

SALOMON MAIMON AND THE METAPHORICAL NATURE OF LANGUAGE

LUCIE PARGAČOVÁ

This article is concerned with the metaphorical nature of language in the conception of Salomon Maimon (1753–1800), one of the most distinctive figures of post-Kantian philosophy. He was continuously challenging the theories that attributed a metaphorical character to language, which were widespread in eighteenth-century British, French, and German philosophy. Particularly notable was his attack on Johann Georg Sulzer (1720–1779). The core of the dispute concerned different views on the relationship between the sphere of the senses and the sphere of the intellect. Whereas Sulzer understood them simply as analogical, Maimon dissolved the disparity, convinced that each stems, albeit separately, from the transcendental activity of consciousness. He applied this method of argumentation also in essays on literal meaning and figurative meaning.

Salomon Maimon und der metaphorische Charakter der Sprache

Der Aufsatz beschäftigt sich mit dem metaphorischen Charakter der Sprache im Denken von Salomon Maimon (1753–1800). Dieser herausragende Vertreter post-kantianischer Philosophie polemisierte wiederholt mit in der britischen, französischen und deutschen Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts verbreiteten Theorien, die der Sprache metaphorischen Charakter zuschrieben. Maimons Angriff richtete sich vor allem gegen Johann Georg Sulzer (1720–1779). Der Konflikt drehte sich um verschiedene Auffassungen der Beziehung zwischen dem Bereich des Sinnlichen und dem des Intelligiblen: Während Sulzer diese Bereiche unproblematisch als einander analog verstand, löste Maimon ihre Unterschiedlichkeit auf, da er überzeugt war, dass beide der transzendentalen Tätigkeit des Bewusstseins entspringen. Diese Argumentationlinie verfolgte er auch in seinen Überlegungen zur eigentlichen und uneigentlichen Bedeutung.

The literature concerned with considerations of language by Salomon Maimon (1753–1800), a Jewish Enlightenment scholar following on from the work of Immanuel Kant and Maimonides, is not extensive. Samuel Atlas, in his study ‘Salomon Maimon’s Philosophy of Language’, makes the analogy between Maimon’s consideration on tropes and Kant’s conception of the thing-in-itself.¹ In *Salomon Maimon et les malentendus du langage*, Sylvain Zac, highlighting the Leibnizian character of Maimon’s linguistic essays, considers his concept of philosophical language.² Both works – and this is of fundamental importance

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¹ Samuel Atlas, ‘Salomon Maimon’s Philosophy of Language Critically Examined’, *Hebrew Union College Annual* 28 (1957): 253–88.

² Sylvain Zac, *Salomon Maimon: Critique de Kant* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1988), chapter ‘Salomon Maimon et les malentendus du langage’, 91–117. Originally a separate study: Sylvain Zac, ‘Salomon Maimon et les malentendus du langage’, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 91 (1986): 181–202.

for our topic – overlook Maimon’s key linguistic essay, entitled ‘Was sind Tropen?’ (What are Tropes?).³ The present article concentrates on Maimon’s argument about the metaphorical nature of language and the conception of similarity, since it is precisely in these respects that the split with the Enlightenment tradition of thinking about language manifests itself most conspicuously.⁴

The impulse behind Maimon’s treatise on the figurative nature of words stemmed from a complex of mutually complementary entries in the celebrated dictionary of its time, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* (General Theory of the Fine Arts), by the Swiss philosopher Johann Georg Sulzer (1720–1779).⁵ The most important of these was the entry *Tropen* (tropes). In this Sulzer expresses his conviction that ‘it is easy to show that the greater part of language consists of tropes’.⁶ In contrast with ordinary words, which Sulzer characterizes as ‘words directly expressing things’ (*die Sache unmittelbar ausdrückendes Wort, der unmittelbare Ausdruck*),⁷ or representing (*darstellen*) things, he considers tropes to be representations (*Vorstellungen, Begriffe*), which disturb the ‘immediacy’ of this relationship, considering them to be representations serving to engender another representation.⁸ This happens either out of necessity or for a certain

