

extraordinary phenomenon that occurs in the art of VENTRILOQUISM,\* that I mean of speaking without appearing to speak, or discovering any motion of the lips: the larynx alone, by long and dexterous practice, and, perhaps, by a peculiar modification in some of its muscles or cartilages, being capable of answering the purpose and supplying the place of the associate organs of the mouth.

It is this curious power in the art of ventriloquism that most astonishes us, and puts us off our guard; for the two other powers connected with it, of imitating various cries or voices, and of appearing to throw the voice from remote objects, are far more common and comprehensible. The power of vocal imitation where the tongue is allowed to be employed is possessed, by most persons, to a certain extent; and, by many, to a degree of accuracy, that would certainly deceive us in the dark; or if, by any other means, the performer were concealed from us. While the only point necessary to give the voice the semblance of issuing from a distant or unusual object, is to take a nice measure of the distance itself, and of the nature of the object from which it is to be presumed to issue, and so to modulate or inflect it as to produce the natural tone it may be supposed to possess, if thrown from such a distance or from such a form. It must be obvious, however, that the surprise resulting from the mystery of thus imitating voices and distances must be powerfully aided in ventriloquism by the additional mystery of the artist's motionless mouth; in consequence of which we are totally incapable of referring it to himself. In hearing, as in seeing, habit is our only guide: in both we only judge by accustomed comparisons; and we are exactly in the same manner deceived by the painter, and even allow ourselves to be deceived in regard to objects of vision, as we are by the ventriloquist, and without such allowance, in regard to objects of sound. In respect to both senses, indeed, we often deceive ourselves in judging of the most common phenomena: and hence it is not at all to be wondered at that we should be completely imposed upon by the nice delusions of art. Thus the evening sky, begirt with gold-green clouds at the extremity of the horizon, is often mistaken for the ocean, studded with islands; and the rumbling of a cart over pavement, or hard ground, is not unfrequently believed to be a thunder-clap in the heavens; and, under the influence of this last deception, we immediately transfer all the awfulness and magnificence of the celestial meteor to this clumsy piece of machinery, and are as alarmed as if the fiery bolt were about to descend upon us.

### LECTURE IX.

#### ON NATURAL OR INARTICULATE, AND ARTIFICIAL OR ARTICULATE LANGUAGE.

HAVING, in our last lecture, examined into the seat and properties of the natural voice, let us now proceed to notice the mode in which it is applied to the formation, first, of natural language, and next, of speech, or artificial language.

Natural language is the instinctive appropriation of certain tones of the natural voice, to indicate certain feelings of the sensory: and with the few exceptions pointed out in our preceding lecture, every animal belonging to the three classes of mammals, birds, and amphibians, every animal possessed of lungs, is in some degree or other possessed of this kind of language. Its

\* According to M. Magendie, whose work first appeared in our own country seven years after the delivery of the above lecture, in 1811, the larynx is supposed to be the organ chiefly or altogether operated upon in France; and ventriloquism to consist in adjusting the measure of its articulations according to the effects which the ventriloquist has observed that distance, or other circumstances, produce upon the natural voice. See Edin. Med. and Surg. Journ. lxi. 577.

scope is, indeed, often very limited; but always sufficient to answer the purposes of nature. The female of every species understands the call of the male, and replies to it as intelligibly: the young understand the mandates of the mother, and the mother the petitions of the young. This amusing department of natural history was well known to the philosophers of Greece and Rome, and attentively cultivated by them: and Lucretius, in his Nature of Things, has pursued the subject not only so correctly but so copiously, that it is almost impossible, even in the present day, to add any thing of real importance to what he has already observed.

I have termed this language of nature instinctive: and that it is entitled to this character is clear; because, even among birds, which possess the widest and most complicated range of natural language of all animals whatever, where two individuals of different species are bred up in the same bush, or in the same cage, or hatched and fostered by a female of a third species, each evinces and retains the note that specifically distinguishes the species to which it belongs. In the case of a goldfinch and a chaffinch this has been put directly to the proof. And it is by this native tongue, as Mr. Montague has justly observed, and not by the form or colour, that the process of pairing is achieved, and the female induced to select her paramour.\*

Almost every animal of the three classes just adverted to exhibits a different tone of voice according to the governing passion of the moment; but more especially when under the influence of *grief*, *fear*, or *joy*; to which, in some instances, we may add *anger*; but a distinct tone for anger is not so generally traced among animals as it is for the three preceding passions.

