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THE  
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

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ARTICLE I.

PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE.

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IN speaking of the philosophy of a thing, or in saying that it is philosophically considered, we generally mean that it is regarded from a higher or interior point of view; a point from which the principles by which it is governed and its interior construction become visible. In treating of the philosophy of language we must, therefore, so proceed that the interior things contained therein may become apparent, and that we may get a full view of it in all its bearings.

At first appearance language looks, indeed, simple enough, and by most people it is regarded as a mere instrument for giving vent to their feelings, expressing their ideas, and holding intercourse with their fellow-men. By the more intelligent among men, however, it is held in higher esteem, and even regarded with profound reverence, as by its means they obtain access to all the intellectual treasures of mankind, and in it they see the medium by which God has communicated his word for the salvation of the human race. Beyond this, however, their interest in language rarely extends, and the sole purpose for which, until very recently, it has been made a subject of diligent study, was that of possessing the ability to converse with people of different nations, and of

having access to the literature of olden and modern times. Language was regarded as a mere handmaid, valued only for the sake of the rich presents she bore in her hands, and which she lavished upon all who did not shun the labor necessary for their acquisition.

It is a discovery of quite modern date that language is not a menial handmaid, but instead, a noble organism, full of beauty and wisdom, with liberty reigning in its every particle, and with the charms that render a subject fascinating in the eyes of the student abundantly scattered over its surface. Indeed, modern investigations have proved most triumphantly that language is not only the most comprehensive of all sciences, but with regard to the positive information it offers respecting the intellectual organization of man, full worthy of taking the lead among its sister sciences. This honor also has already been accorded to it by history and natural history, and its oracles are profoundly listened to by each of these sciences, when the former desires to be enlightened respecting the ante-historical ages of mankind, and the latter to have correct ideas respecting the affinities existing among the human species.

A few remarks on the nature of language will show us in what particular field these discoveries have been made, and why it was that mankind so long remained in ignorance of its true character.

Every thing that proceeds from or is produced by man opens a field of investigation in two directions, according as it is regarded, either as a means of usefulness or as illustrating the genius and character of him whose production it is. For every thing that a man does bears the stamp of his mind — it is the natural expression of energies working in his breast, and bears witness of them. So the house or temple he builds can be regarded either in its capacity of serving as a house or a place of worship, or else as a means of illustrating the character and qualification of its builder. Sometimes indeed, the former is entirely lost sight of, and the latter only is taken into consideration, as is the case with all

the buildings and ruins of buildings preserved to us from ancient times, which are prized less on account of the shelter they afford, than because they offer us a deep insight into the state of religion and civilization among by-gone nations. As it is with buildings, so is it with the inventions of men and the books they write; they serve two purposes, that of performing a use to mankind, and that of shadowing forth the characters and abilities of those who produce them.

All that has been stated respecting the works of man in general applies in an eminent degree to language. For language also is a production of man, or rather an emanation from him. It is the natural expression of his thoughts and feelings, by means of which he holds intercourse with his fellow-men. This is its first use. It exceeds, however, all other human productions in the preciseness and completeness with which it reflects the whole human mind, and presents its very complex form to the scrutiny of the understanding. For even as man himself can be viewed, either as an individual or as a member of a nation, or of a whole race of men, or, finally, as a part of mankind in general, so also can we distinguish in every human mind: 1. *Universal* qualities, which it has in common with all mind; 2. *General* qualities, which it holds in common with the mind of the race to which it belongs; 3. *Particular* qualities, which are common to certain nations; 4. *Singular* or *individual* qualities, by which it is distinguished from other minds of the same nation or family. These several features are most beautifully represented in human language, and, by subjecting its organism to a close philosophical analysis, we are enabled to arrive at a full knowledge of them.

For a long time language was regarded merely as the expression of the thoughts and feelings of the individual; and, although it was well known that every nation has a language of its own, still this was not usually regarded as the expression of its national character and mind; and, while a vague feeling prevailed at all times that more things are contained in the words we employ in common talk and writ-

ing than appear on the surface, still the words of language were not used as means of inquiring into the workings of the human mind. In this particular region of the study of language, by which it is placed on an equal footing with the noblest sciences, and in which its lofty and high-born nature is fully recognized, the many brilliant discoveries have been made to which we have alluded above.

As to the reason why men so long remained in ignorance with respect to the true nature of language, it may be remarked that the knowledge of language like that of all other subjects has been progressive, and that men always proceed but gradually from the consideration of the outer parts of a subject to an examination of its inward parts. So in the study of nature, men began by noticing the outer covering of the earth; they saw upon it plants, animals, and men. They admired their beauty, tested their usefulness, and lauded the transcendent skill with which the Creator had arranged them into one harmonious whole. In the course of time, however, animals and plants were arranged into species and families, their interior structure was revealed by the microscope, and the composition of their particles by chemistry. Geology and geognosy descended into the earth and told its history; meteorology ascended into the air and examined the clouds and the fluctuations of the atmosphere; and astronomy, aided by mathematics, attacked the very skies, and made the sun and stars tell their motions. Philosophy, finally, brought up the rear, and with an inspired voice proclaimed the universe to be the word of God manifested in his works. Standing on the shoulders of mathematics and the natural sciences, in its large sweep over the universe, it divides the whole of it into sun and earth. The earth it proves to have been formed from the sun through the atmospheres, and after the creation of the earth, it affirms that by the combined action of the sun, earth, and atmospheres, its surface was covered with plants, and peopled first with animals and afterwards with men.