³ Salomon Maimon, ‘Was sind Tropen?’, *Berlinisches Journal für Aufklärung* V/2 (1789): 162–79. The article, originally published separately in this journal, is not included in Maimon’s collected works. See Valerio Vera, ed., *Salomon Maimons Gesammelte Werke in sieben Bänden* (Hildesheim and New York: Olms, 1965–1977). Maimon published this in 1789, before the publication of his core work, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, which is a polemic and commentary on Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. See Salomon Maimon, *Versuch über die Transscendental Philosophie mit einem Anhang ueber die symbolische Erkenntniss und philosophische Sprache und Anmerkungen von Salomon Maimon, aus Litthauen in Polen* (Berlin: Christian Friedrich Voß und Sohn, 1790) [GW II, VII–442].

⁴ It is generally thought that in the Enlightenment language was understood as representation and presentation of the signified. See, for example, Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), especially the chapter ‘Représenter’ and what follows. In addition, one would mention the foremost works, such as Ulrich Ricken, *Leibniz, Wolff und einige sprachtheoretische Entwicklungen in der deutschen Aufklärung* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1989), Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (London: Athlone Press, 1982), and a wealth of other literature on the same topic.

⁵ Sulzer here may be understood as a kind of *pars pro toto* of the Enlightenment view of tropes. Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste in einzeln, nach alphabetischer Ordnung der Kunstwörter aufeinander folgenden Artikeln abgehandelt* (Leipzig, 1771–1774); in particular this concerns the entry ‘Tropes’ (*Tropen*) (vol. 2, 1184–6). Other relevant entries include ‘Image’ (*Bild*), ‘Allegory’ (*Allegorie*), and ‘Metonymy’ (*Metonymie*). Of these I restrict myself here to ‘Tropes’, since this is what Maimon concentrated on, though I do refer peripherally to the other entries, primarily ‘Metaphor’ (*Metapher*).

⁶ Sulzer, ‘Tropen’, 1184.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1185.

⁸ The difference between the fundamental philosophical terms *Vorstellung* and *Begriff* is blurred for Sulzer: ‘Alle Tropen haben das mit einander gemein, dass der Begriff oder die Vorstellung, die man erwecken will, nicht unmittelbar, sondern mittelst eines anderen erweckt wird.’ *Ibid.*

purpose. One creates tropes out of necessity 'because one has no word to express the thing in a direct way' (*weil man kein die Sache unmittelbar ausdrückendes Wort hat*). So, 'out of necessity one denotes non-visible things by using names of the visible' (*aus Not nennt man unsichtbare Dinge mit Namen der sichtbaren*).⁹ These expressions, such as 'to understand' (*begreifen*) or 'to grasp' (*fassen*), are characterized by Sulzer as dead, 'habitualized' tropes, the metaphorical origin of which we are no longer aware.

Concerning the intentional use of tropes, Sulzer differentiates between two contradictory positions. The first has to do with situations in which 'one hesitates to express the thing straightforwardly' (*die Sache geradezu zu sagen*), the second is when the existing expression is insufficient, 'not strong, not precise, not pictorial enough' (*nicht stark, nicht treffend, nicht malerisch genug*).¹⁰ The relationship of the trope to the thing that is to be signified is dual: either the trope functions as a 'mere sign' (that is, a sign instead of the thing itself, *Zeichen anstatt der Sache selbst*), thus emphasizing its own materiality, or its materiality is subordinate to the thing it signifies, in that it represents it pictorially. The trope acquires the ability to render the represented thing (*Sache*) somehow perceivable by the senses, by means of its power (*Kraft*).¹¹ Thus poetry, by means of the trope, meets the requirement of imitation, since it reveals the beautiful simplicity of nature (*schöne Einfalt der Natur*), and at the same time has an illusory quality, since it stimulates the imagination fomented in the act of viewing cognition. Sulzer combines the concept of power with Quintilian's definition of trope, in which the term *virtus* plays a central role ('verbi vel sermonis a propria significatione in aliam cum virtute mutatio').¹²

