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The Rhetoric of Origin: Language and Exclusion in Historical Perspective

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When children in Germany poke fun at unintelligible babble by calling it *Rhabarber-rhabarber-rhabarber*, they probably have no idea that the foreign vegetable they refer to carries in its name, *rha barbaron* (rhubarb), the very foreignness that the sound of the non-word evokes. Adults in Greek antiquity introduced the onomatopoetic sound when they characterized all non-Greek speaking foreigners as *barbaroi*. Thus, *barbarian* was a language-based denotation for all foreigners, including those who are not at all *barbaric*. The moral tainting of linguistic difference came much later—and with it the linguistic exclusion, which will be the topic of my talk today.

I take my cues from the printed program of this conference which states that “the concepts of a national community based on ancestral lineage and cultural heritage have been called into question.” In the following, I would like to distinguish more clearly between blood line on the one hand and cultural, especially linguistic tradition on the other and suggest that, while the rhetoric of the first is losing, the rhetoric of the second is gaining momentum. The recent culture wars concerning bilingualism in the U.S. are only one strong indication of this trend.¹ Another is the fact that many of the 100,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union who were identified as Jews in Russia are now treated as Russians in Germany, because their ethnic identification gave way to linguistic identification.

If we follow Benedict Anderson’s assertion “that from the start the nation was conceived in language, not in blood,”² we must, however, also recognize the obvious, namely that the German evidence of racist exclusion on the basis of blood is so overwhelming that the exclusion on the basis of language has received much too little attention. Germany’s long tradition of basing identity on *deutsches Blut*, i.e. on *ius sanguinis* as opposed to *ius soli* as it is practiced in the U.S., was modified only recently in new citizenship laws. As a consequence, the question of whether it was biological or linguistic essentialism that has shaped the German discourse on national identity could gain new currency. In fact, recent attempts at linguistic essentialism recall a philosophical tradition going back all the way to Herder’s and Wilhelm von Humboldt’s idea that language is the vessel for “eine eigenthümliche Weltansicht”³ (a particular world view) and to the Romantic concept of release from alienation through language, as in Novalis’s famous line “Dann fliegt von Einem geheimen Wort / Das ganze verkehrte Wesen fort.”⁴ (Then with the help of a single, secret word the entire falseness dissipates) The belief in the redemptive power of language seems to lurk in the backs of minds of people who try to stem the tide of immigrants by questioning their degree of language proficiency and thus their ability to fully participate in what the CDU politician Friedrich Merz called in 2000 “deutsche Leitkultur” as a gauge for the integration of foreigners.⁵ Their concern about language-based cultural values, which reflect a particularly German *Weltansicht*, implies a belief in the purity of language they want to protect rather than in the purity of blood they, too, find no longer politically correct. But it is the underlying concept of purity that permeates both paradigms.

Two recent controversies may highlight the nexus of identity and language and the exclusionary agenda behind it. In one infamous instance of questioning, or actually trying to prevent, multiculturalism in Germany was the demand of the then-Senator of the Interior in Berlin, Jörg Schönbohm, in June 1998 to base the award of social benefits to foreigners—and he meant mainly the 140,000 Turks who constitute by far the largest minority in Berlin—on the varying degrees of their linguistic competence in German.⁶ In another instance, Schönbohm’s equally conservative successor, Eckart Werthebach, in February 2001 called for legislation that would protect the German language from foreign influence and outlaw the abundant use of anglicisms.⁷ Both Schönbohm and Werthebach used anti-foreign sentiment, one directed against the Turks and the other against Americans, to promote their ideological agenda. And both were confident that language could provide the proper battleground.

Such calls for protective regulation of language are reminiscent of similar recent attempts in France, where Jacques Toubon proposed legislation in 1994 to expand and stiffen the penalties already laid down in the language legislation of 1974.⁸ More historically, such calls remind us of the German language associations founded in the 17th century to emulate the model of the *Accademia della Crusca* in Florence (1582) and to study and promote the German language and its literature free from foreign intervention: The most famous among them are *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft oder Palmenorden* (founded in Weimar in 1617), *Teutschgesinnte Tischgesellschaft* (founded in Hamburg in 1643), and *Pegnesischer Blumenorden* (founded in Nuremberg in 1644). But while the German *Sprachgesellschaften* were designed to consolidate standard German, as it was first practiced in Martin Luther's translation of the New Testament in 1522, and to make uniform and refine the emerging national language for literary purposes, the modern calls for linguistic purity were not meant to overcome regional dialects for the purpose of linguistic integration, but to keep those at bay who are unable or unwilling to adapt to grammatically and idiomatically correct German. As was noted in the heated debate following Werthebach's proposal, he was not at all concerned with the increasingly lax, if not outright faulty use of German in political pronouncements and in the media today, but with the abstract concept of purity as it has traditionally been employed against those who for some reason do not fit the preconceived notion of a homogenous community based on linguistic identity. Clearly, the blame for the decline of German was laid at the door of immigrant foreigners.

It is, of course, easy to dismiss any plea for linguistic purity as a xenophobic agenda and to recall the ridiculous attempt on part of the *Sprachgesellschaften* to replace, for instance, the word *Nase* (nose), which was falsely identified as a French cognate (French *nez*, Latin *nasus*), with the newly coined *Schnupfrohr* (literally sniffing pipe), which understandably never caught on. The purists, who resented the use of French words in the 18th century, when French was the dominant language of European aristocracy, and in the 19th century, when words like *Chaussee*, *Boulevard*, and *Etagé* were reminders of the French occupation under Napoleon, relied as much on anti-French sentiment as the purists today may be inspired by anti-Americanism when they protest the use of *computer* (instead of *Rechner*), *jeans* (instead of *Nietenhosen*), *layout* (instead of *Umbruch*), *boss* (instead of *Vorgesetzter*), or, in German railway stations, the *Info Point* (instead of *Auskunft*). Such anglicisms are considered to be and are often despised as indications of a battle of languages, with German losing and English gaining ground as global *lingua franca*.