Among quadrupeds, the elephant, horse, and dog appear to possess the greatest portion of a natural tongue. They are all gregarious, particularly the two former. In Asia, the wild elephant, and in the Ukraine, between the Don and the Dnieper, the wild horse, pursue one common plan of political society, in numerous and collected troops; and are regulated by the elders of the tribe among the elephants, and by leaders chosen for this purpose among the horses: and it is by a difference of voice, combined with a difference of gesture, that these superiors give orders, in the course of their travels from place to place, in pursuit of pasture, for the necessary dispositions and arrangements. Both kinds are extremely vigilant and active, and maintain their ranks and brigades with as much regularity and precision as if they were conducted by a human leader. Among the wild horses of the Ukraine, the captain-general seems to be commonly appointed to his station for about four or five years; at the expiration of which time a kind of new election takes place: every one appears to have a right to propose himself for the office, the ex-magistrate not excepted: if no new candidate offer, the latter is re-elected for the same term of time, and if he be opposed a combat succeeds, and the victor is appointed commander-in-chief.

The conduct pursued by the peaceful and amiable elephant varies in some degree from this of the wild horse; for, in the travels of these animals from place to place, the troops are led on by the eldest of the tribe, thus evincing a kind of patriarchal government: the young and feeble marching in the middle, and the rear being composed of the vigorous and adult.†

The natural language of the monkey kind, notwithstanding the general resemblance of their structure to that of the human race, appears to be more confined than that of most quadrupeds; and it is well known that they never attempt to articulate sounds. Linnæus, indeed, seems to have entertained a contrary opinion with respect to the ourang-outang, and asserts that he speaks with a kind of hissing noise. Buffon, however, and Daubenton, and almost every other naturalist who has attentively watched his habits, deny that he ever employs even a hissing speech. And every comparative anatomist, who has accurately examined his vocal organs, has declared him to be physically incapable of articulation, from the peculiarity of a sac or bag, in some species of the animals single, in others double, immediately connected with the

\* Ornithological Diet. Introd. p. xxix.

† See note to the Author's Translation of Lucretius, vol. ii. p. 376.



upper part of the larynx, and into which the air is driven as it ascends from the lungs through the trachea, instead of being driven into the glottis, where alone it could acquire modulation and articulate sounds. From this sac or bag it afterward passes into the mouth by a variety of small apertures or fissures, by which almost the whole of its force, and consequently of its vocal effect, is lost. This peculiar conformation appears first to have been noticed by Galen, who traced it through several varieties both of the ape and monkey families; but for the most correct account of it we are indebted to Professor Camper, who, in a paper published in the Philosophical Transactions for 1779, minutely describes it as it exists in the sylvanus or pigmy, in which Tyson had overlooked it; in various other species of the ape; in the cynosurus or dog-tailed monkey; and in many others of the monkey tribe. At all adventures, the monkey has a peculiar deficiency of natural tongue; and we hence obtain an insuperable objection, had we no others, but which, I have already shown, are sufficiently abundant,\* to the declaration of Lord Monboddo and Linnæus, that this tribe are all of the same original stock as man; and their absurd story that man himself is not unfrequently to be met with in some of the Asiatic islands, with a monkey-tail, varying in length from three or four inches to a foot, possessing as great a fluency of speech as in any part of Europe.

Maregrave, in his history of Brazil, has amused us with an account of a very extraordinary species of American sapajou, which Linnæus has called Beelzebub,—Buffon, Ouarine, and our own countryman Mr. Pennant, Preacher-monkey,—that assemble in large groups every morning and evening, and attentively listen to a loud and long-continued harangue of one of the tribe, whom he seems to suppose a public officer or popular demagogue. Upon the authority of Maregrave, this species has been admitted into all our books of Natural History; but there are some doubts concerning it, and the description is at least without the support of concurrent testimony.

