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Lingua Adamica and Philology: The Rise and Destruction of a Concept¹

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1 Introduction: The Origin of Language and the Shift of Credibility

The *lingua Adamica* seems, at first glance, to be a strange and merely academic subject.² However, one has to consider that the idea of the divine origin of language was **the** common theory in the Western tradition from the first century CE until the first half of the eighteenth century. So, for 1700 years, the theory of the *lingua Adamica* was a remarkably stable view of the notion of language and of its origin and potential. Yet from 1740/50 onwards, the question of how languages had emerged was discussed anew. Discussions of the genealogy of language led into a set of complicated arguments. In particular, the question of whether logic—which is evidently dependent on language and syntax—has a temporal index provoked unsolvable paradoxes. It is obvious that the question of whether there was a time when logic was not valid does not make any sense. Sensualist accounts of the origin of languages may perhaps have been capable of explaining the origin and etymology of single words, but they were unable to deliver a plausible account of how syntax and logic emerged. That is why, just at the apex of the discussions about the natural origin of language, the Berlin pastor Johann Peter Süßmilch (whose work on demographic statistics anticipated that of Malthus) wrote a booklet in 1766 entitled *Essay on a Proof That the First Language Had Its Origin Not from Mankind, But from the Creator*.³ His argument was precisely this: that there is no plausible argument that can explain how logic could develop naturally. And indeed, the discussion on the origin of languages ended without a result: in 1832, the ‘Société Linguistique’ in Paris declared in its statutes that it would not permit any discussion of the origin of language.

1 The first part of this lecture has already been published; see Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, “*Lingua Adamica* and Speculative Philology: Philo to Reuchlin,” in *For the Sake of Learning: Essays in Honor of Anthony Grafton*, eds. Ann Blair and Anja-Silvia Goeing (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 572–580. The English translation of this lecture was aided by Millay Hyatt and Andrew Johnston.

2 Allison P. Coudert, ed., *The Language of Adam – Die Sprache Adams* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999). Philologically and philosophically, this book (including my own paper in it) does not really achieve its goal.

3 Johann Peter Süßmilch, *Versuch eines Beweises, daß die erste Sprache ihren Ursprung nicht vom Menschen, sondern allein vom Schöpfer erhalten habe* (Berlin: Buchladen der Realschule, 1766; reprinted Köln: Themen, 1998).

Any discussion of the subject of the *lingua Adamica* inevitably leads to a second, even more intriguing question: how is it possible that philosophical and theological truths may lose their believability? In what way are they true? Is it plausible to say that Kant's transcendental philosophy, Hegel's objective idealism, or Wittgenstein's theory of *Sprachspiele* ('language games') is true? Or is it more convenient to say that they are plausible? But what can that mean? Plausibility does not mean anything more than meeting with approval. Is approval sufficient for the claim of philosophical truth, which arguments had in the past? The question that is most intriguing within the subject of the *lingua Adamica* can thus be phrased: how did the idea of the divine origin of language achieve and lose its credibility? Here I present the first part of this history of truth claims: the rise of concessions to the truth in philosophers from Philo to Reuchlin.

2 The Rise of Credibility: from Philo to Reuchlin

2.1 Philo's Cosmic and Earthly Adam

Few books have been provided with so many commentaries as the Book of Genesis; I think it is by far the most discussed book in the world. The reason for this astonishing fact is possibly that Genesis contains an account of the becoming of the world, of the creation of men, of the beginning of human wisdom, and of the origin of evil. All this is told in a brief, concise story, without any philosophical pretensions. Yet no other story has provoked so many philosophical interpretations. One of them is the subject of this paper, viz. the idea of the *lingua Adamica*: can such a discussion can be classified as philosophical at all, or is it merely a vain speculation?

The Book of Genesis has two accounts of man's creation. The first is:

'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26 f.)

The second account contains Adam's creation from dust and Eve's creation from Adam's rib:

Then the Lord God formed a man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7) [...]

So the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he formed into a woman and brought her to the man. The man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and

flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.⁴ (Genesis 2:21–23)

In between stands the passage concerning the *lingua Adamica* in Genesis 2:18–20:

And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.

And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

And Adam gave names to the cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help to meet for him.

Philo of Alexandria conceived the first (and, moreover, a very long lasting) interpretation of these passages. In his commentary on the Book of Genesis, he interprets Adam in a twofold way. The Adam created in God's image is identified with the Platonic cosmic man, the androgynous macro-cosmos who is the archetype of the word; the spiritual Adam, 'he that was after the image was an idea or type or seal, an object of thought, incorporeal, neither male nor female, by nature incorruptible.'⁵ In opposition to this pure, spiritual, supra-individual, androgynous Adam, the individual Adam is composed of soul and body. His body was created, though Philo does not say from where. The Adam who was made from dust and whose wife was formed from his rib is composed of bodily and spiritual parts, and this bodily Adam is the one who fell into sin. His soul, however, partakes of the eternal Father and Ruler of all:

For that which He breathed in was nothing else than a Divine breath that migrated hither from that blissful and happy existence for the benefit of our race, to that end that, even if it is mortal in respects of its visible part, it may be in respect of the part which is invisible be rendered immortal.⁶

The earthly Adam was created by the hand of God. Because of this immediate creation, he is 'a born ruler and master'⁷ of all beings, and, before his fall, he named all things, thanks to divine grace. In the process of naming, Adam had insight into the inner essence of things. His names denote the signatures of the things and indicate the archetypes of creation before they were called into extra-mental existence. Their power can be evoked again by their Adamic names:

4 'Man' in Hebrew: *ish*; 'woman' in Hebrew: *isha*; Vulgate: *vir, virago*.

5 Philo, *De creatione mundi. On the creation*, in Philo, *Works*, trans. Francis H. Colson and George H. Whitaker, vol. 1 (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1929): 134.

6 *Ibidem*, 135.

7 *Ibidem*, 83.

For the native reasoning power of the soul being still unalloyed, and no infirmity or disease or evil affection having intruded itself, he received the impressions made by bodies and objects in their sheer reality, and the titles he gave were fully apposite, for right well did he divine the character of the creatures he was describing, with the result that their natures were apprehended as soon as their names were uttered.⁸

2.2 Denis Pétau on Philo and Chrysostomus

Before the nineteenth century, Philo was not accepted as part of the Jewish tradition. Instead, from the time of St. Jerome onwards, he was counted as one of the Church Fathers, because he taught a logos theology that was close to the Gospel of St. John and to the spirituality of St. Paul. He was part of the Christian tradition, before the Hamburg philologist Johann Albert Fabricius destroyed the pious myth,⁹ and so it is obvious why the Jesuit Denis Pétau (1583–1652), one of the great important theologians, philologists, chronologists, and intellectual historians of the seventeenth century, summarised Philo's theory in his *Dogmata Theologica* (1644). However, his interpretation gave Philo a new slant: it was not so much the participation in the divine wisdom that he attributed to Adam, but rather the more rational interpretation that Adam had command over the animals.

