

PIERRE TRUDEAU ON  
THE LANGUAGE OF VALUES AND  
THE VALUE OF LANGUAGES

*Edward Andrew*

No one dies for mere values.

M. Heidegger

We must be free or die, who speak the tongue  
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold  
Which Milton held.

W. Wordsworth

Wordsworth's equation of freedom with individual and national identity defined in terms of language and religion, appears both foreign to our understanding of freedom and yet hauntingly familiar. English-speaking Canadians outside Québec tend to take language for granted. But to take language for granted is to place Canada in jeopardy, for it is to assume that English is to be the dominant language of North America.

As a French Canadian, Pierre Trudeau is concerned with the conservation of the French language within a country and a continent where its status is insecure.<sup>1</sup> As a liberal, his political commitment is predicated on a conception of liberty and he has publicly stated that conception of freedom with force and clarity. His Catholicism is not part of Trudeau's public life. His faith and morals are reserved for his personal life. The faith in morals of a "civil society" with no commonly recognized public purpose, become values, or objects of personal estimation. And an intellectual educated in the contemporary social sciences, Trudeau articulates the relationship between freedom and language in terms of "values".

It shall be argued in this paper that to employ the category of values to language pre-judges and circumscribes certain aspects of linguistic concerns in Canada. To put it baldly, to call language a 'value' is to categorize it as a luxury, rather than a necessity. Yet to call it "la nourriture culturelle", as René Lévesque does,<sup>2</sup> is to consider it to be indispensable to the existence of a people, a defining characteristic rather than an instrument of human beings. In this light the eating of food, as something essential to our being, is not usually considered a value. To be sure, Trudeau sometimes recognizes language to be a necessity rather than a luxury, but in the sense of a necessary vehicle or an essential instrument to convey or express "values" (or the luxury goods in the world market of moral and cultural options). And, for Trudeau it is precisely these values, rather than the language bearing them, which define human beings.

**Values and Human Freedom: The Valued and the Evaluators**

In Trudeau's articles and speeches, before and after he entered political life,

one continually encounters the word *valeurs* or 'values'. This much-used word appears familiar, but familiarity does not breed thoughtful reflection about its derivation and usage. Thus, prior to analyzing Trudeau's political philosophy, his understanding of human nature and its relation to language, it is necessary to unfold what is enclosed in the use of the word 'values'.<sup>3</sup>

The currency of the word 'values' derives from Max Weber's assumption, based on the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, that there are no moral facts. 'Values' are to be distinguished from facts, or the domain of scientific reason. Since reason is impotent to prescribe or guide human conduct, moral and political goals are autonomous or self-legislated. 'Values' are the product of will rather than reason; they are willed into being. 'Values' have no independent being disclosed by reason. What is emphasized in the usage of 'values' is our choosing rather than what is chosen: that the values be ours, freely adopted by us, rather than that they be rational. Reason cannot prescribe values which one is compelled to adopt by virtue of one's nature or through conformity to some natural or God-given standard. Our values are what we will or freely choose, not what we are commanded, obliged or called upon to do. Our nature is our history; we are not creatures but creators, creators of our moral as well as our technical world. Our freedom consists in the voluntary adoption or rejection of existing values and their continual re-creation in repetitive, selective and transformative actions. The place of reason is to serve freedom, to avoid inconsistency and impossibility, and to find the appropriate means to secure the end willed, or the value chosen. Values, then, are the principles, sentiments, habits, interests and aspirations that are manifested and defined by moral choices or practical commitments which constitute our character or personality structure.

Yet our values, it might be said, are not of our own choosing. They are imparted to us by a particular religious tradition, class background and cultural inheritance. But adherence to inherited values, (which include the heresies, revisions, and creations within the preservation of our heritage), are not reducible to that which has been given us. We are *forced* to choose, whether or not we want responsibility or autonomy. But to hold blindly to our prejudices or pre-judgments *is* to choose, however it seems to violate our essence as judges, choosers or evaluators. Yet no commitment is so binding, no alternative is so appealing, no action is so compelling that we can evade our freedom. So it is in the recognition of personality as free that we can appropriately speak of values. Thus values are the creation of the free subject who projects a world of meaning and significance into a course of actions that are not inherently or demonstrably choiceworthy. In this sense, values are subjective, not grounded. They rest in freedom, on nothing.