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The way Sulzer uses the term power (*Kraft*) brings him closer to Johann Gottfried Herder, according to whom, however, it is not exclusively metaphors which are capable of exercising this power (*Kraft*), but poetical language as such. What unites both authors and their conceptions of *Kraft* is its incorporation within the broader conception of *enargeia* (ἐνάργησια) – a rhetorical device whose aim is to transmit visual experience into words and thus bring to mind the object in question, literally to 'present it before the eyes' (See Demetrius *On Style* and Aristotle *Poetics*, 1411). According to Herder, 'the poet plays with the spiritual power of words in succession, up to complete illusion in the soul'. In his polemic with Lessing, Herder attempts to demonstrate that the essence of poetry does not lie primarily in the succession of 'tones' of words, but in this spiritual power (*Kraft*), and because it conjures up vivid images, he says poetry 'can justifiably be called a painter for the imagination'. See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Kritische Wälder oder Betrachtungen, die Wissenschaft und Kunst des Schönen betreffend* (1769), in *Herders Sämtliche Werke*, 33 vols, ed. by Bernard Suphan (Berlin: Weißmann, 1877–1913), vol. 3 (1878), 161.

¹² '[T]he artistic alteration of a word or phrase from its proper meaning to another.' Marcus Fabius Quintilian, *The Orator's Education (Institutio Oratoria)*, ed. and trans. by

Sulzer further expands upon the pictorial aspect based on the theory of linguistic power in the entry on metaphor. He defines the metaphor as an expression ‘which signifies things [...] by power’. Such expressions ‘no longer appear as arbitrary signs but as images on which one can vividly and intuitively (*anschauend*) grasp the qualities of things’.¹³ The metaphor vitalizes, and ‘from a dry sketch creates a painting’. With the aid of the metaphor, ‘what is merely a philosophical mode of presentation (*Vortrag*) can become an aesthetic one, because during the careful evolution of thoughts the imagination and the lower representational powers in general are constantly engaged’.¹⁴ The metaphor may play a productive role in philosophy by invigorating and activating even lower components of the soul led by imagination, whereby it contributes to the aesthetic mediation of philosophical ideas,¹⁵ indeed cognition as such. For example, in the metaphor ‘reason is the eye of the soul’, the ‘representation (*Begriff*) is denoted by an expression enabling us to recognize the traits of an object presented through similar traits presented in another object’.¹⁶ We may recognize the nature of

Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 8.6.1. According to Anselm Haverkamp, Quintilian qualifies ‘mutatio’ as ‘translatio’, to which he brought a translation of the Greek expression ‘metaphor’. See Anselm Haverkamp, *Metapher: die Ästhetik in der Rhetorik; Bilanz eines exemplarischen Begriffs* (Munich: Fink, 2007), 26. Sulzer, however, presents Quintilian’s definition in German translation: ‘Ableitungen der Wörter und Redensarten auf andere Bedeutungen’ (Sulzer, ‘Tropen’, 1184). We shall not consider here the extent to which he deviated from Quintilian in the conception of *mutatio in verbo* as *Ableitung der Wörter*, because it is irrelevant to the commentary. Sulzer then presents examples of such derivations (of which the most important is the sentence ‘die ganze Stadt ist bestürzt’, in which the word ‘city’ is derived from ‘citizenship’). In addition to this Roman authority, Sulzer also mentions in this entry a contemporary authority, Du Marsais’s *Traité des tropes* (1730). Sulzer has in mind in particular the second section, in which Du Marsais deals in detail with individual tropes (Sulzer, ‘Tropen’, 1184–5). See also César Chesneau Du Marsais, *Traité des tropes* (Paris, 1730), 64–210.