Philo Judaeus says in his *De mundi opificio*: God let Adam give perfect names to all the animals. These names encompassed wisdom and the dignity to rule. Adam was wise because he learned by himself and was not taught by anyone, only accompanied by an act of divine grace, and that was the reason why he was king. It is the task of leaders and princes to give proper names to all their subjects.¹⁰

Pétau also quotes the Church Father John Chrysostom, who shares Philo's (and Pétau's) interpretation of the *lingua Adamica* as wisdom and command over the animals. He combines Genesis 1:26 ('let man and woman have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth') with the account of the divine origin of Adam's language, and therefore emphasises that man was the ruler over all species of animal. For him, Adam was like an owner and master of slaves who changes the names of his servants after he buys them. Chrysostom em-

⁸ *Ibidem*, 150.

⁹ Johann Albert Fabricius, *De Platonismo Philonis Judaei* (1693), repr. in idem, *Opusculorum Historico-Critico-Literariorum Sylloge* (Hamburg: Felginer, 1738): 147–160.

¹⁰ Dionysius Petavius (Denis Pétau), *Dogmata Theologica* (Paris: Vives, 1866): T. IV. Theologicorum dogmatum De opificio sex dierum, Lib. II, Cap. VIII, 265b: 'Philo Judaeus in libro *de mundi opificio*, Optime, inquit, et impositionem nominum primo homini tribuit. Id enim opus est sapientiae, ac regiae dignitatis. Porro ille sapiens erat, qui a seipso didicerat, nec ab alio perdoctus fuerat, divina quadam id gratia consecutus; sed etiam praeterea rex erat. Est autem duci, ac principi consentaneum, unicuique subjectorum sibi proprium nomen assignare.'

phases the force of the *lingua Adamica* to command, whereas the idea of participation in the divine logos evidently does not play an important role for him. Of course, as a consequence of the fall, Adam's dominating power over the animals was lost for all mankind.¹¹

In any case, the quotations in Pétau clearly prove that Philo was still counted as an authority of Christian Dogmatic until the seventeenth century.

2.3 Reuchlin: *De Arte Cabalistica*

a Logos Theology

In the early modern era, it was Reuchlin who renewed the Church Fathers' theories and made the idea of the *lingua Adamica* a key concept of the Christian Kabbalah. Reuchlin shared Giovanni Pico's conviction that no art 'makes us more certain of the divinity of Christ than magic and the Kabbalah.' The divinity of Christ includes the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the incarnation of the logos in Jesus Christ, and his resurrection.¹² To prove this theory, Reuchlin used the topos of the wonderworking word, *verbum mirificum*: an intertwining of logos theology, magic of the word, and Christological prophecy. He merged all this in the *Ars Cabalistica*, and this Christian Kabbalah had the aim of reconstructing the paradisiacal *lingua Adamica* lost with the fall.

The real wonderworking word was the divine word, which created the world from nothing. The wonderworking word encompassed two elements: the first was the essence of all things, which were preconceived in the divine mind (the divine Sophia); the second was the force to make these ideas of the divine Sophia extra-mentally real (*fiat, vehementia essendi*). The *lingua Adamica* revealed insight into the divine Sophia, i.e. into the essential concepts of things, and Adam's command over them was the shadow of God's power to call things from mental into extra-mental material existence. God's primordial intellect and the might of His word were united in the divine logos in which Adam participated when he was granted the right to name God's creatures.

This is how—according to Philo of Alexandria—the prologue to the Gospel of St. John could and should be read. Obviously, the prologue begins as an allusion to the

11 Chrysostomos, *Homilia XIV in Gen. Pétau, Dogmata Theologica* (Paris: Vives, 1866): T. IV., col. 265: 'Hoc impus admirabilis cujusdam in Adamo sapientiae specimen praedicat Joannes Chrysostomus, sed et alteram causam adjicit, dominatus in animantia caetera, ,cujus argumentum in illa nominum imposition praebuit. Nam et hominibus usitatum illud est, hoc uti signo dominationis, ut cum servos emerint, eorum nomina commutent.'

12 Johannes Reuchlin, *Gutachten über das jüdische Schrifttum*, ed. and trans. Antonie Leinz-v. Desauer, Pforzheimer Reuchlinschriften 2 (Konstanz: Thorbecke, 1965): 75: 'There is no art that makes us more certain of the divinity of Christ than magic and the Kabbalah.' The quote is from Pico's *Apologia*, see Giovanni Pico, *Opera omnia* (Basel, 1557–1573; ND Hildesheim: Olms, 1969): 166.

first words of the Hebrew Book of Genesis: *bereshit bara elohim* ('In the beginning God created'). The beginning of St. John's Gospel is analogous: ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος. The complete verse reads as follows: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word. The same was in the beginning with God.' For Christians, this text could only, in the first instance, be read as a hint towards the Holy Trinity: Christ is God's Word, by which God becomes aware and cognizant of himself, and this reciprocity was considered as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, the 'Word' was intertwined with the inner-Trinitarian concept of the Deity. Secondly, the Word's power became obvious in the creation of the world through the Word: 'All things were made by Him (i.e. the Word); and without Him was not anything made that was made.' On the one hand, this verse shows the process of creation through the word, and this creating word was communicated to Adam when God revealed the names of the animals to him (Genesis 2:19 ff.). On the other hand, it is obvious that this logos is also the inner-Trinitarian one and therefore the logos of the Father. The prologue to St. John's Gospel has a third interpretation of the logos: ὁ λόγος ἐνσαρκός: 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelled among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' (John 1:14) St. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, corroborated this interpretation and concentrated the whole process of logos theology in the name of Jesus: 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' (Philippians 2:9–11)

So, it was obvious for Christian theologians how the 'Word' was intertwined with the Divine Trinitarian essence, with the process of the conceiving and becoming real of the creation, with Jesus as the Christ, and Adam participated in this process when God revealed the divine language to him.

b Kabbalah as *symbolica receptio*: JHSWH

Reuchlin takes the consequences of the theology of logos even further; he alludes to St. Paul's typology of Christ and Adam¹³ and quotes Genesis 3:22, where God says: 'Ecce, Adam sicut unus ex nobis.' This verse corroborates a typological correspondence between Christ and Adam. For Reuchlin, Adam therefore has both a cosmic and a Christological meaning, and he quotes the appropriate passage from *Onqelos*, the Aramaic (Chaldaic) paraphrase of the Book of Genesis: 'Behold, Adam was my only begotten Son, the only one and in eternity from me.'¹⁴ In other words, prelapsarian

¹³ 1 Corinthians 15:22: 'For as in Adam all die, even also in Christ shall all be made alive.'