To speak of religion as a value is not to assert that God is present in the world and that His will commands our assent. Rather is it to assert that we exist as the measure of all value and some conception of God is useful to the living of a vital and moral life. Similarly, to speak of nationalism or culture as values is not to assert that the nation has given birth to what we are (the word nation has the same root as nature, natal and nativity) or that a cult has sustained that birth and

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encouraged growth (as in a bacterial culture). As values, they depend upon us for their status. They do not have an independent reality—as do facts. Thus to assign nationalism and culture the status of values is to assert that we do not depend upon the nation or the cult for our birth and growth but rather that we freely dispose of them and honour them as instruments of our freedom. We stand in a relation to the so-called higher values as beings with the power and authority to estimate their worth to us. We implicitly exalt the position of the valuer above the valued. To call something a higher value is to deprecate it, to lower it in status by subjecting it to our appraisal. As a value, culture is not the measure of man but man, whether or not exposed to, and nurtured by, the cult, assigns a quality to culture. Only for men and women who have cast themselves as the measure of all things, as the sovereign subject, do values achieve a position higher than Man.

But, if man is the measure of all things, what is the standard to measure human conduct? If all lengths are to be gauged by 'the standard metre in Paris', what is the length of this standard of measurement? To answer a metre is meaningless, as it assumes some standard beyond what is accepted to be the standard of measurement. We stipulate standards of measurement—freely. Values are free, arbitrary or willed stipulations to gauge conduct? The sub-stance (what is standing under) of these stipulations is man as sub-ject (what is cast under), as the ground of values.

### The Free Subject as Natural Individualist: Language and Community as Instruments

Trudeau writes:

Je crains qu'à trop se préoccuper de l'avenir de la langue, un certain courant de pensée n'ait oublié celui de l'homme qui la parle. Si les travailleurs tiennent à leur valeurs culturelles et à leur langue, ils tiennent fortement à vivre convenablement...<sup>4</sup>

Who then is the man lurking beneath the tongue but somehow connected to it? A preliminary answer seems to be given — the worker, or to be more precise, the worker as consumer. Yet how is human nature, thus understood, clearly related to language?

In *Les cheminement de la politique*, Trudeau presents an account of human nature by examining the basis of political authority. He rejects the idea of a social contract, although that doctrine correctly emphasizes the will or consent of the governed as the source of legitimate government. Trudeau insists that a contractual basis of society is inadequate because men are born into a particular society independently of their will and consent. Men are naturally social beings and subject to some form of political authority, although "les hommes restent toujours libres de décider quelle forme d'autorité ils se donneront, et qui

l'exercera."—In short, Trudeau advocates the doctrine of the liberal contractarians within the framework of the Catholic natural law tradition.

Aristotle presents the basis of Trudeau's political theory: "Le principal but de la société est que ses membres puissent, tant collectivement que chacun en particulier, vivre une vie pleine."<sup>6</sup> However, in elaborating Aristotle's view of the innate sociality of men, Trudeau substantially revises Aristotle, particularly with reference to the enjoyment of collective life.<sup>7</sup> "Or nous vivons en société précisément afin de pouvoir attaquer collectivement les problèmes que nous ne pouvons pas résoudre individuellement."<sup>8</sup> That is, participation in collective life is an external necessity rather than a positive aspiration; unfortunately, individual enterprise cannot provide the transportation systems, safety and health measures that individuals demand. Collective life is thus seen by Trudeau as technically necessary for the achievement of individual ends or individualist values.

Après tout, si les hommes vivent en société, c'est comme disait Aristote afin qu'ils puissent vivre une vie pleine. Les sociétés humaines existent précisément afin que, par l'entraide, la collaboration et la division du travail, les hommes vivant ensemble puissent se réaliser plus pleinement que s'ils vivaient séparément. Si les hommes ne pouvaient orienter leurs efforts collectifs à cette fin, il feraient mieux d'aller vivre tout seuls dans les bois et sur les collines.<sup>9</sup>

Trudeau presents a Rousseauian individualism in Aristotelian clothing, although his Rousseauianism involves a more favourable assessment of the benefits of technique and collective labour than can be found in Jean-Jacques' *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts*. For Aristotle did not think that social life goes against the grain of men's nature. Nor did he think that human sociality was merely a means to an end, namely necessary to the achievement of private, consumer interests. Aristotle states, in the sentences prior to that cited and then paraphrased by Trudeau:

...man is an animal impelled by his nature to live in a polis. A natural impulse is thus one reason why men desire to live a social life even when they stand in no need of mutual succour, but they are also drawn together by a common interest, in proportion as each attains a share in good life.<sup>10</sup>

What is striking in Trudeau's representation of Aristotle's understanding of men's social and political nature is what is conspicuously *absent*, namely, an

