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Linguistic justice vs. linguistic diversity

1. European languages and Globalese

Europe is a plurilingual region, the map of European languages is a rather colourful one. Even if we know that it is difficult to count the languages of a certain region (what is a "language"? what is a "dialect"? do we include the languages of migrants? etc.), serious authors talk about sixty to seventy-five languages in Europe. Some of these are official languages in the European states. This means that they are used not only in daily conversation but also in higher discourses, like politics, administration, press, literature, education, jurisdiction, technology, sciences etc. These higher uses – *hochsprache* as we say in German – are the basis of a high *status*, a high prestige of these languages in their respective linguistic communities. And the use of the language in so many different fields of discourse normally leads to a differentiation and elaboration of the linguistic means, which in linguistics is called *ausbau*, e.g. the possibility to talk about nuclear physics in Italian or about complicated legal matters in Hungarian. The existence of so many languages with a high status and a differentiated *ausbau* is a specificity of the European linguistic situation.

The European Union recognizes twenty-four of these languages as its official languages. The European languages are considered by the basic or constitutional texts of the EU as fundamental elements of the European identity. According to the poetic passages of those texts, the European Union "shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity" (Treaty of Lisbon, Art. 2 (3)). The EU had even a Commissioner for Multilingualism who would say beautiful things like: "The harmonious co-existence of many languages in Europe is a powerful symbol of the European Union's aspiration to be united in

diversity" (Leonard Orban, 18.9.2008). The EU has an official policy of maintaining and fostering linguistic diversity. As a European citizen you can write to Brussels in your national language and you will get a reply in that language. The laws and decrees are translated into the languages of the Union – or let us rather say: they should be. In the European Parliament speeches can be held in the official languages of the Union, and any speech or text can be translated in any language of the Union. Brussels entertains the most expensive translation service of the world.

Thus, linguistic diversity is the official political credo of the EU. But, of course, linguistic diversity is also a problem, it is a huge obstacle to communication. How can we be a political community without a common language? Therefore, linguistic diversity is not the game really played in the European Union by its decisive agents. Beyond the beautiful diversity poetry, Europe is on its way towards linguistic uniformity: There is no Commissioner for Multilingualism any more, the portfolio has been enlarged and handed over to a Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth who is not really interested in the multilingualism issue. The translation service does not work very well.¹ The European institutions in Brussels become more and more English speaking places. But more important is the fact that the Europeans themselves learn English eagerly, thus creating a common vehicular language, and tend to neglect learning the languages of their neighbours. And, finally, the really important political players in Europe are not committed to linguistic diversity, on the contrary. The important agencies here are the national states and the transnational industries, and these, at least those of the North and the East of the continent, are massively engaged in the proliferation of English, they are eagerly creating a population speaking English. The big firms, business, science and technology act in Global English. In Germany the private

¹ Cf. Ammon/Kruse 2013.

industry has established an alternative education system in English from the kindergarten to the MBA. This is a thriving business. And this development has created an enormous pressure on the state system that tries to compete with the private schools through more and more schooling in English. CLIL, Content and Language Integrated Learning, i.e. English linguistic immersion in an increasing number of school subjects, is the very efficient didactic weapon for the implementation of an anglophone education. Ambitious parents prepare their children for becoming CEOs by getting their babies into an English speaking crèche and kindergarten, and the happy grandparents finance the move into the Global language and culture. The educated young generations of Europe, even those of the South of Europe, will soon have a common language, the language of the World, Global English, Globalese. It is important to note that this is not a European language, but a Global language. This language will be the common language of Europe but it does not contribute to the formation of a European identity.

Of course, we should be happy to have an increasing plurilingual population capable of working and communicating all over the Globe with a common language. However, this process creates social and cultural problems, some of which can be sketched in the following way (I am referring here to the German situation):

- The massive exodus from German into Globalese in the higher fields of discourse creates a social divide that is rather dramatic, it radicalizes the economical split that has developed in the years of globalization. Just as the aristocracy emigrated into the French culture in the 17th and 18th centuries, today the rich bourgeoisie emigrates into the Global culture. The precarious social cohesion of a national society, which is certainly fostered by a common language, is in danger.
- The fact that the national language is no longer used in some of the prestigious discourses has dramatic consequences for the status and the ausbau of the national

languages. A neo-medieval diglossic situation arises: As in the middle ages Latin was the language of "culture", of the high fields of discourse (power, religion, science), and the languages of the people, the *vulgaria*, were used in low domains, now Globalese is the high language and the other languages become more and more "low" languages again.

