

it was only when additional and impossible conditions were imposed, that he was unsuccessful. That he failed to bring about a peaceful solution was no fault of his intelligence or his fidelity, but rather the fault of the nation which he served. We say the nation, and by it we mean both the government and the people, for they goaded each other on to common disaster. That the government was the first to raise the war-cry, we think is clearly shown by the Emperor's instructions to Benedetti, and by the infamous address of the Duke of Gramont. We doubt if there was any possible way of maintaining the peace from the hour when that address was circulated in the streets of Paris. From that moment there was to be either foreign war or revolution. The excitement was so intense that the dynasty was threatened, and Napoleon was obliged, at least, to seem to lead public opinion, when, in fact, he was swept along before it. After reading the despatches which were addressed to him by his ambassador at Berlin, it is impossible not to believe that he knew the risk he was running. But his crown was in peril, and his only hope of saving it was in throwing himself upon the mad current of popular opinion.

C. K. ADAMS.

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ART. II. — *Abriss der Sprachwissenschaft*. Von Dr. H. STEINTHAL, etc. Erster Teil. *Die Sprache im Allgemeinen*. Also with separate title: *Einleitung in die Psychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*. Von Dr. H. STEINTHAL, etc. Berlin. 1871. 8vo. pp. xxiii, 487.

HAJJIM STEINTHAL, though little known to the general English-reading public, is one of the leading linguistic scholars of Germany. He represents, as professor extraordinary, the general science of language in the Berlin University. He is joint editor, with Professor Lazarus of Berne, of the *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, which is now in its seventh volume. His more important separate works have been his *Grammatik, Logik, und Psychologie* (1855), the *Charakteristik der hauptsächlichsten Typen des Sprachbaues* (1860),

the *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft bei den Griechen und Römern* (1863), and *Die Mande-Neger-Sprachen psychologisch und phonetisch betrachtet* (1867), of which the *Charakteristik*, especially, has necessarily lain upon the table of every deeper student of language. He was also the *réducteur* of Heyse's *System der Sprachwissenschaft* (1856), and has put forth a considerable number of valuable lesser works and essays, the titles of which need not be given here. Nothing of his, so far as we know, has ever been translated into English. This is not, indeed, to be wondered at, since he habitually writes for a limited circle of readers, and not at all in a style calculated to be taking with the general public, either of England and America or of any other country. His point of view and method of treatment are distinctively and highly metaphysical, and what he produces is wont, therefore, to be hard reading, even for the practised linguistic scholar. He has been, in particular, the disciple, interpreter, and continuer of Wilhelm von Humboldt, a man whom it is nowadays the fashion to praise highly, without understanding or even reading him; Steinthal is *the* man in Germany, perhaps in the world, who penetrates the mysteries, unravels the inconsistencies, and expounds the dark sayings, of that ingenious and profound, but unclear and wholly unpractical, thinker.

The present work is intended by its author to be a new elaboration and digest of his former contributions to linguistics, the summary of his philosophy of language. Its first part, now published, is founded mainly on his *Grammatik, Logik, und Psychologie*; the parts to follow will be an expansion rather of the *Charakteristik*, treating of the ethnological peculiarities of the different families of language, our own in particular, and adding the history of languages, especially of the Greek, Latin, and Germanic; the whole forming three or four volumes. All students of language, we are sure, will thank us for bringing to their notice this comprehensive and systematic work of a writer who is worthy of careful attention.

It is not our intention to give here a comprehensive analysis and criticism of Steinthal's first volume, nor to set forth the general features of his scientific system. We prefer to take up but a single subject or chapter, namely, the Origin of Lan-

guage, and, by discussing that in detail, to get an impression of the author's way of working. No more central and telling subject, certainly, could be selected than this for attaining such a purpose; its exposition ought to bring to light the strength or the weakness that is in him, and enable us to see how fruitful of advantage to science his labors are likely to prove.

