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 England from Bacon to Locke
 Rhodri Lewis
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CHAPTER I

Introduction: The idol of the market

I

On his descent from the floating island of Laputa, Gulliver's travels reach the continent of Balnibarbi. Among the curiosities of its capital city, Lagado, was a 'grand Academy', founded 'about forty years' before Gulliver's visit in mid-1708, and which took as its task the 'putting of all Arts, Sciences, Languages, and Mechanicks upon a new Foot'.¹ Detailing his visit to the 'School of Languages', Gulliver relates that its members were much concerned with a 'Scheme for entirely abolishing all Words whatsoever'. Given that 'Words are only the Names for *Things*', they intended to supplant languages by communicating through things in themselves. To this end, it had been decided that everyone should 'carry about them, such *Things*' as are 'necessary to express the particular Business they are to discourse on'. A further advantage of this language reform project was 'that it would serve as an universal Language to be understood in all civilized Nations', or, that it would at least do so in those nations whose 'Goods and Utensils are generally of the same kind'. And, Gulliver intimates, the projectors would have been successful in their ambition, had not the Balnibarbian womenfolk, illiterates and vulgarians – informed that they could no longer 'speak with their Tongues' – threatened to rebel: 'Such constant and irreconcilable Enemies to Science are the common People.' Despite their project's failure to catch on, the language projectors themselves communicated through this medium, and struggled on manfully under the weight of the increasingly large 'Bundles of *Things*' that their range of interests compelled them to carry around.²

The pretensions and impracticable excesses of the Lagado Academy are, of course, Swift's satiric reflection of the activities of another scientific cohort concerned with the promotion of the new learning, namely, the

¹ *Gulliver's Travels* in *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, 16 vols., ed. Herbert Davis et al. (Oxford, 1939–68), xi. 176.

² *Ibid.*, xi. 185–6.

Royal Society of London – awarded its Royal charter in 1662 and with more than a passing interest in the reform of language.³ While Swift clearly felt that his readers would have no difficulty in recognising the sitters for his portrait of the language projectors, it seems to me that this is no longer the case, and that this is to be regretted, not least because, while all good caricatures seize upon and magnify some partial verisimilitude, Swift's depiction is by no means an accurate representation of a movement which, going far beyond the early Royal Society, spanned the entire social, religious and political gamut of intellectual life in seventeenth-century England.

This movement sought to remedy the increasingly apparent failings of natural language through the invention of a new philosophical means of communication. This sense of linguistic inadequacy arose from a number of discrete, but interpenetrative, tendencies that were particularly influential in Protestant Europe. These included the impact of printing, humanist scholarship (especially when applied to the text and language of the Bible), the growth of vernacular languages, the concomitant (if gradual) decline of Latin as a *lingua franca*, increasing interest in natural philosophy, and knowledge of the 'new world' (along with the hitherto unknown languages spoken therein). A revealing index of these anxieties about language is the extraordinary popularity enjoyed by pictures and prints of the tower of Babel for a century from about 1550 – of which the paintings by Brueghel and Valckenborch are only the most famous examples.⁴ To put it another way, ever worsening linguistic shortcomings were seen as a hindrance to the formulation of thoughts (whether of the moral, religious, political or philosophical kind) and their transparent expression. In seventeenth-century England, many people believed that the only plausible curative for this condition – and the only likely prophylactic against further linguistic slippage – was the construction of an artificial language that would exactly map the order of things, and of thought. The high-water mark of this artificial language movement came in 1668, with the publication of John Wilkins's *An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language*, under the imprimatur of the Royal Society. Both Wilkins and the movement of which he is a representative have occasioned a broad range of scholarly literature over the course of the past century.⁵ But in beginning my studies of the

³ See M. H. Nicolson, 'The Scientific Background of Swift's *Voyage to Laputa*', *Annals of Science* 2 (1937), 299–334.

⁴ See Borst, III. esp. 1048–261. On Babel paintings, see Ulrike B. Wegener, *Die Faszination des Maßlosen: Der Turmbau zu Babel von Pieter Bruegel bis Athanasius Kircher* (Hildesheim, 1995).

⁵ Weightier studies of the topic include Louis Couturat and Léopold Leau, *Historie de la langue universelle* (Paris, 1903); Otto Funke, *Zum Weltsprachenproblem in England im 17. Jahrhundert*

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topic, it rapidly became clear to me that there was very little agreement as to what form the artificial language movement in seventeenth-century England took, let alone as to what its significance could be said to be.