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account of language. In Aristotle's well-known argument, the basis of his contention that human destiny consists in participating in a political community is that man is unique amongst the animals in being gifted with language.<sup>11</sup> Man alone is a political animal because he is able to reveal his nature, and the nature of other things, in speech. He is able to convey his interests and his ideas of justice and to resolve conflicting interests and opinions through persuasive speech. Language is not merely useful in conveying information, serving vital wants and obviating pressing fears, but is also a form of display or playful revelation and a form of communion, establishing and preserving a sense of kinship essential to the political community. Contrary to liberal theorists, Aristotle insists that a political society cannot be merely a network of instrumental relationships, of mutual exchanges and pacts for common security.<sup>12</sup> The gift of *logos* is what makes possible a political community, and the exercise of that gift is the purpose of human life.

For Trudeau, it is not language that distinguishes man from other social animals. Following Rousseau, Trudeau asserts that it is free choice.<sup>13</sup> Rousseau is clear that language is not natural to man; it is the product of some historical accident, such as an earthquake which created an island from the mainland and forces natural individualists into contact with one another.<sup>14</sup> This bizarre account illustrates Rousseau's view that human nature is fundamentally pre-social and pre-linguistic. Language merely utters pre-verbal and personal experiences; it expresses the impressions of things upon the senses and the passionate response to them. Participation in a political community is neither for Rousseau nor Trudeau an outgrowth of what is unique to man, of the natural faculty of speech, but a means to the achievement of personal (and fundamentally pre-social and pre-linguistic goals).<sup>15</sup>

### The Shift from *Logos* to *Ratio*

Trudeau seems to adhere to the Latinization of the Aristotelian understanding of man as the being endowed with speech into man as the rational animal.<sup>16</sup> The basis for this shift appears to be two-fold: first, that man's rational nature cannot be encompassed within a specific linguistic community and secondly, that reason is preeminently to serve human "animality", creature comforts, the material or economic requirements of man the consumer.

As to the universality of man, the rational animal, Trudeau approvingly cites Renan:

L'homme n'appartient ni à sa langue, ni à sa race; il n'appartient qu'à lui-même, car c'est un être libre, c'est-à-dire un être moral.<sup>17</sup>

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Furthermore, he asserts:

L'ère des frontières linguistiques est finie, au moins en ce qui concerne la science et la culture...<sup>18</sup>

In the realm of science, language merely denotes certain objective or universally intersubjective processes (and the languages of mathematics and symbolic logic are universally comprehensible means of organizing scientific experience). But the realm of culture is more problematic since there is no universally recognized language which surpasses the frontiers of linguistic communities. Writes Trudeau:

...il importe maintenant d'examiner le cas plus difficile des valeurs culturelles qui se rattachent directement à la notion d'ethnie; ou plus précisément, des valeurs qui, au Canada et au Québec, sont véhiculées par la langue française.<sup>19</sup>

There would seem to be some inconsistency in asserting that culture transcends language barriers and also that cultural values are somehow bound up with ethnicity and language. However the inconsistency is less striking when we consider that language is merely a vehicle or means of conveying meanings or 'values'. Although 'values' must be conveyed or communicated, they are not conditioned by the means or vehicle of communication. The medium is not the message. Language is an instrument, albeit a most important one, for conveying values which are not limited or conditioned by the instrument. A tool is external to, or not an integral part of, its user. Thus, if 'values' are as universal as the objects of scientific investigation, the many languages of the world can convey or express these 'values' without altering them in the means of communication or expression. If the era of linguistic frontiers has gone, then the 'meanings', 'ideas' or 'values' represented in language, or to which language refers, are as external to language as scientific objects are to mathematical concepts.

What I wish to emphasize in this shift from *logos* to *ratio* is that language has become *external* to man, as an instrument, a means of conveying information or meanings rather than informing the meaning conveyed, a means of expressing personal experience rather than impressing itself upon experience. In loosening the bonds between the speaker and speech, the shift from *logos* to *ratio* also loosens the ties between speech and what is spoken of. The ideal or real objects (meanings or things) represented in language are detached from the linguistic community using and being used by the language. The meaning of concepts (like the material qualities of things) are assumed to be independent of common, poetic or philosophic usage. Ideas reside outside rather than inside speech until a

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universal language or 'logic' is created to represent adequately the objects of reason to reason as subject. Language is a displaceable mediation (medium of communication and means of thinking), a stop-gap until reason embraces itself in the cybernetic automation of *logos* servicing the pre-linguistic purposes of 'man'. The crucial point in the shift from *logos* to *ratio* is that it presupposes that speech refers beyond itself to speakers as reasonable subjects and to what is spoken of as objects of reason and that neither subject nor object is informed by language.