The different accents of the dog and the horse, when under the influence of rage, desire, or exultation, are too powerful and too common not to have been noticed by almost every one. It is impossible to describe the different tones of the mastiff more precisely than in the words of the truly philosophical poet I have so lately referred to; but as it would be improper to quote him in the original before a popular audience, I must request of you to receive a feeble translation of him in its stead:—

When half enraged  
The rude Molossian mastiff, her keen teeth  
Baring tremendous, with far different tone  
Threats, than when rous'd to madness more extreme,  
Or when she barks, and fills the world with roar.  
Thus, when her fearless whelps, too, she, with tongue  
Lambent, caresses, and, with antic paw,  
And tooth restrain'd pretending still to bite,  
Gambols, soft yelping tones of tender love—  
Far different then, those accents from the din  
Urg'd clamorous through the mansion when alone,  
Or the shrill howl her trembling bosom heaves,  
When, with slunk form, she waits th' impending blow.†

The language of the tiger, leopard, and cat is not so rich or diversified as that of the dog; but they have still a considerable variation in the scale of their mewings, according to the predominant passion of fear or grief: while

\* Series II. Lecture III. On the Varieties of the Human Race.

† *Inritata canum quom primum magna Molossium  
Mollia ricta fremunt, duos nudantia dentes,  
Longe alio sonitu rabies districta minatur,  
Et quom jam latrant, et vocibus omnia complent.  
At catulos blande quom linguâ lambere tentant,  
Aut ubi eos lactant pedibus, morsuque potentes,  
Subspensis teneros imitantur dentibus haustus,  
Longe alio pacto gannitu vocis adulant,  
Et quom desertet baubantur in adibus, aut quom  
Plorantes fugiunt, submisso corpore, plagat.*

De Rer. Nat. v. 1063.

these again differ from the accent of simple pleasure, which consists in purring, and very considerably indeed from the loud and dissonant voice of love.

The language of birds is, in almost every instance, strikingly musical, though not equally eloquent, whatever be the passion it describes. To its variety in the different tribes of the osprey, hawk, sea-gull, rook, and raven, and especially as auguring wet or dry, stormy or serene weather, almost every naturalist has borne testimony: for each can say, that

Cawing rooks and kites, that swim sublime  
In still repeated circles, screaming loud,  
The jay, the pie, and e'en the boding owl  
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me.  
Sounds inharmonious in themselves, and harsh,  
Yet heard in scenes where peace for ever reigns,  
And only there, please highly for their sake.\*

Upon the exquisitely varied tones and modulations of the singing birds we descanted at some length in a former lecture.† But the subject is as interesting as it is inexhaustible; and in the summer-season of praise, when the heart of man overflows, or should overflow, with gratitude to his beneficent Creator for the return of plenteousness that meets his eye in every direction, with what animation do they join in the general carol; awakening us at the dawn, accompanying us through the day, and softening and harmonizing, and I fear not to add, spiritualizing our feelings at nightfall.

The robin, and not the lark, as commonly supposed, takes the lead,‡ and seems longing for the day to unclose. His gentle voice is in sweet accordance with the feeble beams of the early twilight; and as soon as the glorious sun makes his appearance, then up mounts the lark, and pours forth his more vigorous song; a thousand warblers hear the call, and the chorus is full and complete. The leaders vary, but the carol continues. The nightingale yet protracts his nocturnal tones; and the thrush, the blackbird, and the goldfinch, from the lofty grove, the close thicket, or the blossomed orchard, intermingle their rival pretensions: while the transient but mellow burst of the cuckoo adds a richness to the general harmony; and even the croak of the raven, and the chattering of the daw, only break into the symphony, with an occasional discord that heightens the impressive effect. At length the sun is no more: the unbounded concert dies away; and the season of rest returns. It returns, but not with mute silence; for the night is soothed rather than disturbed by the solitary song of the robin, now resuming his modest strain, and yielding in succession to the peerless pipe of the nightingale, and the deep-toned but expressive hoot of the owl.

