

Joanna Usakiewicz

University of Białystok

ARNOLD GEULINCX' REMARKS ON VERNACULAR LANGUAGES AND LATIN

Our considerations, as the title of this work suggests, will be dedicated to display and analyze Arnold Geulincx' (1625–1669) speculations on the subject of vernacular languages, in other words, native tongues and Latin. These speculations were meant by their author, generally known as one of creators of the theory of Occasionalism,¹ to present opinions accessible not only to the narrow circle of specialists. They were addressed to a broad public. Still, from the contemporary perspective, his reflections bring the value of “getting to know”. They show us the picture of the Netherlands in the 17th century. In this article we would like to go beyond the linguistic matter of the subject and see how Geulincx understood the reciprocal relationship: language – thinking – reality. Trying to reflect on this problem, we are doomed to depend on short references rather than extensive studies. The fact that the author had written so little on the topic of language, one could arbitrary explain by Cartesian background of his philosophy. It hints that language is always secondary to the act of thinking and even “double secondary” to an entity that is being thought about in this process. The aim of Geulincx (and of Descartes as well) was, after all, to reach the nature of thinking itself, not to contemplate its output. But let's try to inquire further instead of being content with simple explanations...

Geulincx had left an abundant set of works,² systematically dealing with logical,³ physical, metaphysical and ethical problems. Among this creative

¹ More information about Geulincx and his convictions in: J. Usakiewicz, *Z miłości do rozumu. O etyce Arnalda Geulincxa (1624–1669)*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2010.

² His works in Latin: A. Geulincx, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. J. P. N. Land, Friedrich Frommann Verlag (Günther Holzboog), Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt 1965–68.

³ It should be noticed that logic, from Geulincx' point of view, was closely attached to thinking. It was regarded by him as the art of a correct argumentation and deduction, not associating it with means of formulating thoughts.

yield, we will find one writing of quite different character – *Quaestiones quodlibeticae in utramque partem disputatae*.⁴ It is a collection of questions-considerations discussing generally interesting topics, in the first place the social matters and lifestyle, often in the context of the academic community. The roots of this work should be traced to the tradition of the University of Louvain (Leuven), where each year of the studies ended with the celebration called the Saturnalia. This was the program of students' deliberations on "not too serious" affairs led by a specially chosen professor of the university. In 1652 Geulincx was elected a master of the celebration. The composition of *Quaestiones quodlibeticae...* indicates that the work could serve as a discussion panel. Each question-consideration provides us with arguments for and against, but they conceal any final judgment of the author. Only a force of an argument leaves us with a clue. We will concentrate on two of the questions-considerations from the collection – the Question XXIV *Which language is more perfect: Belgian or Latin? (Ultra praestantior, Belgica an Latina lingua?)* and the Question XI *Should we praise the desire of conscientious learning of other nations languages? (An laudabile diversarum gentium idiomata perdiscendi studium?)*.⁵ Let's, together with Geulincx, study the problem of the relationship between a native language that we speak every day and a language of science, taking Belgian (as it is Geulincx called by) and Latin as the example. During our inquiry it is also worth to ask following question: Is it possible to functionally live in the world speaking only a native tongue?

In the Question XXIV Geulincx is asking which one of the languages should be considered more perfect: Belgian or Latin. He calls Belgian (*lingua Belgica*, sometimes *lingua Flandrica*) his own native language, the tongue of the Southern Netherlands. It is basically Belgian Dutch, today classified as the national variety of the Dutch language spoken in Belgium with dialects that differ regionally. To make things more simple, we will use, as Geulincx did, the term "Belgian language" and refer to the people speaking it as "Belgians".

In this Question, Geulincx doesn't only list arguments for and against each of the two languages, he also wants them to wrestle. He invites readers to be objective referees of this fight, acknowledging that the task of giving the right call will be a tough one. The philosopher has observed many discussions on the same subject. They have always been full of prejudices

⁴ The first edition was published in 1653, the second in 1665 under the more expanded title: *Stauralia. Quaestiones quodlibeticae in utramque partem disputatae*.