¹⁴ Johann Reuchlin, *On the Art of Kabbalah/De Arte Cabalistica*, trans. Martin and Sarah Goodman (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993): 70: 'Ecce, Adam fuit unigenitus meus sive unicus meus in aeternitate ex me ipso.'

Adam, too, participated in this inner divine logos of God. Human paradisiacal knowledge culminated in the *lingua Adamica*, with which Adam, the ‘protoplast,’ named the animals (Genesis 2:18–20). ‘And it was incidentally this singular and astute insight with which the protoplast himself, who already was master of the world, gave a name to each and every thing that presented itself to him.’¹⁵

This human insight into the will and knowledge of God was lost with Adam’s fall. With the fall, the analogy between the Christological cosmic and the earthly Adam takes on a new meaning. Christ, the cosmic Adam, *sicut unus ex nobis*, who was preferred to the angels, now has to be newly revealed as the coming redeemer to the fallen human souls by the angels:

After this unhappy fall of the race of man, God taught his angels about redemption, ‘the coming salvation, and through whom it would come.’ Of course, he only taught them as much as the angels, with their status, could comprehend. He showed them the presence of the one who would redeem the human race, for man’s salvation was completely predestined. And so he said: ‘Behold, here is that Adam who not only existed in essence after you and the world came into existence, but who also was one of us in eternity before all creation and before time began.’¹⁶

Restoring the knowledge of the redeemer is part of the divine project of the salvation of mankind after the fall. This knowledge has its magical focus in the saviour’s name, which is the core of the *lingua Adamica*; it is the divine name in which all wisdom and might was united, and the aim of all the attempts of the Christian Kabbalah. It is participation in the logos, who is part of the life of the Holy Trinity, who created the word, and who became flesh.¹⁷

It is for this reason that the messianic Christological aspect is the dominant theme of Reuchlin’s Kabbalah, and he has a key narrative for his access to the core of the *lingua Adamica*, the name of Christ. In the terms of his Kabbalah, this means that the Kabbalah of the name of God is based on the *shin* in the tetragrammaton, which thereby becomes a pentagrammaton.

15 Reuchlin, *On the Art of Kabbalah/De Arte Cabalistica*, 66: ‘Caeterum et hoc ingenii erat videlicet singularis et acerrimi cuique rei protoplastus ipse iam orbis dominus spontaneo positu nomen adderet.’

16 Reuchlin, *On the Art of Kabbalah/De Arte Cabalistica*, 70: ‘Post miserabilem itaque generis humani casum docuit angelos suos deus de restitutione aliquando futura salutis, per quem nam ventura esset, et quidem docuit non quantum ipse docere, sed quantum capere angelica conditio poterat, in praesentia demonstrans quis esse humanum genus redempturus, tunc enim praedestinata plane fuerat salus hominum, quapropter Ecce inquit hic est ille Adam qui non tantum post orbis et uestri ortum essentialiter est, sed etiam ante omnem creationem in aethernitate fuit unus ex nobis antequam tempus fieret.’

17 This intertwinement of logos speculation, Trinitarian theology, theology of creation, and Christology obviously cannot be accepted by Jews. Rabbinic theology—if a theo‘logy’ exists—can only accept creation through the word; the rest of logos speculation is suspicious.

Reuchlin begins the story of these kabbalistic revelations with the promise of the Messiah, imparted to the fallen Adam by the angel Raziel. This is the key story of his messianic Kabbalah:¹⁸

And so the angel Raziel was sent to fallen Adam, who was filled with grief, in order to comfort him. The angel said: Do not succumb to excessive pain and grief, because under your guidance the human race was plunged into the worst perdition. Original sin will be atoned for like this: from your descendants will be born a just and peaceable man, a man of peace, a hero whose name exists *in mercy* and in the four letters **i.h.u.h.** He will extend his hand for the true faith and a sacrifice agreeable to God and take from the wood of life, and the fruit of that wood will be the salvation of all who hope.¹⁹

This is the messianic hope, fulfilled for the Christians in the wood of the cross, but still to come for the Jews.

The following passage is proof of Reuchlin's philology as well of his speculative kabbalistic abilities. It is a little complicated; however, it makes clear that Kabbalah, too, is philology, and that it is also the summit of speculation. It is speculative philology.

Genesis 4:26 reports that Adam's clan began calling on God's name שם (*shem*) beginning with the birth of Adam's grandson Enosh. 'God' is written as a tetragrammaton (יהוה) here. The key words are *shem* and the tetragrammaton: שם יהוה. Reuchlin now highlights the special meaning of the *shin* in the word *shem*, which is spelt with the Hebrew letters *shin* and *mem*. He combines *notaricon* and *gematria*, the kabbalistic methods of interpretation. (*Notaricon* means that the letters of a word are read as the first letters of other words. *Gematria* is the interpretation of letters as numbers.²⁰) According to the *notaricon* method, the Hebrew letters ש (*shin*) and מ

18 The surviving part of the *Book of Razi'el* consists of mystical, cosmological, and magical texts. It has nothing in common with Reuchlin's account. It includes writings from *Merkavah* and *Heikhalot* literature and from the *Sefer ha-Razim* as well as a version of the *Sefer ha-Malbush*. The title and the legend of the *Book of Razi'el* presumably derive from the introduction to the *Sefer ha-Razim*. According to this legend, the angel Razi'el revealed the secrets (of all ages) to Adam shortly after he was driven out of paradise. In addition to these early writings, the collection also includes literature by the thirteenth-century *Haside Ashkenaz*, primarily from the *Sode Razayya* by El'azar ben Yehuda of Worms, as well as kabbalistic texts on the Sefirot and interpretations of the name of God. The book was first published in Amsterdam in 1701 and, since owning it was widely believed to keep fire and other dangers away from the home, it was reprinted many times.

19 Reuchlin, *On the Art of Kabbalah/De Arte Cabalistica*, 72: 'Missus est igitur angelus Raziel ad Adam collapsum et moerore plenum, ut consolaret eum, cui sic dixit. Ne supra modum conficias gemitu et molestia quod te duce genus humanum in summa corrui perditionem. Quoniam originale peccatum hoc expiabitur. Nam ex tua propagatione nascetur homo iustus et pacificus, uir heros, cui nomen continebit in miserationibus, etiam quas quatuor litteras **i.h.u.h.** et ille per rectam fidem et placidam oblationem mittet manum suam, et sumet de ligno uitae, et ejus ligni fructus erit omnium sperantium salus.'

