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A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

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JOURNAL OF
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ORDINARY MEETING, MARCH 7, 1881.

J. E. HOWARD, ESQ., F.R.S., VICE-PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed, and the following elections were announced :—

MEMBER :—Rev. W. H. Jones, M.A., Hull.

ASSOCIATES :—R. F. Weymouth, Esq., M.A., D. Lit., Mill Hill ; G. Wise, Esq., London ; The Librarian, Cathedral Missionary Divinity College, Calcutta.

Also the presentation of the following Works for the Library :—

“Proceedings of the Royal Society.” *From the same.*

“Proceedings of the Geological Society.” *Ditto.*

Also pamphlets from W. H. Brown, Esq., R.N., and C. Hill, Esq.

The following paper was then read by the Author :—

LANGUAGE, AND THEORIES OF ITS ORIGIN.

By R. BROWN, Esq., F.S.A.

1. *Parallel and Connexion between Language and Religion.*

AMONG the multitude of animals existing upon the face of the earth, one only,—Man,—is possessed of the two remarkable endowments of language and religion ; and this circumstance alone might fairly give rise to the opinion that there is a somewhat intimate connexion between them. With men, language is universal, and religion is no less so* ; and in either case we have an almost infinite variety of manifestation, yet, as

NOTE.—R.Z., *The Religion of Zoroaster* (Paper read before the Victoria Institute, April 21, 1879). R.M.A., *The Religion and Mythology of the Aryans of Northern Europe* (Paper read before the Victoria Institute, April 19, 1880).—For the Synopsis, see page 355.

* *Vide* Appendix.

in Nature itself, capable of reduction into a vast unity; for, although both sounds, delineations, and ideas, like chessmen, present combinations practically innumerable, still, like chessmen, they are susceptible of classification, analysis, and coalescence in a single system. Again, language, in its totality, is not borrowed from without, but first welling up within the soul by virtue of a mysterious power inherent in the human individual, and then, assisted in its manifestation by the external world, it finally overflows the Ego, and produces an harmonious link between two or more beings; and, similarly, religion originates within to work outwardly, and, in its origin, is utterly independent of the material and the visible, however greatly these may assist or entangle its subsequent career. Language has become, in course of time, and with the increase and dispersion of population, almost infinitely varied, complicated, in many cases exhausted, degraded, and defiled; or, again, purified, elevated, vastly extended, made delicately accurate and harmonious; and, as its history continues, the possibility of its union or re-union in a single tongue becomes distinct: and religion has undergone an exactly corresponding destiny, and as no one ever urges the errors, degradations, or excesses which have arisen in connexion with language against its use, and its existence as a most practical, true, and important institution; so, equally, such arguments when advanced against religion, are not merely unjust but ridiculous, and if it be objected to this parallel that men cannot do without language, I have yet to learn that they can do without religion, although, of course, here and there an unreligious individual may be found, the deaf-and-blind-mute of a religious world. As even in our present civilisation the number of the ideas and of the words used by ordinary persons is extremely limited, so, it is evident that language in its earliest phases, owing to the simplicity of life, paucity of experience, and smallness of numbers of its employers, must have been also extremely simple, without almost the whole of those elaborations which, to later ages, become grammar with its alphabets and parts of speech. For the same reasons we might *à priori* suppose, and investigation confirms the fact, that religion in its earliest phases would exhibit a corresponding simplicity, a healthy infancy,—immature, indeed, when compared with subsequent attainment,—but yet, at the same time, free from those infirmities which beset age, unendowed with a formulated creed, canons, or articles, the grammar of belief, but based upon truth and giving light sufficient for the time. Again, language, like religion, is founded upon the unseen and immaterial, for it arises from the effort to telegraph thought to the consciousness of some

other sentient being; and as language is based upon limited and internal thought, so religion is based upon unlimited and external thought, *i.e.*, God. A safe superstructure can only rest upon a sure foundation; but language, the superstructure of thought, is in itself reliable, and is thus satisfactorily based; and human thought, therefore, is, when within the sphere of its involuntary operation, perfectly worthy of belief.* The fact, then, that religion is confessedly founded upon the immaterial, should offer no stumbling-block to our acceptance of it; or, if we regard the immaterial as a fallacious basis, then, to be consistent, we must also reject language and consider it an imposture. But, as language postulates human thought, which is obviously limited, so religion postulates superhuman thought,† and, as no limitation of this is mentally visible, it follows that (so far as we either are or can be concerned) it is unlimited; and as religion is to language, so is superhuman thought to human thought, *i.e.*, indefinitely superior. Again, the higher animals have simple cognitions, and, indeed, definite opinions: *e.g.*, a dog may regard A as an offensive person, to be always barked at and driven away; and such an opinion may, as in the case of a human being, continue for years and gain strength by time; but when a dog compels obedience, he does so by the exercise of force alone, without reference to the feeling, wish, or opinion of the creature with whom he deals; in the same way that a stone, striking a man, may compel him to fall to the earth; that is to say, no animal, except man, has any wish to promulgate his ideas or opinions by persuasion, or generally heeds whether others entertain them or not, whilst, on the other hand, man is essentially a propagandist of ideas, teacher, preacher, converter, perverter, and probably almost his keenest pleasure frequently consists in seeing his notions, good, bad, or indifferent, warmly accepted. The harmony of existence, therefore, necessitated the possession of language as a legitimate outlet for this passion; and, conversely, other animals have not, and never had, and never will have, any such power, because the economy of their nature does not demand it; and thus language upon the mind of a dog would be but an excrescence unsightly and inharmonious, and

* Vide *R.M.A.*, sec. 5.

† Mr. Tylor, for his purpose, gives "as a minimum definition of religion the belief in spiritual beings" (*Prim. Cult.* i. 383). Prof. Müller regards religion "as a subjective faculty for the apprehension of the Infinite" (*Hibbert Lects.*, 1878, p. 22). I do not feel it necessary to attempt an exact description here, because we may have a thorough practical knowledge of what is intended by a term, without necessarily crystallizing our conceptions into a perfectly satisfactory verbal definition.

it is probable that even the animal's bark is not natural but acquired from association with man. Now man, as we have noticed, is a religious animal, and although religion does not consist in the promulgation of individual ideas, yet this is a necessary feature in it; since we cannot imagine as religious any being who, whilst personally entertaining any of those ideas which we regard as religious, had a thorough dog-like indifference to an external and non-forcible communication of them (as, *e.g.*, in prayer to Divinity). A religious animal, therefore, must be a language-possessing animal; and, conversely, a non-language-possessing animal cannot be a religious animal. If this were not so, we should see a phenomenon similar to that which would be exhibited by a water-requiring creature whose constitution made it unable to obtain water; a frightful spectacle such as nature never presents. Language is thus the natural vehicle and servant of religion, and the closeness of the connexion is evidenced, amongst other circumstances, by the fact that even after the establishment of regular literary composition almost all literature continued to be either of an absolutely or of a semi-religious character. As the Vedic Indian of old saw in the ordinary panorama of nature the performance of a divine ritual, which he imitated by his earthly sacrifices and daily life; as we are commanded to pray without ceasing, and to be religious in the most trivial actions of our existence; so, in proportion as we advance towards the high standard of Christianity, and our life in its externals becomes more and more a not unworthy ritual, will language approximate towards a union with religion; for, were our thought holy, its product would not be inferior: and perfected beings combining in choric adoration, that is to say, employing at the same time melodious sound and vocal rhythmic harmony, which together form the noblest combination of utterance, would supremely illustrate the indissolubility of the two great gifts to man when with one mind (Religion) and with one mouth (Language) they glorified God. Such terms as *Logos* (= Lat. *rätio* + *oratio*) and *Fatum*, "the spoken-word," illustrate the close connexion between language and religion; and *Vach* (*i.e.*, *Vox*, *Voice*), personified as a goddess by the Vedic Indians, is said to rush onward like the wind and make him whom she loves a poet (*poëtés*, *i.e.*, a maker of word-clothed ideas) and a sage. As soon as the science of Comparative Philology was firmly established, the comparative study of religion followed as a matter of course; and in archaic times language is by far the most important, and frequently the only, factor in the explanation of religious ideas. We observe, then, that language and religion are inseparable, exhibit diversity in unity, are in origin

independent of, although stimulated by, the external world, are capable alike of advance and of degradation, indicate a future unity, possessed a pristine simplicity, are based upon the unseen and immaterial, postulate thought human and superhuman, are always associated with a spirit of propagandism more or less pronounced, necessitate each other, and approximate each other in proportion to the perfection of the individual existence. Lastly, language is a great fact, a mighty truth; and is it reasonable to say that religion is less? He who is the beginning and end of religion, has significantly declared that he is at once Alpha and Omega.

2. *Language, what.*

What is signified by the term "language" in its wide and true meaning? It is chiefly, no doubt, a way of expressing the unseen and immaterial by an articulation of air;* but the Archbishop of York has defined it with accurate generality as "a mode of expressing our thoughts by means of motions of the organs of the body."† This mode of thought-expression is addressed either to the sensation of feeling, to the eye, or to the ear of another. Mr. George Harris observes, "Taste and smell have not, as far as I am aware, ever been availed of for the purposes of mutual intercourse,"‡ among men. This, however, is far from certain, as *e.g.*, we find that "the Hill Tribes of Chittagong do not say 'Kiss me,' but 'Smell me.'"§ Language, as thus defined, addresses the sensation of feeling by touch, the eye by gesture and pictorial representation (which latter includes writing, the daughter of drawing), and the ear by sound, involuntary (simple ejaculations), articulate or musical. Hence, in considering any of the problems connected with language, we must start from as broad a basis as possible; and make, at least to some extent, a comparative study of the facts and principles of touch, gesture, delineation (drawing and writing), natural involuntary sound, articulate speech, and artificial harmony. Articulate speech divides into dialects and groups or families of languages; but articulate speech itself is only a division of the original subject. Thus we observe the vastness of the study of language, and the immense difficulty of the various questions and intricate problems connected with it; nor can we forbear

* Canon Farrar, *Chaps. on Lang.*, 92.

† *Outline of the Laws of Thought*, 27.

‡ *The Nature and Constitution of Man*, 1876, ii. 239.

§ Lewin, *Hill Tribes of Chittagong*, apud Sir John Lubbock, *Pre-historic Times*, 3rd edit., p. 563.

astonishment at the "light heart" with which numerous inquirers and theorists have essayed the subject, equipped with nothing much except a host of *à priori* fancies. The complicated character of language, as "the point of contact, where mind and matter, artificially, yet most intimately, blend, and reciprocate their respective properties,"* and as inexplicable in origin by any single science,† is also, I apprehend, at once apparent. Some have regarded language as being purely physical,‡ which is to confuse it with the mere process of phonetic; and it were as reasonable to attempt to penetrate its labyrinth by means of the physical aspect alone, as to endeavour to discover the soul by the aid of anatomy. Prof. Müller, indeed, says, "I always took it for granted that the science of language is one of the physical sciences";§ but at the same time he defines "physical science" as that which "deals with the works of God," and is not "historical"; and thus the psychological element in language is not excluded. Bearing its general and complex character in mind, we shall not be confused, but somewhat assisted, by more or less felicitous definitions and illustrations of language of a somewhat rhetorical, or of a symbolic or metaphorical character, as *e.g.*, that it is "the reflection of the soul," "the congealment of ideas," "the correlation of the understanding," "the gesture of the tongue," "imitative sound," "inexplicit things," and the like.

3. *Language a Natural Development.*

It may next be observed that language, like sculpture, for instance, is a natural art; with a beginning, progress, and development yet continuing. As in early Greece rude stones were revered instead of statues, and we read of an Artemis of unwrought wood, a Herê merely a tree-trunk or a plank, an Aphrodite in the shape of a conical stone, and the like,|| which forms at length expanded into the unsurpassed perfection of the Periklean age; so, similarly, language, by means of the continued efforts of centuries, blooms from a lowly beginning into the Zeus-like Greek of Plato or the stately diction of Gibbon. I do not suppose that this position will now be seriously controverted,

* Isaac Taylor, *Physical Theory of Another Life*, cap. 8.

† *Vide* Prof. Sayce, *Introd. Sci. Lang.*, ii. 398.

‡ *Vide* Prof. Whitney's Essay on "Schliecher and the Physical Theory of Language." (*Oriental and Linguistic Studies*, First Series, 298, *et seq.*)

§ *Lects. Sci. Lang.*, i. 23.

|| On this subject, *vide* R. B., *The Great Dionysiak Myth*, i. 350, *et seq.*

but, at the same time, it may be well to supplement it by two or three general considerations:—

1. It is far more in harmony with the ordinary procedure of the Divinity to give man a power or faculty, and then to leave him to freely develop it, than to grant him at once the power to exercise an art in high perfection. Highly-developed language is and was no more an instantaneous natural endowment than are reading and writing.

2. There is not the least general evidence that the Divinity ever bestowed a perfect or perfected language upon man, but the whole study and history of language tends to show the exact contrary; so that you could no more induce an expert to support such an opinion than you could persuade him to believe that the whole history of the Pharaohs may be compressed into four or five centuries. We may remember with advantage the genial irony of Sokrates in the *Kratylos*, a treatise still worthy the most serious attention of every linguistic student, that if we are deprived of other theories, “we must have recourse to divine help, like the tragic poets, who in any perplexity have their gods waiting in the air.”

3. There is nothing in our Sacred Books which negatives the theory of the gradual natural development of language by man. We read that Yahveh Elohim brought the other animals to the Man to see what he would call them, and whatsoever he should call them that was to be the name thereof. Here the variety of nature stimulates the power of the language-possessing animal. He, not Yahveh, finds names for the other animals, appellations such as he deems to be appropriate for them. He sculptures names, if the expression may be permitted.

4. Language, like sculpture, poetry, and every other human production, is very imperfect; and this imperfection becomes glaringly apparent when linguistic forms are placed beneath the microscope of scientific investigation. Without referring to small special illustrations, almost every thinker knows how inadequate even the present elaborated condition of language is for the expression of numerous highly delicate imaginations and ideas; how translation into speech frequently disfigures their symmetry and obscures their drift, and how in some instances, as in the case of many dream-combinations, language is absolutely unable to reproduce them. Dr. Tylor forcibly remarks:—

“Take language all in all over the world, it is obvious that the processes by which words are made and adapted have far less to do with systematic arrangement and scientific classification, than with mere rough and ready ingenuity. Let any one whose vocation it is to realise philosophical and scientific conceptions, and

to express them in words, ask himself whether ordinary language is an instrument planned for such purposes. Of course, it is not. It is hard to say which is the more striking, the want of scientific system in the expression of thought by words, or the infinite cleverness of detail by which this imperfection is got over, so that he who has an idea does somehow make shift to get it clearly in words before his own and other minds.*

If it be objected that language is perfect, though man's use of it may be imperfect, I rejoin that we only know it in man's use of it; unlike religion, the principles of which and their harmonious expression in conduct, we see before us as a "flying perfect," a mark, goal, and standard to aim at, but which, unless terribly self-deceived,† we must be conscious that we do not attain. We may, therefore, well conclude with the Archbishop of York that "language is a divine gift; but the power, and not the results of its exercise, the germ, and not the tree, was imparted."‡ "Languages are not made, but grow." Their natural original is well illustrated by Canon Farrar,§ who truly observes, "On the human origin of language, the voice of the Bible coincides perfectly with the voice of reason and of science"; and who quotes the remark of St. Gregory of Nyssa that "the hypothesis of a revealed language" is "Jewish nonsense and folly."