The development of the knowledge of language took a

parallel course. For language also has its sun and earth, and on the surface of the latter its organic life. Thoughts animated by feelings or affections are the sun in language, even as the sun in nature is light animated by heat. As the sun in nature procures a resting-place for itself in its earths, in which it concentrates its powers, and whence, as from new centres, it creates paradises for the habitations of men, so the thoughts animated by affections create a resting-place for themselves in the words of language, in which they concentrate their powers, and of which in delightful books and brilliant orations they construct intellectual paradises for the enjoyment and uses of human minds. Witness the sunny influence of a kind word,—how it dispels gloom and darkness, and causes the tender flowers of innocence and truth to open their buds; how it irradiates the countenance, as with the beams of a rising morning sun, and presses the pearly dew from the eye. As in nature the charms of the earthly paradise first enchanted the eyes of men, so also in language, conversations first, and afterwards books, occupied their attention. They were completely satisfied with the present meaning of words, and cared not for their origin, even as they enjoyed themselves for a long time on the surface of the earth before they dug into it to examine its strata. However, the nature of man is such that he cannot be contented with mere facts for any length of time, but in the end is irresistibly drawn towards the investigation of causes. So with regard to nature; men were not satisfied with enjoying her bountiful riches, and dwelling on her surface, but they were inflamed with a desire of penetrating into the mysteries of her economy and of the creation of the earths; and in language they could not be satisfied with the mere use of words, and with admiring the beauties of composition, and endeavored to reach the source whence they sprung, and to see them revealed in the inner meaning of their life. This desire to enter into the causes of words gave rise to *etymology*, or the science of tracing words to their origin. In the beginning its derivations were often arbitrary and

highly fanciful, and never, indeed, has a science been so much abused and treated with such violence as etymology. It was regarded as the field in which the learned were allowed to amuse themselves and display their antics. Each endeavored to surpass the other in extravagant and impossible derivations, and the more he did violence to the spirit of language the surer was he of being applauded and believed. Language, in the meantime, like a defenceless maiden, had to suffer all this abuse, and watch her chance of making her escape out of this den of robbers and thieves. The day of deliverance finally came, but it was long after all the other sciences had broken the fetters by which they were chained to the Middle Ages. Etymology was not placed upon a solid scientific basis until within the last thirty or forty years. Since that time, however, it has been steadily advancing, and, under the fostering care of comparative philology, it has contributed a large share towards the enlightenment of the human race.

There is one circumstance, however, which contributed, perhaps, more than language unaided could have done, towards placing it in its proper position among its sister sciences.

After men, in the course of time, had begun to inquire into the causes of things, they indeed first commenced with classifying and investigating the subordinate parts of nature, as animals, plants, minerals, etc. ; but gradually their ambition took a higher flight, and they commenced to gather information about man himself. At first they instituted a systematic search after the human soul, by cutting open the human body and dissecting it in every direction, thinking that they might discover it through material channels. This search proving futile, some drew comparisons between animal and human bodies, and in their haste to find similarities failed to see distinctions, and thus came to assert that man draws his origin from the beast. With this preconceived idea they entered upon the natural history of mankind, and arranged them into families and species, with a view of proving their relationship to the beast. Others, however, started from the

principle that the soul of man is separated from the human body, as the Creator from creation ; and that as the Creator reveals himself to the rational eye of man in his works, so also the human soul is revealed in every function of the body. Scientific men were thus from the very beginning divided into two hostile armies, one of which contended for the animal origin of man, and the other declared his independence of the beast, and his creation as a man by the Creator. These two armies frequently had hot encounters, but without any distinct results. In the course of time the defenders of the human origin of man again divided into two parties, the one asserting that all men have descended from one human pair, the other attributing a distinct origin to each separate race of men.

With this last party the defenders of the animal origin united themselves, and thus two new parties arose, one of which advocates the theory of one Adam, and the other, of several Adams. In this state of affairs the eyes of the combatants were drawn upon language, which on its resuscitation had made a few bold assertions on the subject under discussion. Thus far it had not been used by either party to fortify its position, and both, therefore, sought its alliance in the hope of ensuring a preponderance in the contest. Upon a clear sifting of the claims of language, they came to the conclusion that it alone is enabled to decide scientifically the question of the plurality or unity of the human race. By common consent it was therefore made umpire, and since that time the most zealous of either parties have buried themselves deeply in the labyrinth of languages, and are there busily engaged in digging, comparing notes, and retracing their steps. Among these party-workers there are some stern laborers, who, perfectly familiar with the ways of language, and filled with an almost parental affection for it, because they have rescued it from its low and degraded condition, keep a sharp look-out in their field, and see that those working under the influence of a party-spirit, do not form their judgments too hastily, and pronounce unfounded opin-

ions. Among these we may mention Bopp, the founder of comparative philology, and Pott, the greatest philologist of the age. With such care the science of language has reached, in the short space of thirty or forty years, a high state of development, and the harvest which it will yield after all its fields shall have been brought into a state of cultivation, will be immense.

From this general view of language let us descend to the more refreshing consideration of its details.

Little more than what appears at first sight can be said of language, regarded as the mere vehicle of the thoughts and the expression of the *individual human mind*. Still, even in this respect, we detect in it much that is interesting and worthy of notice. For, while the accuracy and pithiness with which it expresses our every thought and gives its minutest shades must excite the admiration of the learned, the facility with which it chimes in with all our states, weeps with us when we are sad, laughs when we are gay; and the ambiguity of its terms, which furnishes an endless source of sport and merriment in the form of charades and puns, make it a most delightful companion for men in general. Still as regards puns they are an abuse of language at best, and are with a better grace pardoned in others than perpetrated by ourselves. Nor is the virtue of language as a safety-valve, at all to be underrated, by which men when they are heated and angry are able to let off some of their superfluous steam. — Indeed, the complete adaptation of language to the use for which it has been created, namely, that of expressing alike the feelings and the thoughts of men is truly astonishing. This is illustrated also by the immense quantity of books written on all subjects which could possibly occupy the attention of man, and by the fact that every man, no matter how high his sentiments and abstruse his thoughts, or how low his desires and corporeal his ideas, ever finds a sufficient stock of words with which to clothe them, so as to make them intelligible to his fellow-men. In regard to the perfect harmony of its parts, their remarkable fitness, and the facility

with which they can be brought into any connection whatever, as well as in regard to the absolute sway which man exercises over it at all times, language is second only to the wonderful organism of the human body itself, and its complete adaptation to all the uses of the soul.