20 The word 'notarikon' derives from the Latin and means 'shorthand;' it is also used as a kabbalistic exegetical method.

(*mem*) of the word שם (*shem*, ‘name’) stand for the spelled-out letter שין (*shin*) and מתוך (*mitokh*, ‘in the middle’). Thus, following the *notaricon* method, Genesis 4:26, שם יהוה can be read: ‘*Shin* is in the middle of the tetragrammaton.’ So much for the *notaricon* explanation of the word שם. According to *gematria*, the letter ש *shin* has a numerical value of 300. This is also the numerical value of ברחמים (*be-rahmim*, ‘in mercy’).²¹ The prophecy the angel Raziel revealed to Adam was: ‘A hero whose name exists **in mercy** and in the four letters **i.h.u.h.**’ So, when the *shin* ש is introduced into the tetragrammaton, you have the solution to the riddle. With the *shin* in the middle of the tetragrammaton, which means ‘in mercy,’ the tetragrammaton can be pronounced as Jehoshua; Jesus. So the *shin* makes the tetragrammaton pronounceable, which means that the *shin*, the symbol of Jesus Christ, when positioned in the middle of the divine name יהוה, reveals the divine mercy and grace, because through the *shin* God’s name is pronounceable. The *sensus analogicus* thus is: Jesus is the way to the otherwise unpronounceable God.

Divine might and wisdom are focused in the name of God, thus the newly invented pentagrammaton יהוה is the kernel and centre of the magic of the *lingua Adamica*; this is the name before which ‘every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.’ (Philippians 2:9–11) Reuchlin was convinced here that he had found the key to universal wisdom and magic. So if one tries to find a combination of *lingua Adamica* and philology—viz. speculative philology—one has it here with Reuchlin, and on a remarkable level.

What truths does Reuchlin tell? What kind of philological proofs does he present? He transferred Philo’s concept of *lingua Adamica* into Christian Kabbalah. Reuchlin does not copy Philo’s interpretation at all. He has his own much more comprehensive approach to explain the *lingua Adamica*. His theology of language elevates speculative philology into the only truth that matters, the name of God himself, of which everything else is a derivative, such as the naming of the animals which Adam then does. Reuchlin is a believer in the truth of the Bible as well as in the truth of the divine ideas directly communicated to human minds. His theological speculations and his philological skills laid the ground for the credibility of kabbalistic exegesis in the early modern era. With this exegesis, he set the standards of analogical interpretations, which founded the fruitful development of Christian Kabbalah for 200 years. It took until the eighteenth century for critical philology to murder her speculative sister. But that is another story.

21 In detail: ב (= 2), ר (= 200), ה (= 8), מ (= 40), י (= 10), מ (= 40).

3 The Destruction of the *Lingua Adamica*. The Process of Discrediting Theories

Discrediting something is in many cases a silent, but very effective process; it works like calumny.²² Such a decrease in credibility and credit can also be observed in theories and in varieties of speculation. However, it is difficult to understand this process. It constitutes something like a miracle in the histories of philosophy, philology, and the humanities that certain theories lose their credibility, although it cannot be said that their arguments become explicitly wrong; however, they look increasingly aged, no longer seem up to date, become dull and finally are considered absurd. This was also the case with the *lingua Adamica*, and the process of its discrediting is rather long. I shall try to sketch some of the stages of this process of disillusionment.

For the Jewish tradition, Philo was no authority, and for good reason. His theology of logos was too close to Christian Trinitarian theology and Christology, and this was of course unacceptable for the Jewish rabbis. Even though the Jewish theology of creation highlighted the word through which the world was made, Jewish theologians (if one can speak of 'logians' at all) did not follow the Greek speculations on logos. The platonic interpretation of the *lingua Adamica* which Philo, a Greek Jew, offered them, was too close to Trinitarian and Christological trains of thought. Consequently, the idea of the *lingua Adamica* became a Christian rather than a Jewish doctrine. So it is hardly astonishing that competing interpretations of the passage Genesis 2:18–23 which proved the idea of the *lingua Adamica* first came from Jewish exegetical traditions.

Just to recall: the passage which Philo first interpreted as an account of the *lingua Adamica* began with God's deliberation in Genesis 2:18–20: 'And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.' The following verse is the passage which triggered the interpretation of the *lingua Adamica*:

And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to the cattle and to the fowl of the air and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help to meet for him.

So much for the account of Adam's naming of the animals. The biblical text continues:

So the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he formed into a woman and brought her to the man. The man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and

²² Cf. the aria 'La calunnia è un venticello' in Gioachino Rossini's opera *Il barbiere di Siviglia*.

flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ (Genesis 2:21–23).

3.1 Naḥmanides (1195–1270) and Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508): No Help for Adam Which He Would Be Able to Call ‘a Living Soul’ Like His Own Name

It was Naḥmanides (aka Ramban) who took into consideration that Adam’s naming of the animals had nothing to do either with the divine creating word or with the philosophical speculations of human insight into the divine logos embracing the essence of things. In his commentary on Genesis 2:19, Naḥmanides writes:

It is possible that the phrase be explained in connection with the matter of ‘the help’ that God gave to Adam, and the meaning is the *ha’adam nefesh ḥayyah* (‘the man is a living soul’), as is said, *And man became a living soul* [Genesis 7], and it is as I have explained it there: ‘And He brought before him all species so that every one of them unto which Adam would give a name and say it is a living soul like himself, that would remain its name and be a help to him. So Adam gave names to all, but as for himself he found no help which he would be able to call ‘a living soul’ like his own name.’²³

The interpretation is obvious: *nefesh* (‘soul’) and *shem* (‘name’) are connected, and the name is the expression of the soul. Therefore, the meaning of the biblical passage is that Adam did not find a living being that had a soul like his own. Since Adam had no help and companion who had the same kind of soul as him, Eve was to be made from Adam’s substance. Consequently, the story of Eve continues with her creation from Adam’s rib. The whole account receives its meaning without any mention of the *lingua Adamica* with all its Platonic implications. This is not a lengthy and elaborated interpretation like Philo’s or Reuchlin’s, but it concisely makes sense of the whole difficult account of Eve’s creation.

