

Chapter Nine: Appeal to Authority

Forms and Usage

I. Eighteenth-Century Purism

A. Standardize (ascertain): According to Johnson, *ascertain* means "a settled matter, an established rule." The term is used in this sense in Swift's *Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue*.

B. Refine: fallacious notion that contemporary language was corrupt and must be rid of "imperfections," such as the following noted by Swift:

1. recent innovations, especially shortened words
2. tendency to contract verbs
3. words in vogue, especially those used by fops

C. Fix: establish a permanent form

II. Attempts to form an Academy:

A. Examples of French and Italian Academies

B. earliest suggestions for an English Academy

C. Important Voices for the Academy

1. Dryden, 1664
2. Defoe, 1697
3. Swift's *Proposal*
4. Robert Lowth (and purism)

D. Increasing scepticism in the 18th century

E. Substitutions for an Academy

1. dictionary
2. grammar

III. Johnson's Dictionary

IV. 18th Century Grammarians and Rhetoricians

A. Grammarians (Cooke, Murray, Sheridan, Priestley, Lowth)

B. Rhetoricians (Sheridan, Campbell, Baker)

C. The aims and goals of grammarians and rhetoricians attempting to ascertain English

1. Codified principles of language
2. Settled disputed points and decided on usage
3. Pointed out and corrected common errors

D. How did they settle rules?

1. reason
2. etymology
3. example of the Classics
4. doctrine of usage (late 18th century, Priestley and Campbell)