Another pleasing feature in language is its riches. It is not compelled to usher a thought into the world naked, or but scantily clad; it can build gorgeous mansions for its reception, and dress it in the most sumptuous garb. At the touch of the poet it even yields music; for its organism is subject to the same laws of rhythm as the atmosphere by which we are surrounded; both thus giving evidence of their heaven-born nature. However, it is with the economy of words as with that of all other possessions. Some of those who are rich in words but poor in thoughts, like those that are rich in money but poor in sense, often build large houses and make many pretensions and great show, but they make much ado about nothing. Others, again, are rich in some kind of thoughts, but of a different order, which they offer in the form of the lighter novels and romantic tales. Generally they even do it in a handsome and very captivating style, appealing to the feelings of men rather than to their understandings; they lavish their words, and calculate everything for effect; these are they in society, who have a certain "*savoir vivre*," are rich, fond of society, keep a large, open house, and are for this reason loved and respected by almost everybody. Separated from these, in the literary as well as in the social world, are those men of sterner mould, who first look to the substance, and then consider the form. Like a good and faithful steward, a man of their stamp ascertains that he is right, and that the thoughts he wishes to express by words are true, and adapted to promote the happiness of his fellow-men, or to advance the cause of science. When his mind is satisfied on that score he goes resolutely to work, and embodies his thoughts in words. As the occasion requires he presents it in bold, laconic terms, or else produces it in a milder form, and enlivens it by the genial warmth

of genuine humor, or else dresses it in magnificent colors, and decks it with all the charms of consummate art, or finally he presents it in an abrupt and threatening aspect, should his object be to destroy a deeply-rooted, detestable falsehood, which he explodes by cutting sarcasms, and annihilates by a stern exposure to the refulgent and searching rays of truth. Inasmuch as he is master of his thoughts, which he reduces into a clear and definite shape, he is also master of his language. For every word in a man's memory has an innate tendency to clothe a thought, just as the human body has a tendency to clothe the soul; and from the very first, when the rudiments of a thought are laid in the mind, the words from the memory begin to flock around it, and become more ardent in their desire to clothe and cover it the more clearly it is brought out and the more definitely it is shaped. Indeed, the thoughts are the plastic force in language, and the more a man possesses of this force, or in other words, the more his faculty of thinking is developed and concentrated, the more easily will he wield language, and out of a few simple words chisel a most lovely image of his thoughts.

In order to write well you must think well. First get your ideas, then write. All your dictionaries, models, and rhetorics will prove unavailing unless you know how to think. We must have food, in order to turn our skill in dressing and preparing it to some account. It is very well that in youth we should be made acquainted with the graces of a good style, but unless we learn how to think at the same time, all our accomplishments will be to no purpose. As in the conclusions of modern science are contained all the results at which the learned have successively arrived through the course of thousands of years, so also in every thought of man are contained the ideas which he had previously stored up in his memory; and thus his thought will be free, true, and independent in the degree in which these ideas are well digested and well arranged in his mind; and his power of illustrating and communicating them to others will be com-

mensurate with the extent and depth of his knowledge. In order to write well we must therefore know a great deal, and what we know must be well arranged and digested in our minds. Besides, we must not forget the effect which is exercised upon our thoughts by the state of our feelings ; for what we love, that we think. It is our love which invades and rouses up our memory, and thence produces thoughts ; and it is from a soul well animated by noble impulses that burst forth those spontaneous flashes of eloquence which kindle the masses and make every word a flaming sword and resistless power.

In comparing the language of different individuals, we find next that the same words can be made either very strong or very weak. Thus, when a man like Laplace or Humboldt uses the word "universe," it has quite another meaning than when it is used by a narrow-minded individual whose ideas never extended beyond his own immediate, contracted circle. The word "God" also, has one meaning, when spoken by a sincere believer in the Divine Being, and quite a different one when it is employed by a man who has destroyed the idea of God in his mind by blasphemous scepticism and irrational philosophy. The word "wife" also has quite a different meaning when issuing from the lips of a happy husband and when pronounced by those of the solitary bachelor ; and the word "home" comes with a great deal more expression from the former than from the latter. The words "ethnology," "entomology," "etymology," have an indifferent and even disagreeable sound to such as know nothing about these sciences, while they touch quickly a responsive chord in the minds of those with whom they are favorite studies. The reason of this is evident. The words we use in speaking and writing are the representatives of our knowledge, and according as our knowledge of a thing is correct, clear, and full, we are enabled to handle the word by which it is expressed with ease and facility, and to apply it in its proper place. In speaking, also, we pronounce it with the proper emphasis and animation ; for the feeling of freedom

which we experience, when we have fully mastered a subject, gives us security, and allows us to articulate distinctly and without hesitancy. But when a word is comparatively empty in our minds and void of meaning we bungle in the use of it, and are very apt to become "*malaprops.*" Words filled with knowledge are our own property, for we have honestly acquired them; but mere empty words are borrowed. So long as man in speaking or writing confines himself to the use of such expressions as are really his property, his style will be clear and transparent; but when he deals in words which by right do not belong to him, because he has not acquired their meaning, he becomes unintelligible, and generally makes himself ridiculous. Indeed, this incongruity is as striking as that of a simpleton's wearing the badge of a judge, or of a servant's dressing in the clothes of her mistress. This counterfeit use of words is therefore very readily recognized, because in this instance they do not fit the thoughts which they are used to express. It is, however, quite different where the language is created into a complete likeness of the thoughts it expresses, as is the case in the word of God, where the ruling thought can be pursued into the very words which compose its expression, and new treasures are gathered the further we descend. Such essays and compositions also as are made up with the help of dictionaries and collections of synonyms, are widely different from those which are the spontaneous products of our minds; for their whole frame is frigid and stiff, and they bear evident traces of the painful exertions and convulsive efforts which their writers have made with a view of reaching the height of their subject. Indeed, the peculiar grace and fitness of words, as well as the so-called happy expressions with which we meet in the writings of our first authors, are never drawn from dictionaries and grammars; as little as the sublime paintings of Raphael were drawn from treatises on painting, in which the beautiful, the doctrine of perspective and of shades, and the mixing of colors were discussed.

Such are the phenomena noticed in language when it is regarded as the mere tool for the expression of the individual human thought. But as every man has his own peculiar thoughts by which the contents or the substance of his speech differs from that of all other men, so also has he a peculiar accent in pronunciation, and a peculiar style in writing, by which he is as easily recognized by the adept as by his hand-writing. It is for this reason that Buffon said: "Le style, c'est l'homme" — the style is the man himself. However, this style of man, as well as his peculiar hand-writing, do not make their appearance until he has fully become a man, and is his own master, both in thinking and writing.