- In the long run the move to a new linguistic community in education and history weakens the common memory of a society. The access to the archive becomes tenuous.

Social cohesion is jeopardized through the loss of a common history.

- Since the old language loses its prestige and becomes a lower vernacular, immigrants have no incentive to learn that language. The social disintegration from above is answered by a social non-integration of the lower classes.

- An immediate economical problem consists in the fact that native speakers or the quasi-native speakers of the dominant language have unmerited advantages on the job market and in the society.

Those are only a few of the evident social dangers. I will come to a more philosophical – or philological – danger in the final part of my paper.

Now, whether I like it or not, this is a historical change that is taking place since World War II. The process of linguistic globalization flows like a natural event, English as a global language is an unstoppable destiny of the Modern World. Europe and the World are learning English. You cannot be a citizen of this world without knowing, at least to a certain extent, the language of the world: Globalese. Thus, the younger generations of Europe become more and more anglophone. "Plurilingual" – *mehrsprachig* - is the euphemistic word for that bilingualism.

2. Plurilingualism

The linguistic literature on the globalization of English is rather prudent, it shows the advances and the advantages of Global English as well as the dangers of that development and eventually even of a global monolingualism.² The official texts of the British Council try not to be too triumphant or, let us say, they hide the triumph under a very British understatement.³ Until recently only a few chauvinistic journalists have accompanied the revolutionary linguistic transformation of the world with cries of triumph.⁴ The tsunami of English was simply accepted by everyone. No further propaganda was needed.

But now, there seems to be a new era in the process of the anglicisation of the World, a period of intensification of that somehow quasi-natural global linguistic uniformisation. I hear the trumpets of a final battle: "C'est la lutte finale". A rather loud exhortation to learn more English, to intensify the English lessons (and to finally get rid of the other languages of the world) comes from different directions. These new propagandistic activities that are the subject of the following presentation come from politics, from the social sciences and from philosophy. The criticism I will formulate is not directed against the persons I will quote. Their positions are only examples of a widespread attitude towards language. This attitude is one Wilhelm von Humboldt, around 1800, thought had already disappeared, a reductive way of conceiving of language.⁵ Today it does not only show its reductive form but its destructive force.

² Cf. Crystal 1997.

³ Cf. Graddol 1997.

⁴ Cf. McCrum 2010.

⁵ Humboldt wrote in 1810/11: "und der Irrthum ist längst verschwunden, dass sie [die Sprache] ein Inbegriff von Zeichen von, ausser ihr, für sich bestehenden Dingen, oder auch nur Begriffen sey" (Humboldt 1903-36, VII: 621) ("and the error has disappeared long ago that language is the epitome of signs of things or concepts existing for themselves outside of language").

2.1. Politicians as the federal president of Germany or the ancient chancellor, Mr Helmut Schmidt, feel obliged to tell their fellow Germans to learn more English in order to overcome the European Tower of Babel and to create a public sphere for the unification of Europe. President Gauck who is a Protestant pastor explicitly evokes the biblical horror of linguistic diversity in a programmatic discourse on Europe on February 22nd, 2013:

Zunächst fehlt uns dazu einfach eine gemeinsame Verkehrssprache. In Europa sind 23 Amtssprachen anerkannt, zahllose andere Sprachen und Dialekte kommen noch hinzu.

First of all we simply lack a common vehicular language. In Europe, 23 official languages are acknowledged, innumerable other languages and dialects must be added.

Linguistic diversity is the Babelic catastrophe we have to overcome through a "common vehicular language". Therefore, he tells us to learn more English:

Die junge Generation wächst ohnehin mit Englisch als Lingua franca auf. Ich finde aber, wir sollten die sprachliche Integration nicht einfach dem Lauf der Dinge überlassen. Mehr Europa heißt nämlich nicht nur Mehrsprachigkeit für die Eliten, sondern Mehrsprachigkeit für immer größere Bevölkerungsgruppen, für immer mehr Menschen, schließlich für alle!