The note of the wren (*motacilla Troglodytes*) is as slender as its form, but it is well worth noticing, as being the only note of the feathered creation that is continued throughout the winter. During the season of frost and snow it is, indeed, heard to most advantage; for the fearless little songster then enters the court-yard, the stable, or the dairy, and seeks, in confidence, his food of insects or their larvae. It is this that constitutes the little beggar's petition; and where is the heart so hardened as to refuse the request he then offers?

With respect to singing birds, indeed, of all kinds, we may make this pleasing observation, that, as though chiefly intended, in the general munificence of the great Parent of the human race, to captivate mankind, they almost always reside in their vicinity, and are rarely to be found in the uninhabited parts of the earth.§

\* Task, book I.

† Series II. Lecture I., on Zoological Systems, and the Distinctive Characters of Animals.

‡ See Jenner, Phil. Trans. 1824, p. 37.

§ The following passage from Dr. Jenner's very admirable paper "On the Migration of Birds," has a passage so directly in accordance with these remarks, that I cannot avoid copying it from the Phil. Trans. for 1824:—

"We must observe, that nature never gives one property *only*, to the same individual substance. Through every gradation, from the clod we tread upon to the glorious sun which animates the whole terrestrial system, we may find a vast variety of purposes for which the same body was created. If we look on the simplest vegetable, or the reptile it supports, how various, yet how important in the economy of nature, are the offices they are intended to perform. The migrating bird, I have said, is directed to this



But the vocabulary of the common cock and hen is, perhaps, the most extensive of any tribe of birds with which we are acquainted; or rather, perhaps, we are better acquainted with the extent of its range than with that of any others. The cock has his watch-word for announcing the morning, his love-speech, and his terms of defiance. The voice of the hen, when she informs her paramour that she is disburdened of an egg, and which he instantly communicates from homestead to homestead, till the whole village is in an uproar, is far different from that which acquaints him that the brood is just hatched; and both again are equally different from the loud and rapid cries with which she undauntedly assails the felon fox that would rob her of her young. Even the little chick, when not more than four or five days old, exhibits a harsher and less melodious clacking when offered for food what it dislikes, than when it perceives what it relishes.\*

Before I quit this part of our subject it becomes me also to remark, that even in various other tribes of animals than the three classes to which our observations have hitherto applied, we occasionally meet with proofs of an inferior kind of natural language, though it cannot with propriety be called a language of the voice. And I may here observe, that among the few of these three classes which we have already noticed as being destitute of a vocal larynx, the bounty of nature has often provided a substitute. Thus the wapiti (*cervus Wapiti* of Barton), though without the sonorous endowment of the horse or ox, seems to have a compensation in an organ that consists of an oblique slit or opening under the inner angle of each eye, nearly an inch long externally, which appears also to be an auxiliary to the nostril; for with this he makes a noise that he can vary at pleasure, and which is not unlike the loud and piercing whistle that boys give by putting their fingers in their mouth.†

Among insects, however, we find a still more varied talent of uttering sounds, though possessed neither of lungs nor larynx, nor the nasal slit of the wapiti. The bee, the fly, the gnat, and the beetle afford familiar instances of this extraordinary faculty. The sphinx *Atropos*, a species of hawk-moth, squeaks, when hurt, nearly as loud as a mouse; it has even the power, in certain circumstances, of uttering a plaintive note, which cannot fail to excite deep commiseration. If a bee or wasp be attacked near its own hive, the animal expresses its pain or indignation in a tone so different from its usual hum, that the complaint is immediately understood by the hive within; when the inhabitants hurry out to revenge the insult in such numbers, that the offender is fortunate if he escape without a severe castigation.