¹³ ‘Sachen, die man ohne sie hätte bezeichnen können, mit Kraft bezeichnen, die folglich nicht mehr als willkürliche Zeichen, sondern als Bilder erscheinen, an denen man die Beschaffenheit der Sachen lebhaft und anschauend erkennt.’ Sulzer, ‘Metapher’, vol. 2, 761.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Compare ‘dadurch allein kann ein sonst blos philosophischer Vortrag *ästhetisch* werden’ (Ibid.). The term *ästhetisch* is an allusion to Baumgarten’s concept of the aesthetic. According to the interpretation of Gottfried Gabriel, in which a special place is reserved for the metaphor: ‘[The metaphor] is no longer merely a rhetorical figure or figure of representation, but it is also an aesthetic form of knowledge’. As a result, the metaphor is considered a fixed component or cornerstone of aesthetics. And further: ‘The modern aesthetics established by Baumgarten did not inherit merely this point from rhetoric. The rhetoric of cognition thus contains within itself an analysis of aesthetic recognition.’ See Gottfried Gabriel, *Logik und Rhetorik der Erkenntnis: zum Verhältnis von wissenschaftlicher und ästhetischer Weltauffassung* (Paderborn, Munich, Vienna and Zurich: Schöningh, 1997), 11.

¹⁶ ‘Die Bezeichnung eines Begriffs durch einen Ausdruck, der die Beschaffenheit eines uns vorgehaltenen Gegenstandes durch etwas ihr ähnliches, das in einem anderen Gegenstand vorhanden ist, erkennen läßt.’ Sulzer, ‘Metapher’, vol. 2, 761.

reason on the basis of perceiving its similarity with sight, that is, the non-sensory by means of the sensory. A certain type of similarity is assumed between the sensory and non-sensory, which enables a smooth transition between both spheres, expressed through the relationship of a sign (name – perceptible object) and a reference (imperceptible object).¹⁷ Following on from the tradition of the Wolffian division of signs, Sulzer also characterizes metaphors as natural signs because of their ‘pictorial’ properties.¹⁸

In ‘Was sind Tropen?’ Maimon begins by addressing the definition of figurative expressions, using Quintilian’s definition of tropes. According to Maimon, this definition is merely an analytical truth, not a genuine recognition; the trope – a manifestation of language – is again interpreted as a linguistic phenomenon. He does not consider this definition to be true, since, as a nominal definition, it is fundamentally non-falsifiable.¹⁹ What he disagrees with, however, is the conclusion that Sulzer drew from it – namely, the conviction concerning the metaphorical nature of language in general. Maimon was aware of the seriousness of

¹⁷ This conception of the relationship of the sensory and non-sensory, in which similarities and analogies emerge, stems from the understanding of the term *Begriff* as an idea indicating any content of consciousness, covering sensory perceptions, conceptions, and notions of reason. Hlobil notes that this conception is shared by the German rationalists (and popular philosophy) and the British empiricists, in particular Locke. See Tomáš Hlobil, ‘Reflexionen der Sprache in J. J. Breitingers Überlegungen von der Auffassung der Poesie als Naturnachahmung: Metapher als natürliches Zeichen’, *Listy filologické* 123 (2000): 318–30. The thesis according to which abstract words are of metaphorical origin was widespread also amongst the British empiricists; Locke, as demonstrated in the work of William Walker, despite his explicit critical assertions with regard to tropes (see his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book III), defended the opinion of the sensory origin of abstract terms: ‘Locke does not banish *energeia* [sic] but locates it in common linguistic usage. This implicit affirmation of rhetorical power which contests the explicit denigration of rhetoric in the *Essay* is reinforced by Locke’s account of the sensible origins of all abstract terms. Implicitly identifying all abstract terms as tropes or the product of tropological history, Locke does not condemn them but identifies them as an effective means of communicating ideas.’ See William Walker, *Locke, Literary Criticism, and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 207.

¹⁸ Sulzer’s conception of the metaphor as a natural sign was in accordance with those of other leading representatives of Enlightenment aesthetics. In this respect one may mention in particular the conceptions of Johann Jakob Breitinger, Moses Mendelssohn, and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. See Hlobil, ‘Reflexionen der Sprache’ and Helmut Göbel, *Bild und Sprache bei Lessing* (Munich: Fink, 1971).

