

MAIMONIDES LECTURE ON SCEPTICISM

TUESDAY
26 APRIL 2022
18:00

**Critique of Language as Critique of Nation:
Linguistic Cosmopolitanism according to Fritz Mauthner**
Andreas Kilcher

The language theory of the nineteenth century was essentially based on an organic family model—and thus also founded the concept of nationalism. In his main opus, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (3 volumes, 1901/2), Fritz Mauthner, who was born in multilingual Prague, countered this linguistic nationalism with an alternative model. Instead of linguistic identities and borders, it focuses on connections and transitions between languages. With recourse to the physical and linguistic theory of waves as well as the sociological theory of imitation, Mauthner explained adaptation and loan as universal principles of an ultimately global mixing of languages. Thereby, languages prove to be living structures that mutually penetrate and fertilise each other. Thus, Mauthner radically questions the territorialisability of language in order to assert a post-national linguistic cosmopolitanism.

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