4. *Primeval Language unknown.*

As language, whether slowly developed or instantaneously bestowed, had a beginning, there must have been at least one primeval form of speech. Inquiries respecting this have long been made, are naturally interesting, and lack nothing to command success except the requisite data. The hopelessness of this *ignis fatuus* pursuit is, in the present state of our knowledge, very apparent; but it may be desirable to illustrate the fact by one or two examples.

We have an account of the creation of man, written in Hebrew at a comparatively early period; but this circumstance affords not the least real ground, even in the abstract, and apart from any historical investigation, for supposing that Hebrew was the primeval language. We now know historically that it was a comparatively modern Semitic dialect; but we need not have

* *Prim. Cult.*, i. 216.

† "When the deceiver is always at home and always with you—that is indeed terrible." (Plato, *Kratylos*.)

‡ *Outline*, 47.

§ *Language and Languages*, cap. i.

waited for historical testimony on the subject. There is no pre-
 tence in *Genesis* to the use of *ipsissima verba* in the passages
 where speech is first mentioned. Dr. Colenso, in his carping
 criticism of the Bishop of Winchester's Commentary on *Genesis*,
 contends that the writer must be considered to have held that
 Hebrew was the language of Paradise, because there is a direct
 phonetic and etymological connexion between the words "Eve"
 ('Havâh, Chavvah, Khavvah, or Chawwâ) and "living." Suppose,
 then, we read,—“And the Man called his wife's name 'Life'
 (and rightly so), for she hath become the mother of all 'living,'”
 —may we urge that the writer of such a sentence necessarily held
 that English was the primeval language? It is obvious that a
 score of languages might keep up the connexion, and we are not
 a whit nearer the original *x*. Similarly the Man declares that his
 partner shall be called "Wo-man" (*i.e.* Wife-man, Heb. Isschâh),
 because she was taken out of "Man" (Heb. Isch.). Here, again,
 both languages with equal facility keep up a connexion between
 the pair of terms. Nor will antediluvian proper names give us
 any more assistance in the matter, even after making every
 possible allowance. Thus, *e.g.*, let it be granted that Moses wrote
 the name "Methusael," and that this name means "Man-of-God,"
 and represents a primeval name. How does it represent it,—by
 translation, as being an equivalent, or by transliteration? If
 by translation, then we can no more recover the original form
 than, if ignorant of Greek, we could obtain Astyanax from City-
 king; but, if by transliteration, through how many languages
 and dialects, Babylonian, Assyrian, Akkadian, plus *x*, may it not
 have passed? Again, of course it is by no means difficult to
 supply Hebrew derivations or explanations to non-Hebrew names.
 Thus, the Bishop of Winchester observes that Eve "called her
 firstborn Cain (*possession*), but this second Hebel (*breath*,
vapour, *vanity*, *nothingness*), because all human possession is
 but vanity."* Had Eve, then, at that early period, and thus
 made a happy mother, the feelings of the writer of *Ecclesiastes*?
 Even the Bishop himself seems to doubt his own explanation, for
 he immediately adds, "Yet it is not said that Abel was so named
 by Eve herself, as Cain had been. [It is not directly stated that
 Eve named Cain.] Hence it is possible that the name Abel was
 that by which he became known, after his life had passed away
 like a breath or a vapour." It is *possible*, but such possibilities
 are valueless. It is equally possible that, according to another
 suggestion, he "received a name indicative of his weakness and
 poverty, and, prophetically, of the pain and sorrow which were to

* *Holy Bible with Commentary*, i. 53.

be inflicted on him and his parents." * These are good examples of the facility with which reasons, more or less plausible, may be adduced in support of any etymology. Abel (Habel) is now generally regarded as a variant and derivative of the Chaldeo-Assyrian *ablu*, "son"; † but I am far from claiming any primeval character for this latter language, although we find in it some of the earliest known forms of antediluvian names, as, *e.g.*, *admu*, Heb. *adam* (dark-red), "man."

Leaving sacred books and their associations, let us suppose that we wish to know the primeval name given by man to his best, and probably first, friend,—the dog. In the abstract it is evident that the animal might not unnaturally have been called, in the first instance, Runner, Barker, Biter, etc. Will investigation assist us, and reveal what really took place? Take the the word *dog* itself. Prof. Skeat ‡ gives Middle Eng. "*dogge* (2 syllables). Not found in A. S., but an old low German word: Du. *dog*, a mastiff; Swed. *dogg*, a mastiff; Dan. *dogge*, a bulldog. Root unknown." Richardson § well observes, "Although the word in English is applied to every species, yet in the other dialects it is the large hunting-dog, *Canis grandis et venaticus*"; and we may well connect it with Fick || with the European formation, *dhav*; meaning, primarily, "to flow"; and the Sk. root, *dhav*, ¶ which has the same primary signification, and hence means to move quickly,—run, advance against, assault,—a line of idea most appropriate in connexion with the *canis venaticus*. The root *dhav* is, we find, connected with one or two other roots, as *dhanv*, and *dhan*, which latter has the general meaning of "to move" or "cause to move"; and the Gk. *theó* ($\theta\epsilon\acute{\nu}$) "to run," is a connected form. Thus, *dog*, probably means "runner," but, as noticed, ** there was another and indeed a Proto-Aryan word for the animal, *i.e.*, *kwan* or *kvan*, Sk. *svan*, Zend *span*, Gk. *kuón*, Lat. *can-is*, Teutonic base, *hun* (*i.e.* *kwan*), Goth. *hunds*, Du. *hond*, Icel. *hundr*, Dan. Swed. and Germ. *hund*, Eng. *hound*, Lith. *szu* (=szan-s =szvan-s), Irish *cu*, Gael. *cu*, Welsh *ci*. Here is a word whose use is almost conterminous with the Aryan race, and one which probably is older than the most archaic form of the word

* Kitto, *Cyclop. of Bib. Lit.*, in voc. *Abel*.

† Vide Lenormant, *Les Origines*, 12.

‡ *An Etymological Dict. of the Eng. Lang.*, arranged on an Historical Basis, 1879. In voc.

§ *New Dict. of the Eng. Language*, 1836. In voc.

|| *Ver. Wört. der Ind. Spr.*, i. 635.

¶ Prof. Monier Williams, *Sk.-Eng. Dict.* In voc.

** *R.M.A.*, 49.

dog. Professor Skeat says, "Root uncertain." The Sk. *svan* is connected with a root *svi*, "to swell," and similarly the Proto-Aryan *kvan* or *kvan* is probably connected with the primary Aryan root *kva*,* meaning "to swell" and "to burn," heat and expansion being connected; and hence to be hollow, be strong, promote, hollowness and strength being connected with increase of size and strength with heat; whilst that which is strong of course promotes. A dog may thus have been regarded as the hot,† warm-tempered, strong creature who promotes man's wishes, or according to some similar line of thought. Canon Farrar sees in *svan*, a direct *onomatopœia*, but this I am unable to discern: he derives it from the Sk. root *kvan*, "to sound," a view which, though tempting, is, I think, decidedly incorrect; for *kvan*, "to sound" (Cf. Lat. *can-o*, Goth. *han-a*, "cock," i.e. "sing-er," Ang.-Sax. *hæn*, i.e., female cock, the alteration of gender being shown by vowel-change), is from the Proto-Aryan *kan*, "to sound," a form contemporaneous but unconnected with the form *kvan*, *kvan*, or *kuan*, "dog." But let it be granted that the form *kvan* is older than any variant form of *dog*, and also that it is the first word ever used by Aryan man to express the animal, how do we know that it is older than the form which we find in Assyrian as *kalbu*, Heb. *keleb*, "barker," another very natural name to apply to the animal, or than the Kamic (Egyptian) *tesem*, or the Akkadian *lik*? This latter name Canon Farrar would probably connect with "the universal root *lk*, an imitation of *licking* the lips" (Cf. Sk. root *lak*, "to taste"). In this case *lik* would signify "the greedy," "the swallower," and the cuneiform ideograph of the word is, in the opinion of the Rev. Wm. Houghton,‡ "a rough picture of some animal couchant," and the name is used somewhat generally, being also applied to a lion, perhaps regarded as a big dog, as it has elsewhere been styled "the great and mischievous cat." A wolf, too, the most rapacious of brutes (Cf. "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf"), is called *lik-bi-ku*, "dog-other-eating," i.e. greedy-dog. Thus, without entering into the vastly difficult question whether inflectional languages have passed through previous stages of

* *Vide* List of Primary Roots of Proto-Aryan (*R.M.A.*, Appendix B.).

† As to the connexion in idea between fire and an animal, *vide* the remark of Herodotus that "The Egyptians believe fire to be a live animal, which eats whatever it can seize, and then, glutted with the food, dies with the matter which it feeds upon" (*Herod.*, iii. 16, Rawlinson's translation). Plutarch similarly observes, "There is nothing that so resembles a live animal as fire, which moves and nourishes itself" (*Sympos.*, vii.).

‡ *The Picture Origin of the Characters of the Assyrian Syllabary*, 30.

isolation and agglutination, without indeed complicating the matter by any grammatical or linguistic doubts or inquiries, we see at a glance that if mankind have sprung from a single pair of ancestors, these progenitors may, with equal propriety, have called the dog *kwan*, *kalb*, *tsm*, *lik*, or *x*; and that if, for instance, white, black, red, and yellow men had an ancestry originally distinct, any primeval ancestor might have employed any one of these sounds for his purpose.

So we circle round to the *à priori* truth that the first man might have called his dog Barker or Biter, Runner or Watcher, or Swallower. As many appropriate ideas, so many appropriate names. Again, even if we knew that any particular dog-word, *e.g.*, *lik*, was the representative of the original term, we might be still far from the knowledge of what that term was; since, as Sokrates observes in the *Kratylos*, "names have been so twisted in all manner of ways, that I should not be surprised if the old language were to appear to us now to be quite like a barbarous tongue. Remember that we often put in and pull out letters in words," in accordance with the Laws of Least and Most Effort. Lastly, the primeval language may be extinct, not merely in the sense of being unused in conversation and literature, but as having none of its not directly onomatopoeic forms, or even very near approximations to them preserved in any manner. The number of extinct dialects must be immense, and curious accidents at times preserve them more or less; thus "Humboldt saw in South America a parrot which was the sole living creature that could speak a word of the language of a lost tribe."* So Dante's Adam declares:—

"The language, which I spoke, was quite worn out
Before unto the work impossible
The race of Nimrod had their labour turn'd." †

Prof. Sayce considers Akkadian to have been a decaying speech as early as B.C. 3000.‡ But the fact that we are ignorant what were the earliest vocal combinations employed verbally, is no absolute bar to the discovery of the origin of language; for this, when made, would show, to a great extent, how any possible prehistoric presentive § word acquired its special meaning.

* Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 2nd edit., p. 181.

† *Paradiso*, Pollock's translation.

‡ *Introd. Sci. Lang.*, ii. 368.

§ *I.e.*, a word used for a thing or an idea, as opposed to a "symbolic" word, or one which by itself presents no meaning to the mind.

5. *Errors of the Conventional (Anomalistic) and Connexional (Analogistic) Theories of Language.*

The foregoing line of thought will serve to clear the mind from any traces of the errors of the conventional and connexional theories of language. In the *Kratylos* Hermogenes, on the one hand, contends that "There is no name given to anything by nature; all is convention and habit of the users. The name of anything is that which any one affirms to be the name. Hellenes differ from Barbarians in their use of names, and the several Hellenic tribes from one another." Aristotle is of this opinion, though how people could make agreements and conventions without language he does not explain. This crude *à priori* view which, as Prof. Jowett excellently remarks, "is one of those principles which explains everything and nothing," when applied to the canine terms we have been considering, asserts that different men arbitrarily chose the names *kwan*, *kalb*, *tesem*, and *lik*, as appellations for the dog. But if *kalb* mean "barker," and *dog* "runner," then it is obvious that these names were not chosen arbitrarily; and we are aware that all onomatopoeic names, and local * names, and very many personal names were given for reasons more or less obvious, and hence are not arbitrary. We should thus be at once driven to say that some words only were originally arbitrary; and, in affirming this unprovable proposition, we should be aware that we were doing no more than stating our ignorance of the particular principles which obtained in the formation of them. Sokrates, however, knowing no language but his own, and being etymologically ignorant of the meanings of words (about which, however, either in earnest or jest, he can, of course, guess to any extent), is compelled to disprove the absurd position of Hermogenes by an abstract argument which comes to this:—

Things have their distinct natures, and are independent of our notions about them.

Actions also have distinct natures.

There is a natural way of cutting or burning: any other way will fail.

This is true of all actions.

But speaking is a kind of action, and naming a kind of speaking.

We name, then, according to a natural process.†

Therefore, names are not given by artificial convention.

* "Local names are never mere arbitrary sounds" (Rev. Isaac Taylor, *Words and Places*, 1).

† *Vide* Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, ii. 174.

Hermogenes agrees, but would fain know what is "the natural fitness of names." Why does *dog* mean "runner"? But this is the actual mystery of language, and Sokrates cannot help him except by a few ingenious general suggestions.

Kratylos, in the opposite extreme, not only holds that names "are natural and not conventional," and that "there is a truth or correctness in them," which I do not doubt; but also that one name is no better than another, that all names are rightly imposed, that if a man addresses you by a name not your own "the motion of his lips would be an unmeaning sound, like the noise of hammering at a brazen pot," and "that he who knows names, knows also the things that are expressed by them"; for, "as is the name so is also the thing"; and on being pressed with the argument that "if things are only to be known through names how can we suppose that the givers of names had knowledge before there were names at all," takes refuge in the supposition that "a power more than human gave things their first names, and that the names which are thus given are necessarily their true names." This latter position we have already found reason to reject on its own merits; and the view that "a word is either the perfect expression of a thing, or a mere inarticulate sound," is, as Prof. Jowett observes, "a fallacy which is still prevalent among theorizers about the origin of language." So far from a name being perfect, it is obviously imperfect; inasmuch as it gives an incomplete view, which itself naturally corresponds with an experience only partial and a defective apprehension. "Runner" is a good name for a dog, so far as it goes; but evidently not an absolutely good name. But there being thus an element of imperfection in names, there are therefore degrees of imperfection, so that one name is better or worse than another; and therefore all names have not an equal degree of truth or appropriateness. It is, then, absurd to regard names as god-bestowed.