The young generation grows up with English as lingua franca. But I think we should not leave linguistic integration to the natural course of events. More of Europe does not only mean plurilingualism for the elite but plurilingualism for ever vaster groups of the population, for ever more people, eventually for all!

Mehrsprachigkeit, "plurilingualism", is the magic word for the learning of English.⁶ And plurilingualism for everybody promotes justice. Nobody can oppose so wonderful things as plurilingualism and justice.

The request to learn more English is, of course, completely superfluous since the fellow Germans of the President and the Chancellor already know enough English or learn it eagerly without being requested by their politicians to do so. I myself (as well as my whole generation) am trying to learn English for sixty years now, I do not want to be told that I have to learn English. Speech act theory has told us that there is no need to request an action of the hearer if the requested action is already accomplished or if it is clear that, in the normal course of events, it will be accomplished anyhow. If the speaker makes the request nevertheless, there must be another intention underneath that request, an "implicature" (Grice). What is the implicature of the superfluous presidential requests? I think that in both politicians it is the fervent wish to get rid of their past: for Schmidt to get rid of the German Nazi past (and to participate in the power of the victorious Anglo-saxon countries and their language), in Gauck to come to an end with the provincial closure of the German Democratic Republic (and, here too, to finally belong to the winning party of the World).

2.2. The second surprising activity for the promotion of English comes from the social sciences. They have discovered the European process of the generalization of English as a research subject. They reveal to us that the Europeans learn English, that the young know more English than the old, that Northern Europe knows more English than the South, that the better educated know it better than the less cultivated. This information does not come as a real surprise. But since in the social sciences, the scientific

⁶ The label "plurilingualism" hides an essentially Jacobin propaganda for a unified international language, cf. Trabandt 2014: chapter 1 and 5.

description always spills over into an advice for social action, the social sciences in this case develop a very strong propaganda for the learning of English. Of course, having one language in Europe abolishes one of the strongest obstacles to social and political togetherness: the language obstacle. Therefore, social science that always worries about the good functioning of a society, fights for the spreading of English.

In his book on plurilingualism in Europe, Gerhards (2011) radically and passionately tells the Europeans to learn English. The knowledge of that language is presented as "capital", more precisely as a "transnational linguistic capital". "Linguistic capital" is conceived as the possibility to *communicate* with as many people as possible. The capital value of a language is exclusively measured according to its communicative potential. Bourdieu (1982/1991) had shown for France how the French bourgeoisie accumulated the linguistic capital of the national language after the French Revolution. Gerhards now advises the Europeans to accumulate a transnational linguistic capital by learning English. Bourdieu's critical approach has however completely disappeared, there is no hint to the victims or the losers of that process. Gerhards celebrates the accumulation of that capital: It enhances the chances on the job market, it makes life better. Hence: "Enrichissez-vous!" There seem to be no problems with this optimistic accumulation of linguistic capital.

It is certainly true that English is a condition of professional success today. What I object to is the unnecessary propaganda and the fact (1) that this is sold under the label of "plurilingualism", (2) that this appraisal for the enhancement of linguistic capital is based upon a reductive conception of language (that languages are reduced to communicative devices) and (3) that therefore it cannot grasp the losses that go with that gain of capital.

Since everybody is convinced today that "plurilingualism" is something good and precious, people who learn English and thereby become "plurilingual" do the right thing and have to be praised. In reality, in this sociological context, it is not plurilingualism as such (having the knowledge of more than one language) that is good but only the acquisition of English, only English is the capital. If you learn e.g. Basque, the communicative gain is equal to nothing: The Basque language community is only a small linguistic community, hence its capitalistic value is small. And also the fact that, as a plurilingual person, you necessarily have another language, lets say French or German, is irrelevant. English is the value language, and everything else is indifferent. The plea for "plurilingualism" is only a plea for English, and hence a propagandistic use of that term.