Be this as it may, a number of studies have attempted to contextualise the artificial language movement within broader trends of literary and intellectual history. The most prominent of these have viewed the language planners as a part of the so-called ‘scientific revolution’, or as of a piece with the empirical philosophy held to have been pursued in England in the wake of Bacon, and most fully realised in the early Royal Society.⁶ Another cluster of studies is self-consciously opposed to the ‘clean’ narratives of those holding nascent scientific progress to be the best explanatory paradigm for the topic. The authors of these have sought to identify the language planners and their schemes with the variously hermetic, occult and mystical.⁷

Another contextualising trend takes its cue from Jorge Luis Borges’s 1942 essay on ‘John Wilkins’ Analytical Language’, in which Borges dwelt with characteristic wryness on what he took to be the more quixotic aspects of Wilkins’s *Essay*.⁸ This became influential as a result of the fact that Michel Foucault began his *The Order of Things* with a quotation from it. In thinking about the principles of knowledge classification in schemes such as Wilkins’s artificial language, Foucault contended, we destroy ‘all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion

(Heidelberg, 1929); Knowlson; Slaughter; Gerhard F. Strasser, *Lingua Universalis. Kryptologie und Theorie der Universalsprachen im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1988); Werner Hüllen, ‘*Their Manner of Discourse: Nachdenken über Sprache im Umkreis der Royal Society*’ (Tübingen, 1989); Robert E. Stillman, *The New Philosophy and Universal Languages in Seventeenth-Century England* (Lewisburg, 1995); Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, trans. James Fentress (Oxford, 1995); Astrid Göbels, *Die Tradition der Universalgrammatik im England des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Münster, 1999); Maat. The most influential articles on the topic can be conveniently consulted in Joseph Subbiondo, ed., *John Wilkins and 17th-Century British Linguistics* (Amsterdam, 1992). See further Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure* (1982), esp. 239–77, and the articles collected in Vivian Salmon’s *The Study of Language in Seventeenth-Century England* (Amsterdam, 1988) and *Language and Society in Early Modern England*, ed. E. F. K. Koerner (Amsterdam, 1994).

⁶ See, e.g., Richard F. Jones, *The Seventeenth Century* (Stanford, 1951), esp. 143–60; Slaughter, esp. 3–11, 217–19; Barbara Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1983), ch. 7; William T. Lynch, *Solomon’s Child: Method in the Early Royal Society of London* (Stanford, 2001), 116–56.

⁷ The *locus classicus* of these studies is *LAM*, esp. 145–75. See further Benjamin De Mott, ‘Comenius and the Real Character in England’, *Publications of the Modern Languages Association* 70 (1955), 1068–81, and ‘The Sources and Development of John Wilkins’ Philosophical Language’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 57 (1958), 1–12; Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (1966), 364; Allison Coudert, ‘Some Theories of a Natural Language from the Renaissance to the Seventeenth Century’, *Studia Leibnitiana Sonderheft* 7 (1978), 56–113 (here 91–105); Michael Isermann, ‘Rational Representation or Secret Analogy? Some Remarks on the Philosophical Language of John Wilkins’, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* 6 (1996), 53–77.

⁸ In, e.g., Jorge Luis Borges, *The Total Library: Non-Fiction 1922–1986*, ed. Eliot Weinberger (Harmondsworth, 2000), 229–32.

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of existing things'.⁹ While Foucault's account of seventeenth-century linguistic thought has been seen as insufficiently informed and discriminating, his notion of language as socially charged 'discourse' has influenced a number of later studies of language projection in the period.¹⁰ Robert Markley, for instance, writes that the English language planners sought 'a semiotic encoding of the order of the material and political worlds', and argues that Wilkins's *Essay* attempted to 'subsume political differences within principles of Protestant and upper-class solidarity'.¹¹ The fullest embodiment of this tendency, however, is Robert Stillman's monograph examining the interpenetration of politics, natural philosophy and the artificial language movement, principally through contextualised readings of Bacon, Hobbes and Wilkins. As Stillman opaquely puts it: 'In the distinctive discourses of Bacon, Hobbes, and Wilkins, discussions about language created a kind of laboratory in which massive problems of authorizing artificially constructed systems of signs supplied both a space and a technology for authorizing sovereign authorities to intervene against cultural crises.'¹² If it is true that all language is a tool for the insidious maintenance and manipulation of authority by the powers that be, then this truth will be decisively underscored in the case of an artificial language – particularly if devised by a Lord Chancellor of England, a political philosopher with a perceived attachment to sovereign absolutism, or a bishop in the Anglican Church.