The Origin of Language is treated in the fifth and last chapter of the Introduction (pp. 72-90). The subjects of the previous chapters have been: 1. Scientific knowledge in general, the task of philosophy, and that of linguistic philosophy in particular; 2. Extent and division of the science of language; 3. Relation of this science to other sciences; 4. Speaking and thinking, grammar and logic. In entering upon this one, the author remarks that he comes at last to the more precise determination of the task which is to occupy him in the present work. "How could one hope," he asks, "to discover the principle of grammar, without having exactly analyzed and thoroughly investigated the essential character of language and its manifold relations to the mental activities, its function in the mental economy, its efficiency for the development of the mind? But these researches we have to begin with the investigation of the origin of language." It is characteristic of Steinthal's synthetic and *aprioristic* way of working, that he thinks it necessary to settle thus, at the very outset, the most recondite and difficult question in the whole science, one that most scholars would doubtless prefer to put off to the end of their work, as what might be settled by inference when everything else was established, and the way thus duly prepared for it. But, as we have hinted already, he is nothing if not metaphysical, and the metaphysical method requires that one get behind the facts he deals with, and evolve them by a necessity out of some predetermining principle. This is the opposite of the current scientific method, which is proud to acknowledge its dependence on facts, and prefers to proceed by cautious induction backward from the known and familiar to the obscure and unknown. Both methods ought to come to the same thing in the end, and will do so, provided the scientific be conducted with sufficient reach and insight, and the metaphysical with sufficient moderation and caution; we are used,

however, to seeing the metaphysical, when it comes to deal with concrete facts and their relations, fail by labored obscurity and feebleness or by forced and distorting treatment. The result alone can decide which is the better, as applied to language.

Men ask for a definition of language, we are now told ; but very improperly, since things of such immense content are not to be defined ; and moreover, a definition, like a picture, can represent only something at rest, or only a moment in an action ; while language is manifold, and constantly growing and developing. If, then, we inquire how it is with language, the proper answer follows, "It is what it is becoming" (*sie ist, was sie wird*). Surely, it was hardly worth while to moot the point, only to come to so barren a result as this. Locomotives, likewise, are numerous and various, and their mode of construction is all the time changing ; yet it is possible to give a plain man a reply to the question, "What is a locomotive ?" When a definition of language is called for, men expect the answer, "It is audible thinking ; it is the body of which thought is the soul ; it is the spoken instrumentality of thought ; it is a body of uttered signs for conceptions," or something of the kind, drawn out with more or less fulness, enough to show us, in a preliminary way, what the answerer's general idea of language is. The author might have left out the paragraphs he devotes to this little discussion, and nobody would have missed them ; we only refer to the matter because it illustrates a vexatious way he sometimes has of startling and rebuffing a common-sense inquirer with a reply from a wholly different and unexpected point of view : as when you ask a physician, "Well, doctor, how does your patient promise this morning ?" and he answers, with a wise look and an oracular shake of the head, "It is not given to humanity to look into futurity !" The effect is not destitute of the element of *bathos*.

Next we are called on to note that the way in which a problem is stated is of the highest consequence, often half involving the solution ; and it is proposed to determine "what demand this present question contains, what significance it can alone have."

And, to lead the way to such a statement, our author gives

a sketch of the discussions respecting the origin of language, as they were carried on, in an especially lively manner, during the last century. Some maintained that language was invented by man, under the pressure of necessity and convenience, as a means of communicating with his fellows and securing their assistance. "He, the much-inventive man, has, among many other remarkable works, invented language also." And it was not at the outset so perfect a work that rude and uncultivated men should not have been equal to its production; having been improved and perfected later, somewhat as the means of navigation have been, from the first hollowed-out trunk of a tree to the modern ship of a hundred cannon. The opposing party referred to the languages of the negroes and of our Indians, as being so cunningly devised products as to imply a degree of reflection (*Nachdenken*) of which such savages were not capable. Moreover, the invention of language would require reason (*Vernunft*), and before the possession of language men could have had no reason. Therefore language must have been given by God; it is no human invention, but a divine communication.

According to Steinthal, those who defended the human invention of speech show a revolting triviality and rudeness of conception and view; while the upholders of the divine origin saw deeper. From his sketch of the argument, indeed, we should draw quite the contrary conclusion; but this may pass, as of small consequence. Of much more consequence is it to notice that he makes no reference of any kind, anywhere in his chapter, to a view of the nature and origin of language which is held by a whole school of linguistic students at the present day, and which is akin with the one first stated above, only modified to accord with the better knowledge and deeper insight of modern times. An adherent of that view would be likely to urge that it is an easy matter to cast reproach and ridicule upon the last-century form of it; but that to carry from the latter an inferential condemnation over to its present form is much more easy and convenient than fair and ingenuous; and he would be justified in adding that its present opponents are in the habit of combating it in that way, and in that alone. This also, however, only by the way; what concerns

us here is rather what our author does than what he leaves undone.