Again, we do not, by knowing names, know the things that are expressed by them. Thus *tesem* raises no idea of the dog in our minds. Yet we are willing to admit with Kratylos that he who bestowed this name had a reason for so doing. But if all names are equally valuable, and indeed divine, so that *kwan*, *kalb*, *tesem*, *lik*, and *x* are perfect names for dog (if, indeed, there can be more than one perfect name, as, says the adage, "Mortals have many tongues, immortals one"), then the result is precisely the same as if these terms were merely valueless in themselves, *i. e.*, had only a conventional value. In either case we could understand nothing about them, except that we had them. Thus these two opposite systems, starting from the same point in different directions, traverse the world and meet

again, having in their course described two semicircles, which combined give us—nothing.

6. *The Platonic View of Language.*

Between Hermogenes and Kratylos stands the Sokrates of the dialogue, who freely communicates his "view," or perhaps "views," rather than any definite theory. Language has undoubtedly a natural element; names are appropriate and not arbitrary. But there is also a conventional element; thus, *e.g.*, *shall* (Old Eng. *sceal*, "belongs to") is now generally employed merely as a tense-symbol. There is, moreover, the element of accident, the element of the effect of time, the element of the desire of euphony, and (as regards Hellenic considered alone) the foreign element. Granting that language is the imitation of something; imitation, like convention or any other human effect or arrangement, is comparatively feeble and imperfect. And here it may be further observed that human imitation is second-hand, *i.e.*, we reproduce the impression which the particular circumstance has made upon us. This line of idea is most true, and excellent so far as it goes; but having nothing except *à priori* brilliance to support him, Sokrates starts the singular theory that "the work of the legislator is to give names, and the dialectician must be his director if the names are to be rightly given"; so that "this giving of names can be no such light matter." We who know that all languages are more or less related, and that simple primitive man was the great maker-of-terms (*poiētēs*), are, of course, aware that the appellation *kwan* was not the product of the joint reflective wisdom of dialectician and legislator; unless, indeed, the simplest thinker be dignified with the former name, and the simplest ruler with the latter. But Plato sees with luminous clearness the real *crux* in language, *i.e.*, "What is the natural fitness of names?" "Names rightly given are [in some way or other] the likenesses and images of the things which they name." We see, of course, how direct onomatopoeitic ("bow-wow") names answer this description. We do not, however, call a hound *bow-wow*, but *dog*; granting that *dog* means "runner," we see how this name answers the description, but why does the root *dhav* mean "to flow"? If language is "imitative sound," and if this fact be "the greatest and deepest truth of philology,"* what and how does *dhav* (allowing it for argument's sake to have been once used as a word) imitate? Names could never "resemble any actually existing thing, unless the original

* Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, ii. 192.

elements of which they are compounded bore a resemblance [in some way or other] to the objects of which the names are the imitation." Very true; but, be it remembered, this "resemblance" may have been merely in the mind of the name-giver. "And the original elements are letters," or, rather, sounds. The alphabet is comparatively modern, and Sokrates is only thinking of the Hellenic alphabet. A practical age grouped these "original elements" in an alphabetic combination.

How, then, do letters imitate? Various ideas are imitated by various sounds. Sokrates modestly observes that his "notions of original names are truly wild and ridiculous"; but, as Prof. Jowett observes, "Plato's analysis of the letters of the alphabet shows a wonderful insight into the nature of language."* The "notions" of Sokrates on some letter-meanings are as follows:—

a expressed size, because a "great letter." How "great" I am not clear, whether as most important, † as the head of the alphabet, as being often written larger, or otherwise. Professor Jowett observes that "in the use of the letter *a* to express size, the imitation is symbolical." How the sound *a* was supposed to express size I know not; but Plato's obscure reason points more to the letter itself than to its sound. Cf. his explanation of *o*.

γ, a heavy sound.

γλ, "the notion of a glutinous, clammy nature." Vide *γ* and *λ*.

δ, *τ*, expressive of binding and rest, on account of the closing and pressure of the tongue.

ζ, *σ*, *φ*, *ψ*, are used to imitate what is windy, their pronunciation being accompanied by great expenditure of breath.

η, length; because a "long" letter (double *ε*). A "great letter." Vide *a*.

ι expresses "the subtle elements which pass through all things."

It is "imitative of motion, *ίέναι*, *ίεσθαι*." This imitation consists in the quickness and comparative noiselessness of its pronunciation, which Plato contrasts with the agitation of the tongue in *ρ*. This is the most interesting of these comparisons, because it is not palpably obvious; and yet Plato's view seems to have been that adopted by Aryan man. Thus, we find the Proto-Aryan root *i* (*ja*, *ya*), "to go," Sk. *i*, Gk. *ίί*-mi, Lat. *e*-o, *i*-mus, Lith. *ei*-mi, Slav. *i*-du, etc. So *i* in

* Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, ii. 191.

† Vide the Alpha-speech (*R.M.A.*, Appendix B.).

Akkadian signifies "clear," "sunrise," the subtle element of light which passes quickly and noiselessly.

λ expresses smoothness, as the tongue slips in its liquid movement.

υ, being sounded from within, has a notion of inwardness, e.g., ἔνδον.

ο was the sign (not sound) of roundness.

ρ appears to be the general instrument of expressing motion, because the tongue is most agitated in its pronunciation.

These are his specimen letters, and he profoundly observes :—
 "I believe that if we could always, or almost always, use likenesses which are perfectly appropriate, that would be the most perfect state of language, as the opposite of this is the most imperfect." These are very valuable hints, and, in leaving Plato, we must also remember that the *Kratylos* does not pretend to be a formal treatise on language, but a semi-humorous argumentative conversation *about* language. Plato, being "necessarily more ignorant than any schoolboy of Greek grammar," could not make bricks without straw; but his profound and penetrating genius,—by which term I mean the power of appreciating and disclosing to an unusual extent the latent potencies of truth and beauty, and the capabilities of things,—did almost all that was possible in the way of useful *à priori* speculation.

7. The Divisions of Language.

Reverting to the definition of language and its divisions,* we observe that it naturally divides into :—

I. *Touch-language*.—A good instance of this is afforded by the special books for the use of the blind, but pressing the hand is equally a word in it. I do not propose to refer further to it.

II. *Eye-language*.—This consists of :—

1. *Gesture*. Which is,—

(1.) *Directly imitative*.

(2.) *Occultly imitative*.

2. *Delineation*. Which is,—

(1.) *Directly imitative*. *I.e.*, ordinary drawing.

(2.) *Occultly imitative*. *I.e.*,—

(a.) *Symbolic drawing*.

(b.) *Writing*. Originally purely pictorial or ideographic.

* *Sup. Sec. 2.*

III. *Ear-Language*.—This consists of:—

1. *Ejaculations*. *I.e.*, natural involuntary cries, which to a very great extent are identical, or only slightly variant, amongst different nations. They intensify by junction and reduplication,* *e.g.*, Gk. *a*, *aa*, *alalai*, *alala*, which becomes a sub., “the battle-cry,” and next a personification, the “genius-of-the fray,” and so gives rise to a verb, *alalazô*, “to cry *alala*.” Cf. Zulu *halala*, Tibetan *alala*, Heb. *hallelujah*. As an instance of reduplication, we find,—*ototoi*, *otototototoi*. So from the Old Eng. *ea* (ah) and *la* (lo) comes *eala* (halloo). Cf. *wa* (woe), *wala*, *walawa* (well-a-way, well-a-day).
2. *Ordinary articulate speech*. Which is,—
 - (1.) *Directly imitative*. — The Onomatopoeic Proper, *e.g.*, names simply and obviously expressive of sounds.
 - (2.) *Occultly imitative*.—Here the connexion between sound and sense is not immediately apparent. There must, as Plato remarks, have been some resemblance between the name and the thing; and intentional resemblance is produced by imitation. If we deny any resemblance, we are driven back on the conventional theory of language, which we have already seen cause to reject.†
3. *Music*. Which is,—
 - (1.) *Directly imitative*.—At times highly ingenious, but, as a rule, essentially clap-trap.
 - (2.) *Occultly imitative*.—*I.e.*, subtly suggestive; so that we speak of “the sound-reveries of Tone Poets.”

It will thus be observed that language, like the moon, has a bright and intelligible side (direct imitation), and a dark and hidden side (occult imitation); but the latter did not spring from the former. The two combined form the mysterious satellite that attends and illumines the intelligence of man, very possibly borrowing its own light from man’s sun religion.‡

* Vide *R.M.A.*, Sec. 19. The Law of Reduplication.

† “That the selection of words to express ideas was ever purely arbitrary is a supposition opposed to such knowledge as we have of the formation of language” (Tylor, *Early Hist. of Mankind*, 3rd edit. p. 56). “We cannot suppose the development of language possible without some connexion between sounds and objects” (Farrar, *Language and Languages*, 20).

‡ Vide *sup.*, Sec. 1.

I do not support "the Interjectional, or Pooh-pooh theory," *i.e.*, that speech is founded upon man's natural cries and ejaculations. "Our answer to this theory," says Professor Müller, "is the same as to the former"* [the Bow-wow theory], *i.e.*, that interjections constitute but a very small portion of the dictionary. I do not regard articulate speech as based upon ejaculations, nor is it possible to regard ejaculations as based upon articulate speech; both are necessary parts of ear-language.

It will next be observed that all language, whether working by touch, sight, or sound, is directly addressed to the apprehension of another; and is, therefore, inseparably connected with the desire to communicate our thoughts and ideas. Hence it is the special social force of the highest gregarious animal.

Occult gesture is probably as much simpler than occultly imitative speech, as the latter is than occultly imitative musical harmony.

In studying occultly imitative speech, the other divisions of language should be considered comparatively.

8. *The Divisions of Articulate Speech.*

Languages, according to the terminology of the time, are:—

- I. *Isolating*.†—This class shows no formal distinction between a root and a word, and has practically no grammar, but syntax only. It includes,—
 1. *The Tibeto-Burman Group.*
 2. *Chinese.*
 3. *Various Mexican Dialects.*
- II. *Agglutinative*.—The terminational class, in which two or more roots unite to form a word, but retain their original character in different degrees. The additions may be prefixes or affixes. The class includes:—
 1. *Akkadian*.—The language of the early non-Semitic inhabitants of the Euphrates Valley, inventors of the cuneiform writing, and from whom the Semites borrowed a considerable part of their religion and general civilisation.
 2. *The Ugro-Altaic Group* (Turanian); including Turkish-Tatar, Mongol, Tungusian, etc.
 3. *Etruscan*.‡

* *Lects. Sci. Lang.*, 6th edit., i. 409.

† Vide *R.M.A.* 5.

‡ Vide *R.M.A.* Appendix D. *The Etruscans.*

4. *Nubian*.
5. *Dravidian* (South-Indian Family).
6. *Malayo-Polynesian*.
7. *Papuan*.
8. *Australian*.

III. *Inflectional*.—The amalgamating class, in which the roots equally coalesce, and are therefore equally subject to phonetic corruption. It includes:—

1. *Hamitic*, which is:—

- (1.) *Kamic* (Archaic Egyptian).
- (2.) *Coptic*.
- (3.) *Libyan*.
- (4.) *Ethiopian*.

2. *Semitic*, which includes:—

- (1.) *Assyro-Babylonian*.
- (2.) *Phœnician*.
- (3.) *Hebrew*.
- (4.) *Aramaic*.
- (5.) *Arabic*.
- (6.) *Himyaritic* (Sabean).

3. *Aryan* (Indo-European), which includes:—

- (1.) *Proto-Aryan*.
- (2.) *Sanskrit*.
- (3.) *Hindustani*, and modern dialects allied.
- (4.) *Iranian*, including Archaic Persian, Archaic Baktrian (generally called Zend*), Pahlavi (Ancient Persian), and Parsi.
- (5.) *Keltic*, including Gaulish, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, and Cornish.
- (6.) *Teutonic*, including Gothic, Old English (Anglo-Saxon), Old Norse, German, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, and English.
- (7.) *Italian*, including Latin, Umbrian, Oscan, French, Spanish, and Modern Italian.
- (8.) *Hellenic*, including Ancient Greek, Modern Greek, and Phrygian.
- (9.) *Albanian*.
- (10.) *Letto-Slavonic*, including Old Slavonic, Old Prussian, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, and Bulgarian.

4. *Lycian*.

5. *Alarodian*, including Vannic, Georgian, etc.

* Vide R.Z., Sect. 5. Iranian Sacred Literature.

The foregoing list, which includes the most celebrated dead languages, is, of course, not intended to be exhaustive, but merely indicative; and in addition to the above-mentioned three great divisions, some comparative philologists of the highest merit add a fourth, namely:—

IV. *Polysynthetic*.—The class where the sentence is fused into a word, and the words thus fused are reduced to their simplest elements.* *E.g.*, the Eskimo *sialugsiokhpok*, “he-is-outside-in-the-rain.” It includes:—

1. *Mexican*.
2. *Peruvian*.
3. *Many other dialects of North and South America*.
4. *Eskimo*.
5. *Basque*.

As regards the polysynthetic languages, Prof. Müller has remarked that,—

“As long as in these sesquipedalian compounds the significative root remains distinct, they belong to the agglutinative stage; as soon as it is absorbed by the terminations, they belong to the inflectional stage.” † Others see in polysynthesis a survival of the universal early state of language. The majority of the Old World dialects are agglutinative, and the inflectional branch, although exceptionally prominent, is by no means essentially superior. Thus, one of the strongest points about English, is the immense extent to which it has abandoned inflection, and the great advantages which it has gained thereby.

“That language,” observes Prof. Sayce, “has most chance of superseding [old dialects] which, like our own, has discarded the cumbrous machinery of inflectional grammar. The great Grimm once advised his countrymen to give up their own language in favour of English, and a time may yet come when they will follow the advice of the founder of scientific German philology.” ‡

It may be incidentally remarked, that if the principle of Fixity of Type obtains in languages, and, according to many of the highest authorities, it undoubtedly does; so that, *e.g.* an inflectional language will have always been inflectional, and has never passed through prior stages of isolation and agglutination or either of them, then we may find in this permanence of character a powerful argument against the doctrine of Evolution.

9. *The Transition from Drawing to Writing.*

The earliest inscribed language, whether Chinese, Akkadian,

* *Vide* Prof. Sayce, *Introd. Sci. Lang.*, ii. 216.





† *Lects. Sci. Lang.*, i. 371.