The cunning spider often avails himself of the natural tone of distress uttered by the fly to make sure of him for his prey. He frequently spreads out his webs or toils to such an extent that he cannot see from one end of

island at a certain season of the year to produce and rear its young. This appears to be the grand intention which nature has in view; but in consequence of the observation just made, its presence here may answer many secondary purposes; among these I shall notice the following: The beneficent Author of nature seems to spare no pains in cheering the heart of man with every thing that is delightful in the summer season. We may be indulged with the company of these visitors, perhaps, to heighten, by the novelty of their appearance, and pleasing variety of their notes, the native scenes. How sweetly, at the return of spring, do the notes of the cuckoo first burst upon the ear; and what apathy must that soul possess, that does not feel a soft emotion at the song of the nightingale (surely it must be "fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils"), and how wisely is it contrived that a general stillness should prevail while this heavenly bird is pouring forth its plaintive and melodious strains,—strains that so sweetly accord with the evening hour! Some of our foreign visitors, it may be said, are inharmonious minstrels, and rather disturb than aid the general concert. In the midst of a soft warm summer's day, when the martin is gently floating on the air, not only pleasing us with the peculiar delicacy of its note, but with the elegance of its meandering; when the blackcap is vying with the goldfinch, and the linnet with the woodlark, a dozen swifts rush from some neighbouring battlement, and set up a most discordant screaming. Yet all is perfect. The interruption is of short duration, and without it the long-continued warbling of the softer singing birds would pall, and tire the listening ear with excess of melody, as the exhilarating beams of the sun, were they not at intervals intercepted by clouds, would rob the heart of the gaiety they for a while inspire, and sink it into languor. There is a perfect consistency in the order in which nature seems to have directed the singing birds to fill up the day with their pleasing harmony. To an observer of those divine laws which harmonize the general order of things, there appears a design in the arrangement of this sylvan minstrelsy. It is not in the haunted meadow, nor frequented field, we are to expect the gratification of indulging ourselves in this pleasing speculation to its full extent; we must seek for it in the park, the forest, or some sequestered dell, half enclosed by the coppice or the wood.‡

\* See White's Hist. of Selborne, vol. ii. p. 17.

† See Phil. Mag. No. 223, Nov. 1816, p. 392.

them to the other; and often conceals himself in some adjoining crevice where he cannot see the poor animal as it becomes ensnared: but he sits wistfully listening for the buzzing noise that assures him the fly is entangled, and is fluttering to make its escape. He hears the well-known signal, sallies forth from his concealment, and riots on the spoil that has fallen into his power, with all the eagerness and ferocity that distinguish the most rapacious quadrupeds.

Whether fishes possess any similar means of communicating their feelings we know not. Reasoning from the facts that a few of them occasionally utter tones of distress when first taken; and that they possess an organ of hearing, and live in a medium well adapted to the propagation of sound, it is generally conjectured that they have a language of some kind or other: but our knowledge of their usual habits, from their residing in a different element from our own, is so imperfect, that we have no positive data to build upon.

It is a curious fact, that many animals, which are naturally dumb in the widest sense of the word, are possessed of a power of producing sounds, by the use of some external organ or foreign instrument, that forms a very convenient substitute for a natural tongue. I have formerly had occasion to observe this of the goat-chaffer or *cerambyx*, which, whenever taken, utters a shrill shriek of fright, by rubbing its chest against its wing-shells, and the upper part of its abdomen; and of the *ptinus fœtidicus*, or death-watch, that produces its measured and, to the superstitious, alarming strokes, by striking its horny frontlet against the bed-post, or any other hard substance in which it takes its stand. The termes *Pulsatorium*, or tick-watch, is an insect of a different order, but armed with a similar apparatus, and makes a noise by the same means, like the ticking of a watch, from the old wood or decayed furniture in which it loves to reside, and by which it endeavours to entice the other sex to its company. And it is a singular circumstance, which I shall merely glance at in passing, that some species of the woodpecker, in the breeding season, in consequence of the feebleness of its natural voice, makes use of a similar kind of call, by strong reiterated strokes of the bill against a dead sonorous branch of a tree.