Since English guarantees the biggest linguistic benefit there is no need to care for other languages. Languages are treated only as communicative devices. They have no other value. The cultural or cognitive value of languages is explicitly negated. Languages are said to have nothing to do with culture (a strange affirmation) and to have no cognitive value. According to an underlying universalistic linguistic conception languages are irrelevant superficial manifestations of a universal "language of thought".⁷ Therefore languages without a relevant communicative outcome can also be abandoned.

This approach fails to understand what language is and what languages are: Language is, of course, also a communicative device but it is as well – or rather primarily – a cognitive instrument: "the formative organ of thought", "the work of the spirit"⁸ manifesting itself in the plurality of human languages that are as such constitutive parts of culture.⁹

⁷ Gerhards sides with Pinker 1994.

⁸ Cf. Humboldt 1903-36, VII: 53, 46. It was a pleasure discussing Humboldt's fundamental text in the world philologies seminar on December 5th, 2013 at the Freie Universität Berlin.

⁹ Cf. my books on Humboldt and on the languages of Europe: Trabant 2012 and 2014.

3. Linguistic justice

The third propagandistic wave for the propagation of Globalese comes from political philosophy. The key word for the proliferation of English here is not "plurilingualism" but "linguistic justice". The main thesis of that politico-philosophical activity is that the spreading of English is the condition of justice in the globalized world. Who can be against justice? Linguistic justice is a knock-out term. It means that if you are against the spreading of English you are against justice. Philipp van Parijs' book "Linguistic justice" (2011) starts where Gerhards left us alone or with something Gerhards did not consider at all: It states and analyses acutely the injustices created by the spreading of English.

3.1. My own lamentation about the negative social consequences of that dramatic historical transformation of the European linguistic landscape concern the following facts:

- Social inequality is created by the separation into a rich anglophone bourgeoisie and a German-speaking people, a social split that reminds of the situation of the linguistic divide in Germany from the end of the Thirty Years War until 1800: After the destruction of Germany in the 17th century, the aristocracy decided to emigrate culturally and linguistically into the country of the winners by becoming French. The king of Prussia spoke better French than German. Only at the beginning of the 19th century, after the Napoleonic wars, did the aristocracy return to German, the language of the people. History does not repeat itself, but a similar thing now happens after the Thirty Years War of the 20th century: The elite emigrates into the language of the winners. First the sciences, then business and a part of culture, the higher discourses, went over to English. Now the bourgeoisie as a whole emigrates more and more into English. They educate their children in English which thereby becomes the high

language of culture, the *bildungssprache*. This process is sold and hidden under the label of bilingual or plurilingual education. A look at the programs of the so-called bilingual or international schools shows however that the only language that counts is English, not the other languages. German (or any other regional language) remains for the contact with the inferior classes and the servants.

- By these social processes, the German language is on the way to be reduced again to a vernacular language, "vernacular" in the etymological sense: a language of the *verna*, the slaves of the house, a language of the domestics. If the high fields of discourses - technology, philosophy, sciences, business - are no longer expressed in German, if the *ausbau* of that language is reduced, also its status will be lowered, its prestige in the own linguistic community as well as from outside. Hence it becomes a "popular" language, a vernacular, comparable to the regional dialects today. It will even disappear in zones where the local dialects are still strong. We can already observe this in Switzerland: Since the superior discourses are made more and more in English, the German *koinè* that the Swiss used in "higher" discursive functions has no role any more and can – and does – disappear.

- This reduction of German to the private sphere is, in my view, the destruction of a cultural heritage to which libraries of knowledge and memory are connected. Their disappearance is a scandalous loss.

3.2. Van Parijs, for his part, deals with three major injustices created by the proliferation of English: The first injustice concerns the fact that the non-anglophones pay the costs of their English language acquisition themselves. The anglophones do not spend time and money with language learning and they profit massively from the fact that they are understood by those who learn their language and that they can spread their goods and knowledge to those who learn their language. The anglophones are free riders.

According to very complicated computations Parijs shows that the United Kingdom owes 30 billion € per annum to the non-anglophone world, 10 billion € to the non-anglophone European countries. Van Parijs therefore proposes that Great Britain pay 5 billion € every year to the English-learning countries of the EU, as a "promising start" (van Parijs 2011: 77). This is my favourite proposal. But I cannot see any activity of the British government in that sense. Hence there will be no solution of that first linguistic injustice.