‡ *Introd. Sci. Lang.*, ii. 350.

or Kamic, was originally purely pictorial and unalphabetic; but, as direct and simple pictorial representation was obviously the most natural course, so equally, under the force of the Law of Least Effort, did the pictorial glide into the conventional, which latter at times became alphabetic, and drawing passed into writing. Thus, in Kamic we find:—

- I. *The (so-called) Hieroglyphic.*—Here, although direct ideographs are exceedingly prominent, yet we have also certain phonetic or alphabetic signs representing *a, i, u, b, p, f, m, n, r, k, q, h, ch, s, sh, t, and th.* There is, moreover, the very important class of indirect ideographs, which convey the idea by metonymy or otherwise, *e.g.* by putting cause for effect; hence a whip = to rule.
- II. *The Hieratic.*—This, which is of extreme antiquity, is merely the archaic contraction of the monumental (hieroglyphic) for ordinary use.
- III. *The Demotic or Enchorial.*—A still further abbreviated and common form of the country. These three forms completely illustrate the transition from drawing to writing,* and are referred to by the Greek authors.†

In the case of the cuneiform, we find similarly:—

- I. *The Ideographic.*—In Akkad, as everywhere, this is the first principle. As Clement of Alexandria says of the Egyptians, “Wishing to express ‘sun’ in writing, they make a circle; and ‘moon,’ a figure like the moon, in its proper shape.”‡ Here, too, of course, ideographs are direct and indirect.
- II. *The Archaic.*—This is the first phase of transition from picture-writing pure and simple. Thus  and  = the solar circle.
- III. *The (so-called) Hieratic.*—A succeeding avatar which, with variations, was used by the Babylonians down to the latest days of their monarchy. Here  = sun.
- IV. *The Ordinary Assyrian type.*—Here  = sun, the two perpendicular strokes of the last form having joined, and the two horizontal strokes having been shortened and made semi-perpendicular.

The Chinese characters present a similar example. Thus the

* *Vide* Specimen of the Rosetta Stone, in Bunsen's *Egypt's Place*, vol. i., 2nd edit., p. 625.

† Herod., ii. 36; Diod. Sic. i. 81.

‡ *Stromata*, v. 4.

archaic form for "a hare" shows the animal sitting upright. The form for rhinoceros shows the animal's horn used as a drinking-cup, on the principle of a part for the whole, just as our letter A is, in origin, a bull's horns. The form for "man" now shows only a man's legs, the rest of the figure having, like letters in words innumerable, dropped off in the march of time. The oldest characters, called *siang-hing* ("images"), are said to have been about 200 in number. The sun was represented by a circle with a dot in the centre, the moon is a crescent, and rude but plain ideographs show figures of a dog, a fish, etc. There is no difficulty in expressing more complicated ideas; thus "tear," both in the Chinese character and in the cuneiform, = eye + water.

It is very desirable that the various forms used by different nations should be studied comparatively, and it is almost certain that some connecting links between them will be discovered. Thus, according to M. Terrien de la Couperie, the Chinese ideograph, which represents the setting sun, is similar to the Akkadian ideograph, and, like it, has the phonetic value *mi*; and his recent researches actually tend to show the common origin of the Chinese and Akkadian writing. But the deduction which naturally arises from this examination of delineatory eye-language is, that, just as in the great majority of instances it would be utterly impossible to show *à priori* any connexion between the original ideograph and its ultimate conventional form, and yet that connexion is a most real and regulating one; so, similarly in ear-language, although it may be utterly impossible to show directly the connexion between the sound and meaning of the majority of words, yet such a connexion not only may, but by analogy in all probability must, exist. As is the transition from drawing to writing, so is the transition from the idea (mental picture) to its vocal expression (tongue-writing).

10. *The Principle of Limitation of Choice in Original Names.*

If, as we have seen, one name is not as good as another, or, at all events, that there is some cause, reason, or principle in the selection of a particular name, let us next inquire if it be possible to indicate, or even partially to determine, the limitation which obtains in this selection. That there is a practical limitation is obvious, inasmuch as not every name has been applied to the dog, but the animal has received only a certain limited number of appellations; and, again, the same name is not used

for "dog" and "cat" interchangeably. Thus the ancient Egyptians called, and the Chinese call, the cat *miau*, a name which obviously would never have been applied to a dog. When the Akkadai called the horse "the-animal-from-the-East," the wolf "the-animal-from-Elam," or the camel "the-animal-from-the-Sea" (*i.e.* as having come from Arabia across the Persian Gulf), or when the Vedic Indians called the horse "the-rapid-animal,"* and the cat "the-animal-that-cleans-itself," they had reason for the appellations; and the reason in each case was definite and limited, and not merely of a vague and general character.

But, in illustration of the Anomalistic position, it has been remarked that in Kamic *kek*, *u*, *ua*, *ta*, and some two-and-twenty other sounds, all mean "ship." There was a ship: A called it *kek*, B called it *ua*, C called it *ta*, and so on through the alphabet. Let us translate this into English. There was a ship: A called it *ark*, B called it *bark*, C called it *cutter*, etc. Are all these chance names, of similar meaning, and one as good as another? The hieroglyphic forms (not to refer to anything else) show distinctions between the Kamic words; and we may naturally expect to find in the infancy of language, as now in many savage dialects, vast numbers of special, and few, or, at times, absolutely no general terms. A dialect may possess quantities of names for trees, the parts of trees, relation with trees, but yet no word meaning "tree." Again, a highly-developed life and language will and must produce this number of names *in addition to* appropriate abstract terms. Ancient Egyptian also offers instances of the converse example, *i.e.* some words have a great variety of meanings, some of which are apparently or even really unconnected; but this phenomenon, too, we can parallel without going beyond our own language, *e.g.* *bark*—of a tree, of a dog, of the ocean. Prof. Sayce, who to vast learning and ability adds the genial element of great personal kindness to inquirers, speaking on the question of the connexion between word and idea, observes: †—

"The arbitrary element in gesture-language is very small compared with what it is in spoken language.‡ Here beyond a few interjections, or possibly [Why 'possibly'? It is an absolute fact] a few onomatopœic sounds, the whole body of symbols is [Yes; *is now*—to us] purely conventional. The same combination of sounds may [to some extent] be used to denote very

* *Vide* Prof. Müller, *Lects. Sci. Lang.*, ii. 68 Other meanings have also been suggested.

† *Introd. Sci. Lang.*, cap. ii.

‡ *Vide* the Canon, *sup.*, Sec. 7.

different ideas. There is no necessary connexion between an idea and the word that represents it. It is as arbitrary as our making the sign I symbolize the idea of unity, or the sign = the idea of equivalence."

Here the question turns upon the meaning of "necessary connexion"; there is a connexion of some kind between that-which-is-representative and that-which-it-represents, for a word is a sign, and a sign, as M. Taine has acutely observed, is "a present experience, which suggests to us the idea of a possible experience." If by "necessary" is meant "abstract," it may be admitted that in the abstract one name is equally as destitute of, or as replete with, meaning as another. We are not, however, dealing with the abstract but with actual concrete circumstance, and Prof. Sayce's illustrations throw still greater doubt upon his meaning. For he says that the connexion is *as arbitrary as, e.g.,* making the sign = represent the idea of equivalence. But what degree of arbitrariness is there in so doing? Surely, two short and equal straight lines represent this idea very naturally. On the other hand, we might fairly call it arbitrary to represent equivalence by two unequal lines. There is evidently a certain degree of arbitrariness in the matter, *e.g.,* perpendicular lines might have been employed; and, therefore, by corollary, a certain degree of connexion.

Prof. Sayce continues,—“There is no reason in the nature of things [the abstract?] why the word *book* should represent what we mean when we look at the present volume; it might just as well be denoted by *biblion* or *liber*.”

Let us, forgetting the connexion between *book* (Old English *boc*, “a beech-tree”) and beechen tablets, between *liber* and the inner bark of trees, between *biblion* and the inner coats of the papyrus (a book being named from its material stuff), admit that they are equally good names; that the Aryan *kwan*, the Semitic *kalb*, the Hamitic *tesem*, and the Turanian *lik*, are equally suitable names for the dog. From such an admission, the deduction is frequently, but most incorrectly, drawn that *any* sound-name would have been, or be, equally suitable. Yet, as we have seen, *miau* would have been intrinsically inappropriate. Prof. Sayce observes that:—

“The origin of language is to be sought in *gestures*, *onomatopœia*, and, to a limited extent, *interjectional cries*.” If it comes from these three sources, the words “to a limited extent” apply equally to each source; and he then notices that interjectional cries are universally practically the same, like play of feature, that the same gestures are for the most part understood by different races in the same way, and that language can be traced back to a few and simple elements. As to interjec-

tional cries (of which more anon), they may or may not be words, but how much of the dictionary comes from them? Have they not, as far as we know, been almost always stationary in number? Theirs must at most be a minimum of influence; and this fact Prof. Sayce fully admits, since, as he says, they represent emotions, not ideas. But if the other two and the chief elements in the formation of language be gesture and onomatopœia, how can it be said of words generally, at all events in their origin, that there is no necessary connexion between an idea and the word that represents it? Noticing that natural sounds strike different ears very differently, he excellently remarks :—

“Of course, it is not necessary that the imitation of natural sounds should be an exact one; indeed, that it never can be all that is wanted is, that the imitation should be recognisable by those addressed. Many of our modern interjections, like *alas!* [= *a* (ah!) + *las* (wretched, Lat. *lassus*)], *lo*, are words that once possessed a full conceptual meaning, but have lost their original signification, and been degraded to the level of mere emotional cries. *So hard is it for language to admit anything which was not from the first significant in thought.*”*

Therefore, the mind, we notice, positively demands significance in word-making; but significance excludes the arbitrary element; and if men formed $\frac{9.9}{100}$ of language on gesture and onomatopœia, we again find that the means practically employed negatives mere arbitrariness. Thus from any and every point of view we arrive at the conclusion that language in origin is not arbitrary and conventional. But although these arguments may be fully admitted in the abstract, yet we falter when confronted with the crowd of utterly variant words (*e.g.*, *kwan*, etc.). The fact that people attempting to imitate the notes of the nightingale, produced forms as various as *bulbul*, *jugjug*, *whitwhit*, *tiuu-tiuu*, etc.,† shows at least that there are cases in which highly different results may attend the attempt to express verbally the same thing; but I make no suggestion that the four dog-names are variant phases of a prior and original name, in the same way as numerous Aryan dog-names are variant phases of *kwan*.

As our method is strictly comparative, let us in the attempt

* The italics are mine.

† The cock is referred to in the *Avesta* as “the bird named Parodarsh, which evil-speaking men call by the name *Kahrkatās* (*Vendidad*, xviii.). Cf. our *cock-a-doodle-doo*, the Tahitian *aaoa*, the Yoruban *koklo*, the Zulu *kuku*, the Finnish *kukko*, the Sanscrit *kukkuta*, the Spanish *quiquiriqui*, the Chinese *kiao-kiao*, the Mantchu *dchor-dchor*, etc.

to discover the apparently occult, and yet, I think, really simple principle in the limitation of original names, call in to our aid the sister branch of language—drawing. If we wish to draw, *e.g.*, Death, might we not depict a skeleton, a skull and cross bones, a winged skull, a black figure with a dart, a prostrate human body,* any usual means of putting to death, as an axe, guillotine, etc., or otherwise express the idea in fifty variant ways, which, however different from each other, would yet all agree in being aspects and phases of the general concept. And how many such pictures could we draw? Obviously as many as our distinct ideas of the original, and no more; given fifty independent ideas, and fifty different pictures can be produced. Here, then, we touch the principle of limitation of choice in original names. A man could give the dog as many of such names as he had distinct ideas concerning the animal, and no more. Thus, to instance some names which Ovid gives to dogs of the pack of Aktaiôn, he could call a dog Blackfoot, Tracer, Glutton, Quick-sight, Ranger, Hunter, Swiftfoot, Spot, Smut, Snap, Runner (*Dromas*, *i.e.*, “Dog”),† Barker (Kanakê-Kalbu), etc. But he could not call a dog Tree, Root, Onehorn, Tenlegs, etc., because naming was a powerful exercise of rational judgment, and not an aberration of judgment; and such names as the latter would have been, to quote the simile of Kratylos, “unmeaning sound, like the noise of hammering at a brazen pot.” But could not we call a dog Tenlegs? Certainly, although any one who did so would be thought very foolish, or at all events decidedly eccentric, which is almost the same thing. But we possess a power of abstract and arbitrary and sportive thought, which primitive man, the slave of truth and reality in nature immediately around, had no idea of.

Gifted with a supreme power of apprehension in the matter of simple natural facts, it was as impossible for him to contradict the vivid impression of his every-day ideas, as it would be now for a sane man to take a madman’s stand-point. Thus every archaic animal-name is based upon an excellent reason; and it was nothing short of an illumination of genius, the quintessence of correct observation, which made the mighty animal call himself *man*, he-who-means,—“the Thinker,” not “the Speaker,” observe; for speech is based on thought, not thought on speech. Thus we may conclude that *Original names do not exceed in number the number of distinct ideas entertained by the namer.*

* The Kamic ideograph for “to kill.”

† Vide *sup.*, Sec. 4.

11. *Children and the Origin of Language.*

The acquisition of speech by the "Speechless one" (*Infans*, *Nēpios*) has long been considered a phenomenon of great importance in the study of the origin of language; and various celebrated experiments have illustrated the universality of the imitative element in children, who learn one dialect as easily as another. Thus, according to the famous story in Herodotos, the Egyptian king, Psamethik (Psametichos), "made an attempt to discover who were actually the primitive race," and "finding it impossible to make out by dint of inquiry what men were the most ancient," he had two children brought up with goats by a herdsman, "charging him to let no one utter a word in their presence. His object was to know, after the indistinct babblings of infancy were over, what word they would first articulate"; it being apparently a very general, but most illogical, assumption that any such word would belong to the most ancient of languages. After two years "the children distinctly said '*Bekos*,'" and the king finds on inquiry that this is "the Phrygian name for bread," on which the Egyptians admit "the greater antiquity of the Phrygians."* Into the question of the historical truth of the story we need not enter, and despite various learned conjectures respecting *bekos* (*i. e.* *bek*, with a Greek termination), we may, I think, undoubtedly agree with Larcher, Canon Farrar, and Dr. Tylor,† that the children were imitating a goat's bleat.

This is confirmed by the result of the experiment attributed to Akbar, whose ruling passion was "desire of knowledge," and who "had heard that Hebrew was the natural language of those who had been taught no other." Here, again, we encounter the view that people, if uninfluenced, would speak the primeval language, and also the ancient and possibly not yet extinct opinion that such language was Hebrew. "To settle the question, he had twelve children at the breast shut up in a castle and brought up by twelve dumb nurses." At twelve years of age the children are brought before him and a great assembly of linguists. "Every one was astonished to find that they did not speak any language at all. They had learnt from their nurses to do without any, and they merely expressed their thoughts by gestures, which answered the purpose of words."

* *Herod.*, ii. 2. Canon Rawlinson's translation.

† "*Bek bek* is a good imitative word for bleating, as in *βληχάομαι*" (*Early Hist. of Mankind*, 79).

It was with some trouble that their tongues were loosened.* Thus, as we all know without any experiment, children imitate their companions; but it further appears that the influence of the latter may be strong enough even to set aside the ordinary course of nature.