The most astonishing instance, however, of sound excited in this manner, is that made by two species of Italian grasshoppers: the cicada *Plebeja*, and *c. orni*. The music of these insects (which is confined to the male) is produced by a very singular apparatus, that consists of several winding cells under the abdomen, separated by different membranes, and opening externally by two narrow valves. In the centre of these cells is contained a scaly sonorous triangle, and exterior to them are two vigorous muscles, by the action of which the cells are supplied with air through one of the valves, and so powerfully reverberate it against the triangle as to produce the notes of which the grasshopper's song consists; and which is sometimes so loud that a single insect, hung in a cage, has almost drowned the voices of a large company. This song is also the madrigal of love.

But, highly tempting as it is, I must not pursue this part of our subject any farther. From the birds of the field to the grasshopper, from the bee to the fly, every attentive naturalist observes, in every tribe, a vast compass of accentuation, and comprehends the meaning of a great variety of their tones. But what is the little that we understand to what is understood by themselves, formed with similar organs, in a thousand instances more acute than our own, actuated by similar wants, and proposing to themselves similar pursuits!

What the natural language of man is we know not. There can be no doubt, however, that if, by a miracle, he were to be deprived of all artificial language, there would still remain to him, from the perfection of his vocal organs, a language of this kind, and of far greater extent and variety than that of any other animal.

But some schools of philosophers have not been satisfied with contemplating such an idea hypothetically; they have boldly imbodyed it into a fact, and have contended, and still continue to contend, that such a language has actually existed; and that it constituted the sole language of man on his first



formation: the only means he possessed of communicating and interchanging his ideas.

But whence, then, has artificial language arisen? That rich variety of tongues which distinguishes the different nations on the earth; and that wonderful facility which is common to many of them of characterizing every distinct idea by a distinct term?

And here such philosophers are divided: some contending that speech is a science that was determined upon and inculcated in an early period of the world, by one, or at least by a few superior persons acting in concert, and inducing the multitude around them to adopt their articulate and arbitrary sounds; while others affirm that it has grown progressively out of the natural language, as the increasing knowledge and increasing wants of mankind have demanded a more extensive vocabulary.\*

Pythagoras first started the former of these two hypotheses, and it was afterward adopted by Plato, and supported by all the rich treasure of his genius and learning; but it was ably opposed by the Epicureans, on the ground that it must have been equally impossible for any one person, or even for a synod of persons, to have invented the most difficult and abstruse of all human sciences, with the paucity of ideas, and the means of communicating ideas, which, under such circumstances, they must have possessed: and that, even allowing they could have invented such a science, it must still have been utterly impossible for them to have taught it to the barbarians around them. The argument is thus forcibly urged by Lucretius, whom I must again beg leave to present in an English dress:—

But, to maintain that one devis'd alone  
Terms for all nature, and th' incipient tongue  
Taught to the gazers round him, is to rave.  
For how should he this latent power possess  
Of naming all things, and inventing speech,  
If never mortal felt the same besides?  
And, if none else had e'er adopted sounds,  
Whence sprang the knowledge of their use? or how  
Could the first linguist to the crowds around  
Teach what he meant? his sole unaided arm  
Could ne'er o'erpower them, and compel to learn  
The vocal science; nor could aught avail  
Of eloquence or wisdom; nor with ease  
Would the vain babbler have been long allow'd  
To pour his noisy jargon o'er their ears.†

In opposition to this theory, therefore, Epicurus and his disciples contended, as I have just observed, that speech or articulate language is nothing more than a natural improvement upon the natural language of man, produced by its general use, and that general experience which gives improvement to every thing. And such still continues to be the popular theory of all those philosophers of the present day who confine themselves to the mere facts and phenomena of nature, and allow no other authority to control the chain of their argument. Such, more especially, is the theory of Buffon, Linnæus, and Lord Monboddo; who, overstepping the limits of the Epicurean field of rea-

\* See on this subject Harris's *Hermes*, book iii. p. 314. 327; and Beattie on the *Theory of Language*, p. 246, Lond. 1803, 4to.

