularly the Stoics and the Platonists of Smyrna or Alexandria.

This is a point on which there has sometimes been misunderstanding in the transmission of Greek knowledge to authors of the Middle Ages. Some among these, such as Thomas Aquinas, identified the *sermo endiatheton* still spoken of in the current Latin translation of John Damascene's *De fide orthodoxa*—one of their rare sources on this subject—with that *verbum imaginabile* (whose precise notion came to them from Augustine, as we will see in the next chapter) that was the mental representation of the sounds of a spoken language. But the distinction between *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos* in Greek philosophy was nothing other than the development, in a technical vocabulary, of some of the main ideas that Plato and Aristotle had advanced much earlier about interior discourse: the first had associated it with *dianoia*, as most of his successors would do after him, and the second had made it the locus *par excellence* of the mental treatment of logical relations.

The question of the syntactic and semantic structure of mental judgments, however—which in the preceding chapter we called “the problem of the composition of thought”—does not seem to have been very much explored during this period. Aristotle had posited the idea of an intellectual composition of certain mental acts, but did not clearly pose this problem that would so interest logicians of the later Middle Ages. Among philosophers of antiquity, only the Stoics clearly perceived the necessity of a compositional theory of truth-conditions; however, they did not directly integrate it into the problematic of interior discourse and, above all, only developed it—as far as we know—in an inchoate manner that was hardly continued in the philosophy of the first centuries A.D.—a philosophy generally more concerned with religion and morals than with logic and semantics. The idea that judgment in the intellect is displayed in an organized plurality remained present, to be sure—one finds it, for example, in that interesting description of the mind's movements that Irenaeus of Lyon, before John Damascene, transmitted to us—but it does not yet, in this period, form the locus of the kind of constructive and detailed treatment that only will be made possible, much later, by a semiotic approach to mental processes.

CHAPTER THREE

VERBUM IN CORDE

Augustine, bishop of Hippo in the first decades of the fifth century, was the great authority for the theorizing of Christian faith in the Latin Middle Ages, and the notion of an interior speech—a word generated in the heart, or *verbum in corde*, to use his favorite expression—played a primary role in his trinitarian reflections. Thus, his influential *De Trinitate* contributed, more than any other source, to our present theme's being written onto the very heart of theology. The expressions *verbum mentis* and *verbum mentale*, common in the Middle Ages, are not found as such in his work, but are directly inspired by it, and his doctrine of the interior word—which these expressions inevitably evoked in the eyes of the Scholastics—became, beginning at least with Anselm, an essential component of trinitarian theology in the Latin world.

Considered in relation to Plato and Aristotle, the Augustinian framework, by virtue of this theological emphasis, marks a spectacular displacement, for it is insofar as it reveals something of the transcendent divinity that the theory of mind interests Augustine. Not that he takes the latter lightly—far from it: since man was created “in the image of God,” as Genesis proclaims, the most serious investigation imposes itself upon anyone who hopes to comprehend the divine mysteries to the slightest degree. The psychological analyses of *De Trinitate* often shine with finesse and clarity. Their deep motivation, however, always remains theological, the object being to find in human dimensions, in the intimate relation of the soul to its own interior speech, a model of the *generation* of the Son by the Father in God.

This theological use of our chosen theme did not originate with Augustine. Philo of Alexandria, as we have noted, traced a parallel connection between the duality of *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos* in man and that of the *Logos* immanent in the universe.¹ Other authors of the first century—Heraclitus, Cornutus, Plutarch, to mention only those of whom we have already spoken—also in one sense or another readily established connections between the psychology of human *logos* and the order of theological or mythological stories—the god Hermes, in particular, was often invoked in this kind of context. But it is above all in the theologians from the end of the second century and beginning of the third—Justin, Irenaeus of Lyon, Theophilus of Antioch, Hippolytus

1. Philo of Alexandria, *De vita Mosis* II.127 (the relevant passage was quoted at length in chapter 2).

of Rome, Tertullian—and in their Gnostic opponents—Valentinus, Basilides, Ptolemy, Marcion, and a host of others—that the vocabulary of philosophical gnoseology (*Logos*, *Noûs*, *Ennoia*) began to be used systematically for the benefit of Christian speculation.

In this chapter we shall briefly recall how the theme of *logos endiathetos* was exploited in theological contexts by the first Greek fathers and how it was subsequently transposed into a nascent Latin theology by such authors as Tertullian and Marius Victorinus, coming finally to consider more directly that famous Augustinian doctrine as it was progressively constructed through the great doctor's works.

THE BATTLE AGAINST GNOSIS

From the end of the second century to the age of Augustine (354–430), the *logos endiathetos*/*logos prophorikos* pair is current among the Greek fathers,² although it plays different roles according to times and places. Athanasius of Alexandria and the fourth-century Cappadocians sometimes invoke it in an admonishing tone to warn sternly against the temptation to assimilate the divine *Logos* to human *logos*, whether interior or exterior.³ A century earlier, Origen knew the terminology but did not himself use it for a direct comparison with the divine order,⁴ and his intellectual guide, Clement of Alexandria,

2. References to the relevant passages in the church fathers can be found in many commentators: Aall 1896; Lebreton 1906, 1928; Schmaus 1927; Michel 1950; Paissac 1951; Spanneut 1957; Mühl 1962; Schindler 1965; Wolfson 1976; Lampe 1978; Couloubaritsis 1984; and Colish 1990.

3. Athanasius of Alexandria, *De synodis* II.21, *Patrologia Graeca* [hereafter PG] 26, 737; Basil of Caesarea, *Homily* 16, PG 31, 477; Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Arium et Sabellium* 10, PG 45, 1296B. Lampe (1978) gives in section II.B.2b of his article “*Logos*” a list of passages from the fathers where recourse to the notions of *logos prophorikos* or *logos endiathetos* for speaking of the divine *Logos* is disapproved.

4. Origen, *Contra celsum* VI.65, PG.11, 1397A: the context of the occurrence of the *logos endiathetos*/*logos prophorikos* pair here has to do with the question of knowing to what extent God is intelligible to human *logos*, interior or exterior. There is also a fragment from a lost part of a commentary on the Gospel of John by Origen, wherein the author invokes *logos endiathetos* in humans, which is found, he says, in the intellect (*dianoêtikon*) and which is “that by virtue of which we are rational” (cf. Origen, *Origenes Werke*, vol. 4, *Der Johanneskommentar*, ed. E. Preuschen [Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1903], frag. 118 of the appendix, 506). A very similar passage is also found in another fragment of the same work (frag. 18, 497); however, the word *endiathetos* is in this case omitted. Origen, in addition, accords much importance to the theological notion of *Logos*, but without associating it with the label *endiathetos*. On the Origenian doctrine of divine *Logos*, see Harl 1958 and Letellier 1991.

emphasized in his *Stromata* that one must not see the word of God as a *logos prophorikos*.⁵ On the other hand, near the last decades of the second century and the beginning of the third, some of the first Christian theologians made recourse to these notions in a much more positive and daring way: *logos endiathetos* plays an important role in the discussions of Irenaeus of Lyon, Theophilus of Antioch, and Hippolytus of Rome, to whom we will now turn.

First, let us return to the case of Irenaeus. In the preceding chapter we noted the most important passage where he uses *logos endiathetos*—that passage we considered in the *Adversus haereses* (II.13.1–2) wherein he expounds an interesting theory of the movements of the mind. There he gave no specifically theological meaning to the notion and even exhibited a marked reluctance to apply the vocabulary of cognitive psychology to articulate divine mysteries:

However, when heretics say that Thought (*Ennoia*) was emitted from God, and then from Thought, Intellect (*Noûs*), and then from that, *Logos*, they deserve blame . . . because, in describing affections, passions, and intentions of the mind proper to man, they misunderstand God. In effect, whatever happens in man to produce speech, they apply to the Father of all things, whom they nevertheless say is unknowable by us.⁶

It should be noted, however, that (contrary to what is sometimes believed) Irenaeus does not absolutely condemn any theological recourse to the idea of the interior word. It is in fact the only psychological notion that, in this type of context, could find favor in his eyes. He directly invokes this possibility on two occasions in his polemic against the Gnostics, and he reproaches them, each time, not for attributing to God a *logos endiathetos*, but, on the contrary, for not taking the comparison seriously enough: the *Logos* of the disciples of Valentinus, he explains, could not be legitimately seen as a *logos endiathetos*, because they themselves had sought to situate it *outside* of the Father, as an entity derived from its relation to him: “that this *logos* is not interior, the very idea of emission, as they use it, is enough to reveal.”⁷ Doesn’t this argument suggest, conversely, that, unlike the *logos* of the Gnostics, the true Christian *Logos*—that spoken of in the prologue to the Gospel of John—may be legitimately described as an interior Word?

Even though Irenaeus does not go there explicitly, the path is clearly trod by Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, who is nearly Irenaeus’s contemporary and, in some ways, his disciple. It is in his writings that for the first time in known

5. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* V.1, trans. F. Crombie (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1925), 445–46.

6. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adv. haer.* II.13.3.

7. *Ibid.*, II.12.5. Irenaeus develops the same idea even more clearly in II.13.6. The real target of his more severe attacks is the assimilation of the *Logos* of God to an uttered speech, which would be something inferior and not divine (cf. *ibid.*, II.28.6).

patristic literature we encounter the use of *logos endiathetos* to characterize the Son of God: "Therefore God," he writes in his second book to Autolytus, "having his own Logos innate in his own bowels (*logon endiatheton*), generated him together with his own Sophia, vomiting him forth before everything else."⁸ And further on in the same treatise, he explains this even more clearly:

What is the "voice" but the Logos of God, who is also his Son?—not as the poets and mythographers describe sons of gods begotten of sexual union, but as the truth describes the Logos, always innate (*logon endiatheton*) in the heart of God. For before anything came into existence he had this as his Counselor, his own Mind and Intelligence. When God wished to make what he had planned to make, he generated this Logos, making him external (*logon . . . prophorikon*), as the *firstborn of all creation*. He did not deprive himself of the Logos but generated the Logos and constantly converses with his Logos. Hence the holy scriptures and all those inspired by the Spirit teach us, and one of them, John, says, "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God."⁹

The approach is the same, at the beginning of the third century, in Hippolytus of Rome, generally recognized as a disciple of Irenaeus. Following closely the Gospel of John, Hippolytus defends the dogma of a Word interior to God, pre-existing in him and yet capable of being exteriorized without abandoning him who generates it.¹⁰

This indeed is the key for recourse to the philosophical notion of *logos endiathetos* in these passages. Against Gnostics, it serves to defend the divinity of Christ by identifying him with the interior word of God, preexisting in him from all eternity, and at the same time it serves to mitigate the apparent scandal of the exteriorization of the divine Word in the Incarnation: the *Logos* of God could express itself externally without thereby ceasing to be interior, just as the sense or content of our intimate thoughts manifests itself in utterances without thereby leaving the mind of the speaker.

This was already the teaching of Justin, though without the technical vocabulary. Once again, therefore, our study takes us back to that untiring seeker of sense who, in the turmoil of the Jewish Diaspora, carried from town to town his attachment to Platonism and his humble philosopher's garment and who—having been converted to Christianity in the region of Ephesus around the

8. Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad autolytum* II.10, trans. R. M. Grant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 39.

9. *Ibid.*, 63.

10. Cf. Hippolytus of Rome, *Philosophoumena* 10.33, PG 16, 3447B, where the author speaks in so many words of *logos endiathetos* with respect to the Son of God; and *Contra haeresim Noeti* 10, PG 10, 817B, where, in the same vein, he describes the *Logos* of God as being interior to him (*en éautô*).

year 135—was one of the very first to attempt to explain and defend in philosophical terms certain aspects of his new *credo* among the intellectuals of his age. Striving in his *Dialogue with Trypho* to make known to his Jewish interlocutor the Christian idea of divine *Logos*, Justin invokes the comparison with the duality of human speech:

When we utter a word, it can be said that we beget the word, but not by cutting it off, in the sense that our internal *logos* (*ton en hêmin logon*) would thereby be diminished. We can observe a similar example in nature when one fire kindles another, without losing anything, but remaining the same; yet the enkindled fire seems to exist of itself and to shine without lessening the brilliancy of the first fire.¹¹

The apologetic concern is exactly the same as in Theophilus. The comparison with human thought and speech in this context has the very precise goal of defending the dogma of the *Logos* preexisting in God (of which Justin is one of the first promoters) against the following easily reconstructed objection: the Son could only be exterior to the Father and derived in relation to him, in the way that speech, for example, is exterior to a speaker. Justin's response is that divine speech behaves, on this point, just like ours: the "*logos* which is in us" remains in us, undiminished, even when it is expressed in exterior words—just like fire, in igniting another, is not itself affected by being thus propagated. As one commentator has previously written, Theophilus adds to this response "only the nicety of technical expression."¹² We should, however, not forget that certain important writings of Justin are now lost, wherein the philosopher could have directly employed the terminology of his profession. Theophilus, in any case, does not present his recourse to the *endiathetos/prophorikos* pair as a novelty.

Here there are identifiable links. Hippolytus is a disciple of Irenaeus, who is himself, just like Theophilus, largely inspired by Justin and his apologetic enterprise. These men, a few years apart—and who may well have known each other—were engaged in the same battle: defending on the theoretical level, to intellectuals of other allegiances, the Christian doctrine then on the way to being institutionalized. Around the middle of the second century, Justin addressed himself to the Romans in his two *Apologies* and to the Jews in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, his only extant works. His multifaceted (predominantly Platonic) philosophical education provided him with an array of intellectual tools to initiate this great dialogue. Whether it was with him or someone else, it is nevertheless in this very context—and with these people—that the *endiathetos/prophorikos* pair was invoked.

The declared enemy was Gnosticism. Even prior to his first *Apology*, written

11. Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Iudaeo* 61, PG 6, 614–16 (Falls trans., 244; slightly amended).

12. Casey 1924, 50.

around 150 A.D., Justin had attacked it in treatises no longer extant. Criticizing Gnosticism was also the great intellectual project of Irenaeus, Theophilus, and Hippolytus. The looming figures of Simon the Magician, Mark the Magus, Valentinus, Ptolemy, and Marcion all haunt their pages in one way or another. And what exactly is at stake in this confrontation? Precisely the status of the *Logos*! Those whom we call the “Gnostics” did not form a homogenous group—far from it. But they all posit—between the unique, absolutely transcendent Creator and the material universe—a diversified hierarchy of intermediary entities, often with names taken from philosophy, such as *Noûs*, *Sophia* . . . and *Logos*. They regarded these entities as exterior to the Father and derived from him in a sort of cascading ontological degeneration that would conclude, in the final analysis, in the ill-formed creation of the material world.¹³ The apologists, faced with this, intended to give back to God direct responsibility for Creation and, at the same time, to divinize his Word. The underlying image, taken for granted in the debate, is that an intentionally acting subject bears within himself a *logos*, which expresses itself in his action and which is its mover. The lesson of Justin and of his successors is that this creative *logos* need not be exterior to or ontologically subordinated to the being that generates it. In carrying the idea of interiority in its very formulation, the *logos endiathetos* of the philosophers—with which Justin would be familiar—could very naturally play this role. And that is what was demanded of it.

The orthodoxy to defend was, in its essentials, that expressed in the prologue to the Gospel of John:

In the beginning was the Word [*Logos*],
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
The same was in the beginning with God.
All things were made through him;
and without Him was not anything made that was made.

(John 1:1–3)

And the Word became flesh
and dwelt among us . . .
and we have beheld his glory.

(John 1:14)

This very Johannine creed, still permeated with Judaism, is what our authors set against the Gnostics in order to rehabilitate at once the divinity of Christ and the goodness of Creation: the *Logos* preexists in God from all eternity; it is

13. The literature on the Gnostics is immense. I mention, among the works particularly useful for the theme that concerns us: Sagnard 1947; Orbe 1958; Wolfson 1976; Puech 1978.

by him that the world was created; the *Logos*, in a certain way, is identical with God himself; and it is him again who is incarnated in Christ. Irenaeus, Theophilus, and Hippolytus, on these matters, explicitly invoke the fourth Gospel.¹⁴ Regarding Justin, the question of his relation to the text of John is admittedly a little more delicate, but it is quite difficult to assume total independence. Not only are the doctrinal convergences strong, but the geographical coincidence is equally striking: it is in the important Christian milieu of Ephesus (quite close to Smyrna, we note in passing) that the Gospel of John appeared, in Greek moreover, around the end of the first century or the beginning of the second, and Justin, we think, was converted to Christianity precisely in Ephesus in the 130s.¹⁵ The doctrinal relationship is in any case obvious with respect to the doctrine of the *Logos*, and it is probably not inappropriate to speak here of a genuine Johannine current with which one could associate Justin, along with Irenaeus, Theophilus, Hippolytus, and Tertullian.

In the roiling debates about the preexistence of the Word and divinity of Christ, philosophical terminology that revolved around the term *logos* came easily to the minds of more educated protagonists, sometimes opportunely providing some promising nuance, distinction, or comparison. In this way the notion of *logos endiathetos* was put to use in the struggle with the Gnostics. It provided, on the human order, a model of production that reconciled production with interiority and could thus render more credible certain articles of nascent Christianity. No longer did it principally serve—as it had for the philosophers—to distinguish the human from the animal nor to account for discursive thought and its logico-semantic properties. Rather, it provided to certain religious beliefs elements of an *ontological model* that would be intellectually satisfying: the theoretical issue, ultimately, was the place of the *Logos* in the hierarchy of all beings, material or not.

Nonetheless, comparison with human psychology was not without risk. The authors being considered wished to insist on the fact that it was *the same logos* that remains inside and is expressed outside. Yet the terminological pair *endiathetos/prophorikos* could also quite easily suggest the opposite—namely, an ontological distinction—and even hierarchy—between the immanent word of God and the incarnate Christ and thereby compromise the divinity of the latter even further. It is for this reason that the fathers of the fourth century were wary

14. On the emergence of the role of the Johannine *Logos* in the church of the first centuries, and on its relation to the theme of the Word of God—the *Manna*—in the Old Testament, see, among others: Aall 1896; Lagrange 1923; Sanders 1943; Starcky 1957; Borgen 1965.

15. Hamman 1958, 19. According to the same author, Justin's dialogue with Trypho may also be assumed to have taken place in Ephesus (349, n.). Léon-Dufour [himself] speaks of a "Johannine school" (*école johannique*) in Ephesus, from which the Gospel of John issued (1988, 11–12).

about this and assemblies of bishops—as in Sirmium in 351—even condemned its theological usage: “If someone says that the Son of God is a *logos endiathetos* or *prophorikos*, let him be anathema,” we read bluntly in the *De synodis* of Athanasius of Alexandria.¹⁶ This was the post-Nicene age; the quarrel with Arianism had, at the beginning of the century, cruelly divided Greek Christianity, and the precise issue had been the ontological status of Christ, which Arius and his disciples wished to make an *ousia* distinct from and derived from the Father—a doctrine that verged dangerously on that of the ancient Gnostics. The disagreement had been decided with authority by the first ecumenical council in the history of the church—that of Nicea in 325—convened by the emperor Constantine himself to put an end to internal dissent within what was on its way to becoming the official religion of the empire. We know the Nicean formula: the Son, as well as the Holy Spirit, is “consubstantial” with the Father, *homoousios*; this is what Athanasius, Basil of Cesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom would defend. It is understandable that in this new context the image of the two *logoi*—apparently reprised by the controversial Marcellus of Ancyra around the year 330—would seem suspect to them:¹⁷ on the one hand, it strongly implied the association of the incarnate Christ with the *logos prophorikos*, which would accord him a precarious and not very dignified place; on the other hand, the human *logos*, even being interior, is not at once consubstantial with the mind that generates it—as would be that of God. On this point, at least in the Greek world, the way of speaking of a Theophilus or a Hippolytus was defeated.¹⁸

THE EMERGENCE OF LATIN THEOLOGY

For the Latins, the Arian controversy, while hardly passing unnoticed, was less consequential. Whether dated before or after the Council of Nicea, many of the Christian writings in Latin that Augustine read—and that profoundly

16. Athanasius, *De synodis* II.49, PG 26, 737; see also 730. The same condemnation is reported and commented on in Latin by Hilary of Poitiers in his own *Liber de synodis* (38 and 45–46, PL 10, 510 and 515).

17. The trinitarian doctrine of Bishop Marcellus of Ancyra and his disciple Photin gave rise, between 335 and 360, to a very lively debate in the church. It was vigorously opposed by Eusebius of Cesarea, who is today our principal source on the subject and, after much tribulation, was condemned by the synod of Sirmium, whose decisions are reported by Athanasius (and Hilary after him). On the supposed use of the *logos endiathetos/logos prophorikos* pair by Marcellus, see Eusebius of Cesarea, *De ecclesiastica theologia* II.15, PG 24, 933–36.

18. Paissac (1951, 68–69) invokes an anonymous Greek treatise from the middle of the fourth century, the *De eo quid sit ad imaginem Dei et ad similitudinem*, wherein the comparison of the two *logoi* is again used in a positive way; however, this no longer corresponds to the dominant approach of the Greek fathers of the time.

influenced him—clearly imply that comparing the divine Word to our words can be fruitful, as long as it is done with care. Hilary of Poitiers had indeed translated the anathemas of the Greek synods reported by Athanasius, and even Ambrose of Milan—who would baptize Augustine in 387—recalled in turn that “the Word of God is neither an uttered word [*prolativum*] nor what is called an *endiathetos*,” here preserving the Greek word in his Latin text.¹⁹ Yet despite that, in the immediately preceding sentence, this same author did not shy away from appealing to the comparison with human speech, in exactly the same spirit as Justin or Theophilus: “in any case,” he writes, “that word which is ours is uttered; there are syllables, there is sound; and nonetheless it is not separate from our sense and our mind.” The philosophical terminology of the *endiathetos* has indeed been sacrificed, as Athanasius had wished, but theological recourse to the ubiquity of human *logos*, at once interior and exterior, has not been abandoned—far from it.

Reference had already been made to it by Tertullian (c. 155–222), who can be considered the first true Christian theologian in the Latin language:

consider, first of all, from your own self, who are made “in the image and likeness of God,” for what purpose it is that you also possess reason [*ratio*] in yourself, who are a rational creature. . . . Observe, then, that when you are silently conversing with yourself, this very process is carried on within you by your reason, which meets you with a word [*sermo*] at every movement of your thought [*cogitatus*], at every impulse of your conception [*sensus*]. Whatever you think, there is a word; whatever you conceive, there is a reason. You must needs speak [*loquaris*] it in your mind; and while you are speaking, you admit speech as an interlocutor with you, involved in which there is this very reason, whereby, while in thought you are holding converse with your word, you are (by reciprocal action) producing thought by means of that converse with your word. Thus, in a certain sense, the word [*sermo*] is a second *person* within you, through which in thinking you utter speech, and through which also (by reciprocity of process), in uttering speech you generate thought. . . . Now how much more fully is all this transacted in God, whose image and likeness even you are regarded as being.²⁰

Although he writes in a different language, this Carthaginian intellectual (raised on Greek culture before converting to Christianity around 190) by all rights belongs to the same group of thinkers as the Greek fathers of the end of the second century, whose works he knew and with whom he shared the battle against Gnosticism. His treatise *Against Praxeas*—one of his later writings—directly

19. Ambrose of Milan, *De fide ad Gratianum* I.4.7, PL 16, 651A.

20. Tertullian, *Adversus praxeam* 5 (English translation: *Against Praxeas*, trans. P. Holmes, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian* [Christian Literature, 1885], 600–601).

addresses the question of the Trinity. Here he defends the idea that it is the Son and not the Father who was incarnate, and the text we have cited plays a crucial role, as its conclusion is that the word of God, like that of man, can indeed be both interior to and distinct from that which produces it. The passage is not very explicit, it must be admitted, on the relation of thought to language, and has given rise to important divergences among Tertullian's interpreters regarding whether the interior discourse there invoked does or does not belong to a given language.²¹ Still, what is clear is that the author distinguishes two senses of the Greek word *logos*—one of which corresponds to the *ratio* of the Latins, the other to *sermo*—and that his goal is to show that, under one form or another, speech is already present in interior rational activity. Somewhat further on in the same work, railing in passing against the Valentinians, Tertullian also takes up the Justinian theme of a speech that, while being exterior, is not thereby separated from its mental source.²²

Lactantius, a century later, mines the same vein in his *Divine Institutes*. The Greek word *logos*, he affirms, applies to the Son of God better than the Latin terms *verbum* or *sermo*, for "*Logos* means both talk [*sermo*] and reason [*ratio*]; it is both God's word and God's wisdom"²³ In the philosophical terminology now familiar to us, this amounts simply to saying that the Son is at once the *logos endiathetos* and the *logos prophorikos* in relation to the Father!

After Nicea, greater prudence will be shown in this regard, even among the Latins, but intellectuals will not cease to maintain that human psychology of interior speech can contribute to trinitarian theology. Augustine will provide the brightest example of this trend; however, we also know of the (no doubt less successful) attempt, just before him, of Marius Victorinus (c. 300–80). Of African origin himself, Victorinus was at the height of his glory in Rome as a master of grammar, logic, and rhetoric when he converted to Christianity, and Augustine invokes him with the greatest respect in the *Confessions* (VIII.2–4). Following his conversion, Victorinus had undertaken to apply to the delicate question of the divine Trinity philosophical schemas and concepts that he had learned from intimate and extended contact with the works of Plotinus (whom he had translated into Latin) and especially of Porphyry, whose *Isagoge*, for example, he had translated and commented on long before Boethius. His objective was to defend and explain the Nicene doctrine of consubstantiality; he thus

21. According to Moingt, the interior *sermo* of Tertullian "lays down reasoning in words and sentences which are not verbally pronounced" (1966–69, 3:1045), and consequently already belongs to a particular language. In this, Moingt agrees with Braun (1962, 259ff.) and opposes Orbe (1958).

22. Tertullian, *Adv. prax.* 8. Prigent (1964) thinks that, in a general way, Tertullian, like Irenaeus, was much inspired by the lost treatise of Justin, *Against All the Heresies*.

23. Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* IV.9, trans. A. Bowen and P. Garnsey (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 236.

marshaled all his philosophical education to offer the first Christian version of Neoplatonism of a Plotinian variety.

Needless to say, the idea of the *Logos* is omnipresent in this trinitarian theology. The author does not, as far as I know, appeal to the Greek *endiathetos/prophorikos* pair or to a Latin equivalent. However, he is eager to clarify the theological concept of *Logos* with reference to what seems prominent to him in the corresponding gnoseological notion—what we today call “intentionality”:

How is our knowledge directed, how does it move?—According to a *Logos*.—It does not see the *Logos* without more, for the *Logos* is another thing or a *Logos* of another thing. Insofar as it is what it is, it exists entirely to posit the existence of something else. . . . The *Logos* is therefore father and generator of all things, that “by whom all things were made and without which nothing was made.”²⁴

What is relevant for Marius Victorinus in the parallelism between the divine *Logos* invoked by the Gospel of John and the human *logos* spoken of by philosophers is that the latter is above all a power “of positing and making something other than itself.”²⁵ For good reason, the theme of *generation* is less important for him (Victorinus takes the word of God as ungenerated) than the *expressive and motive force* that in Plotinian language is called *Logos*. While the notion of discursivity or any treatment of logical relations is here entirely avoided, the model of the human mind nevertheless continues to impose itself forcefully on trinitarian reflections, providing it with a privileged and familiar illustration of a creative energy that is at the same time rational. Victorinus relaxes the weight of the comparison in the lines that follow, but does not disavow it, thereby prefiguring the nuanced attitude adopted by Augustine, some decades later, in *De Trinitate*.

Thus, what is judged the most relevant likeness between the mental word and the *Logos* of God varies somewhat in different authors and especially in different polemical contexts. Sometimes it is the manner of production that matters, sometimes the way in which it is externalized or is related to something else, and sometimes both at once. In any case, it is easy to trace the historical connection between the Augustinian thematization of the *verbum in corde* and the *logos en hêmin* of Justin or the *logos endiathetos* of Theophilus or Hippolytus. Tertullian no doubt represents an intermediary of great import here, but he is not the only one: Latin theology up to the age of Augustine was, in its essentials, developed by intellectuals who read Greek and knew their classics. Some, like Marius Victorinus, were equally familiar with recent discussions in philosophy. Shielded from the passion of the Alexandrian controversies, these

24. Marius Victorinus, *Ad candidum* 8, ed. and trans. (French) P. Henry and P. Hadot, in *Traité théologiques sur la Trinité* (Paris: Cerf, 1960), 1:157.

25. *Ibid.*, 8.

Latin Christians—especially the North Africans—were in the best position to exploit anew, but with greater nuance than before, psychological concepts in exposition of the delicate doctrine of the Trinity.

AUGUSTINE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DOCTRINE

Far more than any of the other authors discussed so far, Augustine insisted on the comparison of divine Word with human thought; and, up to the end of his life, he was committed to exploring and developing, more systematically than any previous theologian, the properly gnoseological theme of interior speech. This great undertaking had an immense impact on medieval thought, and we must here accord Augustine special attention. For present purposes I will distinguish three phases in his work.²⁶

In the first period—up to approximately 395—the idea of an interior *word* is entirely absent. The word *verbum* invokes only oral speech: “Everything that is a word is audible,” we read in the *De dialectica* (chap. 5). This unfinished manual of dialectic, directly inspired by a lost Stoic source (perhaps a treatise by Varro), is thought to have been written in 387, when Augustine, newly converted, awaited his baptism in Milan. The first part, itself incomplete, was to be dedicated entirely to the *verbum*, and the definition given there is explicit: “A word is a sign of any sort of thing. It is spoken [*prolatum*] by a speaker and can be understood by a hearer.”²⁷ Even written words would, strictly speaking, be refused the title in question: since they are not uttered, produced by the voice, they are at best only “signs of words.”²⁸ The *verbum* properly so called, in *De dialectica*, is nothing other than the audible expression of signifying speech, and the etymology that seemed most likely to Augustine at that time is that relating *verbum* to *verberare*—“to strike with a stick, to whip”—thereby indicating that speech, by definition, strikes the air.²⁹

De magistro, in 389, also makes abundant use of *verbum*, and the same restrictive definition is preserved: “A word [*verba*] is that which is *uttered* by the articulate voice [*vox*] with some meaning.”³⁰ Written words, again, are relegated to the rank of *signa verborum*, signs of words (IV.8), and the same etymology

26. Among studies dedicated to the theme of the mental word in Augustine, I have used principally the following: Schmaus 1927; Paissac 1951; Schindler 1965 (which offers, in appendix 2, 250–51, a very useful list of the most relevant passages); Nef 1986; O’Daly 1987; Vecchio 1994, especially chaps. 3 and 4; and Panaccio 1995.

27. Augustine, *De dialectica* 5, ed. and trans. J. Pinborg and B. D. Jackson (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1975), 87.

28. *Ibid.*, 89.

29. *Ibid.*, 93.

30. Augustine, *De magistro* IV.9 (English translation: *Concerning the Teacher*, trans. G. C. Leckie, in *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine* [New York: Random House, 1948], 1:367). (Italics mine.)

as in *De dialectica* is again approvingly mentioned (V.12). While the perspective of this work is clearly different and its inspiration is much more Christian, the notion of *verbum* remains the same as what Augustine, two years earlier, had borrowed from the Stoics. If the intention of *De magistro* is, in the final analysis, to summon the *interior man*, the idea of a purely mental *word* is nevertheless excluded, simply by definition. Since the point is that we never understand anything by means of speech, all types of *verba* are pushed back to the less valued side of things, the side of exteriority, of the corporeal, of the secondary, of what at best serves only for recollection.

Even so, certain central ideas of the future doctrine of the mental word are allusively sketched in this period. In *De magistro*, for example, Augustine invokes a notion that often returns in his later developments and that, under the label *imaginatio vocis* or *verbum imaginabile*, had great prominence in the Middle Ages: that of the mental representation of speech that we are prepared to pronounce or that we could pronounce if we wished. The topic is raised in reference to prayer recited silently, yet in a given language: we can well emphasize, says our author, that “although we utter no sound, yet because we think words we speak within the mind”; but even in this type of case, he immediately adds, the *locutio*—however silent it be—“only remind[s],” awakening in memory verbal signs stored there previously.³¹ The passage, we must acknowledge, does not yet introduce the interior word that “belongs to no language”³² of which *De Trinitate* will make so much, but a related phenomenon that will, indeed, be distinguished from it with emphasis—namely, “thought turning in itself the image of sounds.”³³

Even closer to our theme is what Augustine in *De dialectica* calls the *dici-bile*, which he defines as “that which the mind, not the ears, perceives from the word” or, some lines later, as “what is understood in the word.”³⁴ Here it is a matter of the *sense* of words, of their intelligible content, which Augustine quite clearly distinguishes from the exterior thing (*res ipsa*) to which the words correspond. There is every reason to believe that he is thus taking into account the Stoic notion of the *lekton*, which its original promoters distinguished from the exterior state of affairs as well as from the spoken sign, and which was seen by them as the true significate of exterior speech.³⁵ However, *De dialectica*, in the

31. Ibid., 362–62.

32. Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.19 (English translation: *On the Trinity*, ed. G. B. Matthews, trans. S. McKenna [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 186).

33. Augustine, *De mag.* I.2.

34. Augustine, *De dial.* 5 (English translation: *On Dialectic*, trans. B. D. Jackson [Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1975], 89, 91).

35. On this triple distinction of the Stoics, see Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 8.11–12 (English translation: *Against the Logicians*, ed. and trans. R. G. Bury [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1933], 244–45).

same breath, locates the *dicibile* in the mind itself (*in animo*), where, according to the text, it remains enclosed (*inclusum*): the sense, consequently, is affirmed as something mental. Since the part of *De dialectica* that was to be dedicated to this subject was never written, we cannot know what the precise status of the *dicibile* was for Augustine, but the notion certainly refers to an intellectual phenomenon interior to the mind and signified by oral speech. In this—and only this—respect we can say that it prefigures the future “mental word,” which will now be our more direct concern.

The second phase is characterized, indeed, by the explicit introduction and development, for theological ends, of this crucial idea of the *verbum in corde*. The expression first appears tentatively in 395—under the form *verbum . . . quod corde conceptum*—at the very end of the commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, where it serves only to introduce, in passing and without particular insistence, a moral clarification.³⁶ It is in book I of *De doctrina christiana*, the following year, that it will be used for the first time by Augustine in the context of a theological comparison to clarify the question of the generation of the Son by the Father. Here is the text:

When we speak, the word which we hold in our mind becomes a sound in order that what we have in our mind [*verbum quod corde gestamus*] may pass through ears of flesh into the listener's mind: this is called speech [*locutio*]. Our thought, however, is not converted into the same sound, but remains intact in its own home, suffering no diminution from its change as it takes on the form of a word in order to make its way into the ears. In the same way the word of God became flesh in order to live in us but was unchanged.³⁷

The driving idea in these lines corresponds exactly to what we encountered in Justin, Theophilus of Antioch, Hippolytus of Rome, Tertullian, and even Ambrose of Milan: the comparison of the divine Word with human thought that remains interior while expressing itself in words serves to tame the idea that a spiritual being can be incarnated, exteriorized, without losing any of its proper interiority—that is, without being diminished in any way—and the use of the word *verbum* in this context to designate interior thought itself is clearly demanded by the Latin version of the Gospel of John, cited immediately before, where it serves to render the Greek term *Logos*. We may conclude from this that it was neither the enigmatic Stoic source for *De dialectica* nor Augustine's general philosophical culture that inspired his characteristic theme of the *verbum in corde*, but rather the properly Christian readings he must have encountered in the 390s. Precisely which ones is difficult to say, but whatever the Latin intermediaries may have been, it is clear that the passage in

36. Augustine, *Epistolae ad Romanos inchoata expositio* 23, PL 35, 2105.

37. Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* I.12 (English translation: *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. R. P. H. Green [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 13–14).

question from *De doctrina christiana* is in a direct line of descent from Justin and Theophilus.

In the other writings I locate in this second phase—those up to approximately 417 A.D.—the same characteristic argument is dominant in nearly every case in which we encounter the theme of the interior word. I am thinking of those occurrences found, on the one hand, in the *Sermons*,³⁸ and on the other, in the first book of the *Homilies on the Gospel of John*.³⁹ In almost every case, moreover, the point in question allows the bishop of Hippo to explain to his flock the doctrine of the *Verbum* in the Gospel of John in exactly the same way that the image of the interior *logos* was exploited by the Johannine school of the second century in relation to the Greek version of the same Gospel.

Yet Augustine always deepens in his own way the thoughts he borrows. Experienced in reflection on language, the rhetorician turned bishop soon set about delving into the psychological idea of the interior word, which had been presupposed, without being made explicit, by the argument of Justin and his successors. He struck on the already very mysterious case of the human phenomenon, whereby he sought in his own sermons to tame for his listeners the difficult doctrine of divine generation. We see him reworking this theme through sermons and homilies, time and again taking up the description it implies of the process of communication, insisting each time on the interiority of the speaker's meaning:

Observe thy own heart. When thou conceivest a word to utter . . . thou meanest to utter a thing, and the very conception [*ipsa conceptio*] of the thing is already a word in thy heart: it has not yet come forth, but it is already born in the heart, and is waiting to come forth.⁴⁰

The main refinement he thus contributes, as soon as he has occasion to do so, is that the interior word in question is not bound to any particular language. It is only when we wish to communicate to a certain audience that we must translate it into a conventional idiom that they would find comprehensible; but "remove the diversity of auditors, and this word which is conceived in the heart is neither Greek, nor Latin, nor Punic, nor any language."⁴¹ To my knowledge, Augustine is the first to make himself so clear on this point. In the preceding chapters, we indeed found reason to believe that the *logos endiathetos* of the Greek philosophers was not dependent on languages of communication, either,

38. Augustine, *Sermones ad populum*, PL 38, in particular the following passages: 119.7; 120.2; 187.3; 225.3; 237.4; and 288.3–4.

39. Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*; see in particular I.8–9.

40. Ibid., XIV.7 (English translation: *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, trans. J. Gibb, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* [New York: Christian Literature, 1888], 7:96r).

41. Augustine, *Sermo* 288.3.

but there the point always had to be established by some indirect argument, the authors themselves not being very explicit on the subject. If it comes to have more importance for Augustine, it is because he tries to highlight the more spiritual aspects of the human *psychê*, those that, in his eyes, render the interior man more similar to his Creator than the exterior man and thereby, to a greater extent, his “image.” The mental word, from this point of view, is opposed to oral speech by virtue of a greater unity and integration:

in my heart, in fact, in what I want to say, in what I think, there is neither diversity of letters, nor differences of sounds between syllables.⁴²

The multiplicity of languages arises from the exteriorization of thoughts into voice and writing—from their diffusion in letters, sounds, and syllables, which are susceptible to variation from one people to another. It is thus the requirements of a spiritualist psychology, nourished on Neoplatonism and Christian faith, which press for a still clearer demarcation of interior speech from its sensible manifestations, taken as variable and secondary.

Last, the third phase corresponds to the more systematic and detailed exposition of the doctrine of the mental word in *De Trinitate*, beginning with book VIII, apparently written around 417.⁴³ During this phase, Augustine tries—insofar as possible—to explain the *consubstantiality* of the divine persons and to reconcile this with the Incarnation of Christ. His method, perhaps inspired by Marius Victorinus, consists in searching the depths of the soul for a threefold structure that can serve as a model of the divine order, on the human scale—the least improper image of it to which we can attain in this life—and of exploring it in detail in a rigorously articulated psychology. This latter aspect is what interests us here, of course. It emerges in the text through a progressive pedagogy that skillfully introduces the reader to refinements of an increasingly penetrating theoretical analysis of the relation among memory, intellect, and will in the human soul. As to the interior word, the theme is introduced on a few occasions in books VIII and IX, to be taken up later with great emphasis in book XV under a more theoretical and unified mode. We will briefly recall the principal moments of this masterful construction.

The first significant development, in book VIII, arises in the context of a reflection on interior images:

42. Ibid.

43. On the (complex) chronology of *De Trinitate*, see especially the works of La Bonnardière (1965, 1976–77). We can also fix to this same period after 417, the brief developments dedicated to the mental word in *tractatus* 20 and 37 of Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John* (*Œuvres de saint Augustin*, vols. 72 and 73A [Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1977 and 1988]). On the dating of *tractatus* 20, see the introduction of Berrouard to the whole of the *Homilies* (*Œuvres de saint Augustin*, vol. 71 [Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1969]), esp. 42–46.

In fact when I wish to speak of Carthage, I seek for what to say within myself, and find an image of Carthage within myself; but I received this through the body, that is, through the sense of the body, since I was present there in the body, and have seen and perceived it with my senses, and have retained it in my memory, that I might find the word about it within myself whenever I might wish to utter it. For its image [*phantasia*] in my mind is its word. . . . So too, when I wish to speak of Alexandria, which I have never seen, an image [*imago*] of it is also present within me . . . and this is its word within me, when I wish to express it.⁴⁴

What is called the “word,” in this passage, is the sensible image, whether remembered (*phantasia*) or imaginary (*phantasma*). Augustine, faithful to his method, approaches human interiority from the periphery, taking as his starting point the examination of simple mental states, still directly associated with the sensible order. It will become clear in the remainder of the treatise that the notion of the interior word is much broader than this and more properly applies to spiritual phenomena—that is, phenomena more detached from the sensible. However, what is important here is that the word first appears as a mental *representation* of something, a representation that is the object of a kind of internal vision and that, at the same time, underlies its exterior manifestations, particularly in communication.

The dynamic aspect of the process is then made clear in book IX: on the one hand, the interior word is *generated*, and, on the other hand, it is itself a driving force. The first trait paves the way for repeated exploitation of the vocabulary of childbirth: the word is “conceived,” “born,” “begotten” by the mind in its own womb and yet is not taken away “by being born.”⁴⁵ The second trait, associating the word with action, makes it like a driving anticipation, an intention to act: “For no one willingly does anything which he has not spoken previously in his heart.”⁴⁶ The interior word is thus inscribed by both characteristics in a sort of erotic activity of human spirituality. Always “conceived in love,” the word in the strict sense is distinguished from other mental representations in that it is itself the bearer of a desire belonging to the moral order: “the word is born when that which is thought pleases us, either for the purpose of committing sin or of acting rightly.”⁴⁷ Love—or desire—maintains a double relation with the word: at first, it commands its coming, but, once the word is conceived, love holds to it—like the representation of a good meal might stimulate appetite or the memory of a loved one might prompt intense emotion. We have, in effect, advanced to a wholly new definition of the interior word as a “knowledge united

44. Augustine, *De Trinit.* VIII.9 (McKenna trans., 15–16).

45. *Ibid.*, IX.12 (34).

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*, IX.13 (34–35).

to love [*cum amore notitia*],⁴⁸ a mental representation thus bearing a motive or erotic charge.

The theme quietly returns here and there in the remainder of the treatise, fully emerging at the close of book XV, the last of the work, when Augustine, at the end of his reflection on the human *psychê*, seeks to collect his results and to evaluate their theological import. The comparison of the mental with the divine Word occupies many paragraphs, in which the psychological doctrine is recapitulated with clarity and force.⁴⁹ Interior speech is described here as an actual mental representation, effectively sustained by the thinking subject; it “is born from the knowledge itself which we retain in the memory” and exists only insofar as one thinks it;⁵⁰ it is the meaning and the significate of oral speech, but is of no language and even precedes the mute anticipation of sounds by which we can express it; finally, it is charged with love, and its formation is indispensable to any voluntary action.

Such is the Augustinian concept of the *verbum in corde*, forged by a long meditation on speaker’s meaning and intention to act. When we thus see how these pieces are progressively put into place, some of the components become more easily recognizable. From the Stoic *dicibile*, the mental word preserves the two principal properties that were attributed to it in *De dialectica*: its being the intelligible content of spoken words, on the one hand, and its being located *in animo*, on the other. From the Christian tradition, Augustine borrows even more: first a vocabulary (that of the Latin version of the Gospel of John, where *logos* is translated by *verbum*), and then a theological problematic (that of divine generation), and finally, a very precise comparison between a human speaker’s meaning and the word of God, which goes at least back to Justin, and whose purpose was to soften the apparent scandal of a spiritual being who is also incarnate—the interior word, after all, even when it is made into a sound, still does not depart from him who generated it within himself and is not diminished in any way thereby. In the third place, from Neoplatonism, to which the author was much exposed prior to his conversion, we can recognize the characteristic insistence on the dynamic aspect of all that is called *logos*. Augustine’s first original contribution to our theme is to draw clearly a crucial distinction between the interior word properly so called, which is not of any language, and the silent representation of words in the mind; but his genius, obviously, was in integrating these many elements into a general and quite unified theory of the mind and its faculties—a theory that easily lends itself to the theological use sought from the start. The notion of the mental word appears as an essential part of the new psychology of the *interior teacher* that would so inspire the Middle Ages.

48. Ibid., IX.15 (36–37).

49. Ibid., XV.17–26 (199–219).

50. Ibid., XV.10 (186).

However, in relation to the philosophical concept of the *logos endiathetos* as we have encountered it (for example, in Galen, Ptolemy, Sextus, or even in Irenaeus of Lyon), a key element is now missing: namely, the “Aristotelian” component—the notion that interior discourse is the proper locus of reasoning and deliberation, which is consequently articulated in structured sequences. Augustine, in his quest for the interior teacher, is more interested in phenomena such as moral judgment and religious faith. He is more attuned to the metaphors of illumination and generation than to a model of discursivity, and the problem of composition, which at least surfaced in Aristotle, hardly finds a place here. Logico-syntactic structure, to be sure, is not in principle excluded from the mental word, but it is passed over in silence. Augustine’s interior word, like the *logos en tê psychê* of Plotinus,⁵¹ must be more unified, less dispersed, and less spread out than its external manifestations. But to what extent? And how can its internal structure be further analyzed? To all evidence, these questions did not much interest the bishop of Hippo, absorbed as he was by the needs of his ministry.

For all that, the mental word—no more than the *esô logos* of Aristotle—is never considered by Augustine to be composed of *signs*. On the contrary, it is “anterior to all signs” and is signified by exterior speech.⁵² Consistent with the famous definition from *De doctrina christiana*—and present already in *De dialectica*—the sign for Augustine is always something *sensible*, making something other than itself come to mind.⁵³ The spiritual order to which the *verbum cordis* pertains is not that of the *signum* in the proper sense.

The Augustinian reinterpretation of the mental word follows primarily in the line of the Johannine movement begun in Asia Minor at the time of Justin and Irenaeus of Lyon and relayed to the Latins—for example, by Tertullian. Despite the anathemas of Athanasius and the Cappodocians, it sensitively and carefully reconnects with the original inspiration that had governed the theological use of the *logos endiathetos/logos prophorikos* distinction by Theophilus of Antioch or Hippolytus of Rome in their fight against Gnosticism. In its own way it also absorbs the *lekton* of the Stoics, which Augustine himself had introduced quite early, in *De dialectica*, under the name *dicibile*. And with great finesse it exploits the dynamic dimension of the Greek concept of the *logos*, already in play in a theological context (as we have seen, in Philo, the Gnostics, and the

51. Plotinus, *Enneads* I.2.3: “spoken language, compared with the interior language of the soul, is broken up into words”; see, on this subject, Heiser 1991.

52. Augustine, *De Trinit.* XV.20.

53. Augustine, *De doctr. christ.* II.1 (Green trans., 30): “For a sign is a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind, besides the impression that it presents to the senses.” See also *De dial.* 5 (Jackson trans., 87): “A sign is something which is itself sensed and which indicates to the mind something beyond the sign itself.”

first fathers) and obvious in the Neoplatonists Augustine had read (particularly Plotinus and Marius Victorinus). In the last analysis, it is undoubtedly the question of *spiritual generation* that moved him. Once again, just as for Justin nearly three centuries earlier, the concern was to find in human psychological activity a model for spiritual production. The great innovation, however, is that Augustine developed more fully than any of his predecessors the theory of the human soul that this comparison requires. With him, Trinitarian theology gave birth to a comprehensive and skillfully crafted spiritualist psychology in which the notion of interior speech occupies a key position.

This very doctrine is what theologians of the Middle Ages invoke through expressions such as *verbum mentale* and *verbum mentis*: the idea, in short, of a mental representation linked to desire, conceived by the mind within itself when it thinks of something, and, above all, not in any language; a *sense*, in other words, that the mind produces within itself by the act of thought. New questions arise on this point. Is this intelligible content *in animo* a purely intentional object, distinct from the mental act, or is it a quality of the soul similar to Aristotle's *passiones*? Is it, like exterior discourse, susceptible to a decomposition into parts?—and if so, into which parts? These questions fueled discussions at the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries, but Augustine, engaged in a primarily religious project, did not really care about them. Like Justin, Irenaeus, and others, he was foremost concerned with defending the divinity of Christ. For this, the mental word required no very precise structure.

CHAPTER FOUR

ORATIO MENTALIS

Until the third century, the philosophical notion of interior discourse remained relatively stable. Different authors emphasized different aspects, and the contexts of its emergence varied, but in the final analysis interior discourse almost always appeared as something like a private discursive deliberation, purely intellectual and prelinguistic. From the moment the idea began to be revived in the Christian context, serving by way of comparison to clarify the status of the “Son” of God, its history is marked by a crucial bifurcation. On the one hand, there is the theological usage to which the previous chapter was devoted: an approach instigated by Justin—in passing and without special emphasis—that continued through to Augustine’s very elaborate doctrine of the mental word, in which the notion of discursivity is in effect eliminated in favor of the notion of interior generation. On the other hand, the theme continued independently as it was exploited by professional philosophers: after Porphyry, we regularly encounter it in the Neoplatonic tradition, with which we will now concern ourselves. Here, it takes on very different bearings, much closer to its origins.

Contact with the Middle Ages, in this case, passes principally through Boethius, whose translations and detailed commentaries would, for the Latin West, rescue the first chapters of Aristotelian logic, the *Categories* and *Perihermeneias* in particular, as well as Porphyry’s *Isagoge* by way of introduction. Now, the idea that in the mind there are structured expressions, sentences, a discourse—in short, all that in the *Organon* is called *logos* (becoming *oratio*, in Boethius)—is reaffirmed many times in Boethius’s second commentary on the *Perihermeneias*. It is this text (well known to the medievals) that William of Ockham will invoke—even before mentioning Augustine—on the very first page of his *Summa logicae* to introduce his own theory of the *oratio concepta* or *mentalis*. The authority of Boethius on this point was later reinforced by the Latin translation (thanks to William of Moerbeke in the years 1266–68) of two other Neoplatonic commentaries that also occasionally addressed mental discourse: Ammonius’s commentary on the *Perihermeneias* and (to a much lesser degree) Simplicius’s commentary on the *Categories*. The Latin version of Ammonius’s work—which preserved, in one instance, the transliterated Greek term *endiathetos*—was also the first to render the expression *logos endiathetos* as *oratio mentalis*.¹

1. Ammonius, *Commentaire sur le Peri hermeneias d'Aristote: Traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke*, ed. G. Verbeke (Louvain: Publications universitaires de Louvain, 1961), especially 41 (for *endiatheton*) and 455, 479 (for *orationes mentales*); and Simplicius,

Latin and Greek, these texts are directly related to one other and belong to a single, quite unified tradition, for the most part lost today—a tradition going back to Porphyry and his commentaries on Aristotelian logic. I will devote myself to retracing, as far as possible, the relevant positions of this author in order in turn to examine those of Ammonius and Boethius. At the end of the chapter, I will dedicate some pages to the contributions of the Muslim philosophers al-Fârâbî and Avicenna—extremely influential in the Middle Ages and themselves profoundly influenced by Neoplatonism and the long line of Aristotle’s commentators. Our principal thread throughout will be the question of whether for the Neoplatonists mental discourse is bound by a particular language or whether it must rather be considered, like Augustine’s *verbum in mente*, as totally independent of the idioms of communication. In particular, we will ask to what extent and in precisely what way the Neoplatonic tradition sought to apply the grammatical categories of noun and verb to the analysis of interior language. The problem is delicate, and the most prominent recent commentators have divergent opinions on the subject, but much rides on this question—it is a matter of determining whether Porphyry and his successors put in place, as Danish scholar Sten Ebbesen believes, a semantico-grammatical theory of thought prefiguring the theory of William of Ockham, ten centuries later, and whether, in so doing, they laid the groundwork for a genuine compositional analysis of *oratio mentalis*.²

THE CASE OF PORPHYRY

The question arises first concerning Porphyry. There is every reason to believe that the commentaries on the *Perihermeneias* by Ammonius and Boethius were both largely inspired by Porphyry’s, written toward the very end of the third century, but today lost.³ Boethius attributes to Porphyry by name a later celebrated distinction among three orders of discourse:

one which is composed of letters, a second which resonates from verbs and nouns, a third which the intellect unfolds in the mind.⁴

cus, *Commentaire sur les Catégories d’Aristote: Traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke*, ed. A. Pattin, vol. 1 (Louvain: Publications universitaires de Louvain, 1971), especially 39 (where *logos endiathetos* is rendered as *ratio in mente*). The Latin term *oratio* designates, in philosophical context, any discursive sequence, whether a composed expression, sentence, or longer unity; I will generally translate it as “discourse.”

2. Ebbesen 1980, 1:4, 1990.

3. See especially Shiel 1990. We have today generally come to reject the hypothesis, advanced by Courcelle (1948), of a direct influence by Ammonius on Boethius, and instead attribute the evident relationship between their two *Perihermeneias* commentaries to a common source—Porphyry, as it happens.

4. Boethius, *In librum Aristotelis Peri Hermeneias. Secunda editio*, ed. C. Meiser (Leipzig: Teubner, 1880), 36.

And above all, he attributes to him, a few pages earlier, the surprising idea that there are nouns and verbs in mental language. I say surprising—and innovative in relation to all we have thus far encountered—since in the Greco-Latin world grammatical categories were generally associated with oral speech. Porphyry's mentor, Plotinus, had himself said that "spoken language, compared to the interior language of the soul, is fragmented into words,"⁵ by which he, like his predecessors, really seems to remove his *logos en tê psuchê* from analysis by grammarians. Why did Porphyry separate himself from his master and the more dominant tradition on this point? Here it is appropriate to examine the text in question—a passage that William of Ockham much later will invoke to introduce nouns and verbs into his language of thought.⁶

Boethius explains in great detail, as was his habit, the second sentence of *Perihermeneias*. Here is Aristotle:

Those which are in the voice are symbols of states of the soul, and those which are written are symbols of those which are in the voice. (16a3–5)

Boethius asks himself, following Porphyry, why Aristotle uses the neuter demonstrative here, "those which," *ta* in Greek, which he translates, correctly, by *ea quae sunt*. Here is the passage:

But Porphyry asks why Aristotle says, "those which are in the voice," and not "sounds"; and also why he says, "those which are written," and not "letters." To which he responds in the following way. There are, according to the Peripatetics, three discourses (*oratio*), one written with letters, another which is uttered by the voice, a third which is articulated (*conjungeretur*) in the mind. And if there are three discourses, there is no doubt that the parts of discourse must also be triple. This is why, since noun and verb are the principal parts of discourse, there will be verbs and nouns that are written, others that are uttered, and still others that are fashioned by the mind in silence.⁷

Aristotle's intention, according to this interpretation, was that the different instances of the pronoun *ta* in the second sentence of the *Perihermeneias* have as their antecedents *nouns and verbs*, which were referred to at the beginning of the previous sentence ("It is necessary first to establish the nature of noun and of verb"; 16a1).

5. Plotinus, *Enneads* I.2.3 (French translation: E. Bréhier [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960], 54–56).

6. William of Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.3: "Nor should anyone be surprised that I speak of mental names and verbs. Let him first read Boethius' commentary on the *De Interpretatione*; he will find the same thing there" (English translation: *Ockham's Theory of Terms, Part I of the Summa Logicae*, trans. M. J. Loux [South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1998], 54).

7. Boethius, *In libr. Arist. Peri Hermeneias*, 29–30.

Precisely the same problem had been raised by Ammonius in his own commentary and was resolved in the same way.⁸ Porphyry is not named this time, but there is no doubt that he was also the source of Ammonius's development of the point. Thus it is apparently to him that we must trace this intriguing thesis.

However, we must be prudent. It is quite probable that the Boethius text we have cited contains, after the words "he responds in the following way," a literal fragment—translated into Latin—from the lost commentary of Porphyry. If this is the case, an observation emerges: it is not Porphyry himself here advancing the distinction among three discourses, as Boethius claims; *rather, Porphyry attributes it to others*—to the Peripatetics, as it happens—and he does not necessarily endorse it—at least not in this context, where it only helps him to interpret a grammatical feature of Aristotle's text, nothing more. We may even wonder, at this stage, if he has, after all, ever defended and developed for his own benefit the idea of an interior discourse composed of nouns and verbs.

The expression *logos endiathetos*, to my knowledge, is only explicitly encountered in two other of Porphyry's preserved treatises: the *De abstinence* and the short commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*. We cannot find the thesis that concerns us in either. I have already spoken of the first of these works in Chapter 2. The notion of mental *logos* is there employed within the framework of the old debate over the rationality of beasts, where it allowed Porphyry, as Philo of Alexandria and Sextus Empiricus before him—and undoubtedly others unknown to us—to structure the discussion:

Now since there are two kinds of *logos*, one in expression and one in disposition [*en tê diathesei*], let us begin with the expressive *logos*, *logos* organized by the voice.

and some pages later:

The *logos* which is within them, their internal *logos* [*endiathetos*] is also to be demonstrated.⁹

The principal thesis that the author defends against the Stoics on this topic is that animals, like humans, are equipped with two *logoi*—an argument he then invokes in favor of vegetarianism. The notion of interior discourse that comes into play here is exactly what we encountered in Philo's *Alexander*, as well as in a good part of the Greek tradition—that of a private, morally responsible deliberation, sometimes accompanied by intentions and plans of action. While not excluding it, it certainly does not require the applicability of grammatical categories, which, to tell the truth, is hardly at issue in this context. We further note

8. Ammonius, *In Aristotelis De Interpretatione*, ed. A. Busse (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1987) (= *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 4.5), 22–23.

9. Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Killing Animals* III. 3 and 7, ed. and trans. G. Clark (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 83–84.

that the distinction invoked here—attributed first to Stoicism but ratified by Porphyry in the course of the discussion—is binary (*endiathetos/prophorikos*) and that it has no trace of the famous doctrine of three discourses as such.

As for the *Categories* commentary, there we find only two brief mentions of interior discourse, called *logos endiathetos* on one occasion and *logos en tē dianoia* on the other. The first of these passages offers—dryly and without explanation—an enumeration of the diverse senses of the word *logos*; this incorporates, among other things, the distinction *endiathetos/prophorikos*, but without mention of written discourse.¹⁰ The second concerns that sentence from the *Categories* (4b34–35), already mentioned, wherein Aristotle gives *logos* as an example of a discrete quantity. The commentator then clarifies, as does the entire tradition after him, that this does not apply to interior discourse, “which goes on within us even when we are silent.” “For that,” he adds, “is either an activity or an affection of the faculty of thought [*dianoia*]”;¹¹ it thus belongs more to the category of quality than of quantity. On the philosophical level, this refinement is invaluable, as it shows that the *logos en dianoia* of Porphyry is not, like the Stoic *lekton*, a pure intelligible or solely intentional entity, but a psychological reality, a sequence of mental *qualities* inherent in a given mind. This point will be hotly debated in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and we will return to it in Chapter 6. On this subject the Neoplatonic tradition, following Porphyry, will be clearly aligned with Aristotle himself, for whom the constitutive beliefs of *esô logos* must be identified with “states of the soul,” as we have shown.¹² As for the present question, however, nothing in this *Categories* commentary indicates that the author wished to analyze this quality of mind he calls *logos en dianoia* into nouns and verbs. On the contrary, he explains that if uttered discourse can be classed legitimately with quantities, this is because it is “composed of nouns and verbs and everything that we call parts of speech. And all this is composed of syllables, which are long or short.”¹³ Does the argument not rather suggest that interior discourse, which is not rightly of the order of quantity, is not composed of nouns and verbs?

We thus have nothing in Porphyry’s texts that permits us to believe that he accorded any sort of philosophical importance to the idea of a grammatically

10. Porphyry, *In Aristotelis Categorias expositio per interrogationem et responsionem*, ed. A. Busse (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1987) (in C.A.G. IV.1), 64 (English translation: *On Aristotle’s Categories*, trans. S. K. Strange [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992]).

11. *Ibid.*, 101.26–28 (96).

12. The classification of interior discourse with the qualities of the soul is explicitly adopted by Ammonius and other Neoplatonists, in particular John Philoponus (*In Aristoteles Categorias* [Berlin: G. Reimer, 1898] [C.A.G. XIII.1], 90) and Simplicius, who unambiguously attributes the notion to Porphyry (*In Categorias Aristotelis*, ed. C. Kalbfleisch [Berlin: G. Reimer, 1907] [C.A.G. VIII], 124).

13. Porphyry, *In Aristotelis Categorias*, 101. Precisely the same argument is made by others, for example, in Simplicius (*In Categorias*, 124).

structured mental language. Our only indication in this direction comes to us from the citation reported by Boethius, in his commentary on the *Perihermeneias*. In these lines, the pupil of Plotinus attributes the idea to the Peripatetics, but without himself affirming it. Of whom precisely is he thinking? Ebbesen believes it may be Aristotle himself.¹⁴ However, since we never explicitly encounter the theme of three discourses in Aristotle, it seems to me more probable that Porphyry was alluding here to one or another Peripatetic commentator—for example, from the period of Andronicus of Rhodes (i.e., the first century before Christ), whom Boethius mentions by name (undoubtedly with Porphyry's mediation).¹⁵ As far as knowing whether these Peripatetics, whoever they were, wished thereby to invoke discourse pronounced very quietly in a given language—and so certainly composed of nouns and verbs—or intended rather to assign a structure of grammatical character to the prelinguistic activity of thought—as will Ockham in the fourteenth century—is quite difficult to say. I will return to this briefly in the following sections.

For his part, Porphyry, like many others of his age, occasionally appeals to the traditional philosophical notion *logos endiathetos*, especially as it occurred in the debate concerning animals; however, there is no reason to think that he modified it in any significant way. His most obvious contribution seems to have made explicit what had been implicit in Aristotle—that is, to recognize that interior discourse is a *quality* of the soul and that it could, under this aegis, correspond at times to an act of *dianoia* (when one consciously thinks of something) and at times to a passive or dispositional state (for example, a belief one might hold at a given moment without explicitly thinking of it). Whatever their originality, however, the historical influence of his commentaries on Aristotelian logic was enormous, and the entirety of the later Neoplatonic tradition was marked by it. If we admit, as we have every reason to, that the *Perihermeneias* commentaries by Ammonius and Boethius were in large part inspired by Porphyry, we are undoubtedly authorized to seek in these writings other elements from which to reconstruct, with greater precision, a unified and coherent Neoplatonic position on mental discourse.

THE TESTIMONY OF AMMONIUS

Porphyry's commentaries on the *Organon* most probably acted as intermediaries for the later transmission of the idea of mental language, and it is undoubtedly in large part thanks to them that the theme would continue to arise occasionally throughout the entire Neoplatonic tradition. His student, Iambli-

14. Cf. Ebbesen 1980, 1:130.

15. See, for example, Boethius, *In Categ. Arist.*, 263B. Sorabji (1990b) insists on the considerable impact the Andronicus commentaries must have had for subsequent Aristotelian studies; see also Gottschalk 1990.

chus, for example, alludes to it in a passage in which he attributes to Pythagoras the distinction between *logos endiathetos* and *exô logos* (among a host of other equally improbable things).¹⁶ Later, Dexippus, himself a student of Iamblichus, does not employ *endiathetos*, to be sure, but he briefly mentions, in his only surviving work, a commentary on the *Categories*, that “the primary kind of speech [*logos*] occurs in the reasoning faculty [*en tê dianoia*], from which it is reasonable to assume that speaking itself [*legein*] and the uttered speech [*logos en tê phônê*] takes its name.”¹⁷ Moreover, Proclus, in the fifth century, in his great commentary on the *Timaeus*, sometimes distinguishes *logos prophorikos* or *logos en prophora* from interior “speech” (*endon logos* or *logos en éautô*), of which he acknowledges at least two varieties. One of these corresponds to “speech one considers internally in scientific reflection,”¹⁸ which he also refers to as a “discursive intellection” (*metabatikê noêsis*) or *dianoia*, which unfolds in time and is articulated in a multiplicity of parts in a “succession of reasoning.”¹⁹ Another depends instead on the supreme spiritual activity, that of *noûs*, by which the eternal intelligibles are fully apprehended in the indivision of a synthetic vision.²⁰

We must wait for Ammonius, toward the end of the fifth century, to find in extant Neoplatonic texts any detailed treatment of our problematic and the idea that there are nouns and verbs in *logos endiathetos*. Head of Alexandria’s Platonic school for many decades, Ammonius—who we know had studied in Athens with Proclus—would in turn become the source of an impressive intellectual lineage, extending at least as late as the seventh century, in which we must place, notably, Philoponus, Simplicius, and Olympiodorus—each of

16. Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica liber*, ed. L. Deubner (Leipzig: Teubner, 1937), 118. This book, writes one commentator, “does not pretend to give a historical picture of Pythagoras, but a portrait, under his name, of the ideal sage” (Rocca-Serra 1992, 186).

17. Dexippus, *In Aristotelis Categorias*, ed. A. Busse (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1888) (= C.A.G. IV.2), 10 (English translation: *On Aristotle’s Categories*, trans. J. Dillon [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990], 29).

18. Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl (1903–5; repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965), 1:218. It is interesting to note that Proclus, in this passage, associates with his master Syrianus a distinction among three kinds of *logoi*—those of *noûs*, those of science (*epistêmê*), and those of oral communication—which perhaps prefigure the threefold divisions, strongly related to each other, that are found later in John Damascene (as dealt with in chap. 2) and al-Fârâbî (as dealt with later on in this chapter).

19. Proclus, *In Timaeum* II.244 and 246 (English translation: Proclus, *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, trans. D. Runia and M. Share, book 2 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press], 2:87–90).

20. See *ibid.* I.218, and especially II.246–47. The distinction between *logos prophorikos* and *endon logos* is also found, in passing, in III.308.

whom will at some point use the idea of interior discourse (*logos endiathetos*, usually) in their own commentaries on Aristotelian logic.²¹

Ammonius mentions—without explanation—the distinction between two *logoi* (*endiathetos/prophorikos*) in his commentary on the *Categories*, once again in connection with Aristotle's consideration of discrete quantities.²² However, in all that survives from the Greek Neoplatonists, the text that is by far the most explicit on this subject is chapter 1 of Ammonius's commentary on *Perihermeneias*, where he probably follows closely the teaching of Porphyry. It is here that he revives in his turn the enumeration of three discourses in order to explain the use of the demonstrative *ta* in the second sentence of Aristotle's treatise:

these terms [nouns and verbs], as well as the enunciations composed of them, can be considered in three ways: in the soul in their relations to simple thought and discourse that we call *endiathetos*; in oral expression itself; and in writing . . . ; it is thus because . . . nouns and verbs can be considered in three ways like this, according as they are in thought, in speech, or in writing, that he has expressed himself as he did, saying that "those which are in the voice" are symbols of thought [*noêmata*] which is produced in the soul—which he calls equally "passions" [*pathêmata*] . . . —and that in their own turn those which are written are symbols of those which are in the voice.²³

Explaining this passage, Hans Arens asserts that Ammonius speaks here of speech pronounced in silence in a given language.²⁴ This is possible, as we shall see. However, there are insurmountable difficulties in generalizing this thesis. Discursive thought, for Ammonius, is constituted of concepts [*noêmata*] that can be simple or composite and that are signified by spoken expressions.²⁵ Now, these *noêmata* are not in general subject to a particular language: they are intellectual resemblances [*homoioîmata*] of external things (rather than

21. See, particularly, in addition to the texts mentioned in n. 12: John Philoponus, *In Analytica posteriora*, ed. M. Wallies (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1909) (= C.A.G. XIII.3), 130–31; Olympiodorus, *In Categorias*, ed. A. Busse (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1902) (in C.A.G. XII.1), 86 (which follows Ammonius very closely); and Simplicius, *In Categorias* 29 (where the author repeats Porphyry's short commentary literally).

22. Ammonius, *In Aristoteles Categorias* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1895) (= C.A.G. IV.4), 57, (English translation: *On Aristotle's Categories*, trans. S. M. Cohen and G. B. Matthews [London: Duckworth, 1991], 68).

23. Ammonius, *In Arist. De interp.* 22. I use for all citations from this treatise the partial French translation of Ildefonse and Lallot, with occasional light amendments to better bring out the aspects of interest here: cf. Ildefonse and J. Lallot, "Ammonius, Commentaire du Peri Hermeneias, Préambule et chapitres I à V (1–81, 2 Busse)," in *Archives et Documents de la Société d'histoire et d'épistémologie des sciences du langage* (SHESL), seconde série, no. 7 (December 1992): 1–91.

24. Arens 1984, 139.

25. Ammonius, *In Arist. De interp.* 22.

representations of spoken words); they occur naturally in us and are identical for all,²⁶ and do not vary according to the diversity of languages:

It is possible to transcribe the same vocal sounds by different letters . . . and to express the same thoughts [*noêmata*] by different vocal sounds, as is evident from the plurality of languages and the difference of names in a given language (it is thus that the Ancients decided to call Aristocles Plato and Tyrtaeme Theophrastus); but it is impossible to think one and the same thing by means of different thoughts: on the contrary, it is necessary that each thought be an image of the thing of which it is a thought, that it be inscribed in the soul as in a tablet, if it is true that to think is nothing other than to receive or make available the form of the object thought.²⁷

We can hardly attribute to the author of these lines (nor, consequently, to Porphyry) the idea that interior judgments of the human soul generally occur in a particular language. It furthermore emerges, from another passage of the same treatise, that for Ammonius the *logos endiathetos* corresponds precisely to the order of judgments in the soul, which are signified by spoken sentences.²⁸

Must it be understood that interior discourse, although not in any language, is nonetheless structured in grammatical categories—as it is, much later, in the *oratio concepta* of William of Ockham? That would at least be surprising. Certainly there is composition in the concepts, as we have seen; yet in Ammonius's text, as in those of his predecessors, grammatical terms are systematically associated with the order of conventional languages. Does he not write that nouns and verbs are signs and symbols of concepts in the soul, which themselves are not signs but intellectual “images”?²⁹ And does he not, above all, insist that nouns and verbs, unlike concepts that are naturally formed in us, “owe their existence to our invention, all having vocal sound as matter”?³⁰ In the great contrast between what is natural and what is conventional, concepts fall on one side, nouns and verbs on the other.

We must conclude from this that Ammonius's interior discourse—in which beliefs, judgments, and resolutions are formed—is in general composed of concepts. These are intellectual representations naturally impressed upon the mind by exterior things and are not normally divided into nouns and verbs, which in

26. Ibid., 24.

27. Ibid., 20.

28. Ibid. 256. The *logos endiathetos* in these lines is associated with the order of beliefs (*doxai*), which Aristotle compares with spoken discourse in the final chapter of *Perihermeneias*, and which must certainly be counted among those states of the soul “identical for all.”

29. Ibid., 20.

30. Ibid., 22.

turn correspond to conventional signs, which are intended for communication and which vary among different peoples.

What, then, should we do with the doctrine of three discourses? Have we not read plainly and in so many words that there are nouns and verbs in the soul that correspond to “simple thought and the discourse we call *endiathetos*”? Must we see here a simple lapse, an eccentric manner of expression, or carelessness on the part of our authors? It seems to me that this hypothesis is unnecessary and that we should not resort to it except as a last recourse. For there is a solution that ensures the flawless consistency of the thought of Porphyry and Ammonius on this point, even on the terminological level, and that is therefore *prima facie* preferable: *nouns and verbs in the mind* are, in the passages considered here, nothing other than *mental representations* a speaker may form of words in his language; *interior discourse*, however, is not reduced essentially to representations of this sort—far from it.

To support this interpretation, we must first remember what Porphyry taught us: that the distinction of three discourses, with nouns and verbs at each level, is not his invention, but rather came to him from an unnamed Peripatetic source. I wish, in the first place, to advance the hypothesis that this enumeration, in the original version, describes three possible modes of existence of conventional nouns and verbs belonging to a given language. It is merely a commonsense observation, after all, that an English noun such as “horse” or a verb such as “running” can be written, uttered, or simply represented silently in the mind. This hypothesis is simpler, as it happens, since it avoids attributing to its originators a profound terminological rupture with the tradition and only supposes that here they took note of what would have been, even in their age, a perfectly banal phenomenon.

It is possible to think that this is precisely how Porphyry and Ammonius themselves understood the threefold distinction bequeathed to them—which would explain why they felt no need to be more explicit on the subject. Not only did they not advance it as a novelty in need of defense, but nothing here obliged them to provide any detailed explication: neither the entirely normal use of grammatical categories for speaking about conventional discourse nor the passing allusion to a normal and easily observable psychological phenomenon. This hypothesis is made even more probable by the fact that, just a few lines following the enumeration of three discourses, Ammonius furthermore invokes what he calls the “lexical imagination” (*lektikê phantasia*), by which nouns and verbs destined to be uttered are fashioned in the soul.³¹

31. Ibid., 23. Ammonius undoubtedly borrows from Porphyry the expression *lektikê phantasia*, since we find its Latin equivalent (*imaginatio proferendi*) in Boethius’s commentary (*In libr. Arist. Peri Hermeneias*, 6). The original source of this idea of a representation of words in the imagination is probably a short passage in Aristotle’s

None of this implies that *all* human thought must be resolved into a silent discourse enclosed within the limits of a given language. We can, after all, represent words of a language to ourselves internally, just as we can for any other sensible object in our environment, and if there exist in the soul concepts independent of language—as Ammonius also clearly affirms—then nothing prevents us from being able to mentally associate our verbal representations with intellectual contents of this kind—for example, to prepare the utterance of speech. Let us carefully reread the sentence in which the author effects this intriguing connection between grammatical categories and interior discourse. He says there that nouns and verbs can be considered insofar as they exist within the mind “*in their relations with [kata] simple thought and the discourse that is called endiathetos*.”³² All that is required by this claim is that the speaker can form *along with* the concepts of his interior discourse, or *in relation* to them, mental representations of nouns and verbs. Nothing precludes—quite the contrary—that the *logos endiathetos* is composed *also*—or even *principally*—of other concepts, themselves nonlinguistic.

Given the current state of the texts, this interpretation cannot be proven beyond all doubt, but it seems plausible. It does not contradict any known theses of Porphyry and Ammonius, nor does it accord them or their Peripatetic predecessors any eccentric use of the key terms “noun,” “verb,” “concept,” “symbol,” or “sign.” Furthermore, the general conception of *logos endiathetos* that it attributes to them merges seamlessly with the conception we have repeatedly encountered in Greek philosophy from the outset of our inquiry.

THE COMMENTARIES OF BOETHIUS

Boethius, “the last of the Romans,” who died around 525 in the prisons of Theodoric, was a near contemporary of Ammonius. Although the hypothesis that he had been Ammonius’s student has now been abandoned, he nevertheless presents in his Aristotle commentaries a noticeably similar notion of interior discourse, one that also comes to him from developments made by Porphyry, of whom he will subsequently be the principal transmitter for the Latin Middle Ages. To Boethius the medievals owe the use of the term *oratio* for rendering *logos* in this sort of context, a choice that was by no means necessary. Boethius himself explains, in his commentary on the *Categories*, that the

De anima (420b32), which clarifies that there cannot be true oral speech without the accompaniment of some *phantasia* (contrary to what happens, for example, in the case of coughing). Stoics, for their part, spoke of a *logikê phantasia* in relation to their theory of the *lekton* (cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos* 8.70), which may also have favored use of the expression *lektikê phantasia*.

32. Ammonius, *In Arist. De interp.* 22.

Greek word *logos* can signify either the cognition of the soul (*animi cogitatio*) and interior reasoning (*intra se ratiocinatio*), or oral discourse, and that in this text, he reserves the word *oratio* for the latter: “for the Latins, in effect, there is no *oratio* save what is emitted by the voice.”³³ This is quite a striking claim from an author to whom will later be attributed the very idea of an *oratio mentalis*.

It is in his second commentary on the *Perihermeneias* that, resolving to do violence to the language of his fathers, Boethius will explicitly invoke the doctrine of three *orationes* in transposing Porphyry. I cited previously the key text in which he relates—no doubt literally—the argument of his mentor regarding nouns and verbs that “are fashioned by the mind in silence.” However, in the same treatise we find many other passages where Boethius himself endorses the idea of an interior discourse. From such passages it is clear that, for Boethius, the activity in question arises first from the intellect and is not essentially composed of morphemes belonging to one or another language of communication. John Magee, who has also explored this question, is of the contrary opinion,³⁴ but it turns out the texts leave us no choice. From the first explicit appearance of the theme, Boethius unambiguously identifies what he calls “the discourse of the intellect” with states of the soul that, for Aristotle, are signified by oral speech and do not vary with linguistic conventions:

discourse of the voice relates to a discourse of the soul and of the intellect [*animi atque intellectus oratio*], which is produced by silent cogitation. . . . Aristotle says that things and conceptions of the soul—namely that discourse which takes place in concepts [*in intellectibus*—exist naturally because they are identical for all . . . , while other elements—nouns, verbs, and letters—do not exist naturally, but are instituted by convention.³⁵

Interior discourse is composed of concepts (*intellectibus*),³⁶ and these (on this Boethius is as clear as Ammonius was) are in general independent of the words a given people might choose to express them:

For when a Roman, a Greek, and a barbarian see a horse at the same time, they form the same concept [*intellectus*] of it . . . , but the Greek names the horse in one way, and the Roman term which signifies the horse is different,

33. Boethius, *In Categ. Arist.* II, 204A.

34. Magee 1989, chap. 4, “Cogitabilis oratio.”

35. Boethius, *In libr. Arist: Peri Hermeneias*, 24–25.

36. *Ibid.*, 29: “the Peripatetics, inspired by Aristotle, have most justly [*rectissime*] proposed that there are three discourses, one which can be written with letters, another which can be uttered by the voice, and a third which is articulated by thought; and that *one is composed of concepts*, the other of sounds, and the third of letters” (*italics mine*). The same is reaffirmed on 42.

and the barbarian differs from each of these in his way of designating the horse.³⁷

These texts seem to me decisive: the concepts constitutive of *oratio animi* for Boethius cannot be reduced to mental representations of words ready to be uttered.

In support of the contrary interpretation, Magee marshals two principal arguments. The first concerns Boethius's use, on one occasion, of the expression *cogitabilis oratio*, which he thinks calls to mind the possibility of an exterior speech being interiorized, represented silently in thought, and consequently referring to an "internal articulation of one or many words still belonging to a known linguistic medium."³⁸ Yet, for my part, I see nothing in the term *cogitabilis* other than the possibility for some element to become the object of an actual cogitation. Nothing indicates that the movement suggested by the suffix *-abilis* must correspond to interiorization; it suffices that we can associate it with an *actualization*—the passage, for example, of a mental disposition to a treatment in act. As for the second argument—in which Magee sees "the stronger indication" in favor of his reading—it rests on another extract from the second commentary on the *Perihermeneias*, in which Boethius describes the mental progression of the listener, passing (as he comes to understand the words of his interlocutor) "through the same syllables" before grasping, at the end of the process, "the signification in its totality."³⁹ However, nothing in the text in question warrants the identification of this movement of progressive perception with the *oratio animi*, composed of concepts, that is at issue elsewhere; still less does it warrant the reduction of all interior discourse to this type of phenomenon. We may admit that the reception of oral speech supposes that one passes first through the recognition, syllable by syllable, of the words uttered by the speaker; but this is not what Boethius is speaking about in the previously cited passages when he proposes a mental discourse "composed of concepts": these concepts (as he explained to us in so many words with the example of the Greek, the Roman, and the barbarian) must, on the contrary, be independent of the diversity of languages.

As for the notion that there are nouns and verbs in mental language, it should be noted, *pace* Ockham, that this appears only once in all of Boethius's work (whereas his habit is to repeat things, at times *ad nauseam*), and, as we have indicated, this is in the context of a citation of Porphyry, himself reporting a suggestion of the Peripatetics. Everywhere else, Boethius, like Ammonius, only associates nouns and verbs with exterior discourse of the conventional sort. Thus the single occurrence in this text can only be the reemergence, via a

37. *Ibid.*, 21.

38. Magee 1989, 139. See Boethius, *In libr. Arist: Peri Hermeneias*, 44.

39. Boethius, *In libr. Arist: Peri Hermeneias*, 72. This text is cited and used by Magee 1989, 119 and 139.

third party, of a distinction (formerly proposed by some Peripatetic) between the different modes of existence of nouns and verbs. The idea neither plays any doctrinal role nor gives rise to any commentary. The *oratio in animi* of Boethius is composed of concepts, simple or complex, that are signified by words; it is prelinguistic and not conventional and is subject to no grammatical analysis that could be elaborated in any way. This coincides fully with what we have found in Ammonius and must also therefore correspond with the original position of Porphyry.

THE PASSAGE THROUGH ISLAM

After Ammonius and Boethius, the Neoplatonic tradition continued to convey, through commentaries on Aristotelian logic, this same old Greek notion of an interior discourse that is not in any language. We find it in Philoponus, Simplicius, and Olympiodorus.⁴⁰ Two Christian disciples of the latter, Elias and David the Armenian, in their own commentaries on the *Isagoge* or the *Categories*, even associate *logos endiathetos* with the thought—or discourse—of angels, which again confirms its independence, in principle, from the linguistic conventions of human communities.⁴¹ Well into the seventh century, Stephanus, in his *Perihermenias* commentary, continued to distinguish between *logos prophorikos* and *logos endiathetos*, relating the latter to the order of *doxa*;⁴² and the same duality is also transmitted in Greek treatises on rhetoric, until it is encountered again in the Byzantine John Doxapatres in the eleventh or twelfth century. Reflecting on the status of rhetoric as a discipline and on the diverse types of discourse, *logos endiathetos* is defined in the most traditional manner as “human thought [*ennoia*] in virtue of which one determines what is to be said or what is to be done.”⁴³

40. See nn. 12 and 21.

41. Elias, *In Porphyrii Isagogê*, ed. A. Busse (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1990–95) (in C.A.G. XVIII. 1), 29–30. *In Aristotelis Categorias*, ed. A. Busse (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1990) (in C.A.G. XVIII.1), 183 and 191 (attributed to Elias by the editor, this text could also be by David); and David the Armenian, *In Porphyrii Isagogen*, ed. A. Busse (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1904) (C.A.G. XVIII. 2), 211, 20–22.

42. Stephanus, *In librum Aristotelis De interpretatione*, ed. M. Hayduck (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1885) (C.A.G. XVIII.3), 63 and 64.

43. *In Hermogenis Peri stasêon*, ed. H. Rabe, in *Prolegomenon sylloge (Rhetores graeci XVI)* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1931), text 13, 217 (anonymous in Rabe's edition). The same definition of *logos endiathetos* is repeated almost literally in another anonymous commentary on Hermogenes's *Peri stasêon*, edited by Rabe (*Prol. syll.*, text 14, 229) and in the *Lessons on the Art of Oratory* by John Doxapatres (ed. H. Rabe, in *Prol. syll.*, text 9, 122). One of the authors proposes, in another passage, a very similar definition, but with *dianoia* replacing *ennoia* (*In Herm.*, 184). Other occurrences of the expression *logos endiathetos* are found here and there in the corpus of late-Greek rhetoric,

What most concerns our history, however, is that, by way of the Neoplatonic tradition, the notion of interior discourse also reached Islamic philosophy. In Islam's assimilation of Greek science and philosophy from the eighth to the twelfth centuries, Aristotle's *Organon* would indeed quickly come to occupy a special place, attaining the status of instrument *par excellence* for all intellectual inquiry. As they were also translated into Syriac or Arabic, the Neoplatonic commentators were widely exploited for deciphering its sense.⁴⁴

Even limiting ourselves to those Arab writings translated into Latin and known in Europe from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, we clearly recognize echoes of the Greek distinction between *endiathetos* and *prophorikos* in al-Fârâbî's *De scientiis* of the tenth century and in Avicenna's *Isagogê* of the eleventh. Both texts were very influential among the Arabs and, later, the Latins. Al-Fârâbî, in whom the scholar Ibrahim Madkour sees "the father of Islamic philosophy,"⁴⁵ was called "the second Master" by his successors (Aristotle being the first), and Avicenna uses him widely in his own works. His *De scientiis*, which offers a classification and summary of each of the sciences, was adapted into Latin in Toledo by the archdeacon Dominicus Gundissalvi around the middle of the twelfth century and then more fully translated, in the same city, by Gerard of Cremona.⁴⁶ In the very first lines of chapter 2 of the work, dedicated to logic, al-Fârâbî explains that the aim of this art is to provide rules for judging the truth of discourse "within us or for others," and he then specifies, in a typical leitmotif, that the *logos* is double: inscribed in the mind (*logos fixus in mente*, in the Latin version) on the one hand, and uttered by the voice (*exterior in voce*) on the other—which undoubtedly corresponds to the Greek pair with which we are familiar.

Here the distinction arises to help circumscribe the subject of a very special

for example in Trophinius the Sophist, around the sixth century (*Prolegomena eis tê rhêtorikê*, ed. H. Rabe, in *Prol. syll.*, text 1, 7) or again in John Doxapatres (in *Prol. syll.*, text 9, 89–90). It is significant that all of these texts present the standard philosophical notion of *logos endiathetos*, and not the more specific notion one finds in the second century in the great master of rhetoric Hermogenes (dealt with in chap. 2). One of the anonymous commentators, moreover, associates the expression with Theophrastus, perhaps suggesting a Peripatetic origin of the terminology in question (*In Herm.*, 188). On this, see Conley 1994, 225–26.

44. On this subject, see Madkour 1969. Badawi (1968), Peters (1968), and de Libera (1993) offer, in addition, very useful synthetic presentations of the entire question of the transmission of Aristotelianism by the Arabs.

45. Madkour 1934, 10.

46. Gerard of Cremona's translation was edited by A. G. Palencia (al-Fârâbî, *Catalogo de las ciencias* [Madrid: University of Madrid, 1932]), and the adaptation of Dominicus Gundissalvi by M. A. Alonso (Domingo Gundissalvo, *De scientiis* [Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1954]). Here I will cite al-Fârâbî from the Latin text edited by Palencia.

discipline—namely, logic. This discipline aims to provide normative rules of reasoning and demonstration. In other words, it seeks to govern the discursive processes by which we seek to establish, for ourselves or for others, the *truth* of a conclusion not evident by itself—*verificare*, says the Latin text. Interior discourse, in this context, is “the means by which we establish the truth of something for ourselves,” while exterior speech is “the means by which we establish it for others.” The syllogism, for instance, has two modes of existence, depending on whether it is interior or uttered.⁴⁷ The very name of the discipline—the author adds here—comes from the Greek term *logos* (*al-nutq*, in Arabic). This etymological consideration affords him the opportunity to introduce a new distinction among three senses of the term in question, which coincides with what we encountered, in Chapter 2, in John Damascene:

Now, the word was taken by the ancients in three senses. In the first sense, it means exterior discourse produced with the voice: it is this by which language translates what is in the mind. In the second sense, it means discourse fixed in the soul: this is the concepts that words signify. In the third sense, it means the psychic power created in man, by which he exercises a discernment which distinguishes him from animals: this is the power by which man understands concepts, sciences, and arts, and by which deliberation is effected. It is this also by which man discerns between good and bad. And we find it in all human beings.⁴⁸

The first two terms of this triad correspond to *logos prophorikos* and *logos endiathetos*; the addition here is in the third one: namely, the mention of the rational or deliberative faculty (*ratio* for the Latins)—that is, reason. The “discourse fixed in the soul” thus comes out again as an interior deliberation through which reason seeks to support conclusions, whether practical or theoretical.

Interior discourse is moreover identified, just as in Ammonius and Boethius, with “concepts that words signify,” allowing one to think that here also it is taken as in principle independent of the diversity of languages of communication. Logic, admittedly, must propose a set of rules relating to uttered discourse, insofar as it is *also* occupied with argumentation for others, but its task is in principle greater: “this science gives rules for both exterior *logos* and interior *logos*.”⁴⁹ Insofar as it bears on spoken discourse, it is fitting that it take over certain grammatical categories—as Aristotle did with nouns and verbs in the *Perihermeneias*; but it must then limit itself to what diverse languages have in

47. Al-Fârâbî, *Catalogo* 2, 134.

48. Ibid., 136. This passage from al-Fârâbî is repeated almost literally in Domini-cus Gundissalvi's *De divisione philosophiae* (ed. L. Baur, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, IV, 2–3 [Münster: 1903], 77) and in the *Speculum doctrinale* (III.2) of Vincent of Beauvais (Douai: Baltazar Béliet, 1624), 212.

49. Al-Fârâbî, *Catalogo* 2, 136.

common, and this type of analysis, in any case, only ever concerns exterior discourse, forged from words.

Still, in this way we find *indirectly* posited the question of the *structure* of interior discourse. Avicenna, who was much inspired by al-Fârâbî, regularly recalls the theme of the composition of mental judgments at the beginning of his various logical treatises. We see it, for example, in the *Book of Directives and Remarks*:

Every inquiry that has as its object the order of things so as to move from them to other things or, indeed, that has as its object any composition, requires one to know the single elements of which the order and the composition consist, although not in every respect but [only] in that respect by virtue of which the order and the composition consist of them validly. That is why the logician needs to pay attention to certain states of single concepts, and then move from them to pay attention to the states of composition.⁵⁰

In Avicenna's only logical treatise known to the Latin world, which is called his *Isagogê*, the object of logic is said to be rectitude of *locutio interior*, just as the object of grammar is rectitude of spoken discourse.⁵¹ There is no doubt that this interior speech corresponds to the order of mental conceptions, simple and composite, that he described on the preceding page:

one thing can be known in two ways: the first when we understand it alone, in the way that (just as it has a name by which it is called) it is represented in the mind by that "intention" [*intentio*], and there is found there neither truth nor falsity, as when we say "man." . . . And the second when we form in the intellect a belief [*credulitas*], as when we say that all whiteness is an accident.⁵²

These are echoes of *Perihermeneias*. Amplified by the long tradition of commentators, they become especially pronounced in Avicenna's work. Logic is for him first of all a science of *intellectual* composition.

Yet it cannot ignore spoken language. On this subject we find in Avicenna's *Isagogê*—translated into Latin, we recall—a startling passage, in which the idea of an imagined representation of exterior words (already encountered in Ammonius and Boethius) reappears:

50. Ibn Sina (Avicenna), *Remarks and Admonitions*, Part 1, *Logic*, trans. S. C. Inati (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984), 48.

51. Avicenna, *Logyca*, in *Opera philosophica* (1508; repr. Louvain: Éd. de la Bibliothèque, 1961), 3ra. This *Logyca* corresponds to book I (dedicated to the *Isagogê* of Porphyry) of the *Logic* of the *Shifa*, Avicenna's great encyclopedia. The text was translated into Latin in the second half of the twelfth century, probably in Toledo. On this, see the collected articles of M.-Th. D'Alverny 1993, especially chap. 4.

52. Avicenna, *Logyca*, 2ra.

Necessity obliges us to examine words: indeed, the logician, *qua* logician, is not concerned first with words, except for speaking and acting. . . . And if the doctor in that art could reveal in another way what is in his soul, he would dispense with words; but because necessity obliges to act principally with words (reason [*ratio*] in fact cannot compose concepts without uttering words to accompany them [*cum illis*]; cognition, in reality, is like a dialogue between a man himself and what he thinks, with the help of imagined words [*verba imaginata*]), it follows that words have diverse properties by which differ also the properties of the concepts which correspond to them in the soul. And this makes them indexes [*indicia*] that we would not have without words. That is why it is necessary in logic that part of this discipline treats the properties of words.⁵³

This is an exceptionally rich passage. It concerns at once the object of logic as a discipline and the close relations that unite thought and language. Avicenna maintained, in other works, that logic is interested primarily in mental representations of the intellectual order—that is, “second intentions.”⁵⁴ However, he concedes here that *part* of the discipline is nevertheless dedicated to words, insofar as these provide unique and invaluable indications of the structure of intellectual thought: certain distinctions among words reflect and reveal logical distinctions among the concepts that correspond to them.

This conceded necessity of passing through language comes across in Avicenna's text as a sign of human frailty. Ideally, the logician could make due without a study of words; only the contingencies of the human condition prevent that. There are first the requirements of communication: the logician himself is obliged to formulate his teaching in words in order to transmit it. However, there is also something else, something more radical, as is casually revealed in a short digression between parentheses in the Latin text: “reason in fact cannot compose concepts without uttering words to accompany them; cognition, in reality, is like a dialogue between a man himself and what he thinks, with the help of imagined words.” The human mind is too dependent upon the sensible to easily and confidently combine the simple intellectual concepts it is nevertheless able to form. In its discursive operations, it requires the aid of the imagination, where the images of sensible things (including the images of words: *verba imaginata*) are preserved, as well as the aid of another faculty of the sensible soul, which Avicenna elsewhere calls the *cogitative*, that allows the mind to rearrange the images in question into original combinations.⁵⁵ Mental

53. Ibid., 3ra–b.

54. Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina* I.2, ed. G. Verbeke (Louvain: Peeters, 1977), 10; on this subject, see Sabra 1980.

55. On imagination and the cogitative, see in particular *Psychologie d'Ibn Sina (Avicenna): D'après son Œuvre Al-sifa*, vol. 2, French trans. J. Bakos (Prague: Éd. de l'Académie tchecoslovaque des sciences, 1956), especially chap. 2.

deliberation—in humans—first requires that a kind of image of the word be associated with each relevant intellectual concept, such that logical computation can then use it—as like an abacus—to make connections of the logical order more apparent to the eyes of the thinking subject.

The domain of imagined speech, in a scenario like this, is not directly identified with the space of intellectual composition, nor consequently with purely interior discourse. For Avicenna, neither concepts nor judgments can be reduced to verbal images that are merely copies—required, presumably, because the human soul cannot move with sufficient ease among pure intelligibles. The primary locus, the place *par excellence* of logical composition and deliberation, remains the intellect, speculative or practical, as he maintains in chapter 5 of his *De anima* (in the *Shifa*).⁵⁶ Yet by mimicking, in a way more accessible to the senses, logical relations woven by the intellect, language plays an indispensable auxiliary role (in practice if not in principle) for discursive reflection in the embodied soul. The essentially intellectual and prelinguistic nature of mental discourse in its pure state is not called into question, but a more complex and detailed image appears of the concrete psychological process by which human beings reflect and deliberate. The novelty is that the imaginary representations of exterior speech are here accorded the positive role of assisting reasoning. To what extent this is Avicenna's distinctive contribution is obviously difficult to say, but it is the first time that this idea emerges so explicitly in the body of work we have covered so far. The problem of the relations of correspondence between the structure of thought and the structure of exterior language seems now to be posed with greater acuity than ever.

Thus, following our chosen theme, while we find important variations from Porphyry to Avicenna, we are dealing with a relatively homogenous notion transmitted in a continuous movement, particularly through Neoplatonic commentaries on Aristotle's *Organon*. Interior discourse is revealed as essentially composed of concepts, which is to say of intellectual and prelinguistic pictures, formed naturally in the mind to represent exterior things, and signified, as it happens, by oral speech. To be sure, the idea emerges in Avicenna that words, sketched in the imagination, in practice provide humans with indispensable assistance for the mental combination of concepts—and consequently that spoken language constitutes a sort of crutch for reasoning without which the embodied soul would only move clumsily among the intelligibles; but even in Avicenna the interplay of words is derivative. Spoken language would be devoid of sense and value without that underlying and nonconventional intellectual activity that is the proper object of logic and that corresponds to the *logos endiathetos* of Porphyry and Ammonius or the *oratio intellectus* of Boethius.

We are now, at the end of this first part of our inquiry, in a position to

56. Avicenna, *Psychologie* V.1.

put this Neoplatonic thread, continued from the ninth century onward by the Arabs, back into the context of a much longer history, in which we may distinguish two great traditions: the one, properly philosophical, of Greek origin, and the other of theological character and Christian allegiance. The first—to which belongs by all rights the series of texts reviewed in this chapter—ultimately goes back to Plato and Aristotle. It associates—or even identifies, as in the case of Plato—mental discourse with *dianoia*—that is, with deliberative thought whose normal fruition is to take a position (the formation of *doxa*); and, following Aristotle, it sees this as the privileged locus of logical operations and, in particular, of syllogistic reasoning. The “discourse laid out in the interior” is thereby the sequential psychic movement by which a morally and intellectually responsible agent determines for himself, in a rational manner, what he must do or say in a given situation. It is this notion—the notion of a private discursive deliberation, logically articulated and morally responsible, be it practical or theoretical—which in diverse Greek philosophical schools (beginning, in all likelihood, from the second century B.C.) would be conveyed under the label *logos endiathetos*. Originally used as a means for clarification in the context of debate about the rationality of animals, it seems to have enjoyed a revived popularity in the cognitive psychology of the second century A.D., especially in the area of Alexandria and in Smyrna, in Asia Minor. This is what we have found again in the Neoplatonic commentaries on Aristotelian logic and in the Greek rhetorical treatises, as in the writings of Nemesius of Emesa, Ammonius, Boethius, John Damascene, al-Fârâbî, and Avicenna, through whose mediation it will be transmitted to the Latin Middle Ages.

The second, more exclusively theological, tradition also finds its source in the Greek notion of *logos endiathetos*, which at least as early as the first century A.D. began to be regularly employed for the allegorical interpretation of religious stories, notably those concerning the god Hermes. But it only really takes form in the second- and third-century Johannine Christian attempt to render minimally intelligible the assimilation of the divine *Logos* to the incarnate Christ. Appearing hesitantly in Justin—as far as we know—the comparison of God’s immanent Word with man’s interior speech developed by the fifth century, in Augustine, into a highly articulated psychology of the interior man that made a very strong impression on medieval thought. Here the mental word is no longer essentially characterized by rational and structured discursivity, but is an expressive force, a sense-bearing motivating intention that is itself the fruit of an interior generation.

Each of the two branches thus exploits one or another aspect of the Greek idea of *logos*: discursive rationality on the one hand and intentional and creative energy on the other. They occasionally align or meet, but beginning in the fourth century and on through the twelfth, they are transmitted essentially independently. Sometimes the philosophical notion reappears in theologians like Maximus Confessor in the seventh century and John Damascene in the eighth,

but is not used by them directly for theological speculation. As for the Augustinian idea of the mental word, it does not, during this period, have any impact outside Latin Christianity, either in the Greek Neoplatonists—Christian or otherwise—or *a fortiori* in Arabic authors. It is only in the Europe of the twelfth and especially thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that the two encounter each other again and give rise to original and fruitful theoretical problematics.

At that point, their interpenetration will be greatly facilitated by the fact that the two traditions, however divergent and independent, both posited that the discourse of thought (or mental word) is in principle (if not always in practice) preliminary to the use of languages of communication and signified or revealed from the outside by spoken words or syllables and by sounds varying according to peoples. It is possible that more ancient authors had not always been clear enough to establish (or not establish) the distinction between interior discourse, properly speaking, and the act of speaking silently to oneself in a given language. But the great majority of available clues in Greek philosophy beginning with Aristotle suggest a dissociation of the two phenomena, as, for example, in Philo of Alexandria, Claude Ptolemy, Plotinus, Ammonius, and Boethius; Augustine, at any rate, is absolutely clear on this subject. Finally, in both approaches the silent representation of oral speech pertains to the *imagination* and not the intellect: Augustine speaks of unrolling images and sounds in himself, while Aristotle's commentators, following Porphyry, invoke on this matter a sort of verbal imagination: *lektikê phantasia* for Ammonius or *imaginatio proferendi* for Boethius.⁵⁷ But genuine mental discourse itself is more pure; properly speaking, for philosophers as well as for Christians, it belongs to the intellect or to the spiritual soul. Perhaps more focused reflection on the interaction between the two orders, such as sketched by Avicenna in his *Isagogê* on the auxiliary role of imagined speech in logical composition, may have opened the way for a more precise approach to the relations between thought and language—especially regarding their isomorphism; nonetheless, all of them maintained a wholly nonlinguistic conception of interior discourse. Since Plato, grammatical categories, especially those of noun and verb, remained associated with the contingencies of communication and not with the intimate structures of deliberation.

All through the long period we have examined so far, there was no conceptual apparatus available for addressing—or even formulating—the problem of the semantic composition of thought (raised in Chapter 1 in relation to Aristotle). We do arrive—with Avicenna, especially—at the idea that *linguistic* structure must for the logician reveal *intellectual* structure; but neither in the long tradition of *Organon* commentaries nor even in the tradition of Christian psychology does the compositionality of thought appear to be made the ob-

57. Averroes also made the connection between language and imagination in his long commentary on *De anima* (II.90).

ject of any more precise or more clear analysis than what Aristotle sketched in book H of the *Metaphysics* (1051b3–4): an elementary mental judgment is true if and only if what is represented by the subject concept is one in reality (or is separate, if the judgment is negative) with what is represented by the predicate concept. From a retrospective view that adopts, as we have resolved to do, the perspective of the terminist logic of the fourteenth century, this can only appear very rudimentary. Aristotelian logic implies, we have seen, that interior discourse, formed by the combination of concepts, be subjected to what we today call the “principle of compositionality,” which holds that the truth-value of elementary judgments is a function of the semantic properties of the simple concepts of which they are composed. But it does not provide any theoretical taxonomy for the properties in question. Subsequent reflections on the mind’s operations, on the status of logic, and on relations of thought and language were able, especially in the Islamic philosophers, to make the phenomenon of logical composition still more prominent; but still, before the twelfth century, such reflections do not seem to have given rise to the elaboration of new theoretical tools specifically adapted to the analysis of the extramental reference of interior concepts. No semantics for the language of thought had yet been proposed, either by philosophers or, *a fortiori*, by theologians.

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PART II

THIRTEENTH-CENTURY

CONTROVERSIES

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CHAPTER FIVE

TRIPLE IS THE WORD

From here, our history takes a new turn. The theme of interior discourse, or mental speech, played a significant role in certain major discussions in Greco-Latin antiquity (on the rationality of beasts, notably, and on the divinity of Christ); but it had not itself become the object of any controversy explicit enough to give rise to overt theoretical debate. It's not as if there were complete consensus on the issue: on the contrary, we saw diverse traditions form, as well as a major rift between the philosophical notion (of Platonic-Aristotelian inspiration) and the Augustinian notion (colored by Judeo-Christian spirituality). But these differences were never debated. The precise theoretical status of mental language had not yet been perceived as a *problem* about which one might develop arguments. Precisely this is what happened, in various ways, in the last decades of the thirteenth century in the European universities—those new (and in many respects even revolutionary) academic institutions where argumentative discussion was the daily bread. The three following chapters will be dedicated to examination of these university polemics, wherein were problematized such issues as the ontological status of the mental word—ardently discussed at the end of the thirteenth century and beginning of the fourteenth (Chapter 6)—the relation between the sign and the interior concept—a *magna altercatio*, according to Duns Scotus (Chapter 7)—and, crucial for our study, the very object of logic as a scientific discipline (Chapter 8).

For each of these there is abundant evidence in the rich Scholastic literature of *Summas*, Questions, and Commentaries. Here there will be no pretense of attempting exhaustive treatment. In each case we will consider only some of the most representative and revealing texts in order to discern those clashing ideas and shifting stakes that, especially during the time between Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham, prepare the way for the elaboration of a highly articulated notion of an interior language subject to grammatical and semantic categories.

However, before coming to this, I wish in the present chapter to retrace the principal doctrinal threads that ensured the persistence of our theme in the Latin West from the eleventh century to approximately the middle of the thirteenth and outline the most prominent forms that reference to mental language took during this period. To this end, we will stop first at Anselm of Canterbury's *Monologion*, written around 1070; certain of its very Augustinian passages were regularly cited by Scholastics on this topic. Following this, we will see, on the basis of these texts by Anselm (as well as others, already indicated, by Boethius,

Damascene, and al-Fārābī), various classifications—strikingly, nearly always threefold classifications—of different senses of the word *verbum*; such classifications helped spread, from its originally theological context, the Augustinian distinction between the mental word properly so called and silent discourse conducted in the imagination in a given language. The final section will be dedicated to the introduction (around the middle of the thirteenth century), especially in the theorization of grammar, of a new notion of mental discourse (*sermo in mente* or *sermo internus*), this time corresponding to the representation of spoken words *in the intellect* and no longer only in the imagination.

ANSELM'S AUGUSTINIANISM

Directly inspired by Augustine's *De Trinitate*, Anselm, at the dawn of the great Scholastic period, revisits the idea of the mental word in his *Monologion*.¹ Chapter 10, dedicated to the preexistence of creatures in God's thought, became very influential on this subject. It is worth citing a long extract:

Now what is that form of things that existed in his reason before the things to be created, other than an utterance of those things (*locutio rerum*) in his reason, just as, when a craftsman is going to make some work of his art, he first says it within himself by a conception of his mind? Now by an "utterance" of the mind or reason (*locutio mentis sive rationis*), I do not mean what happens when one thinks (*cogitantur*) of the words that signify those things, but what happens when the things themselves (no matter whether they are yet to exist or already exist) are examined within the mind by the gaze of thought (*acie cogitationis*).

For we know from frequent experience that we can say one and the same thing in three ways. For we say a thing either by making perceptible use of perceptible signs, i.e., signs that can be perceived by the bodily senses; or by thinking imperceptibly within ourselves the very same signs that are perceptible when they are outside ourselves; or by not using these signs at all, whether perceptibly or imperceptibly, but rather by saying the things themselves inwardly in our mind by either a corporeal image (*corporum imaginatio*) or an understanding of reason (*rationis intellectus*) that corresponds to the diversity of the things themselves.

...

Each of these three kinds of utterance is composed of (*constat*) its own kind of word (*verba*). But the words of the kind of utterance that I put third

1. Anselm, *Monologion*, ed. F. S. Schmitt, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1946), chaps. 10, 31–33, and 48; see also *Proslogion*, chap. 4f. I will use, with occasional amendment, the English translation in Anselm, *Monologion and Proslogion with the Replies of Gaunilo and Anselm*, trans. T. Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996).

and last, when they are about things that are not unknown, are natural; they are the same among all peoples. . . . No other word seems as similar to the thing of which it is a word, or expresses it in the same way, as the likeness (*similitudo*) that is expressed in the gaze of the mind of someone who is thinking of the thing itself. And so that should by right be called the most proper and principal word for the thing (*verbum rei*).²

Augustine's influence on these lines is evident. To be sure, they are not the work of a mere compiler. Anselm does not merely reproduce the text of his mentor; he reformulates and reorganizes things in his own way. Still, in its essentials the doctrine is that of *De Trinitate*. The threefold distinction in particular is strongly inspired by it, even if it is not found there in that form. Anselm indeed acknowledges, first, exterior speech composed of sensible signs; second, the representation of these signs in the mind; and third, the mental word, which is of no language—notions all familiar to the reader of Augustine's great treatise.

To be sure, in book IX of *De Trinitate*, Augustine had proposed a slightly different enumeration:

For we use the term "word" in one sense, when we speak of words which fill a determined space of time with their syllables, whether they are spoken or simply thought; in a different sense, when everything that is known is called a word impressed on our mind . . . even though the thing itself displeases us; and in still another sense when that which is conceived by the mind pleases us.³

However, Anselm's list is easily obtained from this—on the one hand, by redoubling the first term in the sense indicated by Augustine himself; and, on the other hand, by giving up the third and leaving aside, at least in this context, the distinction between knowledge accompanied by and not accompanied by love. The first operation is suggested by Augustine in these very lines when he invokes the syllables *whether . . . spoken aloud or merely thought*, and is encouraged—even imposed—by the rest of *De Trinitate*, especially the fifteenth book, where the opposition between the word belonging to no language and the thought "which turns over the images of sounds in itself" (XV.19) becomes salient. As for the second transformation, it comes down to discreetly leaving out the Augustinian reference to love (*cum amore notitia*), a reference that, without being repudiated by Anselm, could well appear irrelevant to him in his own context, a complication he could do without.

Moreover, within the very mental word properly so called—which is of no language—the distinction drawn out by Anselm between corporeal images

2. Anselm, *Monologion*, chap. 10 (Williams trans. with a minor emendation, 23–24).

3. Augustine, *De Trinitate* IX.15 (English translation: *On the Trinity*, ed. G. B. Matthews, trans. S. McKenna [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 36–37).

of exterior things and rational concepts can itself be referred to the bishop of Hippo. I cited, in a previous chapter, a passage from book VIII of *De Trinitate*, where it was a sensible image—*phantasia*, or sometimes *phantasma*—that was initially identified with the word within me: “For its image [*phantasia*] in my mind is its word.”⁴ We have also seen that Augustine, in the end, included in mental speech—and even prioritized—representations much less bound to the body and more properly rational or spiritual. Anselm, as a good Augustinian, was justified in making himself explicit about this duality. In this way, even before the appearance of Arab Aristotelianism in the West, Anselm is seen to bring out the specific role of *imagination* in the Augustinian theory of the word: not only does it allow for the representation of external words themselves (as we found, albeit less clearly, in Boethius and Ammonius), but it also provides to the mental word properly so called certain prelinguistic components: “corporeal images” of exterior things. Mental speech, in Anselm’s Augustinianism, is conscious thought in all its richness: it is composed of concepts, to be sure, but also of sensible images.

As for the expression *verbum rei*, which the *Monologion* introduces here and which will recur in thirteenth-century Scholasticism, this corresponds quite closely to the way Augustine expressed himself in certain passages of *De Trinitate*. We read, for example, in book VIII, that the image of Carthage within me is its word (*verbum eius*): it is the word of Carthage, then, the word of the thing itself. The phrase *verbum rei* does not occur here as such, but we come very close: the relation between speech and its referent is indicated in the same manner in these passages by a rather special use of the genitive following *verbum* to designate the referent of speech rather than its speaker.⁵ Anselm employs *verbum rei* to recall that the word is always related to something other than itself: “every word is a word of a thing [*verbum rei*],” he says a little later, in a striking formulation of what we today call a “principle of intentionality.”⁶ He wishes to insist on the fact that it is the thing itself that is in some way presented to the mind when we think: “we say interiorly the things themselves.”⁷ In all this, he follows in Augustine’s footsteps, despite some nuances of vocabulary and presentation.

This does not mean that there are no other recognizable sources of the ideas

4. Ibid., VIII.9 (15).

5. In the *Homilies on the Gospel of John* (XIV.7), Augustine identifies the word with a *conceptio rei* (English translation: *Homilies On the Gospel of John*, trans. J. Gibb, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* [New York: Christian Literature, 1888], 96).

6. Anselm, *Monol.*, chap. 32; see also chap. 38: “After all, the Word’s being a word or image implies a relationship to another: he must be the word or image of *something*” (Williams trans., 58).

7. Ibid., chap. 10.

expressed in chapter 10 of the *Monologion*. The identification of the units of mental language with natural “resemblances” of things, identical for all, has a clearly Aristotelian ring to it. The conjunction of the three ideas of epistemological resemblance, of natural rather than conventional representations, and of an identity of these representations across the human species inevitably calls to mind the beginning of the *Perihermeneias* and its commentary by Boethius, texts with which Anselm was certainly familiar.⁸ In identifying Augustine’s mental word with the *similitudines* of *Perihermeneias* (in Boethius’s translation), our theologian, nourished on dialectic, proposes in these lines an integration, at least a partial synthesis, of the two traditions we have so far recognized on the subject of interior language. Here it is Augustinianism that integrates Greek philosophical teaching, and not the other way around: in Anselm, the Augustinian doctrine provides a framework for the theory of knowledge and mind and determines what must be retained from Aristotle in these areas and what can be left aside. The logical composition of thought, prominent in the Greek and Arab commentators on the *Organon*, is briefly invoked through use of the verb *constare* (“these three sorts of language are each composed from their proper speech”): the different *similitudines*, for Anselm, should be able to be combined with each other in the mind. However, the logical organization of these arrangements is simply not his concern.

THE PLAY OF TRIADS

Proposed by Augustine and endorsed by Anselm, the doctrine of the mental word firmly established itself in the discourse of medieval theology. From the twelfth century, it is common currency in discussions of the divine Trinity, and most of the time it is obviously the Augustinian idea we thus find repeated. Abelard, for example, between 1120 and 1140, occasionally appeals on the theological level to a *verbum intellectuale*, which he compares, following his two illustrious predecessors, to the interior speech of God, the *locutio intellectualis Dei*.⁹ His contemporary and follower of the great Bernard of Clairvaux, William of Saint-Thierry, speaks in his *Enigma fidei* of a word *in interiore cordis* “with neither voice nor syllables,” which is recognizably Augustinian.¹⁰ Hugh

8. Isaac 1953, 47ff.

9. Abelard, *Introductio ad theologiam* I.11, *PL* 178, 966; see also I.14, *PL* 1004; and Abelard, *Theologia scholarium* I.62–63, ed. E. M. Buytaert and C. J. Mews, in *Petri Abaelardi Opera theologica* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), 3:342–43. Abelard also invokes, but very briefly, the idea of *oratio intellectualis* in his *Glossae in Categorias*, in connection with Aristotle’s passage, frequently encountered in our inquiry to this point, on the *oratio* as discrete quantity (cf. P. Abelardo, *Scritti filosofici*, ed. M. Dal Pra [Rome: Fratelli Bocca, 1954], 66).

10. William of Saint-Thierry, *Enigma fidei* 91, in *Deux traités sur la foi: Le Miroir de la foi; L’Énigme de la foi*, ed. and French trans. M.-M. Davy (Paris: Vrin: 1959), 170.

of Saint-Victor, around the same period, literally cites the adage from *De Trinitate*: “The word which is uttered externally is the sign of the word which shines within, to which belongs especially the name ‘word.’”¹¹ And it is again Augustinianism that animates the trinitarian reflection on this question a little later for Richard of Saint-Victor, in whom we even find timidly reintroduced the (quite recognizable) theme of a word that “pleases”—or, if we prefer, of amorous knowledge.¹²

There is a fair consensus among theologians here, and the Augustinian notion of a mental speech has not yet become the object of any significant open disagreement in the twelfth century. Augustine’s authority is combined with the prestige of the Fourth Gospel to make the word *verbum* a key term in the theology of the schools, accepted by all. Peter Lombard’s famous treatise, the *Sentences*, circa 1155, gives it a place among the divine names and cites Augustine’s *De Trinitate* in this connection.¹³ Peter’s compilation, as we know, will become the basic manual for theological teaching in the universities of the following century, such that each doctor in this subject will have had to have commented on it over the course of two years before groups of students. Distinction 27 of the first book will become, in this burgeoning of *Sentences* commentaries, the *locus classicus* for discussions of the mental word in theological contexts.