⁵ The Latin texts will be cited from: A. Geulincx, *Sämtliche Schriften*, op. cit., v. 1, pp. 130–133 and 96–98.

against one or the other language. Indeed, it is the confrontation of his native tongue with Latin, the language of knowledge, science, universities. It is the struggle between Heracles and Antaeus, a giant and the son of Poseidon and Gaia who regained his full strength each time he was touching the ground – his mother Gaia – Earth. However, Heracles discovered the effective tactics against his opponent: he strangled Antaeus holding him in the air. But which one of the languages plays the role of Heracles? We can't say, because, accordingly to the convention of Geulincx' work, the result of the fight between Latin and Belgian remains inconclusive.

The first argument mentioned in the advantage of Latin, and supposed to be a blow against Belgian, is its range: widespread Latin is spoken by clergy and scientists. In his era, as Geulincx states, people outside Italy – the historical cradle of the language – like to communicate in Latin more than Italians themselves. Moreover, this language is even used by people without any education (he mentions there barber surgeons and harlots). This brings associations of The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in that age. We know an anecdote about Ferdinand II who had a conversation in Latin with a wagon-driver of the Archbishop of Gniezno or another tale by Ulrich von Werdum about his talk in the classical form of this language with a townswoman in Lvov⁶.

Geulincx ornaments his argument of the widespread usage of Latin quoting Ovid: "The land of other nations has a fixed boundary: the circuit of Rome is the circuit of the world".⁷ His commentary is brief: the same thing that the poet related to The Roman Empire as a state is now connected with the language of this state – Latin.

In this moment he asks ironically: "Where is then Belgian language?".⁸ And he answers: only in this nook, on the small piece of land. Even here, in Belgium, it is spoken by servants, it is heard in taverns. The court, merchants' houses and universities are dominated by other languages. Different groups of society, Geulincx points out, prefer different tongues than Belgian. Universities choose Latin, merchants fancy Portuguese and the court – French. As the philosopher admits in the end of his considerations of this argument, it is a serious blow for his own native language.

⁶ See A. W. Mikołajczak, *Łacina w kulturze polskiej*, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 1998, p. 207.

⁷ *Gentibus est aliis tellus data limite certo; Romanae spatium est urbis et orbis idem*; Ovid, *Fasti*, 2, 683–684 (the text from: Ovid, *Fasti*, translated by J. G. Frazer, Harvard University Press – Cambridge, Massachusetts, William Heinemann Ltd., London 1931).

⁸ *At Belgica lingua ubi est?*

But Belgian language will not surrender easily, announcing with pride that sometime in the future it will conquer the whole world. Trying to tackle Latin furiously, Geulinx switches to the next argument, this time in favor of Belgian. People speaking it learn other languages, Latin included, easily and quickly – he advocates, pleading his own experience as well as the experience of his compatriots. He argues that Belgians master foreign languages so well that they can even pretend to be other nations’ natives. And speaking about Latin... Wasn’t it restored in the early modern period of history by the people who spoke Belgian as their native language? Geulinx writes: “To whom Belgians give way in speaking the language of Romans? Is there anybody who doesn’t give way to Belgians? Where, after the expulsion of the barbarity of earlier ages, did the ancient light for the Latin world begin to shine if not from the language of Belgians? Erasmus, Lipsius, Grotius, Puteanus – they all belong to us; o Latium, point at any other nobleman that you owe so much”.⁹

The ability of learning languages so easily, which characterizes speakers of Belgian, and the service done by this tongue to the restoration of Latin could be also used to its disadvantage: it is nothing more than a servant language. The other argument against it might be derived from the sound of Belgian. Geulinx stresses the abundance of consonants that can compose not so pleasant melody for ears of foreigners. He draws here a vivid picture: “(...) it unloads in one syllable the whole wagon of aspirations and consonants”.¹⁰ In our fight of languages, Belgian parries the argument with ease: Latin does not tolerate two consonants when one is next to another (he has exaggerated on this point), and its music resembles lisping or stammering. “It (Latin) is a lisping language and it stammers. It often doubles the same syllables, so I heard a stammerer, for example: *Quid de re mererere? Quid da re rare rara? Iactat faber fecisse sese securim* (What will be your merit? What do you think about a rare thing? The artisan boasts about the fact that he has made an ax)”.¹¹ The lack of the stress on the last

⁹ *In ipsa etami Romana lingua quibus cedunt Belgae? Imo qui non cedunt Belgis? Unde depulsa nuper praecedentium saeculorum barbarie, priscus illuxit Orbi Latio nitor, nisi e nostro hoc Belgio? Erasmi, Lipsii, Grotii, Puteani nostri sunt; da Latium adhuc viros, quibus debes tantum.* On the subject of the studies on the classical heritage in the seventeenth century Netherlands see: L. D. Reynolds, N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars. A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1991.