Over the next couple of hundred pages, it will become clearer that some of these studies, and lines of interpretation, have more to recommend them than others. This notwithstanding, my research has led me to believe that none of them has succeeded in detailing all, or even most, of the seventeenth-century artificial language movement, and that none has provided an adequate interpretation of its historical significance. In this study, I hope not only to have reconstructed the language planners' activities as fully as possible, but to have shown that the artificial language movement was a product of the natural philosophical preoccupations of many

⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (1974), xv. For an account of the artificial language movement explicitly indebted to Foucault, see Murray Cohen, *Sensible Words: Linguistic Practice in England, 1640–1785* (Baltimore, 1977).

¹⁰ See, e.g., Foucault's essays 'Politics and the Study of Discourse', *Ideology and Consciousness* 3 (1978), 7–26, and 'The Order of Discourse' in Robert Young, ed., *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* (1981), 48–78. For criticism of Foucault as an intellectual historian, see Sidonie Claus, 'John Wilkins' *Essay Towards a Real Character: Its Place in the Seventeenth-Century Episteme*, *JHI* 42 (1982), 531–53; Ian Maclean, 'Foucault's Renaissance Episteme Reassessed: An Aristotelian Counterblast', *JHI* 59 (1998), 149–66.

¹¹ Robert Markley, *Fallen Languages: Crises of Representation in Newtonian England* (Ithaca, 1993), 63, 81.

¹² Stillman, *New Philosophy and Universal Languages*, 14.

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early modern thinkers in England. As such, I argue that the movement is interwoven with the language planners' theological beliefs, which would themselves come to overlay political considerations before, during and after the Civil Wars. Further, I have sought not only to shed new light on the interrelationship between natural philosophy and religion in seventeenth-century England, but better to define the relationship between occult and mainstream philosophies of nature.

The sources on which I have based my account include a diverse range of printed and manuscript works, comprising treatises of various types, official records, diaries, correspondence and occasional jottings. These have not presented a collection of readily complementary historical materials with which to work. It might thus be helpful to explain something of the way in which this study has been written. Gibbon began the first instalment of his *History* by noting that 'Diligence and accuracy are the only virtues which an historical writer may ascribe to himself; if any merit indeed can be assumed from the performance of an indispensable duty'. Yet, as Gibbon remarked elsewhere, sometimes not even diligence and accuracy are enough: the sources from which he worked were 'always concise, often obscure, and sometimes contradictory', compelling him 'to collect, to compare, and to conjecture'. Not many of my sources could be described as 'concise', but their obscurity and inconsistency have occasioned me many of the same problems. After Gibbon, I would not seek to 'place . . . [my] conjectures in the rank of facts', but hope nevertheless to have 'supplied the want of historical materials' in a properly sensitive way where necessary.¹³ After Bernard Williams, I have endeavoured to be faithful to the way I take events to have been, and to have written an account that does not sacrifice veracity to coherence.¹⁴ Yet, since to describe at all is to select, any attempt at narrative closure or completeness would be bogus – events will always permit redescription in other terms, the more so in a subject area that may be enriched by further archival nuggets at any time.

In attempting to determine what, if any, broader significance attaches to the English artificial language planning movement, my interpretative criteria are drawn from the writings of Skinner and Pocock. I try to take seriously the Wittgensteinian dictum that 'words are also deeds'.¹⁵ What,

¹³ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 3 vols., ed. David Womersley (Harmondsworth, 1994), 1. 5, 253.

¹⁴ Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton, 2002), esp. 233–69.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory* 8 (1969), 3–53; Quentin Skinner, 'Reply to My Critics' in James Tully, ed., *Meaning and Context* (Cambridge, 1988), 231–88; J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge, 1985), 1–34;

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in short, were English language planners *doing* in pursuing their schemes? What and whom were they responding to? What sources did they make use of, and how did they use them? How did their language planning relate to the rest of their thought? What responses did they hope they would elicit? What responses *did* they elicit? Such questions have not often been asked of English language planning, and, in attempting to answer them, I have tried to engage as fully as possible with the ‘tangled woof’ of the language planners’ milieu.¹⁶ In so doing, I hope to have assessed the artificial language movement in terms that the language planners might themselves have recognised.