The question that was posed by these thirteenth-century Latin academics, being the meticulous analysts that they were, was precisely what sense must be given the term *verbum* such that it may be so applied to the Son of God. In their eyes, this first required enumeration of its various possible senses within the domain of terrestrial realities. Chapter 10 of Anselm’s *Monologion* conveniently provided the topic with a threefold taxonomy that met expectations: *tripliciter loqui possumus*—“we can speak in three different ways of the same thing.”¹⁴ This passage enjoyed attention and would be revisited by the greatest theologians of the age. Yet Anselm’s distinction was hardly the only one in the marketplace of ideas. Boethius, John Damascene, and al-Fârâbi, in writings all available in the twelfth century, also advanced similar, but not equivalent, threefold classifications. What happened with them? From this knot we will now seek to untangle some threads. We will see the rival triads mingling, interacting, and sometimes fusing in a close-knit network woven from one text to another, with Anselm and Augustine holding the privileged positions: an interplay that well

11. Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De sacramentis* 2.XVIII.19, PL 176, 616B; See also Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De sacram.* 1.III.20, “De verbo extrinseco et intrinseco” (PL 176, 255).

12. Richard of Saint-Victor, *De Trinitate* VI.12, in *La Trinité*, ed. and French trans. G. Salet (Paris: Cerf, 1959), 406.

13. Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae* I, dist. 27, chap. 3 (Rome: Coll. Saint-Bonaventure, 1971), 206–7.

14. Anselm, *Monol.*, chap. 10.

reveals, it seems to me, the interacting lines of transmission in the case of the mental word.

First, Boethius's threefold *oratio*—written, spoken, and mental—will be mentioned frequently in the final decades of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth—especially by arts masters, for example, in their commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories* or *Perihermeneias*; Ockham refers to it in the very first lines of his *Summa of Logic*. However, until at least the middle of the thirteenth century, while the trio of written, spoken, and mental was known, it remained unobtrusive, even in the arts faculty.¹⁵ We must point out the noteworthy case of William of Auvergne around the year 1220, who appeals to this tradition, in his *De universo*, to enumerate the three senses, not of *oratio*, but of *verbum* (!)—thus establishing the connection between Augustine and Boethius:

The word is said according to three senses. In the first sense, it means that intellectual word [*verbum intellectuale*], which is normally called the mental word [*verbum in mente*]; and this is nothing other than the image or resemblance [*similitudo*] understood and thought of the exterior thing, which is produced as an effect in the mirror of the soul. . . . In the second sense, it means the written mark . . . and this is what is normally called the word in writing [*verbum in scripto*]. In the third sense, it is the audible word, which is normally called the spoken word [*verbum in ore*].¹⁶

William of Auvergne is seen by scholars as someone who wished to integrate Augustinian theology with the psychology of Arab Aristotelianism, especially

15. We find mention of the Boethian triad in a grammatical context—for example, in Robert Kilwardby's commentary on the *Ars major* of Donatus (*In Donati Artem maiorem III*, ed. L. Schmücker [Brixen: A. Weger, 1984], 22–23) and in the commentary on the *Priscian Major* by the Pseudo-Kilwardby ("The Commentary on *Priscianus Maior* Ascribed to Robert Kilwardby," ed. K. M. Fredborg et al., *Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen Age grec et latin* 15 [Copenhagen: 1975], 10). We also encounter it in an anonymous treatise on *insolubilia*, which apparently dates to the middle of the thirteenth century (H. A. G. Braakhuis, "The Second Tract on *Insolubilia* Found in Paris, B.N. lat. 16. 617: An Edition of the Text with an Analysis of its Contents," *Vivarium* 5 [1967]: 135). It is not in play, on the other hand, in influential commentaries on the *Perihermeneias*, neither that by Robert Kilwardby himself (cf. Lewry 1978), nor by Albert the Great (*Liber I Perihermeneias*, ed. S. C. A. Borgnet, in *Opera omnia* 1 [Paris: Vivès, 1890]), nor by Nicolas of Paris (ms. Vat. lat. 3011, fol. 21–38) around the middle of the thirteenth century, no more than in the commentary by Abelard more than a century earlier (P. Abelardo, *Scritti filosofici*, 69–153), or in that by Peter of Ireland, who was one of Thomas Aquinas's masters (ms. Vat. lat. 5988, fol. 82–108).

16. William of Auvergne, *De universo* I.20, in *Opera omnia*, ed. B. Le Feron (Paris: 1674; repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1963), 613b.

that of Avicenna and al-Fârâbi.¹⁷ We can now see that his ecumenical enterprise also takes into account the traditional logical teaching of Boethius. The Augustinian notion of the mental word, which our author pointedly endorses in his own *De Trinitate*,¹⁸ is found in these lines from *De universo* cast in a distinctly Boethian mold. The approach is, to my knowledge, exceptional in the first half of the thirteenth century.

As for al-Fârâbi, let us remember that he distinguished in order: vocal discourse; discourse fixed in the soul (without doubt, a transposition of the Greek *logos endiathetos*); and reason itself, "the natural psychic power created in man, by which he exercises a discernment which distinguishes him from other animals."¹⁹ His *De scientiis*, where this enumeration figures, was available in Latin from the middle of the twelfth century, and the same list passed from there in its entirety into some other treatises. Al-Fârâbi's development is literally repeated in the chapter on logic in Dominicus Gundissalvi's *De divisione philosophiae*, in the second half of the twelfth century, and around the year 1240, in the *Speculum doctrinale* by Vincent of Beauvais, who followed the Spanish archdeacon very closely.²⁰ In both cases, however, it is the Greek word *logos* that is used and not its usual Latin version *verbum*; it would not occur to a Latin author to call the rational faculty, taken in itself, *verbum*. This probably explains why the Farabian triad suffered a humbler fate compared with that of Anselm or Boethius. It operated on a less natural relationship for the Latins and neglected the opposition of spoken and written, as well as that of spoken and imagined, word, to which minds had been sensitized by Aristotelianism and Augustinianism.

On the other hand, John Damascene's formulation, which has seemed to us equivalent in content to al-Fârâbi's, nonetheless enjoyed a more celebrated fate. In addition to the word of God, it distinguishes, we recall, three other senses of the Greek term *logos*: the natural movement of the mind "by which it moves and thinks and reasons" (i.e., the rational faculty, probably, as in al-Fârâbi); the *logos endiathetos*, enunciated in the heart; and the spoken *logos*, which is the "messenger of thought."²¹ Around the middle of the thirteenth century, theo-

17. On the "Avicennian Augustinianism" of William of Auvergne, see especially: de Vaux 1934; Switalski 1976; Marrone 1983.

18. William of Auvergne, *De Trinitate* 16–19, ed. B. Switalski (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1976), 98–111. I will return in Chapter 7 to the idea of interior discourse in William of Auvergne.

19. Al-Fârâbi, *Catalogo de las ciencias* (Madrid: University of Madrid, 1932), 2:136.

20. Dominicus Gundissalvi, *De divisione philosophiae*, ed. L. Baur, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, 4.2–3 (Münster: 1903), chap. "De logica," 77–78; and Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum doctrinale* 3.2 (Douai: Baltazar Béliet, 1624), 212.

21. John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* I.13, ed. E. M. Buytaert (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1955), 62.

logians knew and used this text. Thus for these authors the problem arose of how to reconcile John Damascene's division with Anselm's, which they invoke much more readily.

Alexander of Hales, for example, employs both lists, but without bothering to compare them. He mentions Damascene's triad in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, one of the earliest of the genre, from the 1220s,²² and then turns instead to that of Anselm in his *Quaestiones*, whose passage will be repeated around 1240–45 in the great Franciscan *Summa* that tradition associates with the name of Alexander: "I say that the word is understood in three senses," he declared, before citing Anselm in entirety, and by name.²³ Bonaventure—who is Augustinian enough to endorse the definition from *De Trinitate*: *verbum est cum amore notitia*²⁴—knew Damascene's work well but, concerning the diverse senses of *verbum*, chose instead to invoke Augustine's *De Trinitate*, which he read, on this point, in light of Anselm:

there is a resemblance between the created and uncreated word: this is what Saint Augustine suggests in Book XV of *De Trinitate*, when he distinguishes three senses of *verbum*. There is, indeed, the sensible word, the intelligible word, and, third, the intermediate word [*verbum medium*]. The sensible word has place in spoken utterance, the intelligible word in thought of the thing [*cogitatio rei*], and the intermediate word in the thought of the word [*cogitatio vocis*]. And such order is good, for a man thinks first of what is, and second of how he must pronounce [*pronunciare*] what he thinks, and third, he pronounces it.²⁵

Sensible word, intelligible word, and intermediate word: Bonaventure finds in Augustine, under a slightly different vocabulary, exactly the same triad as Anselm, whose *Monologion* he uses so much in those important pages of his *Commentary on the Sentences* on the question of the Word. There we find the same insistence on the fact that it is the thing itself that is "thought" in the men-

22. Alexander of Hales, *Glossa in quatuor libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi* I, dist. 10, n. 6 (Quaracchi: Coll. Saint-Bonaventure, 1951), 130–31. On the dating of Alexander's work, see van Steenberghen 1991, 145–46 and 154–55.

23. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica* I.419, ed. B. Klumper (Quaracchi: Coll. Saint-Bonaventure, 1924), 610–11. A large part of this text is repeated in Alexander's *Quaestiones disputate* "Antequam esset frater," q. 9, disp. 1, membrum 1 (Quaracchi: Coll. Saint-Bonaventure, 1960), 80–82.

24. Bonaventure, *In Quatuor libris Sententiarum* I, dist. 27, pars II, quest. 1, in *Opera omnia* (Quaracchi: Coll. Saint-Bonaventure, 1882), 1:481.

25. Bonaventure, *In Sent. I*, dist. 27, pars II, q. 4, 489. Bonaventure also develops the theme of the interior word in several other places, especially in questions 1 to 3 of the same article, as well as in the *De reductione artium ad theologiam* 16 (*Opera omnia* [Quaracchi: 1891, 5:323]) and in his second sermon *De Nativitate Domini* (*Opera omnia* [Quaracchi: 1901], 9:106–10).

tal word; and we find the same recourse, without seeing any problem in it, to the notion that the word is nevertheless a “resemblance or image of something knowable” (*similitudo vel imago alicuius cognoscibilis*), an idea Bonaventure explicitly attributes to St. Anselm.²⁶

It was the Dominican Albert the Great who, toward the end of the 1240s, raised the question of reconciling the authorities on this point. In his own *Commentary on the Sentences*, he advances four ways of dividing the different senses of *verbum*:²⁷ that of Augustine in book IX of *De Trinitate*—a text I have cited previously and that offers, according to Albert, a fourfold distinction;²⁸ that of Damascene, which is already familiar to us;²⁹ that of a certain treatise *Super Ioannem*, which distinguishes, in an Augustinian way, between the word of the heart (*verbum cordis*), the word that contains the “image of the voice” (*imago vocis*), and the spoken word;³⁰ and then a last that he attributes to certain *magistri* and that also corresponds (although Anselm is not named) to Anselm’s triad: *verbum rei*, *verbum vocis*, and *verbum speciei vocis*—the only significant difference being the introduction of the term *species* in the third member, the representation of the word. Comparing them, Albert maintains that all of these divisions come to nearly the same thing. The only distinctive feature he finds is that Augustine, in *De Trinitate*, subdivides the mental word into “pleasing knowledge and non-pleasing knowledge, which the others do not do.” For the rest, it is the Anselmian triad, found in Augustine, in the *Super Ioannem*, and in

26. Bonaventure, *In Sent. I*, dist. 27, pars II, q. 2, 485. Anselm expounds this doctrine of the word as *similitudo* or *imago* in chapters 31 to 33 of the *Monologion*. See also Bonaventure, *In Sent. I*, dist. 27, pars II, q. 3: “The word is in fact nothing other than a similitude expressed and expressive, conceived by the power of the mind which understands” (488).

27. Albert the Great, *In I Sententiarum*, dist. 27, art. 7, ed. S. C. A. Borgnet, in *Opera omnia* (Paris: Vivès, 1893), 26:46–47.

28. Augustine, *De Trinitate* IX.15.

29. Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* I.13.

30. This *Super Ioannem* is certainly very Augustinian. It may even be a text of Augustine himself. The distinction that concerns us could in fact be taken—although the vocabulary is not found there as such—from tract 14 of the *Homilies on the Gospel of John*: “when thou conceivest a word to utter, thou meanest to utter a thing, and the very conception of the thing is already a word in thy heart. . . . But thou considerest the person to whom it is to come forth, with whom thou art to speak: if he is a Latin, thou seekest a Latin expression; if a Greek, thou thinkest of Greek words . . . but the conception itself was bound by no tongue in particular” (Gibb trans., 96r). Peter of Falco, in the second half of the thirteenth century, finds in this tract a slightly different triad of senses of *verbum*: “According to Augustine in tract 14 of his *Super Ioannem*, the word is triple, namely the spoken word . . . , the mental word, which is interior . . . and the word of God the Father, which is eternal” (*Quaestiones disputatae de quodlibet* I, q. 1, ed. A. J. Gondras, *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 33 [1966]: 133).

the *magistri*, that dominates. This involves forcing an interpretation on Damascene's text that identifies his *logos endiathetos* with the imagined word of the three others and what he calls the "natural movement of the mind," his "radiance," with the *verbum cordis* of Augustinianism rather than with the natural light of reason, as in al-Fārābi:

what Augustine calls the word that has syllables but is not pronounced is the same as what Damascene, in the second division, says is enounced in the heart; and that is the same as that which contains the image of the voice, according to the third division [that of the *Super Ioannem*], and this is identified by the fourth [that of the *magistri*] with the *species vocis*. . . . As for what Augustine calls the word imprinted in the mind, namely, knowledge without representation of words and without oral speech, which, before the word is uttered, is found in the one who meditates or thinks, it is this which Damascene, in the second division, calls movement or light of intelligence, and which is found in the third division under the name *verbum cordis* and in the fourth division under the name *verbum rei*, because in this word there is nothing more than the thing said.

Damascene is thus reinterpreted in light of Augustine and Anselm.

In his *Summa theologiae*, some twenty years later, Albert comes to the same conclusion regarding the "multiplicity of the word."³¹ This time, he invokes analogous triads that he finds in Jerome and Basil, but above all cites *in extenso* and comments in detail on the very lines from the *Monologion* wherein Anselm proposes the trio *verbum vocis*, *verbum imaginationis*, and *verbum rei*; in the end, it is this enumeration to which the others reduce—again including Damascene's list, which, Albert writes, "comes to nearly the same."

Thomas Aquinas follows Albert faithfully here and reads the reference to *logos endiathetos* in *De fide orthodoxa* in the same way. His *Commentary on the Sentences* in the 1250s, manifestly inspired on this point by Albert's, also cites Damascene, Augustine, and a "certain ordinary Gloss on the Gospel of John," reconciling them in the same manner.³² The enumeration of three words, already posed in this commentary, is also found in his *De veritate* as well as in his

31. Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I, tract. 8, q. 35, III.1, ed. D. Siedler et al., *Opera omnia* 34.1 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978), 269–71.

32. Aquinas, *In I Sententiarum*, dist. 27, q. 2, art. 1, ed. R. P. Mandonnet (Paris: Le Thielleux, 1929), 653. Jordan (1986, 216 n12) notes regarding this text that the distinction assigned by Thomas to a *glossa ordinaria super Ioannem* is not found in the compilation of glosses on sacred scripture to which was especially attached the title *Glossa ordinaria* in the thirteenth century, and that was (wrongly) attributed to the Benedictine monk Walafrid Strabo (the text of which is published in *PL* 113). However, it is probable that Thomas Aquinas does nothing here but repeat, without proper verification, the reference of Albert the Great to a certain commentary *Super Ioannem*.

influential *Summa theologiae*³³ and spreads from these to other treatises directly influenced by Aquinas, such as the *Sentences* commentaries by Richard Middleton and John of Paris.³⁴ The vocabulary varies somewhat from one occurrence to another, but at base the distinction is the same in each of these texts. It is the distinction Anselm, two centuries earlier, had drawn from Augustine: that between the spoken word itself, its representation in the imagination, and, distinct from both of these, the mental word properly so called, which is of no language—in Middleton's terminology, *verbum sensibile*, *verbum imaginabile*, and *verbum intelligibile*.

This whirlwind of triads reveals the triumph of the Augustinian doctrine of the mental word as reread through the *Monologion*. It is true that Aristotelianism had also been called upon by Anselm, when he identified the mental word with the natural "resemblances," identical for all, found in the *Perihermeneias*—an assimilation that under one form or another most authors would subsequently endorse. However, the Augustinian ideas, originally developed in a theological context and repeated for the same purposes by the Scholastics, provided interior speech with the mandatory framework into which Aristotle himself could be integrated. The distinction between imagined speech (which is interior but composed of syllables) and the mental word (prior to all languages) is omnipresent by the middle of the thirteenth century among theologians who consider the question—even more universally accepted indeed than the distinction between spoken and written, prominently proposed in Boethius's second commentary on the *Perihermeneias*. As for John Damascene's distinction (which seemed to us at root the same as that of al-Fârâbi), beginning with Albert the Great in the 1240s it is subjected to a reinterpretation that subsumes it under Anselm's triad and forces an identification of its *logos endiathetos* with imagined speech rather than with the mental word in the proper sense.

The role attributed to imagination in this context must be seen as reminiscent of Augustinianism and the *Monologion* rather than an original contribution of Greco-Arab psychology. The *De anima*, evidently, with the correspond-

33. Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 4 ("De verbo"), art. 1: "there is found in the speaker a triple word" (*Opera omnia* 22 [Rome: Leonine ed., 1970], 1.2:120); and *ST I*, q. 34, art. 1: "it must be known that the word in us is understood in three ways"; ed. Marietti (Turin: 1938), 234. Thomas, in this latter text, also cites the passage from Damascene's *De fide orthodoxa* that is familiar to us and again interprets it as had Albert.

34. Richard Middleton, *In Sententiarum I*, dist. 27, art. 2, quest. 1: "The word in us is triple: intelligible, imaginable, and sensible" (Brixia: 1591), 1:248; Richard, in the following lines, refers, like his predecessors, to Damascene's *De fide orthodoxa*, Anselm's *Monologion*, and Augustine's *De Trinitate*. See also John of Paris, *Commentary on the Sentences*, I, dist. 27, q. 2: "the word in us is triple: intelligible or mental, imaginable, and spoken" (ed. J. P. Muller [Rome: Herder, 1961], 284).

ing treatises by Avicenna and Averroes, allowed imagination to be inscribed into a general schema of faculties of the sensitive soul and so to deepen the required psychology. Nonetheless, it is the Augustinian-Anselmian thread that was systematically exploited by theologians to support the idea of the *imaginatio vocis* (Thomas Aquinas) or *verbum imaginabile* (Richard Middleton). Augustinianism is the prism through which everything concerning the question of the word was viewed.

SERMO IN MENTE

Around the middle of the thirteenth century, a new notion was progressively introduced that allowed this idea of a representation of spoken words in the mind to be pressed yet a little further. It was realized that, if the oral speech of a given language can be represented in the imagination, then nothing prevents it from also being in the intellect, like any other sensible reality. It is Aristotelian psychology that calls for this: of every object given to it by the senses, the intellect forms by abstraction intelligible notions—that is, the *species intelligibiles*. Why should it be otherwise with spoken or written speech? The intellect must thus have in understanding what certain authors will call a *sermo internus* or *sermo in mente*.

The term *sermo*, as it appears in this context, is exactly what Abelard had earlier used to designate the couple formed from a vocal sound—a *vox*—and its signification: the spoken word, therefore, insofar as it bears meaning.³⁵ However, even though he had sometimes invoked the Augustinian idea of a *verbum intellectuale*,³⁶ Abelard never spoke of a mental *sermo*. That terminological association did not begin to spread until about a century after his death. John of La Rochelle, in his *Summa de anima* (written before 1245), and Peter of Spain, in his own treatise *Scientia libri de anima*, both used *sermo internus* (or *intus*) to render John Damascene's *logos endiathetos*.³⁷ Peter of Spain even dedicates a chapter to it, entitled “*De sermone interno*,” wherein he describes it as a rational deliberation disposing the soul to action.

That the *sermo internus* occurs in a given language is not yet very clear in these two authors, but appears more obviously in an interesting passage from Albert the Great's *Summa de creaturis*, written in Paris around 1246.³⁸ Inquir-

35. Abelard, *Logica nostrorum petitioni sociorum*, ed. B. Geyer, in *Peter Abaelards Philosophische Schriften* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1933), 2:522–24.

36. See the references given in n. 9.

37. John of La Rochelle, *Summa de anima* 72, ed. J. G. Bougerol (Paris: Vrin, 1995), 204–5; and Peter of Spain, *Scientia libri de anima*, tract. 11, chap. 10, ed. M. A. Alonso (Barcelona: Juan Flors, 1961), 453–55.

38. Albert the Great, *Summa de creaturis* II, q. 25 (“*De voce*”), art. 2, ed. S. C. A. Borgnet, in *Opera omnia* (Paris: Vivès, 1896), 35:244–47.

ing into the way sounds acquire a sense, Albert explains, with reference to Damascene:

there are two parts of reason . . . , namely that which disposes internal discourse [*sermo interius*], and this is a part of reason which is proper to man and which no one is deprived of; and that which is expressed by the voice, and this is sometimes lacking, namely in those who cannot speak.³⁹

The first of these functions is called the *potentia interpretativa*. It is in this faculty, continues the author, that a conceptual significate is associated, before any utterance, with the mental representation of a given vocal sound. It is thanks to this, therefore, “that the species [*species*] is uttered in discourse on the basis of imagination and intellect.”⁴⁰ These *species*, which are imprinted in the vocal enunciation, can only be, in this context, what the arts masters, or *magistri*, called, according to Albert himself, *species vocis*—that is, mental representations of oral sounds.⁴¹ What is interesting here is that Albert’s *sermo interius* is constituted by the marriage of a representation of a sound and a representation of a thing, which occurs not only in the imagination but also in the intellect. It is this that structures the linguistic unity that, once uttered, will serve the ends of communication.

The same doctrine is found, around the same time or a little later, in certain theorists of grammar. The *Tractatus de grammatica*, a work of English origin (sometimes, probably incorrectly, attributed to Robert Grosseteste), reformulates it with the help of the standard vocabulary of the *magistri*: *species vocis* and *species rei*. “It is by the intellect,” it explains, “which is the medium common to species of things and to those of sounds, that things and sounds are found united.”⁴² By far the most explicit development we know of, in this regard, appears in another grammatical treatise, a commentary on the *Priscian Major* by an anonymous author (whom one manuscript identifies as Robert Kilwardby and who has for this reason recently been dubbed the “Pseudo-Kilwardby”).⁴³ The author makes what he calls the *sermo in mente* or *sermo interior* the proper

39. Albert, *Summa de creaturis*, 35:246.

40. Ibid. [italics mine].

41. On the attribution to *magistri* of the idea of *species vocis*, see the text from Albert the Great’s *Commentary on the Sentences*, book I, dist. 27, art. 7 discussed previously. The expression will be used again in the same sense by Roger Bacon around 1267 in his *De signis* (§16–17, ed. K. M. Fredborg et al., *Traditio* 34 [1978]: 86–87).

42. *Tractatus de grammatica* 6, ed. K. Reichl (Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1976), 32.

43. I will use the edition of the work partially realized under the direction of Jan Pinborg: “The Commentary on *Priscianus Maior* Ascribed to Robert Kilwardby” (*Cahiers de l’Institut du Moyen Age grec et latin*, 15, 1975). On the idea of mental language in this text, see also Panaccio 1999a, 397–413.

object of grammar as a theoretical science, thus prefiguring the enterprise of certain modist grammarians of the end of the century.⁴⁴ Given the exceptional precision of its analysis, it is worth dwelling on this text.

Two passages in particular hold our attention. In the first, at the beginning of the treatise, the principal problem at stake concerns the epistemological question of the object of grammar as a scientific discipline: grammar's object must be a linguistic unity, to be sure, but in precisely what sense? The reflection here finds its point of departure in a familiar triad—that of Boethius, as it happens, but reformulated this time in terms of *sermo* as opposed to *oratio*:

It must be said that discourse [*sermo*] exists in three ways: in writing, in pronunciation, and in the mind [*in mente*]. In writing, it has a visible existence, in pronunciation, an audible existence. . . . In the third mode, it has an intelligible existence—that of a universal—and is the same for all and is a necessary being; and it is in this sense that it is a subject of science, not under the first or second modes.⁴⁵

A few lines later, the anonymous author distinguishes again between two sorts of *sermo in mente*: one that is obtained “by abstraction beginning with particular occurrences of discursive elements, significative or not,” which is indeed the proper subject of grammatical science; and another that is produced in the mind “by emotion and imagination,” which is at the origin of sensible exterior speech. It is the first that is important to us here: what is this interior discourse obtained by abstraction, this universal endowed with necessary existence?

The second passage we will examine permits us to dispel any ambiguity on this matter. It appears later in the text, in chapter 2 of the treatise, where the author asks how a spoken word is united to its significate, which significate is also, for him as for the Aristotelian tradition, the concept in the mind invoked by the *Perihermeneias*. The distinction between two modes of existence that had been introduced with respect to the *sermo in mente* is used here again, but is applied this time to what the text now calls the *vox in anima*:

the word [*vox*] exists in the soul in two ways: firstly, by abstraction [*per abstractionem*] in the knowing substance as other objects of knowledge; just as the soul indeed has a knowledge of things through the intermediary of the senses, so does it also have knowledge of words, and this is as true of the speaker as of the listener. And the word, secondly, also exists in the soul as a

44. The *Summa grammatica* of John of Dacia, in particular—written around 1280—seems in many regards to be quite close to Pseudo-Kilwardby; cf. John of Dacia, *Johannis Daci Opera*, ed. A. Otto (Copenhagen: Det Danske Sprog—og Litteraturselskab). On the relationship between the two authors, see especially Sirridge 1995.

45. Pinborg, “Commentary on *Priscianus Maior*,” 10.

principle of movement; the word indeed is a percussion of air accomplished by the soul, as is written in Book II of *De Anima*; and thus it exists in the soul under the mode of impulse [*appetitus*] and imagination.⁴⁶

In the mind there are two representations of the exterior word: one in the intellect, *per abstractionem*, and the other in the imagination, as a driving force for the physical production of sensible speech. We are already familiar with the second, common among theologians in the wake of Anselm; but the first is more original. It treats words like any other sensible things: one can, by abstraction from particular occurrences, forge *intellectual* representations of them, which are thus universals with purely intelligible existence, identical for all those who have knowledge of the thing (or word) in question.

What is the relation between this abstract image of the *vox* in the intellect and the *sermo in mente*, which in the preceding passage was taken for the proper object of grammatical science? The matter is clarified a few lines later within the framework of a brief but remarkable development. In a manner quite similar to what we saw in Albert the Great, the author explains how language is established within the mind itself: to each concept that it wants to signify, the soul associates the intellectual representation of an exterior speech and so forms the *sermo interior* of the intelligible order that was mentioned previously.⁴⁷ This, then, corresponds to the couple constituted by, on the one hand, the *vox in anima* in the first way—which Pseudo-Kilwardby also calls the *intentio vocis*—and, on the other hand, the concept signified, the *intentio significabilis*. Between *vox* and *sermo*, the background distinction is precisely that traced by Abelard in the preceding century, but it is now transposed *within the intellect* at the level of abstract representations.

We thus find a sophisticated schema in which interior language—the object of grammar as a science—is neither the mental word of Augustine, indifferent to linguistic manifestations, nor the *oratio mentalis* of Ockham, constituted by sequences of concepts (of any sort), nor yet the imagined speech of Avicenna, Anselm, or Thomas Aquinas, but rather a complex intellectual entity corresponding to the mental association of the abstract intellection of a sensible *vox* with the conceptual content of what it signifies. To the extent that it thus incorporates properly linguistic representations—which render it relevant to grammar—this mental language is not independent of languages of communication; on the contrary, it is their intellectual duplicate and foundation.

In relation to the distinctions and threads identified in the preceding sections, this idea seems novel. To be sure, our authors—including Pseudo-Kilwardby—cite Damascene by name on this matter, but the notion we now see established cannot be directly derived from *De fide orthodoxa*. Not only is

46. Ibid., 57.

47. Ibid., 59.

it not at all clear in Damascene's text that his *logos endiathetos* (*endiatentum*, we read in Pseudo-Kilwardby)⁴⁸ always contains a representation of words and not only of things, but the new idea of *sermo in mente* is anyway more subtle and more complex than that attributed around the same time to Damascene—for example, by Thomas Aquinas, who sees there the representation of speech in the imagination and not in the intellect. The entire tradition of Aristotelian commentaries—in the wake of *De anima* (420b31)—usually associated the mental representation of words with the order of the imagination, as we noted in the previous chapter viz. Ammonius, Boethius, and Avicenna. It did no violence to Aristotle, of course, to introduce a purely intellectual level of linguistic representation into his scheme; in a sense it is a quite natural development. The idea begins to emerge in Alexander of Hales, for example, who invoked a *verbum intelligibile vocis*,⁴⁹ and comes out in greater detail in Albert the Great, who described the *potentia interpretativa* as that part of *reason* by which representations of sounds come to be associated with conceptual contents.⁵⁰ However, we can at least say that this idea was not very common prior to the middle of the thirteenth century.

In Pseudo-Kilwardby, the move responds to the necessity to secure for grammar a proper object: something that would permit it to satisfy the epistemological conditions of a full-fledged science imposed by Aristotelianism. Recall the adage “There is only science of the universal.” Oral speech and even its imagined representations were too elusive, too fleeting, too particular to serve the purpose. Even so, it is certain that grammar as a science must be related to words and languages rather than to pure concepts formed by the intellect directly from exterior things. It was thus necessary to find an abstract level for the representation of linguistic units. This would be precisely the *intelligibile* being of interior language, which, attained through abstraction from heard or uttered words, finds its place in the intellect rather than in sense or imagination.

From the eleventh century through the middle of the thirteenth, the theme of mental language continues to spread, under various forms and through prestigious authorities. The fate enjoyed by the traditional (usually threefold) distinctions of senses of the words *logos*, *verbum*, and *oratio* (from Boethius, Damascene, al-Fârâbi, and Anselm) has allowed us to see different threads (especially Augustinianism and Aristotelianism) woven together during this period. Three different notions of interior speech—again a triad!—coexist in the university of the 1250s, yet without confronting one another. There is, first, the mental word of Augustinian stock, energetically revived by Anselm's *Monologion* and omnipresent in Scholastic theology from the twelfth century. This was not at

48. Ibid., 58.

49. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica* I. 419.

50. Albert the Great, *Summa de creaturis* II, q. 25, art. 2.

all linguistic, and Anselm, like a number of his successors, did not hesitate to identify it with the order of “similitudes” the mind forges of exterior things, as Aristotle had said in *Perihermeneias*. Second, there is the *imaginatio vocis*, which is to say, the representation of the sensible word in the imagination as an active power. While the reference to a *lektikê phantasia* in the tradition of Aristotle commentaries and the mention of imagined speech in a striking passage from Avicenna’s *Isagogê*, known to the Latins, certainly encouraged diffusion of this notion, here as well it is the Augustinian thread that was decisive. Anselm borrows, among other things, Augustine’s idea from *De Trinitate* that we think “within ourselves those signs which would be externally sensible”; this was the framework through which theologians of the 1240s and 1250s would interpret the Greek *logos endiathetos* that they had found in John Damascene, thus making it the interior word of sensible imagination that is therefore bound by some conventional language known to the speaker. Finally, there is the quite specialized notion of a *sermo interior*, proposed by such authors as Albert the Great around 1246 or Pseudo-Kilwardby perhaps in the 1260s, in order to explain how something like signification could be attributed to a mere noise uttered by the voice. This time it is a matter of an association, in the intellect and not in the imagination, relating the abstract representation of an exterior word with a given conceptual content that would be its significate.

Grammatical categories, forged first for the analysis of oral speech, could be applied to the second of these three mental discourses—imagined speech—and, in a manner eminently suited to supporters of a scientific grammar, also to the third, which, by incorporating the representation of exterior words, was essentially bound to languages of communication even if it properly pertained to the intelligible order. However, the first and most important, the *verbum in corde* produced by the spiritual soul within itself, with no reference either to exterior speech or its mental representation, completely escaped such categories. Prior to the time of Thomas Aquinas, theologians who would make use of this notion of “mental word” hardly felt the need to enquire precisely into its logico-semantic composition; they found it useful primarily to interpret, as well as possible, the mystery of the generation of the Word in God.

CHAPTER SIX

ACT VERSUS IDOL

By the middle of the thirteenth century, Aristotle's natural philosophy was firmly implanted in the faculty of arts, which all university students attended for some years. Religious reticence and local but repeated condemnations did not succeed in containing it, and theologians themselves now appropriated its concepts and principles. In the psychology of *De anima*, in particular, they found powerful tools for analyzing cognition, and the question then became inevitable: where should the mental word of Augustine be located within the intellectual framework described by Aristotle? A long debate would develop on this subject, beginning in the 1280s, above all in reaction to the brilliant and daring theses on this point by Thomas Aquinas. This will be the subject of the present chapter.

At first sight, an attractive possibility was somehow to identify the interior word with the intelligible *species* that, according to Aristotelian psychology, is abstracted from sensible images by the agent intellect and is then deposited in the possible intellect. For Alexander of Hales, for example, "one calls word, that [intelligible] species itself insofar as it is subject to a volition of manifestation."¹ A similar thesis was advanced—not without some hesitation—in the first of Thomas Aquinas's grand theological works, his *Commentary on the Sentences*, written in Paris in the 1250s.² Yet this identification of the interior word with the Aristotelian *species*, however nuanced it might be, fails to do justice to certain of Augustine's most salient affirmations about the *verbum cordis*. The mental word in the strict sense, for the bishop of Hippo, was something the soul actively engenders *out of* the knowledge deposited in the soul and does not exist except insofar as the soul thinks it. Only with great loss, then, could the mental word be confused with knowledge itself or with one of its components.

The distinctive solution Thomas Aquinas would develop beginning in the late 1250s and throughout his later work was to add a step to the Aristotelian process: the production by the possible intellect of an internal object for conscious intellection—namely, the mental word; to this he attributes a special mode of being that escapes the Aristotelian categories: that of a pure object of thought. It was not a novel idea to thus enrich ontology to accommodate intelligibles in the soul. Abelard had already proposed that concepts (*intellectus*) and

1. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica* II.149, ed. B. Marrani (Quaracchi: Coll. Saint-Bonaventure, 1928), 198; see also I.419, 611.

2. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sententiarum*, dist. 27, q. 2, a. 1–3. On this conception of the mental word in Thomas's *Commentary on the Sentences*, see above all Paissac 1951, chap. 2, and Chênevert 1961.

propositional contents (*dicta*) were pure products of the soul and had no claim to the robust existence of real things such as substances and qualities.³ Others after him proposed that the “enuntiable” (*enuntiabile*)—that is, that which is signified by a sentence—could not be a real thing; that it pertained to none of the Aristotelian categories and exhibited a distinctive mode of existence.⁴ We could even trace all of this further back, if we like, to the old Stoic idea of the *lekton*. However, the originality of Thomas was to mine this vein in order to develop a detailed theory of the *interior word*. Confronted with Aristotelianism, Augustinian psychology thus engendered through the Angelic Doctor a new doctrine, at once epistemological and ontological, that caused great controversy in the decades that followed. Aquinas was criticized for introducing between the intellectual act and the exterior thing an intermediary representation, a sort of “idol,” which is an obstacle to cognitive contact. Well before William of Ockham many authors, especially Franciscans, will propose instead to identify the mental word with the act of the intellect, which itself is a *quality* of the soul and not an improbable, purely ideal object.

I will first expound on this controversial position of Thomas Aquinas and then examine the criticisms to which it was subjected in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.⁵

THE THOMISTIC SYNTHESIS

Although he was not the only one, Thomas Aquinas was the most influential theorist of the *verbum mentis* in the thirteenth century.⁶ The theme recurs frequently in his work, and it most often serves (as it did for Augustine) to explore the theological mystery of the relation between the first two divine persons.⁷

3. Abelard, *Logica “Ingredientibus,”* ed. B. Geyer, in *Peter Abaelards Philosophische Schriften* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1919–27), 1:20–21 and 1:67–370; and Abelard, *Dialectica*, ed. L. M. De Rijk (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1970), 157–60. See on this subject the studies of De Rijk (1975) and de Libera (1981).

4. See the anonymous *Ars Burana*, ed. L. M. De Rijk, in *Logica Modernorum* II.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1967), 208–9; the *Ars Meliduna* in the extracts cited by De Rijk in *Logica Modernorum* II.1, 308 and 358; Alexander Nequam, *Speculum speculationum* II.40–43, ed. R. M. Thomson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 179–83. On this question of the *enuntiabile*, see especially: Kretzmann 1970; Nuchelmans 1973, chap. 10; de Libera 1981; Lewis 1995; Iwakuma 1997; Kneepkens 1997.

5. Other aspects of the Thomistic theory of knowledge also came under intense discussion during this period: his conception of abstraction, notably, and of the intelligible *species*; see, for example, Spruit 1994; Pasnau 1997b.

6. This section repeats, with some supplement, parts of an earlier article (Panaccio 1992b).

7. The principal developments of Thomas Aquinas on the mental word are the following (in approximate chronological order): *In I Sententiarum*, dist. 27; *Quaestiones*

The French scholar Hubert Paissac made clear a crucial evolution in Aquinas's thought on this point.⁸ While at the time of his *Commentary on the Sentences* the subject did not yet seem of great importance to him, insofar as he identifies Augustine's word with Aristotle's intelligible *species*, a turning point in his doctrine is reached beginning with the *Quaestiones de veritate*, disputed in Paris between 1256 and 1259. It must be supposed that Thomas was then immersed in Augustine's *De Trinitate* and that he meditated intensely on book XV. While the process of abstraction invoked in Aristotle's *De anima* is meant to explain the original acquisition of intellectual cognition, the Augustinian *verbum mentis* emerges from an already possessed knowledge. And while the intelligible *species*, once acquired, remains in the intellect as a habitual cognition, the *verbum*, on the other hand, appears only in the movement of conscious and reflective thought as the actual and transitory product of *cogitatio*. The most plausible way to accommodate these differences was to make the interior word *subsequent* to the process of abstraction, and this is exactly where Thomas' reflections led him: the mental word presupposes abstraction, but is not produced by it; it is the result of a subsequent act of the possible intellect.⁹

It is in the writings of the 1260s that this doctrine of the word comes into full bloom. A limpid and succinct account thereof is given in the *Quaestiones de potentia*, disputed in Italy around 1265. In this passage Thomas distinguishes four items to which the knowing subject, in the process of intellection, stands in relation: the exterior thing; the intelligible *species*; the mental act of intellection; and finally the mental word, which he also calls the *conceptio*. This latter, Thomas insists, is irreducibly distinct from the other three: it is internal to the soul, while the thing known is, normally, external to it; it differs from the act of intellection insofar as it is its term or result; and so at the same time it differs from the intelligible species, which constitutes in this new schema the starting point of the intellectual act rather than its terminus. Thus, once the abstractive action of the agent intellect has left in the possible intellect an intellectual representation of the exterior thing—the intelligible *species*—another process can

disputatae de veritate, q. 4; *Summa contra Gentiles* I.53 and IV.11; *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, q. 8–9; *Compendium theologiae* I. 37–43; *ST* I, q. 27, a. 1, and q. 93, aa. 7–8; *Super Evangelium Joannis lectura* 1, lect. 1–3. The authenticity of the opuscles *De differentia verbi divini et humani* and *De natura verbi intellectus* being still uncertain, I use them here only with circumspection; however, their teaching is not fundamentally different. As far as possible, I use the Leonine edition of Thomas's works and, when necessary, the Marietti edition.

8. Paissac 1951. On the other hand, there are numerous studies on the question of the mental word in Thomas Aquinas. We note, among others: Maritain 1932, appendix 1; Meissner 1958; Lonergan 1967; Gonzalez Alio 1988.

9. Aquinas, *Quaest. disp. de veritate* (q. 10, art. 3, ad 1), where Thomas identifies the intellectual memory that engenders the interior word, according to Augustine, with the possible intellect of Aristotelianism.

be put into motion when the subject undertakes to think: that of active cogitation, which takes as its starting point the species impressed in the intellect and produces from it something new—namely, the *verbum mentis*.¹⁰

In the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas compares this interior product formed by the intellect to the *idolum* engendered by sensible imagination:

There are two operations in the sensitive part. One, in regard of impression only, and thus the operation of the senses, takes place by the senses being impressed by the sensible. The other is formation, inasmuch as the imagination forms for itself an image [*idolum*] of an absent thing, or even of something never seen. Both of these operations are found in the intellect. For in the first place there is the passion of the passive intellect as informed by the intelligible species; and then the passive intellect thus informed forms a definition, or a division, or a composition, expressed by a word [*per vocem significatur*].¹¹

This definition—or, as the case may be, this propositional division or composition—which is some sort of *idolum* of the intellect and which is signified by oral speech, is precisely what Aquinas identifies with the Augustinian *verbum mentis*. He calls it also sometimes *conceptus*, *conceptio*, *ratio*, or *intentio intellecta*.

Much ink has been spilled on this doctrine, and its correct interpretation is no easy matter. I propose to distill it into six narrowly related theses:

(1) The complete cognitive process puts into play two distinct mental representations for each intelligible form: the *species intelligibilis* and the *verbum mentis*; each of these is an intellectual image—a *similitudo*—of the exterior thing thus known. It may perhaps seem surprising that I speak here of “representation.” Among others, Édouard Henri Weber—one of the best French specialists in Thomistic thought—has expressed serious reservations about using this term to characterize the Angelic Doctor’s theory of knowledge: “the idea of something intermediary, of a representation,” he writes, “seems to us to be excluded.”¹² By this, the commentator wishes to insist on the “real unity” of the word conceived and the exterior reality—on the fact that, in active intellection, both share the *same* form.¹³ However, Thomas is very clear on this point: neither the word nor the *species* is *identical* with the exterior thing; both are mental *similitudines*.¹⁴ I wish to say no more than this in employing the term “represen-

10. Aquinas, *Quaes. disp. de potentia*, q. 8, art. 1.

11. Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 85, art. 2, ad 3 (English trans., Fathers of the English Dominican Province, *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas* [New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947], 1:434).

12. Weber 1970, 246; see also Weber 1988, 90n6, and 1990, 2709.

13. Weber 1988, 67.

14. Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 85, art. 2: “the likeness [*similitudo*] of the thing understood, that is, the intelligible species, is the form by which the intellect understands” (trans.

tation.” Thomas Aquinas himself sometimes uses *repraesentare* or *repraesentativum* to describe the relation of the mental word to the exterior thing.¹⁵

(2) The mental word or concept is the primary significate of the exterior word that corresponds to it. On this point, Thomas follows the suggestion advanced by Anselm in his *Monologion* and assimilates to Augustine’s *verbum cordis* those *passiones animae* that Aristotle, in the first book of *Perihermeneias*, made the direct significates of oral words.¹⁶ The interior word is thus identified with what Boethius called the *oratio in mente*. It is at the same time clearly distinguished—always following Anselm—from the mental representation of exterior words, the *imaginatio vocis*, which the Angelic Doctor associates with the *logos endiathetos* of John Damascene.¹⁷

(3) The mental word is the terminus of an operation—or act—of the possible intellect, which takes the intelligible species as its starting point. Although the product thus engendered is always internal to the soul, it is nevertheless distinct from the act that gives birth to it.¹⁸ In employing the notions of possible intellect and *species intelligibilis* in this context, Thomas integrates the Augustinian theory of the word with Aristotelian psychology; however, he joins to the latter a precise analysis of the cognitive *activity* of the possible intellect. In this way, the productive character of conscious reflection becomes more salient than it had ever been in Aristotle’s *De anima*.

(4) Although the intelligible *species* is a quality of the soul, the mental word possesses a special mode of existence, that of a purely intelligible object, which stands in contrast to the natural mode of being of exterior things and of the intellect itself:

since natural being and the activity of intellection are distinct in us, it is necessary that the word conceived in our intellect, which has only an intelligible existence [*esse intelligibile tantum*], is of another nature than our intellect, which itself has a natural existence [*esse naturale*].¹⁹

The concept—or the interior word—has no reality other than intelligible being.²⁰ It is this that makes it, according to Paissac, a purely relational entity, “whose entire essence is to be relative to its principle.”²¹ It exists only insofar as the soul actively thinks it: “it does not exist in us except when we are actually

[1947], 1:434); and *Quaest. disp. de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1: “the word which is born in the intellect is a likeness [*similitudo*] of the intellected thing.”

15. Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 34, art. 3; *Quaest. disp. de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1.

16. See especially Aquinas, *Super evang. S. Joannis* I.1n25.

17. Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 34, art. 1.

18. See, among others: Aquinas, *Quaest. disp. de veritate*, q. 4, art. 2; *Quaest. disp. de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1.

19. Aquinas, *Compendium theol.* I, chap. 41.

20. Aquinas, *S. contra Gent.* IV, chap. 11.

21. Paissac 1951, 190.

cognizing.”²² As soon as the intellect turns its attention toward new objects of thought, its preceding word ceases to exist. Again, as Paissac writes, “the word disappears as soon as the action of intelligence is over. The encounter, so to speak, lasts only for the instant of perfect actuality of which the intelligence is capable.”²³ It is precisely this recourse to a special ontological mode, that of a pure object of thought, that permits Thomas Aquinas to insert the mental word into the process of knowledge without thereby reifying it—that is, without making it an intermediate *reality* between the intellect and exterior thing. In the word, he thinks, it is the intelligible form of the thing itself that is present, but under an intentional mode. The concept of man, for example, is not itself a man, but is “man insofar as he is understood” (*homo intellectus*).²⁴

(5) The mental word is the primary object of intellection. The exterior thing is intellectually apprehended only through it and not directly. This thesis—which will quickly become controversial—sometimes embarrasses Thomists desiring to present their mentor as the champion of a robust form of realism in epistemology. It is, however, clearly affirmed by the Angelic Doctor:

What is understood [*intellectum*] by itself is not the thing from which knowledge is thus obtained by the intellect . . . since it is necessary that what is understood be in that which understands it and be one with itself. . . . Thus what is understood in the first place and by itself is what the intellect conceives [*concipit*] in itself concerning the thing which it understands.²⁵

Here again is a point on which Paissac has strongly insisted.²⁶ It is true that Thomas’s formulations on the object of knowledge vary from one work to another. Does he not write, in the treatise *On the Unity of the Intellect*, that “according to Aristotle’s doctrine, that thought object [*intellectum*] which is one is the very nature or quiddity of the thing”?²⁷ However, whatever the precise formulation of the idea, the intellectual apprehension of a thing always presumes, for Thomas, the intervention of a mental word directly produced by and within the soul and through which the exterior thing comes to be known. In his commentary on the Gospel of John, he will say that the word is that in which (*in quo*) the intellect conceives the exterior thing,²⁸ and in his *Quodlibet* V, disputed

22. Aquinas, *Quaest. disp. de veritate*, q. 4, art. 1, ad 1.

23. Paissac 1951, 194n4.

24. Aquinas, *S. contra. Gent.* IV, chap. 11.

25. Aquinas, *Quaest. disp. de potentia*, q. 9, art. 5; see also *Quaest. disp. de veritate*, q. 4, art. 1: “the interior word is what is known [*intellectum*], and . . . it does not exist in us except when we are in an act of cognizing”; and *Compendium theol.* I, chaps. 37–38.

26. See, especially, Paissac 1951, 155–57.

27. Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, § 106; see also *Compendium theol.* I, chap. 85.

28. Aquinas, *Super evang. S. Joannis* I.1. Thomas then explains that, unlike the intelligible *species*, the word is not that by which (*quo*), but that in which (*in quo*) the thing

in Paris around 1271, he presents it as an *instrument* by aid of which the soul understands the thing.²⁹ The real external thing always being individual, it was necessary to have some sort of intermediary to secure for the understanding an object that would be universal *in act*.

(6) There are two varieties of mental words, corresponding to the two operations of the intellect that Aristotle distinguishes in the *De anima*:

In the proper sense one calls an interior word that which the knowing subject forms in the activity of intellection. But the intellect forms objects of two sorts, according to the duality of its operations. For according to the operation which is called the understanding of indivisibles, it forms a definition; and according to the operation by which it composes and divides, it forms an enunciation, or something of this kind.³⁰

The result of the first type is a simple but articulated concept that Thomas sometimes calls a “definition” and that is normally signified by a noun. The word “man,” for example, signifies a noncomplex conceptual content corresponding to “rational animal.” Regarding the second operation, it results in the formation of mental propositions that do not belong to any language and that are affirmative if they are produced by a *compositio* and negative when they are the fruit of a *divisio*. These propositions are complexes, of course, and their elements are mental words of the first type. Interior discourse, consequently, is seen to be granted a constituent logical structure, a structure that must obey the principle of composition. That is a theme, we have seen, that was far from explicit in Augustine and that Anselm neglected almost entirely. It was suggested to Thomas by Aristotelian psychology and logic, but also by the idea—which he learned from Albert the Great and Avicenna—that logic as a discipline is concerned first with articulations of thought rather than articulations of exterior language. This compositional structure of intellection will later play a primary role in the development of the Ockhamist idea of *oratio mentalis*. For now, it suffices to note that it is recognized by Aquinas, who nevertheless seems not to have been tempted to elaborate it further.

In sum, then, Thomas Aquinas proposes, in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, an impressive and complex synthesis of the Augustinian doctrine of mental word and the Aristotelian psychology of the intellect. Preserving the general framework furnished by the Stagirite (above all in the *De anima* and also in the *Perihermeneias*), he supplements it—in large part for theological reasons that concern the search for a model, on the human level, of the divine essence—with a new psychological process: the production, by the active

is known. The same distinction is found in the opusculum *De differentia verbi divini et humani* (ed. Marietti [1954], 99).

29. Aquinas, *Quodl.* V.9.

30. Aquinas, *Super Evang. Joannis* I.1; cf. *ST I*, q. 85, art. 2, ad. 2.

cognition of the possible intellect, of a logically articulated interior discourse that is signified by spoken language and that exhibits, during its short existence as primary object of intellection, a mode of existence outside the Aristotelian categories: that of purely intelligible being.

THE FIRST CRITICISMS

This synthesis was subjected to hard tests in the decades following the death of Thomas, and nearly all of its elements were called into question by the more dynamic thinkers of that period. The debate, however, developed only gradually. The famous condemnations of 1277, for example—whether in Paris or in Oxford—concerned certain Thomistic theses but were mute on the question of interior discourse.

Toward the end of the 1270s, the secular Henry of Ghent (one of the members of the commission of theologians who had drawn up the list of 219 articles condemned by the bishop of Paris) developed his own doctrine of the mental word that differed appreciably from that of Aquinas, although without engaging in a very aggressive polemic in this regard. Perhaps he aims at Thomas when he writes, around 1280, that “they lose much of the nature of the word, who say that the first simple cognition conceived in the intellect regarding the known thing is a word”;³¹ his position nonetheless remains very nuanced and exhibits important resonances with that described in the preceding section. Henry, like his predecessor, distinguishes the word conceived from the act of intellection, and he too makes the first a terminus of the act and an object of the intellect.³² However, in the strictest sense, he reserves the appellation “word” for the complete concept that results from a successful intellectual investigation, when all doubt has been removed and errors regarding the very nature of the known thing corrected. This is why he refuses to assimilate the simple object of the first operation of the intellect to the mental word of which Augustine speaks. The soul, according to him, forms first a vague concept, from which it elaborates an active cogitation, which in turn succeeds in forming a “declarative” intellectual knowledge, more certain and more articulated, by which the intelligible form of the thing is adequately circumscribed. It is this mature fruit of reflection that the author proposes to call *verbum mentis* in the proper sense. We do not have here, let us note, a position radically incompatible with that of Thomas: nothing

31. Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet* VI, q. 1, ed. G. A. Wilson (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1987), 16.

32. Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* IV, q. 8 and V, q. 25 (Venice: 1613), f. 152–54 and 305–6; and *Summa quaestionum ordinariarum*, a. 54, q. 9–10 (Paris: 1520), f. 104–6. Henry recognizes, in fact, that the term *verbum* can sometimes designate the act of intellection itself as well as its object, but this is in his eyes a derivative meaning (see *Quodl.* IV.8 and VI.1).

prohibits, in Thomas, the formation of a “declarative” concept in this sense. His notion of a word was merely broader than Henry’s.

The Franciscan William de la Mare was a much more combative polemicist. His *Correctorium fratris Thomae*, written in its first version around 1279 and dedicated entirely to a systematic criticism of Thomist thought, would quickly become a major element in the conflict that developed between the two great mendicant orders at this time. From 1282, the minister general of the Franciscans required that Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae* not be disseminated in the order unless accompanied by William’s text. The Dominicans promptly counterattacked, and many responses to the *Correctorium*—ironically dubbed by them the *Corruptorium*—soon arose in their camp.³³ A rich discussion followed concerning all aspects of Thomism. Regarding the question of the mental word, however, William de la Mare had little to say. He addresses it above all in article 1 of his treatise—which comprises 127 articles—on the subject of the delicate issue of the beatific vision, reproaching Thomas for having maintained that “God, in the after-life, is apprehended by his essence and not by some created *species*.” Against this thesis he invokes the authority of Anselm’s *Monologion* to attest that the formation of a mental word is always necessary for knowledge, even in the presence of the known thing. To this the Dominicans replied, here as in many other cases, that William had simply misunderstood Thomas’s thought. Richard Knapwell, for example, recalls on this topic the Thomistic doctrine of the word.³⁴ The representation of which Anselm speaks in the passage invoked by the *Correctorium* is not, in his eyes, the intelligible *species*, but the *verbum mentis*, which is the significate of the spoken word; all intellectual cognition, for Thomas himself, really does require the production of such a mental word, even in the presence of the object. The Franciscan critique, in this case, was simply off the mark!

This response, however, is itself not without difficulty, for while recognizing the indispensability of the *verbum*, even in the beatified, the Dominicans nevertheless want to continue to say that the divine essence itself is directly attained in beatific vision. The word, therefore, should not be seen as a sort of mental intermediary between the soul and the thing. Knapwell wants to situate it “on the side of the object known,” and the author of the *Correctorium corruptorii* “*Sciendum*”—another response to William de la Mare—thinks that, in the beatified, the word is indeed that in which (*in quo*) the divine essence itself is known, but that it nonetheless does not represent it (*non tamen repraesentat*).³⁵

33. For a brief presentation of this polemic, see especially Glorieux 1974. The text of William de la Mare’s *Correctorium* was published with the response of the Dominican Richard Knapwell in *Le correctorium corruptorii* “*Quare*,” ed. P. Glorieux (Le Saulchoir: Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques, 1927).

34. Knapwell, *Le correctorium corruptorii* “*Quare*,” art. 1, 8–10.

35. *Le correctorium corruptorii* “*Sciendum*,” ed. P. Glorieux (Paris: Vrin, 1956), art. 1, 32.

The problem is theological, evidently, but reveals, on close inspection, the fundamental philosophical ambiguity of the Thomistic doctrine of the word, which continues to pose a challenge to the most authoritative interpreters today: how to maintain at the same time that the interior word is a mental *similitudo* produced by the soul and the primary object of intellection *and* confer on it the role of assuring—in certain cases at least—*direct* access to the known thing. With respect to beatific vision, the problem concerns first and foremost the privileged case wherein the known being is present in person. The difficulty here is clearly admitted, for example, by the author of the “*Sciendum*”: “whether or not,” he writes, “a resemblance [*similitudo*] is produced by the act of vision when God is seen, the question is difficult.”³⁶ He inclines toward identifying the word, in this type of case, with the very intellection—that is to say, with the intellectual act of apprehension—rather than with its object. However, the solution more faithful to Thomas may be that envisioned by John Quidort of Paris in his own reply to William de la Mare when he describes the interior word as “the quiddity of the apprehended thing insofar as it is objectively presented to the soul (*ad intuitum mentis*)”³⁷—the very form of the thing, therefore, but insofar as it is known. This approach, however, only superficially eliminates the problem. For, as Thomas himself said, the word is not identical with the exterior thing (how could it be?). So if it is its quiddity-as-known, we must conclude that this known quiddity, internal to the soul, is not the thing itself and that it is consequently a mental *representation* thereof. The first article of the *Correctorium* did not directly address this point, but its discussion among the Dominicans themselves tended to make it increasingly salient.

The first critic directly to attack the difficulties faced by the Thomistic doctrine of the mental word was, to my knowledge, Peter John Olivi, the controversial Franciscan whose thought on poverty would also create such a great stir. Here is what we read in the second book of his *Questions on the Sentences*, written probably in the 1280s:

One must know, however, that some propose that by the abstractive or explorative examination [*consideratio*], a concept [*conceptus*] or word [*verbum*] is formed, in which [*in quo*] the real objects are understood as in a mirror. This word, indeed, they call the primary and immediate object of intellection and say that it is an intention [*intentio*], a conception [*conceptio*] and a reason [*ratio*] of the things. That this should not be called a word however and that there is nothing here other than the act of examination itself [*actus considerationis*] or the memorial species [*species memorialis*] which is

36. *Ibid.*, a. 1, 31.