¹⁰ (...) *in unam syllabam integrum aliquando plaustrum exonerate aspirationum et consonantum.*

¹¹ *Blaesa etami est, et balbutit, frequenti eiudem syllabae geminatione; audi balbutientem in exemplo: Quid de re mererere? Quid de re rare rara? Iactat faber fecisse sese securim.*

syllable forms the next allegation. Surely, the last syllable carries the very important information for a statement to be understood well in inflected languages like Latin. This situation is especially inconvenient when we have to grasp the meaning of a statement made from a lectern or a stage of a theater. A speaker must be then well qualified to pronounce everything loudly and audibly. Answering these accusations, Latin strikes back – Belgian does not even have a clear, codified grammar... Suddenly, Geulincx, a presiding referee, gives the sign to stop the skirmish. He doesn't want this sportive fight, simply a game, to turn into a bloody slaughter.

Nonetheless, he writes an additional part to the Question we are dealing with now, pointing out that many contemporary vernacular languages ignore grammatical declension. As the replacement they use prepositions. Geulincx wonders if it would be comfortable to get rid of conjugation also, but he doesn't want to unveil his opinion on this problem. The question remains open.

Geulincx' considerations, as they were described in the beginning of the article, are of the popular character. This is why his argumentation could be sometimes rather funny and not too original, but placed in the historical context, bearing in mind the subject matter – the linguistic problems of the vernacular languages and Latin, it starts to be very interesting. In 17th century Latin was spoken only by the social and intellectual elite, in the same time some substantial and outstanding works were created in the vernacular languages. Especially the development of philosophical writings in these tongues seemed to be very symptomatic. One can open the list with Descartes, but Geulincx has also published versions of his works in Belgian. So it is not too difficult to name the main reasons of the diminishing importance of Latin succumbing to the vernacular languages. The first discloses the thirst of spreading ideas to masses. The second is connected with the ease of formulating these ideas, some of them being pretty complicated and abstract, in a native tongue. The third envelopes a notion of a breakthrough: modern philosophers of the era, systematically and with predilection, named their systems and convictions as cutting-edge ones, breaking with scholastic tradition, so also with Latin language that symbolized its heritage.

It is worth of mentioning that the subject chosen by Geulincx has also an ageless, universal dimension. It touches the character of the vernacular languages, especially those spoken by minor nations. These nations, in order to remain in the main stream of culture and to be active on the fields of science, are forced to pick up a non-native tongue to express their ideas, discoveries or reflections, a language having more influ-

ence and being widespread. In Geulincx' times this role was still played by Latin. It served as a universal language in a quite obvious and natural fashion, being closely attached to the main centers of education and development of European thought: monasteries and universities. Nowadays, we sometimes meet the same dilemma, as in modern Europe. We are dealing here with a comparable phenomenon: English is superseding a native languages as a major language of science. The difference between this contemporary example and the situation from Geulincx' era is astonishing: English – not having much in common with the local tradition of universities which were deep rooted in Latin – especially for the humanities, was in fact imposed arbitrary, to some extent by official actions of the state. Moreover, English (not like Latin which has not been favoring any nation using it from Middle Ages) gives an upper hand for its native speakers.

