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PHILOSOPHICAL LANGUAGE

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A philosophical [language](#) is any constructed [language](#) that is constructed from first principles, sometimes following a classification. It is considered a type of engineered [language](#). Philosophical languages were popular in Early Modern times, partly motivated by the goal of revising normal [language](#) for philosophical (i.e. scientific) purposes. The term ideal [language](#) is sometimes used near-synonymously, though more modern philosophical languages [such](#) as Toki Pona are less likely to involve [such an](#) exalted claim of perfection. The axioms and grammars of the languages together differ from commonly spoken languages.

OVERVIEW

In most philosophical languages, words are constructed from a limited set of morphemes that are treated as elemental or fundamental. Philosophical [language](#) is sometimes used synonymously with taxonomic [language](#). Vocabularies of oligosynthetic languages are made of compound words, which are coined from a small (theoretically minimal) set of morphemes. Languages like Toki Pona similarly use a limited set of root words but produce phrases which remain series of distinct words.

HISTORY

Foreseen in Descartes' letter to Mersenne of November 20, 1629, work on philosophical languages was pioneered by Francis Lodwick (A Common Writing, 1647; The Groundwork or Foundation laid (or So Intended) for the Framing of a New Perfect [Language](#) and a Universal Common Writing, 1652), Sir Thomas Urquhart (Logopandecteision, 1652), George Dalgarno (Ars signorum, 1661), and John Wilkins (An Essay towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical [Language](#), 1668). Those were systems of hierarchical classification that were intended to result in both spoken and written expression. In 1855, English writer George Edmonds modified Wilkins' system, leaving its taxonomy intact, but changing the grammar, orthography and pronunciation of the [language](#) in [an](#) effort to make it easier to speak and to read.[1]

Gottfried Leibniz created lingua generalis (or lingua universalis) in 1678, aiming to [create](#) a lexicon of characters upon which the user might perform calculations that would yield true propositions automatically; as a side effect he developed binary calculus.[2]

These projects aimed not only to reduce or model grammar, but also to arrange all [human](#) knowledge into characters or hierarchies. This idea ultimately led to the Encyclopédie, in the Age of Enlightenment. Under the entry Caractère, D'Alembert critically reviewed the projects of philosophical languages of the preceding century.

After the Encyclopédie, projects for a priori languages moved more and more to the fringe. However, from [time](#) to [time](#), some authors continued to propose philosophical languages until the 20th century (for example, Ro, aUI) or even in the 21st century (Toki Pona).

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