The issue I address in this paper, as it is enounced in the title, is like a coin which may only be analysed by alternately regarding its two sides: the history of the words on the one hand, and the history of ideas or concepts on the other. I do not, thereby, wish to suggest that we should also draw a further distinction between what we traditionally call “history of ideas” and “history of concepts”: these expressions are certainly in use to designate the disciplines known as, respectively, history of ideas proper and Begriffsgeschichte. Here, however, I intend only to concentrate on aspects of the signifier (i.e., words and their history) and of the signified (i.e., the ideas, or concepts, and their history) alternately. The two histories are certainly deeply interwoven, although this does not mean that the history of ideas and concepts coincides with the history of the words by which they are signified: a given word may change its semantic intension in the course of time and certain concepts, conversely, have at different times had different words to connote them.

I felt it necessary to make these simple introductory remarks in that, when it comes to the community of minds, the image of a coin and its two sides bears directly on the theoretical substance of the issue in question and on the historical context in which such theoretical substance took shape. The community of minds is a community composed of subjects who communicate among themselves, although with the peculiarity that, being minds and not bodies, they ought to be able to merely transmit ideas without embodying ideas in words (I shall not here address the possibility that they could not, thereby, also conceal ideas through silence or words carefully chosen to mislead).

The question of the community of minds is therefore a modern problem, in the sense that it rests upon the construction of what we may term, after Hegel, the “philosophy of finite subjectivity”—or “philosophy of reflection of subjectivity”—and the ensuing question of inter-subjectivity. It is well known that a great deal of attention was spent, in the Middle Ages, on the language of angels. We should perhaps say from

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1 For an excellent recent study, see Suarez-Nani (2002); for the theoretical aspects which concern linguistic communication between and amongst different ontological systems (God, angels, humans), also see Parret (1992).
St. Paul\(^2\) to Hamann\(^3\) at least, rather than just say Middle Ages; a period, at any rate, with the nature of a hiatus or interval, an Age in-between, so as to bring out the “modern” nature and origin of the question I address here and which we may collocate in the semantic area of the term *inter-subjectivity*, i.e., a field which presupposes a modern semantic redefinition of the *subjectum*.

The term *inter-subjectivity* was originally devised by Husserl, although it has now become a possibly over inflated term and a part of ordinary language. Both its technical origins and its successive drift into ordinary language have to be regarded as symptoms of the problems created by the “philosophy of finite subjectivity.” Husserl, as a matter of fact, only started speaking in terms of *inter-subjectivity* and only began dealing with the problem which goes under this name when he began to understand and reformulate his own phenomenological programme in terms of a “transcendental” philosophy. We should equally note that Husserl publicly addressed the problem of inter-subjectivity only when he was finally induced to define the historical collocation and derivation of his phenomenological programme, which is to say in the course of lectures which were given the title of *Cartesian Meditations* (a far more appropriate title than is frequently understood, no matter how one chooses to understand the relationship between Cartesianism and transcendentalism in the phenomenology of Husserl).

Modern philosophy of finite subjectivity developed through stages which need not be examined here in detail—from the conceptualisation of the *cogito* as substance “qua nihil facilius a me percipi potest” (as I would find fit to gloss), to Leibniz’s *apperception*, to the non-substantiated “I think” within the *transzendentale Apperception* framework and beyond. It is beyond doubt, however, that the Cartesian divide between *res extensa* and a first person *res cogitans* has given rise to severe difficulties: indeed it has erected a barrier in the communication between individual and personal *res cogitantes*—a barrier which only comes down by means of the extraordinary one-way communication by virtue of which the Cartesian God, to whom the origin of everything is ascribed, furnishes all finite *res cogitantes* with the idea of infinity. What we find today is that contemporary philosophy is still engaged with these problems (and that it has widely forgotten the seriousness and obstinacy with which occasionalism has tried to respond).\(^4\)

One could in fact say that what qualifies the programme of contemporary philosophy lies precisely in its attempts to find a solution to these problems—whether

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2 1 Cor. 13, 1.
4 Given that in this work I shall treat the Descartes-Leibniz-Kant paradigm in *apicibus*, I shall not touch upon a large number of authors, amongst whom is Malebranche, whose theoretical and historical importance cannot however go unmentioned (with regards to Leibniz too). On the argument of occasionalism, see the important works of R. Specht, e.g., Specht (1966).