Contents

Series Editor's Preface ix

Introduction 1

1 From Adam to *Confusio Linguarum* 7
- Genesis 2, 10, 11 7
- Before and After Europe 10
- Side-effects 19
- A Semiotic Model for Natural Language 20

2 The Kabbalistic Pansemioticism 25
- The Reading of the Torah 25
- Cosmic Permutability and the Kabbala of Names 28
- The Mother Tongue 32

3 The Perfect Language of Dante 34
- Latin and the Vernacular 35
- Language and Linguistic Behaviour 38
- The First Gift to Adam 40
- Dante and Universal Grammar 43
- The Illustrious Vernacular 45
- Dante and Abulafia 46

4 The *Ars Magna* of Raymond Lull 53
- The Elements of the *Ars Combinatoria* 54
- The Alphabet and the Four Figures 56

The *Arbor Scientarium* 64
The *Concordia Universalis* of Nicholas of Cusa 69

5 The Monogenetic Hypothesis and the Mother Tongues 73
The Return to Hebrew 74
Postel's Universalistic Utopia 75
The Etymological Furor 80
Conventionalism, Epicureanism and Polygenesis 85
The Pre-Hebraic Language 91
The Nationalistic Hypotheses 95
The Indo-European Hypothesis 103
Philosophers against Monogeneticism 106
A Dream that Refused to Die 111
New Prospects for the Monogenetic Hypothesis 115

6 Kabbalism and Lullism in Modern Culture 117
Magic Names and Kabbalistic Hebrew 119
Kabbalism and Lullism in the Steganographies 126
Lullian Kabbalism 128
Bruno: *Ars Combinatoria* and Infinite Worlds 132
Infinite Songs and Locutions 139

7 The Perfect Language of Images 144
Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica* 145
The Egyptian Alphabet 146
Kircher's Egyptology 154
Kircher's Chinese 158
The Kircherian Ideology 162
Later Critics 166
The Egyptian vs. the Chinese Way 168
Images for Aliens 176

8 Magic Language 178
Hypotheses 182
Dee's Magic Language 185
Perfection and Secrecy 190

9 Polygraphies 194
Kircher's Polygraphy 196

Beck and Becher 201
First Attempts at a Content Organization 203

10 *A Priori* Philosophical Languages 209
Bacon 211
Comenius 214
Descartes and Mersenne 216
The English Debate on Character and Traits 218
Primitives and Organization of Content 221

11 George Dalgarno 228

12 John Wilkins 238
The Tables and the Grammar 239
The Real Characters 242
The Dictionary: Synonyms, Periphrases, Metaphors 245
An Open Classification? 248
The Limits of Classification 251
The Hypertext of Wilkins 258

13 Francis Lodwick 260

14 From Leibniz to the *Encyclopédie* 269
Characteristica and Calculus 271
The Problem of the Primitives 275
The Encyclopedia and the Alphabet of Thought 278
Blind Thought 279
The *I Ching* and the Binary Calculus 284
Side-effects 287
The 'Library' of Leibniz and the *Encyclopédie* 288

15 Philosophic Language from the Enlightenment to Today 293
Eighteenth-century Projects 293
The Last Flowering of Philosophic Languages 302
Space Languages 308
Artificial Intelligence 310
Some Ghosts of the Perfect Language 312

16 The International Auxiliary Languages 317
The Mixed Systems 319
The Babel of *A Posteriori* Languages 321
Esperanto 324
An Optimized Grammar 327
Theoretical Objections and Counter-objections 330
The 'Political' Possibilities of an IAL 332
Limits and Effability of an IAL 335

17 Conclusion 337
Translation 344
The Gift to Adam 351

Notes 354

Bibliography 355

Index 372