Obviously, Europeans are very uncomfortable with the notion of English as a global language⁹ and sometimes lament, somewhat facetiously as did Peter Schneider in a talk in Berkeley five years ago,¹⁰ the fact that Americans are deprived of the chance to experience cultural difference *linguistically*, because supposedly almost everybody in the world speaks their language. But it is the Americans, not the Europeans who are confronted with—and actively confronting—an explosion of languages in their own midst. When undergraduate students at Berkeley represent speakers of up to 100 different native tongues, it comes as no surprise that there is a growing awareness of linguistic difference—especially among the 64 percent of incoming Berkeley students (most of them U.S. citizens) who stated a year ago that at least one of their parents was born outside the U.S. Public sign posts in Spanish, Cantonese, Tagalog and Vietnamese are a common sight in a time which is marked by growing linguistic diversity. As of 1995, the California driver's license test was offered in 27 languages.¹¹ In comparison, it may indeed be the Germans and not the Americans who hold on to an obsolete ideal of monolingualism. The last time I looked (and I may not have looked hard enough) I did not find generally accessible government proclamations or even ballots printed in Turkish, Vietnamese, or Russian, which could address the three most obvious linguistic minorities

in urban Germany. Since foreigners constitute 10 percent of the population in the U.S., but no less than 12 percent in Germany, the contrast between the dramatic linguistic diversification in the U.S. and the continuing claim to monolingualism in Germany is even more striking.

There has been a long tradition of fighting linguistic diversity as well as sociolects and ethnolects in Germany. Contaminated German mingled with words from other languages has been called *Kauderwelsch* since the 15th century, when it was none other than Martin Luther who in 1538 referred to Romansch spoken by a traveler from the Swiss Kanton Chur or Kau(d)er as *Kauderwelsch*. Often confused with Yiddish, *Kauderwelsch* and *Rotwelsch* (an analogous term used only after 1800 to indicate the idiom of thieves) became derogatory terms for corrupted, hardly intelligible German as spoken by foreign intruders, who, for the most part, were French or Jewish.

In a famous literary example of *Kauderwelsch*, Lessing employed cultural stereotyping linguistically in his drama *Minna von Barnhelm* (1764), which gained Goethe's praise for its "vollkommenem norddeutschem Nationalgehalt"¹² (completely North German national content): Minna von Barnhelm, a well-educated aristocrat from Saxony, refuses to speak French, while she is in Germany ("Mein Herr, in Frankreich würde ich es zu sprechen suchen. Aber warum hier?" Sir, I would try to speak it in France. But why here?), and thus forces her visitor, the pompous Chevalier Riccaut de la Marlinière, into Franco-German gibberish:

Gutt, gutt! Ik kann auk mik auf deutsch explizier.—Sachés donc, Mademoiselle – Ihró Gnad soll also wiß, daß ik komm von die Tafel bei der Minister <...> ik speisen à l'ordinaire bei ihm, / und da iß man gekommen reden auf der Major Tellheim; et le Ministre m'a dit en confidence, car Son Excellence est de mes amis, et il n'y a point de mystères entre nous / Se. Exzellenz, will ik sag, haben mir vertrau, daß die Sak von unserem Major sei auf den Point zu enden, und gutt zu enden. Er habe gemakt ein Rapport an den Könik, und der Könik habe darauf resolvier, tout-à-faire en faveur de Major.¹³

When the smooth-talking chevalier turns out to be begging for money for gambling, he insists on translating the German word *betrügen* (to betray) as "corriger la fortune" and pities the German language for being so 'poor' as to call a dishonest act by its name: "O, was ist die deutsche Sprak für ein arm Sprak! für ein plump Sprak!"¹⁴ This linguistic caricature of *Kauderwelsch* tainted by dishonesty was directed as much against French as it was against Frederick the Great, who preferred French over German. Not unlike Riccaut, he called German "eine noch halb-barbarische Sprache" (a still half-barbarian language) but nevertheless wrote an essay in French arguing for the use of German as an academic and literary language.¹⁵ A few years earlier, from 1750 to 1753 Voltaire had been the philosopher in the Prussian king's Potsdam castle, which notably bears the French name *Sanssouci* (lit. without worry), and after the death in 1759 of Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, who had been president of the Prussian Academy of Science since 1741, Frederick II. approached only French luminaries, among them Rousseau, d'Alembert and La Mettrie, to become the successor of Maupertuis. Thus, the broken German of Lessing's Riccaut implied a very timely and rather provocative plea for German as a national language, in fact, it could be seen as the literary beginning of linguistic nationalism, which was embraced by the rising bourgeoisie in opposition to the French-dominated courts all over Europe. Incidentally, even more ironic than Lessing's linguistic characterization of the foreigner is Johann Nestroy's dramatic satire on the short-lived revolution of 1848 in Vienna, *Freiheit in Krähwinkel* (1848), in which a radical journalist, Ultra, assumes the persona of a Russian prince in order to take

possession of the suppressed constitution by faking Russian-accented *Kauderwelsch*: “Verbrensky Proklamatsky Constituzki!”¹⁶