Linguistic frontiers have doubtless eroded for man, the rational and tool-making animal. If Marx and Engels were wrong to assert that industrial workers have no country, their error was based on the correct estimate that the world of science and technique, in which workers are professionally engaged, is increasingly universal and free of the heterogeneity of pre-industrial modes of production (which depend on differential soil fertility, climate, irrigation facilities, natural resources, trading and communication opportunities). Today one would expose oneself to ridicule if one were to refer to a national science (in the way one speaks of a national culture). Even to speak of a specific manner of harnessing the power of natural or international science as a national technology or ethnic technique would be considered parochial.

Trudeau has few peers in his warm disposition to the cosmopolitan mission of modern science, in his appraisal of the richer and more fruitful lives provided by industrial technology to increasing numbers of people, and in his hopes for enhanced freedom or mastery in the cybernetic revolution. Yet the universality of modern technology, the best-loved child of science and commerce, threatens to homogenize man's estate and to depersonalize man within that estate. As Trudeau put it:

La technologie qui crée l'abondance et le bonheur matériel présuppose une masse indifférenciée de consommateurs, et tend ainsi à minimiser les valeurs par lesquelles la personne humaine acquiert et retient son identité propre, valeurs que je groupe ici sous la vague vocable "culturel". L'ordre politique établi par l'Etat doit lutter contre cette dépersonnalisation en poursuivant des objectifs culturels.<sup>20</sup>

Cultural 'values' thus enter into a dialectic, or a fruitful tension of attraction and repulsion, with technological 'values'. It is not just a question of French and English Canadians being drawn, moaning with pleasure and with pain, into the orbit of multinational corporations. Rather it is more a question of how Canadians can remain Canadian, and Québécois, Québécois, when subject to international capital, particularly when the instrument of communication in North America is the English language.<sup>21</sup> Is international technique to be an instrument of Canadians or are Canadians to be instruments of international

technology? For one to conceive of technique being used by, rather than using, man, one must conceive of certain ends, or purposes which are not the means to, or the products of, economic or technological objectives. Trudeau calls these ends or purposes 'cultural values'; they constitute the identity of the free subject who uses language and technique as instruments of identifiable purposes. The identity of the free tool-user does not derive from the tool used, although there is the permanent possibility of a surrender of freedom in the identification of the user with the tool, or in the submergence of personality under the impact of dominant technological forces.

It is within the context of these considerations that Trudeau can consistently maintain that language serves to preserve cultural values while asserting that linguistic barriers to a cosmopolitan culture are, and should be, disappearing. The world of 'material' and 'spiritual' goods are only appropriated in freedom, or are only appropriate to a free subject, when they can be used by a person for his own (i.e. cultural) ends. To lack a culture of one's own is to lack an identity that can take a stand in relation to the dissolving agents of global technique. An uprooted individual is not able to choose freely in the world market of science and culture.

### Language as an Instrument of National Culture or Languages as Nations

In a speech to an Ukrainian-Canadian congress in 1971, Trudeau provided an account of the place of language in human affairs.

Languages have two functions. They act both as a vehicle of communication, and as a preservation of culture. Governments can support languages in either or both of these roles, but it is only in the communication role that the term 'official' is employed.<sup>22</sup>

Trudeau explained that his government's Official Languages Act designates English and French as the languages to be used in communication with government but does not necessarily sponsor English or French above other languages in promoting Canada's cultural mosaic. He distinguished a technical, administrative function of language as a means or vehicle of communication and its cultural function as the caretaker or guardian of values.

The other use of language, as an ingredient of cultural preservation, as the vehicle for the dissemination and inheritance of literary and artistic treasures, requires no official recognition. Language in this sense is contributor of those values which guarantee to Canada its diversity, its richness, its

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strength. Language so described becomes synonymous with culture. Though language for that purpose need not be official, it nevertheless deserves the support of government.<sup>23</sup>

In this quotation, we see the affirmation of an essential relationship between language and culture, but the nature of the relationship is presented unclearly. Language is "an ingredient of cultural preservation", (the apples, the flour or the salt in an apple pie?), "a contributor" to cultural values (as a catalyst accelerating but external to the chemicals interacting or as one of the elements in the compound?), and itself "synonymous with culture". Clearly if language is identical in meaning with culture, it cannot merely be either a vehicle, an ingredient, a contributor or a means of preserving culture. Consistency requires that we consider Trudeau's statement of the identity of language and culture to be rhetorical emphasis and that he wishes to emphasize that language is an important ingredient of cultural preservation or a central contributor to cultural values.