The second injustice consists in the fact that English native speakers have enormous advantages on the job market and in many professional fields, in the media, the sciences, business, politics – a dramatic inequality of opportunities. What can we do against this? Here van Parijs' advice is that we have to become as good as the native speakers. Hence more English, and English for everybody. The disease is the remedy. More of the same. When we are as good as the anglophones, there will be no unjust advantages of the native speakers any more. The way to this goal is complete immersion: First the schools and then the media have to become anglophone. No dubbing of films any more, a linguistic bath from morning to evening, from the cradle to the tomb. The media are, as van Parijs rightly observes, the second – and the most efficient – "mother" for the acquisition of this second mother tongue (van Parijs 2011: 106). The social disparity I here complained about will disappear since everybody will have undergone the radical linguistic immersion. This complete anglicisation does away with the second injustice. And then, of course, it is eventually also the solution for the first injustice. There will be no English learners any more since English will be the native language of everybody. In the end, there will be one language. This is the situation the book dreams of: Paradise, Globalese monolinguisism.

More tricky is the third injustice. The dominant language – or the "megaphone language" – can create a situation of inferiority for the languages with which it competes. Since no language is better than any other, this inferiority is unjust. The language community can feel that its identity is in danger through the impending loss of its language. This menace can be averted only by observing a "parity of esteem" between the languages in competition and by guaranteeing a territorial regime to the weaker language. On its territory the local language is the "queen", against the higher, dominant language as well as against other colonial languages, like those of immigrants who act like settlers. Van Parijs here concedes a territorial space to the languages competing with English. He is no enemy of national languages. On the contrary, he thinks that a strong local language regime is the best means for maintaining these languages against the pressures of global English. Van Parijs thinks as a Flemish Belgian who has to defend his language against the arrogant domination through French by giving a strong territorial position to Flemish. Now, on the basis of a strong territorial regime, bilingualism with global English or any other dominant language can flourish without endangering the territorial language.

3.3. But: the territory has to be very strong. If however, and here the story continues in a very intriguing way, the language community does not maintain and strengthen a coercive territorial linguistic regime but rather allows a soft "accommodating linguistic regime" it is on its way to abandon its language. It will not defend itself against colonial take-overs from above or from below. This – you will recognize it immediately – is the situation in Germany: It defends its linguistic territoriality rather weakly against colonizing languages. It does not at all defend its language against the growing arrogance of the dominant English. Therefore, in the long run, the Germans will go over

to the dominant language. Van Parijs calls this "a kindness driven agony " (van Parijs 2011: 144).

Van Parijs, however, is indifferent in front of this process. It should not be hindered or complained about: "there is nothing wrong with linguistic suicide" (van Parijs 2011: 168). There is nothing wrong, because there is no real loss. Even if he does not advocate it explicitly, van Parijs thinks that linguistic suicide is the way to go. Since real linguistic justice can only be reached with the same language for everybody, English monolingualism is the best solution, a monolingual world would be just fine:

If a powerful language were to drive all others into gradual extinction, not only would we all enjoy [enjoy!] the convenience of being able to use our mother tongue in all the conference rooms and hotel lobbies of the world, but incomparably more would become possible: even in the most remote bazaars, farmyards and playgrounds, we would be able to understand directly what the locals are telling each other. [...] Once again, all humans would 'speak the same language and form a single people', and hence conceivably 'no goal will be unachievable for them' (Genesis 11: 6). Is there anything to prevent us from looking forward to this new stage in the progress of mankind, apart from the irrational fear that a jealous Yahweh may strike once more and cruelly thwart our neo-Babelian hubris? (van Parijs 2011: 189)

The book dreams of the Paradise. If there are no other languages any more, there will be no free riding, no inequality of opportunities, no need for a parity of esteem between languages since there will be no other languages to esteem. Maintaining these unnecessary signs of identity is eventually superfluous: We all have one language. Only our accents will remain as traces of the old language, perfectly enough as signs for our identity:

A peculiar yet intelligible English accent might one day become just as good a marker of the linguistic dimension of one's collective identity as one's ancestral language, and the curse of Babel will then at long last be undone. (van Parijs 2011: 209)

Perfect and complete linguistic justice is achieved – at the cost of the languages of the world. The remains of those old communication obstacles – the accents – will be the trophies of that victory in the "lutte finale".