While French was the highbrow challenge to the purity of German, Yiddish or, worse, what was called *mauscheln* or *jüdeln* (meaning to speak and to act like a Jew) lurked at the other end of the spectrum. Derived from the Jewish name Moyshe, the verb *mauscheln* was first used in the 17th century to mark the hardly intelligible German spoken by Jewish tradesmen and soon associated with dishonest speech and action. It is characterized by faulty syntax (no final position of verbs in subordinate clauses), Hebrew phrases, heavy accent, and dramatic gesturing.¹⁷ One of the most anti-Semitic portrayed Jews in German literature is the character of Veitel Itzig in the popular novel *Soll und Haben* (1855) by Gustav Freytag. In social terms, Itzig is so low on the totem pole that even the assimilated Jewish banker Hirsch Ehrenthal, who otherwise comes across as rather obsequious, can afford to look down on him in unparalleled arrogance: “kein asiatischer Kaiser kann so stolz auf die Kreatur vor seinen Füßen heruntersehen.”¹⁸ (No Asian emperor could look down more proudly on the creature before his feet). Yet, in spite of the enormous difference in their social standing, their speech patterns are uniformly characterized by the same *mauscheln*: While Ehrenthal says, “in meinem Geschäft wirst du machen alle Gänge, die ich habe zu machen, und wirst ausrichten alle Bestellungen,”¹⁹ Itzig’s answer follows the same faulty syntax by which all Jews are marked independent of their social standing: “ich will alles tun, daß Sie seien zufrieden mit mir.” (I will do everything that you with me content will be.) As Itzig moves up the social ladder and changes in every other way, his idiom remains the same. Whatever the wealth and influence may be, in language there is no escape from Jewish identity. The linguistic essentialism at work here is bound to an ‘orientalist’ notion of Asian heritage: While Ehrenthal behaves like an ‘Asian’ emperor, even his son Bernhard, who otherwise is completely acculturated in the German concept of *Bildung*—speaking perfect German without any trace of *mauscheln*—can explain his amazing ability to translate Persian poetry into German only with the ‘Asian’ affinity of his supposedly native language: “Durch das Hebräische bin ich zu den andern asiatischen Sprachen gekommen. Es ist viel fremdartige Schönheit in dem Leben dieser Sprachen und in den Gedichten der alten Zeit.”²⁰ (Through Hebrew I came to the other Asian languages. There is much alien beauty in the life of these languages and in the poems of old times.) Obviously, the ‘Asianized’ heritage of Jews is so *fremdartig* (alien) that they can never achieve linguistic assimilation.

Gustav Freytag’s implicitly racist argument was anticipated five years earlier in a much more explicit and vehement diatribe by Richard Wagner in *Das Judentum in der Musik* (1850), which marks the beginning of physiological anti-Semitism. Wagner’s unabashed disgust at the visual appearance of the imaginary Jew, *der Jude*, who bears “etwas dieser Nationalität unüberwindlich unangenehm Fremdartiges: wir wünschen nicht mit einem so aussehenden Menschen etwas gemein zu haben”²¹ (something alien [and] so unpleasant of this nationality that it cannot be overcome: we don’t want to have anything in common with a person who looks like this), is backed up acoustically by the disgust at the mere sound of Jewish speech which to him has the “Charakter eines unerträglich verwirrten Geplappers” (the character of an unbearably confused babble) : “Als durchaus fremdartig und unangenehm fällt unserem Ohre zunächst ein zischender, schrillender, summsender und murksender Lautausdruck der jüdischen Sprechweise auf.”²² (Immediately, a hissing, shrill, humming, and chuckling sound of the Jewish speech strikes our ear as thoroughly alien and unpleasant.) By referring twice to “fremdartig” (alien), the passage exoticizes ‘the’ Jew into a foreign realm where he has no chance of overcoming the ingrained disadvantage of a secondary language.²³

What a difference 150 years makes. With the breakdown of political, ethnic, and linguistic walls in the 1990s imperfect, hybrid, ‘broken’ German has become something of a local fad. Referring to the affected Turko-German spoken mainly in Berlin-Kreuzberg, the artificial ethnolect *Kanaksprak* has developed into a meeting ground for hip youngsters, both Turkish and German, both educated and underprivileged. Following the demand of the Left in the 1970s to lower linguistic barriers in order to make education more accessible also to underprivileged Germans from remote dialect areas, the popular book by Feridun Zaimoglu, *Kanaksprak. 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* has further popularized the idea that the language barrier must be lowered also for underprivileged immigrants in urban areas. But it is exactly this kind of “gebrochenes Türkendeutsch“, as it was stylistically employed already in Emeni Özdamar’s *Mutterzunge* (1990), which scared the conservatives in Berlin into trying to protect the German tongue from foreign, i.e. from foreign-looking and foreign-sounding intruders.

Historically, ridiculing imperfect, mangled German is part of the centuries-old struggle to establish German as a uniform language in its own right and to secure it against Latin, against local dialects, and against French. Already the very first document of the word *deutsch* indicates a linguistic difference between universal Latin usually spoken by the clergy and the regional language spoken by the people. A letter of Charlemagne’s chaplain Wigbold to the Pope states in 786 that the communication at an Episcopal assembly in England took place in both Latin and the people’s language, *tartatine, quam theodisce*, so that all present could understand. Referring in this context to the Anglo-Saxons, *theodiscus*, from which *deutsch* is derived, is the Latinized adjective belonging to *thioda* in Old Saxon and *diot* in Old High German, meaning ‘people.’ When Charlemagne insisted in 801 on speaking *lingua theodisca*, the phrase meant the (Old High) German tongue as opposed to both Latin and the Franconian (i.e. Old French) language of the people. But even almost 900 years later, despite the efforts of the German *Sprachgesellschaften*, the preferred academic language well into the 18th century remained Latin. When in 1687 the philosopher at the university of Leipzig, Christian Thomasius (1655-1728), was the first to announce an academic lecture in German rather than in Latin, the censors blocked the lecture, arguing that philosophical logic simply could not be handled in the German language. Even the Berlin Academy of Science, founded by Leibniz in 1700 to promote the German language, was reorganized by Frederick II as the *Académie Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres*, with French as the preferred language. But there were other challenges to the primary use of German in Germany, especially from the many groups of immigrants invited by the Great Elector of Brandenburg to help with the reconstruction of Brandenburg and Berlin in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War: 500 Dutch colonists were brought in already in 1648, followed by fifty Jewish families, who had been expelled from Vienna in 1670, by Swiss immigrants in 1685, and, most of all, by approximately 20,000 Protestant French, the Huguenots, in 1686. As a consequence, by around 1700 every fifth person in Berlin, when the total city population amounted to little more than 20,000, was a native speaker of French. Until today, place names in Berlin such as *Gendarmenmarkt*, *Französische Straße*, *Französischer Dom*, *Französisches Gymnasium*, and the *Charité* are reminders of the first wave—avant la lettre—of invited *Gastarbeiter*, who eventually settled in Germany, intermarried, and were absorbed into the mainstream culture. But the policy of tolerance was increasingly undermined by affirmations of national identity, including linguistic nationalism, as a vehicle of social protest among the emerging bourgeoisie. This trend came to the fore when the French occupation under Napoleon from 1806 to 1813 prompted German resistance in the name of the German language and culture.