Precisely this exegesis could be found about three hundred years later in Isaac Abravanel’s (1437–1508) *Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (c. 1505)—that is, just to recall, exactly the time when Reuchlin conceived his ideas of the *lingua Adamica* and the wonderworking word. Abravanel writes:

Comme il est dit ensuite: ‘Et l’homme ne trouva point d’aide qui lui corresponde’. Il n’a pas trouvé parmi les animaux, en face et devant lui, une femelle capable de lui être une aide qui le serve alors que tel était le but de ce rassemblement. En effet, D. n’a pas voulu lui donner une femme avant qu’il en ressentit la nécessité, qu’il la recherché, et qu’il ne trouve pas de femelle qui lui convienne parmi toutes les espèces animales. C’est alors qu’il la lui a faite, de sa chair et de sa substance.²⁴

²³ Naḥmanides, *Commentary on the Torah: Genesis*, trans. Charles B. Chavel (New York: Shilo Publishing House, 1971): 77.

²⁴ Isaac Abravanel, *Commentaire du récit de la création (Genèse 1:1 à 6:8)*, trans. Yéhoua Schiffers (Paris: Verdier 1999): 350f.

So here, at least for more prosaic philological and hermeneutical minds with no interest in logos theology, it became obvious that the *lingua Adamica* was mainly a Christian speculation or—in Jewish eyes—rather a phantasm.

3.2 Marin Mersenne

Marin Mersenne, a French Franciscan monk, astronomer, philologist, and mathematician and one of the best and busiest networkers in the seventeenth century, a friend of Gassendi and Descartes and an avid anti-kabbalist, wrote a huge commentary on the Book of Genesis with the title *Quaestiones celeberrimae in Genesim*, which was printed in 1623. The book has a chapter entitled “De scientia Adami, & intellectus ornamentis.”²⁵ Mersenne comments on Genesis 20:2, which in Latin reads: ‘Appellavit Adam nominibus suis cuncta animantia, & universa volatilia coeli, & omnes bestias terrae. Adae verò non enveniatur adiutor similis eius.’²⁶

a Quotation of Nahmanides

It is important that Mersenne cites the last verse of this famous biblical passage, since it is here that the germ of the destruction of the concept of the *lingua Adamica* lies hidden. Mersenne does not openly draw the hermeneutical conclusions of the last sentence. However, he quotes Nahmanides as the best commentary on this passage: Adam did not find any animal to whom he could have given a name corresponding to his own as *ish* (‘man’) until he saw a woman, whom he called *isha* (‘woman’), because she was obviously suited to him.²⁷ He evidently knew the sceptical and dry elimination of the *lingua Adamica* by the Jewish exegete, but that did not prevent him from giving an explicit explanation of how Adamic wisdom could be imagined and explained in terms of the Aristotelian theory of knowledge.

b Philosophical Considerations about the Adamic Language

1 The Limits of Adam’s Knowledge: Hebrew Grammar Sufficient for the Explanation of the Holy Scriptures

Firstly, he deals with the philosophical question of whether the names of the things are imposed on those things or whether they derive *ab ipsa natura*. Evidently, he believes that Adam was given insight into the essence of the things by God. It is remarkable that the sceptical Mersenne concludes: ‘It is not dangerous if we concede to

²⁵ Marin Mersenne, *Quaestiones celeberrimae in Genesim* (Paris: Cramoisy, 1623): col. 1201–1221.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, col. 1201.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, col. 1201: ‘Ramban ait nullum animal reperisset Adamum, cui nomen ex proprio suo nomine יש [*ish*] deductum imponere posset, donec foeminam videret, cui ישה [*isha*] nomen inderet, quia solum sibi convenire perspexit.’

Adam the knowledge of all things corporeal and elementary, as well as the knowledge of the stars and the sciences.²⁸ His proof is biblical; he quotes Ecclesiasticus (Jesus Sirach) 17:3.4.6:

He gave him the number of his days and gave him power over all things, that are upon the earth. He put fear of him upon all flesh, and he had dominion over beasts and fowls. [...] He created in them (scil. Adam and Eve) the science of the spirit, he filled their heart with wisdom, and showed them both good and evil.²⁹

It seems that one has to conclude from this that the first parents *omni decore, virtute atque scientia ornatos fuisse*.

Mersenne offers some critical objections; it is, however, not completely clear whether he does so in order to destroy or to corroborate the biblical passage. On the one hand, he argues that Adam only had sufficient knowledge to explain the Holy Scriptures and the veneration of the godhead. It was not a knowledge of all particulars, but a form of wisdom which derived from *optimum ingenium & maximam aetatem*.³⁰ Here Mersenne again draws on evidence from Jesus Sirach 17:11: ‘And their eyes saw the majesty of his glory, and their ears heard his glorious voice, and he gave them a heart to understand.’ These were practical abilities which mostly concerned *voluptas animi*—the ‘joy of the soul.’ This knowledge did not deal with theoretical subjects such as mathematics and the liberal arts. On the other hand, he seems convinced that Adam was able to answer questions about astronomy and grammar, particularly the latter as he gave names to the animals. God gave him the Hebrew language which he handed down perfectly to Eve and their descendants. Moreover, when the discussion turns to these encyclopaedic questions, Mersenne seems to lose his sceptical attitude completely. He is sure that Adam mastered the problems of metaphysics, angelic knowledge, and all the secret sciences of the wise men from the Orient before the fall: ‘Indorum Gymnosophaetae, Sacerdotes Aegyptiorum, Prophetarum Cabalistsae, Chaldaei Babyloniorum [...] Adamus omnibus Philosophis hic enumeratis doctior.’ Additionally, he had a perfect knowledge of natural magic.

It is hard to decide whether Mersenne is being ironic with this list from a secret Adamic encyclopaedia. It is precisely the list of magic sciences he rejects in his acrid polemics against Robert Fludd which feature in this very same volume on the Book of Genesis.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, col. 1211: ‘nullum esse periculum si rerum omnium corporearum, atque elementorum, quam syderum cognitionem, atque scientiarum Adamo tribuamus.’

²⁹ *Ibidem*: ‘Numerum dierum et tempus dedit illi (viz. Adam). Et dedit illi potestatem eorum quae sunt super terram. Et deinde: & disciplina scientiae replevit illos (viz. Adam and Eve). Creavit illos scientiam spiritus, sensu implevit cor illorum, & mala & bona ostendit illis.’

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

2 Philosophical Theory of Knowledge: *Species Infusa* (How is it possible to know what a species is without having sense perception of an individual of this species? God presented the individual animal to Adam in the moment when he infused him with the knowledge of the species.)

Be that as it may with the encyclopaedia of magic and secret sciences, Mersenne's substantial considerations concerning the concept of the *lingua Adamica* are philosophical. His question is: what kind of knowledge could Adam have had? How can infused empirical knowledge be possible?³¹

Mersenne's first rather sceptical question is: is it possible to know particular things without having achieved a habitus that administrates the species deriving from sensual experience with the extra-mental things? Knowledge of extra-mental things is always knowledge of species, and therefore abstract. It is abstracted from the extra-mental things, represented spiritually by an abstract phantasma which is given a name. A phantasma, viz. a species or scheme, can be given a name, and with the combination of scheme and name one can communicate knowledge and identify an individual extra-mental thing. This is the Aristotelian theory of science: giving a species a name is creating a concept of an individual, extra-mental being.