4. Diversity

Why is there no lamentation over the loss of languages in this theory of linguistic justice? I should answer: Because this theory does not understand what languages are or rather: It does not want to understand what languages are. Van Parijs cannot see that languages are something more than communicative devices, for him their only function is communication. In the third injustice he concedes that they might have a further function: as signs of identity. But identity is a quality of the group of speakers, it is a pragmatic property that is still linked to its communicative force. Van Parijs cannot see – nor could Gerhards - the semantic and cultural value of languages. He explicitly denies such a thing.

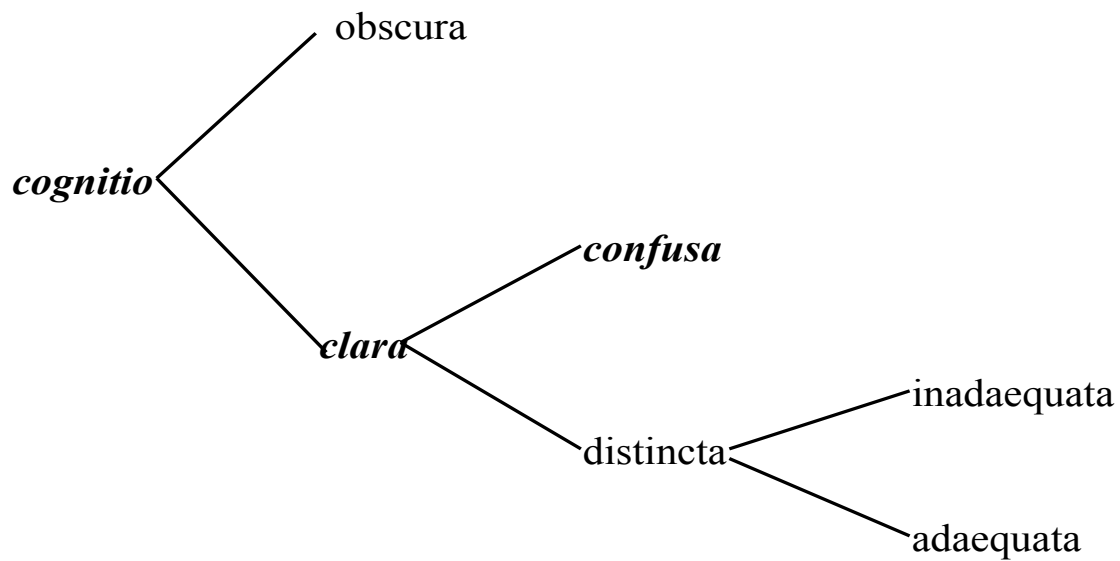
4.1. Just as Gerhards did, he explicitly separates culture and language. As if culture were something independent of language. He thinks that if you lose your language, you can still maintain your culture. This is simply something I do not understand. If I lose my language, I lose the very core of my culture, only very few things of my culture would survive. My culture is deeply rooted in my language: the stories, the songs, the literature, my memories, the juridical order, the political organisation, the religion, all this is connected to my language. If I change that language, let us say from German to French –

my culture changes completely. Even my body changes rather significantly with the transition from German to French. What might be elements of a non-linguistic culture: the cuisine, clothing, body care, are rather superficial elements of a culture. And I would rather survive without this part of my culture than without the part embedded in my language.

4.2. But the most dramatic reason for his cold look on dying languages is the fact that van Parijs cannot see the cognitive or semantic function of languages. Just as the sociologist, the social philosopher does not admit that language has two - deeply connected - functions: a communicative and a cognitive one. Both functions are essential, some philosophers are even convinced that the cognitive function is the primary one.