It was in the year following the Prussian defeat in Jena-Auerstedt and the French occupation of Berlin, in 1807, that the first modern German dictionary was published. One of the leading educators in Germany, who had started as the tutor of Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt in 1775-76, Joachim Heinrich Campe prefaced his Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache (1807) by saying that in this time of national despair the German language was “das einzige letzte Band, welches uns noch völkerschaftlich zusammenhält“ (the only and last tie that holds us together as a people) and “der einzige noch übrige Hoffungsgrund, der uns zu erwarten berechtigt, daß der Deutsche Name in den Jahrbüchern der Menschheit nicht ganz verschwinden werde; der einzige, der die Möglichkeit künftiger Wiedervereinigung zu einer selbständigen Völkerschaft uns jetzt noch denkbar macht”²⁴ (the only remaining reason for hope which gives us cause to expect that the German name will not completely disappear from the annals of mankind, the only one that still makes it possible to think of future reunification as an independent people). The philosopher Fichte dared to hold his nationalist Reden an die deutsche Nation in French-occupied Berlin and to suggest under the suspecting eyes of informants in his first speech on December 13, 1807 a program of national education as the sole remedy for keeping the German nation alive: “eine gänzliche Veränderung des bisherigen Erziehungswesens ist es, was ich, als das einzige Mittel die deutsche Nation im Daseyn zu erhalten, in Vorschlag bringe”²⁵ (it is a total transformation of the present educational system that I propose as the only remedy to retain the existence of the German nation.) Fichte’s suggestion that an “eigentümliche deutsche Nationalerziehung”²⁶ (particular German national education) be gleaned from “eine begeisterte Geschichte der Deutschen [...], die das National- und Volksbuch würde, so wie Bibel oder Gesangbuch es sind“ (an engaging history of the Germans, which would become, like the Bible or the hymn-book, the national and popular book) was heeded in more ways than one. In addition to Campe’s German dictionary of 1807, the next decade saw the publication of the Nibelungenlied of 1807 (edited by Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen), Die teutschen Volksbücher of 1807 (edited by Joseph Görres),²⁷ Goethe’s Faust I of 1808, Volks-Sagen, Märchen und Legenden of 1812 (edited by Johann Gustav Büsching),²⁸ Kinder- und Hausmärchen of 1812-15 (collected and edited by the Brothers Grimm), and Deutsche Sagen of 1816-18 (edited by Jakob Grimm)—all of them competing for the title of a quasi-religious “National- und Volksbuch,” in which the German people could find themselves. In the midst of military defeat and foreign occupation, political exile and economic depression the industry of preparing documents of the German language as a rallying point for renewed national confidence and pride was booming. The invention of a German tradition in literary anthologies was in full swing. The defensive attempt to essentialize “den echten innern Geist des teutschen Volkes” (Görres: the genuine inner spirit of the German people)²⁹ was well underway and ready to be expanded in a more aggressive effort to locate those who would not pass the test of *deutscher Geist*. The major criterion of this test is what Germans call *Ursprünglichkeit* (originality).

More than anybody else, Jews were destined to fail the test of originality. When Hitler declared in Mein Kampf (1925/27) “daß [wir] dem Judentum nichts Ursprüngliches zu verdanken haben”³⁰ (that we owe nothing original to the Jews) he only radicalized a rhetorical topos which had been around since the 18th century when the idea of the *Originalgenie* (original genius) emerged as a tool to shed all restrictions of normative aesthetics. But he set the stage for the paradoxical conclusion that the only thing which is original about Jews is their innate incompetence at creating originality because they are essentially bound up, in the words of the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, “in ursprünglicher Fremdheit europäischen Wesens.”³¹ If this precludes any integration or assimilation, the exclusion of such eternally different people is justified linguistically, so much so that Wagner even metaphorizes language as the language of culture in which Jews have no place:

Unsere ganze europäische Civilisation und Kunst ist aber für den Juden eine fremde Sprache geblieben; denn, wie an der Ausbildung dieser, hat er auch an der Entwicklung jener nicht theilgenommen, sondern kalt, ja feindselig hat der Unglückliche, Heimathlose ihr höchstens nur zugesehen. In dieser Sprache, dieser Kunst kann der Jude nur nachsprechen, nachkünsteln, nicht wirklich redend dichten oder Kunstwerke schaffen.³²

Because Jews played no active part in the original emergence of the German language, Wagner argues, they can only fake it when they use it, be it language or culture. Jews, therefore, cannot be, in Hitler's words, "der geniale Gestalter, sondern äußerlicher Nachahmer" (the genial creator rather than superficial imitator), who relies on "Mätzchen und Tricks,"³³ or in Rosenberg's words, they are capable only of "Talmi, Technik, Mache, Effekt, Quantität, Virtuosität, alles was man will, nur keine Genialität, keine Schöpferkraft."³⁴ Though separated by almost 80 years, Wagner, Hitler, and Rosenberg are uncannily united in employing the same sanctioned stereotypes for the same essentialized failing because they partake in the same traditional discourse that is much older and proved much more resistant than the Third Reich.

