

## Les pensées qui parlent... quelle langue? - 1/1

**La parole succède-t-elle la pensée ? Ou pensons-nous avec des mots ? C'est ce que débat ce texte. Attention, il faut bien maîtriser l'anglais pour le comprendre !**

Thoughts that speak.... which language?

Descartes once said : " We speak because we think" . But Plato seems to see things quite differently when he says : "An inside and silent dialogue between the soul and itself " (talking about thinking). Descartes' view of things imply that the thinking precedes language, while Plato suggests that the process of thinking is connected with words. But does thinking really require words? In other terms : Isn't language just a mean of externalizing our thoughts?

First of all, let's analyze the sentence we have just read. Some questions appear right away when we read it. The first one would be : what is language? The language is the faculty of speech. And what does "isn't... just" imply? It indicates there is only one option, one true possibility. A mean is a method producing a result, a way to realize a project, it is that which is used for the achievement of a goal... To externalize is to reveal outside what is inside, to make visible what is hidden. And finally, what is a thought? It is all conscious state or the act of thinking as an intellectual activity.

We have to be sure to measure the pros and cons before we can state an opinion if we want it to be valid; jumping right into conclusions without analyzing the situation would be a serious mistake. This is why we will here carefully debate both sides before choosing ours.

We would all agree, for a start, that the act of creation is totally independent of language. William Blakes wrote in English, but the French translations keep the ideas. If I can open a dictionary and translate a document from a language to another, it is because no matter the language, my thoughts stay the same. And what about polyglots? They are living proof that thoughts are not bound with words; they can think of anything and express it in different languages. And this is clearly because language is only a garment for the thoughts. As William James said : " The true thought is independent of language. The language is what succeeds it ". We can therefore deduce that the goal of language is purely communication. We understand our thoughts, but language is the "code" that permits them to be translated as for the community can understand them. It is language that makes our ideas accessible to others. And by thinking without words, we do not meet dams, for the words are limitative; we only see what we know. If the process of thinking is independent, we should be able to conclude that we can talk without thinking, which is true.

Even science has always denied the impossibility to detach thinking of words. > (Jacques Monod). We know that a great number of objective observations have proven that the cognitive functions of the man, even the complex ones, can not be bound by language.

On the other hand isn't language the foundation of the thinking? After all, it is the language that structures the thinking. And we all know we can not think abstractly. How could someone understand and think of concepts without having words as a reference? Plus we can't think in a language we do not master. And if language is a code, doesn't every code need the information to be processed before the encoding? Finally, the big question : how can we represent the thinking, if it is not with words? How else could we think? We can not think with particular images, concepts, general ideas.

In conclusion, the thinking needs language without which it can not exist. Therefore, language is not only a tool of communication; it is a necessary to think. The master of a language gives us a depth of mind for we can give names to abstract ideas, realities and concepts.