Van Parijs explicitly negates that a cognitive function exists or that it matters. He asks what "knowledge" is lost if we lose a language. And he thinks that nothing is lost. He refutes the argumentation of many ecolinguists who refer to such a knowledge in certain indigenous languages of Australia or America. And I think he is right when he says that, even if e.g. an Indian language disappears, the knowledge of that Indian nation about certain plants and animals can also be conserved in another language. That is certainly true. But the first question to be asked is who translates that knowledge into English or another stronger language? And the second and main argument against his opinion is that languages are not that kind of knowledge. The example shows, that by "knowledge" van Parijs thinks of truths that can be formulated in sentences. But languages are no propositional knowledge. Leibniz would say, they are not *cognitio adaequata*. They are knowledge - *notio* or *cognitio* - of another kind. Leibniz' hierarchy of notions allows us to differentiate the undifferentiated concept of "knowledge" used by van Parijs:¹⁰

¹⁰ The following schema refers to Leibniz 1694.



Van Parijs is looking for "knowledge" in the sense of rationally argued truth. This would be *cognitio adaequata*. But languages are cognition of an inferior level: languages – words and linguistic structures - do not argue, they give no reasons for the concepts they create in their semantics, they just give us the world in those structures and concepts (always linked to sound). This is also knowledge: *cognitio clara confusa*.

4.3. And languages give us this *cognitio* of the world in *different* ways. There is one language that makes an aspectual difference in the way of conceiving an action: *I am singing* vs. *I sing*, something another language does not do: *ich singe*. That language makes a difference between *Treppe* and *Leiter* which another language does not see: *scala*. Where German and English only have one concept of novelty, French distinguishes between a material and an epistemic newness: *neuf* vs. *nouveau*, etc. etc.

Every learner of a language knows this and knows that languages are different ways of conceiving the world and hence different cognitive systems. Just as with the negation of

the cultural impact of language, I really do not understand why plurilingual intellectuals like van Parijs can deny something that is so evident to any language learner.

Humboldt calls these different semantic organizations of thought through the languages "world views". But since these world views, the multiplicity of the cognitive organization of the world, are not taken into account by van Parijs, language diversity comes only as a communicative obstacle, not as a cognitive wealth. He asks therefore: "What is so great about not being able to understand each other?" (van Parijs 2011: 188). Of course, nothing is great about this, but this is not the point. What is great is the cognitive "capital" if I may borrow the key term of my economic colleagues. The point is to recognize the cognitive function beyond the communicative one. And to see what it is worth.

The ensemble of these semantic or cognitive particularities is the precious creation of the human mind we call a language, and language comes as a plural: languages. Locke, and, in his wake, the enlightenment and analytical philosophy complained about these superfluous semantic differences that complicate and obfuscate the work of philosophers. But Leibniz celebrated them as the "marvellous variety of the operations of the human mind".¹¹ And in that Leibnitian tradition, Humboldt calls them *Weltansichten*. This insight into the cognitive depth of linguistic diversity marks the end of the old Aristotelian concept of words (and languages) as communicative sounds which survives here as the basis of the new sociological and philosophical propaganda against the languages and for a global monolinguisism.

The diversity of languages "is not a diversity of sounds and signs but a diversity of world views" (Humboldt 1903-36, IV: 27). Humboldt saw the existence of many languages as

¹¹ Cf. Leibniz 1765/1966: 293.

a cognitive potential that enriches our knowledge of the world and that should therefore even be radically multiplied:

und da der in der Welt sich offenbarende Geist durch keine gegebene Menge von Ansichten erschöpfend erkannt werden kann, sondern jede neue [Sprache] immer etwas Neues entdeckt, so wäre es vielmehr gut die verschiedenen Sprachen so sehr zu vervielfältigen, als es immer die Zahl der den Erdboden bewohnenden Menschen erlaubt. (Humboldt 1903-36, III: 167f.)

and since the spirit manifesting itself in the world cannot be grasped exhaustively by a given amount of views and since each new language always discovers something new, it would even be good to multiply the different languages as much as the number of the inhabitants of the globe permits.

4.4. Van Parijs explicitly negates the existence of such precious "world views". In the old tradition of Greek philosophy he seems to think that languages are only different sounds for communication, "Zeichen und Schälle", that all humans think alike, and that hence nothing precious is lost – only sounds – if languages disappear.