Let's move to the next Question of Geulincx that considers advantages resulting from learning foreign languages. The author begins with regrets: mankind is so divided because of the diversity of languages. He doesn't hesitate to name this situation as the misfortune (*calamitas*) of humanity. It hurts him even deeper because, accordingly to his philosophical convictions, people, as far as the essence of their beings is concerned, don't differ much: "Though they are united by the similarity of mind, they are still divided by the difference of speech; this is a reason why, when we are traveling abroad to the far away countries, we think – among other thousand worries – about our departure not only from home and fatherland but also from a community of people".¹² What a sad, somewhat existentialist, declaration: an alien in a foreign country although a man among people. Disturbing us when traveling abroad without any knowledge of a local language, loneliness, in Geulincx opinion, reveals itself in silence, laugh or puzzlement caused by misunderstanding. Unless one can come up with a right solution: to learn foreign languages. There are some personal benefits for speakers of several vernacular languages. "(Such person) is surrounded by all good friends, every country is familiar then; you will nowhere be a speechless listener with a puckered forehead when others talk unhampered during a feast; asking for directions in an awkward and jumbled way, you will nowhere be laughed at by neighbors; amid laughing people discerning a jest, you will nowhere

¹² *Nam quos in unum similis ratio conciliat, eosdem inter se dissimilis oratio separate; indeque fit, ut ad dissitas forte regions proficiscentes, videamur nobis inter mille taedia, non a domo et Patria, se ab humana societate discessisse.*

whisper in your interpreter's ear: What do they want?".¹³ Summing it up in a little bit effusive fashion, the whole world turns out to be home and fatherland for such person. Citizens who speak foreign languages are also beneficial to their state. Its administration can profit from the information about other countries, foreign customs – all kind of valuable data gathered by its multilingual civilians. Geulincx asserts that a language might disclose individual characteristics of a nation speaking it: toughness or benignancy. However, he doesn't reveal any specific examples to prove his assumptions.

A linguistic fluency allows also to make use of books written in various languages and to transplant the knowledge gathered in them to the ground of a native tongue. Geulincx argues: a person who can read in foreign languages and can absorb wisdom that they carry "(...) is contributing this wealth of science to the fatherland".¹⁴

One shouldn't underrate social values of commanding foreign languages. By merging concepts from other tongues, statements of a multilingual speaker become more refined, displaying erudition.

The diversity of languages is compared by Geulincx to a performance on a theater stage, where a way of speaking distinguishes all characters taking part in the drama. On the worldwide stage of languages we can observe following scene: "a Frenchman is chatting in French, a Spaniard has license to speak Spanish, a German is whistling, puffing and groaning in his language, still a Turk and an Arab are ready to join the company with sounds of barbaric and exotic [tongues]".¹⁵ In the original Latin version of this sentence, the author uses verbs that imitate characteristic traits of given languages.

Learning languages, nonetheless, has got its drawbacks. It is consuming time, which could be spend to acquire much more valuable knowledge. To strive for perfection in speaking foreign languages endangers a native tongue: it might be neglected and used with linguistic mistakes. So the work that was supposed to enrich us can turn to be quite disadvantageous.

It is not the end of troubles for students of languages. Beginners have to be aware that they only make a first step on a long way, the way without a finishing line. They have to treat their efforts as a constant process where

¹³ *Ubique inter suos est, omne solum ei patria; nusquam familiaribus inter coenam sermonibus accumbit caperata fronte mutus auditor; nusquam viam sciscitaturus, mutilis mixtisq; vocabulis cachinnum movet accolae; nusquam inter ridentium sales suspiciosus, quid sibi velint, in aurem insusurrat interpreti.*

¹⁴ (...) *scientiarum divitias profundit in patriam.*

¹⁵ *Sua garrit Gallus, sua lascivit Hispanus, sua sibilat aspiratque et gargarizat Germanus, et subinde etiam barbarum quiddam ac exoticum adiiciunt Turcus et Arabs.*

eventual breaks bear the perilous effect, a loss of the earlier attained skill: “(..) whenever you let it go, though only a bit, soon after you will feel, turned down to the earlier learned basics, like rolling boulders with Sisyphus”.¹⁶ We can assume that, in Geulincx’ opinion, one can never be perfectly fluent in any other language but a native tongue.

But he gives also some compassionate words: apart from speaking a native language, the command of Latin will help, at least in his times. The first tongue will serve us on a day to day basis, Latin will be a language of science: “We don’t have to beg foreign languages for rules of all knowledge; the whole chorus of sciences has gathered in Latium; the whole treasury of doctrines is guarded by Latin; this is the only language that sounds from a teacher’s lectern, it alone moves quill pens of pupils, it alone fills up tones of volumes”.¹⁷ In other words, Latin has united scientists in one community and wherever they go and meet their fellows, they will be still in their “fatherland”.