Common sense also speaks against the equation of language and culture. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism sensibly points out that various groups of Canadians enjoy an identifiable culture different from other groups who share a common language. For example, most Canadian Jews born in this country do not speak Yiddish but have maintained a cultural identity despite having to find a home in another tongue.<sup>24</sup> Speaking a common language is thus not only not a sufficient condition of cultural distinctiveness but also is not even a necessary condition of preserving a cultural identity. However, the point here is that for Trudeau, cultural identity, like economic power, is prior to language use; language is not a precondition, but merely an expression or an instrument of, a culture (which appears as a-linguistic as money).

You don't protect a language essentially by laws or even by a constitution. You can prop it up artificially that way but if you want to have a language preserved and have it flourish, it will be by making that language, in a sense, the expression of a dynamic, lively, important, cultured, wealthy, powerful group. I don't think you do this by laws. You can't legislate a language into importance. You can, once again, make sure that the people who speak a language become a very important contribution to the society in which they live and therefore that language will take prominence.<sup>25</sup>

If language is not identical with culture and is not a necessary condition for the preservation of cultural values, could we say that language is one of the many 'values' that comprise culture or a way of life? Trudeau appears to speak of

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language as a 'value'.

Or il faut bien le reconnaître, le français d'ici ne sera valable que dans la mesure où il sera parlé par un peuple qui se tiendra à l'avant-garde du progrès. Ce qui fait la vitalité et la valeur d'une langue, c'est la qualité de la collectivité qui la parle.<sup>26</sup>

To be sure, when Trudeau refers to language as a 'value', he does not mean it to be understood as an 'ultimate value'. Its 'value' is conditional upon other 'values' expressed by the speakers of the language. But if our earlier discussion of the meaning of 'values' is correct, all 'values' (and not just the value of language) are conditional upon the disposition of the free subject. That is, 'values' are instruments in the progress of human freedom and are conditional to the extent of their contribution to this end. In designating certain things or relationships as 'values', we honour the human subject who realizes his or her freedom, through these things or relationships. What is notable in Trudeau's formulation is not that language, as a value, is conditional upon ulterior purposes (freedom, progress) but that the human subject who freely disposes of its 'values' is a collectivity, or a people, and not an individual.

It may seem strange to portray a people or a nation as a collective subject since collectivities do not think, feel, judge and act as do individuals, and since Trudeau understands collectivities to be individuals jointly engaged in the common pursuit of individual interests. However, what is crucial to our analysis is to see that the collective subject, like the individual subject, maintains an external relationship to the object valued. The language which is valued by the people speaking it is not intrinsically or definitionally related to the people or nation as a collective subject. The collectivity, like the individual, is not defined in terms of language. Trudeau usually defines a nation or a people in terms of ethnicity, rightly observing that such a conception of a national collectivity is theoretically unsound and practically intolerant. But if Quebec nationalists were to hold by a racial or ethnic definition of a nation, they would object to all immigration into Quebec rather than to the tendency of immigrants into Quebec to adopt the English rather than the French language. Trudeau's conception of the nation is not just a straw-horse to be knocked down but inheres in the notion of a pure subject (individual or collective) prior to all particularisms, who then clothes himself or itself with concrete characteristics called 'values'. Indeed, Trudeau does not always seem to take a negative view of the nation.

La nation est porteuse de valeurs certaines: un héritage culturel, des traditions communes, une conscience communautaire, une continuité historique, une ensemble des moeurs, toutes choses qui contribuent—au stage présent de l'évolution de l'humanité—au développement de la personnalité.<sup>27</sup>

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Here we see Trudeau reaffirm that the collectivity exists for the purpose of individual development and that the nation is not understood in terms of language but in terms of cultural 'values'. The nation seems to be endowed with personality or subjectivity; it is the porter or caretaker who conveys or preserves goods or values. But porters or caretakers do not enjoy a lofty status; they deal with goods belonging to others, and serve the individuals entitled to their services. The collective subject is a servant of individuals.

Yet if we understand nationality in linguistic terms, we can see why the nation might be considered to be a subject rather than a predicate of individuals. For, as Marx and Wittgenstein emphasized, there are no private languages. Thus, to the extent that thinking requires language, our personal experiences are brought to self-awareness by means of what is common to a linguistic community. Language not only serves to express or convey one's experiences to others but also, and more fundamentally, to impress itself on, and order, experience. A child learns about the world by seeing the way words are used. The meaning of words is not unique to himself unless the child remains autistic and incapable of registering his thoughts in a regulated framework and of communicating them to others. Thus our thoughts are never simply our own; they are a product of social or linguistic interaction.