Believing that language was primarily used by the man, not by the child, I do not think that very much is to be learnt from children in the matter, because we miss the comparatively thoughtful and mature intelligence that was first employed upon the formation of words. Yet that occasional hints and illustrations of great value may be obtained from observation of the earliest linguistic operations of children is undoubted, as the following instance will show. A little boy "showed, in early infancy, a peculiar tendency to form new words." It will be observed that such a tendency is decidedly uncommon. "He established in the nursery the word *nim* for everything fit to eat. First, he expressed his satisfaction at seeing his meal, by the natural humming sound *hm*. Gradually it changed into the more articulate *um* and *im*. Finally, an *n* was placed before it. But soon the growing mind began to generalize, and *nim* came to signify everything edible; so that the boy would add the words *good* or *bad*, which he had learned in the mean time. He would now say *good nim*, *bad nim*. On one occasion he said *fie nim*, for *bad*, *repulsive to eat*. There is no doubt but that a verb *to nim*, for to eat, would have developed itself, had not the ripening mind adopted the vernacular language, which was offered to it ready-made."† So, again, amongst the Papuans "eating was called *nam-nam*, from the noise produced by the process";‡ and in Akkadian the greedy wolf is called *nim* or *num*. In the above case of *nim* we have a rare and admirable instance, showing how the rational mind deliberately strengthens a sound into a word. Prof. Sayce quotes a dictum of Proklos that "men create speech, not, however, deliberately and with intention, but instinctively through the impulse of their nature." The error here lies in the "but"; there is no real antithesis. Men create speech instinctively and naturally, and yet also deliberately and purposely. Here we have a case of occult imitation; of course the lips may be opened and closed silently, yet it will probably be admitted that it is very natural to accompany this movement with the sound *em*, *um*, *mem*, in fact, an *m* sound. Cf. and Sanskrit root *mu*, "to tie,

* The Jesuit Father Catrou ap. Tylor, *Early Hist. of Mankind*, 80, 81.

† Lieber, ap. Taine, *On Intelligence* (Eng. Trans.), 402-3.

‡ Comrie, ap. Sayce, *Introd. Sci. Lang.*, i. 108.

make fast," *muka*, "dumb," *i.e.*, where the string of the tongue is tied; Greek *mu*, an imitation of the sound made by *murmuring* with closed lips, *muβ*, "to be shut," especially of the lips, *muβ*, "to initiate into the mysteries," because in saying *mu* the mouth is both opened and shut. Cf. also English *mum*, *mumble*, *munch*, *mutter*, *mute*; the *mumu*, "dumb," of the Vei negroes of West Africa, the Tahitian *mamu*, "to be silent," etc.

It is said that the little boy in question placed an *n* before *im*, "*nim* being much easier to pronounce than *im*, when the mouth has been closed." But this I do not follow. As the child's organs strengthened he evidently placed more emphasis upon the *im*,* and imitated the action more thoroughly; and, as we see, his *nim-nim* almost exactly agrees with the Papuan *nam-nam*, the Surinam *nyam-nyam*, the Swedish *nam-nam*, and the Chinese child-word *nam*. Such a case as this, where every step of the process can be traced, shows how the principle of occult imitation doubtless obtains in numbers of cases where at present we are unable to trace it. The whole operation has not the slightest connexion with the emotional cries of other animals. Mr. Darwin, also, mentions the case of a little boy who invented the word *mum* for food, and called sugar *shu-mum*; and we see how naturally the same sound, *e.g.*, *mum*, may be connected with two apparently absolutely distinct and even opposite ideas; *i.e.*, with food as that which goes into the mouth, and with silence or words-not-coming-out.

12. *The Simious Theory of Language.*

We may next notice what has been styled the "Simious" theory of language, *i.e.*, that speech has arisen through the natural instinctive cries of quasi-human apes. The epicurean Horace has told us how at some time animals crawled forth from the earth, formed, probably, somehow by the mixture of heat and moisture; and how "the mute and dirty herd" fought for nuts, and at length in some way found out words and names "by which to mark articulate sounds and to express their feelings."† Manilius‡ speaks similarly, and Diodoros, apparently repeating the common opinion of his day, observes that at first the tones of the human voice were indistinct and confused, but that after a little they distinctly articulated their

* As to emphasis, vide *R.M.A.*, 45. I apprehend that originally emphasis was frequently expressed by a prefix.

† *Sat. I.*, iii. 99, *et seq.*

‡ *Astronomica*, i. 85.

speech and used signs, so that they became able to understand each other.* Plutarch, too, records an Egyptian tradition that until the god Teti (Thoth) taught men language, they used mere cries, like other animals.

But what the ancients were ignorant of is the great principle of the gradual transformations, avatars, descent, or rather (as Prof. Goldwin Smith well observes) 'ascent' of man. Though at present I see no reason to accept the evolutionary view (which I regard as being what lawyers would call a "bare possibility," and to be rejected, amongst other reasons, by virtue of the principle of fixity of type), I do not wish to ridicule it. Prof. Sayce expresses the theory in no unfriendly spirit:—

"Between the ape and man the evolutionist has inserted his *homo alalus*, 'speechless man,' whose relics may yet [or may not] be discovered in Central Africa, or in the submerged continent of the Indian Ocean. Wherever the conditions were favourable, *homo alalus* developed into *homo primigenius*, whose first records are the unworked flints of countless ages ago. Where the conditions were unfavourable, there was retrogression instead of progress, and *homo alalus* became the progenitor of the gorilla, the chimpanzee, the gibbon, and the orang-otang. Such is the theory which post-tertiary geology can alone verify or confute."†

The theory, then, is "not proven," and we must wait and see what geology will do for us in the matter; again, it cannot be absolutely refuted, because we cannot demonstrate an absolute negative on the point. We should be fully justified in letting this theory stand aside for the present, but it is perhaps more satisfactory to give it a brief examination with the aid of the evidence available. There is plenty of decided *opinion* on the matter; thus Mr. Darwin remarks:—

"I cannot doubt that language owes its origin to the imitation and modification of various natural sounds, the voices of other animals, and man's own instinctive cries, aided by signs and gestures."‡

Here the elements of language are said to be Imitation, which of course produces modification, Ejaculations, and Gesture. This latter is undoubtedly a most valuable adjunct. Prof. Sayce, too, as we have seen,§ founds language on Gesture, Ono-

* Diod. Sik., i. 8.

† *Introd. Sci. Lang.* ii. 310. All students of the question should carefully consider Dr. Elam's acute and caustic criticisms (*Winds of Doctrine, and The Gospel of Evolution*, in the *Contemporary Review*, May, 1880).

‡ *Descent of Man*, i., 87.

§ *Sup.*, Sec. 10.

matopœia, and Interjectional Cries. The Imitation of Mr. Darwin is probably identical with the Onomatopœia of Prof. Sayce, although not exactly with onomatopœia in the sense in which I understand the term.* Before calling in the assistance of Dr. Bleek† to show us how imitation practically operated, we may notice from one or two names the way in which man has regarded the family of the Simiadæ.

1. *Ape*. Proto-Aryan root *kap*, "to vibrate," Sk. *kamp*, "to move rapidly," *kapi*, Heb. *koph* (an instance of Semitic borrowing), Ang.-Sax. *apa*, middle Eng. *ape*. The creature constantly in motion, "mopping and mowing." As to the loss of an initial *k*, cf. Proto-Aryan *kam*, "to love," Lat. *am-o*.

2. *Monkey*. According to Prof. Skeat from Ital. *monna* (a corruption of *madonna*) a woman's familiar or nickname (*i. e.* *eke-name*, extra-name), dim. *monicchio* (little *monna*), Eng. *munkie*. "The order of ideas is: mistress, dame, old woman, monkey, by that degradation of meaning so common in all languages." In this case *monkey* means "little old woman," funny little hag, instead of *manikin*, a Dutch word with double dim. suffix (cf. *Donkey*, *i. e.*, *don-ek-ey*, double dims., "little dun," *i. e.*, little horse, *dun* being a familiar name for a horse; cf. old Eng. proverbs, "Dun in the mire," "The devil on Dun's back," etc., as a colour, dull-brown or dark). With *monkey* as meaning little man or woman, cf. the Assyrian *udumu*, "monkey," which is connected with *admu*, *ádám*, "man," *i. e.*, a kind of little man.

3. *Pithékos* ("ape.") Probably mimic, from *peithó*.

4. *Simia*. Probably "flat" or "snub-nosed" (*simus*, *simos*), as Herodotus describes a tribe of Skythians;‡ but some would connect it with *similis*, *i. e.* "mimic." *Simos* is occasionally represented on Greek vases as a Seilenos,§ *i. e.*, one of the Dionysiak personages connected with the flow of water, and hence with the force and flow of life.|| Thus we get the general idea of ape or monkey as a little, old, snub-nosed, restless, imitating, human variant. The orang-oötan is "the man of the jungle."

According to Dr. Bleek the "earliest quasi-human beings" (1) uttered instinctively certain sounds which expressed certain feelings; (2) heard their fellows also utter sounds; (3) imitated them; (4) were then reminded of their feelings when they first uttered the sounds; and thus (5) saw distinctly and separately

* Vide *sup.*, Sec. 7.

† On the *Origin of Language* (Eng. trans. by Davidson).

‡ Herod., iv. 23.

§ Vide *Brit. Mus. Vase Cat.*, No. 1,318.

|| Vide R.E., *The Great Dionysiak Myth*, i. 155.

the sound and the idea, so that (6) the sound became the word for the idea or feeling.

This theory assumes that language is founded on ejaculations, but they do not form a hundredth part of it; and have always remained much as they are, comparatively infertile. Again, as Prof. Whitney observes, with his rough common sense:—

“Involuntary utterances did not need to be repeated by imitation before they could be associated with an idea of the feeling that led to them. Would not the most rudimentary man *in posse*, if he heard his fellow laugh or cry, understand what it meant, without having first himself to *haw-haw* or *boo-hoo*? Do not even the animals thus? When a gun goes off, all the shy birds near take to flight without waiting to say ‘bang’ to themselves. The imitative factor is an intrusion and may be left out of the account altogether.”* But, alas, if you take away this, what remains?

Again, this quasi-human being had some power unknown to parrot and monkey, or otherwise either he would have remained at their level, or they would have ascended. This occult x was a power of judgment and comparison, a power of reflection and introspection; but such a power is not excited by the mere act of imitation, otherwise parrots would acquire it. “Observe,” says M. Taine, “the profound difference separating this acquisition [*i.e.*, of speech by a child], and the parallel acquisition which a parrot might make. The infant invents and discovers incessantly. The names suggested to him are but starting-points for his innumerable efforts. A parrot does not apply the name which is taught him; in a bird’s brain it remains isolated.”† Dr. Tylor gives the following illustrative instance from the Brazilian traveller, Eschwege:—

“I was occupied . . . in making philosophical observations on a deaf-and-dumb idiot negro boy about thirteen years old, with water on the brain, and upon whom nothing made any impression except the crowing of a cock, whose voice he could imitate to the life. He lay most part of the day stark naked on the ground, and crowed as if for a wager against the cock.”‡

Mere animal imitation gets no further than this, and as the quasi-human being in question possessed this x -power, which was thus not dependent upon imitation, he must have possessed it prior to and independently of his imitation. But if he had this power prior to and independently of his imitative power,

* *Oriental and Linguistic Studies*, 296.

† *On Intelligence*, 402.

‡ *Early Hist. of Mankind*, 73.

then, although he might imitate as a child does, yet the rise of his definite ideas would not be the result of his imitations, and these would be nothing more than one of the forms of activity which his mind-power would set in motion. We are, therefore, compelled to set aside the ape-mimic when he would pose as an interpreter of the riddle of language, and we may add with Prof. Whitney:—

“When the process of language-making began, man was man *in esse* as well as *in posse*, ready to have his powers drawn out and educated—just as is every human being nowadays at the commencement of its existence. And the specific moving power to the working-out of speech was not the monkeyish tendency to imitate, but the human tendency to sociality.”*

Man is, as Prof. Noiré well observes, “the not merely *gregarious* but *co-operative* animal.”† Mr. Darwin remarks, —“The strong tendency in our nearest allies, the monkeys, in microcephalous idiots, and in the barbarous races of mankind, to imitate whatever they hear, deserves notice, as bearing on the subject of [the rise of language by means of] imitation.”‡ It certainly deserves very careful notice, and the result of such notice will be to bring into prominence the bridgeless gulf which separates the infant and the barbarian from the monkey and the idiot.

13. *The Co-operative Theory of Language.*

The writer who is supposed to have approached the nearest to the solution of the enigma of the origin of speech is Prof. Noiré,§ who has carefully considered the efforts and views of his predecessors in the field, and who observes of one of the latest and most prominent of them, “It was not reserved for Geiger to reach the final goal, as he hoped, and indeed, as appears from some indications, believed himself to have done.” The reader will perhaps conclude that we may re-read this passage by substituting the name of Noiré for that of Geiger, although I am quite willing to admit its truth, so far as Geiger himself is concerned. In his latest work, from which the following quotations are taken, Noiré sums up with deep admiration the views of Prof. Max Müller on the origin of language. Scientific investigation has revealed certain “roots”

* *Oriental and Linguistic Studies*, 296.

† *Max Müller and the Philosophy of Language*, 83.

‡ *The Descent of Man*, 87.

§ *Der Ursprung der Sprache*, 1877; *Max Müller and the Philosophy of Language*, 1879.

lying *apparently* at the basis of speech ; they differ in different languages. Primary Aryan roots are, or, at all events, are generally, monosyllabic ; Semitic roots dissyllabic, or, if the vowels are sounded, trisyllabic. Old Egyptian roots may be either. Semitic roots show the principle of triconsonantism ; Aryan roots do not.*

And here let me observe that nothing is more dangerous than to build a universal theory on the phenomena afforded by a single family of languages, *e. g.*, the Aryan dialects. If any one is inclined to be alarmed at the amount of knowledge which may be supposed to be requisite for linguistic inquiries, let me reassure him by the dictum of a master ;—

“ I must protest, at the very outset of these lectures, against the supposition that the student of language must necessarily be a great linguist.” †

But whilst this is a most consoling fact, yet be it remembered that the student of language should have a clear grasp of a subject upon which most people have but very shadowy notions—the principles of evidence. Suppose, *e. g.*, that Aryan man started with the verb, in the abstract it is evidently possible that Semitic man may have started with the noun. Yet we find persons arguing or even asserting, with the utmost confidence, that what has occurred in some families of speech must be the rule in all. What is at fault, their knowledge, according to the saying “ a little knowledge is a dangerous thing ? ” No, their knowledge is very valuable ; it is their imperfect logic,—their ignorance of the laws of evidence, which overthrows their efforts.