He declares, namely, that he cannot join the other party, who assume for language a divine origin, notwithstanding their deeper insight; and that, "for one general reason and two special reasons," which he proceeds to set forth. We give the general reason in his own words:—

"Of God, the philosophy of religion, founded on metaphysics, has to take account. It has to determine how far, in order to the understanding of every being and of every occurrence, in order to the full and true apprehension of all actuality, we are to add in our thoughts the idea of God. All other sciences are unauthorized to bring in God as a means of explanation. The philosophy of religion teaches *πάντα θεία*; the special sciences teach *φυσικά* or *ἀνθρώπινα πάντα*; and the two may not contradict one another."

We fail to appreciate the force or to see the appositeness of this objection. If to bring in the idea of God is the monopoly of religious philosophy, then, whenever that idea comes in, religious philosophy comes also; and the latter is called upon in this case to help solve a problem which science finds insoluble. Religious philosophy and the special sciences may be so distinct as not even to have in common the idea of a God; but, at least, the same person may be both special scientist and (even without knowing it) religious philosopher; and what he cannot do in the one character he may attempt to do in the other. If Steinthal chooses to say that it is not scientific to appeal to a divine author, that it only shows the weakness of the scientist, whose problem is really soluble without such appeal, then we shall understand what he means, and perhaps agree heartily with him; but to claim that God cannot have originated language because, in our classification of knowledge, we put the idea of God under another rubric than the linguistic, seems to us a mere verbal quibble.

In the "two special reasons," also, we find force and pertinence equally wanting. God, we are told, must either have created language in man, or taught it to him. But the latter is impossible; because, although much may be taught man by means of language, teaching is only possible by that means, and therefore language itself cannot be taught. This, we

remark, in spite of the fact that every child learns language without being previously possessed of language whereby to acquire it! To be sure, Steinthal does not, as we shall see hereafter, believe that children do learn language, in the ordinary sense of that term; yet, whatever the precise nature of the process, why should not God, in a confessedly supernatural or miraculous way, have been to the first human beings what they were, and what human parents have in general since been, to their children? This assumption, however, is in a manner involved and answered in our author's further reasoning, in refutation of the alternative theory, that God created language in men, — that is to say, made it a part of their nature or constitution. Language, he says, is evidently not created in us; it is certain and evident that the child "appropriates" (*sich aneignet*) the language of the community in which it grows up. And he goes on: —

"God, then, would have to be regarded as having created language in the first human pair alone, while the succeeding generations learned to speak, each from its own parents. But this assumption also is impossible. For what man can learn, that he can also bring forth as original out of himself, without instruction; for all learning is merely facilitated, supported, and for that very reason limited creation. But what one man should receive from God as an exceptional endowment, that no other man would be able to learn from him. If, therefore, language had been created in the first human beings, their children never could have appropriated it. If they were in fact able to do this, then the language of the first human beings could not have been an exceptional endowment of theirs, and their children must have been able also to create it independently for themselves. If, then, in order to man's possession of language, he absolutely must have had the power to create it, the first man in like manner with all his successors, why should it in only a single case have been created in him by God?"

We have given this in Steinthal's own words, because we feared not being able to do him justice in a paraphrase or summary. We think the inaptness of the reasoning, in spite of its obscure intricacy, will at once strike almost every one. The assumption is impossible, because — why should things have been so? We may retort, it is possible, because — why should n't they? What the Creator might or might not have thought it proper to do for the first human beings in order to

give the race a fair start in life, we would rather not claim to decide. And as to the impossibility of transmission claimed to be involved, it amounts simply to this, that a miracle contravenes the laws of nature. But that, we imagine, is involved in the very idea of a miracle. Our author might just as well assert that water could not be miraculously converted into wine, because there are certain chemical elements in wine which water does not contain; and because, if it had once been so converted, then all water would have to be so convertible, which every one knows not to be the case. The assumption of the divine origin of language does not, as we understand it, deny that each man, as a part of his human nature, possesses the capacity to learn and use and make language; it only implies that, whereas this capacity might be indefinitely or infinitely long in developing itself so as to produce languages like those we know, the first men were miraculously put by anticipation in possession of its perfected fruits. It is a part, and a natural part, of the view which supposes the first human beings to have been produced in the maturity of growth and in a condition of high culture, by a direct and anomalous fiat of the Almighty. We are ourselves just as far as Steinthal from accepting the theory that language was a miraculous gift to the first human beings; but our objections to it would be of a wholly different character from his. Here, it seems to us, he again shows the same remarkable incapacity already once noticed, of getting upon the same plane with the holders of an opinion which he opposes, and of so constructing his argument that it shall be understood and received by those against whom it is directed.