It is truer to say that thinking individuals are the product of a linguistic community than it is to say that a nation is the product of the thoughts or 'values' of natural individualists or 'unsocialized' individuals. As Aristotle said, the community is prior to the individual. This does not mean that the end of human life is to subordinate individuals to the collectivity but that the pre-condition of a 'human' life for individuals—the exercise of *logos* in practical and theoretical matters—is participation in a linguistic community. As indicated above, Trudeau cites Aristotle's dictum that individual fulfillment is the end or purpose of collective life. He parts from Aristotle in failing to recognize language as inseparable from man, as the very element within which one can question or doubt who or what man is. Language is no more a value, or a vehicle to convey values, than is man.<sup>28</sup> For language itself is man. As such, man is not a pure subject but is subjected to, or conditioned by, the language with which he is at home.

### Language, Languages and Meaning

The purpose of this paper has been to clarify the dimensions of Pierre Trudeau's approach to language. His approach is grounded in a rejection of an Aristotelian understanding of human nature, of the innate sociability of men and of language as that power which unifies and orders a political community. This rejection is the precondition of the thoughtful application of the vocabulary of values to linguistic questions. Consistent with the grammar of values in the analysis of moral and political questions, Trudeau identifies individuals and

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collectivities not in terms of language but in terms of the values adopted by the free subject, who somehow subsists under the particularisms or accidents of class, culture and nationality. Language is understood as an instrument or vehicle of human freedom, not as the very being of humanity. As a 'value' or a vehicle to convey 'values', language is external to the definition of a man or of a specific group of men: the nation is conceived in terms independent of a linguistic community.

It is for this reason that the vocabulary of values may be inappropriate to linguistic concerns in Canada. For a fundamental conflict in Canada is between French-Canadians and English-Canadians, not between individuals who happen to speak French and those who happen to speak English. It is not a question of the values of those who speak the tongue that Shakespeare or Racine spoke: it is a question of the very being of French and English Canadians.

If one understands language merely as a vehicle to convey values, one would be at a loss to account for the public misperception that the Official Languages Act forces Canadians to speak both French and English. The error that the Act is a threat to freedom and personal identity is suggestive of the truth that individuals see their identity and their freedom to consist in the security of their mother tongue. What English-speaking Canadians should come to realize is that French-Canadians experience a similar sentiment. They do not want to bear what many consider to be the burdens of bilingualism; they do not want to feel compelled to speak English in order to get on in the public and private corporations.<sup>29</sup> Those who have been inappropriately called "the white niggers of America" do not simply want more of an anglophone pie, for the language one speaks is not as external to one's civic status as is one's blackness or whiteness. whiteness.

The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism stated: "As a means of communication, language is the natural vehicle for a host of other elements of culture."<sup>30</sup> An even stronger link between language and culture is suggested in the statement that language is "an essential expression of culture."<sup>31</sup> However, as a means of communication or of expression, language is secondary to what is prior in importance or closer to man, the culture which is conveyed or expressed. Such a view, which is similar to that of the prime minister, might be called a liberal or anti-nationalist understanding of language.

The Royal Commission cites, but does not espouse, the following opinion of R.L. Watts:

It is through language that man not only communicates but achieves communion with others. It is language which, by its structure, shapes the very way in which men order their thoughts coherently. It is language which makes possible social organization.<sup>32</sup>

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This view, which might be called a nationalist or communitarian understanding of language, is that which has been implicitly advanced throughout this paper as an alternative to Trudeau's instrumentalist conception. The Royal Commission advances a third alternative, which might be called a moderate or liberal nationalist view; namely, that it is language which unites a culture, but it is culture or "a way of being, thinking or feeling" which defines a man.<sup>33</sup>

If, as the nationalist view of language claims, it is the structure of a language that shapes the way men think, one might infer that it is impossible to translate one language into another. If so, the position is absurd, particularly for one who attempts to analyse the ideas of a bilingual, such as Trudeau. (However, the structure of French and English grammar or usage is not so different that one encounters the problems of translating between two languages of independent origins and differing grammatical structures. And doubtless, with the techniques of modern linguistics and sufficient sensitivity to understand the nuances of the languages involved, any sentence of any language can be translated into another.) However the question is not so much whether one can translate the ideas formulated in one language into another but whether the ideas formulated in one language are shaped or conditioned by the language in use.