We have, then, these mysterious roots, and arrived at this point, Prof. Müller observed :—

“ The science of language, I felt, had done its work when it had reduced the vague problem of the origin of language to a more definite form, *viz.*, What is the origin of roots ? Beyond that point, however, where the student of language is able to lay the primary elements of language at the feet of philosophers, the science of language *alone*, apart from the science of thought, will not carry us.” ‡ Psychology, then, must be summoned to assist. The problem, to use the words of Prof. Müller, is “ How do mere cries become phonetic types ? ” This most difficult question Noiré claims to have solved, and Prof. Müller appears

* *Vide* List of Primary Roots of Proto-Aryan (*R. M. A.* Appendix B.).

† *Lects. Sci. Lang.*, i. 25.

‡ *Contemporary Review*, Feb., 1878, p. 466.

to be quite satisfied with his solution.* Prof. Sayce also speaks with high approbation of Noiré's main theory, but adds:—

“ Like Geiger, Noiré is a philosopher rather than a philologist, and his explanation of Aryan roots and their connexion with one another, frequently contravenes the laws of scientific etymology. Nor can his identification of roots and words be admitted, or the actual existence at any time of the hypothetical roots of the Aryan tongues. But his theory doubtless explains the origin of much that is in speech, though it does not explain everything.”†

It may be observed that the investigations of any able man on such a subject are almost sure to be valuable as being suggestive, even although his conclusions may be highly doubtful, or even actually erroneous. The reader will further notice the absolute opposition of opinion on the important question, Did “ roots ” ever actually exist, and as words?

Rejecting the “ Pooh-pooh ” and “ Bow-wow ” Theories, and also the Imitation Theory, and noticing that a rigid analysis would doubtless diminish the comparatively small number of original roots, and that Geiger even referred all vocal sounds to “ a single sound, excited by a single definite idea,” we press up to the question, How (to take a particular instance) did *da* come to mean giving? Before unlocking the gate Noiré turns round to gibe at the impotent crowd of sages who are hopelessly outside, and exclaims;—

“ Now is the time to prove your mettle! A philosophy that can solve such a problem as the present has given a pledge of substantial value, and established an unassailable claim to universal respect.” Certainly; so let us listen to the hierophant:—

I. “ Language is a product of association, and of the community of feeling which is developed, intensified, and finally carried to perfection by community of life.”

This is merely the preliminary basis, for, of course, the above-named factors are not sufficient to produce language; were it otherwise, many gregarious animals would possess it.

II. “ Language is a product of an active process; it is the child of will. In the place of sensations, the mere sense-impressions . . . we must set the active will, or spontaneous activity, . . . which the Monistic philosophy affirms to be at the root of all phenomena.”

This further stimulating cause now presents itself; it is the

* Vide *Lects. on the Origin and Growth of Religion*, 183 et seq.

† *Introd. Sci. Lang.*, i. 83.

active (human) will, which appears to be also described as "spontaneous activity." When the Monistic philosopher affirms that active will is at the root of all phenomena, he will doubtless find the religious philosopher happy to agree with him. When he affirms that spontaneous activity occupies this position, the materialistic sage will probably assent to the dogma. The doctrine of spontaneous activity may be expressed in the statement;—Activity exists, and I don't understand it. But without entangling ourselves in "the Monistic philosophy," we see so far that the factors which are stated to produce language, are association + the community of feeling arising therefrom + will. This last is undoubtedly an essential. As a corollary from the previous "two points" we find that:—

III. "There is not only a sympathy of joy and sorrow expressing themselves in . . . laughter and tears, as well as in the impulses towards common movements, out of which dancing, singing, and music develop themselves later; but there is also a sympathy of the will, of activity directed outwards, which only becomes *phenomenally apparent in its effects.*"

Professor Noiré underlines these last words, though what their special significance is, it is difficult to say. Doubtless there is a sympathy of will; it is equally clear that this involves "activity directed outwards," and it is if possible even more certain that this activity "only becomes phenomenally apparent in its effects." It certainly has no other chance of attracting notice. But probably Noiré merely desires to call attention to this obvious fact in order to prepare us for his next proposition.

IV. "This common sympathetic activity was originally accompanied by sounds, which, as in games and dances, broke out from the violent stress or excitement of the common action, *and as they recurred with every repetition of the particular form of activity,* they became so intimately associated with it as to acquire the power of *recalling the memory* of the action. This is the origin of human thought, for it is the origin of phonetic types (roots)."

There are various other considerations referred to by Professor Noiré in connexion with his theory, but this is the all-important clause by which it must stand or fall, and so consequently demands the closest scrutiny. Man showed a sympathetic activity, and this was originally accompanied by sounds. Doubtless. According to the theory, these sounds were accidental, unpremeditated, and involuntary; "they broke out from excitement,"—the excitement of the moment,—"*as in games and dances.*" Young people, playing or dancing, utter similar cries, the natural outcome of the action and of the surroundings of the situation. True. But their chance excla-

mations, except indeed so far as they are purely interjectional (and language Noiré admits is not founded on interjections), are not remembered and repeated, or repeated without being remembered on subsequent occasions. A boy in an excited state may exclaim "Row-de-dow-de-dow," but on a subsequent similar occasion the probabilities are enormously against his repeating this particular sound; it has an extremely poor chance of passing into a "phonetic type." Thus, so far as the evidence afforded by what now takes place in games and dances is concerned, we find no confirmation of the principle laid down by Noiré, and this implies that these incidents illustrate a contrary principle. But, leaving this illustration, let us simply take the vital point of the theory. This common activity was accompanied by sounds, "and AS they recurred with every repetition of the particular form of activity," etc. But *did they so recur?* Man sat down in company to rub two stones; he exclaimed, casually and by chance, *mar*. He sat down again next day for this purpose, and again exclaimed, as of course, *mar*. Having once said *mar* by accident, he subsequently always said it again either by accident or otherwise. After a few more times, the sound *mar* became associated in his mind with the idea of rubbing. Then *mar* became a phonetic type, a word, subsequently a root, lastly, the parent of a tribe of words all connected with the one idea of rubbing. About this last point there is no question; *mar* is an absolute fact. It was the sire of the god Mars, of Ares, and of the blustering Vedic storm-winds, the Maruts.

Professor Noiré thus holds that man pitched upon his particular sound, *e.g.*, *mar*, in the first instance, and then adhered to it ever after. Of course, his view is merely a theory; it is what *may* have been, and therefore the only standard by which we can try it is that of probability. Now let x = the number of sounds, evidently a large number, which man might or could have used on the original occasion; then the probabilities are x to 1 against his selecting *mar*. But when he had once used it as a mere sound on a particular occasion, are the probabilities that he would use it on a subsequent occasion increased? Certainly not. Nature usually exhibits a repetition with variations, not an exact repetition. He might have said *kar* or *tar*, etc. Looking at the question from this standpoint, Professor Müller, naturally enough, sees no reason to believe that man pitched upon *mar* in the first instance. He observes:—"Every possible combination of consonants, with final *r* or *b*, was suggested; *kr*, *tr*, *chr*, *glr*, all would have answered the purpose, and may have been used, for all we know, previous to the first beginning of articulate speech. But, as soon as *mar* had got

the upper hand, all other combinations were discarded; *mar* had conquered.* How and why? It *happened* to conquer. But if any one of these various combinations "would have answered the purpose," how was it that man, either sooner or later, so resolutely discarded all the rest in favour of one? It *chanced* that he did so. But if I can get to Rome with equal facility by all roads, is it probable that I shall invariably use one only? Scarcely. Thus Noiré's explanation of this mysterious fact of language is (to illustrate it by a particular instance):—

That man *happened* to select the sound *mar*.

And that he subsequently *happened* to continue to use this sound to the exclusion of others. The rest is simple enough; *mar* from association became connected with the idea of rubbing. Hence, language. We know that man has selected and continued to use the root *mar*, but we would fain know *why*. It was an accident of circumstance; "as it fell upon a day." But this bare possibility, the odds against which are 100, or perhaps 1,000, to 1, cannot surely be considered as an *explanation* of the occult fact of language and of the origin of phonetic types. According to Noiré, the only link between the sound and the action is one of time; they were contemporaneous. "Stress or excitement" is no special element in the case. These states might make a man exclaim *mar*, *bar*, *kar*, or anything else. I fear that, after all, the real difficulty has eluded us, and that with Waitz, Geiger, and others, we are still outside the gate of the temple that enshrines the mystery. The questions—

Why did man first select the sound *mar*? and,

How is that he has continued to employ it in a particular connexion to the exclusion of other sounds?—

remain practically unanswered by Noiré's theory. To say that this or that matter happened to take such and such a turn, is practically only saying that things are as they are.

14. *Further examination of Professor Noiré's views.*

Professor Noiré adds, "It is only by means of this visible effect [*i.e.*, the effect of "the individual activity"] that the sounds acquire their meaning." That is to say, when a man said *da*, he gave his fellow something. No doubt the element of gesture and demeanour is an exceedingly important one; but it is here tacked on to an unsupported theory. And why is Noiré compelled to hold that man *accidentally* said *da*?

* *Lects. Sci. Lang.*, ii. 348.

Because he stretches Professor Müller's celebrated dogma, "No speech without reason. No reason without speech," to the extent of holding that there is no reasoned thought before verbal utterance. Thus "the illuminated space of rational thought," = "the store-house of linguistic expression." Having given Lange's definition of a "thing," *i.e.*, "a group of phenomena, which, making abstraction of remoter relations and internal changes, we grasp and conceive as one;" he asserts that "there are things for men," because they can name them; and, conversely, that "it follows undoubtedly from this definition, that things have no existence for animals." What! Cannot one dog grasp as one the group of phenomena which compose another dog? Does he regard that other dog as more than one, or as merely part and parcel of surrounding appearance? Or are the "remoter relations and internal changes" everlastingly present to his mind, so that he cannot abstract them from the concept? I trow not. And when this previously thoughtless quasi-human creature, uncognisant of "things," in his excitement had involuntarily ejaculated *da* or *mar*, what was there in so doing, what occult philosophy did this potent utterance possess, which at once brought his bestial intelligence within "the illuminated space of rational thought?" I doubt not but that just as *man* is he who *means*, not he who *speaks*, so man had his meaning all along; he had his rational thought prior to its expression, as the child exists before its birth; and the circumstance that his choice of a sound was not haphazard, but more or less deliberate,—for mere ejaculations are not speech,—was not the only, but one of the chief reasons, why any sound hardened into a phonetic type.

I have elsewhere quoted an unproved assertion of Professor Noiré, that there was a time when man's thought knew "no I nor thou, no here nor there," etc., and we find in illustration of his general position the statement that "the earliest meanings of verbal roots referred to human action. An impartial glance at any dictionary of roots will serve to verify this assertion. We do not find there Sun and Moon, Thou and I, nor yet anything about shining, flashing or burning. No thoughtful etymologist, even if he found them, would allow them to pass as primitive intuitions; such is the power of truth! What we do find are words signifying to dig," etc., *i.e.*, other strictly human activities. Of course, in the nature of things, most verbal forms indicate actions such as might be performed by human beings; but when we pass this truism we find:—

1. The assumption that men spoke in dictionary roots, which may or may not be true; but which many high authorities, *e.g.*, Professor Sayce, regard as absurd.

2. That we find nothing about shining or burning, whereas in these Proto-Aryan roots of which Professor Noiré is so fond, and to which he seems almost exclusively to have directed his attention, as if they had supplied a pattern to the world, we find *ar*, "to shine," and *ka*, "to burn;" an eloquent commentary on his preposterous statement that "primitive man was dumb in the face of light."

3. That verb-forms are older than noun-forms. On this point let us, waiving argument for once, appeal to authority. Professor Sayce observes:—

"From an analysis of Aryan it has been inferred that all roots were originally verbal. This is certainly the case in the Indo-European, so far as our facts allow us to see. . . . Hence it might be supposed [and it evidently is supposed by Noiré] that the verbal nature of radicals was a fact which held good not only of Aryan, but of all other human languages. Not so, however. In this case we cannot appeal to Turanian; for though Accadian seems to have nominal as well as verbal roots, our data do not carry us back to their original content and meaning, and they may have been a combination of nominal and verbal elements. [Most probably.] But, like the idioms of Polynesia, the Semitic languages refer us to nominal roots as decidedly as the Aryan do to verbal ones. The Semitic verb presupposes a noun, just as much as the converse is the case in Aryan. Here, then, the conception of the *object* lay at the bottom of the language; subjective action being left out of sight."*

Chavée, again, to quote another view, places at the base of Aryan speech pronoun-adverbs and verb-nouns.† Here we have a "combination of nominal and verbal elements," such as Prof. Sayce thinks Akkadian very probably presented.

Canon Farrar, the thorough-going supporter of onomatopœia, advances various arguments to show that the naming of animals was the first effort of speech,‡ in which case nominal forms, of course, preceded verbal forms; he believes with Garnett § that "all language is reducible to roots, which are either the basis of abstract nouns, or are pronouns denoting relations of place." He even thinks it "inconceivable" that men should have used a word meaning "to shine" before they named the sun.

Take, again, the case of an isolating language. "In Chinese

* *Principles of Comparative Philology*, 79, 80.

† *Idéologie*, 33.

‡ *Language and Languages*, 1878, cap. iii.

§ *Essay on the Nature and Analysis of the Verb*.

ly means to plough, a plough, and an ox, *i.e.*, a plougher. Whether a word is intended as a noun, or a verb, or a particle, depends chiefly on the position which it occupies in a sentence.*

What evidence does this state of things supply respecting the priority in time of noun or verb? What now becomes of Noiré's confident dogmatism respecting primitive man, and his list of roots confined to verbal ideas and human activities? As surely as primitive man dug for roots, so surely had he a name for "root" as well as for "to dig."

15. *Present position of the Onomatopoeic Theory of Language.*

"Plato," says Prof. Jowett, "is a supporter of the Onomatopoeic theory of language; that is to say, he supposes words to be formed by the imitation of ideas in sounds." In this view he has been followed by a whole host of sages, one of the most remarkable of whom is De Brosses, who published his *Traité de la Formation Mécanique des Langues* in 1765. We "may read there," says Prof. Noiré, ridiculing the work which he, of course, imagines his own theory has effectually overthrown, "how the *littera canina, r*, betokens what is disagreeable; how the tone of pain is deep, *oh, heu, hélas*; that of surprise higher, *oh, ah*; of joy short and recurring, *ha, ha, ha! he, he, he*; of displeasure and contempt labial, *fi, vae, puh, pfui*; that of doubt and negation nasal, *hum, non*, etc.; and that all the most necessary words are derived from these sources." The fact that supporters of a theory misapply it in particular instances, or unduly extend it, is, of course, not fatal to it; although frequently unfairly pressed against it. Those who wish to study the strength of the onomatopoeic position, should make themselves familiar with Mr. Hensleigh Wedgwood's *Origin of Language* and *Dictionary of English Etymology*, and Canon Farrar's *Chapters on Language* and *Language and Languages*. But besides these champions of the cause, as we have seen, Mr. Darwin and Prof. Sayce regard Onomatopœia and Interjectional Cries as the source of language; and even Prof. Max Müller can no longer be considered as an opponent, for he explains that when he spoke of "the Bow-wow and the Pooh-pooh theories," he was thinking "of Epicurus rather than of living writers;" and in the Preface to the 5th edit. of his *Lectures on the Science of Language*, he says:—

* Prof. Max Müller, *Lects. Sci. Lang.*, ii. 89.