37. John Quidort of Paris, *Le Correctorium corruptorii* “Circa,” art. 1, ed. J. P. Muller (Rome: Herder, 1941), 9.

formed by this act, I have already proven in my commentary on the Gospel of John, where the eternal Word of God is discussed.³⁸

The invocation of an exploratory reflection producing a concept could make us think of Henry of Ghent, but the series of enumerated synonyms (*conceptus, verbum, intentio, conceptio, ratio*) and the use of the characteristic expression *in quo* leaves no doubt that it is the Thomistic doctrine that is in question here. Regarding the mirror comparison, although it is uncertain that it is from Thomas himself,³⁹ we do at least find it in some of his disciples under the guise of an explication of what Aquinas intended by his famous *in quo*.⁴⁰

The detailed refutation to which Olivi refers his reader is found, as he indicates, at the beginning of his commentary on the Gospel of John.⁴¹ The author there addresses himself to those who say that "our mental word is something which follows the act of cogitation or actual examination, which is formed by it and which is, however, such that once formed it permits the clear understanding of the thing in itself like in a mirror"; and who propose further that this word is "what is first understood by the intellect and is its primary object." His objections to this thesis are many and cannot all be recounted here. Some rely on the "authority of the saints," above all Augustine, who supplies Olivi's principal inspiration for this entire passage: does not *De Trinitate*, in fact, identify the word of the heart with the actual cogitation (*actualis cogitatio*) rather than with its object? And did Anselm not do the same in the *Monologion*? Still other

38. Peter John Olivi, *Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum*, q. 74, ed. B. Jansen (Quaracchi: Coll. Saint-Bonaventure, 1926), 3:120–21.

39. The comparison of the mental word with a mirror is explicit in the opusculum *De natura verbi intellectus*, often attributed to Thomas but whose authenticity is now doubtful: the word, we read in chap. 1, "is like a mirror in which [*in quo*] the thing is apprehended [*cernitur*]."

40. See *Le correct. corrupt.* "Sciendum," art. 1.32: "we must say that the light of the agent intellect is only that under which [*sub quo*] the thing is seen, while the produced word [*verbum expressum*] is that in which [*in quo*]; just as in corporeal vision, the species of the thing is that by which [*quo*] it is seen, the light is that under which it is seen, and the mirror is that in which [*in quo*]." The Franciscan Richard Middleton, who borrowed his theory of the word from Thomas, also uses the mirror analogy in a text whose formulation greatly resembles that mentioned by Olivi and could very well have directly inspired it: the word of the thing, he writes, "is the immediate object of the act of intellection, in which [*in quo*], so to speak, the intellect examines [*considerat*] as in a mirror that of which it is the word" (*Super quatuor libros Sententiarum* II, d. 24, art. 3, q. 5 (Brixia: 1591), vol. 2, f. 314a). The teaching of Middleton on the *Sentences* also dates to the 1280s.

41. The part of Olivi's text that interests us here has been edited by Robert Pasnau under the title "Petri Iohannis Olivi Tractatus de Verbo," *Franciscan Studies* 53 (1993): 121–53.

criticisms present a theological character: if the interior word conformed to what the Thomists say, it would be a very misleading comparison to speak of the word of God, for that is certainly not formed by the Father in the manner of an image in a mirror, in which he apprehends the objects of his thought; and furthermore it does not possess a different mode of being, purely intellectual and inferior to that of the Father.

However, the crux of Olivi's discussion is properly philosophical. For him, the mental process of intellection includes only acts and habits. But if the word is an act, he explains, it could only be the act of intellection itself and consequently cannot be identified with a product of this act that would be distinct from it. And if it is a habit, then it must be a *species* placed in the memory by the work of cogitation; however, the word, in this case, would not cease to exist at the same time as the act, as the Thomists maintain. As for the hypothesis that it could be something other than an act or habit, this lacks any foundation:

For there is neither necessity nor utility in positing such a word. Things and their real properties are given to the intellect only if they are presented in themselves or if they are presented by species placed in the memory; but whether the things and their properties are presented in themselves or are absent and represented to the intellect by species, there is in any case no need for another objectual mirror in which [*in quo*] the things could be presented to the intellect. In truth, this would instead constitute an obstacle.⁴²

Olivi puts his finger on what many after him consider the fatal weaknesses of the Thomistic doctrine of the word: the introduction of a first object of intellection that is distinct from the act and the *species*, as well as from the thing itself, is useless and without support; what's more, such an intermediary representation compromises the success of cognitive activity.

BACK TO THE THINGS THEMSELVES

It would be some years before Olivi's criticism made waves. The Franciscan Roger Marston did speak, around 1284, of a "controversy of the word" precisely with respect to the questions of whether or not the mental word is the formal object of knowledge and whether or not it must be distinguished from intellectual vision,⁴³ but in doing so he seems to think primarily of the divergence between Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent. His own position is quite close to Henry's: if the intelligible *species* obtained by abstraction is the starting point for intellectual inquiry, the word, for him, corresponds to a complete and perfect intellection. Distinct from intellectual vision, it is the terminus of an op-

42. *Ibid.*, 144.

43. Roger Marston, *Quodlibeta quatuor* IV, q. 18–20, ed. G. F. Etzkorn and I. C. Brady (Quaracchi: Coll. Saint-Bonaventure, 1968), 400–10.

eration, the conclusion of an inquiry, or cogitation. Yet, for all that, it is not the *object* of intellectual apprehension; rather, in relation to apprehension, it plays the role of *principle*. His argument on this last point is that, if the word were the object of intellection, it could only lead to cognition of a thing through a sort of inference—in the same way, for example, that a statue makes known its model; but the *verbum*, in the sense of Augustine—on whom Marston himself continually depends—must ensure a more immediate relation to the known being. While the discussion does seem to address certain Thomist formulations, it is presented more as a clarification than as a severe critique.

Around the same period, the Dominican Thomas Sutton defended the position of Thomas Aquinas:

the word is not the act of intellection; it is rather formed in the act of intellection and produced from that which is in the memory.⁴⁴

However, he appears quite accommodating of the contrary thesis: since the word ceases to exist at the same time as the act that produces it, the difference between the one and the other, he freely admits, is very small—*modica*, he says—indeed so small that there is nothing surprising—nothing very grave, apparently—about its often being neglected by theorists. It's fair to say that at this point the controversy has not yet come to a head.

It is in the 1290s that the debate becomes truly animated and widespread. Little by little, the question of whether or not the word is distinct from the act of intellection becomes unavoidable for theologians, who approach it head-on in their quodlibetal disputations or in reference to distinction 27 of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* on the subject of the theological import of the term *verbum*. More and more authors develop a position close to that of Olivi and directly identify the mental word with the act of intellection. This is the case with Godfrey of Fontaines, for example,⁴⁵ and with the Franciscan William of Ware, whose argument on this point seems to have had more impact than is generally acknowledged.⁴⁶ Having first rejected the identification of the mental word with the intelligible *species*, this author then addresses himself in greater detail to the position familiar to us:

some say that the word is neither the species nor the act, but the terminus of the act, something which is made by the intellect, a bit like an image [*idolum*] in which [*in quo*] the intellect reflects [*speculatur*] the exterior thing itself.⁴⁷

44. Thomas Sutton, *Quodlibeta* I, q. 17, ed. M. Schmaus, in Schmaus 1930, 25.*

45. Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodlibet* X, q. 12, ed. J. Hoffmans (Louvain: Institute supérieur de philosophie, 1924), 358–66.

46. William of Ware, *In Sententiarum* I, dist. 27, q. 3, ed. M. Schmaus, in Schmaus 1930, 253*–71.*

47. *Ibid.*, dist. 27, q. 3, 258.*

Let us note the use of the term *idolum*, which would subsequently become current in presentations of the Thomist thesis. We previously cited the passage from the *Summa theologiae* (I, q. 85, a. 2) in which Thomas employs the term within the framework of a comparison intended to convey the nature of the mental word. It is the same term that, associated with the characteristic expression *in quo*, invites the aid of the mirror terminology (*speculum*, *speculari*): *idolum* is, in the medieval vocabulary, the name habitually given to the reflection of something in a mirror.⁴⁸

To this doctrine—as to that of Henry of Ghent, with which he directly associates it—William of Ware addresses a battery of objections. In 1301, Walter Burley—who was greatly inspired by the Franciscan on this matter and sometimes repeats him almost verbatim—took from this discussion two principal criticisms that, conjoined, seemed to him decisive:

since such an image [*idolum*] could only ever exist in the presence of the act by which the intellect is informed, no one, even possessing perfect science, could understand anything in a perfect manner unless first fabricating an interior object he would understand, which hardly seems admissible. Furthermore, we do not find in any philosophers that the purely interior action of an agent must always produce in the same agent something really distinct from this action; in the transitive and exterior action, there is indeed some terminus of the operation which is distinct from the action, but this is not the case for the purely interior action.⁴⁹

It is all here. On the one hand, the hypothesis of a mental object distinct from the act of intellection introduces into the course of knowledge a troublesome intermediary for anyone wishing to assure the possibility of direct intellectual

48. The term *idolum* had already been employed to speak of mental representation in the Latin translation, probably by Michel Scot, of Averroes's long commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima* in the 1220s or 1230s (see *Averrois Cordubensis commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros III.6*, ed. H. A. Wolfson et al. [Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1953], 415). It had likewise played some role in the discussion of the beatific vision that shook up theological circles around the same period (see Dondaine 1952, in particular 86n93; the author refers in this matter to question 454 of the important collection of theological texts assembled in the Douai ms. 434). We also find an epistemological critique of the mental *idolum* in the *Summa philosophiae* of Pseudo-Robert Grosseteste around 1265–75 (see *Summa philosophiae Roberto Grosseteste ascripta, Tract. III*, chap. 2, ed. L. Baur [Münster: Aschendorff, 1912], 297–98), where it is explicitly associated with the idea of the mirror.

49. Walter Burley, *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias*, q. 1, §1.5–1.6, ed. S. Brown, *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974): 210–11. It is worth noting that Burley, while following William of Ware closely in this passage, nevertheless does not use the term *verbum* and sticks to the Aristotelian appellation *passio animae*; doubtless wishing to avoid, in a treatise on logic, recourse to terminology with a strong theological connotation.

apprehension; the beatific vision itself would be compromised, William of Ware observes on this matter:

no beatified in the afterlife could be perfectly blessed . . . since that which he grasps immediately would be the word, and he would not be joined to the divine essence except in the word.⁵⁰

The recourse to this embarrassing intermediary, on the other hand, rests on an unjustified presupposition, according to which a mental action must necessarily require an internal object distinct from that action itself.

There remains only one possibility, William of Ware concludes (and with him Walter Burley)—that the mental word is nothing other than the act of intellection. John Duns Scotus, who was perhaps a student of William at Oxford, arrived at the same position.⁵¹ There are differences between these authors, of course. Burley was content to conclude briefly that “we need not posit any intrinsic terminus distinct from the act of intellection” and that the concept, consequently, “could not be seen as an image [*idolum*] formed in the intellect by the act of intellection.”⁵² William himself clarified that the word is identical with the act of intellection, but insofar as this act is itself *received* in the cognitive faculty.⁵³ And Scotus, who knew this position and explicitly distanced himself from it,⁵⁴ preferred to describe the word as the actual intellection insofar as it is *produced* by the soul.⁵⁵ But these are only nuances. The essential point for our purposes is that we have here a recognizable thread, characterized by the refusal to distinguish the intellectual representation from the act that gives birth to it, as Thomas Aquinas had done, and by the identification of the mental word with the act of intellection.

This approach continued to be propounded afterward, especially among Scotists. We find it at the beginning of the 1320s, in the Franciscan Walter Chatton, who appealed to it to criticize severely the first theory of the concept defended by his confrere William Ockham in his own *Commentary on the Sentences*: “I do not understand,” wrote Chatton, “that the concept, be it universal or particular, is something other than the very act of knowledge.”⁵⁶ Ockham had maintained that the general concept was only ever a fabrication of the soul, a mental *fictum*, existing in the soul as a pure object of cognition, rather than as

50. William of Ware, *In Sent.* I, dist. 27, q. 3, 262.*

51. John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, dist. 27, q. 1–3, in *Opera omnia*, Vatican ed. (1963), 6:63–106 (especially 83–99).

52. Burley, *Quaest. in libr. Perih.*, q. 1, § 1.65, 211.

53. William of Ware, *In Sent.* I, dist. 27, q. 3, p. 264.*

54. Scotus, *Ord.* I, dist. 27, 87.

55. *Ibid.*, I, dist. 27, 91.

56. Walter Chatton, *Reportatio super Sententias* I, dist. 3, q. 2, ed. G. Gál, in Gál 1967, 201.

a real quality, like an act.⁵⁷ His original position, although inspired by different considerations, was rather close to that of Thomas Aquinas on this point. Profoundly influenced by Duns Scotus, Chatton developed against Ockham—on this matter as on many others—an entire series of objections, aimed to show that the admission of such a *fictum*, distinct from the act, was useless and seriously compromised the relation of the soul to things themselves. Ockham finally abandoned the theory of the *fictum*, also to realign himself with the identification of the concept and the act of intellection. We are now in a position to see that this well-known episode is in direct continuity with the decades-long controversy surrounding the question of the mental word.

The Thomists, however, were not disarmed, and the theory of the word as an interior object distinct from the act continued, in spite of criticism, to find partisans in the early fourteenth century, especially among Dominicans. The most resolute was Hervaeus Natalis, much discussed in Paris in the 1310s; his *De verbo* rejected as impossible the assimilation of the word to the act of intellection.⁵⁸ His argument rests especially on two characteristics, which, according to him, it must be possible to attribute to what deserves to be called the “mental word.” First, one must be able to say that the word is an object of the intellect in normal cognitive activity, by which it thinks of something different from itself or from its proper acts. But the act of intellection can only become an object for the intellect when it is engaged in a reflexive movement, returning to itself, which hardly corresponds to normal cognitive functioning. Second, for the theological comparison to succeed, we would want the word to be engendered—or produced—by the operation of the intellect. But this too hardly pertains to the act of intellection, which is rather the operation itself and not its product. The interior word, the Dominican concludes, is distinct from the act of intellection. As it also can’t be identified with the exterior thing, which does not possess the desired generality, there remains one option: it is a concept formed by the soul and by means of which the exterior thing is thought—just as the Angelic Doctor had proposed. Hervaeus concedes willingly that the word is not the principal *object* of the intellect, insofar as this principal object is nothing other than the thing itself; but it is nonetheless an object of thought *by means of which*, as by an image or similitude, the exterior thing comes to be understood.

This reply, however, could only confirm, in the eyes of critics of Thomism, the suspicion already expressed by Olivi, William of Ware, Walter Burley, and John Duns Scotus: in Hervaeus Natalis, recourse to a concept distinct from and

57. William of Ockham, *Scriptum in librum primum Sententiarum Ordinatio*, dist. 2, q. 8, ed. S. Brown and G. Gál, in *Opera theologica* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1970), 2: 271–89.

58. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, art. 2, published with the *Quodlibeta Hervei* (1513; repr. Ridgewood, N.J.: Gregg Press, 1966, f. 10–24); see especially f. 11–12 for the development summarized here.

formed by the act still rests on the presupposition that an intellectual operation requires a product that is distinct; at the same time it posits, in the process of knowledge, a mental object that is intermediate, threatening to be a screen. The theory of the *actus*, undoubtedly, was scoring points.

A third option arose during this period, which proposed instead to identify the word with the thing itself—or with its quiddity—but insofar as it is known. Such was the position of Peter of Auvergne, at the turn of the fourteenth century.⁵⁹ And this is, above all and with many nuances, what the Franciscan Peter Auriol vigorously defended in his commentary on the *Sentences* around 1315.⁶⁰ Augustine's mental word, according to him, is the thing itself insofar as it is presented to the attention of the soul under a form of existence he calls "objective" or "intentional" (*esse objective* or *intentionale*). An ordinary thing, he explains, can exist in two ways: by real being, outside the soul, or by intentional being, when it is apprehended by the soul. But it is, in both cases, *the same thing*. We are then justified in saying that the mental word is the object of the intellect, without thereby introducing an undesirable intermediary between thought and thing. And we can posit in the same breath that the word is produced by the soul insofar as it is the act of thought that makes the thing exist under its intentional mode. Peter Auriol thus wishes to avoid the inconveniences of Thomism, which he explicitly criticizes (especially through Hervaeus Natalis) while conserving the key notion of a purely intentional existence of what is known.

This, however, might not be a very promising strategy. For, if the word has only an intentional existence in the soul, how can we avoid concluding—as did Thomas in the questions *De potentia* (q. 8, a. 1)—that this word is not after all the thing itself, since the latter is exterior to the soul? Whatever we think of this difficulty—as crucial for the system of Peter Auriol as for that of Thomas, which it resembles in some regard—at least his motivation, as with Peter of Auvergne's, joins in its essentials that of the partisans of the theory of the word as act: both wish to eliminate any encumbering intermediary between the act of intellectual cognition and the exterior objects at which it aims. In all of these authors, the reaction against the Thomist doctrine of the mental word (whether or not it hits its mark) was in large part inspired by a desire to "return to the things themselves" in the theory of knowledge.

Thus, in the last decades of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, the question of the mental word and the necessity of conjoining Augustine and Aristotle in a theory of cognition provided an occasion for rich

59. Peter of Auvergne, *Quodlibet* 1, q. 21, and 5, q. 9–10, ed. G. Cannizzo, in Cannizzo 1964–65, 72–89.

60. Peter Aureoli, *Scriptum super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 9, art. 1, and dist. 27, 2a pars, art. 1; I thank Russell Friedman for supplying me with preliminary edition of these texts. On intentionality according to Peter Auriol, see Vanni-Rovighi 1960 and Perler 1994.

philosophical debate regarding the nature and import of conceptual representation. While the positions were quite diverse, the original synthesis proposed by Thomas Aquinas assumes a primary place in the discussion during this entire period. William Ockham's well-known hesitations on the nature of interior discourse in the 1320s remained directly linked to the critique of Thomism, developed, over four decades, by a principally Franciscan current of thought, marked by the interventions of Peter John Olivi, William of Ware, Walter Burley, and John Duns Scotus.

Everyone agreed on two points: first, the mental word must be produced by the thinking subject; second, it must be able to provide an intellectual cognition adequate to exterior reality. The problem was determining exactly to what to attribute this double function: to a mental object distinct from the act of intellection and endowed with a particular ontological status; to that act itself, existing in the soul as a quality; or to the exterior reality insofar as it is known. Of the six theses into which I have proposed dividing the Thomistic response, the debate hinged primarily on the third, according to which the word is distinct from and produced by the act of intellection; on the fourth, which makes appeal to a special intramental existence that escapes the Aristotelian categories; and on the fifth, which makes the mental word the primary object of intellection. The principal stake in all this was to ensure both the creative dynamism of cognitive activity and the direct access of thought to things themselves.

As for the three other theses we found in Thomas Aquinas, these knew quite different destinies during this period. The first, according to which it is normally necessary to distinguish, for each exterior object, two mental representations irreducible to each other—namely, the intelligible *species* and the *verbum mentis*—was largely accepted, and the identification of the word with the Aristotelian *species*, which had at first seemed tempting, was rejected both by partisans of the *actus* theory and by followers of Thomism, quickly falling into disuse. The second thesis, which made the mental word the significate of the uttered word, became, on the other hand, the object of lively disagreement, in many cases directly connected to the discussions reported here. I will return to this in the next chapter.

Finally, there is the sixth thesis, distinguishing two varieties of interior words: the simple concept and the mental proposition. Except for Henry of Ghent, who saw the mental word in the strong sense as the fruit of a propositional activity, this position does not seem to have been very controversial among the authors studied in this chapter. It nonetheless represents a major interest for our history, for it stressed both the discursivity and compositionality of the interior word—two traits left aside by Augustine, Anselm, and many theologians for whom what was attractive in the idea of the mental word was above all the invocation of a spiritual engendering. For illuminating the mystery of the divine Trinity, the *articulation* of the concept and of the mental proposition inspired by the *Perihermeneias* and *De anima* of Aristotle had no

utility. However, it did suggest a much closer correspondence between thought and language than what Augustinianism had proposed. Human thought, for Thomas Aquinas, does not only resemble a word engendered by the thinking and willing subject for the purpose of expressing himself—which constituted the heart of the Augustinian comparison—it was also allied with a certain form of *discourse*, precisely in its being endowed with a logical structure of composition. This idea, so far neglected, comes to play a decisive role in the elaboration of the theme of *oratio mentalis* that we find in the fourteenth century.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCEPT AND SIGN

Is the word the sign of the concept or of the thing itself? John Duns Scotus, in his *Ordinatio*, mentions a lively debate on this subject—a *magna altercatio*, as he calls it.¹ This dispute over the notion of sign was closely linked to the discussion about the word described in the preceding chapter. Thomas Aquinas maintained that the proper significate of the spoken word is the interior word—for him, identical with the *passiones animae* of *Perihermeneias*.² Those who would adopt the opposing position on this point often did so in the name of a resolute realism that seems to characterize an entire philosophical movement at the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries: most of the time, they noted, we use words to refer to things, rather than just to concepts in our minds.

But the question bears on the history of the idea of mental language in another way. The working out of a logico-grammatical theory of interior discourse like Ockham's supposes a systematic application to the order of thought of those categories in which exterior language is usually analyzed—particularly the category of signification, along with several other related categories. It requires, in other words, that concepts *are themselves signs* and that we take this description seriously. Now, such an approach is greatly facilitated if we refuse to make the concept the primary significate of the spoken word. Not that the two views are strictly incompatible: after all, why not say—as did many medievals—that the word is the sign of the concept while the latter is the sign of the exterior thing? The problem with this is that the parallelism cannot be pressed too far, for, from a semantic point of view, these two relations are quite different from one other. The truth of a mental proposition, for example, depends, in general, on the way in which the things it represents are disposed in reality, but it would be absurd to propose that the truth of a spoken proposition depends on the way the mental concepts corresponding to it are disposed in the mind. It would follow that an oral enunciation would only need to be sincere to be true (wouldn't that be convenient!). If the semantic analysis of exterior language is to furnish the ideal model for the analysis of interior thought, it will be more fruitful—as William of Ockham saw—to make the concept-thing relation parallel to the word-thing

1. John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, dist. 27, in *Opera omnia*, Vatican ed. (1963), 6:97n83.

2. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, chap. 11; *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, q. 8, art. 1; *Super Evangelium Joannis lectura* I.1.

relation rather than to the word-concept relation and to posit, consequently, that concepts and things are both signs of exterior things.

The two theses—that concepts are signs and that words signify things themselves—thus go together in the theorization of interior language. In this chapter, I will first describe how the idea that concepts could be seen as signs was introduced in the course of the thirteenth century. I will then examine, against the background of this controversy about signification to which Duns Scotus alluded, the manner in which the two theses in question were joined by the Subtle Doctor himself, giving birth to a new schema of relations between words, concepts, and things—a schema whose possibilities William of Ockham will later systematically exploit to establish his own theory of mental language.

A third section, finally, will be dedicated, as a kind of appendix, to the exotic but illuminating theme of the language of angels, which was also the occasion of rich discussion in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. If angels can communicate with each other—as theologians generally believed—mustn't they use signs? And are these signs, which are certainly not sensible, constitutive of their thought, or do they serve only to transmit thought from one angel to another? What concerns us in this debate is once more a question of whether or not conceptual thought can be described as a discourse composed of signs. We find here a privileged field of application for various medieval philosophical conceptions of the relations between the orders of concepts and of signs. I will especially emphasize the divergences on this issue that set apart the views of Thomas Aquinas and of Duns Scotus and William of Ockham.

SIGNS IN THE INTELLECT

In Greco-Latin antiquity, the *concept* was not generally described as a *sign*. This was due to the primary sense of the words *sêmeion* or *signum*, according to which the sign of something is the more or less probable *clue* that the thing exists:³ smoke is the sign of fire, and symptoms are signs of sickness. It is in this sense that words are signs of states of the soul for Aristotle: they are the clues, or the indicators, for the existence of certain states of the soul in the speaker. The mental state, by contrast, cannot usually be considered an indicator of the real existence of the state of affairs it represents. My belief that it will rain tomorrow is not a reliable meteorological indicator, and I can very well represent to myself a glass of wine without finding one in my presence. This is why, in this vocabulary, states of the soul—including concepts—were not signs of exterior reality.

The notion of sign shifts with Augustine—as is well known—and becomes

3. See, for example, Aristotle, *Prior Analytics* II.27.70a7–8, and Sextus Empiricus, *Hypotyposes pyrrhoniennes* II.100–101. On the notion of sign in antiquity, see Manetti 1993, who himself cites a number of other works.

more directly associated with the order of linguistic phenomena.⁴ Even so, the intellectual concept is still not classified as a sign. Let us recall the celebrated definition from *De doctrina christiana*, which would be repeated for at least a millenium:

A sign is a thing which causes us to think of something beyond the impression the thing itself makes upon the senses.⁵

The accent is on the *evocative* role of the sign, more than on its function as a *clue*; it is no longer what *reveals the existence* of another thing, but rather what *calls something to mind*. For Augustine, however, the sign always remains something perceptible by sensation, as one of the clauses of his definition explicitly indicates. The same condition had already been stated by Cicero in a formula equally well-known in the Middle Ages;⁶ and it is also found in another influential definition, often attributed by the medievals to Boethius but in reality just a variant of Augustine's: "The sign is what presents itself to the senses while offering something else to the intellect (*Signum est quod se offert sensui aliud derelinquens intellectui*)."⁷ At the dawn of the Middle Ages, the notion of a purely intellectual sign is thus excluded by definition. It sometimes happened, for example, in Boethius, that the vocabulary of signification came to be associated with the order of concepts,⁸ but this remained an exception, and hardly gave way to elaborate theoretical constructions.

Turning now to the thirteenth century, we see that the application of the notion of sign to the order of concepts quietly spreads at this time, although not without prompting some resistance. On this subject I will address the salient accounts of three highly important authors: William of Auvergne in the first half of the century and Roger Bacon and Thomas Aquinas in the second.

William of Auvergne (ca. 1180–1249) taught theology in Paris in the 1220s and was bishop of the city for approximately twenty years under the Christian King Louis IX (1228–49). He is the author of an enormous theological encyclopedia, the *Magisterium divinale ac sapientiale*. This is divided into several distinct works. Those that concern us are the *De Trinitate*, written around 1223,

4. Markus 1972 and Maierù 1981.

5. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* II.1; English trans. D. W. Robertson (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958), 34.

6. Cicero, *De inventione* I.48.

7. The formula is quite similar to that advanced by Augustine in *De dialectica*—strongly inspired, it seems, by an unknown Stoic source: "The sign is what is displayed to the sense and also displays to the mind something other than itself" (chap. 5, trans. B. D. Jackson [Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1975], 86).

8. See Boethius, *Commentarium in librum Aristotelis Peri hermeneias. Secunda editio*, ed. C. Meiser (Leipzig: Teubner, 1880), 7 and 24. Boethius in general uses *signum* in the ancient sense of clue or of element in an inference (cf. Magee 1989, 57ff.)

the *De universo*, which dates from the years 1230–36, and the *De anima*, from a little later.⁹

In his theory of knowledge, William of Auvergne takes from Augustine the idea of a mental speech, prior to linguistic expression and purely intellectual, that he indifferently calls *verbum mentale*, *verbum intellectuale*, *verbum spirituale*, *locutio intellectualis*, or *loquela spiritualis intellectiva*.¹⁰ The context of this notion's appearance in, for example, *De universo*, is an attempt to explain the creation of the universe by the divine word. The author develops for pedagogical purposes (as he himself insists) a comparison between divine creation and creation by an artisan or artist. The spiritual word is, in the latter case, practical knowledge, an active thought that prepares in the agent's mind the effective realization of a work or enterprise, a mental representation preliminary to the action and its formal standard of fulfillment, in the name of which the agent corrects or reorients his action. Like Augustine before him, William explains that such interior speech always directs the production of spoken and written discourse, considered as one action among others an agent may undertake:

when you yourself write or speak, you do not do either without emitting in your heart an intellectual discourse [*locutio intellectualis*], which is nothing other than your very thought [*cogitatio*], by which you think what you write and how it should be written . . . ; and in virtue of which also, if it happens that your text is not entirely appropriate, you immediately correct it or put it aside for later correction.¹¹

For humans, William explains again, that mental discourse that is thought in act is articulated *partem post partem*. It is really a *discourse* and not, as in God, a vision or an instantaneous apprehension of the work to be created. However, this discourse is purely intellectual or spiritual. For William as for Augustine, it precedes articulation in words, which is its translation into a particular language.

Where William of Auvergne departs from Augustine, as from Aristotle, is his insistence on positing the concept in the mind—the *intellectus*—as a sign of the thing it represents: “it is necessary that there be intelligible signs in the intellect when it is actually thinking.”¹² For William, this is a matter of countering the Aristotelian suggestion according to which intellection consists of an assimilation of the intellect to things, just like sensation is an assimilation of

9. William of Auvergne, *De Trinitate*, ed. B. Switalski (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1976); *De universo*, in *Opera omnia*, ed. B. Le Feron (Paris: 1674; repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1963), 1:593–1074; *De anima*, in *Opera omnia* 2:65–223.

10. See especially Auvergne, *De Trinitate* 16 and 26; *De universo* I.20.

11. Auvergne, *De universo* I.20, 614.

12. Auvergne, *De anima* 7.6, 212.

the sense to sensibles. In actual cognition—which is the mental word, as we just saw—the intellect does not really interiorize the very forms it understands. To think of heat does not really warm my mind, and the idea of vice does not make it bad:

Cognition of evil, indeed, does not involve malice and is not itself bad. . . . All cognition, all science, is the intellect's beauty and good. And consequently, since actual cognition (I mean cognition which is an act) is only in our intellect as the sign [*signum*] of the thing known, its reflection realized in our intellect, it is clear that the sign of vice is a good thing.¹³

Indeed, it is necessary to go further and deny, against the Aristotelian tradition, that the concept is a resemblance or similitude of the thing, except in a very attenuated sense. Signs are not similitudes in the strong sense:

What in our intellect is the sign or designation [*designatio*] of vice or malice is not a true image or a resemblance of either. . . . It is not necessary for the sign to be related to its significate by a resemblance other than minimally or in a very thin sense.¹⁴

We could compare these to names of things in spoken language, which indeed have no need to resemble the things. But, the bishop further explains, we must take care not to push the comparison too far, for if linguistic designations are conventional, those that are in the intellect are the fruit of a *natural* process: it is in virtue of its proper nature—and not of any decision or convention—that the intellect forms in itself (and with an astonishing agility and speed) conceptual representations that it does not receive already formed from exterior things. The intellect needs only be mildly excited by things to set this process in motion: concepts are natural signs.¹⁵

Here, a century before William of Ockham, is an important author for whom intellectual discourse—*locutio intellectualis*—is composed of signs, naturally formed in the intellect from contact with things and capable of being combined into successive complexes *partem post partem*. William of Auvergne's motivation for using the vocabulary of sign in this context was to avoid the problems associated with a theory positing intellectual cognition as assimilation or similitude in a strong sense and so to defend free intellectual inquiry: the properties of the thing are not those of its representation in the intellect. Still, for him, the theme remains essentially negative. The terminology of the sign does not yet bear with it, as it will for William Ockham, an entire theoretical apparatus.

Around the middle of the thirteenth century, the idea that the concept is a sign, while far from being universally adopted, gradually spread. The English-

13. Auvergne, *De universo* IIae-IIIa.3, 1018.

14. *Ibid.*, IIae-IIIa.3, 1018.

15. The expression is explicit, for example, in Auvergne, *De Trinitate* 16, 99.

man Richard Fishacre—a contemporary of William of Auvergne—likewise allowed, despite the Augustinian definition, that there could exist purely intelligible signs. However, contrary to the Parisian bishop, he does not seem to have counted among these the mental representations that are involved in every intellectual act of cognition, and he recognized that, generally, sensible entities more appropriately serve as signs than intelligibles.¹⁶ Around 1250, Lambert of Lagny (often called Lambert of Auxerre) attributed to the author of the *Perihermeneias* the affirmation that “concepts are signs of things,” but is content to mention the point in passing without making any elaborate use of it. It is the study of spoken language that is of primary interest in his *Logica*, and the idea that concepts are signs of things only serves to posit words as indirect signs of things, just as the cause of a cause can be seen as the indirect cause of the effect of the other cause.¹⁷

The Danish scholar Jan Pinborg has pointed out that, in the second half of the thirteenth century, there was an English tradition according to which concepts are natural signs of exterior things.¹⁸ The idea is found in passing—but without any emphasis—in a number of grammatical treatises: the commentary on Donat’s *Ars Maior* by the influential Dominican Robert Kilwardby, the commentary on the *Priscian Major* by someone we call the Pseudo-Kilwardby, and the *Ars grammatica* of Pseudo-Robert Grosseteste.¹⁹ We find it especially in such important authors as Roger Bacon and John Duns Scotus. Even so, the theme is still exploited only in a very mild way, as its blossoming is still impeded by the impressive authority of Augustine stipulating that the sign is something presented to the senses. The secular association of the sign with the sensible explains why others—the Parisian masters, in particular—hesitated, as Pinborg notes, to speak of signs that are pure intelligibles.

We can take a closer look at this disagreement by turning to the explicit evidence of Roger Bacon, on the one hand, and Thomas Aquinas, on the other. Bacon (c. 1220–92) was very interested in language and signs throughout his long career. He is the author of the *Summulae dialectices* and of a *Summa grammatica*, probably written between 1240 and 1250; a long chapter of his imposing

16. The passage in question from Fishacre’s *Commentary on the Sentences* is cited by Rosier-Catach (1994, 114) based on Professor Goering’s critical edition in preparation at the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto; I am grateful to Mrs. Rosier-Catach for sending me the pages of this edition that are most pertinent to my project.

17. Lambert of Auxerre, *Logica* 8, ed. F. Alessio (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1971), 205–6.

18. Pinborg 1979, 35; see also Biard 1989, 28–30.

19. Robert Kilwardby, *In Donati Artem Maiorem III*, ed. L. Schmücker (Brixen: A. Weger, 1984), 23; Pseudo-Kilwardby, “The Commentary on *Priscianus Maior*,” 1.1.1, ed. K. M. Fredborg et al., *Cahiers de l’Institut du Moyen Age grec et latin* 15 (Copenhagen: 1975): 4; Pseudo-Robert Grosseteste, *Tractatus de grammatica*, ed. K. Reichl (Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1976), 32.

Opus Maius of 1267 was dedicated to a general theory of signs, and the same subject returns in great detail in his last work, the *Compendium studii theologiae* of 1292. Bacon does call for broadening the traditional definition of *signum* in order that the term may be applied also to purely intelligible realities:

The sign is what, presented to the senses *or to the intellect*, designates something for that intellect, *since it is not true that all signs present themselves to the senses*, as is supposed by a trivial description of the sign: some offer themselves only to the intellect, if we follow Aristotle, who said that the passions of the soul are signs of things, which passions are its proper ways of being [*habitus*] and the *species* of things existing in the intellect. Thus they present themselves only to the intellect, so that they represent to the intellect exterior things themselves.²⁰

It is remarkable that Bacon, just like Lambert of Lagny, here attributes to Aristotle the idea that “passions of the soul,” including concepts, are intelligible *signs* of exterior things, while Aristotle did not actually use *sêmeion* in the *Perihermeneias* to describe this relation, but rather *homoiômata*. This is not a momentary lapse on Bacon’s part, who returns to it with a certain insistence later in the same text, invoking the additional authority of Boethius:

[Aristotle] said that concepts [*intellectus*] are signs of things and that oral sounds are signs of concepts and that the written is the sign of the spoken; and surely the concept is not a conventional sign of the thing, but a natural sign, as Boethius said in his *Commentary*, since a Greek and a Latin both have the same concept of a certain thing, while they nevertheless use different oral sounds to designate it.²¹

We find here clearly articulated the idea that the intellectual concept, the *intellectus*, is a natural sign of the thing it represents. This way of speaking is so taken for granted at the time Bacon wrote these lines, around 1267, that he is persuaded of having encountered it in Aristotle and Boethius themselves.

On the other hand, Bacon does not seem to accord any particular theoretical import to this theme. It is striking, as Thomas Maloney notes, that “having broadened his definition of a sign to include concepts as signs he never pursues the point further.”²² In the chapter *De signis* as well as in the *Compendium*, which is very similar, Bacon extensively develops the notion of a natural sign. He enumerates different varieties according to the natural relation at work—causality, for example, or resemblance—and provides many examples of each. But never in this context does he mention the concept among his examples

20. Roger Bacon, *De signis* 2, in Fredborg, Nielsen, and Pinborg 1978, 82. On the Baconian theory of signs, see especially Maloney 1983 and Rosier-Catach 1994.

21. Bacon, *De signis* 166, 134.

22. Maloney 1988, 131.

of natural signs. The idea is clearly presented by him and even forces him, like some of his predecessors and contemporaries—Richard Fishacre and the Pseudo-Kilwardby, for example—to enlarge the definition of the word *signum*, and yet his theoretical concern stops there.

Likewise, Thomas Aquinas happens to mention in passing that the concept and the *species* in the intellect are signs of the thing they represent. “The vocal sound,” he says in his *Quodlibetal Questions*, for example, “is only a sign and not a significate, while the concept [*intellectus*] is both sign and significate.”²³ Again, in *De veritate*, Thomas posits that the property of signification pertains primarily to the interior word (*verbum interius*) “because the exterior word is only instituted to signify by the mediation of the interior word.”²⁴ But these kinds of expression are rare for him. There is a principled reason for this, which appears, again in *De veritate*, when he discusses the question of whether angels speak to one another. Among those objections he enumerates prior to his eventual affirmative response, one refers back to Augustine’s old definition of the sign: to speak to one another, angels would need recourse to signs; but all signs are sensible, as Augustine held, and, unlike us, angels do not acquire their knowledge through the mediation of sensible perception. To this Thomas responds:

the sign is, properly speaking, only something from which [*ex quo*] one gains knowledge of something else as by a sort of inference [*quasi discurrendo*]; and in this sense, there are no signs among angels, since their knowledge is not discursive . . . ; and it is for this reason also that signs, for us, are sensible, for our knowledge, which is discursive, has its origin in sensible things. But we could also, commonly, call a sign any object in which [*in quo*] something is known; and in this sense the intelligible form could be called a sign of the thing which is known by it; and in this way angels know things by signs.²⁵

Here Thomas distinguishes a proper sense of the word *sign* and another looser sense according to which we may speak of purely intelligible signs. Even so, we must note that the distinctive feature of the sign in the proper sense is not, as it is for the objector on the basis of the Augustinian definition, its being perceptible to the senses. Thomas concedes that, strictly speaking, there are only sensible signs for us humans, but according to him this is not directly a part of the definition of *signum*; it is a mere consequence thereof. The distinctive feature of the sign in the proper sense is its being that from which [*ex quo*] discursive knowledge is engaged, the starting point of a sort of inference. The track on the snow is the sign—in the proper sense—of the passage of a rabbit, because it sets in motion a discursive inference that from the tracks leads the mind to evoke the rabbit. The really pertinent opposition in Aquinas’s text is between *ex quo*

23. Aquinas, *Quodlibet*. IV.9.2.

24. Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* q. 4, art.1, ad. 7.

25. *Ibid.*, q. 9, art. 4, ad. 4; see also *ST* III, q. 60, art. 4, ad. 1.

and *in quo*. While the sign in the strict sense is a distinct thing *from which* the mind rises to another reality, by contrast the intelligible form or concept in the mind—the mental word, in particular—is that *in which* the mind apprehends exterior realities themselves. Contrary to what we have encountered in William of Auvergne, Thomas Aquinas, influenced by Aristotle, wishes to view intellectual cognition as a sort of *assimilation*, and the idea of the *in quo* here plays a primary role. This is why, on the whole, the Angelic Doctor hardly dares speak of exclusively intelligible signs: in his eyes, this is an improper and somewhat misleading mode of expression.

In his commentary on the *Perihermeneias*, Thomas observes—almost as though he wishes to respond to Lambert of Lagny or Roger Bacon on this point—that Aristotle does not speak of signs in characterizing the relationship of passions of the soul to exterior things:

Notice he says here that letters are signs [*notae*], i.e., signs of vocal sounds, and similarly vocal sounds are signs of passions of the soul, but that passions of the soul are likenesses of things. This is because a thing is not known by the soul unless there is some likeness of the thing existing either in the sense or in the intellect.²⁶

The distance between Roger Bacon and Thomas Aquinas is not so great, however, regarding the question that concerns us. For while Bacon insists on extending the definition of sign to intelligible realities, he does not draw from this any theoretical consequence worthy of interest and hardly takes advantage of this way of speaking (which he wrongly attributes to Aristotle). And while Thomas refuses to apply the strict sense of *signum* to the intelligible form of the thing when it is found in the mind, he nevertheless admits a more relaxed sense—which he finds widespread (as he says, *communiter*)—according to which even angels, pure intellects, cognize by means of signs; as we have seen, he even occasionally uses this way of speaking himself.

The notion of the sign has shifted in its use by theoreticians since Aristotle's and Augustine's times. The function most spontaneously associated with it is no longer that of an indicator, nor is its primary characteristic that of being perceptible to the senses, nor even of serving for communication or the expression of thought. Little by little, *representation* becomes the privileged function of the sign. This opens the way, as the Italian scholar Andrea Tabarroni aptly put it, for a consideration of signs *sub specie veritatis*—that is, from the point of view of the adequation or nonadequation of this crucial function of representing the world.²⁷ It is this tendency, inchoate in the thirteenth century, that emerges in the fourteenth as a radically new approach to all cognitive phenomena.

26. Aquinas, *In Aristotelis libros Peri Hermeneias* II.19 (English trans.: *On Interpretation: Commentary by St. Thomas and Cajetan*, trans. J. T. Oesterle [Milwaukee, Wisc.: Marquette University Press, 1962], 27).

27. Cf. Tabarroni 1989, 200.

JOHN DUNS SCOTUS AND THE QUESTION OF THE SIGNIFICATE

From the time he taught logic, around 1295, the Franciscan John Duns Scotus wished unequivocally to say that the intelligible species in the mind is a sign of the exterior thing: *signum rei in mente*. Commenting on the celebrated first chapter of the *Perihermeneias*, he adds that it is by nature that the representations in question—the *passiones animae*—are signs, “since they signify uniformly in everyone . . . ; and what is by nature is the same for all, while letters and oral sounds are not themselves natural signs, since they are not the same for all.”²⁸ Scotus thus proves himself to be the heir of the aforementioned English tradition.

The context of these affirmations, for him, was a discussion that was becoming increasingly animated (a *magna altercatio*, he will later call it). The question was: is the spoken word the sign of the concept in the mind or of the exterior thing? Roger Bacon had already, in his *De signis*, c. 1267, characterized this question as difficult and noted on this matter the existence of considerable disagreement (*non modica contentio*) “between famous men.”²⁹ By this, Bacon is probably referring to a disagreement more between the ancients than among his immediate contemporaries;³⁰ however, twenty-five years later, when Scotus took up the problem, the medieval university was the site of a kind of pitched battle, whose stakes directly concerned the status of the concept as sign. On the one hand, Thomas Aquinas and many others had adopted Aristotle’s and Boethius’s manner of speaking: words, they said, are signs of mental states, or, more precisely, concepts (i.e., the mental word, in the vocabulary of Thomas). On the other hand, less traditional authors on this point—such as Roger Bacon himself, Siger of Brabant, and Peter John Olivi—argued forcefully that what we intend to speak about by means of conventional language is normally things

28. Scotus, *Quaestiones in primum librum Perihermenias*, q. 4, 68; see also q. 2, 47–59, and *Quaestiones in duos libros Perihermenias*, q. 1, 141–45, in B. Ioannis Duns Scoti, *Opera Philosophica* 2, ed. R. Andrews et al. (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004). On the Scotist theory of the sign in these two series of questions, see especially: Bos 1987a; Marmo 1989; Perler 1994.

29. Bacon, *De signis* 162, 132; see also *Compendium studii theologiae*, ed. T. S. Maloney (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 68), where Bacon remarks that this question concerns subjects that give rise to a very considerable differences of opinion.

30. Roger could in fact have in mind a passage from Boethius’s second commentary on the *Perihermeneias*, wherein the author attributes to Porphyry the mentioning of a “disagreement” in the age of Aristotle (Boethius uses *contentio*, the same term we find in Bacon), on the subject of what is signified by spoken words: some said that it is things, others, like Plato, that it is incorporeals, still others, that it is sensations, and others, that it is imaginations; in the end, Aristotle settled it by positing that it is states of the soul (Boethius, *Commentarium in libr. Arist. herm.*, 2nd ed., 26). The “famous men” of whom Bacon spoke could therefore include Plato and Aristotle themselves.

themselves and not concepts; and that consequently it would be better to say that words signify things rather than concepts.³¹

This latter approach, more than its rival, took due account of how the idea of the sign had shifted since Aristotle: originally identified with what reveals its cause or regular accompaniment—the Greek sense—the sign was essentially constituted, for a number of authors at the end of the thirteenth century, by its capacity to call up external realities. Signification, for them, had become reference.

Now, the key argument they employed to demonstrate that the word must signify the thing itself depended on the strict *parallelism* they wished to secure between signification and intellection. For this they would often stress a well-known passage from Boethius that says (or seems to say) that for a word to signify something is for it “to establish a concept” (or an intellection) of that thing (*constituere intellectum*).³² Here is how Siger of Brabant, for example, formulates the argument in the 1270s:

So, if this spoken word “animal” signified the concept of animal and not the thing itself which is an animal, it would establish the concept of the concept of animal and not the concept of the thing which is an animal, which no one would accept.³³

The same reasoning is found in Simon of Faversham, c. 1280:

what we signify by spoken words is what we understand thanks to them; but what we understand thanks to spoken words are the things themselves. . . .³⁴

and again, in Radulphus Brito, fifteen or twenty years later:

what is understood thanks to a word is what is signified by the word . . . and what is the primary object of the intellect is what is understood thanks to the word. Now, the concept is not the primary object of the intellect, but rather it is the very essence of the thing and what it is [*quod quid est*] which is the primary object of the intellect, as we have it from Book II of *De anima*. It

31. See especially Bacon, *De signis* 162–67, 132–35; Siger of Brabant, *Quaestiones in metaphysicam* IV, q. 16, ed. W. Dunphy and A. Maurer (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut supérieur de philosophie, 1981–83), 1:197–98, 2:157; and Peter John Olivi, *Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum*, q. 85, ad 4, ed. B. Jansen (Quaracchi: Coll. Saint-Bonaventure, 1926), 2:195–96.

32. Boethius, *Commentarium in libr. Arist. Peri herm. Prima editio*, ed. C. Meiser (1877), 5. In reality, Boethius in this passage attributes “establishing a concept” to the speaker more than to the word itself.

33. Siger of Brabant, *Quaest. in Metaph.* IV, q. 16, 157.

34. Simon Faversham, *Quaestiones super libro Perihermeneias*, q. 1, ed. P. Mazzarella, in *Opera omnia* (Padua: CEDAM, 1957), 1:151.

follows that the essence of the thing is what is understood and it is this, by consequence, that is signified by the spoken word.³⁵

In such lines we easily see how, for these authors, the question of the significate of names is intimately associated with the question of the primary object of intellection treated in the preceding chapter. As Duns Scotus himself succinctly wrote, “the significate of the word is the primary object of intellection.”³⁶ Thinking and speaking aim at the same targets. To abandon the thesis that the concept—or the mental word—is the primary object of intellection is at the same time to deny that the concept deserves the title of primary significate of the spoken word.

At the time of his *Perihermeneias* commentaries, Scotus, while clearly positing the concept as the natural sign of the thing, still hesitates about whether it would be better to say that words are the immediate signs of concepts and only indirectly signs of things, or rather that words are the signs of things themselves, insofar as they are conceived. In the first of the two works, he opts for the intelligible *species* as significate of the name.³⁷ But in the second, he seems to favor the thing itself; not the singular thing existing “under individuating conditions,” he explains, but the thing *as known* (*res ut concipitur*), free of the contingent circumstances of its actuality and thus reduced to what it is essentially, to its *quod quid est*. Neither of the two positions, he concludes, forces itself upon us with necessity; we should only avoid saying that the word signifies the thing without further qualification.³⁸

Nevertheless, he will end up conceding that himself, “to put the matter briefly,” some years later, in a development of the *Ordinatio*. And it is precisely here that he will propose—while hardly insisting on—a new and suggestive way of characterizing the relations between words, concepts, and things, putting clearly in view the parallelism between spoken language and mental language, which followed from the choice of exterior things as the significates of names and, at the same time, as the primary objects of intellection. Here he directly associates the idea that the word signifies the exterior thing with the characterization of the concept as being itself a sign. Here is the well-known text I have in mind:

Although there was a great controversy on the subject of the spoken word concerning whether it is the sign of the thing or of the concept, I would con-

35. Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super libro Perihermeneias*, q. 3, ed. J. Pinborg, in Pinborg 1971, 275–76.

36. Scotus, *In duos libr. Perih.*, q. 1, 212. Likewise, see Peter of Auvergne, *Quaestiones in Aristotelis De interpretatione*, q. 4–5; I thank Sten Ebbesen for providing me with a transcription of this passage.

37. Scotus, *Quaest. super libro primo Peryarmeneias*, q. 2, 187–88.

38. Scotus, *In duos libr. Perih.*, q. 1, 212–14.

cede, to put the matter briefly, that what is properly signified by the spoken word is the thing. Written words, spoken words, and concepts, however, are ordered signs of the same significate, just as there are sometimes several ordered effects of a single cause, without any being the cause of another, as is the case, for example, with the sun illuminating different parts of space.³⁹

Signa ordinata eiusdem signati: “ordered signs of the same significate.” The description will prove fruitful, and William of Ockham—who reflected a great deal on the work of Scotus—makes it the starting point for his own theory of orders of discourse:

I say that spoken words are signs subordinated to concepts or intentions of the soul not only because in the strict sense of “signify” they always signify the concepts of the soul primarily and properly. The point is rather that spoken words are used to signify the very things that are signified by concepts of the mind, so that a concept primarily and naturally signifies something and a spoken word signifies the same thing secondarily.⁴⁰

Scotus’s suggestion, taken up by Ockham, was a hierarchy of signs for the same significate. The concept in the mind is first the natural sign of one or more exterior things. Then comes a convention that associates with this concept an oral sound, which thus comes to signify—albeit conventionally—the same external realities that were naturally signified by said concept. The operation can then be reiterated to associate the spoken word with written traces that are themselves also signs—doubly conventional—of the same things. In this way, as Ockham will explain, if for some reason the significates of the concept may come to vary, those of the spoken word would vary in the same way and, through a chain reaction, likewise would those of the written word. Scotus, however, did not further exploit the idea. Ockham’s innovation on this subject will be to take seriously the parallelism between linguistic and conceptual signs suggested by his predecessor and to systematically apply to the latter the theoretical categories that the tradition had reserved for studying the former: the categories of grammar, as it happens, and, especially, the logic of terms. From the moment both words and concepts are described as signs of things—even if

39. Scotus, *Ord.* I, dist. 27, 97n83.

40. William of Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.1 (English translation: *Ockham’s Theory of Terms, Part I of the Summa Logicae*, trans. M. J. Loux [South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 1998], 50). See also *Scriptum in librum primum Sententiarum* (dist. 2, q. 4), where Ockham—again very close to Scotus’s formulation—writes that the word and the concept are “so to speak ordered signs [*signa quasi ordinata*] . . . not because the spoken word signifies first the concept, but because the word is imposed to signify first and precisely everything of which the concept is predicated” (ed. G. Gál et al., *Opera theologica* [St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1970], 2:140).

some are derived through their relation to the others—it is possible to theorize these two semantic relations in the same terms.

THE LANGUAGE OF ANGELS

Another fertile theological debate that significantly contributed to the exploration of the relations between signs and concepts in the thirteenth century surrounded the strange question of whether angels can speak to one another. Nearly everyone responded in the affirmative, but there were great differences regarding how to theorize the phenomenon. The approach adopted inevitably put into play general conceptions of language and thought.

In the 1220s, Philip the Chancellor dedicated several pages of his *Summa de bono* to the problem of the *locutio angelorum*.⁴¹ Like many of his followers, he depends upon a passage from Damascene's *De fide orthodoxa*, wherein the author maintains that angels exchange counsel and knowledge, but "without the aid of a discourse uttered by voice."⁴² So how do they communicate? Through a kind of "intelligible discourse" (*sermo intelligibilis*), Philip replies, thanks to which they transmit to their celestial interlocutors certain concepts that are not innate to them. This discourse does not depend, however, on any conventional imposition. It is an illumination of one mind by another and works "in the manner of a natural sign." At the same time as William of Auvergne, we have here another theologian who speaks of the natural sign in relation to mental discourse—in this case, the discourse of angels. He adds, interestingly, that this kind of spiritual illumination, although on the order of signs, is not subject to the equivocity found in spoken language: under the direct control of the will of the speaker, the intelligible speech of angels has no ambiguity.

Every important theologian of the period, from Alexander of Hales and Albert the Great to William of Ockham and beyond, reflected in turn—often extensively—on the enigma of angelic communication, asking, in particular, what relation there could be in pure intellects between this nonsensible discourse by which they communicate and their private thoughts. Bonaventure explicitly emphasizes the question "are language and thought identical for angels?"⁴³ To this he responds in the negative. Speaking has two senses, he explains. It can be an act intrinsic to the mind—this is the production of the interior word, as

41. Philip the Chancellor, *Summa de bono*, ed. N. Wicki (Berne: Franke, 1985), 1:427–33.

42. John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* II.3: *Versions of Burgundio and Cerbanus* 36, ed. E. M. Buytaert (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1955), 70. Avicenna describes the language of angels in the same terms (see Goichon 1938, a. 708, 395).

43. Bonaventure, *In Sent.* II, dist. 10, art. 3, q. 1. On the theme of angelic language according to Bonaventure, see Chrétien 1979, and especially Faes de Mottoni 1995, chap. 5.

in Augustine. Or it can be an act addressed to another (*ad alterum*), which is then the external expression of the mental word. In humans, the second kind of locution necessarily depends on a *sign*, because the soul is here incarnated in a body. The notion of sign employed here by Bonaventure implies, in conformity with the Augustinian definition, a sensible entity. The angel, purely spiritual, makes no use of such an intermediary; for him an act of will suffices to render his thought accessible to the chosen interlocutor. It is the same intelligible *species* which is first the angel's mental word; it becomes exterior speech by the sole fact of its being addressed to another. There must, admittedly, be a second mental act on the part of the speaker, in addition to the thought, but this is merely an act of will and not the production of a new object, of anything like a sign.

Thomas Aquinas goes in the same direction, but emphasizes even more than Bonaventure the gap between thought and speech for angels. He goes so far as to explicitly impute to them that they sometimes manifest their concepts to each other through *signs*—not *oral* signs, to be sure, but *intellectual* ones.⁴⁴ Thomas very clearly places this whole discussion in the philosophical framework of a general theory of mind. He maintains that an intellectual representation, whether for angels or for humans, can exist according to three distinct modes:⁴⁵ it can subsist, first, *in habitu*, when the mind holds in reserve, but does not necessarily employ, the given representation—this is the intelligible *species* of Aristotelianism; it can also exist in act, *in actu*, at the moment when it explicitly presents itself as the mind's object—it is thus the mental word, or concept, properly so called, as we have seen in detail in the preceding chapter; finally, the same representation can exist *in ordine ad alterum*—that is to say, in the form of a message sent to an addressee. The angels' *locutio* corresponds to this third mode.

According to Thomas, what happens when the intellect, human or angelic, adopts this third mode—the communicational mode, so to speak—is that it mentally associates certain of its private thoughts with a domain of objects that it knows are perceptible and comprehensible to the party being addressed. In the human mind, this corresponds with the intervention of what Aquinas calls the *imaginatio vocis*, that mental representation the speaker forms of the discourse he prepares to pronounce.⁴⁶ The third mode in question is but the *mental* translation of concepts into language. For humans, this communicational mode is normally followed, if it is the speaker's will, by the physical production of the exterior message: the utterance of spoken words or the inscription of visible marks. On the other hand, when an angel wishes to communicate with one of his colleagues, he is content to manifest his private thoughts through other

44. Aquinas, *In Sent.* II, dist. 11, q. 2, art. 3, and *Super epistolas S. Pauli Lectura*, n. 763; see on this subject Faes de Mottoni 1986 and Panaccio 1997.

45. Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 9, art. 4, and *ST. I*, q. 107, art. 1.

46. Aquinas, *ST. I*, q. 34, art. 1.

mental objects—ones that are more explicit and that he knows are naturally perceptible by the addressed party.⁴⁷ Aquinas thus preserves, in his theory of the angelic mind, a distinction analogous to that he wishes to make in the human mind between conceptual thought itself—which is the mental word—and its rendering into signs. Here it is not as clear-cut, since in the angel after all it is the *same* representation that exists under different modes, while the spoken word for humans is in fact a thing really distinct from the concept. The fact remains, however, that language and thought are in principle dissociated, even in angelic communication, if only by the distinction of their respective modes of existence in the mind.⁴⁸

At the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries, this dualist thesis in angelology, like other positions of Thomas, was the object of controversy, and the theme of the *ordinatio ad alterum* was at the center. Richard Middleton gives it an original twist by identifying the angel's *locutio* with the emission of a spiritual ray specially oriented to a chosen party.⁴⁹ And the Dominican Hervaeus Natalis, among others, also defends on this point the positions of his master: "a more explicit concept," he writes,

could make manifest [for the addressed angel] what was latent in another less explicit concept. There is nothing inconvenient in one concept being manifested by another.⁵⁰

The opponents of Thomism, however, found much to fault in this duality. Durand of St. Pourçain held that even an angel cannot have the two representations required by the dualist thesis present simultaneously.⁵¹ John Duns Scotus, before him, touched on the heart of the problem by remarking that an intelligible object—a concept—must be directly intelligible for any intellect that is in a position to receive it, so that the translation by the *ordinatio ad alterum* is

47. Aquinas, *In Sent.* II, dist. 11, q. 2, art. 3. This doctrine of the association between two intelligible objects in the angel's mind, for the purpose of communication, is not found as such in the corresponding article of the *ST* (I, q. 107, art. 1), but has not been abandoned by Thomas, as he expounds it again in his teaching on the Epistle to the Corinthians, almost contemporary with the *Summa*, or perhaps even later (see *Super epist. S. Pauli*, n. 763).