Can one assert that all words have a strict denotation, that is, something external to speech to which one can point? Or do a good many words also have, or only have, a variety of connotations, or meanings internal to speech, meanings determinable only through relation to the usage of other words? *Les mots* can be denotative nouns (*noms*, names) or less denotative verbs (*verbes*, words). Hobbesian nominalism, with its instrumentalist view of language, may do less justice to the activity or potency of words (*verbes*). What a word means (*veut dire*) may be what one wants to say, but what is meant by a word wanting to say something?

Perhaps one might say that words refer beyond themselves, not simply to things, as Hobbes had it, but to universal ideas or meanings, as Plato thought. That is, the abode of Platonic forms is not in the tongue but in some intelligible realm to which all reasonable beings have access, regardless of the specific tongue expressing what these universal forms or meanings impress upon it. However much Trudeau's cosmopolitanism or anti-nationalism, together with his view of language as a vehicle of communication and means of expression, suggests a Platonic view of the relation between words and ideas, Platonism is fundamentally incompatible with the doctrine of 'values'. For Plato, man is not the free sovereign subject, the creator of the moral world, the measure of all things.

We have indicated how Trudeau's shift from *logos* to *ratio*, from the speaking to the rational animal, involves a positioning of meanings outside speech. The rational animal refers beyond linguistic representations or signs to the things and meanings signified in speech. Thus what is represented in language is detached from the usage of specific linguistic communities. But what constitutes the rupture with Platonism is the new function of reason which serves the animality of the rational animal in a human—that is, free and creative—manner.

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Reason, like language, becomes an instrument of human freedom or value creation.

To insist that language is part of the being of man, and is not just a 'value' or a vehicle to convey values, is not necessarily to submerge individuality under nationality. For Aristotle, upon whose understanding of human nature this analysis has been based, asserted, as Trudeau pointed out, that the purpose of political life is to foster individual development. However, in the Aristotelian understanding, individuality is to be conceived more fruitfully as a product of society than can society be understood as the product of unsocialized individuals. We have pointed out that Trudeau presents a one-sided interpretation of Aristotle, because Aristotle thought the nurture of community and language were ends in themselves as well as means to individual fulfillment. But to maintain that attention to, and care of, language is an end in itself does not entail that language is not also a means to individual purposes.

If a linguistic community is, as Premier Lévesque has it, the spiritual food of humankind, one must insist that man is not only what he eats, but what he makes of his spiritual nourishment; eating is both an end in itself and a means to further ends. Thus we conclude that language is both an instrument of our freedom and our being, and our very being and freedom; it is a means individuals use to convey information or to express personal experience and, at the same time, language orders individuals' experience, bringing it to con-sciousness, or common awareness. Language is the con-ning of *scientia*, or so nationalist con-men would have it. Care for language is care for what is common.

Whatever the effect of Trudeau's political career, whether the federal state can be re-constituted to meet the interests, aspirations and sentiments of the two nations, or whether Quebec becomes politically independent of the rest of Canada, French and English Canadians can be indebted to the prime minister for making intelligence respectable in public life and for drawing attention to linguistic concerns as a central feature of political conflict. If this analysis has attempted to indicate the inadequacy of Trudeau's account of language, it has also attempted to show the force and coherence of that account. Indeed, any thoughtful review of the merits of federal institutions and the liberal philosophy informing them must take the ideas of Pierre Trudeau into account. Because he has articulated his liberalism with intelligence and because he has provoked thoughtful opposition to his political position, Trudeau has added dignity to Canadian politics by opening us up to fundamental questioning of our political commitments and personal identity. For to question, in and out of whatever language, is a high and uncommon road, a destiny without a destination.