Called *Ursprungsdenken*, the German discourse of origin has a strong cultural tradition and even stronger literary and critical implications. It reaches from the Renaissance slogan *ad fontes* to the philological study of source materials, with antiquity becoming the primordial model of modern education. It reaches from mythology to politics, with the Germanic hero Hermann being named since the time of Luther as the immortal founder of Germany in the year 9 after Christ, defending Germany against the Romans in the first century, against the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century, and against the Romance French in the nineteenth century. It reaches from Historicism to Positivism, with historical explanation becoming the central methodology of the humanities. And it has ideological consequences, with the vilification of those who lack "Ursprünglichkeit" eventually leading to the most horrid result of exclusionary agendas, the Holocaust. For this reason alone, Theodor W. Adorno became one of the strongest and certainly the best-known critics of German *Ursprungsdenken*. Engaging in a philosophical debate with Heidegger and his followers, Adorno in *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit* (1964) turns against all those who would essentialize their ideological beliefs in metaphysical discourse of the primordial:

Worüber die Hegelsche Dialektik hinausgelangte: das Dogma, der Gedanke bedürfe, um wahr zu sein, eines absolut Ersten, Zweifelsfreien, wird im Jargon der Eigentlichkeit desto terroristischer, je selbstherrlicher er sein Erstes außerhalb des gedanklichen Gefüges ansiedelt. Antisophistik im Endstadium aufbereiteter Mythologie ist verhärtetes Ursprungsdenken.³⁵

(What Hegel's aesthetics transcended: the dogma that thought, in order to be true, requires something absolutely primary, something unquestionable, becomes more terroristic in the jargon of essentialism the more arrogantly it places its primary outside the intellectual structure.)

Meant to repel criticism from intellectuals on the outside, the mythologizing of the origin has been a popular tool to unite and integrate those on the inside, thus creating a community which borrows heavily from the language and symbolism of religious congregations.

Secularization of religion and religious glorification of the nation often work together to create, as in the case of Fichte's call for a "National- und Volksbuch," a 'bible' of national identity which goes back all the way to creation: "In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God." Since the Gospel of St. John the genealogy of our world has been defined in terms of language. And since the Tower of Babel the diversity of language has been tainted as the penalty for hubris, *superbia* and sacrilege, or, in Herder's more secular interpretation of the biblical story of the confusion of languages in 1772: Driven by "Zwietracht" (disunity), the people "verwirrten das Eine ihres Ursprungs, ihre Sprache" (confused the One – the commonality - of their origin, their language).³⁶ Different from what we would expect from Herder, whose major concern is the primacy of language, here he sees linguistic diversity as the result rather than the cause of conflict. If the loss of linguistic origin can be attributed to disunity, such betrayal of original unity takes the place of *superbia* as the sinful and punishable transgression. Herder emphasizes that "Veruneinigung über einer großen gemeinschaftlichen Absicht, und nicht blos die Völkerwanderung mit eine Ursache zu so vielen Sprachen geworden" ('disunification' over a great common objective rather than merely migration has become one of the causes for the existence of so many languages).³⁷ Division is the sin itself rather than the punishment.

If division was man's original sin, creating unity is the mission of poetic language. Just as God's word was the origin of reality before it became fractured in human conflict, the poet's word is the origin of the fictional world. God's creative power of language was the theological justification for the poet to become the *alter deus*, a second god who can create a virtual reality that is once again an undivided unity. As a God-like creator the poet could embark on an anthropological venture into what was believed to be the original language ("adamtische oder Ur-Sprache") and original poetry ("Urpoesie"). With the advent of the *Originalgenie* who is able to create a world of his own without resorting to any set of poetic rules, Herder's *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1772) represents a paradigm shift from theological to anthropological models of cultural genealogy. It set the stage for an increasingly national debate on linguistic inclusion and exclusion.

Following Fichte, Friedrich Schlegel in his lectures of 1812, Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur, declared it essential "daß ein Volk große alte National-Erinnerungen hat, welche sich meistens noch in die dunkeln Zeiten seines ersten Ursprungs verlieren" (that a people has great ancient national memories, which go back to the dark ages of its first origin).³⁸ In addition to Archeology, which carries the origin - *αρχε* in Greek – even in its name, new academic disciplines devoted to the study of beginnings emerged to come to the rescue of the troubled present by exploring and, if need be, by inventing the "ersten Ursprung" of the more glorious past. Historians, however, usually resisted the temptation to study, as Schlegel did, "Erinnerungen aus uralter Vorzeit"³⁹ as history. But while Barthold Georg Niebuhr and Leopold von Ranke laid the methodological ground for historical research by sorting out fiction from historical fact,⁴⁰ the historians of German literature were much more caught up in the fictionalized origin of the German people. Among the first to employ the new term *Nationalliteratur* was Ludwig Wachler, who in his Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der deutschen Nationallitteratur of 1818 remembers the "Trost" (consolation) that was gleaned in 1806 "aus der Geschichte und aus den Denkmälern des deutschen Lebens in Wissenschaft und Kunst;" and he goes on to glorify the national language in rather pompous terms: "als Kleinod wurde bewahret die hehre Muttersprache, die reine Tochter freyer Mannheit; ihr Geist weissagte Errettung aus unwürdigen Banden."⁴¹ It is, of course, the redemptive power of language he is trying to evoke not only for the past, when Napoleon's troops ruled in Germany, but also for the present, when new enemies may

appear on the horizon against whom the purity of the sacred language must be defended. When Hellmuth Winter begins his history of German national literature (1821) in the first chapter with “Das uraltdeutsche Zeitalter (113 v. Chr -768)”⁴² (the ancient German age), we can only guess how far back the German people need to be pushed into “die dunkeln Zeiten seines ersten Ursprungs” (F. Schlegel) to establish the German origin long before mass migration mixed up the original purity of race and language.