48. Contrary to this, Chrétien thinks that Thomas, unlike Bonaventure, "does not find in angelic language the distinction, valid for human language, between interior word and exterior word" (1979, 683), but this is because he bases his interpretation only on the *Summa* and does not take account of the other texts cited in the preceding note.

49. Richard Middleton, *Super quatuor libros Sententiarum* II, dist. 9, art. 1, q. 1 (Brixia: 1591), 2:120–21.

50. Hervaeus Natalis, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum* II, dist. 11, q. 1, art. 1 (Paris: 1647), 233.

51. Durand of St. Pourçain, *Petri Lombardi Sententias commentariorum libri quatuor* II, dist. 11, q. 2 (Venice: 1571), fol. 151.

entirely superfluous in the case of pure intellects, as angels are supposed to be; all that is required is a direct causal action by the speaking angel on the angel being addressed.⁵² For Scotus—as later for Ockham, who will radicalize the position—thought, which is made of natural signs, is not distinct from *locutio* in angels: language and thought coincide in the pure intellect. Here again is manifest what we have seen sketched in the preceding section: a new way of theorizing the relations between conceptual thought and the order of signs.

The same opposition is found in a striking manner in certain other disagreements regarding the internal structure of thought in angels. Thomas Aquinas explicitly maintained that angelic thought is neither discursive nor predicative.⁵³ According to him, the angel apprehends objects presented to it at once and in all their richness, cognizing in one simple act all the aspects of an essence or consequences of a given truth. For Thomas, the need for logical composition, division, or inferential steps all follow from the specific weakness of the human mind. Ockham, on this point, explicitly disagrees:

it is not more imperfect to form and subscribe to a propositional complex than to intuitively or abstractly cognize;⁵⁴

and later:

the angel can discourse and acquire through discourse knowledge of contingent propositions.⁵⁵

In short, for the *venerabilis inceptor*, angelic thought is just as predicative, compositional, and discursive as ours. It too presents a logical, syntactic, and semantic structure. All thought for finite intellects, including those of angels, is organized like a linguistic performance. Once again, Duns Scotus had paved the way—not that he developed the idea in a very resolute manner, but in the *Ordinatio*, discussing an objection according to which angels can never learn from each other because they possess all concepts in an innate way, he responds that, even if this were the case, it would not suffice to make them know the truth-value of all contingent propositions formed with these conceptual terms.⁵⁶ Such a response supposes that angelic knowledge has a constituent structure, just

52. Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensa* II, dist. 9, q. 2. Scotus likewise treats the problem of the language of angels in the corresponding questions of the *Ordinatio* and of the *Lectura*.

53. Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 58, art. 4.

54. William of Ockham, *Quaestiones in librum secundum Sententiarum (Reportatio)*, q. 14, ed. G. Gál and R. Wood (in *Opera theologica* [St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1981]), 5:317–18.

55. *Ibid.*, q. 14, 319.

56. Scotus, *Ord.* II, dist. 9, q. 2, ed. L. Wadding, in *Opera omnia* (Paris: Vivès, 1893), 12:503.

like ours. According to this new perspective, the logico-linguistic model prevails even in the intellectual activity of pure intellects.

In the history of the idea of interior discourse, the theme of the language of angels thus constitutes a special field of application for philosophical, much more than theological, principles, a domain of illustrations and thought experiments revealing different views about the nature and import of mental representations and their relations to what are called “signs” in the proper sense.

From the Parisian theologians of the first decades of the thirteenth century, such as William of Auvergne and Philip the Chancellor, through later English philosophers, such as Roger Bacon and John Duns Scotus, we have seen the progressive spread of the practice of speaking of the concept itself as a sign—and even a natural sign—of external reality. We have also seen the emergence, toward the end of the century, of an increasingly strict parallelism between language and thought, leading, notably, to what Duns Scotus calls the “great controversy” on the subject of the signification of words.

In this complex range of discussions there were significant philosophical stakes that still interest us and that the most perceptive medievals clearly saw. Must we say, for example, that concepts are signs in the proper sense? William of Auvergne responded in the affirmative because he was concerned to preserve the moral independence of thought, even in relation to its proper objects, and so he wished to avoid turning intellectual knowledge into an “assimilation” of the mind to things. Thomas Aquinas, on the other hand, resists this position, because he favored an epistemology of *assimilatio*. He reasoned that, if the concept were a natural sign in the strong sense, like a track in the sand, it would only lead to knowledge of reality by way of inference, which would irreparably compromise the direct apprehension of essences. Toward the end of the century, many authors, while sharing with Aquinas this realist concern in the theory of knowledge, arrived at the conclusion that Thomism remained at an impasse on this point, precisely due to its doctrine of the interior word as first object of intellection. The discussions about the natural sign and the significate of the word reviewed in this chapter join those considerations raised in the preceding chapter regarding the ontology of the interior word. Often the same authors—Bacon, Olivi, Scotus, Burley—in the same breath rejected two Thomist positions: both the theory of the word as mental object distinct from the act of intellection and the thesis that words first signify concepts rather than things. For them, it was a matter of reestablishing reality itself both as the primary significate of spoken words and as the primary object of intellection.

Of all the authors studied to this point, it is undoubtedly Duns Scotus that we find best articulating the different aspects of this return to the things themselves. In identifying the concept with the act of intellect (rather than with its object), Scotus can allow himself also to take it for a natural sign of the thing without thereby falling into the trap Thomas wished to avoid: the concept, while

a sign, does not lead to cognition of the thing by means of an indirect inference, since it *is* this very cognition in its actuality, the *cogitatio* in person, so to speak. To affirm that the thing is signified by the concept thus amounts to positing the thing itself as primary object of intellection. By adding to this, in the *Ordinatio*, that the thing is equally the significate of the spoken and written word, Scotus essentially puts into place the scheme that William of Ockham will later exploit to construct his theory of mental language: a hierarchy of signs—natural and conventional—ordered to the same domain of external significates.

All that remained for thought to be treated as a genuine language was to apply to its analysis the whole apparatus characteristic of the study of spoken discourse as this was practiced in the faculty of arts, in particular the theory of *suppositio*. The motivation for so doing would come from the philosophy of logic—more specifically, from the need to determine an adequate object for that rapidly growing discipline.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHAT IS LOGIC ABOUT?

In the second quarter of the thirteenth century, a writer named Henry of Andeli, writing in French, described in colorful allegory a “battle of the seven arts” dividing the intellectual milieu of his time. In it, we see Grammar and his troops valiantly defend training in language and the love of Belles-Lettres against the merciless invasion conducted by Logic and his associates, Elenchus, Topics, Physics, and company—led, appropriately, by Aristotle:

Aristotle, who went on foot, caused grammar to topple.¹

To the poet’s despair, it was the barbarian who triumphed. The youth of the arts faculty henceforth dedicated the better part of their studies to logic. Among many other documents, a “student’s guide” preserved in the Ripoll 109 manuscript confirms the allegorist’s analysis: offering a kind of overview of an arts program c. 1240, it assigns more space to logic alone than to all of the other disciplines combined, including metaphysics, mathematics, physics, morals, rhetoric . . . and grammar.² Logic had become the spearhead of the medieval university, increasingly so in the second half of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth.

But what, precisely, was logic about? Where can we locate whatever repeatable unity logic requires in order to be a theory of something? Is it words, concepts, or some other entities of a special nature? What sort of thing, after all, could be predicated of another? What are the ultimate bearers of truth-value? And what, in the last analysis, are syllogisms composed of? These questions about the philosophy of logic, often debated with finesse and perspicacity, were occasion for sophisticated deployment of the theme of interior discourse. I will recount first, in a very general way, how the problem of the status of the discipline was posed around the middle of the thirteenth century, in order next to examine more closely a selection of texts taken from logic treatises by important authors (Roger Bacon, John Duns Scotus, and Walter Burley, among others), which give explicit attention to mental discourse (*oratio intelligibilis, enuntiatio in mente, voces in mente*). We will see gradually sketched, in the specific context of reflection on logic, various rival conceptions of interior language. At

1. L. J. Paetow, ed., *The Battle of the Seven Arts*, verses 205–6 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1914), 50.

2. Claude Lafleur and Joanne Carrier, *Le “Guide de l’étudiant” d’un maître anonyme de la faculté des arts de Paris au XIII^e siècle* (Quebec: Publications du laboratoire de philosophie ancienne et médiévale de la Faculté de philosophie de l’Université Laval), 1992. On the place of logic in this *compendium*, see also Lafleur 1990.

the heart of these disagreements will be the relevant distinction, with which we are now familiar, between a purely conceptual discourse, independent of communication, and the mental representation of spoken words, itself ordered to the production of exterior speech.

LOGIC, COMPOSITION, AND TRUTH

The domain of logic in the Middle Ages is circumscribed by Aristotle's *Organon*. The accidents of history had divided the treatises into two groups. On the one hand, the *Categories* and *Perihermeneias*—together with Porphyry's *Isagoge* or *Treatise on the Predicables*, which served to introduce them—constituted the core of the “old logic,” the *logica vetus*, taught in the schools of the Latin world since Boethius provided his translations and commentaries in the sixth century. On the other hand, the remainder of the *Organon*, rediscovered in the twelfth century, thanks to contact with Arabs, supplied the constituents of the *logica nova* (“new logic”): the *Prior Analytics*, or theory of syllogism; *Posterior Analytics*, or theory of scientific demonstration; *Topics*, or theory of probable argumentation; and the *Sophistical Refutations*, or theory of paralogisms. To these were added, beginning in the second half of the twelfth century, an entire range of new, specifically medieval, developments, which are known as the *logica modernorum* (“logic of the moderns”), including, especially, the theory of *consequentiae*—the logical relations between antecedents and consequences in necessary conditionals—and, above all, the theory of the “properties of terms,” or *proprietaes terminorum*, articulated around the key notions of signification (*significatio*) and reference or “supposition” (*suppositio*).

What accounts for the doctrinal unity of this mosaic? It was traditional in the medieval university to ask for each discipline—and each subdivision of each discipline—what precise subject gave it coherence and to situate it in a reasoned taxonomy of scientific knowledge. It was with respect to this that diverse conceptions of a given science emerged. In the case of logic, as it turns out, a major development occurred around the middle of the thirteenth century.³ While until then it was seen as a science of *spoken language*, a *scientia sermocinalis*, aiming mainly to distinguish truth from falsity in argumentative discourse, gradually logic came to be characterized more as a science of *reason*. Albert the Great, one of the pioneers of this approach, explicitly criticizes those who say that “the subject of general logic is discourse [*sermo*].”⁴ Language, he recalls, does not signify anything except thanks to the intellect. Logic is dedi-

3. Kretzmann gives a penetrating account of this episode (1967, 370–71).

4. Albert the Great, *De praedicabilibus*, tract. 1 (*De natura logicae*), chap. 4, in *Opera omnia*, ed. A. Borgnet (Paris: Vives, 1890–99), 1:7. On the theory of logic in Albert, see especially Chávarri 1960 and Stagnitta 1982–83.

cated first to *argumentation*, and this is, essentially, a matter of reason and not of words.

Thomas Aquinas proposes in this regard a very finely articulated conception, probably inspired by Albert. The proper matter of logic is provided, in his view, by the three operations of the intellect recognized by Aristotelianism: the formation of simple concepts, the formation of judgments, and discursive reasoning. The theory of the categories concerns the first, the *Perihermeneias* bears upon the second, and the *Analytics*, *Topics*, and *Sophistical Refutations* treat the third.⁵ These mental operations, for him, are productive, and what they produce is precisely the mental word under its various forms. The subject of logic is constituted, for Aquinas, by the second-order properties of interior discourse: the generality of concepts, for example, the structure of predication, and the validity of inferences—what are sometimes called “second intentions.”

The Arab influence is not irrelevant to this shift. Al-Fârâbî already assigned to logic the furnishing of rules for interior *logos* as well as for certain exterior *logos*.⁶ Avicenna, especially, in what would become a celebrated formula, proposed to describe this discipline as the study of second intentions:

The subject of logic, as you have learned, is the intentions understood second, which proceed from the intentions understood first.⁷

But it is on the doctrinal level that we must seek the true motivations of this intellectualist conception of logic that resurfaced in the thirteenth century. Thanks to a deepening study of Aristotle's *Analytics*, syllogism and scientific demonstration were now at the end point of theorists' preoccupation. But science, for the medievals, could not be purely a phenomenon of language, as it would at once lose its universality and necessity. It is the intellect that knows, and the intellect is immaterial and private. Therefore, insofar as logic is the theory of science, it must concern primarily intellectual activity and its products, and so be related only accidentally to spoken or written expression.

At the heart of this problematic was nothing less than the question of truth. However truth might be conceptualized, everyone regarded logic as ordered to the discernment of truth. Truth is what science wants to establish and what demonstration—especially syllogism—seeks to ensure. But where is truth primarily located? Is truth in things, in language, or somewhere else? Directly

5. Thomas Aquinas, *In Aristotelis libros Posteriorum Analyticorum* I.1, n. 4. The classic study of the Thomist conception of logic is Schmidt 1966.

6. Al-Fârâbî, *De scientiis* 2, Latin trans. Dominicus Gundissalvi, ed. A. G. Palencia (Madrid: University of Madrid, 1932), 71.

7. Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina* I.2, ed. G. Verbeke (Louvain: Peeters, 1977), 10. Regarding the influence of Avicenna on the conception of logic in the Middle Ages, see Maierù 1987.

inspired by Aristotle, the medieval response is that truth, properly speaking, is in the soul. We know the famous formula, popularized by Thomas Aquinas, among others: "truth is the adequation of thing and intellect [*adequatio rei et intellectus*]." ⁸ There is no mention here of words or signs. Thomas insists: this adequation, when it is produced, is made in the mind, so that "it is first in the intellect that truth is found." ⁹ Taking seriously this idea of Aristotle, the proper object of logic came to be situated in the mind.

Truth or falsity, for our authors, is a matter of composition and division. As Simon of Faversham writes, "truth is principally in the intellect which composes and divides." ¹⁰ Consequently, it supposes a combinatorial activity of the mind and mental *propositions* that are its products. This is one of Thomas Aquinas's theses on the subject of the mental word—namely, that we find there, as in language, the distinction between simple terms and propositions. The notion of the mental proposition did not seem at first sight very contentious, and unlike Aquinas's other theses on the topic of mental discourse, this position was not immediately subjected to sustained criticism. But it was fraught with consequence. If the intellect is the proper domain of truth and falsity, mental propositions must be at once the privileged bearers of truth-values and the primary components of syllogism as well as of other forms of demonstration. For this, they must display a compositional structure similar to that of spoken sentences, allowing for the exercise of predication, negation, and quantifiers to play their role. In short, it requires a whole mental language, prelinguistic and finely structured, and makes it the primary object of the study of logic as a speculative discipline.

This stage is reached in principle in Thomas Aquinas, but does not give rise in his work to the systematic establishment of a special grammar and semantics for interior discourse. What will be required, in addition, is the long work of an even more precise reflection on different aspects of logical composition: the role of the *syncategoremata*, the elementary form of predication, and the composition of the syllogism.

DEEP STRUCTURE AND LOGICAL FORM

One of the favorite subjects of thirteenth-century logicians was the study of *syncategoremata*. Negations, quantifiers, prepositions, and other functors were the object of special treatises. Peter of Spain, at the beginning of his own *Syncategoremata*, established immediately the connection between this preoccupation and the general question of truth that occupies logic:

8. Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 1, art. 1.

9. Ibid., q. 1, art. 2; see also Aquinas, *In Perihermeneias* I.3, n. 5 and 7, n. 3, and *In Metaphysicam* II.2, n. 298 and VI.4, n. 1240.

10. Simon of Faversham, *Quaestiones de anima*, in Sharp 1934, 356.

Syncategorematic terms, like “only,” “alone,” “if not,” “except,” and other like terms, are causes of truth and falsity in discourse.¹¹

“Every man walks,” and “some man walks,” which differ only in their syncategoremata, can after all easily possess different truth-values. And careful examination of the arrangement of these terms very often reveals ambiguities of structure that suggest a distinction between the order of the words and the form of mental discourse that underlies them.

Consider a sentence like “Socrates twice sees every man except Plato,” a popular example in the Middle Ages.¹² One could understand from this that Socrates saw every man except Plato once, and then saw every man except Plato a second time. But the sentence could also mean that each man except Plato was seen two times by Socrates (in this case, for example, Socrates could have seen every man, including Plato, the first time but not the second time). The truth-conditions change according to the chosen interpretation, and the ambiguity here turns on the respective scope accorded to the syncategorematic functors “twice” and “except”: “The exception,” wrote William of Sherwood in reference to this example, “could include [*includere*] the ‘twice,’ or the opposite.”¹³

Ambiguities of this sort show that the spoken proposition does not always exhibit its logical form transparently. Some authors would find here an occasion to attribute a new role to the old distinction between interior and exterior discourse. Turning now to Roger Bacon, we find a passage from his *Summa de sophismatibus et distinctionibus* that takes from Sherwood this problematic of ambiguities of scope—or *inclusion*—and puts it explicitly in relation to the Boethian theme of *oratio in mente*.

Bacon, as we said, gave special attention to questions of logic, grammar, and the theory of signs. While the theme of mental language did not occupy a primary place in his thought, it is present. In his *Communia mathematica*, for example, which dates probably to the 1260s, the Franciscan inquires into the status of logic as a science of discourse (*scientia sermocinalis*) and, like many others, says it is concerned with concepts—simple or composite—considered from the perspective of truth. “But simple concepts,” he adds, “are mental words and terms [*dicciones et termini mentales*], and composite concepts are discourses, propositions, and arguments.”¹⁴ He then succinctly summarizes the mental process that thus leads to what he calls the *generatio vocum*, or production of oral speech: there is first the formation of images in the soul; from these are born intellectual *habitus*—namely, simple concepts or mental words (*dicciones men-*

11. Peter of Spain, *Syncategoremata*, ed. J. Spruyt, in Spruyt 1989, 13.

12. Kretzmann (1982) compares different treatments of this kind of case.

13. William of Sherwood, *Syncategoremata*, ed. J. R. O'Donnell, *Mediaeval Studies* 3 (1941): 63.

14. Roger Bacon, *Communia mathematica* I, dist. 5, chap. 3, ed. R. Steele (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940), 64.

tales); out of mental words are constituted propositions and arguments in the mind; and finally comes, by a “material transmutation,” the production of oral speech through which the concepts are expressed.¹⁵

A much earlier text even more explicitly addresses the theme of the production of discourse (*generatio sermonis*, in this case) and sketches a precise theory of the logical structure of interior language. In his *Summa de sophismatibus et distinctionibus* (written, it is thought, around 1240), Bacon inquires at length into ambiguities of scope of the kind previously illustrated. A large part of the discussion thus concerns the question of whether this is a legitimate means for distinguishing the various meanings of a given sentence.¹⁶ Isn't word order always sufficient to reveal the direction of logical inclusion? In reply to this objection, Bacon introduces a crucial distinction between the order on the surface and the order of interior discourse. Before the production of oral speech—which fixes the order in which words are uttered by a speaker—there is another, deeper production, that of the *oratio in mente*. Here is an excerpt from the passage in question:

discourse [*oratio*] is threefold, according to Boethius: there is what is intelligible or in the mind, what is in the utterance, and what is in writing; to each of the three corresponds its proper production; . . . for discourse which is in the mind, in connection with the intellect, it is the essential parts which are first produced, namely, the subject and predicate, and then the accidental parts; the subject is first in this production along with all that pertains to the substance of the subject.¹⁷

The mental order, in short, is as follows: first appears the subject of the proposition with its essential determinations, then the predicate with its own essential determinations, and finally the “accidental parts,” like the adverbial modifiers. What comes earlier in this underlying order is considered “included” in the scope of those expressions that come later. The standard case is that of the subject/predicate pair: the subject of a proposition is its material element, for Bacon, while the predicate is its formal element, and the “matter,” in this vocabulary, is said to be “included” under the form. This relation of inclusion, however, is much more general and pertains to the scope of adverbial modifiers formed by the aid of syncategoremata, as well as to that of predicates properly so called. It follows that the later an adverbial phrase or modifier appears in the

15. Ibid., dist. 5, chap. 3, 64–65.

16. Bacon, *Summa de sophismatibus et distinctionibus*, ed. R. Steele (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937), 174–80. It should be cautioned that Steele's edition here is very faulty, if only in punctuation and use of quotation marks. On this text, see de Libera 1984, especially 178–80.

17. Bacon, *Summa de sophismatibus*, 180.

order of mental production, the further back its scope will extend in relation to what came previously in the sentence. The example previously invoked could be given two different representations, with respect to its deep structure:

- (A) Socrates sees every man twice except Plato.
- (B) Socrates sees every man except Plato twice.

In virtue of production (A), the qualifying formula “except Plato,” appearing in last place, “includes”—or dominates—the distribution of “twice,” while it is the inverse in production (B).¹⁸ The surface ambiguity arises from the fact that, for some reason or other, the original order can be transformed when the spoken sentence is produced, but the mental proposition itself is without equivocation.

This is the clear introduction of a conception of mental language as the privileged locus of logical form, here conceived under the unique and general category of *inclusion*. Putting this in relation to the aforementioned passage from the *Communia mathematica*, we could moreover conclude that for Roger Bacon the study of structures of interior discourse with respect to truth-conditions constitutes the proper object of logic as a science.

Still, a delicate question remains: is the *oratio in mente* at issue here composed of concepts independent of language (as it will be for Ockham) or of intellectual representations of spoken words (as with the *sermo in mente* of Pseudo-Kilwardby)?¹⁹ Bacon’s text is not very clear on this issue. On the one hand, the passage from *Communia mathematica* identifies the *diccio mentalis*, the mental word, with the concept formed from sensible images; on the other hand, the *Summa de sophismatibus* as a whole seems rather to treat oral discourse, which could lead one to think that the deep structure postulated there corresponds to an underlying level of *linguistic* representation. While the problem is not yet addressed in a very explicit way in Bacon’s writings, it will become central at the turn of the century for the theorizing of interior language as the object of logic.

THE SUBJECT OF THE *PERIHERMENEIAS*

An especially pointed question arises with respect to the subject treated by Aristotle’s *Perihermeneias*. The treatise concerns, from the first chapters, nouns and verbs, but these grammatical categories were traditionally only applied

18. This example is not treated in the *Summa de sophismatibus*, but is well analyzed in terms of “inclusion” of the excepting phrase by the “twice,” or the inverse, in a treatise on *Syncategoremata* many commentators think is by Roger Bacon; on this subject see Kretzmann 1982, 219–20 and 221n41.

19. See this book, chap. 5, as well as Panaccio 1999a.

to words of a language and not to concepts. What is more, Aristotle defined the nouns treated there as *conventional signs*.²⁰ This could hardly apply to pure products of the intellect; in the Middle Ages, even those who saw concepts as signs in the proper sense—such as John Duns Scotus—took care to clarify that they were natural and not conventional signs. Those who held an intellectualist interpretation of logic thus encountered in *Perihermeneias* a considerable obstacle. Certain authors would still speak, on this topic, of mental discourse—but in what sense? We will consider two cases that are especially revealing: Duns Scotus, in the last decade of the thirteenth century, and Siger of Courtrai, around the 1310s.

At the beginning of the first of his two series of questions on the *Perihermeneias*, following common practice, John Duns Scotus asks about the subject of the treatise.²¹ It is the *enunciatio in mente*, he responds—although his predecessors generally spoke here of *interpretation* (following Boethius) or else simply *enunciation* (like Robert Kilwardby).²² Following Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great, Scotus explained that *Perihermeneias* finds its place in the doctrinal order between the treatise on the *Categories*—which treats the first operation of the intellect, the apprehension of simple terms—and the *Prior Analytics*—which handles the third operation—namely, the production of discursive reasoning. It is too general to speak only of *interpretatio* regarding this treatise, for *interpretation* (which, for medievals, pertains to encoding as much as decoding) can concern simple terms just as much as complex ones, and among those it can concern arguments as well as propositions. Much more appropriate in this case is the word *enunciatio*, which specifically invokes the production (by the second operation of the intellect) of complex unities susceptible to being true or false—namely, propositions. Scotus, however, is among those who think that logic in general does not bear on spoken language as such: “no part of logic has oral sounds [*voces*] for its subject.”²³ Intelligible objects are required, he thinks, that can only be found in the mind. This is as true for the *Perihermeneias* as for the other parts of the discipline and is why one must designate *enunciatio in mente* as its proper subject.

It is not easy to say exactly what Scotus thinks this “mental enunciation” consists of. Looking closely, we do not seem to have here something like the

20. Aristotle, *Perihermeneias*, chap. 2, 16a19.

21. John Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in libros Perihermenias* I, q. 1: “Quid sit subiectum libri *Perihermenias*.”

22. On the position of Robert Kilwardby regarding the subject of the *Perihermeneias* and on the opposition that was current around the middle of the thirteenth century on this topic between two “famous opinions,” those who held to *interpretatio* and the partisans of *enunciatio*, see Lewry 1978, especially 111ff and 286ff.

23. Scotus, *Quaest. in libr. Perih.* I, q. 1.

oratio mentalis of William of Ockham, directly constituted of concepts without immediate relation to the language employed for communication. A salient feature of Scotus's *enuntiatio in mente* is its being composed of the nouns and verbs treated by Aristotle in chapters 2 and 3 of *Perihermeneias* and its belonging to the type of discourse (*oratio*) with which chapter 4 is concerned. As the Franciscan is well aware, nouns, verbs, and discourse are defined by Aristotle as *conventional* signs in those chapters, while concepts, for Scotus, are natural signs. If he had wanted—like Ockham some decades later—to subsume the order of concepts under the grammatical categories of noun and verb, Scotus would probably have been more explicit on this point: it is not plausible *prima facie* to identify the nouns and verbs of *Perihermeneias* with natural signs. Moreover, when he asks if the noun signifies the thing itself or the *species* in the soul—a development we discussed in chapter 7—it is quite clear that the noun he speaks of, while it might be mental, is a properly linguistic unit, distinct from the intelligible species or concept. Given the context, this unit must be, in Scotus's eyes, that very thing treated in chapter 2 of *Perihermeneias* and consequently that which he just told us is an “integral part” of *enunciatio in mente*.

Without explaining it in so many words, the coherence of Scotus's text requires conceiving of the internal discursive order he postulates here as distinct from pure conceptual thought and as devoted to the preparation of exterior speech. It must be closer to the *sermo in mente* Pseudo-Kilwardby proposed to assign to grammar. This interior discourse, composed of intellectual representations of meaningful words, is as well-suited to serve as the object of logic (or of one of its parts) as of theoretical grammar. Roger Bacon had already established the link by proposing, in his *Communia mathematica*, that the same mental words, simple or compound—the *dicciones mentales*—could be considered by grammar from the perspective of good syntactic formation—*congruitas*—and by logic from the perspective of truth-conditions.²⁴ Bacon, Scotus, and Pseudo-Kilwardby apparently shared the same conception of mental discourse as a preparatory intellectual stage, underlying and prior to linguistic production, but already making use of *species vocum*, mental representations of spoken words.

Another *Perihermeneias* commentary that follows this line is that of the Belgian master Siger of Courtrai. Fifteen or twenty years after Scotus's *Questions*, he plainly states that Aristotle, in chapter 2 of his treatise, defined the *nomen in mente*, the noun in the soul, rather than that which is uttered by the voice:

it is necessary to consider, with Ammonius, that *noun* can be understood in three ways: there is the noun which is in writing, that which is uttered, and that which is in the soul. Now, it is the noun in the soul that Aristotle intends to define here. The reason for this is that he defines it by the fact of

24. Bacon, *Communia mathematica* I, dist. 5, chap. 3, 64.

signifying; but signifying does not pertain to the noun except thanks to the intellect, and this is why the noun in the soul and in the intellect is what Aristotle intends to define here.²⁵

There are, therefore, nouns and verbs *in mente*. Their signification is conventional: “no noun signifies naturally”;²⁶ each one must be the object of an *impositio* by the intellect. This operation of *impositio*—the assignment of a signification to a noun—is hardly described by the author, but it is clear that, for him, it takes place in the intellect and that the result is at once a mental and artificial noun. The underlying model must be that already encountered in Albert the Great and Pseudo-Kilwardby: the mental association—performed by the intellect—of a concept, which is the significate, with an abstract representation of an oral sound.

It is true that Siger’s text exhibits a tension. Along with these conventionalist developments, we find other passages identifying, without apparent reservation, the *voces in mente* with the *passiones animae* of Aristotle, which (the author here recalls) are the same for all humans because everyone has “the same representation [*similitudo*] and the same concept of the apprehended thing.”²⁷ The *vox in mente*, in this sense, is individualized only by its conceptual content. But then what could be the role of the *impositio*? The terminology is somewhat deceptive here. On the one hand, the *vox in mente* is indeed identified with a concept; on the other hand, the *nomen in mente* is quite different precisely because it requires an *impositio*: “the simple noun is imposed to signify a simple concept [*intellectus simplex*].”²⁸ Thus, as in Pseudo-Kilwardby, we must suppose two ordered levels of intellectual representation: one that is preliminary to and independent of language—the order of concepts—and the other, derivative, that associates the relevant signified conceptual objects with representations of spoken words in view of their public expression. The semantico-grammatical categories of *Perihermeneias*—*nomen*, *verbum*, *oratio*—only occur, for Siger, at the second level. For neither Siger nor Scotus do they characterize pure thought.

THE ELEMENTS OF SYLLOGISM

The opposition between the diverse ways of conceiving of that interior discourse that was logic’s object became explicit at the beginning of the fourteenth century. We have two eloquent witnesses to a debate on this among English

25. Siger of Courtrai, *Commentaire du Perihermeneias*, ed. C. Verhaak, in *Zeger van Kortrijk Commentator van Perihermeneias* (Brussels: Palais de l’Académie, 1964), 13.

26. *Ibid.*, 18.

27. *Ibid.*, 9.

28. *Ibid.*, 16.

arts masters of the period: Walter Burley and Richard Campsall. The former, in his *Questions on the Perihermeneias*, in 1301, asks whether the *enunciatio* is composed of spoken words, external things, or concepts.²⁹ The latter, around the same time, poses the same problem with respect to syllogisms and propositions, in his *Questions on the Prior Analytics*.³⁰ They differ from each other in their responses, and, additionally and more importantly, they enumerate and discuss different series of positions on the question—some of which at least, in addition to their own, must also have been held among their colleagues. Thus a range of conceptions of mental language, which then conflicted openly in the teaching of logic, are spread through these two texts. I will label B1–B9 those that are recognized by Burley and C1–C4 those—sometimes the same—that Campsall identifies. Burley initially begins by considering three simple answers to the question posed:

- (B1) The enunciation (*enunciatio*) is composed of spoken words.
- (B2) The enunciation is composed of concepts.
- (B3) The enunciation is composed of exterior things.

Having enumerated a series of objections against each one, he then discusses, if one counts his own, six other more sophisticated theories:

- (B4) The enunciation is composed of imaginable words (*voces imaginabiles*).
- (B5) It is composed of spoken words considered as types (and not of their individual tokens).
- (B6) It has spoken words as its material parts and their references to significates (*respectus ad significatum*) as its formal parts.
- (B7) It is composed of spoken words, in such a way that a syllogism, for example, counts six numerically distinct terms (those would be individual occurrences of words, what we today call *tokens*), but only three specifically distinct terms (*types*).
- (B8) There are three sorts of enunciation: one is only enunciating (*enunciatio enuncians tantum*) and composed of spoken or written words; a second is only enunciated (*enunciatio enunciata tantum*) and is composed of the exterior things that are signified; and a third—the most interesting for us—is at once enunciating and enunciated (*enunciatio enuncians*

29. Walter Burley, *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias*, q. 3, ed. S. Brown, *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974): 238–60. Here I repeat in part my essay from the Tenth European Symposium for Medieval Logic and Semantics (Panaccio 2003e).

30. Richard Campsall, *Quaestiones super librum Priorum Analecticorum*, quest. 2, ed. E. A. Synan, in *The Works of Richard Campsall* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), 1:50–68.

et enunciata), composed of concepts in the mind, which are signified by words and which, in turn, signify exterior things.

(B9) [Burley's own position] There are three kinds of enunciation: spoken, written, and mental; the first is composed of spoken words, the second of written characters, and the third—the mental proposition—of the very things of which the mind in question thinks.

Campsall, for his part, distinguishes the following positions:

(C1) There are three kinds of enunciation (*enunciatio*): that which only enunciates, composed of spoken words; that which is only enunciated, composed of things; and that which is at once enunciating and enunciated (*enuncians et enunciata*), which is composed of concepts.

(C2) There are three kinds of discourse (*oratio*): mental, written, and spoken; the first, and most fundamental, is composed of concepts.

(C3) The proposition (*propositio*) is composed of nouns, verbs, and other parts of speech, and these have the oral sounds for their material parts and the reference to the external thing signified for formal parts.

(C4) [Campsall's own position] Syllogisms and propositions are composed of imagined words (*voces ymaginatae*).

The first thing to notice in these two lists is that thesis B4 corresponds for all intents and purposes to the response endorsed by Campsall (C4): the proposition that interests the logician is formed of imagined words—that is to say, of mental representations (in the imagination) of exterior words, a notion we have seen deployed in Augustine and Anselm. Here is how Campsall presents the idea:

In the first place, a thing is conceived and, if it must be enunciated from one person to another, the speaker begins by imagining a word similar to that by which he could enunciate the thing to his interlocutor, and this word [the imagined word] exists only in the mind . . . because it is not necessary that an object in the imagination have real existence . . . ; propositions and syllogisms are composed of such words, and not of spoken words.³¹

Campsall does not deny that there are mental propositions composed of concepts. But these are not the concern of logic. Logic, for him, treats imagined representations of sentences and syllogisms, which is very different from the mental discourse about which William of Ockham will later theorize. In any case, Burley argues in detail against that thesis, to which he raises no fewer than thirteen different objections.

And what should we make of Burley's own position (B9)? As formulated by its author, it has no equivalent in the list of Campsall, who probably did not know his colleague's text when he wrote his own. But it is quite significant for

31. Ibid., 2.83, 1:63.

our inquiry. B9, recalling first the Boethian theme of the *triplex oratio*, proposes for each of the three discourses a different response to the question of its ultimate constitution; spoken discourse is made of spoken words and written discourse of written letters. But the truly distinctive part is the last: the enunciation *in the mind*, according to Burley, is composed of those very things that the intellect, by that enunciation, judges as being the same (when the proposition is affirmative) or as being different (when it is negative). In most cases, according to this conception, the mental proposition will be composed of the exterior things themselves. Here, chronologically, is the first appearance in Burley of his famous doctrine of the *propositio in re*.³² What differentiates it from later versions is that here, real things are said to be part of *mental* propositions. Burley's idea is that the mind in its judgments *intellectually* combines exterior things themselves rather than their representations. He does clarify that the activity of composition of which he speaks here is not *real* composition, like that of a workman who assembles wood and stones, but an exclusively *intellectual* composition: the mind *intellectually* plays with the *exterior objects*.³³ Burley is among those who reject the Thomistic thesis of a mental object produced by the mind; the concept in this sense quite simply does not exist for him.

Considering only, therefore, the proper positions of Campsall and Burley, we already find two powerful and different conceptions of the units treated by logic—and each conception promotes a very specific notion of mental language, neither of which corresponds to that of William of Ockham fifteen or twenty years later: there is imagined discourse, on the one hand, made of representations of spoken words in the imagination, and there is an intellectual discourse, on the other hand, composed of exterior things themselves.

Among the other doctrines discussed by these two authors, some do not imply in any way the theme of interior discourse, and, whatever their intrinsic interest, we will allow ourselves to leave them aside: these are positions B1, B5, B6/C3, and B7.

More pertinent for us is thesis B8, identical to the first of those enumerated by Campsall (C1). It uses a vocabulary so distinctive that it must have been defended in these terms in the English university of this time. It too, like B9, starts from the idea that there are three kinds of propositions, but the triad this time is not Boethius's (spoken/written/mental), but another, more original one: there is the proposition that is only *enuncians*, composed of spoken words; that which is only *enunciata*, composed of things themselves; and finally that which is both *enuncians* and *enunciata*, formed of concepts in the mind. The first cor-

32. The theory of the *propositio in re* is especially developed by Burley in his later commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* (see *Super artem veterem Porphyrii et Aristotelis Expositio* [Venice: 1488], folio b5–6). On this subject, see Pinborg 1967 and Karger 1996.

33. Burley, *Quaest. in libr. Perih.* 3.44, 250.

responds to the standard idea of a spoken sentence, the second to the *propositio in re* (which later became associated with the thought of Burley), and then the third corresponds to the notion of a discursive mental order at once signifying and signified, composed of concepts in the mind. This last idea does remind us of the Thomistic notion of the interior word, composed of concepts, that was indeed both signified by spoken words and itself the sign (albeit in a somewhat relaxed sense, as we have seen) of exterior things;³⁴ but it is not further developed here.

Disregarding the theses that Burley deems incomplete (B₁, B₂, and B₃), it remains for us to examine only the second of those found in Campsall (C₂).³⁵ This, like Burley's own position, initially reaffirms the Boethian distinction of the triple *oratio*, but immediately insists on the fundamental character of the *oratio in mente*; the other two, it specifies, are only called *oratio* derivatively. In his discussion of this, Campsall mentions that, in the eyes of its defenders, the mental proposition in question is composed of concepts (*conceptus*). This is thus not Burley's distinctive position, which makes things themselves the constituent parts of the mental proposition, but another that, in a very abridged form, resembles what will be defended by William of Ockham. It is difficult to say precisely to which author Campsall alludes in these lines, but this shows that the idea of a mental discourse, composed of concepts and prior to spoken and written discourse, was already present in the debate—all the more as it is also found quite clearly in the simple position I have called B₂ (enunciation is composed of concepts).

Why did Campsall and Burley both refuse, in the context of logic, to endorse this (proto-Ockhamist) notion of a mental discourse made of concepts, with which they were obviously familiar? In Burley's case, the reason is ontological: according to him, there do not exist any such things as mental concepts. His discussion on this is directly related to the debate about the *verbum—idolum* or *fictum*—that occupied theologians since Thomas Aquinas. In the first of his *Questions on the Perihermeneias*, Burley, wondering about the proper significance of the spoken word (does it signify a thing or a state of the soul?), presents and rejects the doctrine according to which the thinking mind produces an internal *idolum*, distinct from the act of intellection and enjoying a special mode of existence.³⁶ In the text that concerns us now, question 3, he explicitly refers the reader to this earlier discussion in order to discredit the idea of a mental discourse composed of concepts.³⁷

Campsall, on the other hand, does not directly reject the idea in question,

34. Aquinas, *Quodl.* IV.9.2: "The vocal sound is a sign only and not a significate, while the concept [*intellectus*] is at once sign and significate."

35. Campsall, *Quaest. super libr. Pr. Anal.* 2.17, 52.

36. Burley, *Quaest. in libr. Perih.* 1.5–1.65, 210–11.

37. *Ibid.*, 3.542, 248.

but holds that such a discourse, if it exists, could not be the privileged object of logic. His principal argument in this regard depends on logical considerations regarding the validity of syllogisms. If these, insofar as they concern the logician, were in fact composed of concepts, it would be necessary to accept—wrongly, thinks Campsall—the validity of reasoning like the following:

Every man runs,
Socrates is a rational animal,
therefore Socrates runs

since, he explains, the oral expressions “man” and “rational animal,” while different on the surface, correspond to only one mental concept.³⁸

The same conclusion is also reached by analogous considerations about proper names. Take the following reasoning:

Every man runs,
Marcus is a man,
Therefore Tullius runs.³⁹

If logical validity were more a matter of concepts than words, this reasoning would be valid, for the proper names “Marcus” and “Tullius” here denote the same individual (Cicero, as it happens) and correspond to the same concept in the mind. Now it is evident, for Campsall, that the inference is not valid. Logic, consequently, cannot be primarily concerned with the order of pure concepts, independent of languages of communication.

The debate that is revealed through these two texts, almost contemporary with each other, bears on this point: just what object can be assigned to logic as a theoretical discipline? From the various positions enumerated by these two authors, we find three rival notions of mental language: that of Burley, for whom the discourse in the mind is composed of things themselves; that of Campsall, for whom the object of logic is imagined discourse; and that found in one form or another in positions B1, B8, C1, and C2—and that William of Ockham will in his own way exploit—of an interior language, on the conceptual order, preliminary and foundational to oral speech. At the turn of the fourteenth century, these conceptions openly contested for the title of the privileged object of logic, with arguments on the subject confronting each other in explicit debate.

Augustinianism, by way of Anselm, had introduced into medieval anthropology the theme of the interior word, which theologians continued for some time to exploit in order to tame the difficult trinitarian doctrine. All were familiar with the sharp distinction Augustine had drawn between speech imagined in silence and the true discourse of thought, independent of the accidents of communica-

38. Campsall, *Quaest. super libr. Pr. Anal.* 2.81, 62.

39. *Ibid.*, 2.21, 53.

tion as well as of the diversity of languages. The latter was clearly what attracted theologians. They saw here the model for a creative and spiritual energy, for an internal production whose product—the *verbum cordis*—closely expresses the mind that is responsible for it. However, as Aristotelianism emerged within the arts faculties in the thirteenth century, the theme of mental discourse was little by little inflected until it became, in Oxford at the beginning of the fourteenth century, a subject of interest for those who asked about the status of logic, the very basis of all university teaching. The problem was to locate, in the process of knowledge, the famous “terms” required by logic, the composable units capable of being predicated of each other, of being combined into true or false propositions, and of being arranged, ultimately, into various sorts of reasonings, especially syllogisms.

The dominant tendency since the twelfth century had been to identify these with the words one uses in spoken communication; but uttered sounds proved too precarious, too momentary, too conventional to be direct objects of science. The canons of Aristotelian epistemology, transmitted by the *Posterior Analytics*, required that a science have a necessary and universal object. Two principal possibilities then presented themselves.

On the one hand, there was the path explored by the author called Pseudo-Kilwardby for determining an object for grammar: recourse to representations in the intellect—and not only in the imagination—of the words and sentences of a language, representations that one could, in all good epistemological conscience, assimilate to universals. The way had been opened by Albert the Great around the middle of the century, and it is probably the same idea Roger Bacon had in mind when speaking of *dicciones mentales* as units of study for logic as well as for grammar; likewise John Duns Scotus and Siger of Courtrai, when they proposed the *enunciatio in mente* or the *nomen in mente* as the privileged objects of Aristotle’s *Perihermeneias*. Richard Campsall, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, leaves aside the intellectual dimension of these representations of words to recapture only the *voces imaginatae*; but in so doing, he too attributes to logic the task of dealing in the first place with a level of properly linguistic mental representation.

The other relevant possibility had been sketched in particular by Thomas Aquinas, for whom the interior word, spiritual and preliminary to the formation of conventional words, even in the mind, already exhibits a differentiated compositional structure and constitutes the primary locus of logical relations. For those who adopted this line, it was necessary to detach logic from merely exterior language and make it primarily a science of reason, thus reinstating in the foreground the idea of a mental discourse composed of concepts and finely articulated, which Aristotle himself had roughly indicated. The fact that many authors now tended to classify concepts as signs of things favored this approach. William of Ockham, around the 1320s, goes resolutely in this direction. He will then have to confront, as we will see in the final chapter, the critique of

one like Crathorn, who, privileging the other route, will oppose the *venerabilis inceptor's oratio mentalis* with the (linguistically characterized) order of "similitudes" of words in the mind.

As for Burley's solution of a mental language formed of things themselves, it fell in the path of that direct realism in the name of which much criticism had been voiced against the Thomistic doctrine of the mental word at the end of the thirteenth century. The point, for this author as for others, was to eliminate any awkward intermediary between the act of the composing mind and the extramental beings to which that act is directed. But the terminology in his *Questions on the Perihermeneias*, provocative and somewhat misleading, was that of a young logic professor still fond of apparent paradoxes. Thereafter, while maintaining the idea of a *propositio in re*, he gave up—quite prudently—identifying it with the *oratio in mente*. Yet the concern will remain, for him as for a number of his contemporaries—including Ockham—to connect as tightly as possible the operations of the intellect with external reality independent of the mind.

At the turn of the century, everyone was searching for a deep level, underlying spoken language and embodying true logical form, as far as possible stripped of the characteristic ambiguities of spoken or written discourse—ambiguities concerning word order, for example. Whether one located it, as did Campsall, in imagined speech, or, as Burley, in thought intellectually manipulating things themselves, or, as did probably many of their colleagues, in the arrangement of concepts in the mind, the problem at hand was to define, with respect to cognitive activity, the privileged place of logical relations and of semantic composition. This recognizably Aristotelian problematic is what William Ockham will inherit.

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PART III

THE *VIA MODERNA*

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CHAPTER NINE

OCKHAM'S INTERVENTION

At the end of the fifteenth century, a philosopher from the University of Erfurt, Bartholomew of Usingen, described the English Franciscan William of Ockham, who had been dead for approximately 150 years, as the “venerable initiator of the modern approach” (*venerabilis inceptor viae modernae*).¹ The *via moderna*, in this context, is what others of the same period called the *nominalist* way. Ockham was not considered its only—nor always its principal—master: other authors of the fourteenth century, John Buridan, Gregory of Rimini, Marsilius of Inghen, and Peter of Ailly, would often be credited with as much if not more importance than him in the history of this movement as it was reconstructed in the fifteenth century. But to Ockham was at least attributed the status of originator. While certain recent scholars have contested, on good grounds, whether William founded a genuine school—as one can say of Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus²—we must credit him with having built, for the first time, on the ontological rejection of universals a complete, well-articulated philosophical system and establishing through this a rich program of research and discussion in which the theme of mental discourse played a central role.

After him—and largely due to his influence—this theme remained at the center of philosophical preoccupations for a great number of authors, from the Englishmen Adam Wodeham and Robert Holcot in the 1330s to the school of John Mair in the first half of the sixteenth century by way of John Buridan in the fourteenth century and the *nominalistae* of the fifteenth century. I will not attempt to retrace this history in full: the material on it is too abundant and has yet to be adequately explored.³ In the present chapter I will consider in detail Ockham's doctrine on the subject of *oratio mentalis*, and in the following chapter I will be content to review certain reactions it quickly prompted in England and France. This will suffice to allow us to appreciate both its originality and importance.⁴

1. Oberman 1987, 447.

2. The most important work in this regard is Tachau 1988.

3. Of note, however: Ashworth 1974, 1985; Nuchelmans 1980; and Broadie 1985; all of which address, here and there, the question of mental language in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

4. For recent presentations of the whole Ockhamist theory of mental language, see especially: Tabarroni 1989; Normore 1990; Panaccio 1992a, chap. 2; Karger 1994; Maierù 1996; Biard 1997a; and Panaccio 1999b.

THE OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE

Chronologically, Ockham's first text to develop his conception of interior discourse with any emphasis appears in question 4 of distinction 2 of the *Ordinatio*, in the course of a long discussion on the problem of universals.⁵ Its precise context is furnished by an epistemological objection, threatening for the nominalist: it is necessary that the universal be a true reality outside the soul, says the objector, because there exists a science of real things, a *scientia realis*, and there is no science except of the universal, as Aristotle says. This is what we today call an argument of "indispensability": science as we know it is impossible if universals do not really exist. Ockham's reply, crucial for his system, allows us to directly grasp the original motivations of his reflection on mental language. The objects of scientific knowledge, he insists, are not things external to the mind or to language, but rather propositions, either spoken, written, or *mental*. This explains why we can say that there is no science except of the universal, since those propositions are always composed of general terms. Yet it does not prevent science from bearing on reality itself, populated as it is only by individuals, because the general terms in question—spoken, written, or thought—can very well stand for external things—"supposit for them," Ockham says, fittingly resorting here to the technical vocabulary of terminist semantics.

Here are the most pertinent extracts of this text:

But a proposition, according to Boethius on *On Interpretation* I, has three kinds of being: in the mind, in speech and in writing. That is to say, one kind of proposition is only conceived and understood, another kind is spoken, and another kind is written. . . . Therefore, just as a spoken proposition is truly put together out of words and a written proposition is truly put together out of inscriptions, so too is a proposition that is only conceived put together out of things conceived or understood, or of concepts or understandings of the soul. . . . A word that is part of a spoken proposition can have many kinds of supposition—material, personal and simple. . . . The same holds for a part of a similar proposition in the mind. . . . On this basis, I reply to the argument: The spoken proposition "Every man is risible" is truly known. . . . So too the proposition in the mind, which belongs to no language, is truly known. . . . All the terms of those propositions are only concepts and not the external substances themselves. Yet because the terms of some mental propositions

5. Ockham's teaching on the *Sentences* at Oxford dates from 1317 to 1319. We call the *Ordinatio* the first book of this commentary, because it was written down by the author himself, while the other three books only exist in *reportatio*—that is, in the form of notes taken by one or more specially appointed students. The *Ordinatio* occupies volumes 1 to 4 of the edition of Ockham's *Opera theologica* by the Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure, while the *Reportatio* comprises volumes 5 to 7.

stand and supposit personally for the external things themselves . . . , there is said to be "real" knowledge [*scientia realis*] of such propositions.⁶

The recourse here to Boethius and to his old distinction between spoken, written, and mental serves to reconcile the generality of scientific knowledge with the nominalist refusal to posit universals in being. The point of departure is that the objects of knowledge or its contents—which is to say, *that which is known*, properly speaking—are but propositions: knowledge is knowledge *that* . . . ; one does not know a substance, for example. Now, two pitfalls threaten this propositionalist approach: on the one hand, linguistic relativism, according to which knowledge would have different content according to the language in which it is formulated; and, on the other hand, skepticism, if knowledge could never attain to things themselves, but merely to their mental representations as grouped into propositions. These two consequences were totally inadmissible under the prevailing Aristotelianism. Ockham avoids the first by appeal to mental propositions "which are not of any language" and the second by the attribution of a referential function—*suppositio*—to the terms constitutive of those propositions. We will briefly recount these two points.

Ockham did not envision the idea—widespread since Frege—of a nonlinguistic proposition that would be an abstract object subsisting by itself, independent of minds and languages. This would have seemed a kind of extreme Platonism that he would have considered long since refuted, especially by Aristotle. Linguistic relativism was nonetheless countered by him by positing in individual minds propositional occurrences "which were not of any language." The expression *nullius linguae* obviously evokes the prestigious Augustinian doctrine of the mental word, whose acceptance posed a problem to no one. From the very beginning, the *venerabilis inceptor* thus placed his doctrine of interior discourse under the joint patronage of Boethius and Augustine. He even refers to each quite explicitly in the first chapter of his *Summa logicae*, in a famous passage that echoes that already cited:

As Boethius points out in his Commentary on the first book of *De Interpretatione*, discourse is of three types—the written, the spoken, and the conceptual (this last existing only in the mind). In the same way there are three sorts of terms—written, spoken, and conceptual . . . these conceptual terms and the propositions composed of them are the mental words which, according to St. Augustine in chapter 15 of *De Trinitate*, belong to no language.⁷

6. William of Ockham, *Ordinatio*, dist. 1, q. 4, *Op. theol.* 2:134–37 (English translation: *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals*, trans. P. V. Spade [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994], 136–38).

7. Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.1, 4–5 (English translation: *Ockham's Theory of Terms, Part I of the Summa Logicae*, trans. M. Loux [South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 1998], 49).

More original is the use in this context of the terminology of *suppositio*, which had been current since the twelfth century for the logical analysis of spoken language. If the proper objects of knowledge are, in the first place, mental propositions not belonging to any language, these propositions nevertheless can bear directly on the world because certain of the terms of which they are composed possess a referential function: concepts, just like spoken and written words, receive a “supposition”—a “reference,” we would say today—when they are subjects or predicates. Ockham distinguishes three main varieties of supposition: personal supposition (*suppositio personalis*), the most important, in virtue of which a term stands for the singular things to which it applies, such as “horses” in “horses are mammals”; material supposition (*suppositio materialis*), in virtue of which a term stands for a spoken or written word to which it corresponds, like “horse” in “‘horse’ is a five-letter word”; and finally, simple supposition (*suppositio simplex*), in virtue of which the term stands for itself as a concept, like “horse” in “‘horse’ is a natural-kind concept.” To Ockham—in the previously cited *Ordinatio* passage and even more explicitly in the *Summa logicae*—when the concept figures in a mental proposition, it can, if the context allows, receive one or another of the three suppositions in question.⁸ In its more common usage, personal supposition, a first-order concept—what Ockham calls a “primary intention”—thus stands for certain real things in the external world. This semantic connection assures the tie between knowledge and reality that is required to counteract skepticism (or idealism, for that matter).

The strategy presupposes that the concept can be seen as a sign. Ockham often repeats this: while spoken and written terms are conventional signs, mental terms are natural signs, whose significates are, normally, exterior things.⁹ The concept “horse,” for example, naturally signifies individual horses. When the term in a proposition is taken in personal supposition, which is the normal usage, it stands for these external individuals that are its significates. Thought is in this way connected to the world through a play of semantic relations: signification in the first place and then supposition when the concept is put into propositional context.

Thomas Aquinas had already emphasized, with Aristotle, Avicenna, Abelard, and many others, the compositional character of interior discourse: mental propositions formed by the thinking subject thanks to the mind’s second operation could for him be decomposed into smaller and nonpropositional units—concepts, considered as objects of the first operation. The idea is now radicalized by Ockham with the terminology of *proprietates terminorum* (“sig-

8. Ibid., I.64: “And just as these different forms of supposition accrue to both written and spoken terms, they also accrue to the mental term; for an intention of the soul [i.e., a concept] can supposit for that which it signifies, for itself, and for a written or spoken word” (Loux trans., 191).

9. See especially ibid., I.1, 5–6.

nification," "supposition," "connotation") systematically employed in a fine-grained analysis of epistemic processes.

THE ONTOLOGY OF THE INTELLIGIBLE

The question could not be avoided: what ontological status should be accorded these mental units whose existence was thus posited? Ockham hesitated on this point—a fact well known today¹⁰—and his response changed considerably throughout his writings, from a position much like that of Thomas Aquinas, for whom the concept in the mind enjoys a special mode of purely intentional existence, to the identification of the mental term with the act of intellection, in line with the realist Franciscan movement discussed previously in Chapter 6.

In the original redaction of his first great work, the *Commentary on the Sentences*, from the late 1310s, Ockham clearly inclines in favor of what is called the theory of the *fictum*.¹¹ General concepts, in this view, appear to him as pure products of thought, distinct from acts of intellection and produced by them; they have no existence in the soul apart from being conceived. Ockham at this point attributes to them what he calls *esse obiectivum*—that is, a kind of being pertaining only to an object of thought, as opposed to the real being of the singular thing. The concept, thus understood, is compared to the representation an artisan makes within himself of what he intends to produce. This doesn't make it a sensible image—we are not here in the domain of imagination—but its ability to represent is nevertheless a certain form of resemblance (*similitudo*), in this case of an exclusively intelligible sort. This, in Elizabeth Karger's judicious phrase, is "a kind of purely ideal template of the thing,"¹² an intellectual schema that sketches for the mind the thing's internal constitution.

Functioning as a likeness, the concept-*fictum* is a natural sign, and its significates are the diverse individual things whose intelligible structure it reproduces for thought (individual horses, for example, in the case of the concept "horse"). Since it does not discriminate between the individual things whose essences sufficiently resemble each other for the schema in question to apply, the *fictum*, by its very signification, is inescapably general: it represents always, in principle, a plurality of possible individuals. To the Porphyrian question of whether

10. This development in Ockham was pointed out especially by Boehner 1958, chap. 9.

11. Ockham, *Ord.*, dist. 2, q. 8, *Op. theol.* 2:271–89. The term *fictum* had already been used by Abelard in this type of context to indicate that the intelligible form apprehended by thought was not a real thing, but only something produced, *fabricated* by the mind, somewhat like an "imaginary thing" (see P. Abelard, *Logica "Ingredientibus,"* ed. B. Geyer, in *Peter Abaelards Philosophische Schriften* [Münster: Aschendorff, 1919–27], 20–21).

12. Karger 1994, 439.

the universal, defined as “what is predicable of many,” exists in reality or only in the mind, Ockham in this period responds by identifying universals—that is, genera and species—with these always general mental *ficta*, which are for him the simple objects of abstractive acts. These concept-signs, or intentions of the soul, constitute at the same time the basic units of mental discourse. They can occur in mental propositions and there play the role of subject or predicate, receiving one or another of the functions of supposition articulated by terminist logic.