Department of Political Economy  
University of Toronto

# TRUDEAU AND THE LANGUAGE QUESTION

## Notes

1. R. Whitaker has sensitively uncovered some elements of romanticism within the complex character of the prime minister. See "Reason, Passion and Interest: Pierre Trudeau's Eternal Liberal Triangle", *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 4:1 (Winter 1980), 5-32.
2. R. Lévesque, *La Passion du Québec*, Montréal, Éditions Québec/Amérique, 1978, p. 31-2.
3. What follows is an elaboration of certain aspects of Trudeau's thought which was ably examined over a decade ago by A. Carrier, "L'idéologie politique de la revue *Cité Libre*", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 1 (1968) 416. Since no reference is made to Trudeau in this section clarifying the usage of 'values', readers wishing to ascertain the compatibility of the liberal grammar of values with Trudeau's personalist Catholicism would do well to consult this fine article by Carrier.
4. P.E. Trudeau, *Le Fédéralisme et la société canadienne-française*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1968, p. 13.
5. *Les cheminements de la politique*, Montréal, Éditions du jour, 1970, p. 29.
6. *ibid.*, p. 51.
7. W. Mathie has contrasted the thought of Trudeau and Aristotle in 'Political Community and the Canadian Experience: Reflections on Nationalism, Federalism and Unity', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 12 (1979) 15-19. However the differences between Aristotle and Trudeau on the place of speech in human society is not analyzed by Mathie.
8. *op. cit.*, p. 54.
9. *ibid.*, p. 55.
10. *The Politics of Aristotle*, tr. E. Barker, New York, Galaxy, 1962, 12786.
11. *ibid.*, 1253a.
12. *The Politics of Aristotle*, 1280a-b.
13. *Les cheminements*, p. 31; c.f. p. 34-5, 40-1, 65-7, 113.
14. J.J. Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, ed. R.D. Masters, New York, St. Martins, 1964, p. 147-8; *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, Bordeaux, G. Ducros, 1971, p. 113.
15. Rousseau, in *Émile* (Bk 4 and 5), portrays the motive for civic responsibility as erotic; only when Emile desires Sophie does he search for a homeland to raise a family and establish roots. His commitment to the principles of *The Social Contract* is conditional upon his desire to sow his seed in fertile ground.
16. See P.E. Trudeau, *Conversations with Canadians*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1972, p. 27; and 'La nouvelle trahison des clercs' and 'Fédéralisme, nationalisme et raison' in *Le fédéralisme et la société canadienne-française*. To be sure, the shift from 'logos' to 'ratio' is not as abrupt as the words 'language' to 'reason' would suggest. The Greek word 'logos' was used in various ways, apparently without even Wittgenstein's family resemblances amongst the usages;

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'logos' meant thought or reason, as well as speech, language, word, proportion or ratio, estimation, collection, computation or account, explanation, grounds of a theory or course of action, the matter spoken of, etc.

17. *Le fédéralisme*, p. 168.
18. *ibid.*, p. 184.
19. *ibid.*, p. 36. The English translation renders "se rattachent" by "related" which does not capture the essential belonging together of language and cultural values. *Federalism and the French Canadians*, Toronto, MacMillan, 1968, p. 29.
20. *Le fédéralisme*, p. 36.
21. I am told that English is the language of the boardrooms and of senior management of the Chase Manhattan Bank in Paris. However widespread the use of English in multinational corporations in Europe, it is clear that English is for the most part the language of capital in Quebec. The "working language" is not the language of most workers. Thus linguistic and economic concerns, the "national question" and the "social question", are intertwined; linguistic conflict is to a greater or lesser extent class struggle. With the increasing concentration and socialization of production, language, as an instrument of communication, becomes ever more "a productive force." Access to this productive force is an element of class struggle, particularly when the "traditional petit-bourgeoisie" or independent proprietors have been incorporated in large organizations.
22. *Conversations with Canadians*, p. 33.
23. *ibid.*, p. 36.
24. One might say that religion more than language accounts for the cultural identity of Jews, Mennonites, Doukabours, etc. But it would be inappropriate to consider a religion a 'value', or as a vehicle of cultural 'values' since religious observants do not consider religion exhaustively or primarily in terms of the secular functions of maintaining an identity and enlarging one's freedom. The vocabulary of values adopts a point of view foreign to those believing themselves called by God to realize His will. Similarly, the vocabulary of 'values' is inappropriate to language. Language, like religion, is not merely an instrument or a vehicle; it is not the product of human will and artifice; it is not conditional upon the disposition, choice or evaluation of the free subject. We are used by language in our use of it.
25. *Conversations with Canadians*, p. 39.
26. *Le fédéralisme*, p. 38.
27. *ibid.*, p. 186.
28. D. Cameron's *Nationalism, Self-Determination and the Quebec Question*, Toronto, MacMillan, 1974, is a thoughtful analysis of Quebec nationalism in spite of the fact that he employs the language of values without subjecting it to the careful historical scrutiny which he bestows on other central words in our political vocabulary.
29. See L. Dion, "Quebec and the Future of Canada", in D.C. Thomson, ed., *Quebec Society and Politics: Views from the Inside*, Toronto, McLelland and Stewart, 1973, p. 251-62.

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30. *The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1967, Bk 1, xxxiv.
31. *ibid.*
32. *ibid.*, xxix.
33. *ibid.*, xxxi.
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