2

There is one undisputed – and indispensable – starting point to any study of the language reform movement in seventeenth-century England, a starting point which doubles up as an expedient roadmap for much of the terrain that my study explores: namely, the writings of Francis Bacon, which informed the efforts of every language planner examined herein.¹⁷

Despite the fact that it is usually discussed in terms of its hostility to the established teachings of the philosophy schools, Bacon’s *Advancement of Learning* (1605) takes trouble to attack the shortcomings of, on the one hand, exclusively empirical philosophy, and, on the other, scholastic philosophers who excluded empirical data from their elegant speculations. In a telling passage, Bacon reflected that

the wit and minde of man, if it worke vpon matter, which is the contemplation of the creatures of God worketh according to the stuffe, and is limited thereby; but if it worke vpon it selfe, as the Spider worketh his webbe, then it is endlesse, and brings forth indeed Copwebs of learning, admirable for the finesse of thread and worke, but of no substance or profite.¹⁸

This establishes an expedient platform from which to survey Bacon’s philosophical programme and the place of linguistic reform within it.

For Bacon, knowledge was not ‘as a threade to bee spunne on’, but ‘ought to bee deliuered and intimated, if it were possible, *In the same Methode wherein it was inuented* [sc. discovered]’.¹⁹ The means through which

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. and trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford, 1958), §546.

¹⁶ The phrase is Raymond Chandler’s (*The Chandler Collection*, 3 vols. (1983–4), 1. 143).

¹⁷ On Bacon’s intellectual legacy, see *GI*, passim; M. L. Donnelly, ‘Francis Bacon’s Early Reputation in England and the Question of John Milton’s Alleged Baconianism’, *Prose Studies* 14 (1991), 1–20 (here 4–12).

¹⁸ *OFB*, iv. 24. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

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the human mind reflected on the world were linguistic, and so it was that words were the ‘*Current tokens or Markes of popular Notions of things*’. If these notions, or their verbal representations, were to be ‘grossely and variably collected out of Particulars’, then no remedy could ‘euer correct that Errour; being (as the Phisitians speake) of the first digestion’; once ingested, nothing could mitigate against the deleterious effects of such poison.²⁰ The quotation also brings to mind Bacon’s famous metaphor of philosophical ‘ants’ and ‘spiders’ in his *Novum organum* (1620). The former ‘store up things and use them’, making no effort to transform their empirical learning into useful knowledge, while the latter ‘spin webs from their own entrails’. Bacon’s preferred *via media* was that of Seneca’s scholarly bee: namely, a method which ‘converts and digests’ its empirically collected pollen into philosophical honey. True philosophy will not rely either on ‘the powers of the mind’ or just on ‘material . . . from natural history and mechanical experiments’ laid up in the memory. Rather, it will comprise a form of learning based upon empirical data ‘in the intellect changed and elaborated’.²¹ In other words, and in a characteristically Baconian movement, the methods of neither the *empirici* nor the *dogmatici* were discredited in themselves, but only in as much as they were used (and therefore abused) to the exclusion of one another. Bacon’s corrective methodology of *inductio* involved elements of both approaches, and relied on what can appear to be an intuitive *non sequitur* in the conventional inductive process, leading Urbach to redefine it as ‘hypothetico-inductive’.²² Thus, in *Valerius Terminus*, not published until 1734 but pre-dating the *Advancement* in its composition, Bacon bluntly declared that ‘there is no proceeding in invenc[?]ion of knowledge but by similitude’.²³

Only by so doing would it be possible to realise Bacon’s philosophical ambition, which, as expressed in the *Novum organum*, was to establish ‘in the human intellect . . . a true pattern of the world as we actually find it

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

²¹ *Ibid.*, xi, 153. Cf. Bacon’s *Temporis partus masculus* (posthumously published in Isaac Gruter’s *F. Baconi scripta in naturali et universali philosophia* (Amsterdam, 1653)) in Benjamin Farrington, *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon . . . with New Translations of Fundamental Texts* (Liverpool, 1964), 59–72 (here 63). The image of the bee derives from Seneca, *Epistles*, 84 (‘On gathering ideas’), and was an important one in early modern thought. See, e.g., Desiderius Erasmus, *De duplici copia verborum* (1528), sig. T5^r; Paolo Rossi, ‘Spiders, Ants, Epistemologists’ in Marta Fattori, ed., *Francis Bacon, terminologia e fortuna nel XVII secolo* (Rome, 1984), 245–60; and, in general, Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven, 1982), 72–80.