The second question is how an intra-mental species can correspond to an extra-mental object without previous experience and without a mental habitus of episteme. It is not at all clear how it is possible that infused knowledge of species, prior to any experience, can meet the external individual object. In order to produce empirical knowledge, one must always compare external individual things and mental species. But this was precisely not the case for the names Adam gave the animals.

Mersenne solves this difficulty as follows: he suggests that God conceded his peculiar knowledge of things, namely the *lingua Adamica*, to Adam in this way: at the very moment when God infused the cognition of all things into Adam's mind, he showed the animals to him physically. Therefore, the divinely infused species perfectly corresponded to the things presented to him.³² Through this construction, the correspondence between the *species infusa* and empirical knowledge was granted.

Adam therefore knew the essential divine language, since the knowledge of the *species infusa* which God conceded to Adam entailed more than the empirical knowledge of species achieved by the habitus of abstraction.³³ He was given the *verbum mentis mediante specie intelligibili* ('the mental word through the medium of the intelligible species'). The essential word which corresponded to the divine logos of the

³¹ *Ibidem*, col. 1215: 'Itaque primò videndum est, an quis aliquo habitu scientiae infuso peraeque uti valeat, ac si illum proprio labore comparasset; 2 quomodo novit Adamus scientias praedictos ibi divinitus concessas fuisse.'

³² *Ibidem*, col. 1216f.: 'Existimo autem Deum tantam rerum omnium cognitionem Adamo concessisse, ut statim atque oculos aperiret, viderit hanc & illam plantam, astra & quaecumque subjecerit oculis, perfecte correspondere illi cognitioni, quam habeat à Deo.'

³³ This question is discussed in Articulus VI: Quomodo potuit Adamus de rebus, quas agnoscebat, edissere, cùm loqui nusquam didicisse?

creation entailed the knowledge of the *proprietas rerum* and their substance. This language was the original divine Hebrew, lost with the fall. But before this misfortune, Adam taught the original Hebrew, his *lingua Adamica*, to Eve in paradise.

3.3 Samuel Bochart (1599–1667): *Hierozoicon*

Samuel Bochart was one of the outstanding Calvinistic philologists of the seventeenth century; his *Hierozoicon*, an encyclopaedia of all known animals compared with those mentioned in the Bible, was **the** reference dictionary of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century biblical exegesis.³⁴ Bochart, a model Calvinist, was a dry philological positivist. He asks three questions concerning the *lingua Adamica*: 1. What is a species of animal? According to the biblical account, were animals also presented to Adam that derived from mixtures of species, like mules or amphibious creatures? And what about the species of animals in the waters,³⁵ which do not feature in the biblical account? 2. The second question is even more positivistic: how could one reconstruct the situation when God presented the train of animals to Adam? To Bochart, it is a wonder that the crowd of animals proceeded peacefully in a line before Adam, just as all animals lived peacefully together in Noah's ark. 3. A further question is how so many animals could come to a place where Adam could impose names on them. Was this possible through the might of angels or *arcano Dei impulsu*?³⁶ Bochart leaves these questions open and flees into exegetical obedience: it is sufficient that we know that God, who has absolute mastery over the creatures, has means by which he can arbitrarily realise whatever he decided needed to be done.³⁷ *Qui movent quaestiones tam superfluas* should recall that nobody knows why storks and cranes fly to Egypt in the autumn and return to Europe in spring.

Facing all these problems of biblical realism, Bochart only allows one interpretation of the *lingua Adamica*: 'Itaque in servitutis notam Adam illis omnibus nomina imposuit, nempe ut domni servis solent.'³⁸ Before the fall, the animals were obedient to Adam and Eve; after the fall, most of the animals became wild and disobedient, although there were traces of the original obedience in dogs and horses.

As a philologist, Bochart is interested in the history of the Hebrew names Adam gave to the animals. He also argues that Adam transmitted the animals' names to later generations, which gives him the opportunity to list a vast number of animal names that can etymologically be traced back to their Hebrew origin.

³⁴ Samuel Bochart, *Hierozoicon sive bipartitum opus de Animalibus S. Scripturae*, ed. quarta (Leiden and Utrecht: Guilielmus van de Water, 1712): vol. 1, lib. 1, Cap. IX.

³⁵ The question of fish was already a subject of discussion in St. Augustine's *De Genesi ad literam*.

³⁶ Bochart, *Hierozoicon*, vol. 1, col. 56.

³⁷ *Ibidem*: 'Sufficit enim ut sciamus, Deo, qui absolutam habet in creaturas dominium, non deesse rationes, quibus eas pro arbitrio suo impellat quaecunque decrevit et destinavit.'

³⁸ *Ibidem*, col. 57.

3.4 Hermann von der Hardt and Johann Albert Fabricius

Johann Albert Fabricius was the chief lexicographer of Latin and Greek philology of the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries. His *Bibliotheca Graeca*, *Bibliotheca Latina* and *Bibliotheca Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis* were the key reference works/dictionaries/encyclopaedias of classical philology through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, until the *Realenzyklopädie für klassische Philologie und Altertum*, the so-called *Pauly-Wissowa*, replaced them. Fabricius' philology also included theological philology. Therefore, he collected dates and texts concerning the pseudepigraphy of the New and Old Testaments.³⁹ Important for the subject of the *lingua Adamica* is his *Codex pseudepigraphicus Veteris Testamenti*;⁴⁰ here, under the lemma 'Adam,' he discusses: 1. 'Adamus Litterarum Inventor'; 2. 'Adami Commentarius de Nominibus Animantium'; and 3. 'Adamus edoctis ab angelis.'

Fabricius, like Bochart, was a dry character. In most cases, he only cites others' opinions; however, concerning the first section, the invention of the script and peculiarly the revelation of the Hebrew letters and their punctuation, he is ironic and shows clear judgement.⁴¹ He quotes the Calvinistic polyhistor Johann Heinrich Alsted and the Imperial librarian Peter Lambeck, who were convinced that Adam handed over the complete knowledge of the Hebrew language including its punctuation. As a philologist who knew the state of the art, he was of course convinced that the punctuation of the Hebrew letters was a rabbinic invention. Therefore, he ridicules all attempts to elaborate this thesis and denotes it as 'nugae' ('cloudy'). Although he insists that he wants to save money and time since otherwise he would have to report too many ridiculous opinions, he nevertheless quotes a lot of literature concerning this subject.⁴²

The second section comes to the heart of the problem, viz. Adam's naming of the animals; this is the famous locus Genesis 2:19. In fact, Fabricius quotes works by some very well-known authors who argued in favour of the *lingua Adamica*: Petavius'

³⁹ The best monograph on Fabricius is Erik Petersen, *Johann Albert Fabricius: En humanistz in Europa* (in Danish) (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Forlag, 1998).