From this consideration of language as it is animated by the affections and thoughts of the individual, let us turn to the interior structure of its organism, in which it reflects the character of the *human mind in general and the national mind in particular*. We have henceforth less to do with the contents of language than with its outward form or shell.

Here the philosophy proper of language takes its rise, and lays open to our astonished eyes its hidden treasures. If, from its sublime seat, we take a collective view of all the parts of language as they are spread out before our gaze, we see that everything in existence, from the Creator to the least particle of creation, every feeling in man, and all his actions, every motive power in nature, together with all the relations exhibited in the universe, and the qualities of the single objects of which it is composed, are parts of language, couched in the form of words; and the thought suddenly flashes upon our mind that language, as the most exact counterpart of the world within us and the world around us, is a universe in itself. It is, as it were, man's own version of the universe, and serves as a connecting link between himself and the universe. While he is busy in the universe, his thoughts really yearn for the words of language which are contained in his memory, in order that they may come into a state of greater fulness, and be brought into a more definite shape. Indeed, unless man thinks very deeply about ends and the

causes of things, it is utterly impossible for him to keep the words of the universe out of his thoughts.

And now, from the considerations that have been advanced, we may be justified in asserting more boldly, that language, because it is the most universal of the sciences, is also worthy to take the lead among them. Indeed, this conviction grows stronger as we behold the immense influence it exerts upon the other sciences. To all others it is the means of access, inasmuch as they cannot even take hold of their materials without calling them by such names as language gives them; and still less can they treat of them without drawing largely upon all the stores of language. Nay, it is more; it is in the place of a mother to all the sciences; into her lap they pour all their riches, and to her safe-keeping they entrust all their inventions and discoveries. For the name of a thing is not merely an instrument by which to handle it in speech, but it serves also as an enclosing tunic which fixes the knowledge of it permanently in our sight, and prevents its escape. Thus, unless language had existed, the wisdom of former ages would have been completely lost to us. Without it men could never expect to have their names immortalized, and the past would appear to us as a large, incomprehensible mass of darkness. Wherefore, language cannot be styled merely the guardian of science, and its indispensable helpmeet, but also the bond by which the present and the past are knit together, and the past made the supporter and fructifier of the present, and the treasurer of the present for the use of the future.

On the other hand, an entire new world begins to dawn before us when we come to consider the individual words; for, though they appear extremely simple on first sight, we still find upon clear inspection that a whole mine of metaphysics is contained in each of them. In order to work this mine, and expose its hidden treasures, we have to descend to the root of the word, where it was first conceived, and thence follow its growth among the series of languages through which it extends its branches. Then we shall see

that the surface of language like that of nature, is covered with a multitude of plants, which are larger or smaller, according as their original roots possess more or less of vitality. We shall find also, that during its vegetation each root develops a tendency to leave the realm of low, earthly significations, and, like the butterfly, to flit into the higher regions of mental and spiritual significations. And lastly, we shall see that some of the tribes of words, like some evergreen plants, preserve their leaves and branches entire through the whole of their onward growth, while others, every time they are transplanted from one language into another, are stripped of some of their limbs, and have their places supplied by graftings which have shot forth from a more significant or appropriate root. Indeed, in studying the anatomy and physiology of language, if we may be allowed to use these expressions, we see so many wonderful and profoundly wise developments, that if our eyes are but a little opened by the light of truth, we cannot help tracing in their creation the finger of our allwise Creator. Truly, in the formation of words, he first acts upon the intelligence of a man, and through him produces the word, whence man is very apt to look upon himself and his ancestors as the founders of language, while the whole of language is laid out with such transcendent skill, and there is so much vitality in its well-balanced and profusely supplied organism, which, in this respect, completely emulates nature, of which it is the counterpart, that we must regard it eminently as the work and gift of God.

There are two ways by which we may be brought to a knowledge of the creation of words. In the one we follow and expand the data which are furnished us in the divine record, and in the other, which is more circuitous, we gather together all the languages that are spoken on the globe, dissect them and compare their structure, as we do with the subjects in natural history, arrange them into species and families, and trace them up to their common origin, if we can.

In the holy scriptures we read that in the beginning God created man into his image, after his likeness. How sublime must have been the state of man as long as he was the image and likeness of God ! How quick must have been the penetration of his mind, and how large his capacity of learning ! His body, beautiful in the extreme, because he then lived according to the laws of order, must have been perfectly adapted to the uses of the soul. Nothing at all would impede it in its intercourse with the body, because of a necessity, not only a man's soul, but also his body were created into the image and likeness of God. How clearly the eyes and the expression of the mouth must have then told of everything that passed within the soul, and how instinctively must the thoughts have flowed into such language as expressed most clearly their sublime ideas. Happy men ! They were never at a loss for any word ; as the images and likenesses of God, they must not only have had an interior understanding and appreciation of nature, of which we cannot form any idea, but also an intuitive perception of the peculiar meaning of every vowel and consonant, and of the words that were compounded of them. Wherefore every man must have understood the language of his fellow-men, without being obliged first to learn it. As the children of God, and with their minds moving in a higher atmosphere, they were not obliged, as we are, to toil in the sweat of their brow, for each crumb of scientific knowledge. They were truly the lords of nature then, and knew the names of all the beasts of the field ; that is, they had an acute perception of their uses and qualities expressed by their names. Their minds being thus free, they could regard and contemplate the higher spiritual truths that were taught them by God, who, as we are informed, then spake with man. But man, thus created perfect, fell, and, instead of listening to the word of God, hearkened to the voice of his senses, which spake to him under the symbol of a serpent. In the degree in which the image and likeness of God was destroyed in the breasts of men, the acute perception which they had of

nature and of sounds in language died away ; and, although the highest wisdom was locked up in the words which they inherited from their ancestors, they became to them mere dead, inanimate forms, until finally primeval language itself passed away, and its place was taken by a coarser structure supplying the coarser wants of men. As a remnant of primeval language appear the Semitic languages of the present and past years, whose roots are not so readily penetrated by the modern scholars, as those of the Indo-European stock to which our own and the modern European languages belong.