Yet Geulincx gives us the last argument against learning foreign languages. He suggests that from those languages all human vices come: talkativeness, lust, insobriety, the inclination to exaggerate or to flatter. The author believes that Belgian language is particularly absorptive, so – as he formulates this – a spirit of a Belgian “is blotted (*inquinatur*)”.

So Geulincx didn’t tell us exactly whether it was worth to learn foreign languages, giving only hints to inquire further... What was then his personal experience on the matter? He spoke, as it could be attested by his works, two languages: a native one (Belgian) and Latin.

Let’s move to the philosophical platform of our considerations about language. Before we confront the basic problem of relations between language – thinking – reality (or put differently: a word – a thought – a thing), we shall summarize main assumptions of Geulincx’ metaphysics.

As it was already mentioned before, Geulincx was one of authors of Occasionalism. This theory tries to explain the unresolved by Descartes question of reciprocal actions of two totally different substances: a thinking substance and an extended substance. According to Occasionalism, the phenomenon of interactions between a mind and a body can be explained by the existence of God and God’s actions as the first cause. God created

¹⁶ (...) *si vel tantillum remittas, mox in antiquum rudimentum devolutus, senties te cum Sisypho lapidem rotare.*

¹⁷ *Non mendicanda nobis a peregrinis linguis artium praecepta; totus in Latium concessit scientiarum chorus; totus illi linguae creditor hodie doctrinae thesaurus; sola haec e magistri cathedra tonat, sola discipulorum calamos exercet, sola replet voluminibus museia.*

the mind and the body in the way that actions of one of the substances give a possibility (*occasio*) for actions of the other substance, but they are never their cause. Geulincx picturesquely clarified this idea by comparing two clocks made by a skillful hand of one craftsman and set up on the same hour. Not this theory, but other assumptions of Geulincx' metaphysics are important for our considerations.

The notion of doubt serves as a starting point for the philosopher (as it does also for Descartes). It is a specific way of thinking that leads towards the discovery of the first, basic and undisputed truth: I think, I am. To think consciously assures the existence of a thinking person. A self consciousness, an awareness of self existence and thinking about it cannot be divided in the same fashion as an consciousness of existence of things and thinking about it might be separated in the process of doubting. So, Geulincx answers the question "Who am I?": "I'm a thinking self – a mind". Reflections on this statement result in the conclusion: imperfect "a thinking self" must have a separated cause. It is the proper mind – God. "A thinking self" in the material reality functions in a human condition, that is, in a body. For that reason, Geulincx defines a human as an incorporated mind (*mens incorporata*). There are two totally different substances (as in the philosophy of Descartes): a thinking substance – a mind (*mens*) and an extended substance – a body (*corpus*). A human is the assembly of these substances existing and acting only by the first cause – God. Presenting his ethical convictions, Geulincx introduces, besides the predicament of mind, the predicament of reason (*ratio*). A reason is described as the ultimate and perfect part of a mind, a God's law and a divine element in a human. A reason is a sphere of innate ideas.

The next part of this article will analyze some, important for the subject, fragments of Geulincx' writings in order to verify the correctness of our earlier thesis about the notion of language being "double secondary".

The statement from the *Ethics* will begin this analysis: "But, Wisdom in the mouth of the wise bringeth forth instruction; and in the case of the virtuous man (*vir bonus*) it comes readily into his mouth. For it is very well known that what we understand rightly, and have weighed very carefully in our mind, we are able successfully to sow in the understanding of others. The Poet evidently also understood this: *And ready words follow a clear perception* [Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 311]".¹⁸ In this fragment, some references

¹⁸ A. Geulincx, *Ethics. With Samuel Beckett's Notes*, translated by M. Wilson, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2006, p. 134 (the translation into Polish: A. Geulincx, *Etyka*, translated by J. Usakiewicz, Wydawnictwo Marek Derewiecki, Kęty 2007, p. 143).