⁴⁰ Johann Albert Fabricius, *Codex pseudepigraphicus Veteris Testamenti* (Hamburg and Leipzig: Liebenzeit, 1713): 1.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*: 'Litteras Hebraicas una cum punctis vocalibus ab Adamo repertas & Setho traditas non dubitant Henricus Alstedius in Chronologia p.253. & Petrus Lambeckius quem vide sis in Prodomo Hist. literariae p.5. Alii diversa longe & mirifica plane Alphabeta tribuunt Adamo, quae vel ab ipso excogitate, vel ab Angelo Raziel ille tradita nugantur, quae hic describi aere curassem, nisi in ridiculis commentis ac per tot alios jam explosis voluissem opera et sumptui parcere.'

⁴² Cf. *ibidem*; he mentions Thomas Bangius, *Tou makaritou coelo Orientis*, 100–101; Giulio Bartolucci, *Bibliotheca Rabbinica*, vol. 1, 80; Scipio Sgambati, *Archiva V.T.*, 28 ff.; Paul Christian Hilscher, *Bibliotheca Adami* (Dresden, 1703, 1711 4°); Gottfried Volkerot, *De societatis literariis antediluvianis*, 14; Angelus Roccha, *Commentarius de Bibliotheca Vaticana*, 79, 82, 88, 295; Theseus Ambrosius in *Appendice introductionis ad Varias linguas*, and many others.

Theologia dogmatica,⁴³ Johann Heinrich Heidegger's *Historia patriarcharum*,⁴⁴ and Samuel Bochart's *Hierozoicon*.⁴⁵ But his most important source is the Helmstedt polyhistor Hermann von der Hardt, who doubted the whole theory concerning the *lingua Adamica*. In a letter to Paul Martin Nolte, printed in Helmstedt in 1705, von der Hardt states that he shares Isaac Abravanel's opinion⁴⁶ that Moses did not intend to say anything about Adam giving names to the animals, but that he merely wanted to express that Adam did not find a being among the animals that was suitable to become his wife. The story in Genesis 2:19 was also told, as Abravanel explains, as an allegorical example for the Jews that they should guard against the infamy of the heathens who, like beasts, often violate their contracts.⁴⁷ In his letter to Paul Martin Nolte, von der Hardt states:

Adam carefully examined all living beings, says Moses, of whatever name, for he should judge himself in God's mandate whether there was one among them who could become his desired partner, who could nourish him and establish a family with him.⁴⁸

43 Denis Pétau, *Dogmata Theologica*, ed. Nova (Paris: Vives, 1866): T. IV. Theologicorum dogmatum De opificio sex dierum, Lib. II, Cap. VIII, 265b.

44 Johann Heinrich Heidegger, *Historia sacra Patriarcharum. Exercitationes selectae*, ed. Secunda (Amsterdam: Abraham à Someren, 1688): 148 (the passage deals with the **essential names** Adam gave the animals): 'Quippe quae jamjam impositum nomen fuerat, idem multò ante in ipsa natura inclusum fuisse, adeòque suam illam in appellato quoque appellationem antegressum esse declarant, quam deinde vir ille divino afflatus vi quadam superiore imposuit. Quod etiam secundum naturam imposita sint nomina, arguit appellato coniugis אִשָּׁה [*isha*] *vira*, quae ejus originem plane pandit. Et animalium nomina Hebraica, quae in Sacris occurrunt, naturam ipsam animalium aperiunt.'

45 Bochart, *Hierozoicon*, vol. I, lib. 1, Cap. IX.

46 Abravanel, *Commentaire du récit de la creation*, 350f.: 'Comme il est dit ensuite: "Et l'homme ne trouva point d'aide qui lui corresponde." Il n'a pas trouvé parmi les animaux, en face et devant lui, une femelle capable de lui être une aide qui le serve alors que tel était le but de ce rassemblement. En effet, D. n'a pas voulu donner une femme avant qu'il en ressentit la nécessité, qu'il la recherché, et qu'il ne trouve pas de femelle qui lui convienne parmi toutes les espèces animales. C'est alors qu'il la lui a faite, de sa chair et de sa substance.'

47 Fabricius, *Codex pseudepigraphicus Veteris Testamenti*, 3: 'Nuper tamen Vir acutissimus Hermannus ab Hardt universum hoc vocavit in dubium, Epistola ad Paulum Martinum Noltenium Helmstadii 1705.8 edita, & cum Arabane sentit Moysen nihil eo loco dicere de animantibus ab Adamo nomine donatis, sed tantum voluisse docere quod Adamus considerata quorumcunque animantium natura, nullum offenderit aptum ad vitae & coniugii consuetudinem, ut adeo Adami exemplo Judaei monerentur cavere sibi ab Ethnicorum turpitudine, qui brutis bestiis quandoque foede sunt abusi.'

48 Hermann von der Hardt, *Ad Clarissimum virum Paulum Martinum Noltenium ... in Mosis Gen. II, 18.19.20*, in *Bochartum Epistola* (Helmstedt, 1705): 25: 'scopus erat, Adamo divinitus destinata fuisse sociam;' 29: 'Omnia, inquit Moses, viva animantia, quocunque veniant nomine, attente consideravit et expendit sedulo, pro divino nutu & instinctu ipsemet ingénue iudicaturus, an aliquod illorum esset, quod ad auxilium desideratum societatemque ineundam, alendam, remque familiarem conservandam facere posset.' But he did not find any, and this was reason why God made Eve from Adam's rib, 'flesh from my flesh and bone from my bone,' as his companion and helper: *isha*.

However, he did not find any, and this was the reason why God made Eve from Adam's rib 'flesh from my flesh and bone from my bone' as his companion and helper: the *isha* for the *ish*, the fe-male as the partner of the male. Fabricius confesses that he finds this opinion the only plausible interpretation of the biblical passage.⁴⁹ With this statement from a leading philologist in the first decade of the eighteenth century, it finally became obvious that the idea of the *lingua Adamica* had lost its credibility.