The scientific investigation into the original meaning of the words of the latter class of languages has lately been very successfully carried on by the school of comparative philology. By following up the modern European languages to the Himalaya mountains in Central Asia, their birth-place, and by establishing the long chain of Indo-European languages, it has been proved that the roots of the nouns and adjectives, in these languages at least, are mostly verbs or activities. In fact, our nouns and adjectives seem nothing else but precipitated verbs. A great number of substantives may be traced to verbs belonging to our native tongue, but by far the greater part we have to trace to our ancestral languages, the Anglo-Saxon, Old Saxon, Gothic, Old Norse, and Indian or Sanscrit, which abound in original verbs, now extinct.

As an illustration of the generation of nouns and adjectives in the Indo-European languages, the following examples drawn from the results at which comparative philology has arrived, may not be uninteresting, as they prove the verbal source of many nouns which we least expect to be so derived. Among these examples there are some which show that different nations, according to their genius and manner of perception, chose different roots to express the same word. So with the people in the North of Europe, *God*, according to some, is goodness, virtue, purity, derived from the primitive verb

*çudh* to purify<sup>1</sup>; according to others he is the shaker or concussor, Sanscr. *dhāti*, from the root *dhu*, to shake<sup>2</sup>; while the people of the South take their word *Deus*, which is identical with *Zeus*, or *Jupiter*, *Deus-pater*, from the verb *div*, to shine or to glitter,<sup>3</sup> the original form of which is still preserved in the adjective *divine*, from Latin *divus*. The northern *moon* is that which measures (Sanscr. *mā*), and the southern *luna*, French *lune*, that which shines, from the verb *lucēre* to shine. The English *day*, Goth. *days*, dates back to Sanscrit *dah*, to burn,<sup>4</sup> while the Latin *dies* is derived from Sanscr. *div*, to shine.<sup>5</sup> Other words again are drawn by the northern and southern languages from the same fountains. So Lat. *stella*, Engl. *star*, and Greek *ἀστρον* are derived from Sanscr. *as*, to throw;<sup>6</sup> Lat. *dens* and Engl. *tooth* from *δά-ω*, *δα-λω*, to divide;<sup>7</sup> Lat. *ventus* and Engl. *wind* from Sanscr. *vā*, to breathe, Germ. *wehen*<sup>8</sup>; Lat. *pes*, and Engl. *foot*, from Sanscr. *pad*, to go<sup>9</sup>; Lat. *labium*, Engl. *lip*, from Lat. *la[m]bere* and Engl. *lap*, to sip.<sup>10</sup> Without entering for the present into any detailed comparison of the northern and southern tongues of Europe, we will simply point out the roots

<sup>1</sup> See "F. W. Eichhoff, Vergleichung der Sprachen von Europa und Indien, aus dem Französischen von J. H. Kaltschmidt," p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> See Schleicher in Kuhn's "Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung," Vol. i. p. 158. In the same Magazine, Vol. vii. pp. 12-18, Leo Meyer endeavors to derive *God*, Germ. *Gott* from the Sanscrit *jut* to sparkle, which is a later form of *dyut*. This word itself dates back to the simple verb *dyu*, which is identical with *div* to shine; so that, according to Leo Meyer, *God* and *Deus* are derived from the same root.

<sup>3</sup> *Div* (*dju*) to shine, to sparkle; (also heaven) *djtu-s* heaven, the god of heaven, *divja-s* heavenly, *dēva-s* God. See G. Curtius, "Grundzüge der griechischen Etymologie," Vol. i. p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> See Ahrens in "Zeitschrift, etc.," Vol. iii. p. 166.

<sup>5</sup> See Curtius in l. c.

<sup>6</sup> See Benfey "Wurzellexicon, pp. 661-662, and Kuhn in "Zeitschrift, etc.," Vol. i. p. 540.

<sup>7</sup> See Hugo Weber in "Zeitschrift," Vol. x. p. 244, where he opposes Curtius's derivation of this word from *ἄ-ω*, Sanscr. *ad-mi*.

<sup>8</sup> See Curtius, "Grundzüge, etc.," Vol. i. p. 354.

<sup>9</sup> See Curtius, Vol. i. p. 209.

<sup>10</sup> See Lottner in "Zeitschrift," Vol. vii. pp. 184-185.

of some of the most common words in the English language. Of nouns and adjectives which find their radical verbs in the English language, we may mention the *fly* from to fly, the *duck* from to duck, the *crow* from to crow, the *crab* from to creep, the *snake* from to sneak, the *sled* from to slide. Of adjectives may be noted *low* from to lie, *full* from to fill, *fat* from to feed, *great* from to grow, *bitter* from to bite. Of other words, the roots of which occur principally in the Sanscrit language, the following may be mentioned:<sup>1</sup> *fire* from to burn (Sanscr. *prush*, *plush*, No. 385); *stream* from to flow (Sanscr. *aru*, *arav-â-mi*, I flow, *arô-t-as*, stream, etc., No. 517); *yeast* from to ferment (Old High Germ. *jês-an*, *ger-j-an*, Mod. High Germ. *gâhren*, *Gâscht*, No. 567); *timber* from to build (Greek  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}\mu\omega$ , I build, No. 265); *hut* from to hide (Sanscr. *gudh*, to dress, Greek  $\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\iota}\theta\omega$ , to hide, No. 321); *flail* from to beat (Greek  $\pi\lambda\acute{\eta}\sigma\sigma\omega$ , Lithuan. *plak-u*, to beat, Old High Germ. *fleg-û*, No. 367); *dust* from to agitate (Sanscr. *dhû*, *dhû-no-mi*, commoveo, agito, *dhû-li-s*, pulvis, Greek  $\theta\acute{\iota}\omega$ , to rage, to roar, No. 320). *Son* means one born (Sanscr. *su*, *sav-â-mi*, *sâu-mi*, gigno, pario, *sû-nu-s*, filius, No. 605); *goose*, to gape (Greek  $\chi\alpha\acute{\iota}\omega$ , I gape,  $\chi\acute{\eta}\nu$ , goose, No. 190); *mouse*, to steal (Sanscr. *mush*, *mush-nâ-mi*, I steal, *mûsh-a-s*, mouse, No. 482); *sow*, to generate (Sanscr. *su*, *sâu-mi*, gigno, pario, Nos. 579, 605); *wolf*, to tear, according to Schweizer (Zeitschrift, etc., Vol. vi. p. 444); this word is derived from Sanscr. *vragé*, to tear, *vrka-s*, wolf; *lynx*, to see (Sanscr. *lôk*, *lôk-â-mi*, video, Lettish *lûkô-t*, to see, Nos. 548, 87); *arm*, to fit (Sanscr. *ar*, to contrive, to reach, *ara-m*, fitting, quick, *érma-s*, arm, Greek  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\kappa\omega$ , to fit on,  $\acute{\alpha}\rho\text{-}\mu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ , link, shoulder, etc., No. 488); *finger*, to seize (Germ. *fangen*, to catch); *word*, to say (Goth. *vaur-d*, Lat. *ver-bu-m*, Sanscr. *brû*, *brav-i-mi*, I speak,

