

in its individual and collective existence—has proceeded when separated from that of nature. This survey will start with exactly that movement of thought which was so distasteful to Herder, the critical inquiry of Kant, and it will follow this up to the point when in our days a junction has again been attempted, not unlike in spirit to that dreamt of by Herder, though very much more accurate and precise in method. There is, moreover, one special problem where this has been markedly the case; one phenomenon stands out pre-eminently; it belongs equally to the realm of nature and of mind. After being independently attacked by philosophers, naturalists, travellers, philologists, and latterly by physicists, it has revealed itself as the psycho-physical problem *par excellence*; and it is exactly that which Herder himself treated with special attention. This phenomenon is that of human speech—the problem of language.¹

45.
The problem
of language.

¹ The problem of language and the question of its origin independently occupied thinkers in the three countries in the latter half of the eighteenth century. In France the followers of Locke, notably Condillac ('*Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*,' vol. ii.), wrote on the subject, while Rousseau opposed them ('*Sur l'inégalité parmi les hommes*,' 1754). In Germany the Pastor Süßmilch, of whom I shall have more to say in the next chapter, wrote an elaborate work to prove the divine origin of language ('*Beweis dass der Ursprung der Menschlichen Sprache Göttlich sei*,' Berlin, 1776). In order to settle the question the Academy of Berlin offered, in the year 1769, a prize in the following terms: "En supposant les hommes abandonnés à leurs facultés natu-

relles, sont-ils en état d'inventer le langage? et par quels moyens parviendront-ils d'eux-mêmes à cette invention?" a problem which Herder characterised as a "truly philosophical one, and one eminently suited for me." He had already—following Hamann—thought much about the subject, and he proposes, in his prize essay, which was subsequently crowned by the Academy, "to prove the necessary genesis of language as a firm philosophical truth." A short time after Herder had written his essay (1771), there appeared in England, by James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, a work '*On the Origin and Progress of Language*' (1773), in which he refers to the ideas of James Harris in his work '*Hermes; or a Philosophical Enquiry concerning Language and Universal Grammar*'