The *fictum* always being a *general* sign, the question arises of what place there is, in this doctrine, for singular terms in mental language. Recently, Elizabeth Karger has pointed to an often neglected aspect of Ockham’s early semantics, one quite revealing for our history: singular exterior things were allowed to figure in mental propositions—in person, so to speak—playing the role of singular terms.¹³ For example, according to Ockham, the blessed could form mental propositions in which God himself was the subject and in which God himself, in person, supposits for himself.¹⁴ And if I apprehend simultaneously, by a unique act of intuitive intellection, a given whiteness and a blackness, both individual, I could *ipso facto*, he explains, judge that *this whiteness is not identical with this blackness*, and in so doing form a propositional mental complex in which the individual accidents are themselves the subject and predicate.¹⁵

It is true that our author hardly insisted on this thesis and later renounced it; however, that he admitted it at a certain time at the beginning of his career allows us to regard, historically, his first conception of mental language as a nominalist reorientation of that of his countryman Walter Burley.¹⁶ We recall that, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, Burley had defended the idea that mental propositions are ordinarily composed of real things outside the soul, in the sense that the mind that forms such a proposition intellectually composes the things themselves whose identity or diversity it wishes to posit.¹⁷ This presupposes at least two kinds of real entities: those that are numerically one—individual substances and qualities, for example—and those that are not—such as genera and species¹⁸—the first acting as singular terms and the second as general terms. William of Ockham was strongly influenced by Burley’s semantics. On this matter, however, he could in no way admit recourse

13. Ibid., 441–44; see also on this topic Bos 1987b.

14. Ockham, *Ord.*, Prologus, q. 9, *Op. theol.* 1:270.

15. Ockham, *Reportatio* II, q. 12–13, *Op. theol.* 5:280–81.

16. I adopt here the very plausible thesis advanced by Karger 1996.

17. Walter Burley, *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias* 3.553–3.554, ed. S. Brown, *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974).

18. Ibid., 1.82: “the noun ‘man’ signifies a thing outside the soul, but this thing is not numerically one, but specifically one; things outside the soul are not always numerically one.”

to exterior things that were not individuals. For this reason, it is as though Ockham substituted nonreal entities of intentional character, or *ficta*, to which he attributed precisely the same role of being general terms of mental propositions, while leaving, as in Burley, singular terms to be identified with the individuals themselves, which raise no special ontological difficulty.

In appealing to *ficta* in this way, Ockham was clearly aware of returning, beyond Burley, to the doctrine of the mental word as *idolum*—the doctrine from which, on the heels of William of Ware, Burley had tried to break. Ockham refers to it with some care but in proper terms in distinction 27 of his *Ordinatio*, when he discusses the question of the mental word:

It seems to me probable—though I would not affirm it—that when something common to many is understood, it is found, in addition to the act of intellection itself, something in the intellect—subjectively or objectively—which is somehow similar to the exterior thing understood and which many call a kind of image (*idolum*) in which (*in quo*) in some way the thing itself is known.¹⁹

The conjunction of the typical expressions *idolum* and *in quo*—which one finds associated in William of Ware, for example, and in Burley himself, to characterize the position they intend to combat²⁰—unmistakably invokes in this context the Thomistic conception of the mental word, still defended in the 1300s by Hervaeus Natalis, among others; thus, curiously, Ockham is returning to this conception through a nominalist motivation: to escape at all costs the ontological position of universals as real things exterior to the mind.

Yet even at the time of the *Ordinatio*'s original redaction, Ockham's commitment to this doctrine of the *idolum* or mental *fictum* was not very firm. He will soon abandon it, in fact, thanks to the identification of the concept with the act of intellection—just as William of Ware, John Duns Scotus, and Walter Burley (among others), each with their own nuances, had recommended. Many commentators have seen in Ockham's change of course a reaction to those criticisms—entirely unfriendly—that his fellow Franciscan Walter Chatton addressed to him in his own *Sentences* commentary around 1322–23.²¹ But the first sign of Ockham's evolution on this topic appears already in his own commentary on the *Perihermeneias*, which the editors place in 1321 or 1322, prior to Chatton's teaching.²² The *venerabilis inceptor* in fact enumerates several conceptions of the nature of the concept in the prologue to this treatise. Without decisively settling the point, here he reserves for the theory of the *actus* a privileged

19. Ockham, *Ord.*, dist. 27, q. 2, *Op. theol.* 4:205–6.

20. William of Ware, *In Sententiarum* I, dist. 27, q. 3, ed. M. Schmaus, in Schmaus 1930; and Walter Burley, *Quaest. In libr. Perih.* 1. 5.

21. Walter Chatton, *Reportatio super Sententias* I, dist. 3, q. 2, ed. G. Gál, in Gál 1967.

22. G. Gál et al., "Introductio," in Ockham, *Opera philosophica*, 2:20*–23.*

treatment, providing a detailed response to all objections addressed against it, whereas he leaves without response those objections invoked against the theory of the *idolum*.²³

Returning to the problem in question 35 of his *Quodlibet* IV, probably disputed in 1323, and in his *Quaestiones in libros Physicorum*, written shortly after, Ockham resolutely takes a position in favor of reducing the concept to the act. He thus raises there, against the theory of the *idolum* or *fictum* (two terms he continues to employ interchangeably) an entire battery of objections, five in the *Quodlibets* and seven in the *Questions on the Physics*. It is true that two of these—the fourth and fifth in the two lists—are directly borrowed from Chatton, but the main ones are those we already encountered in Burley and in Peter John Olivi before him: the *fictum* hypothesis is superfluous, and, what is more, it compromises the success of knowledge by introducing a potentially obstructing intermediary into the cognitive process.²⁴

The decisive consideration, however, is now formulated in new terms:

For like a fictive entity [*fictum*], an act of understanding (i) is a likeness of an object, (ii) is able to signify and supposit for things outside the soul, (iii) is able to be the subject or the predicate in a proposition, (iv) is able to be a genus or a species, etc.²⁵

Chatton too, in his critique of Ockham's first theory, had insisted on the fact that the act of intellection could play the role of subject or predicate in a universal proposition formed by the mind just as well as the *fictum*.²⁶ But the specific and crucial observation is that the semantic properties of *signification* and *supposition* are central in the list of functions enumerated by Ockham. Only these are explicitly mentioned in a parallel passage of the *Summa logicae*:

all the theoretical advantages that derive from postulating entities distinct from acts of understanding can be had without making such a distinction, for an act of understanding can signify something and can supposit for

23. Ockham, *Exp. in libr. Perih. Arist.* I, *proæmium*, 3–12, in *ibid.*, 2:348–76.

24. Ockham, *Quodl.* IV, q. 35, *Op. theol.* 9:472–74; and *Quaest. in libr. Phys. Arist.*, q. 1 and 3, *Op. phil.* 6:397–98 and 400–404. At an undetermined date, Ockham also made a number of particular additions to his *Ordinatio* to soften its allegiance to the *fictum* theory and to add, most of the time, positive references to the *actus* theory. These additions are clearly identified in the critical edition (see, for a particularly significant example, *Ord.*, dist. 2, quest. 8, *Op. theol.* 2:289–92).

25. Ockham, *Quodl.* IV, q. 35, 474 (English translation: *William of Ockham, Quodlibetal Questions*, trans. A. Freddoso and F. Kelley [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991], 1:390).

26. Chatton, *Reportatio* I, dist. 3, q. 2, 201: “The position of the *ficta* is intended to find a unit which can be the subject or predicate in a universal proposition. But this recourse is not necessary.”

something just as well as any sign. Therefore, there is no point in postulating anything over and above the act of understanding.²⁷

Chatton had seen correctly: Ockham's original motivation for admitting the *fic-tum* in the first version of his teaching on the *Sentences* had been to find a type of unit that could assume the functions of subject and predicate in *universal mental propositions* without making appeal to *universals in being*, as Burley had thought necessary. However, Ockham's reflections, from then on, put the emphasis on *semantic* notions. He was struck by the fact that what is required for something to be the subject or predicate of any proposition, including mental propositions, is that it be a *sign*—to have a signification, therefore, and on this basis to be in a position to receive diverse referential functions, functions thematized, as it happens, by the theory of *suppositio*. Ockham's switched allegiance regarding the ontological status of the concept was fully realized when he became aware that the act of intellection itself could, without any difficulty, be seen as a sign and play all desired semantic roles. There only remained at this point to make appeal to the famous “razor” principle traditionally associated with his name, a principle whose use was already current in his time: “it is vain to do with more what can be done with less (*frustra fit per plura quod potest fieri per pauciora*).”²⁸ Since the act of intellect is known to be indispensable, it is the *fic-tum* that is superfluous; all the more since the act can be regarded as a simple *quality* of the mind and does not require any special mode of existence like *esse obiectivum*. The key to the ontological economy of this move was that Ockham, more than any of his predecessors, took with utter seriousness the idea that the concept is a sign.

THE SEMANTICS OF CONCEPTS

The Ockhamist theory of mental language finds its complete version in the *Summa logicae* and *Quodlibetal Questions*. Henceforth identified with sequences of intellectual acts, simple or complex, interior discourse is here equipped with a detailed compositional structure, and the traditional categories employed in the semantic analysis of spoken discourse are now meticulously transposed to conceptual thought “which is not in any language.”

This begins with grammar. We have seen that it was unusual in the Greco-Latin world to speak of nouns and verbs with respect to concepts in the mind. Boethius seemed to suggest it in an isolated passage of his *Perihermeneias* commentary, but he was then quoting Porphyry, who himself attributed the doctrine in question to anonymous Peripatetics.²⁹ Be that as it may, we hardly see

27. Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.12, 44 (Loux trans., 74).

28. Ibid.

29. Boethius, *Commentarium in librum Aristotelis Peri hermeneias*, *Secunda editio*, chap. 1, ed. Meiser (Leipzig: Teubner, 1880), 30. I have discussed this passage in details in chap. 4.

this reprised before our Franciscan decides, in the 1320s, to invoke the authority of the great translator on this point:

Nor should anyone be surprised that I speak of mental names and verbs. Let him first read Boethius' commentary on the *De Interpretatione*; he will find the same thing there.³⁰

Thus engaged, Ockham extends this grammaticalization of thought to most of the other traditional parts of speech enumerated by Latin grammarians since Donatus and Priscian:

In the case of spoken and written language terms are either names, verbs, or other parts of speech (i.e., pronouns, participles, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions); likewise, the intentions of the soul are either names, verbs, or other parts of speech (i.e., pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions).³¹

Even more: the distinctions between singular and plural, between nominative, genitive, and the other cases, between modes and tenses of verbs—all of these things, among others, are found in the mental as well as conventional languages.

However, the correspondence has its limits. Certain distinctions in surface grammar have no correlate on the mental order. This is the case, for example, with the distinction between masculine and feminine, as with the diversity of noun endings and verbal conjugations. Ockham's principle for this difference is of a semantic sort: mental language must possess an expressive capacity at least as great as any spoken or written language. All grammatical distinctions required "for the needs of signification" must find an equivalent there, in one form or another. Synonymy, however, is superfluous:

whatever is signified by an expression is signified equally well by its synonym. The point of the multiplicity at work in the case of synonymous terms is the embellishment of speech or something of that nature, so that the relevant multiplicity has no place at the conceptual level.³²

The decisive test, in practice, amounts to asking if a given grammatical distinction is enough to cause differences in truth-values. The statements "a man runs" and "men run," for example, could easily not be true at the same time, and as a result, the distinction between singular and plural must merit a place in mental language. The distinction between masculine and feminine, on the other hand, corresponds to nothing other than the need for ornamentation, and pure thought has no need for it.

30. Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.3, 13–14 (Loux trans., 54).

31. Ibid., I.3, 10 (Loux trans., 52); see also *Quodl.* V, q. 8, *Op. theol.* 9:509.

32. Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.3, 10 (Loux trans., 52).

Some cases seem doubtful. Are participles distinct from verbs in the realm of concepts? And are pronouns different from nouns? Probably not, suggests Ockham. But his responses on these two points, as on some others of the same kind, remain cautious. The main thing was to establish in principle the novel idea of a fine-grained articulation of a mental discourse capable of exploiting all relevant semantic distinctions, leaving the details to the later reflection of those he called the *studiosi*.

Even more than from grammar, it is from terminist logic that Ockham borrows the essentials of his analytical apparatus. Among the distinctions codified by logicians, some, he thinks, "can pertain as well to terms which signify by nature [i.e., concepts] as to those instituted by convention";³³ the main two distinctions, as it happens, are, first, that between categorematic and syncategorematic terms, and second, that between absolute and connotative terms.

Terms are called "categorematic" that have "a definite and determinate signification,"³⁴ such as "horse," "white," "horseman"—in short, all those that by themselves bring to mind real entities. Syncategorematic expressions, on the other hand, like "all," "any," "and," "other," "only," "insofar as," "do not signify things distinct from what are signified by categorematic terms,"³⁵ but, joined to them in discursive contexts, affect their precise semantic import, determining, for example, the truth-conditions of the propositions in which they figure. Thus there is found in mental language some concepts that are natural signs of things themselves and others that, without representing any object whatsoever, nevertheless assume a whole range of auxiliary semantic functions, in particular as quantifiers and connectors.

Mental categorematic terms are in turn subdivided, like spoken words, into absolute and connotative terms.³⁶ The first correspond to what in today's philosophical terminology are called "concepts of natural kinds," such as "horse," "animal," "tulip," and "flower." What distinguishes these, according to Ockham, is that each refers in the same way to all its significates and establishes no hierarchy among them: the concept "horse" equally signifies all horses and nothing else and can in propositional contexts supposit for any of them. A connotative term, on the other hand, presents at least two groups of significates: the primary significates, which are individuals referred to when it is taken in personal supposition (horsemen, for example, in the case of the concept "horseman"); and its secondary significates, for which it does not normally supposit but toward which it nevertheless, Ockham says, directs the mind obliquely (horses, for example, in the case of "horseman"). Counted among connotative terms are all concrete qualitative terms such as "white," "sitting"; all relational terms like

33. *Ibid.*, I.11, 39.

34. *Ibid.*, I.4, 14.

35. *Ibid.*, I.4, 15.

36. *Ibid.*, I.10.

“father,” “owner”; all quantitative terms such as “length,” “solid”; and many others besides—in short, the vast majority of concepts.

A remarkable characteristic of connotatives, according to Ockham, is that, unlike absolute terms, they have a complete nominal definition that can display the term’s sense in the form of a complex expression. “White,” for example, is defined as “something possessing a whiteness,” and “cause” as “something that can produce another thing.” Some modern commentators believed they could infer from this that Ockham’s mental language would count among its simple categorematic terms only absolute terms.³⁷ Since mentalese admits no synonymy, they reasoned, must not connotative terms be represented here by their complex definitions? This, however, doesn’t correspond to the position of our author. Ockham in fact counts the distinction between absolute and connotative simple terms among those that affect concepts as well as words. Mentalese, as he sees it, does not constitute a Fregean, logically ideal language, whose semantic resources would be reduced to a bare minimum. It is enough for it to avoid the most obvious redundancies.³⁸

Apart from these distinctions of terms, of which the main ones were just recalled, the most relevant element of his predecessors’ terminist logic that Ockham retains for his description of mental language is the theory of supposition. Whether absolute or connotative, concepts that figure in mental propositions can receive one or another of the referential functions permitted by that theory. Ockham accords great importance to the principled distinction thus established between signification—primary or secondary, seen as an invariable property of the categorematic concept—and supposition—that the term only acquires when taken as the subject or predicate of a given proposition, and so that varies according to context. The concept “horse,” while always preserving the same signification, does not stand for the same things or stand for them in the same way, in “every horse is a mammal,” “a horse gallops in the field,” “a chestnut is a horse,” “‘horse’ is a species concept.” A whole system of distinctions and rules is introduced to distinguish between and classify the possible cases: supposition is divided into material, simple, and personal; the latter into confused and distributive, and so on. And all of the varieties so enumerated are admitted into interior as well as spoken and written discourse.³⁹

37. See, especially, Spade 1975, 1980; Normore 1990.

38. For a detailed argument on this point, see: Panaccio 1990, 1992a, 30–35; Tweedale 1992; Goddu 1993. Let us be content here with this passage from Ockham, *Ord.*, dist. 3, q. 3: “I say that of the same thing it is possible to have many simple denominative concepts, because of the diversity of their *connotata*” (*Op. theol.* 2:425; recall that denominative terms, for Ockham, are all connotative). See also *Quodl.* V, q. 25, *Op. theol.* 9:582–84: “Are there absolute, relative, and connotative concepts really distinct from each other?”

39. Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.64–77.

For different types of elementary mental propositions of the form “subject + copula + predicate,” this allows the proposal of detailed truth-conditions founded on the relations between suppositions of the subject and predicate.⁴⁰ The necessary and sufficient truth-condition of a singular affirmative, such as “Bucephalus is a horse,” for example, is that the predicate there supposits for the same thing as the subject. A universal negative, such as “no man is a horse,” will be true if and only if the predicate does not supposit for anything for which the subject supposits. And so on for all other elementary propositions, whether singular, particular, or universal, affirmative or negative, modal or not. Conceptual thought thus appears as a complex compositional system wherein the semantic properties of propositions—their truth-values in particular—are, in accordance with precise rules, a function of the semantic properties of their constituent parts, in particular through the mediation of supposition.

From the signification of terms to the truth of propositions, by way of supposition, the whole apparatus is conceived by Ockham with ontological economy in view. Its most salient characteristic is that only singulars—substances and qualities—are admitted as correlates of conceptual signs. General concepts, in this view, never signify or connote anything but individual entities, their generality consisting only in the fact that they signify many at a time. As for syncategorematic terms, deprived of signification proper, they introduce no new entities. Nor does supposition require special objects: all the necessary referents are taken from among the primary significates of the concept when it is personal or from among the singular occurrences of signs themselves when it is simple or material. In the end, the theory of truth-conditions, reduced to the comparison of the subject's supposition with that of the predicate, avoids attributing to the proposition taken as a whole a proper significate distinct from the *supposita* of its terms. As a result, in the final analysis all semantic connections join singular occurrences of signs—spoken, written, or mental—to singular things and nothing else.

The most decisive motivations behind Ockhamist semantics of mental language appear here in full clarity: to avoid recourse to extramental universals and at the same time to maintain the objectivity of knowledge and its relation to reality. It is precisely this that had prompted Ockham, from the *Commentary on the Sentences* onward, to posit as objects of knowledge mental propositions whose terms could exhibit supposition like words of spoken language. For him, it is not at all a matter—as it is for some logicians today—of putting in place a system whose primitive vocabulary could be as restricted as possible. *Oratio mentalis*, to be sure, eliminated the most obvious redundancies—especially the duplication of simple synonyms—but this remains secondary. The main thing for Ockham was that the subjects and predicates of mental propositions supposited only for individuals and, when relevant, connoted only individuals. When

40. Ibid., II.2–10. See on this subject Panaccio 1992a, 43–56.

he insisted on some important structural difference between interior discourse and corresponding spoken or written enunciation, it was never a matter of reducing the primitive constituents of thought to a bare minimum, but rather of avoiding recourse to what he judged undesirable entities as *supposita* of mental subjects or predicates.

This is what takes place, for example, in the case of certain abstract nouns of conventional language, such as "movement," "time," "generation," "point," "line," to which there correspond no real objects in Ockham's ontology. These words, he explains, are not true nouns and have no equivalent simple units in mental language.⁴¹ The point is that they do not, considered alone, possess determinate signification in virtue of which they could supposit for certain things. The sentences in which they appear must be understood as a way of nonliterally abbreviating in spoken discourse mental propositions whose structure is quite different and generally much more complex. "Generation occurs in an instant," for example, must correspond in mentalese to something like, "when one thing is generated, it is not generated little by little, but the whole is generated simultaneously."⁴² Not only are suspect terms thus eliminated from interior discourse, they are not even directly replaced by well-formed complex terms capable of being the subject or predicate of a mental proposition; the entire sentence is reformulated from top to bottom.

If, on the other hand, the presence in mental language of genuine simple connotative terms like "white" or "father" poses no problem for Ockham, even though they could in principle be the object of complete definitions, this is because each of these refers, through signification, connotation, or supposition, only to entities that are perfectly admissible in Ockham's nominalism: horsemen, horses, white things, and singular whitenesses. The proper function of the semantics of mental language in the work of the *venerabilis inceptor* is to minimize the ontological commitment required by true discourse. It is for this reason, in the end, that it takes such a precise compositional form, which reduces all the complexity of relations between thought and reality to certain semantic properties of simple terms.

NATURAL SIGNIFICATION

At the root of the system is *signification*. It is this that serves, from the beginning, to demarcate categorematic and syncategorematic terms, and that is then subdivided into primary and secondary signification to give rise to the distinction between absolute and connotative. Even the very important prop-

41. The most detailed treatment of these pseudo-nouns is found in Ockham's *Tractatus de quantitate*, *Op. theol.* 10, especially 21–35; see also *Summa logicae* I.8.

42. Ockham, *Tract. de quantitate*, 31.

erty of supposition is always derived with respect to signification.⁴³ Personal supposition, in particular, which is the most usual, is nothing but a contextualized modulation of signification. And even if, in the case of simple or material supposition, the term does not stand for its significates, it nonetheless preserves its original signification: in an utterance like “‘horse’ is a concept applied to animals,” the subject, “horse,” although taken in simple supposition, clearly continues to invoke for the mind the beings that are its significates (in this case, horses).

The notion of signification thus involved is the one Ockham received from Scotus and Walter Burley, according to which, as we saw in Chapter 7, linguistic signs signify not concepts but things themselves. Only this notion could be easily transposed without equivocation to the mental order. Those who say, on the other hand, that words signify concepts could not in turn treat concepts as themselves being signs *in the same sense* as words, capable, in particular, in their normal usage, of suppositing for their significates. Ockham gives the name “subordination” to the relation of association between words and concepts, both being considered signs, either conventional or natural, of the same external realities:

I say that spoken words are signs subordinated to concepts or intentions of the soul not because in the strict sense of “signify” they always signify the concepts of the soul primarily and properly. The point is rather that spoken words are used to signify the very things that are signified by concepts of the mind, so that a concept primarily and naturally signifies something and a spoken word signifies the same thing secondarily.⁴⁴

So, like in Scotus and some others before him, the mental concept’s signification is called *natural*.

But in precisely what sense? What exactly is the naturalness of this relation between the concept-sign and those individual things it signifies? Two relations present themselves at the outset as candidates to resolve the question: similitude and causality. Does the mental concept naturally signify certain things in the world because it *resembles* them in a certain way, or rather because it is *caused by* them?⁴⁵ Attentive examination of the texts shows that Ockham’s re-

43. On the priority of signification in relation to supposition in Ockham, see Panaccio 1983, 1984.

44. Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.1, 5 (Loux trans., 50).

45. The question has been discussed in these terms by many commentators in recent years; see in particular Adams 1978, 1987, chap. 4; Normore 1990, 56ff.; Panaccio 1992a, 124–30; Michon 1994, chap. 4; Biard 1997a, 15–54. It seems to me that the majority of these, my own included, have exaggerated the role of causality in the natural signification of general concepts.

sponse differs according to whether one is speaking of singular or general terms of interior language. In the first case, it is causality that is determinative; in the second, similitude.

Singular terms of mental language are identified, in the later version of Ockhamism, not so much with exterior things themselves—as they were in his theory of the *fictum*—but with acts of intellectual intuition—acts through which the mind directly apprehends, at the intellectual level, the external and contingent existence of singular entities; for the *venerabilis inceptor* does count such intellectual intuition of the singular among those signs capable of figuring in mental propositions and of suppositing for something.⁴⁶ However, the individual of which this intuition is the natural sign could only be that individual thing that caused the occurrence of the sign. Imagining an angel capable of directly apprehending what is in my mind, Ockham asks whether, if two very similar objects were found near me, the angel could determine to which of the two my intellectual intuition refers at a given moment.⁴⁷ His response is clear: to decide this, the angel must know which of the things caused the intellection in question. It is true that the intellectual representation is always a similitude for Ockham, but, in the case of intuitive intellection of the singular, “similitude is not the precise cause which makes the intellection bear on one thing instead of another”; it is causality that plays this role.⁴⁸ Resemblance would not suffice to discriminate between two objects maximally similar from the point of view of their essence (two horses, for example); it cannot, in principle, have a properly singular scope.

For general terms, the situation is entirely different. So long as he favored the theory of the *fictum*, Ockham obviously could not explain the signification of general concepts in terms of causality: the *fictum*, itself not having any real existence, could not be the natural cause or effect of anything. The concept is thus posited as a similitude of exterior things, and “it is in virtue of this similitude,” Ockham affirms very explicitly, “that it can supposit for them.” Even after abandoning the *fictum*, he would continue—though it is not clear why—to base the natural *representative* function of mental language’s general terms on *similitude*. Explaining, for example, the theory of the *actus* in the prologue to his commentary on the *Perihermeneias*, he posits unequivocally that if a given cognitive act represented humans rather than donkeys, this could only be “because such a cognition is better assimilated to man than to donkey, by some mode of

46. Ockham, *Quaest. in libr. Phys. Arist.*, q. 7: “The intellect, apprehending a singular thing by intuition, forms in itself an intuitive knowledge which is knowledge of that singular thing only, capable by its very nature of suppositing for this singular thing” (411). See, on this topic, Panaccio 1992c, especially 72–77.

47. Ockham, *Report. II*, q. 16, *Op. theol.* 5:378–79.

48. *Ibid.*, q. 12–13, *Op. theol.* 5:287–89.

assimilation.”⁴⁹ It is for this very reason, he explains again in *Quodlibet* V, that the simple abstractive concept, according to the theory of the *actus*, could never establish proper knowledge of a singular object:

because each such cognition or concept is equally a likeness of, and equally represents, all exactly similar individuals, and so it is no more a proper concept of the one than of the other.⁵⁰

Acts of intuition are the only truly simple singular terms of mental language, and it is their signification alone that is determined by causality. The rest pertains to similitude.

The problem remains, of course, of knowing in just what sense an abstract act of intellection can be adequately described as a *similitude* of the exterior things of which it is a sign. Ockham was never very explicit on this point, contenting himself with vaguely invoking an “indifferent mode of assimilation.” I have elsewhere proposed that we speak of *isomorphism* on this matter, which supposes the mental act naturally endowed with a certain internal structure capable of reproducing, in some manner or other, the structure of the thing it represents.⁵¹ But our author's texts, unfortunately, don't allow us to be any more precise.

Syncategoremata, furthermore, present a special difficulty in this view. Since they have no proper signification and no resemblance in any sense whatsoever to any real object, we can rightly wonder if it is possible to regard them as natural signs as well. Ockham posed the question in the first redaction of his *Commentary on the Sentences*, supplying there a response at first glance disconcerting: since *syncategoremata* cannot be abstracted from things themselves, he explains, they can only be abstracted from conventional words of spoken language.⁵² We have often encountered this idea of a mental representation of words of language: it was found already in Augustine, and we saw in the preceding chapters that it was freshly exploited by many medievals, from Albert the Great and Pseudo-Kilwardby to Duns Scotus and Richard Campsall. However, Ockham adopts it here to make a local use of it. Mental language, in his eyes, is (at this stage) composed of *ficta*, and these have being only insofar as they represent something. Since there is no real thing that can be signified by “all,”

49. Ockham, *Exp. in libr. Perih. Arist.* I, *proemium*, 355; see also *Quodl.* I, q. 13, *Op. theol.* 9:74, and *Quodl.* IV, q. 35, 474.

50. Ockham, *Quodl.*, V, q. 7, 506 (English translation: *William of Ockham, Quodlibetal Questions*, trans. A. Freddoso and F. Kelley [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991], 422–23).

51. Panaccio 1992a, 128.

52. Ockham, *Ord.*, dist. 2, q. 8, *Op. theol.* 2:285–86. See, on this subject, Adams 1987, 289–304. Normore finds this approach “astonishing” (1990, 59).

“and,” “only,” Ockham suggests that the *things* represented in such cases can only be the corresponding spoken *words*. What is surprising in this conception is that mental language can thus depend on conventional languages for a large part of its vocabulary—all the more since, in the same passage, Ockham generalizes the approach beyond *syncategoremata* to all connotative and negative terms. We might wonder, on this hypothesis, from what arise the *syncategoremata* and connotative terms of spoken language, from which the corresponding *ficta* are supposed to be abstracted.

I think we should see matters in the following way: Ockham must at this stage admit, following Burley, that the mind is capable of intellectually combining the absolute terms of mental language. So he must recognize the capacity to form intellectual *acts* of composition. In the surface structure of spoken phrases, these acts of composition are expressed by special terms, the *syncategoremata*, which can in turn be the object of specific mental representations. It is thus that there is finally constituted, on the level of *ficta*, complete mental propositions in which *syncategoremata* as well as *categoremata* figure *precisely as terms*. From the moment Ockham abandons the theory of the *fictum*, this detour by way of spoken language is no longer necessary for the formation of complete mental propositions; because it is now intellectual acts themselves that are constitutive of the propositions in question, nothing prevents acts of composition from figuring in them just as such. One will then easily be able to count them among natural signs in the broad sense, since, even if they do not each represent any special object, they by nature fully pertain to the order of significant mental discourse. Such discourse is thus entirely composed of intellectual acts, whether intuitive or abstractive, absolute or connotative, *categorematic* or *syncategorematic*.

Ockham's originality in the history of the idea of mental language is to have systematically transposed to the analysis of nonlinguistic discursive thought the grammatical and semantic categories that the science of his time employed in the study of spoken or written language. The existence of mental propositions of a predicative form was commonly admitted before him, and discussions from the end of the thirteenth century to the beginning of the fourteenth on the object of logic had led to very precise examination of the nature of the units capable of playing the roles of subjects and predicates in mental propositions. Ockham, on the heels of certain of his Franciscan predecessors, would finally identify these units with acts of intellect. But the important thing, from his point of view, was that they were signs, divided into grammatical categories and endowed with signification or connotation, capable especially of suppositing in propositions for those singular beings that populate the world. We find the theoretical apparatus of terminist logic here promoted to the status of instrument *par excellence* for the analysis of thought itself. Finely structured mental propositions could thus play at once the roles of primary objects of knowledge

and belief, privileged bearers of truth-values, and deep semantic structures for sentences of spoken language.

The most determinative motivation for the *venerabilis inceptor* in this approach was his nominalism; it required him to avoid positing in being any intrinsically general entity, such as genera or species. It is this that led him, in the first place, to resort to mental propositions as the objects of knowledge, rather than common natures. It is also this that made him accept, at the beginning of his career, the hypothesis of *ficta* to serve as subjects or predicates of the propositions in question, instead of the real universals Walter Burley felt obliged to posit. And it is especially this that served as the vital thread in his construction of a sophisticated semantic system based, in the final analysis, entirely on the relations of natural signification between mental acts and individuals in the world. The nominalist inspiration, coupled with a bold generalization of the semantic approach, thus opened up, for the first time, a detailed compositional theory of intellectual cognition.

The abandonment of the *fictum* in Ockham's later doctrine further accentuates this reconfiguration of thought on the model of language. The identification of the concept with the intellectual act rather than its object effectively breaks, in a manner more radical than ever, with the previously dominant visual model for describing cognition. The units charged with representing reality in the mind in this view are no longer the correlates of intellectual acts—something the soul would contemplate within itself after having formed them—but these acts themselves, endowed with signification. Abstract thought is less a vision than a speech. The acts in question surely continued to be described as similitudes of exterior things—Ockham never renounced the iconic mental representation, which seemed to him necessary for assuring the natural character of the signification of general concepts—but the essential point was that intellectual acts, thus connected to exterior individuals in the world, could assume, just like linguistic enunciations, all the semantic functions required for compositional analysis, in particular that of *suppositio*.

CHAPTER TEN

REACTIONS

The Ockhamist conception of mental discourse was quickly impressed upon the attention of university intelligentsia and became, at least in its broad outlines, one of the key elements of the *via moderna* in the late Middle Ages. This development merits a study of its own; here, at the end of our journey, we will limit ourselves to examining the short-term echoes of Ockham's innovation. First, in England, in the environment in which it was produced, we may discern two types of discussions immediately prompted by it: one concerns the very existence of an interior discourse composed of concepts, in the sense intended by Ockham, while the other, taking this for granted, bears instead upon certain precise aspects of the syntactic and semantic structure of this *oratio mentalis*.¹ The first involves Dominican authors such as Hugh Lawton, William Crathorn, and Robert Holcot; recently this has been made the object of some fine studies, whose main results I shall report.² The second, which unfolded in Franciscan territory, has so far been of less concern to commentators; it reveals the rapid spread of certain of William of Ockham's ideas on the subject of mental language, even among his fiercest adversaries. Without getting into the details, I will consider, finally, the reception of this doctrine in the faculty of arts of the University of Paris—especially in the influential nominalist school of John Buridan—that played a major role in its later dissemination.

THE NATURE OF MENTAL LANGUAGE

Hugh Lawton is one of the first authors to have reacted directly to Ockham's theories on our chosen theme. His *Commentary on the Sentences*, no longer extant, was most probably written in the second half of the 1320s. We know from Crathorn, who reports on it in detail, that the author developed a substantial argument explicitly against the Ockhamist doctrine of the *oratio mentalis*.³ His own position is that no such mental propositions exist—he thus strongly rejects a thesis generally accepted in the medieval university of the time by Thomist

1. On this topic, I will loosely use here certain developments of an earlier article (Panaccio 1996).

2. Schepers 1970–72; Gelber 1984; Perler 1997.

3. Crathorn, *Quästionen zum ersten Sentenzenbuch*, q. 2, ed. F. Hoffmann (Münster: Aschendorf, 1988), 172–75. Crathorn's *Commentary on the Sentences* dates from the beginning of the 1330s.

Dominicans, among others. For Lawton propositions are spoken or written only. Crathorn attributes to him fourteen arguments on this point, which the American scholar Hester Gelber some years ago discussed in much greater detail than I can do here. She showed that the argumentation relies largely on a superficial understanding of Ockham's positions, and on this subject I can only refer the reader to her article in *Franciscan Studies*.⁴

I would like, nevertheless, to draw attention to one of Lawton's objections—the eleventh—which is especially revealing, it seems to me, insofar as it manifests a marked reluctance to apply the semantic vocabulary of *suppositio* to the order of mental *similitudines*. Lawton argues that intellectual representations—whose existence he seems to admit—are not the kinds of things that could *naturally* “supposit” for something else, for if the natural function of supposition depended on simple resemblance (*similitudo*), anything could *a fortiori* supposit for something else of the same species (Socrates for Plato, for example), which, he says, is not true. Without being uninteresting or impertinent, the argument is rather brief—to say the least—and fails to do justice to the virtues of the approach it criticizes. In fact, what is manifest in these lines of Lawton is an instinctive resistance to what constituted the crux of the Ockhamist innovation: infusing the theory of the mind and knowledge with the apparatus of the sciences of language, especially semantics.

Crathorn disagrees with Lawton. He discusses each of the fourteen arguments in turn and contests every conclusion.⁵ For all that, however, his intention is not to defend Ockham: while, according to him, there do indeed exist propositions in the mind, they are not composed, as the *venerabilis inceptor* thought, of concepts outside of language, but rather of mental representations of words in a given language. His position on this subject is remarkable for its time: the mental proposition, which is the privileged unit of discursive thought, always pertains to a particular language, such as Latin, Greek, or English; thought, therefore, is not independent of languages of communication. Crathorn does admit the existence of internal representations not in any language—these are, he says, the *verba mentalia* of which Augustine spoke—but the mental propositions in which reasoning and deliberation are articulated are not, for him, composed of these representations. Having expounded his own position in the form of fifteen conclusions, each defended by arguments, he finally summarizes it, with the greatest clarity, in the following terms:

I say that the mental term, which is part of a mental proposition, is a form in the mind and a similitude and a word and a natural sign of the spoken or written term. Thus the mental proposition which corresponds to this spoken

4. Gelber 1984, 156–67.

5. Crathorn, *Quästionen*, q. 2, 175–82.

proposition "*homo est animal*" is composed of three qualities, one of which is a natural similitude of the term "*homo*," another of the term "*animal*," and the third of the term "*est*."⁶

Since the mind can, in good Aristotelian psychology, forge from any object given to it by the senses a mental representation that is at once a similitude of that object—a "word of the thing" (*verbum rei*), as Anselm put it—and a natural sign thereof, the mind could *a fortiori* make mental representations for spoken or written words that are presented to it by hearing or sight. And as these words are already given a conventional signification by the linguistic community, the corresponding representations could be utilized mentally with the same semantic properties. They are thus at once natural signs of the words they represent and conventional signs of the things to which these words refer. Mental language, in this view, is nothing other than an interiorization of spoken or written language.

It is from this standpoint that Crathorn explicitly attacks Ockham's doctrine, to which he addresses nine objections in due form.⁷ Some aim only to show, by reference mainly to introspection, the empirical existence of mental representations of the words of language. Others, resting on the authority of the *Perihermeneias*, contest the applicability of grammatical categories—in particular, those of noun and verb—to the order of natural signs. However, the most important objections directly concern this relation of natural signification, which is required by Ockhamism and which Crathorn, like Lawton, wholly reduces to similitude. How could it be possible, he asks, for a concept corresponding to a term like *ens* to simultaneously resemble everything that exists? How could the concept of color resemble at once black and white? And how could the concept corresponding to the word *Deus* truly be like the Supreme Being? If there exist similitudes in the mind that are natural signs—as Crathorn admits—they could represent only sensible beings similar to one another (all horses, for example, or all green objects) and could not achieve a superior degree of generality or abstraction. The only way of constructing rational discursive thought on such a basis is to use representations of words and not, as Ockham wished, of things.

Also commenting on the *Sentences* at Oxford in the early 1330s, the Dominican Robert Holcot expressly takes up the defense of the Ockhamist theory on this point against the criticisms of his confrere.⁸ He remarks that the notion of similitude used by Crathorn is much too narrow to apply adequately to the

6. Ibid., q. 2, 171.

7. Ibid., q. 2, 166–71.

8. The *Commentary on the Sentences* of Robert Holcot was subject to an incunabular edition (reputedly of poor quality): *Super quattuor libros Sententiarum Questiones* (Lyon: 1497). One finds there also, under the title *Quaedam conferentie*, the text of what is today called the *Sex articuli*, six developments on diverse questions, probably written at the same time as the *Commentary on the Sentences*.

relation that obtains between intellectual representations and exterior things. It seems there is no possible similitude for Crathorn except between two objects sharing a property of the same species—the same color, for instance; and this leads him, Holcot remarks ironically, to think “that the soul is really and truly colored when it understands a color, and that it is black when it understands something black, or dark when it understands something dark.”⁹ In reality, he goes on to clarify, the word *similitudo* must receive a special sense when one speaks of similitude in representation rather than in being: it does not then imply anything other than the capacity to represent, which in the final analysis comes down to the capacity to play the role of a sign.¹⁰ In this type of context, the notion of similitude, for Holcot, adds nothing to the notion of natural sign; consequently, one cannot, like Crathorn, appeal to the one to contest the other.

However it may be, the reduction of discursive thought to mental sequences linked to particular languages leads, according to Holcot, to unacceptable consequences:

It follows from this that a Greek who has never heard nor read Latin and a Latin who is just as Catholic as the Greek cannot have a proposition in common, neither one having a proposition like that of the other. And someone who was blind and deaf from birth could have no mental propositions.¹¹

All of this, he concludes, is contrary to the teaching of the authorities on this point, whether it be Aristotle, Augustine, or Anselm—contrary, therefore, “to the entire school,” such that he will not bother even to discuss any more so pernicious a theory.¹²

As it happens, Holcot’s indignation provides a good measure for the novelty of Crathorn’s theses, which made discursive thought depend upon exterior speech. It was a hierarchical inversion as unacceptable to medieval culture as was Lawton’s position, locked in an unnuanced refusal of mental propositions, whatever their nature. Lawton and Crathorn had, however, been driven to such excess by their profound—indeed rather traditional—reluctance to apply to similitudes in the mind the standard categories of grammar and semantics, as Ockhamism desired. The approach of the *venerabilis inceptor* was novel, as well,

9. Robert Holcot, *Sex artic.*, art. 3, in *Super quattuor libros Sententiarum Questiones*, 7, col. 2.

10. See, on this subject, the extracts of the *Commentary on the Sentences* cited by Tachau 1988, 248 n17 (taken from *In Sent.* I, Prol., q. 1) and 249n18 (taken from *In Sent.* II, q. 3).

11. Holcot, *Sex artic.*, art. 3, p. 8, col. 1.

12. Ibid. See also art. 1, p. 3, col. 2, where Holcot strongly denounces the “false imagination” of Crathorn according to which “there is no other mental proposition than what is a similitude of the spoken or written proposition.” This text is cited, with nearly all of article 1, by Dal Pra 1956, 27–28.

but the controversy we have just reviewed reveals that in the end, the Ockhamist doctrine of the *oratio mentalis*, once in place, could no longer be challenged without an even more severe rupture with certain deeper assumptions of the then prevailing Augustinian Aristotelianism: that interior thought is universal and depends on no language, and that it is, nevertheless, structured in terms of true or false propositions, composed in turn of more simple representations. Ockham's synthesis could appear, at the end of this discussion, as the only available means to hold together these traditional positions in light of the new standards of precision imposed by the logic of the "moderns." Neither Lawton's nor Crathorn's conception of mental language would find immediate followers. The Dominican controversy ended essentially—as Gelber described—in the 1330s, in a victory for Ockhamism.¹³

THE STRUCTURE OF MENTAL LANGUAGE

At stake in the Dominican debate just examined was whether or not it was necessary to accept the idea of a mental language composed of prelinguistic concepts. The doctrine of the *oratio mentalis* also gave rise, during the same years, to a discussion of another sort, in which the existence of mental language in the sense intended by William of Ockham was commonly admitted and where disagreement pertained rather to the precise syntactic and semantic analysis it should be given. To show this, I will explore texts by three contemporary English authors who knew Ockham's work well: the Franciscans Walter Chatton and Adam Wodeham and the anonymous author of a *Logica contra Ockham*, whom scholars have dubbed Pseudo-Campsall—probably also a Franciscan.

Unlike Lawton and Crathorn, all three authors accept the idea that there are mental propositions composed of concepts and that these are natural signs of exterior things.¹⁴ Even more important, all three occasionally use the terminology of the *proprietas terminorum* to analyze these mental concepts—consistent with what, in my opinion, is Ockham's most crucial innovation.¹⁵ Concerning the application of grammatical categories to mental language, it

13. Gelber 1984, 170.

14. See, for example: Walter Chatton, *Reportatio et Lectura super Sententias: Collatio ad Librum primum et Prologus*, ed. J. C. Wey (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1989), in particular q. 1, art. 1, 22–24, and q. 3, art. 4, 213–14; Pseudo-Campsall, *Logica contra Ockham*, ed. E. A. Synan, in *The Works of Richard of Campsall*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982), in particular paragraphs 2.01 (79–80), 29.02 (183–84) and 49.01 (345); and Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda in Librum primum Sententiarum*, ed. R. Wood and G. Gál (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: St. Bonaventure University, 1990), 3 vol., especially Prol., q. 5, §16 (1:139–40), dist. 2, q. 2.2 (3:6–7), and dist. 22, q. 6–8 (3:285–93).

15. See, for example: Chatton, *Reportatio* I, dist. 3, q. 2, ed. G. Gál, in Gál 1967, especially 209–10; *Reportatio et Lectura*, Prol., q. 1, art. 1 (25), q. 2, art. 6 (133), and q. 5, art. 2

is partly dismissed in passing by Chatton in his first *Commentary on the Sentences*, probably composed between 1321 and 1323,¹⁶ which is to say, before Ockham had proposed it with some insistence in his *Summa of Logic* (around 1324) and in his *Quodlibet* V. However, it is accepted in the second half of the 1320s or beginning of the 1330s by Pseudo-Campsall as well as Adam Wodeham.¹⁷ That these characteristic theses of the Ockhamist approach are thus found in this latter author is not very surprising: even if he diverges here and there on some specific points, he has a well-known general sympathy for Ockham's thought, which he systematically defends against Chatton's attacks. But that these theses appear in Pseudo-Campsall and, at least some, in Walter Chatton is quite striking, since throughout their respective writings these two are arch-adversaries of Ockham's theology and philosophy and defenders of the Scotist positions in the Franciscan order.

Chatton was one of the first critics of the Ockhamist theory of the intentional *fictum*, and his arguments may have played a certain role in Ockham's development on this subject. However, the idea of a concept as a natural sign capable of *supposition*, which is in itself independent of the theory of the *fictum*, had been propounded and defended by Ockham in his *Commentary on the Sentences* (between 1317 and 1319), a text Chatton must have seen long before composing his own.¹⁸ It is not incompatible with the thought of John Duns Scotus, of course, in whose work one could even say it was sketched;¹⁹ but Scotus had hardly developed it. More likely is that Chatton received it from the *venerabilis inceptor*, possibly without being aware of it. The same goes for Pseudo-Campsall, whose treatise follows Ockham's *Summa of Logic* step-by-step—to criticize it, of course, but not without thereby preserving some of its most essential elements.

Having thus accepted—partially or wholly—the basis of the theory of mental language, our three Franciscans raise on occasion a number of precise questions or objections concerning the semantic or grammatical analysis of this universal language. By way of illustration, I wish briefly to enumerate seven of the points explicitly argued by one or another of these three authors.

The first two concern one of the most salient consequences of the new

(287–88); Pseudo-Campsall, *Logica* 11.01 (107); and Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda*, Prol., q. 6, §10 (1:157–58) and dist. 1, q. 4, §§8–9 (1:268–71).

16. Chatton, *Rep.* I, dist. 3, q. 2, 211.

17. See, for example: Pseudo-Campsall, *Logica* (2, 79–83), where the matter is explicitly discussed; and Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda*. (Prol., q. 6, §5 [1:147], and dist. 2, q. 4, §4 [2:104]), where the applicability of grammatical categories to mental language is presupposed.

18. See especially William of Ockham, *Ordinatio*, dist. 2, q. 4, *Opera theologica* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1970), 2:134–40, and q. 8, 270–92. These passages were commented on in the previous chapter.

19. See the section on Scotus in chap. 7.

approach: the admission of syncategorematic concepts into the mental equipment of humans: particularly, logical operators such as quantifiers, connectors, and prepositions. The question then arises of which syncategorematic terms should be counted among the terms of mental language. This point—the first of the seven—is explicitly discussed by Pseudo-Campsall, who maintains that the only syncategorematic terms needed for the proper functioning of thought are propositional connectors like “and,” “or,” “if,” “when,” and “because.”²⁰ All others, he thinks—including quantifiers—can be reduced without loss to nouns or verbs (and their modes of reference). Here is a case where, as often happens, Pseudo-Campsall is in explicit disagreement with one or another of William of Ockham’s positions; but we can easily see that this, at least, is merely a local disagreement against the background of the new semantic approach to the process of thought.

A second related problem is the following: having admitted that there exist syncategorematic terms in the mind, where do they come from? Here, Chatton contests the explanation Ockham had adopted in the first redaction of his *Commentary on the Sentences*, according to which mental syncategoremes are nothing but the interiorization of spoken syncategoremes²¹—a position, consequently, that corresponds, with respect to a very special kind of concept, to what Crathorn will some years later generalize to all mental terms. Against this, Chatton maintained that syncategorematic terms, just like other terms, could not have a conventional origin, and that they therefore must themselves be *natural signs* of some extramental and extralinguistic reality.²² Ockham—as is well known—quickly renounced his first position on this point to recognize the natural character of mental syncategorematic terms, but he always denied that they had proper significates in exterior reality.

The next two questions I wish to consider—the third and fourth—concern the use of grammatical terminology in the analysis of thought; both are raised by Pseudo-Campsall in his *Logica*. First, are there participles in mental language that are distinct from their corresponding verbs? Such plurality seemed useless to Ockham, but Pseudo-Campsall sought with relevant arguments to show that it is irreducible.²³

And then the fourth question: what grammatical accidents must be admitted into the syntax of mental language? Are there differences of number, gender, case, figure, and so on? Ockham dedicated one chapter of his *Summa of Logic* to this question, and Pseudo-Campsall, taking up the discussion, occasionally contests the conclusions of his predecessor.²⁴ Ockham, for example,

20. Pseudo-Campsall, *Logica*, 4.

21. Ockham, *Ord.*, dist. 2, q. 8, *Op. theol.* 2:285–86.

22. Chatton, *Rep.* I, dist. 3, q. 2, 211.

23. Pseudo-Campsall, *Logica* 2.03–2.06.

24. Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.3; Pseudo-Campsall, *Logica* 2.07–2.11.

had rejected as irrelevant the dichotomy between masculine and feminine, but preserved that between singular and plural, as well as the variety of so-called “oblique” cases, such as genitive and dative. Pseudo-Campsall, for his part, maintains that none of the accidents of nouns have a place in mental language; however, with Ockham, he recognizes that certain accidents of verbs, such as tense and mood, are irreducible and advances extensive arguments of the same general type as those of Ockham.

The fifth point relates to connotative terms in mental language. Ockham accorded great importance to the semantic distinction between absolute terms (e.g., “man,” “animal,” “horse,” and generally all other natural kind terms) and connotative terms (e.g. “white,” “horseman”); the latter are characterized by a complex semantic structure, as they directly *signify* certain beings (white things in the case of “white,” and horsemen in the case of “horseman”) and *connote* in addition something else to which they do not apply (respectively, whitenesses and horses in the given examples). He taught, among other things, that all relational terms (e.g., “father,” “owner”)—but not only these—are connotative.²⁵ Now, Chatton takes issue with him on this last point, maintaining that there cannot be any connotatives among concepts apart from relational terms. Adam Wodeham, in his *Lectura secunda*, reviews the entire discussion in order to defend Ockham’s position on this subject against Chatton’s criticism, the question in this instance being whether connotatives like “white” or “horseman” are semantically reducible to relational terms.²⁶

The sixth point: precisely what modes of supposition must be admitted into mentalese? Probably referring to a rather ambiguous passage from Ockham’s *Commentary on the Sentences*, Chatton blames Ockham for not accepting the distinction between material supposition (*suppositio materialis*) and simple supposition (*suppositio simplex*) among concepts.²⁷ Ockham, however, clearly admits this in the *Summa of Logic*, but attributes to it an import other than what Chatton would desire.²⁸ In the final analysis, the disagreement between our two authors stems from their respective positions on the question of universals: Chatton holds that a mental term taken in simple supposition, at least in certain cases (such as “man,” for example, in “man is a species”), stands for an extramental common nature, while, for Ockham, the concept in question in such cases can only refer to itself as a mental entity, which is more like what Chatton, for his part, calls “material supposition.”

25. Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.10.

26. Chatton, *Reportatio in Lectura*, Prol., q. 2, art. 6 (132–33); Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda*, Prol., q. 6, §10 (157–58).

27. Chatton, *Reportatio et Lectura*, Prol., q. 5, art. 2 (287–88), and *Rep.* I, dist. 3, q. 2, 209. The passage from Ockham that Chatton has in mind is probably in *Ord.*, dist. 2, q. 4 (*Op. theol.* 2:135).

28. Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.64, 197.

Finally, the seventh point corresponds to a discussion that is today becoming well known among scholars of the fourteenth century: what are the significates of mental propositions?²⁹ There is no such thing, says Ockham: in the strict sense, only terms have significates, not propositions. On this point, both Chatton and Wodeham disagree with Ockham. Chatton wishes to attribute to things themselves—men, animals—the status of being signified by propositions as well as terms; Wodeham introduces on this topic his famous doctrine of the *complexe significabile*, which is to say, the idea of a state of affairs that is not itself a thing among others and that is only signified by propositional complexes.³⁰ What is of interest to us here is that the entire debate presupposes the applicability of the terminology of *significatio* to the analysis of *oratio mentalis*.

I do not wish to enter into the details of the arguments of any of these questions, which are often rich and precise. My purpose in enumerating them was to draw attention to a series of novel inquiries—“puzzles,” if you will—that only become possible upon the semantic turn in the theory of knowledge accomplished by Ockham. We saw manifest, in the previous section, a strong reluctance on the part of a Lawton or a Crathorn to accept this transfer of the framework of grammar and the theory of *proprietas terminorum* onto the order of mental *similitudines*, which, according to Aristotle as well as Augustine, are in no language. This resistance led nowhere. The range of particular debates we have seen deployed, in the texts of Walter Chatton, Pseudo-Campsall, and Adam Wodeham, show that a complex field had now opened up to philosophical investigation—that of the detailed syntactic and semantic analysis of thought itself.

PARISIAN NOMINALISM

The introduction of Ockhamism into France was no quiet affair.³¹ The *Summa of Logic* and *Tractatus de quantitate*, at least, were known at the University of Paris by the end of the 1320s; in the 1330s, we find at the faculty of arts an Ockhamist movement sufficiently vigorous to upset more conservative factions and elicit an official response: nothing less, as it happens, than a prohibition on teaching Ockham's doctrine, issued in September 1339, followed in December of the next year by another, quite famous, edict against “certain Ockhamist errors.”³² On this subject, it is common to speak of a veritable intellectual crisis in the Parisian university of the period.

29. On this subject, see: Élie 1936; Tachau 1988, 303–10; Karger 1995.

30. Chatton, *Reportatio et Lectura*, Prol., q. 1, art. 1; Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda*, dist. 1, quest. 1.

31. Works on this are numerous. See, in particular: Courtenay and Tachau 1982; Courtenay 1984a, 1984b; Kaluza 1994.

32. The Latin texts of these statutes are given particularly in Thijssen 1990, 139 and

The notion of mental language was not explicitly invoked by the decrees in question, but it seems to me probable that the teachers targeted by these condemnations had made some use of it. From the very text of the statute of 1340, we can infer that certain members of the Paris arts faculty, inspired by yet more radical philosophers than Ockham, intended to disqualify as false or incorrect all expressions—even those by authorities—that were not “properly speaking” true (*de virtute sermonis*). Now, if these professors—whose identity is unknown to us—really claimed to be following Ockham on this, as we have every reason to believe they did, then the criteria of *virtus sermonis* they used ought not to concern the common manner of speech—Ockham was in no way an ordinary language philosopher—but surely rather the term-for-term structural correspondence of the uttered expression with the underlying mental proposition it is supposed to represent. This attitude could easily be suggested by reading Ockham’s *De quantitate*, precisely one of the writings circulating in Paris during this time. Propositions like “generation is instantaneous,” “substantial form is the terminus of movement,” and “a point is some thing,” ought not be granted *de virtute sermonis* or *secundum proprietatem sermonis*, explained the *venerabilis inceptor* in these pages, because the terms “generation,” “movement,” “point,” and many others like them do not correspond semantically to true names, capable of being the subjects or predicates of a well-formed proposition and there standing for determinate individuals.³³ Ockham himself saw no inconvenience in conceding, as a consequence, that “philosophers and saints speak in a figurative manner”;³⁴ however, it is easy to imagine that zealous disciples would have undertaken to apply with severity and rigor such logico-semantic analyses to all domains of knowledge and in so doing to promote a reform of scientific discourse that would bring it closer to its underlying mental structure. It is not at all surprising that this would have appeared dangerous to those minds more attached to tradition.

In any case, the theme of mental language gave rise to explicit discussions in Paris in the 1340s. The influential nominalist theologian Gregory of Rimini testifies to this in the prologue to his *Commentary on the Sentences* when he asks whether mental propositions are actually composed of really distinct parts—of which one would be the subject, the other the predicate, and so on—as Ockham, Holcot, and Wodeham had desired. The question debated here is whether

142–43, and a French version of the second (with Latin text) in Paqué 1985, 28–35. Courtenay and Tachau (1982) have supposed another anti-Ockhamist statute promulgated in 1341 and whose text is now lost, but, in light of available evidence, this hypothesis appears superfluous (Thijssen 1990; Kaluza 1994).

33. Ockham, *Tract. de quantitate*, q. 1, *Opera theologica* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1986), 10: especially 21–37. On the semantic ideas of Ockham in this treatise, see Panaccio 1974 and Stump 1982.

34. *Ibid.*, q. 1, 25.

the logico-semantic decomposition of the proposition into terms is actually realized in the mental process itself, or whether it does not rather correspond to an *a posteriori* reconstruction, through the prism of conventional language, of what exists in the mind only in the form of a simple act. Gregory, without being very affirmative, inclines toward the latter view: "it seems to me at this moment more rational to say that the mental proposition . . . is not thus composed."³⁵ His arguments are of various sorts and stem from—among other things—the difficulty of locating a sequential order in the mind that, without being spatial or temporal, could allow one to distinguish effectively between the different components of the mental proposition, especially subject and predicate. This is a problem that William of Ockham himself had recognized, twenty years earlier, in his commentary on the *Perihermeneias*: how can the mind differentiate two mental propositions whose elemental constituents are identical—for example, "every horse is an animal" and "every animal is a horse"? Ockham imagined there two solutions, both of which he regarded as admissible: either one could maintain the real composition of the mental proposition and group together some of their elementary constituents into intermediary units, such as "every horse" or "every animal" (which amounts, we observe, to attributing a tree-like structure to mental expressions), or one could posit that the mental proposition is in reality a unique act of intellection, but "which is equivalent to a propositional whole composed of really distinct parts."³⁶ Already, in this passage of his *Perihermeneias* commentary, Ockham accorded more importance to the first of these two approaches, and it was this that he adopted without reservation in his other works, particularly in the *Summa of Logic*. Gregory chooses the second, as will, with some nuances, Peter of Ailly some decades later.³⁷ Between the two conceptions, a long discussion begins at this time, which will be prolonged up through the Spanish philosophers of the sixteenth century.³⁸

At stake in the debate is the very existence of interior discourse in the sense Ockham intended. As Joël Biard has rightly said, "Gregory of Rimini stands, historically, in the line of those who, even though thinking within a post-Ockhamist horizon, resist the idea of a mental language and tend to absorb thought into a non-discursive act."³⁹ Gregory of Rimini constantly claims the

35. Gregory of Rimini, *Lectura super primum et secundum Sententiarum* I, Prologue, q. 1, art. 3, ed. A. D. Trapp et al. (Berlin: Gruyter, 1978), 33.

36. Ockham, *Expositio in librum Perihermenias Aristotelis* I, *prooemium*, *Opera philosophica* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1978), 356–57.