²² Peter Urbach, *Francis Bacon’s Philosophy of Science* (La Salle, 1987), 16. See further Antonio Pérez-Ramos, *Francis Bacon’s Idea of Science and the Maker’s Knowledge Tradition* (Oxford, 1988), 239–69; Stephen Gaukroger, *Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2001), 138–55.

²³ BL Ms. Harley 6463, p. 4.

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and not as someone's own private reasoning hands it down to him'.²⁴ The true marker of human comprehension, and what Bacon's inductive method aspired to, was knowledge of the 'laws' through which nature operates. For Bacon, these were the determinate physical properties, or 'forms', considered to be so basic that all things could be described in terms of them. They are described in a number of his works, most prominently in the Latin translation of the *Advancement* (*De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* (1623)) and the *Novum organum*. Bacon often envisaged these as 'simple natures', or as the 'cardinal virtues' through which nature functioned. Moreover, Bacon characterised these 'simple natures' as a kind of natural 'alphabet': every kind of natural body was a compound substance made up of them, in the same way that words were compounds made up of letters. It was, however, exceedingly difficult to abstract these simple natures from material reality, and, in the first part of the second book of the *Novum organum*, Bacon described the series of experiments required to investigate just one, heat. In his *Abecedarium* (1622), Bacon listed forty-eight more simple natures, arranged into binaries: heavy, light; hot, cold; tangible, pneumatic; and so forth. Finally, it is worth noting that although simple natures were the goal of *inductio*, they were not the end of natural philosophy in itself. Rather, Bacon valued them for their operative function, useful in the further investigation, and manipulation, of nature: 'from the discovery of forms flows true speculation and unrestricted operation'.²⁵

The fundamental shortcomings of thought and learning that prevented humankind from attaining true knowledge of nature were what Bacon called the four 'Idols' of the mind. Their insidiously unphilosophical nature could be kept in check only through the adoption of Bacon's philosophical reforms. These were first outlined in the *Advancement*, but the fullest presentation of them is in the *Novum organum*. The 'Idol' that he came to see as most dangerous was the 'Idol of the *Market*', or, the philosophical problems that arise through language.²⁶ As language functions as a communicative

²⁴ *OFB*, xi. 187.

²⁵ Quotation from *Novum organum* (*OFB*, xi. 203). See further *OFB*, iv. 84 (*Advancement*); vi. 108–9 (*Descriptio globi intellectualis*); xi. 200–7 (*Novum Organum*), 472 (*Parasceue*); xiii. 174–90 (*Abecedarium*); Bacon, *Advancement*, 162; *Scripta in naturali et universali philosophia*, ed. Gruter, 403–4 (*Cogitationes de natura rerum*). For further discussion, see *OFB*, xi. lxx–lxxvii; xiii. xxxvii–xxxviii; Lisa Jardine, *Francis Bacon: Discovery and the Art of Discourse* (Cambridge, 1974), 109–14.

²⁶ See *OFB*, iv. 117–18 (*Advancement*); xi. 79–97 (*Novum organum*). Studies of Bacon's linguistic thought include Paolo Rossi, *Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science*, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (1968), esp. 166–72; Gaukroger, *Francis Bacon*, 125–7. My discussion of Bacon and language concerns only its role within his philosophical method; Bacon's thoughts on language and stylistics in non-scientific contexts differed markedly. See Brian Vickers, *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose* (Cambridge, 1968); Jardine, *Francis Bacon*, 169–226; Stephen Clucas, 'A Knowledge Broken': Francis Bacon's

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tool through its reflection of the ‘common capacity’, then the meaning of any given word will be ‘along lines most obvious to the ordinary intellect’. This is particularly harmful because, while some delude themselves into believing that ‘their reason rules [their] words’, experience proves that, in fact, ‘words turn back and bend *their* power back upon the intellect; and that has made philosophy and the sciences sophistical and inactive’.²⁷ Better verbal definition was no cure for this problem, as ‘definitions are made up of words, and words beget words, so that it is necessary to go back to particular instances and their sequencing and order’.²⁸ Bacon held that this return to linguistic, and philosophical, first principles might be realised by raising axioms through his inductive method.