We are now led on by our author to a more serious attempt at breaking through the low and trivial assumed conditions of the problem as looked at by the controversialists of the last century. Our views of man, he says, have undergone a complete revolution since that time. As what a little, petty creature was he then regarded! born in the mire, ever crawling on the earth, a prey to want, from which he was all the time devising ways to extricate himself; driven by the pressure of necessity from one improvement of his at first rough work to another; nothing wise and great in his development; indeed, no inward



development at all! “Of the primeval powers of the human spirit, out of which the institutions of social life have grown, and from which they continually draw the juices of life, those people knew nothing; unknown was the creative force from which religious and moral ideas flow forth unsought, for the human being’s own gratification.”

Here, again, is seen Steinthal’s complete antagonism with the inductive and scientific tendencies of the day. We should have said that the prevailing movement of modern thought was precisely the reverse of what is thus described; that only the philosophers of the eighteenth century and those who in the nineteenth inherit their spirit could regard the first human being as having walked the earth with lofty tread and gaze uplifted, letting grand ideas and noble institutions flow forth spontaneously from the deep springs of his soul, and enjoying their flow; comprehending by intuition the Creator and his works, and worshipping him with a pure adoration; meditating on problems of psychology, and giving birth to soulful expression as naturally and unconsciously as he walked or moved his arms. Modern science, on the contrary, claims to be proving, by the most careful and exhaustive study of man and his works, that our race began its existence on earth at the bottom of the scale, instead of at the top, and has been gradually working upward; that human powers have had a history of development; that all the elements of culture — as the arts of life, art, science, language, religion, philosophy — have been wrought out by slow and painful efforts, in the conflict between the soul and mind of man on the one hand, and external nature on the other, — a conflict in which man has, in favored races and under exceptional conditions of endowment and circumstance, been triumphantly the victor, and is still going on to new conquests. For ourselves, we heartily hold this latter view, deeming it to be established already on a firm basis, soon to be made impregnable; and we regard the other as the mere dream of a psychologist, who, in studying the growth of humanity, descends into the depths of his own being — a being developed in the midst of the highest culture produced by thousands of years of united efforts on the part of the whole race — instead of appealing to the facts of history. Why our author should feel

his conception of the dignity of humanity insulted by the belief that the first men were a prey to necessity, and rose by dint of earnest and persistent endeavor to escape its cruel yoke, we do not precisely see, inasmuch as the great majority of men are still bent beneath that yoke, and the number of those who realize his ideal is hardly more than infinitesimal. It would appear that he must hold the doctrine of a "fall" of the race, mental and moral, in its extremest form.

It is, then, only with a feeling of discouragement, of expectation devoid of hope, that we go on from this capital misapprehension to examine Professor Steinthal's further inquiries into the origin of language. We cannot but fear that here, again, he has mistaken the nature and bearings of the question he undertakes to discuss.

The succeeding paragraph warns us against being content with that half-view of language which would come from our merely regarding it, as well as poetry and the like, with wonder and admiration, as springing forth from the unfathomable depths of human nature, and which might lead us to explain it as the product of an "instinct"; some persons, in fact, having attributed the differences of Semitic and Indo-European speech, as of Semitic monotheism and Indo-European polytheism, to a difference in the linguistic and religious "instincts" of those races respectively; which is a mere play of words.