<sup>1</sup> These words are mostly drawn from G. Curtius, "Grundzüge der Griechischen Etymologie, Vol. i., 1858," which contains a most careful digest of all Greek etymologies which have thus far been reliably established by the school of comparative philology. The numbers in brackets have reference to those used by Curtius. [Since writing the above a new and improved edition of this valuable work has been published.]

Greek *ἔρ*, *Fer*, *ἔρέω*, *ἔρω*, I say, No. 493); *lust*, to desire (Sanscr. *lash*, *lash-ā-mi*, I desire, Lat. *las-c-ēvu-s*, No. 532); *feather*, to fly (Old High Germ. *fedara*, *fedah*, wing, Lat. *pet-o*, *im-pet-u-s*, *pen-na*, Old Lat. *pes-na*, Sanscr. *pat*, *pat-ā-mi*, I fly, *pat-a-tra-m*, *patra-m*, wing, Greek *πετ*, *πέτ-ο-μαι*, I fly, *πτε-ρό-ν*, wing, *πτ-ίλο-ν*, feather, No. 214); *wool*, to cover (Sanscr. *var*, to cover, *urā*, sheep, *ūr-na*, wool, Greek *ἔρ-ιο-ν*, wool, Lat. *vell-us*, *vill-u-s*, No. 496). Among adjectives *thick* means to thrive, to accumulate (Goth. *dihan*, Germ. *gedeihen*; see Grimm's Wörterbuch); *thin*, to stretch (Germ. *dehnen*, to stretch (Sanscr. *tan*, *tan-ā-mi*, extendo, *tanu-s*, thin, Lat. *ten-d-o*, *tenu-is*, Greek *τά-ν-μαι* *τείν-ω*, No. 230); *few*, to cease (Goth. *faw-ai*, few, Lat. *pau-l-us*, *pau-cu-s*, Greek *παύ-ω*, No. 351); *much*, to increase (Old Norse, *mīðk*, very, Goth., *mīk-ils*, great, Lat. *mag-nus*, Greek *μέγας* Sanscr. *mah*, *mah-ā-mi*, augeo, *mah*, *mah-ā-mi*, cresco, No. 473.)

From these few examples, which allow us some insight into the interiors of words, the reader may imagine what great help language affords us in investigating the peculiar cast of mind which characterizes a nation. For language, indeed, is man's version of the universe; but as every nation has a language of its own, so there are as many versions of the universe as there are nations. By comparing the roots which each of these nations employs in naming the objects and agencies in nature, we may see whether they take a more superficial or deeper view of their subject, and may thus form some idea of the peculiar method of observation which characterizes each nation. But, as in judging an individual by his language, we not merely take into consideration the substance of his speech or writings, but also the form in which he expresses himself, the method which he pursues, and the degree of lucidity or obscureness which prevails in his writings and speech; so also in fixing the philosophical standard of a nation we must likewise take into consideration their grammar, or the form into which their language is cast, both as regards the etymological means or grammatical forms which they employ, and the syntactical order in which they

arrange their sentences. The etymological part of grammar, or that which treats of declensions and inflections, in the light which has been shed upon it by comparative grammar, is the severest test by which the affinities between languages, and consequently between nations, is now determined. Languages which differ in their grammatical structure cannot lay much claim to a mutual affinity; and whenever the grammatical structure of languages differs we may be sure that their lexicographical portion also differs. There may be assonances in some words, but no affinity; and deriving words of a language from another with which it has no grammatical affinity is now considered as simply absurd.

It would lead us too far to attempt now to give a sketch of the genesis of the grammatical forms of our languages; we will only say, that the endings of the Latin and Greek verbs, and the remnants of endings in the modern languages are pronouns, together with the substantive verb *to be*; in Latin and Greek also there has been used a suffix, which means *endowed with*, (*va, vat, vant*) as has been shown in an earlier number of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, in a review of Bopp's comparative Grammar; and in some of the modern languages *to have* has been added, and in the Germanic tongues *to do*. The endings of Latin and Greek nouns are articles, which originally were suffixed, as in the Latin, but afterwards when the fact of their being articles was lost sight of, were also prefixed, as in Greek; the article itself, however, is first obtained from the demonstrative pronoun. But abandoning the ground of grammar, we now wish to direct attention to the relations which the individual holds to the general language of his people.

As the thoughts which man utters in language are the expression of his own individual mind, so language itself is the grand expression of the national mind. It is like an atmosphere breathing out of a nation, for the purpose of expressing the thoughts and ideas generated in its bosom. As it is essential that it should be of a nature to accommodate all the minds of a nation, it was cast by the Creator in a

form to fit the whole nation. Its texture is such that, while it is a faithful reflection of the national mind, it is general enough to allow each member to shape it into his own image and likeness. Neither is it a stereotype expression of the national mind as it was, or as it should be, but it is elastic and free, like all the works of God, and always takes its form from the nation as it is in the present. It is uncouth and rough with the barbarian, and polished and refined with the cultivated.