¹⁹ See Kant’s conception of nominal and real definition. According to his *Logic*, the nominal serves only for a mutual differentiation of objects, whilst the real leads to ‘cognition of the thing according to its inner possibility’ (‘Erkenntnis der Sache ihrer innern Möglichkeit nach’). Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), §106, 634 (AA IX, 144). See also Maimon’s conception of nominal definition in which, following Baumgarten, the representation of the sign (*die Vorstellung des Zeichens*) is greater than the signified thing (*die Vorstellung des bezeichneten Dinges*). Maimon, *Transscendental Philosophie*, 267.

the epistemological consequences of this thesis. He feared a weakening of the claims of philosophy on cognition and their attribution to poetry (or an aesthetic type of cognition). In order to demonstrate the falsity of such a conclusion, he turns away from the definition of a trope as a phenomenon defined by means of language, and towards epistemology, since in his opinion it is only within an epistemological context that it is possible to respond appropriately to the question of whether language is primarily metaphorical. He further specifies this context as a search for an objective ground (*objektiver Grund*), in the form of a genealogical inquiry into the nature of similarity.

The concept of 'ground' (*Grund*) holds a firm place in Maimon's thought. We shall clarify this briefly here in order to ease the transition to considerations regarding the metaphorical nature of language. In his use of the term, Maimon drew on Kant's law of determinability (*Gesetz der Bestimmbarkeit*).²⁰ He understands ground as an entity of consciousness and characterizes it as signifying 'the proportion of determinability of the particular through the general in cognition'.²¹ Simply stated: the proportion of the particular and the general in cognition, the determination of their relationship, is the reason that a particular thing (*Ding*) is thus and so. Defining 'trope' therefore means finding its ground, that is,

²⁰ According to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, 'Every thing, however, as to its possibility, further stands under the principle of thoroughgoing determination; according to which, among all possible predicates of things, insofar as they are compared with their opposites, one must apply to it.' ('Ein jedes Ding aber, seiner Möglichkeit nach, steht noch unter dem Grundsatz der durchgängigen Bestimmung, nach welchem ihm von allen möglichen Prädikaten der Dinge, sofern sie mit ihren Gegenteilen verglichen werden, ein zukommen muß.'). Kant further notes that this principle relates to content and not merely to logical form: 'It is the principle of the synthesis of all predicates which are to make up the complete concept of a thing.' Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A572/B600. We shall not deal here with Maimon's scepticism in connection with this theme, which springs from his 'subversive' reading of Kant, as is appositely characterized by Gideon Freudenthal. (Indeed, as we shall see, Maimon's reading of Sulzer was also 'subversive'.) A wealth of literature exists on Maimon's scepticism. Amongst others, see Avraham Ehrlich, 'Das Problem des Besonderen in der theoretischen Philosophie Salomon Maimons', Dissertation (Cologne, 1986); Zac, *Salomon Maimon*; Achim Engstler, *Untersuchungen zum Idealismus Salomon Maimons* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1990); Jan Bransen, *The Antinomy of Thought: Maimonian Scepticism and the Relation between Thoughts and Objects* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991); and Gideon Freudenthal, ed., *Salomon Maimon: Rational Dogmatist, Empirical Skeptic; Critical Assessments* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2003).

²¹ 'Grund bezeichnet ein Verhältnis der Bestimmbarkeit des Besonderen der Erkenntnis durch das Allgemeine.' Quoted in Ernst Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, vol. 3., *Die nachkantischen Systeme* (1923) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), 86.

a constellation of determinations of the particular through the general (in cognition).

According to Sulzer's thinking, similarity was the source of figurative terms. For example, in his opinion abstract words originated from a mutual transferability of the visible and invisible. Because similarity, understood as a 'bridge' between the sensory and non-sensory (super-sensory, *übersinnlich*) spheres, is a cornerstone of the thesis about the metaphorical nature of language, Maimon concentrates his interpretation precisely on this, and attempts to demonstrate that similarity cannot be the ground of tropes:

The similarity of the objects cannot produce this ground; for let us suppose an object *ab* (in which *a* is determined by *b*) of which the proper expression is *x*. And let us assume another object *ai*, which (through its similarity with the former, insofar as *a* is the same in both) is denoted by the same expression which taken in itself is improper; then we must necessarily assume that this expression does not stand for the entire object *ab* or *ai*, but only the commonly shared *a* (the determinable, which is determined differently in each); for otherwise its use of *ai* would be without ground. This expression is therefore proper in respect of both *ai* and *ab*, since it stands for the same *a* in both instances.²²