And, in the best Biblical tradition, he even hates these differences as communicative obstacles and longs for Paradise, for a monolingualism parallel to the monotheism of the Western tradition.

And as a politician, he is a Jacobin, thus representing another version of that philosophical and theological paradisiacism or monotheism. According to the Jacobin ideology, justice or *égalité* is only reachable through linguistic identity: All the members of the Republic shall participate equally in the political activity, since they are the sovereign, and therefore they have to have one language: Barère, the "propaganda minister" of the Jacobin terror government of the first French Republic, exclaimed:

"Citoyens, la langue d'un peuple libre doit être une et la même pour tous", "Citizens, the language of a free people has to be one and the same for all".¹² And just like the Jacobins van Parijs cannot see any value in the old languages, they are superfluous obstacles to enlightenment and happiness that only the language of the Republic yields, "la langue de la liberté".

Linguistic justice thus extends the language politics of the French Republic to the World Republic – with the same methods by the way: linguistic immersion in the schools and in the media. The French Republic fought against the languages of France by propagating French in the name of *égalité*, welfare, and political participation. Now the World Republic propagates English in the name of justice and participation with the cynical hope that the languages of the World will eventually die. And it does so with a good conscience and no feeling for the linguistic injustice it is thereby creating: It has no mercy for its victims because it cannot see any victims. What disappears are superfluous communication obstacles.

From the perspective of another - Humboldtian - conception of language, the disappearance of a language is a terrible act of injustice. Since all languages are of the same value, and since, and this is crucial, they are precious mental creations, cathedrals of thought, their disappearance, due to power and domination, is an injustice and an invaluable loss. It is not just the loss of a sound or a subjective identity marker (that would already be a sad impoverishment). It is a loss of an *objective* quality of the fundamental technique of being human: namely that of presenting the world in a specific and particular way. Like destroying e.g. a cathedral in France or the Buddha statues it is not just an attack to the French or the Buddhist identity, to the subjectivity of that community, it is an attack to objective creations of the human mind as a whole.

¹² Cf. de Certeau/Julia/Revel 1975: 297.

4.5. There is probably no other future for the languages of Europe and the world. But then we have at least to weep and to mourn. Rejoicing and celebrating the monolingual Paradise of Justice is possible only due to a blindness for the cognitive and cultural value of languages. Perhaps communicative necessities will force humanity to abandon its languages and their cognitive wealth. But there is no reason to rejoice. It is a tragic situation.

The only way to avoid that tragedy and to have a deeper kind of linguistic justice as social equality, is the spreading of plurilingualism - of real plurilingualism - together with the spreading of a knowledge of what a language is. This will lead to the appreciation of the value of a language as a precious cognitive technique and to a strong feeling of language loyalty. On this basis we will enjoy our plurilingualism, the knowledge of our own language and the wonderful possibility to reach out, beyond the limitations of our mother tongue, to the world, through the global language and through other languages. A real plurilingualism means the joy of being able to think and to talk in different ways in order to participate in equally precious and important cultural and linguistic activities. This plurilingualism would not just be a state of transition to the New Linguistic Paradise dreamt by van Parijs (and the Jacobins) - or dreaded by David Crystal:

If it is by then the only language left to be learned, it will have been the greatest intellectual disaster the planet has ever known. (Crystal 1997: 140)

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Abstract

The linguistic uniformity of Europe (or the globe) is currently enforced not only by powerful economical and political forces but also by sociologists and social philosophers. At first, the learning of global English was only considered as a necessary professional skill, then, the positive connotations of "plurilingualism" were evoked for fostering its universal adoption. Now, the acquisition of "globalese" is promoted as a means to achieve social justice. The rhetoric of justice immunises this discourse against any criticism (what can you say against justice?). Its political aims and measures are reminiscent of the aims and measures of the linguistic Jacobinism in the French Revolution. The propagandistic moves of the social sciences are accompanied by a polemic against linguistic diversity and the connection of language and culture. They are based on a reductive conception of language that underestimates the cognitive and hence cultural potential of languages.

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Fields of interest:

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Books:

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