† Proinde, putare aliquem tum nomina distribuisset  
Rebus, et inde homines didicisse vocabula prima,  
Desipere est: nam quur hic posset cuncta notare  
Vocibus, et varios sonitus emittere lingue,  
Tempore eodem alii facere id non quisse poterant?  
Præterea, si non alii quoque vocibus usi  
Inter se fuerant, unde insita notities est?  
Utilitas enim, unde data est huic prima potestas,  
Quid vellet facere, ut sciret, animoque videret?  
Cogere item plures unus, victosque domare,  
Non poterat, rerum ut perdiscere nomina vellet:  
Nec ratione docere ullâ, suaderique surdis,  
Quod sit opus factis; faciles neque enim patrentur:  
Nec ratione ullâ sibi ferrent amplius aureis  
Vocis inauditos sonitus obtundere frustra.

De Rer. Nat. v. 1040.

soning, and the articles of the Epicurean belief, concur, as I have already remarked, in deriving the race of man from the race of monkeys, and in exhibiting the orang-outang, as his dignified prototype and original, whom they have hence denominated the satyr, or man of the woods.

I shall not exhaust the time or insult the understanding of this auditory, by any detailed confutation of the new and adscititious matter contained in this modernized edition of the Epicurean theory; matter of which the Grecian sage himself would have been ashamed; and which is directly contradicted by the anatomical configuration of various and important parts of this animal itself: concerning which, it is scarcely necessary to recall to your recollection the remark we have just made—that while it approaches nearest to the form, it is farthest removed from the language of man of almost all quadrupeds whatever. I shall confine myself to the fair question, which the theory in its original shape involves;—is human speech, thus proved to be incapable of origin by any compact or settled system, more likely to have originated from a succession of accidents—from the casual but growing wants, or the casual but growing improvements of mankind?

Now, admitting the affirmative of this question, we have a right to expect that the language of a people will always be found commensurate with their civilization; that it will hold an exact and equal pace with their degree of ignorance, as well as with their degree of improvement. It so happens, however, that although language, whatever be its origin, is the most difficult art or science in the world (if an art or science at all), it is the art or science in which savages of all kinds exhibit more proficiency than in any other. No circumnavigator has ever found them deficient in this respect, even where they have been woefully deficient in every thing else; and while they have betrayed the grossest ignorance in regard to the simplest toys, baubles, and implements of European manufacture, there has been no difficulty, as soon as their language has been, I will not say acquired, but even dipped into, of explaining to them the different uses and intentions of these articles in their own terms.

Again: there is in all the languages of the earth a general unity of principle, which evidently bespeaks a general unity of origin; a family character and likeness which cannot possibly be the effect of accident. The common divisions and rules of one language are the common divisions and rules of the whole; and, hence, every national grammar is, in a certain sense, and to a certain extent, a universal grammar; and the man who has learned one foreign tongue, has imperceptibly made some progress towards a knowledge of other tongues. In all countries, and in all languages, there is only one and the same set of articulations, or at least the differences are so few, that they can scarcely interfere with the generality of the assertion; for diversities of language consist not in different sets of articulations, but only in a difference of their combinations and applications. No people have ever been found so barbarous as to be without articulate sounds, and no people so refined and fastidious as to have a desire of adding to the common stock.

But, independently of a uniform circle of articulations, and a uniform system of grammar, there is also a uniform use of the very same terms, in a great variety of languages, to express the very same ideas; which, as it appears to me, cannot possibly be accounted for, except upon the principle of one common origin and mother-tongue; and I now allude more particularly to those kinds of terms, which, under every change of time, and every variety of climate, or of moral or political fortune, might be most readily expected to maintain an immutability; as those, for example, of family relationship and patriarchal respect; or descriptive of such other ideas as cannot but have occurred to the mind very generally, as those of earth, sky, death, Deity. I shall beg leave to detain you while I offer a few examples.

In our own language we have two common etymons, or generic terms, by which to describe the paternal character, *papa* and *father*; both are as common to the Greek tongue as to our own, under the forms of *πάππας* and *πάτηρ*, and have probably alike issued from the Hebrew source *אב* or *אבנא*, *אבנת*.