Inasmuch as language is the common expression of a nation, it cannot be arbitrarily changed by individuals. They might as well set themselves up to remodel and change the ruling customs and habits of a nation, who think that they can change and trim up a language as they would an old garment. It is nevertheless true that language is constantly changing — that it receives new words and throws out old ones, or else varies their meaning. And how could it possibly be otherwise? for the people whose idea of the universe it represents are themselves continually advancing in wisdom and intelligence, and having new forces set free by new inventions and by the influence of the spirit of the times. But how are these changes in language produced? Is it by the lexicographers, and their critical examination of the faults and beauties of each word decorating its vast organism — by their plucking out such as have become vulgar or obsolete, or according to their opinion disgrace the appearance of language? Is it by inserting in their places other words, borrowed from foreign languages, and studding them up as Johnson did his English dictionary? Or is it by the grammarians making the model form of language, into which, according to their opinion, every language ought to be forced, in order to approach nearer to perfection? No, it is not by such means that language is advanced and ennobled. No word can be called a part of language unless it is first digested in the common stomach of the nation, saturated there with its national spirit, and produced by one of the master minds best representing its genius. It is by such master

minds who enter fully into the spirit of the language, fill every word of it in their minds with its respective meaning, and in writing books for the people, pour their whole soul into them, that language is rendered flexible, its individual parts expanded, and its whole standard raised. As for grammarians attempting at any time to improve the grammatical structure of a language, by altering the position of the words in the sentence, or introducing a change in the inflection of the nouns and verbs, it is absolute high-treason against language, and nothing short of it. The grammatical rules of a language are the current in which the national thoughts flow, and to endeavor to disturb this, would be to bring disorder into the whole structure.

It is customary to look upon lexicographers as those to whom the advance and development of a language is mostly due; but this is a mistaken idea. Lexicographers, as we have already seen, are not producers, but convenient, and sometimes inconvenient, treasurers of language. Others coin the gold, but they preserve it, and by them foreign words are changed into such as are current in their own language. Such is their legitimate profession.

It will no doubt be said that Webster did much towards placing the English language on a firm footing, by purging it from abuses and settling and defining its words. So he did; but we nevertheless persist in saying that he did not enrich the English language. He may have introduced and collected a thousand words that were scarcely seen in the language before; but unless they have first passed through the minds of the people, and come into currency among its writers, they are not a part of language, because not yet adopted by the people. As to his improvements in spelling, they were adopted so far as the people were ready to receive them, and he acted in this particular as their representative, through whom the improvements were introduced; as to the rest they fell to the ground, because they were not the expression of the people.

In regard to the external form of language by which it is

impressed upon our senses, we distinguish in it two principles: its pronunciation and its orthography. These principles in some languages agree, as in the Hebrew, German, and Greek, and in others they disagree, as in the French and English. The question now arises, when they disagree is it right for us to force them into an agreement, by making orthography take the form of pronunciation? This must be answered decidedly in the negative. The same power which gave origin to the spoken word also provided for its written form. These two agree and fit each other admirably. The written form of a word contains its whole history; by it we can trace it back through the most tortuous windings into connate languages, and obtain a clue to its original meaning. If this external continent of language, upon which a nation has stamped its own likeness, and upon which its whole building rests and supports itself, is destroyed, how can the philologist after that, by removing skilfully its outer covering, penetrate to the inner kernel, to which a word owes its signification; and how can he upon this basis any further expand and develop the meaning of a word, if he is deprived of the means whereby to measure the ground that can be legitimately covered by a certain word? Is not this preparing death to a language? Or what would you think of a man who, in order to make your countenance appear more like other countenances which he considers normal, so covers it up and distorts its expression as to disguise you completely? Phonography, therefore, considered in the light in which it kills the language under its care, can never be expected to be adopted, either with regard to the English or any other language.

Nations do not form detached parts of mankind, as little as the countries they inhabit form detached parts of the globe. Nations are members of races, as countries are parts of continents, and races constitute one mankind, as the continents form one continuous earth, although they are separated on their surface by the oceans. The number of races, however, is not determined by the number of continents, for

we find the members of races, at the present day, scattered indiscriminately over the whole surface of the globe.

In order to throw light upon the question concerning the human races, we have to take into consideration all those points which we regard when we wish to have a correct idea about an individual man. As we do not form our conclusions concerning him merely by examining his skull, his complexion, and the cast of his features, but take also into consideration his religion, language, deeds, his dress and whole mode of living, so also in drawing conclusions concerning the genius of the different human races, and their connection with one another, we have not only to take into account the formation of their skull and the shades of their skin, but also the state of their religion at all times, their deeds which are recorded in history, and the men they have produced in science, literature, philosophy, art, and politics, their language in which their mode of thinking is delineated, and their dress and whole mode of living. Although each of these points, when scientifically treated, sheds light on this question, still the conclusions drawn from language seem most important, for the very reason that we are more apt to arrive at a just conclusion concerning the character and mode of thinking of an individual man, by analyzing his thoughts as they are expressed by his language, than by simply inspecting his skull, features, dress, and mode of living. The record of deeds, it is true, speaks even louder than language; but then it must be observed that history does by no means reach down as far as the flood, and even the whole of antiquity, including that of the Greeks and Romans, is more or less shrouded in darkness.

To language, then, is left the task of reducing the various nations into races. Very much has been done by comparative philology during the last thirty years in order to settle this question, but it has not yet arrived at any distinct results. In a late resumé of the labors of comparative philology, Prof. Steinthal reduces all languages spoken on this globe into nine groups, of which five are found in Europe

and Asia, two in Africa, two in America, and one in Australia. By others, as by Professor Max Müller, and the late Chevalier Bunsen, they are reduced into three large races, the Arian, Semitic, and Turanian races, ~~and so on.~~

So much is ~~at all events~~ proved by comparative philology, that the languages composing the Indo-European group of languages are an organic whole, so that the nations which speak these, may be regarded as a distinct race.

In taking a survey of this race, and comparing its history with other races which are not yet so distinctly developed by science, we arrive at this conclusion concerning races in general: that each race is a particular type of man, and that it passes through stages analogous to those of the individual man; namely, the stages of childhood, youth, manhood, and decrepit old age. These stages are clearly represented by the languages spoken by the members of each race at different times.