3.5 Zedler's *Universallexikon*/Pierre Bayle/Hermann Samuel Reimarus: "Adam"

A couple of years later, this opinion shared by the philological elite had become common. In the article entitled "Adam," which was printed in Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Universallexikon* in 1732, all the elements of the spiritual tradition are still mentioned; however, they are all rejected. Only the post-paradisiacal biblical story of Adam remained accepted as historical truth. Zedler—or whoever the author of the article was—writes:

Adam, the first man, whom God has created after His image. [...] His age amounted to 930 years, and he begot Cain, Abel, Seth, and additional sons and daughters whom we do not know by name. One honestly cannot relate anything else about him on the basis of scripture. All other stories about him are based on conjectures which are at best likely or evidently fabulous and absurd, e.g. one knows so much about Adam's peculiar physical beauty and his magnificent knowledge. Some say that the angel Raziel was his teacher. They attribute to Adam different books, one on the names of the animals, an apocalypse, Psalm 92 and other psalms, the kabbalistic book Raziel, the book Yeşirah, likewise one on alchemy, and others. Among the Jews, there are many who pretend that Adam was a being of a gigantic size, also that he was created circumcised. And it is also a product of absurd fantasy if some, and especially the well-known Lady Bourignon, believed that Adam was bisexual and that, before the fall, he could procreate the human race without woman.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Fabricius, *Codex pseudepigraphicus Veteris Testamenti*, 3: 'Fateor non destitui ingenio quae à Viro praestantissimo disputantur & communi sententiae objiciuntur, sed ab tota antiquitate cui ratio & verba Moysis aperte vidnetur favere, ideo neutiquam recesserim.'

⁵⁰ Zedlers *Universallexikon*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1732): s.v. Adam: 'Adam, der erste Mensch, welchen Gott nach seinem Ebenbilde erschaffen. [...] Er hat sein Alter auf 930 Jahre gebracht, und ausser Cain, Abel und Seth, noch andere ungenannte Söhne und Töchter gezeuget. Ein mehreres lässet sich von ihm mit Wahrheits-Grunde und nach der heiligen Schrifft nicht melden. Denn was man sonst von ihm erzehlet, beruhet entweder auf lauter Muthmassungen, die auf eine Wahrscheinlichkeit gegründet sind, oder ist offenbarlich fabelhaft und ungereimt. Also weiß man viel von seiner sonderbaren Leibes-Schönheit und grosser Wissenschaft zu sagen, wobey einige den Engel Raziel vor seinen Lehrmeister ausgeben, ihm auch ein und andere Schrifften, als ein Buch von denen Namen der Thiere, eine Apokalypsin, den 92. und andere Psalmen, das cabbalistische Buch Raziel, das Buch Jezira, imgleichen eines von der Alchemie, und noch andere mehr andichten. Unter denen Jüden werden viele gefunden, welche vorgeben, er sei von ungeheurer Riesen-Grösse gewesen, auch beschnitten erschaffen worden. So sind auch ungereimte Phantaseyen, wann einige, und sonderlich die bekannte Bourignon, gemeinet, daß in Adam beyderley Geschlecht vereinigt gewesen, und daß er bis auf seinen Fall das menschliche Geschlecht allein, und ohne Weib hätte fortpflanzen können.'

Although the article in Zedler's book widely depends on Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, it is also much more sceptical than it. Whereas Bayle still accepts Adam's vast knowledge as legitimate biblical exegesis according to the analogy of faith,⁵¹ the article in Zedler doubts this. It looks as though it had been written by Hermann Samuel Reimarus, Fabricius's unbelieving son-in-law. The credibility of Adam's universal knowledge is completely abandoned here. The doctrine of the divine origin of the human language and its implication that the divine logos opens an insight into the essence of the things created is drawn into serious doubt. The terrain is paved for new naturalistic theories of the origin of languages which, from the 1750s on, grew like mushrooms from the earth.

In the 1730s, the same decade in which "Adam" appeared in *Zedlers Universallexikon*, Hermann Samuel Reimarus wrote his *Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes* ('Apology for God's Reasonable Venerators'), an acrid criticism of the Old and New Testaments which remained unpublished until 1972. Lessing knew the manuscript and published parts of it in the 1770s.

Reimarus was a brilliant Hebraist, virtuoso student of Johann Albert Fabricius and Johann Christoph Wolff, the author of the famous *Bibliotheca Hebraea*. During his working life, he was a professor of Oriental languages at the Hamburg Gymnasium Johanneum. In the 1730s, he conceived his clandestine *magnum opus*, the aforementioned *Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, and here the historicity of the whole paradisiacal story, and with it the historical Adam, were taken apart.

Reimarus still seems to believe that Adam was a historical figure; however, the only Adam he accepts is the one after the fall and the expulsion from paradise.⁵² For him, the whole paradisiacal story is dubious. His doubts especially concern the question of original sin and its relationship to Adam and Eve's knowledge and wisdom. His crucial question is: if Adam was created in God's image and was so wise by God's instruction, and if he taught the divine language and wisdom to Eve, how could one imagine that this wisdom did not include the distinction between good and evil? Why did Eve trust the serpent rather than God's wise command? And how was it possible that the wise Adam was seduced by Eve in the ridiculous manner of eating an apple? And a little later, the scripture says that 'the eyes of the first parents were opened' with this act of the disobedient eating of an apple—

⁵¹ Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, s.v. Adam: Bayle first tells the biblical facts about Adam; this is then taken over by the Zedler article. Bayle continues: 'Voilà tout ce que nous savons de certain sur son Chapitre. Une infinité d'autres choses, que l'on a dites de lui, sont, ou très fausses, ou très incertaines: il est vrai qu'on peut juger de quelques-unes, qu'elles ne sont point contraires à l'analogie de la foi, ni à la probabilité. Je mets en ce dernier rang ce que l'on dit de sa vaste science.' This positive judgement is not taken up by the Zedler article.

⁵² Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, ed. Gerhard Alexander, vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Insel 1972): 193–195.

what was this new kind of wisdom? Reimarus comments sarcastically: ‘Nobody is so foolish that he thinks he can become a doctor by consuming fruits.’⁵³

Here, the paradisiacal Adam, and with him the *lingua Adamica*, was dissolved into vapour. Adam became a mythic figure, and the question of the origin of languages was henceforth discussed naturalistically, without any reference to divine intervention. From the 1750s on, naturalistic theories of the origin of languages sprang up like mushrooms. But that is another story.

53 *Ibidem*, 758: ‘Dann aber sieht Eva den Baum an, daß gut davon zu wäre, weil er klug mache. [...] Sollte die Klugheit im Apfel stecken, und als eine Quintessenz durch die Verdauung des Magens herausgezogen werden, damit sie so ins Geblüt treten, und in die Seele übergehen könnte? Welche Vorstellung! So albern denkt jetzt niemand, daß er sich im Obst zum Doktor fressen könnte.’