37. Peter of Ailly, *Concepts and Insolubles*, trans. P. V. Spade (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1980), §§99–137, 37–44; see on this subject Biard 1989, 278–84. Peter of Ailly takes the position of Gregory of Rimini, but only for elementary mental propositions; conjunctives, disjunctives, etc., are, in his eyes, really composed of parts in the mind.

38. Ashworth 1981.

39. Biard 1997b, 405.

authority of Augustine in his reflections on knowledge, and, although he identifies the mental proposition with an act of intellection, as Ockham did, the conception he gives to it ultimately remains much closer to the bishop of Hippo's *verbum cordis*—stripped of internal compositional structure—than to the *oratio mentalis* of the *venerabilis inceptor*. It is directly from Augustine, moreover, that he borrows a distinction that many will take up after him—and with which we are now familiar—between two sorts of mental expression: those that are “the images and likenesses of spoken expressions” and therefore differ among peoples, and those that “do not pertain to any language” and are the same for all.⁴⁰ Only the first, in his eyes, present a compositional structure of a linguistic type; but genuine human thought, underlying and anterior to speech, owes nothing to any form of language. The logico-semantic analysis of knowledge is not quite disqualified on this view, but does not appear to be anything more than a kind of artefact of purely instrumental significance, with a very thin justification on the whole.

This position of Gregory of Rimini was far from achieving unanimity in Paris in the middle of the fourteenth century. Among the authors known to us, John Buridan especially follows Ockham in admitting the psychological reality of an *oratio mentalis* composed of concepts that the mind combines together into propositions. He explicitly proposes this in the first chapter of his most important logical work, the *Summulae logicae*:

The combination [*complexio*] of simple concepts is called a “mental expression” [*oratio mentalis*] [and results from] compounding or dividing [*componendo vel dividendo*] by means of the second operation of the intellect, and the terms of such an expression are the simple concepts that the intellect puts together or separates. Now, just as simple concepts are designated [*designantur*] for us by means of simple utterances, which we call “words,” so also do we designate a combination of simple concepts by a combination of words; it is for this reason that a spoken expression is an utterance made up of several words, which signifies for us the combination of concepts in the mind.⁴¹

40. Gregory of Rimini, *Lectura I*, Prol., q. 1, art. 3, 31. For this distinction, Gregory refers the reader explicitly to book XV of Augustine's *De Trinitate*, as well as Anselm's *Monologion*.

41. John Buridan, *Summulae logicae* I.1.6. I use for this text a transcription of the work that has kindly been provided to me by Professor Hubert Hubien, of the University of Liège. A critical edition of the *Summulae logicae* is presently in preparation by an international team led by Sten Ebbesen (see also Pinborg 1976, 83). English translation: G. Klima, *John Buridan: Summulae de dialectica* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 11.

Linguistic composition is here explained by a prior mental composition. Now, Buridan was one of the more influential authors of his age. A professor in the arts faculty at Paris for several decades, he formed there a genuine nominalist school that, through Nicholas Oresme, Albert of Saxony, Marsilius of Inghen, and others, spread throughout Europe. In this way, the idea of a mental discursivity, psychologically realized, came to mark profoundly the philosophical thought of the following two centuries.

The precise doctrinal relation between Buridan's work and that of William of Ockham remains, however, rather poorly known. The Picardy master, to all evidence, should not be regarded as a mere disciple of the *venerabilis inceptor*, from whom he separates himself in important ways on several points, particularly in physics. Buridan is a very eminent and autonomous thinker on a grand scale, but certain resemblances are sufficiently striking—in logic and above all in the theory of universals—such that one may exclude a total independence of one from the other. It has in fact been established that John Buridan knew and used, relatively early in his career, Ockham's *Summa of Logic*.⁴²

As much a nominalist as the *venerabilis inceptor*, Buridan rejects just as radically any existence of universals outside of mind and language.⁴³ The universal, for him as well, is a concept, a mental term, and this term, as for William of Ware, Duns Scotus, Chatton, and the later Ockham, is an "act of the soul" (*actus animae*),⁴⁴ rather than a purely intentional object like Thomas Aquinas's mental word. This conceptual act, moreover, can be the subject or predicate of mental propositions, and above all, it can *supposit* for something: Buridan also has in common with Ockham the systematic application to the order of concepts of the logical terminist vocabulary, especially of *suppositio*. The truth or falsity of the spoken or written proposition, for him, traces back to the truth or falsity of the underlying mental proposition,⁴⁵ and this, in the last analysis, is traced to the supposition of its terms:

42. See the introduction by R. van der Lecq and H. A. G. Braakhuis to their edition of Buridan's *Questiones Elencorum* (Nijmegen: Ingenium, 1994), especially xxx–xxxv. The editors situate the treatise in the first phase of Buridan's literary activity, between 1325 and 1340.

43. See especially Zupko 1990 and De Rijk 1992.

44. Buridan, *In Metaphysicam Aristotelis quaestiones argutissimae* V, q. 9 (Paris: 1518), fol. 32rb.

45. John Buridan, *Sophismata*, chap. 6, concl. 1 (Klima, trans., 931): "But a spoken proposition is said to be true because it is subordinated to a true mental one (or false, because it is subordinated to a false one)." The same dependence is posited in the *Summulae de suppositionibus* 4.1.3, ed. R. van der Lecq (Nijmegen: Ingenium, 1998), 11 (English translation: *Jean Buridan's Logic: The Treatise on Supposition*, trans. P. King [Dordrecht: D. Reidel 1985], 89).

And thus, it seems to me that in assigning the causes of truth or falsity of propositions it is not sufficient to deal with significations, but we have also to take into account the suppositions concerned.⁴⁶

The theory of truth thus takes the same form as in Ockham: it aims to supply for each kind of elementary mental proposition conditions of truth formulated in terms of a connection between the supposition of the subject and the predicate.⁴⁷

Buridan even imagines widening the approach to speak of truth or falsity applying not only to complete propositions, but to their terms, as well, whether simple or complex. We could say that a mental *term* is true or false, as he proposes, insofar as it does or does not supposit for something:

If propositions are formed from concepts which are not themselves propositions, but terms susceptible of being subjects or predicates in propositions, the concord in virtue of which these terms are called true pertains to the fact that they can supposit for one or many things; and if they cannot, they are called false.⁴⁸

In this vocabulary, a complex concept like “horse capable of laughing” is false, because it does not supposit for anything, while “horse incapable of laughing” is true because it supposits for something (all horses, in this case). As for simple conceptual terms, they are all true, according to our author: every simple concept being the concept of something, it follows that “every simple concept can supposit for something.”⁴⁹ In this passage, Buridan extends to concepts—simple or complex—the Ockhamist theory of truth as a function of supposition, and he does so on the basis of the same compositional conception of the mental proposition.

It is true that there are a number of differences between the two authors. But on the subject of the semantics of mental language, at least, these differences are not very deep, as can be seen by examining the three primary ones. First, Buridan does not share Ockham’s notion of signification, as is well known. While, for the Englishman, the spoken word is *subordinated* to a concept and, properly speaking, *signifies* the thing itself, Buridan agrees with the more classical Aristotelian tradition in saying that the spoken word signifies the corresponding concept. This is a difference that could seem quite important at first, but from

46. John Buridan, *Sophismata*, chap. 2, concl. 8 (Klima trans., 854); see also *In Metaph* VI, q. 7.

47. *Ibid.*, chap. 2, concl. 9–14 (854–59).

48. Buridan, *Questiones in tres libros De anima Aristotelis (tertia lectura)* III, q. 12; thanks to Jack Zupko for having kindly provided an edition of this text in progress. See also on this topic *In Metaph* VI, q. 6.

49. Buridan, *Quaest. in tres libros* III, q. 12.

a strictly theoretical point of view is, in this particular case, a simple matter of terminology. Buridan in fact distinguishes between two kinds of signification, and the distinction he thus traces recovers precisely Ockham's distinction between signification and subordination:

we call the things conceived by those concepts "ultimate significata," whereas the concepts we call "immediate significata."⁵⁰

Ultimate signification, in this vocabulary, is the same as signification in Ockham's sense, and immediate signification corresponds to subordination. Apart from this shift in terminology, the principal theses of these two authors are identical: only singular things are admitted as extramental referents, and spoken discourse is evaluated, on the semantic level, in light of the underlying mental discourse.

A second difference arises with regard to the theory of mental *suppositio* promoted by these two chief nominalists. It is probably more significant than the preceding difference, but still very narrow. While Ockham wishes to recognize among concepts the possibility of simple and material supposition, Buridan maintains that a term in a mental proposition is always taken in personal supposition.⁵¹ This revision has the advantage (if it is one) of eliminating from mental language those ambiguities of supposition that Ockham still tolerates. To speak, in mentalese, of the concept of horse, for example, is not accomplished, for Buridan, by mentioning the concept itself in simple or material supposition—as Ockham would have it—but rather by referring to it with the help of *another* conceptual term of a metalinguistic nature: the concept of the concept of horse. The Buridanian difference, this time, effectively accentuates the normative function of the language of thought. By excluding ambiguities due to simple or material supposition from interior discourse, the French logician purifies it, from a semantic point of view, even more than Ockham had. The theory of *suppositio* remains, for him as for his predecessors, no less the instrument *par excellence* for the analysis of mental language. Thanks to the range of subdivisions of personal supposition, it continues to play essentially the same theoretical role as in Ockham: that of a function sensitive to context that serves as an intermediary between the signification of conceptual terms and the truth-value of the mental propositions really composed of them.

Finally, another difference results from Buridan's introduction of a remarkable technical notion not found in Ockham—that of *appellatio rationis*. A spoken term, in certain special contexts, can, according to this novel doctrine, indirectly refer to the mental concept that underlies it, but without suppositing

50. Buridan, *Summ. de suppos.* 4.3.2, 39 (Klima, trans., 254). On this subject, see Berger 1991, 34–35.

51. Buridan, *Summulae logicales, tract.* 7.3.4 (*De fallaciis*), ed. S. Ebbesen, in Pinborg 1976, 156 (Klima trans., 522).

for it—Buridan thus says the term “appellates” its concept. This provides him with the key to an especially fine logical analysis of indirect contexts produced by epistemological verbs such as “believes that,” “knows that.”⁵² However, whatever its intrinsic interest, this addition is still only a refinement of the theory of connotation and mental language developed before him.

While concepts are here described as signs less consistently than in Ockham—as Joël Biard has remarked—the Buridianian doctrine clearly remains in the line of a semantic approach to discursive thought, and to this end it continues to employ the terminology of grammar and of the logical terminists.⁵³ The categorematic concept, in Buridan as in Ockham, is a mental noun or verb, absolute or connotative, that is destined—by nature—to supposit in mental propositions for individuals in the world.⁵⁴ The semantic theory of *suppositio* provides the Picardy master, like the English Franciscan, with a detailed response to what we earlier called the problem of the composition of thought: how, in the final analysis, do the semantic properties of mental propositions depend upon the semantic properties of their constituents? If this response is not precisely the same as that of the *venerabilis inceptor*, it is at least very similar.

The connection with the Ockhamist semantics of interior discourse is indeed even more manifest in certain important members of the Buridianian School. Albert of Saxony—who, after having been Master of Arts in Paris in the 1350s, became the first rector of the University of Vienna in 1365—comes close to Ockham’s positions on the first two points of divergence we identified. The spoken term, for him, signifies “principally” the thing itself, and only secondarily the concept to which it is subordinated,⁵⁵ and the mental term can, on occasion, receive a material supposition, rather than a merely personal supposition as Buridan would have it.⁵⁶

52. See in particular John Buridan, *Sophismata*, chap. 4, part 3, 140–47 (Klima trans., 895–97). There are numerous studies on this notion of *appellatio rationis* in Buridan; I note: De Rijk 1976; Maierù 1976; Bos 1978; Biard 1988.

53. Reina 1959–60 and Biard 1989, 162–237. Biard thinks that the more traditional usage Buridan makes of the term “signification” reveals his attitude of ambivalence regarding concepts as being signs and that he stages, on this point, a retreat from the Oxford position (Biard 1989, 172; see also 1988, 31). It is possible, in fact, that the primary object of Buridan’s analysis is spoken language rather than interior thought, but it nonetheless remains that it is mental language, already semantically structured, that supplies him with the norm for this analysis.

54. Buridan explicitly admits, following Ockham, the presence of simple connotative terms in mental language; see *Summ. de suppos.* 4.2.4, where “white” is given as an example of a simple concept (ed. van der Lecq, 21; Klima trans., 235).

55. Albert of Saxony, *Questiones in artem veterem*, §§700–38, ed. A. Muñoz García (Maracaibo: University of Zulia, 1988), 472–88.

56. Albert of Saxony, *Perutilis logica* II.3; on all of this, see the analysis of Berger 1991, 37–43, and the texts he cites.

Another of the great successors to the Picardy master, Marsilius of Inghen, who became the first rector of the University of Heidelberg in 1386, not only promoted the semantic analysis of interior discourse in terminist categories,⁵⁷ but seems to have pushed even further than his master the properly grammatical analysis of mental language initially suggested by Ockham. The commentary on Alexander of Villedieu's *Doctrinale*, which the Dutch scholar C. H. Kneepkens proposes attributing to Marsilius, defends, in effect, the idea of grammar as a science of mental discourse that is not in any language:

Even if there were never any spoken words or written words, but only concepts, there would still be in the mind a grammatical system [*regimen grammaticale*] and there would be a science of this grammatical system.⁵⁸

The Ockhamist heritage, as we see, remained quite alive through these channels.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, Walter Burley and Richard Campsall, among others, had asked about the nature of the units of which logic provides a theory. The Ockhamist doctrine of mental language proposed an elaborate response to this question, which, while satisfying nominalist constraints, opened the way for a fine semantic analysis of real cognitive processes. For the remainder of the discussion, both in England and France, this response lay at the heart of the exchanges. Some would refuse the Ockhamist notion of an interior discourse really composed of concepts not in any language. This was the case with the Dominican Hugh Lawton, who entirely rejected the notion of the mental proposition—and with his confrere William Crathorn, who, following Campsall, thought that interior discourse was composed only of mental representations of words from language. And this was also the case with the theologian Gregory of Rimini, who himself accepted the existence of mental propositions not in any language, but, contrary to Ockham, identified them with *simple* acts of intellection. What was really at stake in this debate was the proper status of the theoretical machinery of the sciences of language in the analysis of thought. Is it a convenient but artificial instrument, or does it rather reveal the true natural structure of mental contents? A remarkable consequence of Ockham's response was that it justly fell to semantic analysis to govern the whole of scientific discourse, along with the theory of syllogism, for example. In reference to the presumed structure of the underlying mental proposition, it is in fact only this analysis that could decide what is *de virtute sermonis* in spoken language and what is not. We have here made the hypothesis that the "Ockhamists" of the Paris arts faculty—the targets of the famous statute of 1340—had

57. Marsilius of Inghen, *Treatises on the Properties of Terms*, ed. and trans. E. P. Bos (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983).

58. Cited by Kneepkens 1990, 36, and 1992, 152.

even begun to promote in practice, in the name of a nominalist theory of mental *suppositio*, an actual reform of the admissible modes of speech in the academic context. Their adversaries—probably not without reason—might have feared these normative designs of nominalist semantics.

Many philosophers, in fact, endorsed in its general outlines the Ockhamist approach of *oratio mentalis*, even though they did not share all of its particular theses regarding the exact syntactic or semantic structure of this interior discourse. We have seen this in Scotists, like Walter Chatton and Pseudo-Campbell, and it is what happens, *a fortiori*, in the majority of the leaders of the nominalist movement of the fourteenth century: Adam Wodeham, John Buridan, Albert of Saxony, and Marsilius of Inghen all affirm that the mental proposition that is not in any language is really composed of simple concepts, that these are acts of intellection and not *ficta*, and that at least certain of them—absolute or connotative categorematic terms—could be the subjects or predicates of mental propositions and “supposit” there for the individuals of which they are the natural signs. The characteristic constellation designed by Ockham with the notions of act of intellection, mental composition, natural signification, the grammar of thought, supposition, and truth continued in this vein to nourish university philosophy for approximately two centuries. Beyond the *nominalistae* of the fifteenth century, which we are today beginning to rediscover—John Dorp, John Faber, Thomas Bricot, and several anonymous authors—it was given a central place in the teaching of a John Mair or a George Lokert at the beginning of the sixteenth century, as well as in the Spanish nominalists during the years 1500–40, such as Antonio Coronel or John of Celaya.⁵⁹

Perhaps a victim of its great complexity, the approach is thereafter eclipsed. The notions of mental discourse we encounter again in Hobbes and Locke will not have much to do with the theory of *suppositio*.⁶⁰ But that is another story.

59. On the nominalism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see: Ashworth 1974; Nuchelmans 1980; Kaluza 1988, 1995. On the school of John Mair and George Lokert in particular, see Broadie 1983, 1985 (especially 25–40, on mental language). On the Spaniards of the sixteenth century who discussed mental language, see also Ashworth 1981, 1982.

60. Hobbes defined *mental discourse* as an inconstant flux of thoughts or imaginations of all sorts, in any case stripped of any strict syntactic structure (cf. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* I, chap. 3, ed. C. B. Macpherson [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968], 94ff; see, on this subject, Pécharman 1992). As for Locke, he posits that there are two sorts of propositions, mental and verbal, “as there are two sorts of signs commonly made use of, viz. ideas and words” (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* IV.5, ed. A. C. Fraser [New York: Dover, 1959], 2:244); but his conception of ideas does not take the form of a semantic theory, and the notion of *suppositio* plays no role.

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CONCLUSION

How did the Middle Ages come to construct a notion of mental language quite similar, in certain respects, to that of contemporary philosophers? To answer this question, we identified a multitude of Greek and Latin texts, from Plato through the time of William of Ockham, that feature characteristic expressions evoking, on the one hand, the order of discourse or language and, on the other, the domain of interiority or the mental. (The list “Thirty-six characterizations of interior discourse” recalls the principal expressions.) This varied assortment supplied the raw material of my research at the beginning and circumscribed the corpus with which I worked. The inquiry then revealed how these scattered occurrences could be regrouped into diachronic series that intersect and influence each other in various ways through the centuries. The comparison of human thought to a kind of speech, language, or discourse plays all kinds of roles over the course of this very long period, and even within each stream of transmission, the disputed questions, perspectives, and interests—theoretical as well as practical—are continually repositioned and renewed. As a whole, however, the connections among the many points of the picture thus plotted are sufficiently rich and significant to justify the recognition here of something like a *history*: the history of what I call the theme of interior discourse.

At least the broad outlines of this history are clear. In this matter as in others, medieval reflection finds its sources both in Greek philosophy—which in the wake of Plato and Aristotle had established a technical distinction between *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos*—and in the fathers of the church—above all Augustine, who, desiring to discover in man an image of the divine Trinity, had meditated extensively on the interior generation of conscious thought. The encounter of these two traditions in the thirteenth-century university gave rise to a range of precise philosophical discussions on the “mental word,” its ontological status, its role in knowledge, its relation to language, and, especially at the turn of the fourteenth century, on the object of logic, which had become the foundation of intellectual formation. The Ockhamist notion of *oratio mentalis*, destined for enormous success during the two subsequent centuries, thus took shape.

THIRTY-SIX CHARACTERIZATIONS OF INTERIOR DISCOURSE

Greek

entos dialogos (Plato)

êso logos (Aristotle, Porphyry)

logos endiathetos (Philo of Alexandria, Plutarch, Albinos, Theon of Smyrna, Galen, Ptolemy, Irenaeus of Lyon, Theophilus of Antioch, Hippolytus of Rome, Sextus Empiricus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Nemesis of Emesa, Ammonius, Philoponus, Simplicius, Olympiodorus, Elias, David the Armenian, Stephanus, Maximus the Confessor, John Damascene, John Doxapatres, and others)
ho en hêmin logos (Justin)
logos en tê psuchê (Plotinus)
logos en tê dianoia (Dexippus)
endon logos (Proclus)

Latin

logos fixus in mente (al-Fârâbî in the Latin version)
logos interior (Dominicus Gundissalvi, Vincent of Beauvais)
verbum endiathetos (Ambrose of Milan)
verbum in corde, verbum cordis (Augustine)
verbum intrinsecum (Hugh of Saint-Victor)
verbum intellectuale (Abelard, William of Auvergne)
verbum spirituale (William of Auvergne)
verbum interius (Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas)
verbum intelligibile (Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Richard Middleton)
verbum endiamentum (Albert the Great)
verbum mentale (William of Auvergne, Bonaventure, Henry of Ghent, Godfrey of Fontaines, Peter John Olivi, William of Ware, John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, and many others)
verbum mentis (Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, John of Paris, Thomas Sutton, Hervaeus Natalis, and many others)
oratio in animo, intellectus oratio (Boethius)
oratio in mente (Boethius, Roger Bacon, Peter of Auvergne, Martin of Dacia, Walter Burley, William of Ockham, and many others)
oratio mentalis (Ammonius in the Latin translation by William of Moerbeke, William of Ockham, John Buridan, and others)
oratio intelligibilis (Roger Bacon)
locutio mentis (Anselm of Canterbury)
locutio interior (Avicenna in the Latin version)
locutio intellectualis (Abelard, William of Auvergne)
locutio intrinseca (Richard of Saint-Victor)
locutio in mente (Robert Kilwardby)
sermo in anima fixus (Dominicus Gundissalvi)
sermo intelligibilis (Philip the Chancellor)
sermo interius dispositus (John of La Rochelle)
sermo internus (Peter of Spain)
sermo in mente, sermo interior (Pseudo-Kilwardby)

sermo endiatheton (Ammonius in the Latin version of William of Moerbeke)
diccio mentalis (Roger Bacon)
enunciatio in mente (John Duns Scotus, Walter Burley, Richard Campsall)

Whatever notion we consider—the *logos endiathetos* of Greek philosophers, the *verbum cordis* of Augustine, the *verbum mentis* of Thomas Aquinas, or the *oratio mentalis* of William of Ockham—it is, of course, historically situated. The underlying problems and ways of approaching them depended each time on the cultural context, status of knowledge, ongoing debates, and theoretical instruments available. All of these problematics and approaches, however, even if they sometimes seem rather exotic, remain intelligible to us. We are able to understand, given their context, that rational beings similar to us were posing these questions, and that they saw fit to use the idea of an interior discourse to solve or deepen them. Even better, we can in many respects continue to profit from these seemingly timeworn developments. The history of philosophy has undeniably known innumerable local disruptions, but not to such an extent that the teachings of our ancestors of these past twenty or twenty-five centuries become entirely foreign to us. We find that the interest of recent analytic philosophy in questions of the philosophy of mind and theory of mental language, in particular, is hardly unrelated to the doctrines and problems reviewed here. By way of conclusion, then, I would like to offer some suggestive points of contact that could be established between these ancient and medieval discussions and the philosophical reflection of today.

To be sure, there is reason to be careful here. From Foucault, Kuhn, Feysabend, and de Libera we have learned to be wary of simplistic connections and superficial likenesses. We must renounce as naïve the picture sometimes presented of the history of philosophy as a succession of diverse responses to a small number of immutable questions. Simply because we encounter *oratio mentalis* or *logos endiathetos* in William of Ockham or Philo of Alexandria, we do not automatically find ourselves in the same problematic as Jerry Fodor. Certain preoccupations that motivated the developments reviewed here are only very distantly related to contemporary theories of the language of thought. Think of the theological usage of the idea of mental speech, which finds its paradigm in Augustine's *De Trinitate* and which becomes, through the mediation of Anselm of Canterbury, one of the major pieces of medieval thought: even if the theology of the Word today plays a prestigious role in certain religious milieus and continues to arouse interest in hermeneutics, we must admit that it plays hardly any role in contemporary discussion of the *language of thought*. And this is well and good. But this observation is not generalizable: many of the questions we have met with in the work of the Greeks or medievals do still interest philosophers today.

The question of the moral status of animals, for instance, probably constituted

the first context of appearance of the distinction between *logos prophorikos* and *logos endiathetos* in the Greek philosophical schools. This conceptual pair there served, it seems, to structure the discussion on the rationality of animals: must we attribute to them both *logoi* (Porphyry), only *logos prophorikos* (Plutarch), only *logos endiathetos* (Galen), or neither (Philo of Alexandria and the Stoics)? Today the problem of animal dignity, largely abandoned in the Middle Ages under the influence of a religion that accorded immortal souls only to humans among all terrestrial creatures, has again become current. The fine historical study by Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (1993), without falling into any dubious anachronism, regularly draws connections between the Greek discussion and this or that recent position. It is true that the question of the moral status of animals, as it is debated in a public context, is not commonly associated by our contemporaries with the question of the language of thought; but, in principle, nothing would prevent this, and, moreover, certain theorists of cognition continue to inquire explicitly into the “interior language” of animals.¹

However, among the problems that have occupied us throughout this research, three others especially lie at the heart of contemporary discussion on mental language: the composition of thought, the status of intellectual representation, and the universality of mentalese. It is probably on these matters that we could expect the most from philosophical reflection on the history related here or on certain of its episodes. I will suggest, in closing, some relevant paths.

The first subject, concerning the composition of thought, corresponds to the principal motivations of contemporary partisans of “the language of thought.” The question, for them, is to determine the type of internal structure that can be attributed to discursive thought: the doctrine of mental language opts for a structure of constituents governed by the principle of compositionality, according to which the semantic properties of complex units are a function of the properties of the simpler units. Now, the history traced here proves especially instructive in this regard. We have seen that Aristotelianism, in distinguishing concepts and mental propositions subject to truth and falsity, in fact demands (even if it doesn’t always take note of) the application of the principle of compositionality to the order of pure thought. That mental discourse is a sequence of complex propositional units of the subject/predicate form remained throughout one of the leitmotifs of the long Aristotelian tradition. The Arab logicians insisted on it, and Thomas Aquinas, again, posited two kinds of interior words: one simple—the concept—and the other complex—the mental

1. Proust 1997, for example, 25: “But before judging the crucial character of the possession of an ‘exterior’ language for the attribution of capacities of thought, it is fitting not to push aside the possibility that animals possess an ‘interior language’ conferring on them representational and, eventually, computational powers which are analogous to those of man.”

proposition. However, neither Aristotle nor Porphyry, Avicenna nor Thomas would develop a compositional semantics allowing for any precise way of deriving the signification of mental propositions—or of their truth-conditions, if you prefer—from the signification of their elementary constituents. Aristotelianism bore in itself a requirement that no one seems to have noticed through the centuries, probably because no one possessed the theoretical instruments necessary for treating the problem. It was only with the development of the *logica modernorum*, the semantic theory developed in the twelfth century to account for certain particularities of spoken language, that the problem could be confronted directly. At the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, the idea of a mental language finds itself at the heart of discussions concerning the exact nature of the terms that compose the propositions and syllogisms with which logic is occupied. It was up to William of Ockham to advance for the first time, on the basis of these debates, a veritable compositional analysis of mental language, borrowing the new semantic apparatus of the *proprietas terminorum*—and specifically the theory of *suppositio* that, in the end, is nothing other than a theory of reference.

This situation is full of lessons. On the one hand, we find here characteristic elements that Alain de Libera has recently illuminated concerning another problematic, the question of universals.² Certain notions appearing in Plato—in the case that concerns us, those of subject/predicate composition and of thought as interior discourse—were transmitted to the Middle Ages, especially through the authority of Aristotle's texts (even if their articulation would cause problems the Stagirite himself did not discuss). Detailed reflection on these texts and attempts to reconcile authorities—Aristotle and Augustine, as it happens—would then give rise to diverse and quite elaborate new interpretations, among which the theory of *oratio mentalis*, like the theme of universals, comes to occupy a central place in the final centuries of the Middle Ages. What is more, the period covered by this history corresponds quite precisely to that which de Libera associates with the *translatio studiorum*, that “long transference” of Greek philosophy from Plato and Aristotle “through the Muslim East first, and then through the Christian West,”³ from the fourth century B.C. through the fourteenth or fifteenth century A.D.

On the other hand, the scenario examined here shows that it is an exaggeration to take the textual tradition, as de Libera suggests, as the *only* source of philosophical problems and consequently consider that the interruption of the *translatio studiorum* of Greek origin, at the end of the Middle Ages, created such a divide between “our” world and that of Thomas Aquinas or William of Ockham that any transference of philosophical problems from one universe

2. De Libera 1996, especially chap. 1 (11–65), where the author expounds the principal theses of the work and methodology of his research.

3. Ibid., 12.

to the other would be illegitimate.⁴ It is true, of course—as we were able to see—that all throughout the period in question the theme of interior discourse was always discussed in immediate relation to what de Libera calls the “founding texts”—those of Aristotle, Augustine, Boethius, and John Damascene. And it is also true that the need to reconcile Aristotle with Augustine is—to say the least—not very pressing among our colleagues at MIT or CREA (Centre for Research in Applied Epistemology, in Paris) when they discuss mental language. However, the phenomenon of semantic composition is a salient feature of all human languages, and whoever wishes to maintain that spoken or written argumentation in general expresses an underlying intellectual process will come to raise, explicitly or not, the problem of the composition of the postulated interior thoughts. For this, one need not refer to the texts of Aristotle. The only condition for authors of diverse ages to be able to encounter *the same problem*—that of the composition of thought, in this case—is that they wish to hold both that thought governs language and that it is, like language, *logically* structured. That the problem in question would become decisive at the beginning of the fourteenth century in the discussion of interior language, as it is today, is not, in the end, a mere coincidence. We cannot deny that the medievals arrived there by paths quite different from those of Jerry Fodor and that their ambient spiritualism played a significant role in this. But, by the end of the long contextual presentation I have delivered, the doctrinal similarities that first intrigued us are even more vivid. These surprising convergences between otherwise spectacularly distinct traditions perhaps ultimately reveal something of the very nature of the phenomena that both traditions examined with such attention.

I do not wish to say that these convergences somehow prove the natural existence of a mental language such as Ockham or Fodor hold, but only that there are today all kinds of *philosophical* lessons to draw from such encounters when examined in detail. Beyond what seems to me the undeniable interest one may find in comparing one or another particular thesis of Burley, Campsall, Ockham, or Buridan with the positions of recent cognitive theorists on mental language, the history of the problem of the composition of thought from Aristotle to Ockham suggests a conclusion of a more general import, allowing us to see to what extent the phenomenon of *reference*—made available to philosophical theorizing for the first time by the non-Aristotelian doctrine of *suppositio*—is

4. Ibid., 499: “the *continued translation*, the ‘tradition,’ and it alone, is what allows the problems to arise and take their proper form”; likewise, 33: “To the question of where the philosophical problems come from, we thus respond: from conceptual structures articulated in the founding statements [*énoncés fondateurs*]”; or again, 63: “The starting point for the *medieval* problem of universals is not in *our* world, it is in the philosophical systems and available fields of statements of the age when it was put forth as a *problem*.”

crucial to understanding the very structure of thought, contrary to what Fodor, for example, has sometimes held.⁵ If my reading is correct, the question of how *truth or falsity*, which Aristotle already attributed to mental propositions, depends on *semantic properties of concepts* constituted from the beginning the locus of a major theoretical lacuna for Aristotelianism. Having been avoided for centuries, the difficulty could only be tackled when a fine analysis of the phenomenon of reference in spoken language became available and was transposed to the purely intellectual order, thanks to the idea that concepts are signs. This suggests a strong hypothesis: we can only speak of *discursive thought* if the sequences thus invoked can be described as well-ordered combinations of *referential* units.

This remark leads to a second problem to which I wish to draw attention, that of mental representation or intentionality: how can the mind refer by itself to something exterior and engage on this basis in revealing calculations? This question is crucial for Fodor:

What we need now is a semantic theory for mental representations; a theory of how mental representations represent.⁶

This is what he elsewhere calls “the problem of the semanticity of mental representations,”⁷ a problem that continues to trouble him as well as a number of other authors engaged in the same type of project.⁸ Now, it is clear that certain debates related here are directly pertinent to this problematic. From the first centuries A.D., the theme of interior language figured in an important way in the project of describing a theory of mind or the structures of the human intellect and their relation to the world. When inquiring into John Damascene’s sources, for example, I was struck by a fascinating theory of “movements” of the mind, mentioned by (among others) Irenaeus of Lyon in the second century, that ultimately grounds all intellectual activity in *ennoia* (or *noêsis*), conceived as the grasping by which the mind is related to something other than itself, and that then unfolds in an articulated interior discourse. However, it was, again, at the end of the thirteenth century and beginning of the fourteenth that the question of the ontological and epistemological status of mental representation gave rise to the richest and most interesting discussions for today’s reflection.

Is the concept, seen as the basic unit of interior discourse, a pure intelligible apprehended by the mind—an *idolum*—or the very act of the thinking subject?

5. The “methodological solipsism” proposed by Fodor (1981, chap. 9) as an instrument for exploring cognitive structures came to deliberately set aside any referential dimension of thought, which, it seems to me, leads to an impasse. On this subject, see Panaccio 1992a, 140–45.

6. Fodor 1981, 31.

7. Fodor 1985, 99.

8. On this, see the enlightening synthesis offered by Pacherie 1993.

And precisely what relation does it bear to the exterior things of which it is the *similitudo*? Our contemporaries could benefit, it seems to me, from occasionally looking back to the great medieval debate surrounding these issues. The idea had emerged already in the twelfth century of a special form of existence for mental objects: intentional or intelligible being. Yet, as we saw in Chapter 6, it was the (quite distinctive) reprise of this theme by Thomas Aquinas in the second half of the thirteenth century that triggered controversy. Profoundly influenced by Augustine's *De Trinitate*, Thomas made the production of the mental word by the intellect a new type of cognitive process, posterior to the abstraction described by Aristotle: whenever the cognizing subject generates in himself some conscious thought, said Aquinas, he forms in his inner heart, from the *species* already deposited in the possible intellect, a new and purely intelligible object—the mental word—in which (*in quo*) he apprehends the exterior things under a general form. This doctrine was much discussed in the last decades of the thirteenth century. Franciscans especially criticized it for introducing into cognition a superfluous and pernicious intermediary, liable to compromise epistemic access to things themselves. In the fourteenth century, a consensus was established among a number of thinkers, with the notable exception of Thomists, in renouncing this ghostly object produced and contemplated by the mind. For John Duns Scotus and his followers, as for William of Ockham and the nominalists of the *via moderna*, the concept is a *mental act* rather than an object regarded by the intellect. The visual model that had long dominated the theory of knowledge was thus exchanged for another, associating cognition with speech rather than with sight.

There is here a valuable suggestion that was forgotten in the age of Descartes and Locke, and if the *aporiae* of the intentional object once again haunt contemporary philosophy, we owe it largely to this forgetting. A renewed meditation on the theory of the mental act as a natural sign seems today to be a promising path. The key to this approach is that the concept is seen here as a *natural state* of the mind—or perhaps of the organism. The *content* of propositional attitudes like beliefs or desires is no longer, in this view, a kind of transparent and purely intentional correlate, with an ontological status different from that of the attitudes themselves; it is a real part of them. This does not prevent mental content from being at the same time *representation*, insofar as its specificity is the ability it has to function as a *sign* in combinations of propositional form. Mental signification thus appears to result from certain functional and combinatorial possibilities within a complex network and from certain external relations of resemblance (that is to say, isomorphism) and causality. Whether this basically functionalist and naturalist theory of knowledge seems attractive or not, it is certainly relevant for what we today call the “philosophy of mind.” And the discussions that led to it, as well as the consequences drawn from it, have every chance to be relevant, as well.

Finally, a third subject for which this type of recovery seems fruitful con-

cerns the discursive thought's dependence or independence from languages of communication: do we think with the help of words, variable among different populations, or with concepts, in principle common to all? This, it seems clear, is one of the great questions of contemporary philosophy and one posed with particular acuity in the debate concerning mental language. Elisabeth Pacherie summarizes the situation clearly, recounting the two opposing conceptions among those who admit the existence of systems of internal symbolic representations structured like language:

Either one considers that internal representations are representations in the natural language of the subject of belief, that they are internal occurrences of sentences in a natural language (or again, according to a slightly more elaborated version, occurrences of sentences associated with their syntagmatic trees); this is the position defended by Harman and toward which Field also inclines. Or one considers that these representations are formulae of an innate and universal mental code, the language of thought; this is the conception vigorously defended by Fodor.⁹

Now, this distinction between a purely conceptual interior discourse and the production of silent speech addressed to oneself in a given language was one of the leitmotifs of our study. The Greeks had not noted it very explicitly, to be sure, but we saw in the first chapters that all available indices on this matter—in Aristotle, Philo of Alexandria, Ptolemy, Porphyry, Nemesius, and others—point to an interpretation of *logos endiathetos* as universal and underlying all languages, preliminary to categorization into nouns and verbs. It was Augustine who first distinguished two kinds of mental speech: that not in any language and that constituted by images of sounds. In so doing, he insisted on the fundamental and properly spiritual character of the true mental word, independent of conventions and of any materiality; and this valorization of the word outside of a particular language was endorsed by medieval theologians. From the middle of the thirteenth century, however, various authors like Roger Bacon and Pseudo-Kilwardby, preoccupied with the status of grammar and logic, began to put the accent on the other half of the pair: the *sermo interior*, composed of representations of words—*species vocum*—in the imagination or intellect. It is interesting that the first decades of the fourteenth century witnessed a direct confrontation on this subject: Richard Campsall, and later the Dominican Crathorn, insisted on the privileged role of linguistic representations in rational thought, while William of Ockham, for his part, was the promoter of an *oratio mentalis* composed of natural signs that, although analyzable by grammatical categories, were nevertheless totally independent of spoken language. Religious spiritualism would favor this second option, to be sure; but it is nevertheless the

9. Pacherie 1993, 133, which refers to Harman 1973; Field 1978; and to Fodor 1975, 1981, 1987, 1990, 1994.

case that, long before Maupertuis, Wittgenstein, Whorf, or Merleau-Ponty, the problem was well posed and had been the subject of precise argumentation.

From the medieval discussions, one crucial element in particular emerges with greater clarity than in our contemporary discussions. It is this: the very notion of an interior thought made of words belonging to a given language presupposes in the subject the capacity to abstractly represent to himself the natural objects that populate the sensible universe. Medieval authors, quite explicitly, saw the mental representation of words as a particular case of the representation of sensible objects: *species vocum* were only possible, in their eyes, because *species rerum* in general were. And since the subject could only experience singular tokens of spoken or written words, the possibility that he formed from them mental representations that were reusable in symbolic computations supposed a double innate capacity, which no one denied: first, that of abstraction, allowing one to regroup under just one representation a plurality of external occurrences; and then, a combinatory ability, which, preliminary to the acquisition of a spoken language, makes possible the organization within the mind of these abstract representations of linguistic words.

All of this seems *prima facie* to fit with the approach of Fodor—and of Ockham, of course. However, the medieval reflection pushes further and raises yet other considerations that deserve the attention of philosophers today. Unknown in the early modern age, the position of a Crathorn, especially, outlines a way to reconcile the innatist requirements we have just recalled with a more properly linguistic conception of human reasoning. It seems relevant, in fact, to distinguish with him between a first level of abstraction and composition, wherein the representations of words are formed and combined in a natural and spontaneous manner, and a second level wherein—this time focusing on the *conventional* signification of terms thus interiorized and on the socially shared rules of their syntax—the subject becomes capable of much more abstract and complex reasoning, but is also much more dependent on the structure of conventional language. Halfway between the opposed theories of mental language invoked by Pacherie, a mixed approach of this sort, originally developed on a common Aristotelian and Augustinian foundation entirely typical of medieval scholasticism, is still waiting to be systematically explored in the new context of contemporary cognitive theory. We find here, perhaps, a way to temper the abstract universalism that dominated theories of knowledge in the West until the nineteenth century, while at the same time avoiding the problems of a too radical cultural relativism.

It is true that the authors treated in this book—from Plato up to those of the fourteenth century—were regularly inspired by their predecessors and often wondered how to reconcile the masters of the past. They had, after all, to build upon a certain state of knowledge, inscribe their doctrines within the proper context of their culture, and use, from the start, whatever tools were available to them. However, they did not fail to forge new notions or to adapt

the ancients. Most of the time they were not content merely to repeat one formula after another, seasoned only to the tastes of the day. Rather, they were keen to understand the very phenomena encountered daily in their practice as intellectuals—chiefly cognitive and semantic phenomena, which still present puzzles for us: error, logical validity, ambiguities of all kinds, compositionality, reference, knowledge, deliberation, translation. It is precisely for this reason that these thinkers are of abiding interest to philosophy.

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POSTSCRIPT TO THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDITION (2014)

Since the original French version of this work in 1999, quite a lot of research has been done on the history of the idea of mental language, especially in the Middle Ages. As far as I can see, however, very little of what I wrote here needs to be withdrawn, and since no other monographical survey has covered the same ground in the meanwhile, the publication of an integral translation seemed appropriate. The material, on the other hand, can be updated, and I will address this briefly in the present postscript. Comprehensiveness cannot be hoped for—it would require another volume, I am afraid—but I will at least react to published discussions of various parts of the book, while expressing along the way a few scattered afterthoughts prompted by recent research in the field.

ON THE ANCIENT AND PATRISTIC SOURCES

The most controversial aspect of Part I, I guess, has to do with whether the Greek distinction between *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos* is of Stoic origin or not. Following the lead of Max Pohlenz and Curzio Chiesa, I argued in Chapter 2 that although many commentators routinely repeat that it is, the available textual evidence does not allow us to link the appearance of the terminology to any one school of thought in particular. It seems to have been coined in the context of a debate between Platonists and Stoics about animal rationality, and, whoever first proposed the distinction, it was eventually adopted by everybody, including the Peripatetics.¹ By the first centuries A.D., it was part of the shared technical vocabulary of philosophy, and Middle Platonism in particular played a prominent role in disseminating it. Several recent scholars keep associating the *endiathetos/prophorikos* distinction with the Stoic school as was traditionally done,² but I am not aware of any new result that would firmly support this attribution.

One significant contribution to our knowledge of the early use of the terminology is that of Adam Kamesar in 2004, who draws attention to the following passage from a set of glosses on the Iliad called the “D-scholia”:

1. Labarrière 1997 provides a sharp analysis of the role of the *endiathetos/prophorikos* distinction in the Greek debate about animals. While leaning toward a Platonist origin for the distinction, he—very prudently—conjectures that it was the Stoics who introduced it into the discussion of animal rationality (274–75).

2. See, e.g., Kamesar 2004, 163: “the doctrine of the *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos*, first formulated, in all probability, by the Stoics.”

[the poet] names anger Ares and the *logoi en paideia* Otus and Ephialtes. Of these *logoi* one is impelled (developed) by learning and instruction, while the other is internal (= *endiathetos*), and accrues to men by natural means. The *logos* acquired by learning he called Otus, because we acquire it by means of our ears and our hearing, in the educative process. The *logos* which is internal and which accrues to men by natural means he called Ephialtes, as the one coming upon us in a spontaneous fashion.³

The striking feature here is that the anonymous Greek author interprets Homer's mention of the brothers Ephialtes and Otus as an allegorical reference to two varieties of *logoi*, one of which is called "*endiathetos*" while the other is associated with spoken speech. Kamesar conjectures that this text might have been a source for Philo of Alexandria's interpretation (in his *De migratione* and his *Quod deterius*) of the biblical brothers Moses and Aaron as symbols for the duality of thought and speech; and he thinks that the glosses that the passage belongs to might have originated in the Stoic school of Diogenes of Babylon in the late third or early second century B.C.⁴

At any rate, the text is clearly related to the enthusiasm for the allegorical exegesis of poems and myths that was fashionable in Philo's time and in the context of which the distinction between the two *logoi* was regularly mentioned. If Kamesar's tentative dating of the D-scholium is anywhere near the truth, the text stands out as one of the most ancient manifestations of this trend. Let me note, however, a couple of relevant points. First, even if the dating is approximately correct, the connection of the text with Diogenes's Stoa remains speculative and seems to rest largely upon Kamesar's previous assumption that the *endiathetos/prophorikos* distinction is of Stoic origin. Second, although the *logos endiathetos* is contrasted in the quoted passage with another *logos* that has to do with spoken speech, the technical term "*prophorikos*" is not used, which suggests indeed a primitive stage of the distinction. And third, the notion of *logos endiathetos* introduced in this text does not exactly fit the one we find in most other, and probably later, passages where the phrase occurs. The *logos endiathetos* of the D-scholium is said to "accrue to men by natural means" and to "come upon us in a spontaneous fashion"; it thus seems to be some sort of naturally internalized wisdom, rather than episodic mental discourse as I understood it to be in most of the Greek texts I have reviewed. What we have here, in short, is probably the earliest known occurrence of the phrase "*logos endiathetos*," and this in itself constitutes a remarkable addition to the material collected in the present book. On the other hand, it does not yet precisely correspond to the standard use of later Greek philosophy, and in the end it lends

3. Quoted and translated by *ibid.*, 167.

4. Kamesar 2004, 179.

no significant additional support in favor of a Stoic origin of the technical distinction between *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos*.

This being said, of course it remains true that the *endiathetos/prophorikos* distinction was used by some Stoic philosophers, and I proposed in the book a few interpretative hypotheses as to how they could have dealt with it. Two of those were discussed by Martin Achard in a 2001 essay, in which he brings additional textual evidence in favor of both of them.⁵ The first had to do with the connection between the *logos endiathetos* and the *lekta*. I conjectured that the Stoic philosophers who used the former notion might have seen it as referring to the mental state a thinking subject is in when apprehending some *lekton* or other and that this internal discourse would consequently duplicate within the subject's mind the logical structure of the apprehended *lekta*. Achard relevantly remarks that this interpretation is closely akin to that of David Sedley in his contribution to the *Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*,⁶ and he quotes in support of it one significant passage where Sextus Empiricus says that according to the Stoics, a *lekton* leaves upon the mind an impression that is some sort of imitation (*mimesis*) of the *lekton* itself.⁷

The second hypothesis Achard discusses is that the Stoic *logos endiathetos* is not linguistic and does not belong to any natural language such as Greek, English, or French. Achard points out that several well-known commentators disagreed with this,⁸ but he stresses, on the heels of Michael Frede, that a good case can be made in favor of it along the following lines.⁹ According to Diogenes Laertius, the Stoics drew a sharp distinction between the study of language and the study of *lekta*.¹⁰ This strongly suggests that the latter were not linguistic in nature for them, and therefore, if the *logos endiathetos* is the mental apprehension of the *lekta*, it should not be linguistic, either.

At the very end of his essay, however, Achard remarks that grammatical cases and verbal tenses have been shown by Frede to come under the general theory of *lekta* in Stoic logic, rather than under the theory of external language.¹¹ This suggests, quite remarkably, that the same two groups of grammatical categories could be applied to the analysis of the *logos endiathetos* and that the Stoics, consequently, were committed to a limited, but significant, grammaticalization

5. See Achard 2001.

6. See Sedley 1999, 401: "[a *lekton*] is a formal structure onto which rational thoughts, like the sentences into which they can be translated, must be mapped."

7. See Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos* VIII.409 (quoted by Achard 2001, 229–30).

8. See Achard 2001, 231; he mentions in particular Long 1971; Lloyd 1971; and Verbeke 1978.

9. See Achard 2001, 231–33; Frede 1977, 1978.

10. See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* VII.57.

11. Achard 2001, 233; the reference is to Frede 1977, 345.

of the (nonlinguistic) language of thought. If confirmed by further research, this would no doubt constitute a significant episode in the history of the idea of mental language, and my claim that such an extension of the grammatical vocabulary occurred only with Ockham in the fourteenth century should be qualified accordingly. As far as we know, however, this sort of approach was not systematically developed by the Stoics themselves, nor did it have any impact on the subsequent philosophy of mind. In particular, there is no indication that the central grammatical distinction between nouns and verbs was ever extended to the realm of pure thought, either by the Stoics or by any other ancient philosopher.

The earliest author in which I found the explicit distinction between *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos* was Philo of Alexandria, who uses it in a number of places. To make it conspicuous that he associated nouns and verbs only with external language, I took the liberty of slightly modifying the standard French translation by Charles Mercier of a short passage from Philo's *Quaestiones in Genesim* on the basis of the Latin version made in 1826 by J.-B. Aucher from the Armenian extent translation (the original Greek treatise having been lost). Paul-Hubert Poirier discussed this proposal in a 2001 essay by returning to the Armenian text; while concluding that Mercier's translation should be partly restored, he subscribed to what I took to be really significant in the amendment.¹² According to Mercier, Philo wrote that uttered discourse "is realized by nouns and words." My suggestion, following Aucher, was that the original Greek must have had "nouns and *verbs*" instead, with which Poirier agrees. His reservation about Aucher's version has to do with another part of the passage where Philo, as Poirier clearly shows, interestingly connects internal discourse with various sorts of cognitive operations and faculties.

In the same essay, Poirier also discusses another conjecture of mine about Justin Martyr. One of the most intriguing occurrences of the *logos endiathetos* / *logos prophorikos* terminology is found in the treatise *Against the Heresies* of the Christian bishop Irenaeus of Lyon, as he briefly introduces a neat cognitive theory about five "movements of the intellect," the last one being the *logos endiathetos*, from which the *logos prophorikos* is then "outwardly expressed."¹³ This theory was obviously quite successful, since we find it again and again in later writings—for instance, Maximus Confessor, John Damascene, and even Thomas Aquinas—and it would be valuable to know more about its doctrinal origins. I argued in the book that (1) Irenaeus was not the inventor of the theory; (2) he probably did not borrow it from the Gnostic authors he so vehemently criticizes; and (3) he might have found it in Justin's own

12. See Poirier 2001, 236–38.

13. See Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against the Heresies* II, 13.2, ed. A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau (Paris: Cerf, 1982).

lost treatise *Against All Heresies*. Poirier heartily accepts (1), but doubts both (2) and (3).¹⁴ He rightly remarks that there is no independent indication that Justin ever used or mentioned this theory in his writings, and he draws attention, by contrast, to the presence of it in the *Eugnostos*, a second-century Gnostic work that he takes to be older than Irenaeus's treatise. The latter point is indeed important, as it shows that the five-movement theory was integrated very early into the Gnostic tradition.¹⁵ Yet my reservations for accepting that Irenaeus borrowed this doctrine from the Gnostics remain the same.¹⁶ For one thing, he does not attribute it to them, which he regularly does with related enumerations. And more importantly, he uncritically endorses the theory, although he is usually extremely suspicious of everything both philosophical and theological that he finds in the Gnostics.¹⁷ Justin, on the other hand, had good philosophical training, and he is known to be the most important source for Irenaeus's criticism of heresies and in general for later Christian doctrines of the *logos*.¹⁸ Thus it still seems to me a plausible, albeit speculative, hypothesis that Justin was the one who handed down the five-movement theory to Irenaeus.

Let me add, however, that I never took Justin to be the inventor of the theory, and neither does Poirier think that it originally appeared in the *Eugnostos*, even if the latter is presently the oldest text where it is known to be mentioned. This is clearly a philosophical theory that must have been developed in some Greek philosophical school, maybe a Platonist one. I suggested in the book that the Middle East Platonists might have played a prominent role in the second-century revival of interest for the *logos endiathetos* / *logos prophorikos* distinction, and at this point this seems to be the most promising path for

14. See Poirier 2001, 238–41.

15. Poirier mentions that the theory is also found in *The Sophia of Jesus Christ*, a later Gnostic treatise that heavily depends on the *Eugnostos* (Poirier 2001, 240). See also Pasquier 2010, on the *Eugnostos*, and Pasquier 2013, on the distinction between the internal word and the uttered word in yet another Gnostic work from the Nag Hammadi corpus, the *Gospel of Truth*.

16. My original reply to Poirier is in Panaccio 2001a, 267–70.

17. Note also that Irenaeus's Greek list of the five movements, although very close to it, does not exactly fit the one Poirier finds in the *Eugnostos*. As reconstructed from the later Latin and Armenian versions, Irenaeus seems to have: *ennoia*—*enthumêsis*—*phronêsis*—*boulê*—*dialogismos*, while the *Eugnostos* has: *nous*—*ennoia*—*enthumêsis*—*phronêsis*—*logismon* (which is closer to what we find in Maximus Confessor).

18. See, e.g., Lashier 2011, 22: "The most important of the influences upon Irenaeus for my purposes [i.e., the trinitarian theology and the theory of the *Logos*] was Justin." Fédou 2009, among others, also insists on Justin's pioneering role for later Christian developments on the *logos* (e.g., 145).

exploring—if possible—the origins of this theory of the five movements of the intellect that became so popular both among the Gnostics and the Christians.

ON AUGUSTINE AND BOETHIUS

The idea of inner discourse rooted in the Greek *logos endiathetos* eventually reached the Latin Middle Ages by way of both the Christian theological tradition, with Augustine in the lead, and the Aristotelian tradition, with Boethius as the main intermediary. Concerning Augustine, I argued in the book that his idea of the mental word was originally influenced by the Latin Christian followers of Justin and Irenaeus more than by any Stoic philosopher he might have read and that his doctrinal development on the matter can be divided into three phrases: (1) before 395, when he still reserves the term “*verbum*” for spoken words; (2) between 395 and 417, when he occasionally introduces the inner word for theological purposes—especially in the *De doctrina Christiana*—essentially as Justin and Theophilus of Antioch had done a couple of centuries before; and (3) from 417 on, in the *De Trinitate*, when he elaborates a detailed psychological theory of this mental speech.

These historical points are accepted by Isabelle Koch in her recent insightful study of Augustine’s *verbum in corde*.¹⁹ She expresses the worry, however, that I might have put too much emphasis on Augustine’s primarily theological motivation in the matter, and she rightly insists, by contrast, on the genuine philosophical and psychological interest of his doctrine. Koch calls attention in particular to a number of relevant passages from Augustine’s *Confessions* and from his *Commentary on Genesis* that I had not mentioned, thus nicely filling out the picture. Building upon a previous essay on the same subject by Mary Sirridge,²⁰ her main point is to show how the verbal model and the visual model complement each other in Augustine’s theory of thought and why each of them is independently necessary. Although Augustine is strongly attracted to the visual model, he realizes that it cannot account for the discrepancies that normally exist between the structure of thought and that of reality, and he also wants to emphasize, according to Koch, certain distinctive functions that thought shares with language but not with perception. Koch shows along the way that Augustine’s mental word has a role to play in action-guiding, in approval and disapproval of some action or judgment, and even in communication (e.g., between God, angels, and men, as well as between each human being and himself).²¹

Both Sirridge and Koch, however, acknowledge that Augustine’s mental

19. Koch 2009. On Augustine’s connection to the theological discussions of the *endiathetos/prophorikos* distinction, see also Toom 2007.

20. See Sirridge 1999.

21. Koch 2009, 19–27.

word is not described by him as a system of signs, that it is not analyzed with the help of the grammatical vocabulary, and that it ends up being devoid of compositional structure. As Koch writes, “[Augustine] never seeks to work out something like a distinctive syntax for thought.”²² Or again: “The inner word is not analyzable into basic units . . . ; it is not described as a combination of words and propositions.”²³ This corroborates one of the main points I wanted to make about Augustine’s mental word: insofar as it is not endowed with a compositional syntax, it can hardly be seen as a mental *language*.

Boethius, on the other hand, served in the Middle Ages as a distinctively *philosophical* source for the idea of *oratio in mente* and for the (Aristotelian) notion that prelinguistic thoughts are composed of simpler nonpropositional units called “concepts.” I argued in Chapter 4 that this inner discourse was not seen by Boethius as the silent production of sentences belonging to some particular languages such as Latin or Greek (as John Magee had claimed) and that his reference to mental nouns and verbs, although eventually influential, in no way stemmed from a systematic project of grammaticalization of thought. Both points have recently been corroborated by the Japanese scholar Taki Suto in his book-length study of Boethius’s philosophy of mind and language.²⁴ For one thing, Suto reexamines Magee’s proposal in some detail and concludes, as I had done, that “the textual evidence is against the view that [Boethius’s] notion of mental speech is or contains the intellectual understanding of the phonetic parts of words.”²⁵ And he also pertinently notes that Boethius “mentions ‘the nouns and verbs in the mind’ only once in his commentaries.”²⁶ Suto’s understanding of the latter point, however, differs from mine. His view is that by speaking of mental nouns and verbs, Boethius wanted to draw attention to some important structural “similarity between thoughts and spoken utterances”²⁷ and ultimately “to explain the compositionality of thoughts.”²⁸ My own tendency, by contrast, is to minimize the significance of this isolated passage for Boethius’s own doctrine by remarking that it occurs in fact within a quotation from Porphyry, who uncommittingly reports a previous Peripatetic distinction. I find myself in agreement in the end with John Marenbon’s conclusion on the matter in his own recent book on Boethius: “Boethius,” Marenbon writes, “is far from having a fully developed notion of a mental language.”²⁹

22. *Ibid.*, 11 (my translation). See also Sirridge 1999, 322: “[Augustine] is unwilling to speak about [the inner speech] using syntactic terminology from grammatical theory.”

23. Koch 2009, 15.

24. Suto 2012.

25. *Ibid.*, 90. As Suto mentions, the same point is made by Lenz 2003, 42.

26. Suto 2012, 92.

27. *Ibid.*, 93.

28. *Ibid.*, 113.

29. Marenbon 2003, 37.

ON ABELARD AND THE TWELFTH CENTURY

So when did a theory of mental language proper finally appear? My claim is that it was with Ockham in the fourteenth century. Peter King, however, recently argued that two centuries before Ockham, Peter Abelard already devised such a theory,³⁰ and he gently takes me to task for having mentioned Abelard “only in passing.”³¹ Now it is certainly true, as was also noted to me by others, that I have badly neglected the twelfth century as a whole in the book. My excuse for this is that, having eighteen centuries to cover, I could not look at everything in detail, and as far as I could see, nothing very spectacular occurred on the theme of inner speech between Anselm at the end of the eleventh century and William of Auvergne at the beginning of the thirteenth. Although the idea of *mental word* occurred indeed in a number of twelfth-century authors, it mostly remained within the Augustinian framework and did not give rise to any interesting philosophical or theological debates. Thus I was content to refer to a few passages from Abelard, William of Saint-Thierry, Hugh of Saint-Victor, and Richard of Saint-Victor without extensively quoting or analyzing them.