Before going further in my discussion of Bacon and ‘language’, I must pause to emphasise something central to a proper understanding of the artificial language movement, namely, that while early modern thinkers considered the shortcomings occasioned by language from a number of perspectives, they did not have a set of conceptual or disciplinary tools with which to investigate, or to analyse, the totality of linguistic activity in itself. Language, in other words, had not yet been theorised into a topic of study in its own right; linguistics did not yet exist. Instead, as Bacon exemplifies so neatly, early modern thinkers were concerned with grammar, poetics, rhetoric, philology, logic, law, natural philosophy, education, politics, theology and medicine (this list is illustrative, not exhaustive), and studied language through, and in as much as it impacted on, these practices and concerns. Although this raises the question of when exactly linguistics *did* come into being, such considerations are (mercifully) beyond the scope of my study. While the ‘history of linguistics’ is a convenient historiographical umbrella under which to examine the various topics that feed into modern conceptions of linguistics, there is a danger that – like the ‘history of science’ – its inherently teleological assumptions will obscure as much as they illuminate. Accordingly, this study is concerned with the idea of language to the extent that it emerges from the writings of those involved with what I describe, anachronistically but not teleologically, as the artificial language movement.²⁹ One of the more striking aspects of this movement – one so obvious, in fact, that it is easy to overlook – is that the more

Aphoristic Style and the Crisis of Scholastic and Humanistic Knowledge-Systems’ in Neil Rhodes, ed., *English Renaissance Prose* (Tempe, 1997), 147–72.

²⁷ *OFB*, xi, 93. ²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ For related discussion, see Ian Maclean, *Interpretation and Meaning in the Renaissance: The Case of Law* (Cambridge, 1992), 1–12, and, more broadly, Karl-Otto Apel, *Die Idee der Sprache in der Tradition des Humanismus von Dante bis Vico*, 3rd edn (Bonn, 1980). See further ‘Note on the text’ above.

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ambitious language planners were compelled to formulate for themselves an idea of what a language, in the most comprehensive sense, could be said to be.

Returning to the beginnings of English language planning, it was not the *Novum organum* to which the language planners turned for their text. Instead, the single most important work in defining the shape of English language planning in the seventeenth century was the Latin expansion of Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, published by William Rawley as the *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* in 1623.³⁰

Here, Bacon began his discussion of language by concurring with the ternary relation of things, notions and language outlined in Aristotle's *On Interpretation*.³¹ As it is impossible to understand the ways in which the seventeenth-century language planners thought without paying heed to Aristotle, I must pause to say a word about what Aristotelian cognitive and linguistic theory comprised. The key – and vexingly laconic – passage of *On Interpretation* reads as follows:

Words spoken are symbols [tokens] or signs of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are the signs of words spoken. As writing, so also is speech not the same for all races of men. But the mental affections themselves, of which these words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of mankind, as are also the objects of which those affections are representations or likenesses, images, copies.³²

There are forms in things (unlike Platonic forms, these are found *within* matter), which are commonly represented in the human mind.³³ These mental representations are represented by words, with spoken words having priority over written ones; these words differ from one language to another. The representation of reality in the mind is in the form of 'likenesses' (*ὁμοιώματα*) impressed upon it. These 'impressions of the soul' are thus

³⁰ See *Francisci Baconis de Verulamio . . . tomus primus: qui continet de dignitate & augmentis scientiarum libros IX*, ed. William Rawley (1623), 270–5. I quote from Francis Bacon, *Of the Advancement and Proficiency of Learning . . . IX Bookes*, trans. Gilbert Wat[t]s (Oxford, 1640). On Watts, see Wood, III, 433–4; for the importance of his translation see *GI*, 49, 127–8.

³¹ Bacon, *Advancement*, 258.

³² Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, 16a3–9. This passage of Aristotle is usefully discussed in C. W. A. Whitaker, *Aristotle's De Interpretatione* (Oxford, 1996), 9–25. On the centrality of a heterogeneous Aristotelianism to early modern linguistic thought, see E. J. Ashworth, "Do Words Signify Ideas or Things?" The Scholastic Sources of Locke's Theory of Language', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 19 (1981), 299–326; Marie-Luce Demonet, *Les voix du signe. Nature et origine du langage à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1992), esp. 87–93; Ian Maclean, 'Language in the Mind: Reflexive Thinking in the Late Renaissance' in Constance Blackwell and Sachiko Kusukawa, eds., *Philosophy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Aldershot, 1999), 296–321.

³³ Cf., e.g., Plato, *Phaedo*, 75a–76a, and *Republic*, 596a–d, 597a.