The childhood of the language of a race is the time of its growth, when it acquires its words. All its energies are then turned in that direction. It has no time to devote to its grammatical constructions, and uses its words in mere juxtaposition, without inflecting them and without using any articles, prepositions, or any other grammatical conveniences. In the Indo-European chain of languages there is none that has remained in the state of childhood; but we can see this state illustrated by the Chinese language, which is composed of mere roots, with no grammatical forms whatever. In the time of its youth and early manhood, language expands the roots it acquired during its childhood, into stems and branches; it inflects its nouns and verbs, and makes them fit to take places in elaborate sentences; just as man, when he merges out of the state of youth into manhood, digests the materials he acquired during his youth, arranges them, and subjects them to the laws of thought. In this state of its grammatical development, language wears its most brilliant aspect; it unfolds like a rose, and enchants the eye by its rational beauty. The state of its youth and early manhood our race celebrated in

the Sanscrit, Greek, and Latin languages, which in the redundancy and richness of their grammatical forms, and the apparent ease and facility with which they can be worked up into gorgeous sentences, far surpass all modern languages.

Each of their sentences is a little world ; and it is not without some weighty reasons that such an important place has been allotted to the study of the Latin and Greek languages in our colleges and universities ; for it quickens the understanding of the student, and besides introducing him into antiquity, and making him feel perfectly at home there, by which the sphere of his mind is immensely extended, it gives him the habit of being constantly on the look out for the first thing in order, and of separating it from secondary matters, just as while studying his classics, he must be constantly on the look out for the nominative and verb, by which he obtains a clue to the understanding of his sentence.

As to the Indian or Sanscrit language, it first became known to the Europeans after the conquest of India by the English. Its discovery dates about the year 1780, when its treasures were brought to light by Warren Hastings, and after him by Sir William Jones, "the father and oracle of Indian erudition." He introduced it to the notice of the learned in the following words: "The Sanscrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs, and in the forms of grammar than could possibly have been produced by accident ; so strong, indeed, that no philosopher could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source which no longer exists." The Sanscrit, as the oldest language of the Indo-European race of which any traces are left to us, is the key-stone by which the Indo-European chain of languages is held together, and on account of the prominent place which it occupies for this reason in comparative philology, there is now almost in every large university of Europe a chair for the Sanscrit language and literature.

In its third state of development, or in that of full manhood, language abandons the elaborate forms of grammar by which it was decorated in the bloom of its youth, and is distinguished by a noble simplicity. Its nouns and verbs lose their power of being inflected, the cases of nouns are expressed by prepositions or modulations of the articles, and the tenses by auxiliary verbs. However, what it loses in the richness of its form, it gains by drawing nearer, as it were, to the thoughts, and becoming more spiritual. In the second state of language it required almost as much skill and attention on the part of the writer or orator to express a thought elegantly by words, as it took him to procure the thought itself; but now it is different, the grammar being simplified, and only so many of its forms retained as are absolutely necessary for a fit expression of all thoughts, the mind is at liberty to indulge with its full powers in the realm of thoughts, without troubling itself at all with the grammatical arrangement of the words in language.

The languages of the second age are all doomed to pass away. The Arian language, which is a term given in common to all languages belonging to the Indo-European stock, in its onward struggle towards manhood, has left behind the Latin, Greek, and Sanscrit as memorials of its beautiful youth, and by sublimating these old languages, or introducing new original forms, it has produced the modern European languages as the expression of its manhood.

Among these the English language is the most highly sublimated and purified of all unnecessary forms. In it, as in a rarified atmosphere, the thoughts can soar up to a higher altitude than in any other language, and upon descending flow into a clear and closely fitting garb. The English, on account of its brevity and precision, is eminently the language of common sense; and as in its organism the German and French are blended together, and it thus contains both the depth of the one and the facility and ease of the other, it cannot but follow that in its construction it must be superior to all other European languages, of which the German and French serve as types.

The German language is the primitive Anglo-Saxon, developed without any foreign admixture. It is eminently a philosophical language. Its words are not closed up and narrowly defined, but they are free and open, and can be expanded in a thousand directions. It is the only language, including the Dutch and Scandinavian tongues, in which the intercourse between the roots, the stem, and the branches is kept open, and for this reason it can create for every idea a most fitting word from its own bosom, without drawing upon any other language. On this account, too, it is chiefly adapted to accompany the philosopher in his researches, where for every new discovery he makes, he can immediately coin a suitable word, which everybody may understand, and which will take up and contain his ideas and prevent their evaporation, while in other languages he is frequently at a loss how to name his child after it is born, and is obliged to ransack the Greek and Latin languages for technical terms.

The French is the modern representative of the Latin, animated by a lively Germanic tribe, the Franks. They acted as the resuscitators of the Latin, and moulded it into that pleasing, flowing ripple, which we admire so much in the French language. This language is peculiarly adapted to the lively expression of the affections, which it derives from its German ingredient, and to the discussion of all matters of science, and particularly of the higher mathematics. This feature it draws from the Latin, which is renowned for the conciseness and precision of its terms, and the clear, exact style which we notice in all its writers.

The Spanish is an eminently formal and ceremonious language, in which the calmness of the Moor is combined with the excitability which we observe in all the scions of the old Roman people.

The Italian language is the pleasing, melodious warbling of a little rivulet, in which, however, no such immense waves can be raised as in the German.

With this short sketch of the most remarkable languages spoken on the globe, we close this dissertation. We have

said enough however, to show that there is a philosophy of language, not included in our idea of grammar, and that the subject opens out into rich and inexhaustible fields of vast extent, inviting to all truly philosophical minds, whether linguists, historians, or natural philosophers.

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## ARTICLE II.

### JEPHTHAH'S VOW.

BY SAMUEL WARREN, M.D., BOSTON.

A vow is a promise made to God, to do or to give something in the future, most commonly for success in an undertaking, or for deliverance from danger. The occasions of vows are given us in many places of scripture. They are always voluntary; no one being ever called upon to make a vow if he does not so incline. But having made one, the Bible is very strict to hold him to the performance of his vow, because God is always a party to a vow, and no inconsiderate conduct is to be allowed in dealing with God.

As it is of the first importance that our intercourse with God be regulated according to a prescribed manner, and as God foresaw that men might often find themselves inclined to make vows to do or to give something if God would encourage them that he would do something for them which they could not do for themselves, therefore he condescended to give directions concerning the making of vows, and regulations for the due and proper execution of them. We find several kinds of vows spoken of in the Bible, which are called by different names. The most ancient, as well as the most common, kind of vow was made when persons were in quest of success in an undertaking, as by Jacob when he went into Mesopotamia; or when earnestly seeking deliverance from danger, as by the ship's crew on board the vessel with the