It is obvious that in such sweeping vision any *Zuwanderer* who cannot trace his or her ancestry to that mythical beginning has little chance of ever being accepted into the linguistically defined community. Jews were the first to be told that they do not belong.⁴³ When Richard Wagner affirms his linguistic essentialism by saying “Der Jude spricht die Sprache der Nation, unter welcher er von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht lebt, aber er spricht sie immer als Ausländer” (The Jew speaks the language of the nation in which he lives from generation to generation, but he always speaks it as a foreigner),⁴⁴ he means that merely on linguistic grounds Jews can never become *Inländer*. Unlike *Ausländer*, the word *Einländer* does not exist in the German language—except in one important document, the Prussian *Emancipations-Edikt* of March 11, 1812, which regulated full recognition of Jews as “Einländer und Preußische Staatsbürger” only under one major condition: “daß sie fest bestimmte Familien-Namen führen, und daß sie nicht nur bei Führung ihrer Handelsbücher, sondern auch bei Abfassung ihrer Verträge und rechtlichen Willens-Erklärungen der deutschen oder einer andern lebendigen Sprache, und bei ihren Namens-Unterschriften keiner andern, als deutscher oder lateinischer Schriftzüge sich bedienen sollen.”⁴⁵ In order to gain equal rights, Jews had to adopt German names, the German language, and the German (or Latin) script. This three-strike penalty for alterity is, of course, defined linguistically. What on the surface appears as a rather generous adoption into the German language was in fact a forced betrayal of traditional culture. For Jews giving up the biblical patronymic, the Yiddish ethnolect, and the Hebrew script was a major sacrifice without any guarantees that the commitment would be honored. As we have seen, in anti-Semitic discourse Jews were denied the ability to speak anything but an affected, accented, and grammatically mangled German. Even the Jewish master of brilliant German, Heinrich Heine, could not escape this stereotype, for instance, in Heinrich von Treitschke’s judgment: “Oft mißbrauchte er sein Formtalent, um seelenlos das Anempfinden nachzudichten”⁴⁶ (Often he misused his formal talent in order to copy the affected feeling without soul).

If Jews are essentially unable to ever assimilate into the German language, in an ironic way it seems only logical that the spirit of the Edict of Emancipation of 1812 was revoked by the Nazis, and that Jews, who had been pushed into the German language in 1812, were expelled from German in 1933, even before most of them were expelled from Germany, when Jews publishing in German were forced to add a qualifier to their German book titles: “Übersetzung aus dem Hebräischen”⁴⁷ (translation from Hebrew). If Jews wrote in German, a language considered by some chauvinists the original language of nature, their use of German could only be unnatural, secondary, artificial, and a mere derivative; in short, it was nothing but a bad translation: “Talmi, Technik, Mache, Effekt, Quantität, Virtuosität, alles was man will, nur keine Genialität, keine Schöpferkraft” (Rosenberg). All assertions by Jews, unless they return to the original Hebrew to which they had no secular access, were considered fundamentally disingenuous. Since Jews did not have a language of their own that could function as a gauge for their use of secondary languages, they practically lost the right to speak at all. This is the hardly-veiled implication of one of Wagner’s more ominous assertions: The fact that ‘the’ Jew speaks European languages only as adopted, not as innate languages, he argues, must exclude (“muß ausschließen”) him from all genuine and independent

expression.⁴⁸ Obviously, the intended exclusion is much more radical than the pseudo-linguistic argument implies.

In order for the linguistic discourse to become an excuse for the physical as well as linguistic exclusion, German as the language of the mind had to be tied down to the soil, to the very *Blut und Boden* that featured so prominently in Nazi rhetoric. It had to be territorialized. While the first verse of the Deutschlandlied (1841), which was declared the German national anthem in 1922, marked the craved borders of Germany “von der Maas bis an die Memel, von der Etsch bis an den Belt,” it was the unofficial anthem of the 19th century, Ernst Moritz Arndt’s very popular song Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland (1813), that helped turn the linguistic claim into an imperialist one. In this poem each of the German provinces that could constitute ‘the German’s fatherland’—Bavaria, Styria, Mark Brandenburg, Pomerania, Westfalia, the Baltic Sea, the Danube, Switzerland or Tyrolia—is named and rejected with the expansionist refrain: “O nein! nein! nein! / Sein Vaterland muß größer sein!” (Oh, no, no, no, his fatherland must be larger than that!) The final and the only correct answer to the title question is “So weit die deutsche Zunge klingt” (as far as the German tongue reaches):⁴⁹ Germany has to be as large as the geographic range of German. As soon as the German community was defined spatially rather than only mentally and as soon as national identity was conditioned on linguistic territory, physical removal of linguistic outsiders from this territory became a frightful possibility.

At this point I will have to stop. Rather than elaborate on more names, dates and titles to substantiate further my claims, I would like to summarize the tentative observations by emphasizing again that linguistic exclusion, which has taken the place of racist exclusion, has had its own history, in which Turks are only at the end of a long line of imperfect speakers of German, among whom the French and the Jews are the most prominent to be ridiculed, marginalized, and expelled. The notion of purity that underlies both paradigms of exclusion, pure blood and pure German, could be traced to the long tradition of the discourse of origin. Even though this discourse is not at the forefront of current political rhetoric I believe it is important to remember what even very successful immigrant speakers and writers of German today such as Zafer Senocak and Wladimir Kaminer were up against.⁵⁰ Their amazing success in Germany today can be appreciated more fully when it is seen against the background of language-based national identity formation in the past and the subsequent history of linguistic exclusion.

Let me conclude with a playful take on the linguistic exclusion lurking behind the infamous slogan “Ausländer raus!” A few years ago, just when the German capital was moving from Bonn to Berlin, I found graffiti on a wall near the synagogue in the Oranienburger Straße saying: “Rheinländer raus!” For the vandal, the “Einländer” of the 1990s had a Rheinisch rather than a Jewish accent.

¹ Cf. the cover story “One Nation, One Language? The Battle over English in America,” in: U.S. News & World Report, 25 September 1995, 44-48.

² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 1983), p. 133.

³ Humboldt, p. 434.

⁴ Novalis, Heinrich von Ofterdingen (1802), in: *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*. Ed. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel, vol. 1: *Das dichterische Werk* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), 181-369, p. 345. Cf. Hinrich C. Seeba, *Das geheime Wort: Zur heilsgeschichtlichen Kodierung eines Risikos*, in: Stephan Braese and Werner Irro, eds., Konterbande und Camouflage: Szenen aus der Vor- und Nachgeschichte von Heinrich Heines marranischer Schreibweise (Festschrift Klaus Briegleb), (Berlin: Verlag Vorwerk 8, 2002), 75-93.