“I value as much as any one the labours of Mr. Wedgwood and the Rev. F. W. Farrar in their endeavours to trace the origin of roots back to interjections, imitations, or so-called vocal gestures. I believe that both have thrown much light on a very difficult problem, and as long as such researches are confined to the genesis of roots, without trenching on etymology in the ordinary sense of that term, I mean on the formation and the history of words, Mr. Farrar is quite right in counting me not as an opponent, but as a neutral, if not an ally.” That is to say, we must not run haphazard into the matter, guided only by an arbitrary fancy, and careless whether or not we respect the historical principles of language, such, *e. g.*, as Grimm’s Law. But, provided we pay due regard to the ascertained laws of verbal development, we may assail, on onomatopoeic principles, that ultimate residuum of speech which is properly outside the sphere of the science of language when unassisted by kindred sciences. Nothing could be fairer, as every reasonable supporter of onomatopœia will doubtless admit.

Dr. Tylor, with his customary cautious sagacity, takes up a somewhat neutral position, but observes,—

“It may be shown within the limits of the most strict and sober argument, that the theory of the origin of language in natural and directly expressive sounds, does account for a considerable portion of the existing *copia verborum*, while it raises a presumption that, could we trace the history of words more fully, it would account for far more.”*

He urges the comparison of words in independent languages. If in this case an agreement is found, “then we may reasonably suppose that we are not deluding ourselves in thinking such words highly appropriate for their purpose. They are words which answer the conditions of original language, conforming as they do to the saying of Thomas Aquinas, ‘*Nomina debent naturis rerum congruere.*’”

Leibniz, Herder, and Wilhelm von Humboldt all saw the infinite importance of sound-imitation in connexion with the question of the origin of speech; and we may accept it as a fact, by a consensus of opinion, that imitation, in some form or other, and of something or other, lies at the basis of nineteen-twentieths of original language; but the imitation was that of a man, not of a brute. No other theory of language has ever yet succeeded in explaining a single root-word. To originate is to be a god; to imitate is the mark of a creature.

* *Primitive Culture*, i. 146-7.

16. *Occult Imitation.*

Of direct imitation, *i.e.*, the obvious reproduction of sounds in their totality, *e.g.*, the Kamic *aua* (ox), *ba* (ram), *miau* (cat), nothing more need be said: but the psychological linguistic of the future will be concerned with the unfolding of the principles of occult imitation. A *mimic* (*mimmick*, Shakspeare; Greek, *mimos*, a reduplicated form, the doubling in the form of the word illustrating the doubling involved in the action; Proto-Aryan root, *ma*, "to measure"), is one who "measures," *i.e.*, "compares" himself with another; and it is to be observed that this comparison or imitation is not of the thing itself, but of our concept or apperception of it. A dog barks; the circumstance produces some effect upon our consciousness, and if we attempt to imitate the original incident we give an expression of that effect. Our imitation being thus second-hand, we see how easily it may, nay must, differ, and that probably very considerably from the original; and, further, how widely imitations of the same thing or circumstance, made by different persons, must differ from each other, their differences being the ratio of the powers and opportunities of the several imitators. Now the circumstance that that which is imitated is, as it were, passed through our consciousness prior to our imitation of it, shows how sound may be imitated by silence, or silence by sound. For if anyone says *st!* we may place a finger on the lips to express this; or, conversely, if we place a finger on our lips, some one may imitate the action by exclaiming *st!* And the reason of this is that the human consciousness, unlike, *e.g.*, the parrot consciousness, takes not merely one only but many analogies or corresponding measurements of things, and, indeed, grasps, although with extreme faintness, the principle of the Unity of the All; so that when a blind man compares red to a trumpet-note, or a deaf-mute compares a trumpet-note to red, we feel that this measurement is at once true and appropriate.

Another point which may be incidentally remarked is, that the principles of imitation suggest that many primeval words were not monosyllabic, just as many natural sounds are prolonged, reduplicated and varied. Phonetic Decay, or the Law of Least Effort, is constantly working in favour of monosyllabism. Thus *periwig* dwindles to *wig*, *omnibus* to *bus*, *withhold* to *wôh*, and *withstay* to *way!* "Bohtlingk notes that many Tibetan words at present monosyllabic were formerly polysyllabic, and the polysyllabism of the roots of the Bâ-ntu

family [the Kafir languages] is well known.* The Akkadian language which, according to Prof. Sayce, ceased to be spoken prior to the seventeenth century B.C. has been greatly affected by phonetic decay. Thus *ma*, "land," which by the addition of the individualising affix *da*, becomes *mada* (Media, *i.e.* "the Land"), appears next as *mad*, which, adopted by the Semitic Assyrian, goes through the avatars *mad-atu*, *mad-tu*, *mat-tu*, *ma-tu*. *Timmena*, "foundation-stone," becomes successively *timmen*, *timme*, *tim*, *tem*, *te*; † just as the Aryan *ayus*, (eternity) dwindled at one portion of its career to *aé*; ‡ and we find the forms *eal-swa*, *also*, *alse*, *als*, *as*.

The obscure question of the special part played by various letters and sounds in the formation of the great mass of words must be approached in two ways; (1) by an immense classification of known forms, and (2) by the aid of psychology, which, as regards archaic man, finds one of her chief helpers in scientific etymology. Given the knowledge how primitive man regarded ideas and things in general, and given a vast number of sounds and forms, at least closely akin to those which he must have used, and the combination will show us the principles employed, and which obtained in his "natural selection." And the recent vast advance in our information on these matters may make us reasonably take a most hopeful view of the probabilities of the future. We must not expect to find in natural processes that uniformity which has been well styled "the perfection of small geniuses." We shall meet with no archaic Bishop Wilkins, with his *da*, "god," *ida*, "devil," *dad*, "heaven," *odad*, "hell;" no Dr. Murray with his nine primeval roots, *ag*, *bag*, *lag*, etc. We must not expect to hear, with Dr. Wienburg, "the sylphlike waving and whispering of the letter-spirits."§ The path of laborious induction possesses no such assistants; but, listening to nature, we shall find, with Emerson, that she hums her old tunes with innumerable variations; and further, that languages reflect the characters of nationalities, even as he declares that "Strasburg Cathedral is a material counterpart of the soul of Erwin of Steinbach." The powerful and penetrating mind of Iamblichos the Neo-Platonist, called by succeeding members of the fraternity, "the Divine," and of whom the Emperor Julian in enthusiastic admiration declared that "he was second to Plato, but in time only, not in genius," seems to have grasped various true principles of language, a circumstance which his

* *Introd. Sci. Lang.*, ii. 13.

† Prof. Sayce, *Assyrian Lectures*, 144-5.

‡ Vide *R.M.A.*, p. 47.

§ Apud Canon Farrar, *Language and Languages*, 225, Note 3.

familiarity with foreign tongues assists in explaining; and he speaks with much insight of "the physical similitudes of language to things which exist in nature."*

There are a number of highly interesting and important questions connected with the study of language which, of course, I have not been able even to refer to here. One of them is the determination of the character of primitive religion by linguistic means; but I can only say, with Kratylos in the Dialogue, "You do not suppose that I can explain any subject of importance all in a moment; at any rate, not such a subject as language, which is, perhaps, the greatest of all." Suffice it if I succeed in indicating what language is, and how to be studied, and what are the errors in some of the theories of its origin. I conclude with a suggestion of the process by which any particular sound became a phonetic type, that is to say, an ordinary word:—

I. Man is an imitative being; and, having reason, his imitations are not purposeless but connected with design.

II. The circumstances of his first utterances are not to be regarded as if he had been a vocal statue, *i.e.*, as if sound had been the sole aspect and constituted the whole of the phenomenon.

III. When circumstance stimulated him to the exercise of his latent power of speech, he uttered a sound which he regarded as appropriate to the occasion; † and accompanied the utterance by certain special movements, not accidental but designed, as being, in his opinion, suitable and characteristic of the idea he was endeavouring to express. Thus, not relying wholly on sound, the use of which as language was necessarily strange to him, he partly worked out his meaning pictorially by pantomimic action.

IV. The sound and the action were contemporaneous, and mutually suggestive or provocative; the action suggesting the particular sound, the sound the particular action.

V. A sound having been once used by man in a definite connexion, and that not merely accidentally but because it had approved itself for the purpose to his judgment, ‡ its re-user generally followed in the same connexion as of course; as such re-user was also supported or provoked by the recurrence of the

* *Peri Mysteriôn*, vii. 4.

† Vide *sup.* as to how to ascertain the principles which determined his choice.

‡ This "judgment" would, in a great number of cases, be almost entirely instinctive: that is to say, man would not be conscious of deliberation in the matter. It does not take a good cricketer more than a second to decide how to play a swift round-hand ball.

appropriate pantomimic action, which was itself recalled by the return of the particular circumstance or idea.

Thus, not at random, but designedly, in the first instance, may we suppose that man used sound linguistically and strengthened it by gesture; and, as he had a reason for his first step, so had he a still stronger reason for his second; and his first sound in any particular line of idea being thus definitely determined, his second, in the same line, was naturally, in the great majority of instances, a repetition of the former.

LANGUAGE, AND THEORIES OF ITS ORIGIN.

Synopsis.

1. Parallel and connexion between Language and Religion.
 2. Language, what.
 3. Language a natural development.
 4. Primeval Language unknown.
 5. Errors of the Conventional (Anomalistic) and Connexional (Analogistic) Theories of Language.
 6. The Platonic view of Language.
 7. The Divisions of Language.
 8. The Divisions of Articulate Speech.
 9. The Transition from Drawing to Writing.
 10. The Principle of Limitation of Choice in Original Names.
 11. Children and the Origin of Language.
 12. The "Simious" Theory of Language.
 13. The "Co-operative" Theory of Language.
 14. Further Examination of Prof. Noiré's Views.
 15. Present position of the Onomatopoetic Theory of Language.
 16. Occult Imitation.
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APPENDIX.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF RELIGION.

As the statement in the text respecting the Universality of Religion is almost certain to be hastily denied, I subjoin the following dicta by the highest authorities :—

“ We may safely say that, in spite of all researches, no human beings have been found anywhere who do not possess something which to them is religion.”—(Prof. Max Müller, *Hibbert Lectures*, 1878, p. 79).

“ The statement that there are nations or tribes which possess no religion rests either on inaccurate observation or on a confusion of ideas. No tribe or nation has yet been met with destitute of belief in any higher beings ; and travellers who asserted their existence have been afterwards refuted by the facts. It is legitimate, therefore, to call religion in its most general sense a *universal phenomenon of humanity*.”—(Prof. Tiele, *Outlines*, 6 ; cf. *R.M.A.*, 16.)

Dr. Tylor, after showing that absence of religion has been incorrectly attributed in the most positive manner to the aborigines of Australia, the Payaguas and Guanas of South America, the natives of Madagascar, the Dinkas of the White Nile, and various other tribes, observes :—“ Thus the assertion that rude non-religious tribes have been known in actual existence, though in theory possible, does not at present rest on that sufficient proof which, for an exceptional state of things, we are entitled to demand.”—(*Primitive Culture*, i. 378.)

The CHAIRMAN, Mr. J. E. HOWARD, F.R.S.—I am sure that I may present your thanks to Mr. Robert Brown for this interesting paper, in which he has thrown before us what are certainly subjects for manifold discussion. For myself, I scarce agree with all he has said in regard to the origin of language I think he has been more successful in pulling to pieces the bow-wow and pooh-pooh theories. The question can scarcely be fully considered without inquiring what was man antecedent to the foundation of his language? There are at least two theories on the subject, and it is necessary to proceed on one or the other of these two lines. Scripture teaches that man was created perfect from the hands of his Maker endowed with a spiritual as well as animal part,—let us say, endowed with the *πνεῦμα* as well as the *ψυχή* (endowed with the spirit as well as with the soul), and from the first in communion with his Maker,—

so that He who endowed him with the $\psi\chi\eta$, and also with a spirit of untold and unknown power, could also continually educate the creature He had made, and sustain him in the use of his powers. Therefore, while I quite agree that language was welling forth, as has been described, from the internal resources of the man,—the $\pi\nu\epsilon\delta\mu\alpha$, I take it, may reasonably be supposed to have been not only endowed with power, but guided in its efforts by Divine intelligence. At least, I cannot myself understand how else the remarkably abstract difficulties of language could be conquered by man. I confess it perplexes me to see how this could have been without some Divine supervision and guidance. The other theory is, of course, as all know, that man is only an improved ape; and that, by some means or other, he has managed to pick up a mode of communicating with the other apes. I confess that I do not feel myself to belong to this community, and consequently decline to discuss the corresponding theory; perhaps I could have wished that Mr. Brown could have as summarily dismissed it as I have; because some of his conclusions seem to me rather to take for granted that man did pick up his language in this kind of simial style. Possibly I am mistaken, but in the passage beginning, "The circumstances of his first utterances," the description belongs to the simial period as far as I can understand it—that is, according to the evolutionist theory; but in the Scriptural account I find man, in his first utterances, giving expression in good and correct language to the most abstract and difficult thoughts. If you look at the third chapter of Genesis you find the Almighty conversing with man, and man replying, and this upon the most difficult subjects. Sin and shame and punishment, and the things that are there discoursed about, are the most difficult abstract subjects, requiring the greatest perfection of language. My attention was drawn to this exact point once when, at the wish of one of my scientific friends, when I was young, I took down some portions of the language of the Krumen on the west coast of Africa. In translating the parable of the prodigal son, I found that a very intelligent Kruman, who had been under Christian instruction, hesitated as to the translation of the words, "I have sinned against Heaven." He could not get hold of a version of that sentence at all, until he at last put it into the Scriptural phrase,—"I have sinned in the presence of God." "I have sinned against Heaven," I should have thought a simple idea; but it was too abstract for him. Well, all these abstract conceptions you find in the conversations with man immediately, as far as I understand it, after his creation, and as soon as he is driven out of Paradise, and this may be considered not to have been a long period. Therefore, it follows that he must have been endowed with language from the beginning. How to explain this I do not know. I do not attempt to explain it any more than I can explain how the nightingale is endowed with its musical powers. That which applies to language applies to the nightingale. I think, therefore, there must have been a primitive language, because only two persons spoke it. That that language was the

Hebrew I do not assert ; but that it was something like the Hebrew I think we may fairly deduce, because of the permanence of the words Adam (Admu in the Assyrian), and perhaps, Eve ; and still more particularly from the permanence of the words, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, which, of course, have only their meaning in Hebrew, and these meanings are very definitely associated with the destinies of these great divisions of the human race.