This lacuna, fortunately, has now been largely remedied by Luisa Valente's work.³² Valente systematically reviewed quite a number of texts by Abelard (in the *Theologia scholarium*, the *Theologia christiana*, the *Expositio in Hexameron*, and the developments on the categories in a few logical works), Hugh of Saint-Victor (in the *De sacramentis*, the *Sententiae de divinitate*, the *De archa Noe*, and the *Liber sententiarum aut dictorum memorabilium*), and the anonymous author of a treatise called *Invisibilia Dei*. Her conclusion is that the theme occurs there mainly in the context of two theological topics: creation and the preaching of John the Baptist;³³ and she further concludes that the general framework in both cases remains mostly Augustinian.³⁴ Two distinctive features are especially to be stressed, however. First, the terminology of the mental word is interestingly diversified during the twelfth century. In addition to Augustine and Anselm's typical vocabulary, Abelard has *intelligentiae locutio*, *intellectualis oratio*, *intellectualis locutio*, and *verbum intelligibile*, and Hugh

30. See King 2007a, 169: “Abelard was the author of the first full-fledged theory of mental language in the Middle Ages.”

31. *Ibid.*, 169n1.

32. Valente 2009.

33. Valente (*ibid.*) also mentions the topic of the sacraments as a relevant theological context in the case of Abelard (371), but she finally leaves this aspect aside in her essay. Her references to Abelard's logical writings, on the other hand, have to do either with the explanation of the passage from *Categories* 6 where Aristotle lists the *oratio* among discrete quantities or with Boethius's mention of the *triplex oratio* (see Valente 2009, 393–95).

34. See, e.g., *ibid.*, 401.

of Saint-Victor has *intrinsecum verbum* and *mentis oratio*. Second, and more importantly, all the authors Valente considers tend to equate the Augustinian mental word with the Aristotelian concept, mostly with the help of Boethius's *conceptus mentis* and *triplex oratio*. This is a move that had been suggested by Anselm in his *Monologion*,³⁵ but Valente notes that it now tends to become more systematic, especially in the *Invisibilia Dei* and in Alan of Lille's *Liber sententiarum*, both from the school of Gilbert of Poitiers in the second half of the twelfth century. The Augustinian tradition is thus "made more complex" in some respects, Valente concludes, yet it remains the main inspiration for the twelfth-century idea of the inner word, and the notion of mental *word* still strongly prevails over that of mental *language* proper.³⁶

Peter King, on the other hand, is not principally interested in explicit occurrences of complex phrases simultaneously referring to both mind and speech (like "*verbum mentis*," "*locutio intellectualis*,"), as Valente and I were. His point is doctrinal rather than terminological. In a nutshell, it is that thought, according to Abelard, "generally obeys a principle of compositionality, so that the meaning of a whole is a function of the meaning of its parts."³⁷ This is highly relevant, admittedly. If true, Abelard's doctrine should be seen as a major landmark in the history we are presently trying to trace. King's elaboration of the point, however, leaves me unconvinced.³⁸ What I took to be distinctive of Ockham's approach to mental language is fundamentally two things: (1) the grammaticalization of thought—that is, the analysis of human thinking in grammatical and semantical terms; and (2) the construction of a compositional account of mental propositions on the basis of the semantical properties of their components. As far as I can see, neither of these is to be found in Abelard.

For one thing, he never systematically transposes the categories of grammar to the analysis of thought: nouns, verbs, and the other parts of speech are always described by him as merely conventional units.³⁹ Nor does he ever apply the semantical terminology of *significatio* and *nominatio* to concepts, but exclusively

35. On Anselm's sketchy use of Aristotle and Boethius in connection with the mental word, see also Shimizu 1999. Hurand 2009 correctly draws attention on Boethius's influence on Anselm in this respect, but she seems to overemphasize the point a bit: Anselm in fact clearly integrates within the Augustinian framework whatever he borrows from the Aristotelian tradition; see on this Panaccio 2007, esp. 273–75.

36. Valente 2009, 401–2.

37. King 2007a, 170.

38. See on this Panaccio 2010a, which I will now summarize.

39. See in particular Abelard's detailed study of nouns and verbs as conventional terms in *Glossae super Peri Hermeneia* 2–3, ed. K. Jacob and C. Strub (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 69–127. He is quite explicit actually that "In Latin . . . we use such words or names [i.e., 'noun,' 'verb' and 'sentence'] only for the designation of spoken words"; (ibid., 1.62, 40).

to spoken and written terms.⁴⁰ With respect to compositionality, the matter is admittedly a bit more complex. As King points out, Abelard clearly states that thoughts are structured units: “Just as a sentence is materially composed of a noun and a verb, so too the intellection of it is assembled from the intellections of its parts”;⁴¹ or again: “Someone who thinks that Socrates is a philosopher combines by his intellect philosophy and Socrates.”⁴² This surely is an important step toward a compositional theory of thought, and King’s insistence on the point is entirely appropriate. Yet compositionality in the strict sense requires more. Not only must we have complex items, but, more importantly, their semantical properties must be shown to be a *function* of the semantical properties of their simpler parts, and as far as I can see nothing in Abelard gives us any clue as to *how* to get from the representational properties of simple concepts to the meaning of mental propositions. In the fourteenth century, in contrast, the application of supposition theory to inner thought, as initiated by Ockham, will yield just such a compositional elaboration by providing for any simple mental proposition a precise way of deriving its truth-conditions from the natural significations of its conceptual components.

It is true that supposition theory was developed largely under Abelard’s influence via his nominalist followers of the second half of the twelfth century, and I certainly do not mean to minimize Abelard’s role in the history of semantics.⁴³ Still, two facts remain: first, he did not himself devise an elaborate theory of supposition, and he was not in a position to produce a genuinely compositional semantical theory, even for elementary predicative sentences of spoken languages; second, whatever grammatical and semantical tools he had—his theory of signification in particular—he never systematically used them for the direct analysis of thought. While King has undoubtedly shown that Abelard deserved more space than I gave him in the history of the idea of mental language, I still resist in the end attributing to him a “full-fledged theory of mental language.”

ON AQUINAS AND THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

It was in the thirteenth century—especially in the second part of it—that the idea of *mental word* became the object of theoretical disagreements and de-

40. See, e.g., the theory of signification developed in the prologue and in chap. 1 of Abelard’s *Glossae super Peri Hermeneias* (17–51), the main point of which is that “nouns and verbs [which are merely conventional units, as we just saw] have a two-fold signification, one with respect to things and the other with respect to concepts” (*Prooemium* 4, 18).

41. *Ibid.*, *Prooemium* 8, 19.

42. *Ibid.*, 1.126, 63.

43. Recent research indeed has greatly enriched our understanding of Abelard’s remarkable contribution to semantics. See in particular: Lafleur 2012; Marenbon 1999, 2004; and Rosier-Catach 1999, 2003a, 2003b, 2004.

bates. Thomas Aquinas played a central role in this as he devised a new way of harmonizing Augustine's and Aristotle's theories of mind and cognition by distinguishing among (1) the intelligible species, which is deposited in the possible intellect as a result of abstraction; (2) the act of intellection, which occurs as a further step when the cognizer actually thinks about something; and (3) the mental word, or concept, which is produced by the act of intellection on such occasions. Unsurprisingly, then, Aquinas was the focus of several recent contributions to the study of our theme. Three points in particular were discussed: first, whether Aquinas's doctrine of the *verbum* is a genuine part of his philosophical theory of cognition; second, whether this theory can correctly be labeled as "representationalist"; and third, what role exactly the mental word played in thirteenth-century accounts of the language of angels.

The first question was saliently raised by John O'Callaghan as he claimed that "the *verbum mentis* is no part *at all* of St. Thomas's philosophical account of cognition"⁴⁴ and that it amounts in his works to no more than a "theological metaphor."⁴⁵ O'Callaghan thus opposes quite a number of previous commentators, including, most recently, Robert Pasnau and me,⁴⁶ and his interpretation, as could be expected, was in turn challenged, especially by James Doig, to whom O'Callaghan then replied.⁴⁷ On the face of it, indeed, O'Callaghan's claim, although energetically defended, is highly implausible. From the *Quaestiones de veritate* on, the doctrine of the mental word is present in several of Aquinas's most important works, including the *Summa contra Gentiles*, the *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, the *Compendium of Theology*, the *Quodlibetal Questions*, and even the late *Commentary on John's Gospel*.⁴⁸ It is true, as O'Callaghan remarks, that the *vocabulary* of the *verbum mentis* is absent from the main development on intellectual cognition in *Summa theologiae* I, questions 84–89, but for one thing the doctrine is clearly referred to even in this part of the *Summa*, albeit without the use of the term "*verbum*."⁴⁹ And more importantly, it is explicitly present with the appropriate vocabulary in several other passages of the great treatise. In *Summa theologiae* I, 27, for example, the process of actual thinking is described as the production of a mental *verbum*:

44. O'Callaghan 2001, 103, with the author's italics.

45. *Ibid.*, 108.

46. See Pasnau's discussion of Aquinas's mental word in Pasnau 1997a, 254–71, and 1997b. In my own case, O'Callaghan's target is Panaccio 1992b.

47. See Doig 2003 and O'Callaghan 2003b. Another critical discussion of O'Callaghan on the same subject is to be found in Hochschild 2012.

48. For precise references, see chap. 6, n. 7. An interesting recent reexamination of Aquinas's theory of the mental word from a properly philosophical perspective is to be found in Kawazoe 2009.

49. See in particular Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 85, art. 2, where Aquinas mentions the intellectual production of mental definitions and mental propositions as something different from the intelligible *species*.

For whoever thinks, from the very fact that he thinks, produces something within himself, which is a conception of the thing thought about, and which arises by intellectual force, and which precedes from the cognition of that thing. This conception is what spoken speech signifies, and it is called “the word of the heart” [*verbum cordis*], signified by the spoken word.⁵⁰

In I, 34, the interior mental concept (*interior mentis conceptus*) is said to be called “*verbum*” “primarily and principally.”⁵¹ In I, 93, the doctrine is repeatedly used, in the Augustinian vein, to present the human intellectual process as an image of God’s engendering.⁵² And in I, 107, it allows for a comparison between men and angels with respect to the communication of inner thoughts.⁵³

Admittedly, the use of the term “*verbum*” in such contexts is motivated by theological concerns and by its having been used in the Latin Christian tradition as a name for the second person of the divine Trinity. Yet the doctrine it serves to express about human cognition is properly philosophical. Aquinas’s theological uses of it would be of no avail if it did not rest on what he took to be a correct understanding of human thought. Insofar as he tries to elucidate God’s engendering of the Son by way of a comparison with human intellection, his theory of the latter has to be taken as independently accurate. As Aquinas writes in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, “Let us proceed, as far as possible, from our own intellect in order to cognize the divine intellect.”⁵⁴ When immediately after this he sketches his conception of the human mental word, he proposes a purely philosophical argument in support of it: “the intellect intelligizes the thing independently of whether it is absent or present,” and it intelligizes it as “separated from its material conditions,” which it could not do without producing a mental representation of it; but this representation is the end term of the intellectual act, and it must consequently differ from the previously existing intelligible *species* in which the intellectual act is rooted.⁵⁵ This is precisely the mental word, which will be more lengthily analyzed later on in the same treatise and in several other works, as well.⁵⁶ Whatever this argument is worth, it rests solely on philosophical considerations.⁵⁷ And it has indeed been

50. Ibid., I, q. 27, art. 1, *resp.* A few lines further down, Aquinas uses “*verbum intelligibile*.”

51. Ibid., I, q. 34, art. 1, *resp.*

52. See in particular *ibid.*, I, q. 93, art. 7–8.

53. Ibid., I, q. 107, art. 1.

54. Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* I, 53.

55. Ibid.

56. See *ibid.*, IV, 11.

57. In a comment on the present book, Piché 2001 also raised the question of the properly philosophical dimension of Aquinas’s theory of the mental word. My answer then was basically the same (Panaccio 2001a, 270–72).

routinely discussed as a philosophical thesis by Aquinas's medieval critics and defenders alike.

The main worry this theory raises among some of Aquinas's interpreters is that it makes him too much of a "representationalist" for their liking and that it jeopardizes the epistemological "direct realism" that many of his modern followers highly value. This is the second point I want to briefly address in the present section. My summary of Aquinas's position in Chapter 6 presented it indeed as basically representationalist and thus squarely at odds with the widespread "conformality" interpretation of Aquinas, according to which the very form of the thing itself—rather than any representation of it—is present in the mind when intellectual cognition occurs.⁵⁸ In a later essay I defended my reading in greater details with multiple textual references.⁵⁹ My main point was that while it is true that Aquinas sometimes says that cognition occurs when the cognized object is present in the mind of the cognizer,⁶⁰ when he wants to be explicit about it he stresses that this is only a way of saying that a representational similitude is then produced within the mind:⁶¹ formal identity is thus reduced to representation by way of the notion of similitude. And I further argued that actual cognition even involves in each case *two* distinct mental representations for Aquinas: the intelligible *species* and the mental word or concept.⁶²

This interpretation was criticized in particular by Dominik Perler.⁶³ His counterargument is that "*similitudo*" is a technical term in Aquinas and that it is in turn explained by the sharing of a form: "For Aquinas," Perler writes, "x is a similitude of y if and only if x and y share the same form."⁶⁴ In support of this he quotes *Summa theologiae* I, 4, article 3, where Aquinas lists various sorts of similitude that all involve in different ways the sharing of a form. Similitude is thus reduced to conformality rather than the reverse. Yet it should be noted that in the text Perler mentions none of the listed similitudes has to do with intellectual cognition, but only with noncognitive similitudes such as that of two white things or two men and so on. The passage must be understood on

58. The conformalist interpretation of Aquinas is endorsed, for example, by Kretzmann 1993; O'Callaghan 2003a; and King 2007b, among many others.

59. Panaccio 2001b.

60. For example, Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 16, art. 1: "there is cognition insofar as the cognized is in the cognizer."

61. See, e.g., Aquinas, *In De anima* III.7: "what is meant when we say that the intellect in act is the intellected thing itself is that the *species* of the intellected thing is a *species* of the intellect in act." And the *species* in question is frequently described as a "similitude" (*similitudo*).

62. This is what I presented in chap. 6 as thesis number 1 in Aquinas's theory of the mental word.

63. Perler 2000.

64. *Ibid.*, 115.

the background of a crucial distinction Aquinas draws in the *Quaestiones de veritate* between two senses of *similitudo*:

a similitude between two things can be understood in one of two senses. In one sense, according to an agreement [*convenientia*] in their very nature, *and such a similitude is not needed between the cognizer and the cognized thing*. . . . The other sense has to do with *similitude by representation*, and this similitude is required between the cognizer and the cognized thing.⁶⁵

The text quoted by Perler deals only with the first of these two senses, as shown by how Aquinas restrictively introduces it:

It is to be said that *when similitude is understood as an agreement* [*convenientia*] *or a communication through the form*, there are several sorts of similitudes, according to the various ways of agreeing by the form.⁶⁶

But this is precisely the kind of similitude that is *not* required by cognition; cognition requires the “similitude by representation” of the *De veritate*.⁶⁷

My interpretation thus comes very close to the one that was defended by Jeffrey Brower and Susan Brower-Toland in a 2008 joint essay. Just as much as I did, they reject the conformality reading of Aquinas on the basis of a detailed examination of the relevant texts, and they clearly endorse a representationalist construal of his cognitive theory.⁶⁸ Where they explicitly disagree with me is that they think Aquinas took intentionality to be a primitive and nonanalyzable feature of concepts, and in particular that he never intended to reduce it to similitude. This is not a major disagreement. As I stressed in the essay they discuss, Aquinas sometimes explains cognitive similitude by representation and sometimes does it the other way around.⁶⁹ This amounts in the end to proposing no explanation at all for what intentionality ultimately is, and it comes very close, then, to saying that he takes it as a primitive feature. My main “reductivist” claim was that Aquinas explains *formal identity* (not intentional-

65. Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 2, art. 3 (with my italics).

66. Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 4, art. 3, *resp.* (with my italics).

67. See also Aquinas, *In IV Sententiarum*, dist. 49, q. 2, art. 1, *ad 7*: “Between the knower and the known is not required a similitude according to an agreement in the nature, but according to representation only.”

68. See Brower and Brower-Toland 2008, 207–18. A related interpretation is developed by Kawazoe 2009, with more stress on Aquinas’s distinction between the intelligible *species* and the mental word.

69. Panaccio 2001b, 198–99. The first approach is exemplified by the passage from Aquinas, *Quaest. disp. de verit.*, q. 2, art. 3 previously referred to; for the second one, see, for example, *Quaest. disp. de verit.*, q. 7, art. 5: “to represent something is to contain a similitude of it.”

ity in general) in terms of representation rather than the other way around, and this is something the Browsers agree with.⁷⁰

The sole remaining difference between us is the following. I take it that Aquinas wants to say something informative or in some way illuminating when he characterizes mental representation as a form of similitude as he frequently does. In the Browsers's interpretation, in contrast, Aquinas's "similitude by representation" says no more than "intentionality" or "mental representation" *tout court*. My reading, admittedly, makes his theory incomplete insofar as Aquinas himself leaves it unexplained how exactly representational similitude is supposed to be related to other kinds of similitude.⁷¹ But as I see it, this is indeed a problem for Aquinas's theory of cognition. And in any case it is also a problem for the Browsers' "non-reductivist" interpretation to explain what contribution Aquinas thought "*similitudo*" might make in such contexts. My suspicion at this point is that a better appreciation of his position could be reached by a more thorough examination of his general understanding of this term, but this is a task I cannot undertake here.⁷² Let us be content, then, to conclude along with the Browsers that the conformality reading of Aquinas should be abandoned in favor of a representationalist one.

"Representationalism," of course, is an ambiguous label. Cyrille Michon has pertinently proposed to distinguish various degrees of it, precisely in connection with the debate about Aquinas.⁷³ I have only argued so far for an interpretation of Aquinas in terms of the weaker of these. Representationalism in this sense is the doctrine that some sort or other of mental representation is required for cognition to take place. This rules out strong conformality approaches, according to which the external object itself is present in the mind somehow without being represented there by a mental delegate. But it is still compatible with direct realism if the mental representation in question is not seen as an intermediate object of cognition. Intelligible *species*, for example, are explicitly denied by Aquinas to be such intermediate objects. That they are required for the cognitive process, then, does not jeopardize direct realism in his theory. The doctrine of the mental word, however, is quite another thing in this respect insofar as the concept—or mental word—is seen by Aquinas as the

70. See, e.g., Brower and Brower-Toland 2008, 226: "when Aquinas speaks of the mind's *intentionally possessing* the forms of objects, he means to be indicating nothing more than that the mind comes to possess an *intention* of that form (that is, a representation that intends or refers to it)."

71. This is indeed the Browsers's main objection to my reading (see *ibid.*, 219–21).

72. Herrera 2011 takes a step toward this by turning to Avicenna and Averroes as significant sources for Aquinas's talk of mental similitude, but his effort remains unsatisfactory in my view insofar as it amounts in the end to a variant of the conformality approach, albeit formulated in terms of the "sameness of *ratio*."

73. Michon 2009.

primary object of intellection.⁷⁴ I agree with Michon that no *inferential* process is thought by Aquinas to be involved in order for the cognizer to move from the apprehension of the mental word to that of the external thing and that consequently the strongest form of representationalism identified by Michon (things are cognized by inference from the cognitions of their representations) is ruled out.⁷⁵ Yet the mental word is still supposed to occur as an intermediate object of intellection, “in which” (*in quo*) the external thing is cognized (as an object in a mirror); this is enough, I take it, to prevent Aquinas from being a “direct realist” in the usual sense of the phrase.⁷⁶ Indeed, this is precisely what worried many of his late thirteenth-century critics, who took him to task for having advocated intermediate—and potentially obstructive—entities in the cognitive process.⁷⁷

A third aspect of the mental-language theme that has recently attracted quite a lot of attention in connection with thirteenth-century thought is the matter of angelic communication, especially in Aquinas.⁷⁸ In the book, I labeled Aquinas’s theory of angelic language as “dualistic” insofar as he distinguishes in some cases between the inner thought of the speaking angel and the mental sign this angel directs to the addressee of his speech. This has to be qualified a bit in view of recent scholarship. As Irène Rosier-Catach has shown, the standard position before Aquinas was that no intermediate sign, no “*medium*,” is required for two angels to communicate: they need only *will* to address to each other the content of their present thoughts.⁷⁹ This is what we find in some guise or other in Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, and Bonaventure. What about Aquinas? Well, the problem *prima facie* is that he has texts that strongly favor the dualistic reading as I stressed previously,⁸⁰ but he also has passages where he

74. This is what I presented in chap. 6 as Aquinas’s thesis 5; see the texts quoted there.

75. Michon 2009, 57–58.

76. In order to account for the passages where Aquinas says that the mental word is what is primarily “intellected” (*intellectum*), Michon proposes to distinguish between two senses of “*intellectum*” (Michon 2009, 55–57). But while Aquinas often does distinguish various senses of the terms he uses, this is not how he puts it in the present case. The distinction he makes seems rather to be between what is intellected primarily and by itself (*per se*) and what is intellected through something else; see, for example Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, q. 9, art. 5.

77. I further examined this late thirteenth-century critique of Aquinas in the name of direct realism in Panaccio 2006.

78. See in particular: Goris 2003; Kobusch 2008; Marmo 2010, 166–84; Roling 2012; Rosier-Catach 2006, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; and Suarez-Nani 2002.

79. See Rosier-Catach 2009a, 2009b.

80. See, e.g., Aquinas, *In II Sent.*, dist. 11, q. 2, art. 3: “When an angel associates his conceived species with something that the other angel can naturally see in another, this naturally cognizable object becomes a sign expressing the internal concept; and such

denies the necessity of a “medium” in angelic communication: “a medium is not required by which something is transmitted from one [angel] to the other.”⁸¹

Harm Goris has suggested that Aquinas evolved from a theory according to which angels use intelligible signs to communicate with each other to a more standard one where “the act of the will by which one angel directs his concept to another suffices to complete angelic speech” without requiring intermediate signs.⁸² This explanation, however, meets with serious difficulties. For one thing, the two supposedly competing approaches seem to coexist in Aquinas’s very early commentary on the *Sentences*.⁸³ And for another thing, the sign theory, as Goris acknowledges, is still present in Aquinas’s *Lectura* on St. Paul’s epistles, which is usually considered as a rather late work.⁸⁴ My own inclination at this point is to take Aquinas as saying that intermediate signs are *not always* required in angelic communication. In many cases, an angel can directly show some of his thoughts to another one just by willing to direct them at him. But angels are not all on a par, according to Christian theology, and Aquinas is led to acknowledge various cases in connection with the angelic hierarchy. First, when a superior angel addresses an inferior one, some of his more insightful simple concepts might not be graspable—or easily graspable—by the inferior angel. In such cases, the speaking angel needs to explicate his thoughts in terms of other concepts that are more easily accessible to the addressee and that will serve as intermediate signs in the communicative process.⁸⁵ The case of an inferior angel addressing a superior one, on the other hand, is briefly discussed in Aquinas’s commentary on Paul’s first Epistle to the Corinthians, and there he seems to require again an intermediate range of intelligible signs for communi-

an expression is called speech [*locutio*], although not a vocal one, but one expressed by intellectual signs.”

81. Aquinas, *Quaest. disp. de veritate*, q. 9, art. 6. See also *In II Sent.*, dist. 11, q. 2, art. 3, where pretty much the same thing is asserted. See on this Rosier-Catach 2006, 390–93, and 2009a, 77–82.

82. Goris 2003, 101. Goris consequently disagrees with my attribution to Aquinas of a “duality thesis about language and thought” in the case of angels. “Panaccio is right,” he writes, “as far as Aquinas’s commentary on the *Sentences* is concerned; however, this thesis will not hold for Aquinas’s mature works where the notion of ‘sign’ no longer plays a role” (103–4n54).

83. See Aquinas, *In II Sent.*, dist. 11, q. 2, art. 3.

84. See Aquinas, *Super epistolas S. Pauli Lectura*, on 1 Cor 13:1, n. 763. Jean-Pierre Torrell, for one, conjectures that Aquinas’s first teaching on this part of Paul’s epistles was done in Rome between 1265 and 1268, just before he started writing the *Summa theologiae* (Torrell 1993, 365–76 and 496–97). It must be granted, however, that this dating is a merely tentative.

85. The case of the superior angel talking to an inferior one is discussed in *Quaest. disp. de veritate*, q. 9, art. 5.

cation to succeed.⁸⁶ As I see it, then, Aquinas's theory of angelic speech remains the same all along: the actual duality of inner thought and expressive intelligible language is required in *some* cases, but not in others.

One thirteenth-century author who clearly held the dualistic thesis for *all* cases of angelic communication is Giles of Rome, and as the Italian scholar Costantino Marmo rightly remarked, it is a pity that I did not include an examination of Giles's theory in my historical survey.⁸⁷ Giles's point is that the will being essentially private, no act of will can suffice to transform private thoughts into messages capable of being grasped by other angels.⁸⁸ The latter would not even know that they were being addressed. Something else is needed, and Giles is led to distinguish between two levels of mental discourse, private intelligible speech on the one hand (the *verbum intelligibile*) and its outward expression into a range of "intelligible signs" (*signa intelligibilia*) on the other hand, the latter being perceptible somehow to other minds. Giles, moreover, interestingly enters into some details about the comparative structures of those two mental languages. He holds, for example, that a single mental word can be expressed by several intelligible signs with different modes of signification:

For an angel would not form the same expression or the same intelligible sign according to whether he turns to his representation (*species*) of birds insofar as it represents all birds generally, or insofar as it represents this species of bird specifically, or insofar as it represents this particular bird singularly; and therefore there will be just as many different intelligible signs and expressions of thoughts as there are way of such [mental] conversions.⁸⁹

This is an extremely interesting passage, which nicely foreshadows the application of supposition theory to the realm of the mental. What is distinctive of Giles's approach is that he distinguishes two levels of intelligible discourse. At the deepest private level, a given mental representation can be referentially used in various ways by the thinking agent (with its extension varying accordingly), while on the higher public level, those distinctions are rendered by the use of different *signs*. And similarly, according to Giles, a thinking agent can entertain the *same* intellectual thought affirmatively or negatively, but his outward intelligible expression of that thought will need to include explicit markers for affir-

86. Cf. Aquinas, *Super epist. S. Pauli*, on 1 Cor 13:1, n. 763: "For there is a manifestation of this sort when an inferior angel speaks to a superior, not by illumination, but by some mode of signification."

87. Marmo 2010, 178n27.

88. Rosier-Catach 2009a and 2009b provide very clear presentations of Giles's theory of angelic language with extensive quotations from his treatise *On the Cognition of Angels* (*De cognitione angelorum* [Venice: 1503]).

89. Giles of Rome, *De cognitione angelorum*, quest. 13 (as quoted by Rosier-Catach 2009a, 86).

mation and negation.⁹⁰ Inner thought is thus described as a sequence of varying attitudes toward stored units of representation, while the higher level of mental language transposes this into a more linear structure where the various mental attitudes involved are expressed by distinct markers. This is a highly interesting theory, with penetrating insights into the connections that can hold between the deep-level cognitive structure and the higher-order grammatical structure. Marmo is right in suggesting that Giles's approach to mental language might provide a bridge between the Thomistic conception and the Ockhamistic one.⁹¹ At this point we need detailed study of how exactly Giles associates the two levels of mental structures with each other and with external language.

ON OCKHAM AND THE LATE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Mental discourse in the four decades or so between Aquinas and Ockham has been the object of several recent noteworthy contributions. Giorgio Pini has shown how Henry of Ghent's distinctive idea of the mental word as an elaborate "declarative" concept stems from his critique of Aquinas's and Giles of Rome's teachings in the context of the late thirteenth-century trinitarian theology.⁹² Robert Pasnau has published an English translation of Peter John Olivi's discussion on the mental word in his *Lectura super Iohannem*.⁹³ Christian Trottmann has studied Hervaeus Natalis's views on the mental word in his *De verbo* and its relation to Aquinas.⁹⁴ Richard Cross has provided an analysis of John Duns Scotus's philosophical discussion of five theories of the mental word, identified by Cross as those of (1) Scotus himself, (2) some anonymous author, (3) the Franciscan Roger Marston (and to some extent Henry of Ghent), (4) Aquinas and Giles of Rome, and (5) Scotus's putative teacher, the Franciscan William of Ware.⁹⁵ And Russell Friedman has offered an extensive survey of how the psychological model of the mental word was used in trinitarian theology in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, especially in Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, Peter Auriol, Francis of Marchia, and William of Ockham.⁹⁶

With respect to mental language in the fourteenth century, however, the primary scholarly focus of the last twenty years or so has been on Ockham's doctrine, and a number of disagreements have surfaced about it among commenta-

90. Ibid.

91. Marmo 2010, 178n27.

92. Pini 2003. On Henry of Ghent's theory of the mental word, see also Goehring 2011.

93. Pasnau 2002, 136–51.

94. Trottmann 1997.

95. Cross 2009.

96. Friedman 2013, especially chaps. 2–3, pp. 50–132; see also Friedman 2009 and Friedman and Pelletier 2014.

tors (including myself). I will now briefly review four such debated questions: (1) Is Ockham's mental language a logically ideal language? (2) To what extent is his theory on the matter a cognitive theory in the modern sense (comparable, in particular, to Jerry Fodor's approach)? (3) To what extent is Ockham's mental language supposed to be innate? (4) How can his theory accommodate mental singular sentences? And I will say a few words, finally, about the post-Ockhamistic period.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Paul Vincent Spade and others developed an attractive interpretation of Ockham's mental language as a logically ideal structure devoid in principle of ambiguities and redundancies.⁹⁷ This approach was criticized in the 1990s (by myself among others),⁹⁸ and by the time the present book appeared in French in 1999, a lively discussion was going on about this, the substance of which came to revolve around a rather technical issue: did Ockham accept simple connotative terms in his mental language or not?⁹⁹ Spade for one had argued that he did not, the argument for this being the following:

- (a) all connotative terms (such as "white" and "father") have a nominal definition for Ockham;¹⁰⁰
- (b) a good nominal definition is synonymous with its *definiendum*;
- (c) there is no synonymy in Ockham's mental language;

therefore:

- (d) simple spoken connotative terms are all represented in mentalese by complex nominal definitions composed only of nonconnotative (or absolute) terms plus *syncategoremata* (such as prepositions and logical constants).

It can, however, safely be considered as established by now that Ockham in fact rejected (d) and did countenance some simple connotative concepts in his mental language.¹⁰¹ Spade himself has granted the point.¹⁰²

The problem, then, is whether Ockham is consistent in so doing. My own view is that there is no real difficulty here, since premise (b) is to be rejected in Ockham's doctrine and (c) should be importantly qualified. Let me explain. First, two phrases are synonymous in the relevant sense for Ockham if and

97. See, e.g., Trentman 1970; Spade 1975, 1980; Normore 1990.

98. See, e.g., Panaccio 1990, 1992a, 2000; Tweedale 1992; Goddu 1993.

99. As explained in chap. 9, Ockham's absolute terms roughly correspond to what we now call "natural kind terms" such as "man," "flower," "animal," "water," and so on. All other categorematic terms, including relational ones, are counted as connotative.

100. This thesis is explicit in particular in Ockham's *Summa logicae* I.10.

101. The case for this is rounded up again in Panaccio 2004, 63–83, and arguments to the contrary by Gaskin 2001 are discussed there in some detail.

102. See, e.g., Spade 1996, 224: "Ockham thought there were simple connotative terms in mental language."

only if they both signify exactly the same individual things in the world under exactly the same modes (e.g., if something is connoted in some way by one of them, it is also connoted in the same way by the other one).¹⁰³ But there is no reason to think that this condition is in general satisfied by a connotative term and its nominal definition, and Ockham indeed *explicitly* states that it is “not true” that “a name and its definition signify exactly the same thing.”¹⁰⁴ As Spade has pointed out, this raises the question of what job exactly nominal definitions are supposed to accomplish in Ockham’s semantics.¹⁰⁵ The answer, I take it, is that such definitions are not to be understood in Ockham on the model of Fregean or Russellian explicit definitions (to which the *definienda* are supposed to be semantically reducible). What a good Ockhamistic nominal definition is expected to do is to make conspicuous what external individual objects are signified by the *definiendum* and under what modes, and this in general does not require strict synonymy.¹⁰⁶ Defining “father” as “a male animal having engendered a child,” for instance (one of Ockham’s favorite examples) makes it clear that the term “father” “primarily” refers to certain male animals while “obliquely” connoting their children. But the definition is not synonymous with the *definiendum* in this case, since “child” in it obliquely connotes the fathers (which “father” does not: it *primarily* signifies the fathers).

That there is no synonymy in Ockham’s mental language, on the other hand (which was premise (c) of the Spadean argument), also needs to be importantly qualified. Ockham, admittedly, did write that “to a plurality of synonymous names there does not correspond a plurality of concepts.”¹⁰⁷ But as Martin Tweedale has argued, he most probably meant this to apply only to *simple* synonymous terms.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, David Chalmers has argued that Ockham could not very well reject the mental coexistence of two different but semantically equivalent complex phrases or of a complex phrase and an equivalent simple one.¹⁰⁹ Ockham’s mental language, in other words, by no means excludes all kinds of

103. See Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.6. Ockham there distinguishes two senses of “synonymous,” the relevant one in the present discussion being the wider one.

104. Ockham, *Expositio super libros Elenchorum* I.20, para. 5. I have developed this point in Panaccio 2004, 69–73. Amerini 2009 has raised precise textual objections against this claim of mine that a connotative term and its nominal definition are not synonymous for Ockham, but as far as I can see, Amerini’s interpretation is not really supported, on closer examination, by any of the passages he refers to (see my detailed reply in Panaccio forthcoming a).

105. See Spade 1996, 24, and Spade 1998.

106. I have developed this point in detail in Panaccio 2003a, 2004, 85–102, and forthcoming a.

107. Ockham, *Quodlibetal Questions* V, q. 9; see also *Summa logicae* I.3.

108. See Tweedale 1992.

109. See Chalmers 1999. Chalmers also claimed in the same essay that Ockham had no good reason to exclude even the synonymy between two simple concepts from

semantical redundancies, and especially not the kind that holds between a simple connotative term and its nominal definition—which, as we saw, is not even a case of strict synonymy for him. Since, in addition, Ockham explicitly admitted certain semantical ambiguities in his mental language, and most notably “suppositional” ambiguities (such as that of “man” in “man is a species” or “man is a concept”),¹¹⁰ the conclusion has to be drawn that mental language was never intended by him as a logically ideal language à la Frege and Russell.

Ockham’s theory of mental language, as I understand it, is an empirical theory about what is going on in the mind when it is engaged in the process of thinking, and its most distinctive—and most interesting—feature is that it allows for a fine-grained compositional analysis of thoughts by transposing the main categories of medieval grammar and semantics to the description of intellectual cognition. I thus see it as quite comparable in spirit with Jerry Fodor’s approach to what he calls the “language of thought.”¹¹¹ Now this was recently questioned by Eric Hagedorn’s dissertation on Ockham’s mental language.¹¹² Although still unpublished, it is a well-argued and challenging piece that certainly deserves a discussion. I cannot enter into the details here, of course, but I will at least summarize Hagedorn’s main points and briefly react to them.

Hagedorn’s case basically rests on two closely related passages, one from the *Commentary on the Perihermeneias* and one from the *Questions on the Physics*, where Ockham says, in reply to an objection, that if concepts are taken to be mental *acts*, there are two possible approaches to mental *sentences*: they can be seen either as really composed of subpropositional elements (concepts, namely), or as being themselves *simple* mental acts semantically equivalent to syntactically organized complexes.¹¹³ Since Ockham leaves the choice open, Hagedorn concludes that while syntactic complexity is an essential feature of Fodor’s language of thought, Ockham, by contrast, “didn’t seem to much care whether or not [mental language] was complex in this way,”¹¹⁴ and he then goes

mental language. This is correct, I believe, but not for the reason given by Chalmers (as I have argued in Panaccio forthcoming *a*).

110. See, e.g., Ockham, *Summa logicae* III.4.4: “It is to be noted that this sort of ambiguity [i.e., suppositional ambiguity] can be found in a purely mental proposition.” The point has been discussed by several commentators in recent literature; see Knuuttila 2009; Dutilh-Novaes 2011, 2012; and Panaccio 2013 (where I defend the soundness of Ockham’s approach in this respect).

111. See, e.g., Fodor 1975, 1987, 2008. Of course, there are also very important differences between Ockham’s and Fodor’s projects; for a detailed comparison, see Panaccio 1992a, 69–164.

112. Hagedorn 2012.

113. See Ockham, *Exp. In Libr. Perih.*, Prologue, 6, *Op. phil.* 2:355–58, and *Quaest. In Libr. Phys.*, q. 6, *Op. phil.* 6:409–10. The context in both cases is the question whether concepts are to be identified with mental acts or with purely ideal objects (the so-called *ficta*) produced by such acts.

114. Hagedorn 2012, 111.

on to argue that Ockham's primary motivation with respect to mental language was instead his attempt to find nominalistically acceptable objects for Aristotelian science. I will shortly return to the latter suggestion, which I take to be sound,¹¹⁵ but first let me say something about Hagedorn's main argument against what he calls the "cognition theory interpretation" of Ockham's mental language.

It is difficult to tell exactly what Ockham had in mind when mentioning, without choosing between, the two possible approaches to mental sentences in the aforementioned passages. One way of seeing it is that he did not take the choice to be relevant for the ongoing discussion—the same one in the two passages—about whether concepts are mental acts or not, both approaches being compatible with the affirmative answer to this question (which he eventually adopted) and neither of them being demonstratively refutable or provable in the strict Aristotelian sense. This does not mean, however, that he did not favor one of them over the other. Those are the only two passages where Ockham presents the simple-act conception of mental sentences, and he does it in very few lines on both occasions. The syntactic complexity approach, by contrast, is lengthily expounded in several of his works, including the large *Summa logicae*, where it is salient throughout the book, and the *Quodlibetal Questions*, both of which are usually seen as providing his most considered views on mind and language. The syntax of mental language in these works is analyzed in great detail,¹¹⁶ a compositional theory of the truth-conditions of mental sentences is developed on the basis of the semantical theory of supposition,¹¹⁷ a whole logic of thought is made to rest on these compositional premises,¹¹⁸ and arguments are explicitly given in support of the idea that mental sentences are composed of simpler units that occur within them as subjects and predicates.¹¹⁹ The bottom line is that the Fodor-like compositional theory of thought is the only one Ockham ever cared to develop, and it can thus legitimately be seen as "the" Ockhamistic theory of mental language.¹²⁰

115. This is a point I made myself in chap. 9.

116. In *Summa logicae* I. 2–12, Ockham lists the various kinds of simple terms that can occur within mental sentences and the grammatical and semantical categories they belong to. The rest of the treatise then makes extensive use of these notions for the analysis of mental sentences. See also, among several other places, *Quodl.* V, q. 8, about which grammatical features belong to simple mental terms.

117. See Ockham, *Summa logicae* II.2–10.

118. The lengthy Part III of the *Summa logicae* is dedicated to the study of inferences, especially in mental language, and much of it requires syntactically structured units as premises and conclusions, since logical validity for Ockham ultimately hangs on the supposition of subjects and predicates; see on this Panaccio 2003b.

119. See Ockham, *Quodl.* III, q. 12.

120. As I pointed out in Panaccio 2004, 33, it can also plausibly be argued that Ockham did not take the two approaches to mental sentences to be incompatible with each other, since in both of the relevant passages, he says that *some* mental sentences

Hagedorn is right, though, that Ockham originally introduced the idea of mental sentences in order to provide nominalistically acceptable objects for scientific knowledge as it is understood in the Aristotelian tradition. Earlier in this book I have quoted significant extracts from the passage of his *Ordinatio* where he indicates this,¹²¹ and Hagedorn also attributes a great importance to this text where he finds what he calls Ockham's "Master Argument" for mental language.¹²² It must be noted with insistence, however, that Ockham *in this very passage* explicitly describes mental sentences as composed of simpler units—concepts, namely—capable of various types of *supposition*. As I see it, this is precisely the core of Ockham's conception of mental language: originally developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries for the study of spoken discourse, supposition theory is transposed by Ockham to the analysis of inner thoughts as syntactically structured units. And this is relevant not only for scientific knowledge, but in general for the understanding of all normal thought processes.¹²³

A third point that has drawn attention lately about Ockham's mental language is whether something in it is supposed to be innate. Its categorematical

are composed of a subject and predicate while *some others* are simply equivalent to such complexes (see *Op. phil.* 2:358, and *Op. phil.* 6:410). If so, the latter could be seen as convenient mental abbreviations for the former, of the sort that should be accepted in Ockham's mental language according to Chalmers 1999, 84–86. However that may be, the choice between the two theories might not matter very much from a Fodorian point of view, since even in the simple-act theory mental sentences must presumably presuppose the availability of the relevant concepts (the concept of "horse" is needed, for example, to mentally entertain the thought that horses are mammals) and must therefore be mentally connected with these concepts in some systematic ways. The difference between the two approaches, then, has to do only with how the architecture of mental language is implemented in the mind, which according to Fodor himself is irrelevant to his own view (this point is central in particular in Fodor's discussion of connectionism; see, e.g., Fodor and Pylyshyn 1988).

121. The relevant passage is in Ockham's *Ord.* I, dist. 2, q. 4, *Op. theol.* 2:134–37.

122. See Hagedorn 2012, 112–19.

123. Hagedorn seems to grant that those mental sentences that are the objects of scientific knowledge are usually presented by Ockham as syntactically structured units, but he thinks that this is not supposed to hold for the laymen: "ordinary people, Ockham claims, are *not* related to mental sentences when engaging in ordinary acts of believing, hoping, fearing, and so on" (Hagedorn 2012, viii, with the author's italics). This, however, rests on a dubious interpretation of Ockham's distinction between two sorts of assents in *Quodl.* III, q. 8. Although one of these is said to be characteristic of the layman (the "*laicus*") while the other is of special interest for philosophers, both require the formation of mental sentences, and nothing in Ockham's text indicates that such sentences would not be syntactically structured in the layman's case. The difference, rather, is between reflexive and nonreflexive assents. For detailed discussions of this distinction, see Brower-Toland 2007a and Panaccio 2009.

components at any rate are not: simple concepts such as “man,” “flower,” and “white” are acquired, for Ockham, on the basis of perceptual encounters with external objects.¹²⁴ This is not to say that they are *learned*, since in the basic cases, they are naturally and causally produced in the mind by such encounters without any inferential or reflexive activity on the intellect’s part. Species concepts in particular “can be abstracted from a single individual,” Ockham says.¹²⁵ Such concepts, then, are not innate, but their acquisition presupposes that the human mind is innately endowed with an appropriate mechanism for categorization that generates on the basis of a single exemplar a general representation of every individual that belongs to the same basic natural kind as the encountered one. It is to be gathered that in Ockham’s view this mechanism has been implemented by God so that concepts could fulfill their functions, which is tantamount in modern terms to a functionalist account of how the mind works.

Categorematic concepts, however, do not suffice for propositional thought. As Ockham acknowledges, quantifiers, connectives, copulas, modal operators, and prepositions are also required for mental sentences to be assembled.¹²⁶ And since such syncategorematic terms do not represent anything in the world,¹²⁷ it seems they can hardly be acquired on the basis of experience. In a recent essay, Mikko Yrjönsuuri has pointed out that there is no clear answer in Ockham as to whether syncategorematic concepts are innate or acquired.¹²⁸ On the other hand, Martin Lenz, following some others, has correctly insisted on the need to distinguish two successive Ockhamistic accounts of mental *syncategoremata*.¹²⁹ Lenz claims that in the mature theory, where all concepts are identified with mental acts, mental syncategorematic terms should be innate even though Ockham is not quite explicit on the matter.¹³⁰ In his earlier writings, however, Ockham held that mental *syncategoremata* are derived from spoken ones by way of the internal representation of external words.¹³¹ Although Ockham eventually abandoned this account, Lenz sees it as more interesting philosophically than the later one insofar as it implies that the systematic framework of mental language is derived from that of conventional language and that the latter,

124. See Panaccio 2004, 5–23.

125. Ockham, *Quodl.* IV, q. 17, *Op. theol.* 9:385.

126. See Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.3 and *Quodl.* V, q. 9.

127. See Ockham, *Summa logicae* I.4, *Op. phil.* 1:15: “Syncategorematic terms . . . do not signify distinct things.”

128. Yrjönsuuri 2007, 119.

129. Lenz 2008. The two approaches in question had been discussed in particular by Adams 1987, 298–305.

130. Lenz 2008, 307–9. See also Normore 2009, 296. (Normore, by the way, seems to think that I have a different position on this, but I don’t).

131. Lenz 2008, 309–14. The reference is to *Ord.* I, dist. 2, q. 8, *Op. theol.* 3:285–86, a passage I have also analyzed in details in Panaccio 2003c, 2004, 146–51.

consequently, “is structurally prior to mental language.”¹³² The basic idea of this approach, according to Lenz, is that we do not have “an inborn systematic capacity to form sentences.”¹³³

The problem with this interpretation of Ockham’s earlier theory, though, is that it makes it entirely mysterious how spoken *syncategoremata* could ever be produced in the first place. My own view, as I have explained elsewhere, is that the mind in this theory should be innately endowed with a capacity for certain sentential operations on concepts seen as mental objects (or *ficta*), such as a capacity for predication, quantification, negation, and conjunction.¹³⁴ Pre-linguistic thoughts, then, are just as systematic as spoken sentences, but they are to be seen as structured sequences of *operations* on categorematic concepts rather than as structured sequences of *concepts*. When concepts came to be identified with mental acts in Ockham’s mature theory, mental sentences could henceforth be conceived as structured complexes of acts, some categorematic and some syncategorematic. As Lenz suggested, the capacity for the latter sort of acts in this view should most certainly be seen as innate.

A fourth issue about Ockham’s mental language debated in recent scholarship has to do with singular sentences. This is a crucial point, obviously, since singular thoughts of the form “this here exists” or “this is a man” or “this is white” are the basis for all empirical knowledge in Ockham’s epistemology. Calvin Normore even sees him as the “inventor” of singular thoughts in Western philosophy insofar as the semantic function of a simple mental singular term wholly consists for Ockham, as Normore understands him, in picking out its referent in the world without describing or conceptualizing it in any way.¹³⁵ It is important, however, clearly to distinguish in Ockham between the simple non-propositional act of mentally grasping a given singular object and the mental singular *sentences* that usually accompany such “intuitive” graspings.¹³⁶ With respect to mental language proper, the latter are of special interest and have given rise to intriguing questions in recent scholarship about what exactly plays the role of singular terms in such mental sentences.

As in the case of syncategorematic terms, Ockham’s position on this has importantly varied along with his understanding of what concepts are. The French scholar Elizabeth Karger has decisively shown that in his former theory, when he took concepts to be ideal *ficta*, Ockham held that the *external things*

132. Lenz 2008, 311.

133. Ibid., 309.

134. See Panaccio 2003c, 155–57, and 2004, 150–51.

135. Normore 2007. See the discussion of this essay by Lagerlund 2006. Both commentators basically agree on the interpretation of Ockham’s conception of singular thoughts; what they disagree about is how to assess it philosophically.

136. For more details on this distinction, see Panaccio 2014.

themselves could be the subjects (or predicates) of singular mental sentences.¹³⁷ The point is that just as the mind uses conceptual *ficta* as subject or predicate terms for its predicative acts when it produces general propositional thoughts, according to this theory, it can similarly use a real external thing as a subject or predicate term when it produces a singular propositional thought. In both cases the mind grasps the relevant terms with appropriate “apprehensive” acts (abstractive acts for apprehending concepts and intuitive acts for apprehending real singular things) and mentally connects these terms with one another in a predicative act. In the thought corresponding to “John is white,” then (when John is there in front of the cognizer), the subject-term is John himself. This theory of mental sentences composed of real things has traditionally been associated with the name of Walter Burley, but as we now see, it was endorsed by the early Ockham as well. Aurélien Robert has surmised that Ockham might have wanted to apply this approach to mental-identity sentences only (singular sentences of the form “this is [identical with] that”),¹³⁸ but I see no reason for such a limitation: if John himself is the subject-term of a mental-identity sentence of mine, why couldn’t he be the subject-term of my singular thought that John is white?¹³⁹

In Ockham’s mature theory, the situation is very different. Concepts are now equated with mental acts rather than with ideal objects (which are consequently dispensed of), and mental sentences are entirely composed of acts. From then on, intuitive acts—by which individual things are directly grasped—can occur themselves within mental sentences as subjects or predicates. When John is there in front of me, my thought that John is white has as its subject-term my intuitive grasping of John. This interpretation, which has been proposed by a number of commentators (myself included),¹⁴⁰ has recently been questioned by Frances Roberts on the basis that, for Ockham, mental propositions are composed of concepts, and concepts are all general.¹⁴¹ But what Ockham means in his later theory when he says that mental propositions are composed of concepts is simply that they are composed of mental acts rather than external things.¹⁴² That intuitive acts can occur themselves within mental propositions is directly implied by Ockham explicitly stating in his *Questions on the Physics*

137. See Karger 1994, 1996.

138. Robert 2004.

139. Robert correctly remarks that John would then have to “supposit” for himself (*ibid.*, 388), but this is not a problem for the early Ockham, who explicitly admits, for example, that God can supposit for himself in the mental propositions of a blessed soul in the afterlife (Ord. I, Prol., q. 9, *Op. theol.* 1:270). See on this Karger 1996, 219.

140. See, e.g., Adams 1987, 530; Karger 1994; and Panaccio 2004, 11–14.

141. Roberts 2009.

142. See, e.g., Ockham, *Quodl.* III.12, where the point under discussion is whether mental propositions are composed of things or concepts.

that an intuitive cognition can naturally “supposit” for its object, since in his semantics supposition is a property that a term can have only when it occurs as subject or predicate of a proposition.¹⁴³ The thesis is required indeed by Ockham’s well-known theory of intuitive acts. Such acts, he holds, normally cause the *evident* knowledge of some contingent proposition;¹⁴⁴ and the knowledge of a proposition is said to be evident in Ockham’s later theory when it is caused (in the right way) by the very terms of this proposition.¹⁴⁵ Intuitive acts, therefore, must occur as intrinsic components of those contingent propositions which they cause the knowledge of.¹⁴⁶

As I explained in Chapter 10, the doctrine of syntactically structured mental sentences became prominent after Ockham and was adopted by some of the most influential thinkers of the time, such as William Heytesbury and John Buridan. This development and the discussions it provoked among fourteenth-century philosophers have been the object of quite a number of scholarly contributions in the last twelve years or so. Aurélien Robert for one has further scrutinized William Crathorn’s intriguing attempt to reduce mental sentences to mentally represented spoken ones belonging to some external language such as Latin, French, or English.¹⁴⁷ Laurent Cesalli has produced a book-length study of realist theories of the proposition from Scotus and Burley to John Wyclif.¹⁴⁸ Gyula Klima has dedicated a considerable part of his recent book on Buridan to his conception of a syntactically structured mental language.¹⁴⁹ Alfonso Maierù

143. See Ockham, *Quest. on the Physics* 7, *Op. phil.* 6:411. I have discussed this passage in Panaccio 2004, 12, 2014, and 2016.

144. See on this Karger 1999.

145. In *Ord.* I, *Prol.*, q. 1, Ockham defines evident knowledge as this cognition of a proposition that is naturally such as to be caused by the cognition of the very terms of this proposition (*Op. theol.* 1:5), but this formulation dates from Ockham’s earlier period and has to be adapted a bit in the context of the later theory: instead of saying that evident knowledge is brought about by the cognition of the terms, it must be said to be brought about by the terms themselves understood as mental acts.

146. Intuitive acts in this approach are thus seen as mental *signs*, and, since their objects normally are what cause them, according to Ockham, the theory seems to be *externalistic* in today’s sense. Whether it is or not, and to what extent, has lately been the object of much discussion (see, e.g., Normore 2003, 2012; King 2004; Brower-Toland 2007b; Schierbaum 2010; Panaccio 2010b, 2014, 2015; Vaughan 2013, 36–112), but since this interpretative debate does not *directly* involve the idea of mental language proper, I’ll leave it aside here. Let me simply mention that my current understanding of the role of causality in fixing the signification of *general* concepts in Ockham significantly differs—in a more externalist direction—from the one I presented in chap. 9 (see on this Panaccio 2015).

147. See Robert 2009, 2010.

148. Cesalli 2007.

149. Klima 2009; see in particular: chap. 2, “The Primacy of Mental Language” (27–36) and chap. 3, “The Various Kinds of Concepts and the Idea of a Mental Lan-

has drawn attention to lively fourteenth- and fifteenth-century discussions on *syncategoremata* and “modes of conceiving” in mental language.¹⁵⁰ Jennifer Ashworth has examined the idea of mental singular terms in Buridan and his successors.¹⁵¹ And, most significantly for our present purposes, Joël Biard has shown by both doctrinal and terminological considerations that the Augustinian theme of the mental word all but vanished in many post-Ockhamistic authors of the fourteenth century in favor of a compositional analysis of mental language proper.¹⁵² From Ockham and Buridan on, Biard argues, the old focus on the expressive—or “emanationist”—function of the mental word is generally replaced in philosophy of mind by a semiotical approach to the syntactic and semantic structure of thought.

The idea of a syntactically organized language of thought, however, was not unanimously accepted in the fourteenth century. As I explained previously, Gregory of Rimini, for one, energetically attacked it with several arguments and concluded that mental sentences are actually *simple* acts of the mind with no internal syntactic structure.¹⁵³ Building on Gabriel Nuchelmans’s and especially Jennifer Ashworth’s pioneer scholarship in the 1980s,¹⁵⁴ recent scholarship is now making it more and more apparent that this position—known as the unity of the mental proposition doctrine—enjoyed much success in the late-medieval period and that until the first half of the sixteenth century a rich debate went along between its proponents and those who favored the Ockham-Buridan syntactical view.¹⁵⁵ One of the most salient arguments for the unity doctrine was that the syntactical approach could not account for the order it required among the parts of a mental sentence; in reply the proponents of the Ockhamist approach suggested various interesting ways to cope with this difficulty, but thereby introduced increasingly significant differences between the respective structures of mental sentences and their spoken counterparts. The unity of the mental proposition doctrine, on the other hand, also met with challenges of its own, the main one being to provide a coherent and cognitively plausible account of the connections it needed between the simple mental propositional acts and the nonpropositional concepts these acts were acknowledged to presuppose.¹⁵⁶

guage” (37–120). See also Klima 2004 on the force-content distinction in Buridan’s mental language.

150. See Maierù 2002, 2004.

151. Ashworth 2004; see also, on the same theme, Lagerlund 2012.

152. Biard 2009b.

153. For a detailed study of Rimini’s epistemology, see Bermon 2007.

154. In particular: Nuchelmans 1980; Ashworth 1981, 1982.

155. See, e.g., Perler 2002; Maierù 2004; Meier-Oeser, 2004.

156. For a slightly more detailed presentation of this exchange of arguments, see Panaccio, forthcoming *b*.

Eventually the unity of the mental proposition doctrine, whatever its difficulties, seems to have prevailed,¹⁵⁷ and by the seventeenth century, the idea of mental language proper was no longer a major theme in philosophy. Hobbes, Locke, and others still sometimes spoke of mental discourse or mental propositions, but they did not systematically analyze these in grammatical and semantical terms as Ockham and Buridan had done.¹⁵⁸ The question has consequently been raised, especially by Calvin Normore, as to why exactly the mental-language theory disappeared.¹⁵⁹ Normore discusses various suggestions and thinks that several causes might have concurred, which seems highly probable. His favorite hypothesis is that the most decisive factor was “a growing emphasis on thought as computation,”¹⁶⁰ as we find saliently in Ramus, Hobbes, Descartes, and later on Leibniz. This new approach to the mind was not ultimately incompatible with the mental-language view, Normore claims, but it was apparently perceived to be by the philosophers of the time and thus centrally contributed to “the end of mental language.” This is an intriguing idea, no doubt, but as Normore readily admits, it remains highly tentative, and still more research is needed before an overall account of what happened can confidently be adopted. My own view at this stage is that the decline of supposition theory in Renaissance and early modern logic might very well have been the most critical factor in the disappearance of the mental-language hypothesis.¹⁶¹ Supposition theory was the single most important component of the late-medieval idea of mental language proper. It was at the heart of Ockham’s original proposal, and it provided a systematic link between the natural signification of isolated concepts and the semantical properties of sentential thoughts and reasonings. Once it had receded—for reasons still to be investigated—there was simply no point anymore for early modern philosophers to approach human thinking as syntactically structured. The visual model, then, took over.

157. An influential version of this doctrine is to be found, for example, in the Spanish philosopher Jerónimo Pardo at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; see Pérez-Ilzarbe 2004, 2009.

158. For a recent reexamination of Hobbes on mental discourse, see Pécharman 2004, 2009. On Locke, see Panaccio 2003d. On the remnants of the idea of mental language in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century French philosophy, see Demonet 2009.

159. Normore 2009.

160. *Ibid.*, 306.

161. See Panaccio, forthcoming *b*.

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