⁵ Cf. the opposite position in an article by Gustav Seibt, *Großmacht ohne Staatsidee*, in: *Berliner Zeitung* 153, 4./5.Juli 1998, p. 9). Seibt refers to the guilt-ridden "Geschichtsbewußtsein von katastrophischer Zwiespältigkeit," and emphasizes „daß es tatsächlich eine deutsche Leitkultur, die imstande wäre, ausländische Bürger anzuziehen und zu binden, nicht gibt.“

⁶ Cf. Jens Jessen, *Was Schönbohm uns lehrt*, in: *Berliner Zeitung*, No. 135, 13./14. June 1998, p. 4.

⁷ Cf. Dietmar Göllner, *Weltsprache Pidgin*. Werthebachs Gesetz zum Schutz der deutschen Sprache hat den falschen Schuldigen ausgemacht, in: *Die Welt*, 13 February 2001, p. 9: „Gemeint ist: Die Gefahr für das "Kulturgut Nummer eins" (Werthebach) kommt von außen. Werthebachs Vorschlag erliegt dieser Suggestion mit der Forderung nach einem "Schutz"-Gesetz, das gleichsam die Aufgabe eines ideellen Raketenabwehrschildes übernehmen soll. Aber nicht so sehr die Invasion von Fremdwörtern, gegen die man sich verteidigen müsste, sondern Sprachschlampereien und Traditionsverlust machen den akuten Niedergang der deutschen Sprache aus. Die Verballhornungen und Ungenauigkeiten, die in aller Munde sind, verdanken sich weniger lexikalischen Tatsachen als einem nachlässigen Sprachgebrauch. Dass allerlei Formen des "Dummdeutschen" (Eckhard Henscheid) regelmäßig zu festen Bestandteilen des öffentlichen Vokabulars werden, ist ein Problem mangelnden Sprachbewusstseins und also der Anwendung. Werthebachs Vorstoß aber lenkt den Blick vom konkreten Sprachgebrauch auf die globale Expansion des Englischen, die seit jeher unter dem Verdacht des Kulturimperialismus steht.“ The proposal by Werthebach was followed in July 2001 by a similar proposal by the Berlin political scientist Fritz Vilmar for a *Sprachschutzgesetz* (in: *Berliner Zeitung*, 6 July 2001). Cf. Harald Jähner, *Worte wie Bojen*. Der deutschen Sprache geht es besser denn je. Ein Sprachschutzgesetz würde das ändern, in: *Berliner Zeitung* No. 161, 13 July 2001, p. 11: „Die Aufregung um den Sprachverfall ist ein Scheingefecht. Wer sich über Amerikanisierung der Sprache ärgert, sollte ehrlich genug sein, sich über die Attraktivität der amerikanischen Kultur zu empören. Er mag sein Deutsch pflegen und damit überzeugen. Mit kulturellen Schutzzöllen und staatlichen Verboten ist im geistigen Leben nichts zu gewinnen.“

⁸ Cf. Joseph Haimann, *Kostümwechsel des Universalen*. Zu Begriff und Politik der Frankophonie, in: *FAZ* Nr. 129, 7.6.94, p. 12)

⁹ David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (1997), second edition (Cambridge, UK; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Peter Schneider, ["Is there a Euro-Citizen?"], talk at UC Berkeley, 5 March 1999.

¹¹ According to a news report on ABC News on October 18, 1995.

¹² Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, in: *Goethes Werke*, Ed. Erich Trunz, vol. 9 (Hamburg: Christian Wegner, 1964), 7-598 (Book 1-13); vol. 10 (1963), 7-187 (Book 14-20); here vol. 9, p. 281.

¹³ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Minna von Barnhelm* (1764), in: G. E. L., *Werke*. Ed. Herbert G. Göpfert, vol. 1, (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1970), 605-704, p. 666 (IV, 2)

¹⁴ op. cit., p. 670 (IV, 2).

¹⁵ Friedrich II., *Über die deutsche Literatur; die Mängel, die man ihr vorwerfen kann; die Ursachen derselben und die Mittel, sie zu verbessern* (Berlin 1780), in: *Friedrich II., König von Preußen, und die deutsche Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Texte und Dokumente. Hrsg. v. Horst Steinmetz, Stuttgart: Reclam 1985, 60-99, quote on p. 61 f. The original essay, *De la littérature allemande*, was translated by the Prussian diplomat Christian Wilhelm von Dohm (1751-1820), who a year later published his own essay pleading Jewish emancipation, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (1781).

¹⁶ Johann Nestroy, *Freiheit in Krähwinkel*, in: *Werke*, ed. Oskar Maurus Fontana (Munich: Winkler, 1962), 649-713, p. 683 (II, 4). Cf. Hinrich C. Seeba, *Die Sprache der Freiheit in Krähwinkel*. Anmerkungen zu Nestroys *Revolutionssatire*, in: *Austriaca. Studien zur österreichischen Literatur. Festschrift für Heinz Politzer*. Ed. Winfried Kudsus and Hinrich C. Seeba (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1975), 127-147.

¹⁷ Cf. Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, paperback edition 1990), p. 139 f.

¹⁸ Gustav Freytag, *Soll und Haben. Roman in sechs Büchern* (1855) (München: Droemersch Verlagsanstalt, 1953), p. 35 (book 1, chapter 4).

¹⁹ Freytag, p. 37 (I, 4).

²⁰ Freytag, p. 195 (II, 6).

²¹ Richard Wagner, *Das Judentum in der Musik* (1850), in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, Leipzig 1887, 66-85, p. 69.

²² Wagner, p. 71.

²³ Cf. Marc A. Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1995), p. 63: "Wagner perceives the Jew as a foreigner incapable of assimilating, of participating in this, linguistically defined communal idiom."