The HON. SECRETARY.—Before the discussion commences I have to read the following communication from the Rev. Isaac Taylor, D.D. :—

“I much regret not having been able to be present at the reading of Mr. Brown’s very able paper on ‘Language.’ I very sincerely congratulate you on having succeeded in obtaining such competent treatment of a most difficult subject. If I had been present I should gladly have expressed a general agreement with Mr. Brown’s positions, though I think, on the whole, assigning rather more importance to the theories of Geiger and Noiré than he has done.”

Mr. R. Cust says that the true theory of language is in its infancy, and alludes to the many hundred languages of Africa having “extraordinary resemblances” and “inexplicable differences,” and agreeing with each other in nothing ; some elaborate, others showing no power of development, some dying out. He adds, that a preparatory step to inquiry into the origin of human speech should be to frame a language-map, showing the habitat of the speakers of the languages and a genuine vocabulary of the language spoken.*

Admiral E. G. FISHBOURNE, C.B., R.N.—We are all much indebted to the author of this valuable paper ; but I must confess that, in my opinion, if he had followed out the premises to their legitimate conclusions, he would have come to the result that I now venture to put before you, and which has already been alluded to by Mr. Howard. Adam was created, and he was among other things, declared to be very good ; therefore, we must assume that we have God’s authority for saying he was perfect in his organism and faculties. He was called upon by God to name the animals, and, according to the paper we have just heard, there is no arbitrary naming, but Adam recognised the specific qualities of the particular animals, and gave them names accordingly. Then we pass on to the confusion of language. You will here observe that the people were at first of one language and of one speech. I do not think the two words were indifferent ; I believe they meant two different ideas of language and speech. Language implies the grammatical form of the language, whereas speech was a

* Professor Ludwig Noiré writing to the author from Mayence, says :—
“Your interesting *brochure* has given me great pleasure. Complete understanding of the weightiness of the problem, and earnest endeavour after truth is expressed in it.”

Professor Sayce, of Oxford, adds, “I have been delighted with what you have written ; I know of no other publication in which the present state of the question in regard to the origin of speech is presented with as much learning, clearness, and compactness.”

loose mode of expression current in the place amongst the people. Mr. Brown has alluded to superhuman thoughts arising out of true religion, and all true religion involving superhuman thought ; therefore, as a consequence, superhuman language is required to set forth superhuman thought. Let us take an illustration from the difficulties our missionaries have to deal with. I refer to the difficulty experienced in translating the Chinese language by the Roman Catholic missionaries, the English Protestant missionaries, and the American Protestant missionaries. They all had to obtain a word to represent the Supreme Being, and they all took different words, one taking Tien tu, another Shangti, and another Shin, until they came among the rebels, when they found they used the word Shangti. It is easy to understand how every language may be thus influenced, so that after the fall of man and the degradation of his intellect, while he does not lose sight of the Supreme Being,—and I, for one, do not believe there has ever been any one in the world who did not believe in a Supreme Being,—it may be in a superstitious way,—but in some Supreme Being and a hereafter,—a religious effect is exercised on the conscience, and man is thus kept within bounds. As the nations fell into barbarism their language would be degraded and changed, and then the process of improvement alluded to by the lecturer would have found a place in any nation that advanced, and as it advanced, more particularly as it received new ideas and powers from revelation. I think it immensely important that we should keep before our minds that the statements of Scripture represent facts and realities.

MR. W. GRIFFITH.—I am sure we are all greatly indebted to Mr. Brown for the pains he has taken in presenting us with so laborious a view of the theories entertained on this interesting subject. Of course, one of the first questions arising upon it is, What is language? I have had the pleasure of listening very often to the eloquence of the Archbishop of York. He is a man of undoubted ability, but I must take exception to the accuracy of his definition that language is “a mode of expressing our thoughts by means of motions of the organs of the body.” Language is the process of expressing the operations of the mind, but it does more than express those highly-developed mental operations called thoughts. It is perfectly correct, as Mr. Brown has told us, that the mind not only reasons and thinks, but there are certain innate ideas of right and wrong, of righteousness and sin, contained in the mind. Locke’s theory is that there are certain innate ideas employed in the mind from the first, and if the Archbishop of York had said language was an expression of our ideas rather than of our thoughts, he would have been nearer the truth ; but even then he would have been hardly correct, because language expresses feelings as well as ideas and thoughts. Passing to the more general question of what is the origin of language,—was it divinely given to man at the Creation, or has it been evolved in the process of time,—we come to a much more difficult subject. I must say that the reasons advanced by Mr. Howard for the conclusions he arrives at do not quite

convince me. He says the Almighty is represented as speaking to Adam. Of course, I take this as an historically true and credible narrative; but it does not follow that the conversations took place in audible tones. The human being does contain such a principle as conscience,—an innate spiritual sense,—and we know that inspiration has spoken to people by dreams and other means which we cannot understand; therefore, when we find it stated that the Almighty conversed with Adam, we cannot at once conclude that it was in audible speech. Then comes the further statement that man gave names to particular animals. Well, this, to my mind, rather contravenes the argument of the last speaker that language is a divine gift; for if the beast of the field and the fowl of the air were brought to Adam to see what he would call them (Gen. ii. 19), Adam invented the names, they must have originated in Adam's mind, and were not directly given to him. Of course, I admit that the faculties were given to him; but the question is, whether the language was a divine gift? I do not think the evidence establishes that. If we consider the further idea started by the Archbishop of York, we find he tells us that language was "a divine gift; but the power and not the results of its exercise, the germ and not the tree, was imparted." You have the faculty, and not the words themselves. Language is said to be not only a mode of communicating our thoughts but also our feelings and ideas, and some persons have started the theory that even other animals than man do possess a certain language which we do not understand. I think that as far as we can apply the Baconian theory of philosophy to this experimental question we must admit they do. For instance, we hear the hen calling her chickens, and the chickens understand, and obey the call. Of course, the language these and other animals possess is of a very low description, and primarily appertains to the appetites. It does not prove the existence of any intellect, or mind, or conscience, but it corroborates the theory to which I incline, that language is evolved, and not to be traced to the Creation, although it may have existed at the Creation. Another reason for saying this is that the Almighty in His miracles seldom goes beyond the actual necessity of the case. When Lazarus was raised from the dead, those who stood around him were told to take off the clothes. When man was in a primeval state, having no society, he did not greatly want language, as when woman was created he was sure to do. We all know the expressive power of the countenance, and how quickly ideas are communicated by a pleasing glance or an angry look,—by a smooth brow and a pleasant smile. These things doubtless amounted to all that was necessary in a primitive state of society for some time; but of course it is easier to demolish than to create. Mr. Brown adduced many arguments against some of the theories he quoted; but it seems to me that, on such a subject, we can only reason from very slight grounds. Having said so much as to the main question involved,—the existence of language, as a divine gift, in the first instance, or its being developed according to the necessities of the case, I would remark that the doctrine

of the evolution of language does not in any way support the theory that the human creature is evolved from the lower animals. Man is distinguished by his intellect and conscience, and by those ideas he possesses, which cannot be traced in lower animals. An interesting comparison between the incidents of religion and language was elaborated in the first head of the lecture, and an inference drawn therefrom that they are inseparable, exhibiting diversity in unity. From this tenet I dissent. Religion and language, inasmuch as they are properties of a particular being, may, when that being is compared with others, exhibit much in common. But, as properties, they are essentially distinct. Natural religion binds man to his Maker; language may connect him with his fellow. In the former the conscience dimly apprehends the Infinite, and manifests its truth and honesty by actions. In the latter a different subjective faculty, intellect, or reason, and not faith or spirit, predominates, and may end in talk. The most silent men may be the most genuinely pious, while the infidel may carry off the prize in logomachy. Again, the literature of the religions of Mahomet, Buddha, and Brahma—Confucius is by some called a philosopher, and not a religionist—may be highly intellectual, while their practices and ritual are most degrading. Or, supposing true religion is essentially connected, false religion, on account of its falsity, cannot be. But not wishing to play with words instead of sentiments, I prefer, to pursuing the last argument, to thank the lecturer for the pains he has taken, and for the large amount of information he has laid before us in so pleasant a form. As to which was the primeval language, I do not think we can decide that, although some have ventured to do so; some advocates for Hebrew basing their theory on the fact that Eber lived at the dispersion.

Mr. D. HOWARD, F.C.S.—There is so much in the paper we have just heard that it is difficult to know where to begin and where to leave off. I think that the point which the last speaker has handled so ably is a curious and interesting one, and one which I hope Mr. Brown will endeavour to work out and give us the benefit of, namely,—What necessary connexion is there between religion and the moral sense and language? There is, I think, a very subtle connexion between thought and language. Undoubtedly western thought and language have acted and interacted one on the other, and it is a very curious historical question, as well as a mental question of the present day,—How far are our modes of thought governed by our modes of speech? If you trace through the various families of the human race, you find the same great differences in the modes of thought caused by differences in the modes of speech; while there are great differences in the modes of speech caused by differences in the modes of thought. If we trace this peculiarity back, it will probably throw a vast amount of light on the history of mankind, and I should be far from thinking lightly of the hint the lecturer has given us, namely, as to how far the modes of religious thought—I do not mean in the sense of natural as against revealed religion—are caused by modes of religious expression. There may be two ways of

apprehending a true thing. Just as it has been said that every man has been born either a Platonist or an Aristotelean, so am I convinced that there is a wide difference in the modes of apprehending spiritual conceptions depending on the constitution of the mind. All these are points that deserve a vast amount of attention ; but there are other points in connexion with the subject of the paper that are especially interesting. One that has been touched upon is—How far we should conceive the creation of man as an absolutely perfect being in actuality, and how far perfect in possibility ? I cannot help thinking of a perfection which may be like imperfection. The Greek language was perfect before Plato, and gave the possibilities of Plato's thoughts, but until Plato's thoughts came the possibilities of the Greek language were not developed ; and then, again, until Paul came, they were not fully developed. How far the first speaking man—for I confess that the *homo alalus* is one of the most curious myths we can find—was gifted with the possibility and how far with the actuality of language, is a curious and interesting problem. You cannot imagine the first man a baboon ; you see in the baboon no possibility without the actuality. And so with regard to the first man : there may have been a certain amount of imperfection, but that existed along with perfect possibilities, and this may explain a great many of the questions raised this evening. It seems to be a pregnant idea in the mind of the lecturer that roots may never have been used. If one may judge from the inventions of science, it will be found that, to speak analogically, the root is not used. In mechanics, the best invention is at first a very complicated one, and it is only by what is done afterwards that it is worked into a simple form. Watt's first steam-engine was infinitely more complicated than the modern steam-engine. If you look at one practical point, the arrangement of the valves to regulate the steam, which afford the key to the whole matter, you will find that in Watt's engine these things are exceedingly complicated, and the slide valves, which now do all the real work, were not invented till long after. And I cannot help thinking that there may, in the same way, have been a good deal of complexity in the earlier forms of speech, and that in reality the root was not developed until later, though it sounds very much like a bull to say so. The curious experience of our missionaries among savage tribes with regard to the different forms and roots of the native languages, and the manner in which they are obtained is interesting. I remember it being said that, in one of the Polynesian islands, they describe a horse as a "man-running-pig"; but in order to describe a cow they perform a more curious process of philology, for they take the words "bull" and "cow," and put them together, and add *vahina*, *i.e.*, lady, with the result that a cow is called "ebullemacowvahina."

Mr. R. BROWN, F.S.A.—I had on a former occasion to commence my reply by explaining the stand-point from which my paper was written, and I must do so again, and the explanation simply is, that it is a paper for any one and every one, and not for those only who hold distinctly Christian opinions in the same way that we do. (Hear, hear.) This, I think, is an

absolutely essential stand-point in a philosophical society, and, as on a former occasion I ventured to adopt the conduct of St. Paul at Athens, when he took the Athenians on their own ground, so I shall remind you to-night of a still higher example, when the great Founder of Christianity met the sceptics of His day, who rejected nearly the whole of the Old Testament, and took them strictly on their own ground, *i.e.*, on the Pentateuch, which they accepted themselves. That is the reason, and the only reason, why this paper is, as may be seen, so remarkable for the absence of Scriptural quotations, and while there are no allusions to this, that, or the other positions which may involve circumstances about which there are as many opinions as men. Suppose, for instance, you were arguing with a Brahmin, in defence of your faith, and he were to say, "I am perfectly willing to discuss the matter with you, but you must assume that my books are divine works, and that I only know how to interpret them." You would, of course, say at once, "I do not admit anything of the sort;" but I am afraid that when we are dealing with the world at large, we shall have to take people on their own ground, and meet them from a stand-point on which all can agree. I have, therefore, in this paper endeavoured to take such common ground, and to show the evolutionists and others of our scientific friends that, taken on their own basis, the evidence they adduce does not give the results they suppose, but the contrary. And here I would make just one or two remarks, after first thanking you for the kind patience with which you have listened to my paper. Our Chairman has spoken of the supervision of Divine goodness. I have never denied it; but I think we may suppose the Archbishop of York to be a fair Christian authority on these matters, and he says that language is a divine gift; but that the power, and not the result was imparted. The Chairman has also said that I have denied a primeval language. I have done nothing of the sort. Of course there must have been a primeval language,—a primeval language that is now unknown. If you will refer to page 317 of the paper, which I did not read, in order that I might save time, you will find the question of original names there dealt with, and the bearing they have on the question whether there was a primeval language. As to which was the primitive language it cannot be inferred that, because some of our remote progenitors bore the same names as others, living hundreds of years after, they therefore spoke the same language. Of course the modern Italian differs from the ancient dialect that may have been spoken in an archaic age. The Hebrew language, as known to us in its most archaic documents, could only have come into existence when there was a Hebrew nation, and hundreds of years must then have passed since Abraham came out of another country where the Assyrian, the Chaldean, and the Babylonian languages, and languages of the same stock, or family, were spoken, though of a much older and distinctly different form,—languages which have a better claim to antiquity, in the same way as, I believe, that Admu was an older form than Adam. Exception has been taken to the introductory heading of my

lecture. I do not press that very far ; but it does seem to me that there is a wide and historical connexion between language and religion, and that the inquiry of the future will tend in a great measure to the investigation of this particular question. I do not think there is anything else that calls for observation, except that I desire to say, emphatically, there is nothing in my premises or conclusions in favour of the evolutionist theory. Of course, the fact that man had the capability or power of making a language, and then worked it out, would not support the doctrine of evolution ; the development of language is merely one of the ordinary effects of the progress of human genius, which is always working up towards noble results, and I think that on this point we may hope to aspire still higher. I have not introduced the Tower of Babel into my paper ; there was not only the confusion that we read of there, but I think there has been some since on that point. I have been speaking of the *origin* of language, and there can be no doubt that it must have existed for a long period before that unfortunate event, to whatever extent that event may have influenced the world. I have only to add that I am much obliged to you for the patience with which you have heard me.

The meeting then adjourned.