to the Antiquity capture the reader's attention. Geulincx is not only quoting Horace trying to sustain his argument, he is also using the term: *vir bonus*. This expression had been associated in the Antiquity with a moral, righteous and honest man.¹⁹ It had been used by Quintilian²⁰ in the context of an author of a statement. However, the essence of Geulincx' assertion lies in the following conviction: a person who got to know and properly understood a question, can clearly express it in words and convey it to others. The conviction, which was affirmed by the quotation from Horace, could be also supported by words of many more philosophers of the Antiquity. Here are some examples.²¹ Plato in *The Phaedrus* dialogue made Socrates to say: "If a speech is to be good, must not the mind of the speaker know the truth about the matters of which he is to speak?"²² Cicero added: "For no one can be an good speaker who is not a sound thinker (...)"²³ Again, Seneca gave Lucilius a piece of advice: "You should seek what to write, rather than how to write (...)"²⁴

Summarizing, the classic quotations suggest that a thought comes first, then a word expressing it.

In Geulincx' *Ethics*, we can only read as follows: "This will be the Adminicle of Justice: we keep carefully in mind that things in which a little, no matter how small, is lacking or in excess, are not what they are claimed to be. The vulgar scatter names about lavishly, and extend them to things that do not bear such a meaning. What is almost, they say is: what is only just, they say is not. These verbal abuses would be tolerable if they did not impose them on the things themselves, and fall into the habit of judging the things themselves by their names".²⁵ The author places these sentences

¹⁹ For example see in: Cato, *De agri cultura*, praef. 2; Cicero, *Partitiones oratoriae*, 117; Horatio, *Epistulae*, 1, 16, 40.

²⁰ See: Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 1, 9 and 12, 1.

²¹ The examples come from works of the authors who were quoted in different contexts in the writings of Geulincx.

²² Plato, *The Phaedrus*, 259e; English translation in: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9, translated by Harold N. Fowler, Harvard University Press – Cambridge, Massachusetts, William Heinemann Ltd., London 1925.

²³ *Dicere enim bene nemo potest nisi qui prudenter intelligit (...)*; Cicero, *Brutus*, 6, 23 (the text from: Cicero, *Brutus. Orator*, With an English translation by G. L. Hendrickson, H. M. Hubbell, "The Loeb Classical Library", Harvard University Press – Cambridge, Massachusetts, William Heinemann Ltd., London 1942).

²⁴ *Quaere, quid scribas, non quemadmodum*; Seneca, *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales*, 19, 115, 1 (the text from: Seneca, *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales*, With an English translation by R. M. Gummere, "The Loeb Classical Library", Harvard University Press – Cambridge, Massachusetts, William Heinemann Ltd., London 1943–1962, vol. 1–3).

²⁵ A. Geulincx, *Ethics. With Samuel Beckett's Notes*, op. cit., p. 27 (the translation into Polish: A. Geulincx, *Etyka*, op. cit., p. 48).

in the context of his speculations regarding the virtue of justice. Describing this virtue, he stresses that its role should consist of establishing the right boundaries of actions which emerge from the obedience of reason. In other words – the key point is to separate from actions all things that would be an excess and add to them things that are not in sufficient quantity so far. The quoted words about justice serve in fact as the admonition against the verbal abuses. Some terms, especially in a colloquial speech, embrace things which in fact are somewhat less or more than their names seem to indicate. In Geulincx' statement we should accent the difference between a name and an actual entity that lies behind it. One can suspect that the philosopher treats a name only as a sign pointing at a real thing. Such understanding of this issue is hinted in the words from his another work, the *Metaphysics*. We could read there: “Note that there are words that signify things as they are in themselves, independently of the operation of our mind. Among these is the word Body: it signifies the thing, the extension that we call Body, as it is in itself, apart from the modalities of our consciousness of it. But there are also many other words that signify not only things as they are in themselves, but as the subjects of these modalities”.²⁶ Geulincx uses this explanation in the part of the work dealing with the extended substance – body. He indicates that words serve to describe things, feelings and mental processes. He uses the Latin word *significare*, that etymologically consists of the noun *signum* – “sign” and the verb *facere* – “to do”, “to make”.