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- ²⁴ Joachim Heinrich Campe, Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache. Erster Theil (Braunschweig: In der Schulbuchhandlung, 1807), p. XXIII.
- ²⁵ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Fichtes Werke. Ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte, vol. VII: Zur Politik, Moral und Philosophie der Geschichte (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1971), 257-499, p. 274 (first speech).
- ²⁶ Fichte, p. 277 (first speech).
- ²⁷ Joesph Görres, Die teutschen Volksbücher. Nähere Würdigung der schönen Historien-, Wetter- und Arzneybüchlein, welche theils innerer Werth, theils Zufall, Jahrhunderte hindurch bis auf unsere Zeit erhalten hat (Heidelberg: bey Mohr und Zimmer, 1807).
- ²⁸ Johann Gustav Büsching, ed., Volks-Sagen, Märchen und Legenden (Leipzig: bei Carl Heinrich Reclam, 1812).
- ²⁹ Joseph Görres, Die teutschen Volksbücher, in: Die deutsche Literatur. Texte und Zeugnisse, Bd. 5: Sturm und Drang - Klassik - Romantik. Ed. Hans-Egon Hass (Munich: Beck, 1966), 801-812, p. 804.
- ³⁰ Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (München: Verlag Franz Eher Nachfolger, G.m.b.H., ³1930), p. 332.
- ³¹ Alfred Rosenberg, Der Mythos des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts. Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit (1930), (München: Hoheneichen-Verlag, ¹³⁻¹⁶1933), p. 365.
- ³² Wagner, p. 70.
- ³³ Hitler, p. 332.
- ³⁴ Rosenberg, p. 365.
- ³⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, Jargon der Eigentlichkeit. Zur deutschen Ideologie (Frankfurt am Main: edition suhrkamp, 1964), p. 41.
- ³⁶ Johann Gottfried Herder, Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache, in: Sämtliche Werke. Ed. Bernhard Suphan, vol. V (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1891, reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), 1-147, p. 132 f.
- ³⁷ Herder, p. 133.
- ³⁸ Friedrich Schlegel, Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur (Vorlesungen 1812), in: Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe. Ed. Ernst Behler, vol. 6: Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur. Ed. Hans Eichner (München/-Paderborn/Wien: Schöningh, 1961), 1-240, Erste Vorlesung, 9-36, p. 15.
- ³⁹ F. Schlegel, p. 16.
- ⁴⁰ Barthold Georg Niebuhr, Römische Geschichte. Neue Ausgabe von M. Isler (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1873-74), vol. 1, 1873, p. XXII: "Wir müssen uns bemühen Gedicht und Verfälschung zu scheiden, und den Blick anstrengen um die Züge der Wahrheit, befreit von jenen Uebertünchungen, zu erkennen." - Leopold von Ranke, Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494-1514 (1824): Vorrede in: Sämtliche Werke, vol. 33 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, ²1874), I-VIII, p. VII: „erzählen, wie es eigentlich gewesen.“
- ⁴¹ Ludwig Wachler, Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der teutschen Nationallitteratur (2 Theile, Frankfurt am Main 1818-19). Erster Theil (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Hermann-schen Buchhandlung, ²1834), p. 3. Cf. Hinrich C. Seeba, Trostgründe: Cultural Nationalism and Historical Legitimation in 19th Century German Literary Histories, in: Modern Language Quarterly 64.2 (June 2003), 181-197.
- ⁴² Hellmuth Winter, Literärsgeschichte der deutschen Sprach-, Dicht- und Redekunst zum Leitfaden bei Vorträgen über die schöne National-Literatur auf gelehrten Schulen und Universitäten (Leipzig: bey Friedrich Fleischer, ²1829, Berlin ¹1821 as Literärsgeschichte der Sprach-, Dicht- und Redekunst der Deutschen, zum Leitfaden beim Schul- und Selbstunterricht für Deutschlands Jugend).
- ⁴³ Cf. Jeffrey Grossman, The Discourse on Yiddish in Germany from the Enlightenment to the Second Empire (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2000), p. 50: "Ironically, Herder rejects the spoken language of the Jewish people around him, Yiddish, a mixture of Hebrew-Aramaic and predominantly Germanic elements, even as he promotes organic Volk cultures. He also, ironically enough, rejects the possibility of reviving or re-inventing Jewish culture out of the available resources, although he himself seeks to do the same for German culture. As a mixed culture, uprooted from the historical geography where it arose, Jewish culture and the Yiddish language live "parasitically" off of German culture and language."
- ⁴⁴ Wagner, p. 70.
- ⁴⁵ "Edikt betreffend die bürgerlichen Verhältnisse der Juden in dem Preußischen Staate" vom 11. März 1812, in: Ernst Rudolf Huber, ed., Dokumente zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1961), 45-47, p. 45
- ⁴⁶ Heinrich von Treitschke, Deutsche Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert [1876]. Illustrierte Ausgabe (Essen: Emil Vollmer Verlag, o.J. [ca. 1985]), p. 458.
- ⁴⁷ Cf. Victor Klemperer, LTI. Notizbuch eines Philologen (Leipzig: Reclam Verlag, ¹⁵1996), p. 35, and Das Tagebuch 1933-1945. Eine Auswahl für junge Leser. Bearbeitet von Harald Roth. Mit Anregungen für den Unterricht (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), April, 25, 1933, p. 18.

⁴⁸ Wagner, p. 70.

⁴⁹ Ernst Moritz Arndt, Des Deutschen Vaterland (1813), in: E. M. A., Gedichte. Vollständige Sammlung (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, ²1865), 233-235, p. 234. Cf. Hinrich C. Seeba, 'Soweit die deutsche Zunge klingt': The Role of Language in German Identity Formation," in: Nicholas Vazsonyi, ed., Searching for Common Ground: Diskurse zur deutschen Identität 1750-1871 (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2000), 45-57.

⁵⁰ Cf. Oliver Lubrich, Are Russian Jews Post-colonial? Wladimir Kaminer and Identity Politics, in: East European Jewish Affairs 33,2 (2003), 35-53.