The quotation shows that Maimon carried the problem of similarity and non-intrinsic meaning over into his epistemology. If the relationship between the determinable (*das Bestimmbare*) and determination (*die Bestimmung*) constitutes the reason that it is such and such a thing, then we must seek the meaning of the similarity between things also within this relationship. In Maimon's conception similarity is transformed into identity, the identity of things with respect to what determines them (*das Bestimmbare*). From Maimon's new, 'subversive' reading of similarity as identity in the 'predicate'²³ it follows that similarity can be the source only of intrinsic meaning, not of metaphoricalness. For Maimon, meaning becomes a relational entity: it 'represents' a relation between things, and not these things (*Dinge*) themselves, as was the case with Sulzer, who understood tropes as signs enabling us to perceive the represented thing (*die bezeichnete Sache*) by means of the senses. According to Maimon, what the linguistic sign as such refers to – if we use the traditional terminology of rhetoric – is the *tertium comparationis*. Expressions that are mutually connected by the relation of identity in determinability Maimon calls not metaphors, but 'transcendental expressions'

²² Maimon, 'Was sind Tropen?', 164.

²³ Regarding Maimon's conception of the subject-predicate relationship, see Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem*, 85–125. Maimon's law of determinability is considered in a wealth of secondary literature, a list of which is published at www.salomon-maimon.de, administered by Florian Ehrensperger.

with their own significance.²⁴ According to his argument it is these expressions, and not tropes, which form the centre of language.²⁵

Transcendental expressions denote both sensory and non-sensory objects. They cannot be considered figurative, that is to say, they cannot be assumed to be metaphors with regard to non-sensory objects. Words that we consider to have originally referred to sensory objects and representations thereof in fact relate to these objects in the same way as to non-sensory objects. Transcendental meaning functions as a 'background' from which individual meanings emerge as a certain actualization. Expressions such as 'to conceive' (*begreifen*) or 'to grasp' (*fassen*) are not metaphorical and it is impossible to judge from them whether the abstract language of philosophy has a metaphorical basis. They are transcendental expressions, representing both sensory and non-sensory objects (or the status of sensory or non-sensory is irrelevant to meaning, since the predicate is always the same), and they cannot be considered tropes. Theories such as Sulzer's, according to which abstract words are dead metaphors, ensue from the conception that in the history of human development the sensible representations and concepts (from the point of view of our consciousness) chronologically precede the intellectual ones. Hence it was concluded that these transcendental expressions were originally and properly determined to signify sensible objects, but afterwards derived to signify suprasensible ones (*übersinnliche Gegenstände*).²⁶

Even if these expressions, Maimon argues, taken purely empirically from the perspective of historical development (of consciousness), preceded expressions representing non-sensory objects, one cannot draw conclusions from this (empirical) succession with regard to meaning, which is, on the contrary, transcendental.²⁷ Sensory representation and concept, or intellectual representation

²⁴ In the interpretation of a transcendental expression as a word with intrinsic meaning, the present article departs from the interpretations of previous scholars, who considered these expressions tropes. See Zac, *Salomon Maimon*, 102, and Atlas, 'Salomon Maimon's Philosophy of Language', 258–61.

²⁵ Maimon did not understand intrinsic meaning to be that which is suitable, convenient, appropriate, or apposite 'with regard to the theme, situation and thing' in the sense of Aristotle's *prepon*, or in the sense of *kurion*, that is, ordinary, literal, familiar, or *idion*, because intrinsic and non-intrinsic meaning are two entirely different methods the subject uses to relate or create a relation between things. In 'White Mythology', Derrida refers to the diverse understandings of the expression 'intrinsic' in Aristotle. See Jacques Derrida, 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy', in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans., with additional notes, by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 207–72.

²⁶ Maimon, 'Was sind Tropen?', 166.