In the end we have to cite a sentence from the *Philosophical Dispute* from May of 1664, leaving it without any commentary: “All languages should be obedient to reason, not reason to languages”.²⁷

The not too numerous fragments quoted from Geulincx' writings confirm our argument about a language being secondary to thinking and the reality. These quotations have one more thing in common: they all come from philosophical works, they are the part of a theoretical, purely abstract study. Yet, the theory of the secondary character of language is confronted, in the works of Geulincx, with the reality. When he had moved from Louvain to Leiden, he encountered allegations against Latin, the language of his works. It was regarded as too ornamental, mannerist, being apart from the mainstream style of the Northern Netherlands. Because of this he even

²⁶ A. Geulincx, *Metaphysics*, translated by M. Wilson, A Christoffel Press Book, Cambridgeshire 1999, p. 69 (the translation into Polish: A. Geulincx, *Metafizyka prawdziwa*, translated by J. Usakiewicz, Wydawnictwo Marek Derewiecki, Kęty 2009, p. 86).

²⁷ *Linguae omnes rationi obedire debent, non ratio linguis*; A. Geulincx, *Disputatio philosophica continens Responsonem ad Obiectiones quas non-nemo proposuit. (D. 10 m. Maii a. 1664)*; in: A. Geulincx, *Sämtliche Schriften*, op. cit., v. 2, p. 463.

couldn't lecture for some time at the University of Louvain. Advocating that he had been taught Latin in such form at schools, Geulincx declared in the *Dedication* to his *Logic* that he wasn't interested in the language or words but a meaning, a real thing, the truth. We can notice this in his statement: "Wherever the structure of Latin language abuses a meaning, makes a lecture befogged, binds somebody with the cords of a philosophy, I will truly be more loyal to a sense than to the rules of the language, to real things than to its words, to the truth than to any speech in Latin".²⁸

As we have tried to show in this article, Geulincx undertakes the inquiry into the problem of languages only in the popular considerations about vernacular languages and Latin. On the philosophical platform, this question doesn't seem to be important for him. This is why we could find only few remarks on the subject, nonetheless coherent and consistent ones.

Could Geulincx resolve seriously the issue studied only for the intellectual amusement? Could he demonstrate what languages are more important – vernacular tongues or Latin? Could he tell if learning foreign languages was worth any effort? There is an indirect answer to these questions, but let's not forget about the secondary character of languages toward the process of thinking. Remembering Geulincx' words from the *Dedication* to the *Logic*, one should assume that the author cares about what is meant not about a language that renders a true meaning. For him the truth is paramount, more specifically – the truth of thinking. At the same time, we can add that the superiority of a thinking process changes in relation to a native language or an acquired, learned one. For a first language is closer to the essence of thoughts, because a native tongue expresses an earliest idea in one's lifetime.

S U M M A R Y

This article analyzes the considerations on the subject of language enclosed in works of A. Geulincx (1625–1669), one of the author of theory of Occasionalism. The presented speculations are of two different types. The first one concerns the relationship between vernacular languages and Latin and it is based on Geulincx' work of more popular character – *Quaestiones quodlibeticae in utramque partem disputatae*. The second one

²⁸ *Sed sicubi tenor Latinae linguae vim faceret sensui, tenebras affunderet dictioni, laqueos neceret philosopho; hic vero mihi et sensus moribus, et res verbis, et veritas Latinitate potiora videbantur*; A. Geulincx, *Logica fundamentis suis, a quibus hactenus collapsa fuerat, restituta*, *Dedicatio*; in: A. Geulincx, *Sämtliche Schriften*, op. cit., v. 1, p. 168.

Arnold Geulincx' Remarks on Vernacular Languages and Latin

reflects the problem of the relationship: language – thinking – reality and it is based on *stricte* philosophical Geulincx' writings. The most important questions in this article are: 1. Latin and vernacular languages as the languages of social and intellectual elite in 17th century Europe; 2. the relationship between native tongues spoken by minor nations and Latin as example of the language of science; 3. benefits and disadvantages of learning foreign languages. On the philosophical level, this article deals with the following thesis: Geulincx thinks that a language is always secondary to thinking and double secondary to a thing being thought about.