²⁷ '[S]o folgt doch hieraus nicht, daß diese transscendentalen Ausdrücke nicht eben so gut in Ansehung immaterieller Dinge als in Ansehung der materiellen eigentlich seyn sollten, oder genauer, daß sie nicht in Ansehung des transscendentalen den heterogenen Dingen gemeinschaftlichen Begriffes eigentlich seyn sollten.'

and concept, create meaning only when they can be viewed as referring to a transcendental concept (*Begriff*), to a mental, pre-semiotic, pre-linguistic entity of which the linguistic expression or, here, Maimon's transcendental expression is a sign. This transcendental concept may then be used (or actualized) in various contexts (in a sensory or non-sensory context) without its 'status' being altered. The same expressions representing both sensory and non-sensory objects thus do not differ from one another by means of a transfer of meaning (within language), but by a different context of use (actualization) of the transcendental meaning as an entity of consciousness.

Maimon uses the word movement (*Bewegung*) to illustrate an understanding of transcendental meaning. He describes its transcendental meaning as a 'transformation of determination over time';²⁸ in which, within the context of the body (the sensory level), it also means, in addition, a spatial transformation, whilst on the non-sensory level (Maimon gives as an example motions of the mind, *Gemütsbewegungen*) it means a transformation of internal relationships, not external ones. In both cases, however, transcendental meaning remains one and the same: a transformation of determination over time.

It is upon examination of metaphor and the metaphorical nature of language that one perceives the greatest difference between Maimon and Sulzer. Maimon purposefully challenged Sulzer's theory that 'language consists mostly of poetry'. He understood his polemic with Sulzer as a clash of two philosophical methods.²⁹ He conducted it as a demonstration of philosophical (epistemological) method, which is capable of penetrating deeper than previously in consideration of rhetorical figures. According to Maimon, language tends towards abstraction and does not represent the concrete, it is a thoroughly philosophical medium in which poetry occupies only a peripheral place. Maimon, a devotee of Kant's transcendental philosophy, unambiguously rejects Sulzer's theory of the metaphor, which is closely bound to the then widespread belief in the metaphorical origin and character of language, founded on the theory of cognition presupposing a harmony between the sensory and the rational. From his position it is impossible to speak of sensory *cognition* without a synthesis of

²⁸ Ibid., 168.

²⁹ The Maimon-Sulzer polemics may in a certain sense be reasonably considered a precursor to the Fichte-Schiller dispute. Fichte was concerned with a delineation of philosophy and poetry, or belles-lettres, and thus also reason and imagination. He attacked Schiller for his style, on the grounds that 'Schiller begleitete nicht den Begriff durch Bilder, sondern er ersetze ihn durch sie und wolle die Einbildungskraft zwingen zu denken'. According to Fichte, however, this is impossible. Schiller, in his response, represents the ideals of philosophical belles-lettres, and bases his argument on the rhetorical teaching on the three styles. (In his conception of philosophical style Schiller was following on from Sulzer and other thinkers). Gert Ueding, *Schillers Rhetorik: Idealistische Wirkungsästhetik und rhetorische Tradition* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1971), 112.

understanding in the concept. Consequently, sensory representation (*Vorstellung*) does not create meaning, and words do not denote such sensory representations.

Maimon viewed language as a system not of representations of things, but of non-pictorial abstractions and conceptual signs created on the basis of conceptual identity, devoid of content.³⁰ With this term he abandoned the Enlightenment representational theory of language, and declared the scepticism (started by Kant's transcendental philosophy) about the possibility that a linguistic sign could represent objective reality.

Lucie Pargačová
Department of Theory and History of Art,
Faculty of Fine Arts,
Brno University of Technology,
Rybářská 125/13/15, CZ-603 00 Brno, Czech Republic
luciepargacova@seznam.cz

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³⁰ Thus in a similar spirit as Kant. See Tomáš Hlobil, 'Kant on Language and Poetry: Poetry without Language', *Kant-Studien* 89 (1998): 35–43. Regarding the conception of language immediately following Kant, see, for example, Pietro Perconti, *Kantian Linguistics: Theories of Mental Representation and the Linguistic Transformation of Kantism* (Münster: Nodus, 1999).

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