For, our author goes on, besides the "recognition of the creative power of man," we have in this century the advantage of a rational psychology, which strives to discover a mechanism in the movements of consciousness, laws in mental life, and so on; since all the creations of man will be found not less subject to the dominion of rational laws than are the productions of nature. Now we also, on our part, expect decided advantage to the study of language, as of every other human production, from an improved comprehension of the operations of the human mind, as of all the other determining conditions of a difficult problem. But whether the advance of psychology is or is not to bring about a revolution in the science of language, is a question depending on the manner and degree in which language is a "mental production" (*geistiges Erzeugniss*). It is very possible here to fall into the serious error of

looking upon words and phrases as an immediate emanation of the mind, and so of settling the laws of mental action, and out of them evolving the events of language-history. The soul of man and its powers and operations are, after all, the mystery of mysteries to us ; the phenomena of language are one of its external manifestations, and comparatively a simple matter ; the light which these shall cast upon the soul must probably be greater than that which they shall receive from our comprehension of the soul. If the linguistic student, in his devotion to psychology, shall invert this relation, he is very likely to add one more to the already numerous instances in which metaphysics has shown its inaptitude for dealing with facts of observation and induction. Only the result can decide, and that we will proceed to test.

In order, then, to exhibit the complete change of aspect of the question in this century, Professor Steinthal enters upon a detailed comparison between the "invention" of language and that of some product of mechanical ingenuity, as a watch, a steam-engine, gunpowder. And he first points out that men regard the original invention of a thing with much more interest than the succeeding manufacture of the thing invented ; since invention is the grand difficulty, while imitation and reproduction are comparatively easy. So people have been talking about the invention of language by the first human beings ; and that, even down to the present day ; though now they change the name, and style it production instead of invention ; the acquisition of speech by children they have regarded as a reproduction or later manufacture. They have, therefore, been curious to ascertain how and when this invention was made. They have wanted to know how Adam and Eve chatted together in Paradise, and, as they had no other way of getting at the desired knowledge, they dreamed it out.

We object *in toto* to this way of opening the inquiry. No one with any sense or learning has, within the memory of this generation, thought of regarding language as a thing invented or produced by anybody at any time. Whom is Steinthal arguing against ? Whom does he wish to convince ? Is it the shallow theorists of the last century, with here and there a last-century man, who has by some mischance failed to

get himself yet laid beneath the sod? Surely, there are involved in the origin of language a plenty of real living questions contended about by live men; it is hardly better than trifling to descend into the sepulchre for one's antagonists. Or can it be that he does not realize the measureless absurdity of the view he is opposing, that he thinks it calls for rectification rather than summary rejection? We shall see as we go on.

Our author confesses that first invention is more important than later reproduction; but he doubts whether the history of first manufacture is more attractive than that of later or present manufacture. What, at any rate, is more important and more attractive than either is to comprehend the laws of nature which underlie and determine the working of the thing invented, both at the outset and ever since. The latter is merely temporary and in part even accidental: the former are fundamental and eternal. Whoever knows that a certain monk named Schwarz, experimenting in his laboratory, perhaps in search of the philosopher's stone, invented powder, knows merely anecdotes: suppose another to be ignorant of this, but to understand the chemical composition and resolution of powder and the reason of the effects it produces, does not this one know what is better worth knowing? So as regards language: "it is more important and more attractive to investigate the laws according to which it both originally lived and subsisted, and at this very day subsists and lives; and to know the specific circumstances under which its first production may have taken place is a matter of less moment."

If, now, a comparison is to be enlightening and instructive, there needs to be at least a degree of analogy between the things compared; and such analogy we must confess ourselves unable here to discover. If there be any man living, or dead since the rise of linguistic science, who holds that language was invented, or produced, or created, or evolved, by an individual, as powder by Schwarz, or the watch by some one else, let him be brought forward that we may stare at him for a wonder, as we do at the *megalonyx* and the *ichthyosaurus*; but do not let us spend paper and ink in reasoning him down. And if we must perforce refute him, let us do it by pointing out the fundamental error of his understanding of language, not

by letting that pass unnoticed, and taking exceptions to a point of wholly subordinate consequence. But what, after all, does Steinthal's objection amount to? Simply to this: that it is a grander thing to be a chemist or physicist than to be a student of human culture as exhibited in the history of mechanical inventions. That may be so; it were useless to discuss the question of relative dignity; but, at any rate, the two are quite different, and there is room and occupation for both of them. The historical student does not fully comprehend his task without the help of the physicist to teach him the nature of the practical problems which human ingenuity has solved, one after another; yet he is an independent worker in a separate branch of inquiry, in which the physicist may be as little versed as he in physics. In like manner, it may be a far grander thing to be a psychologist than an historical student of language; yet the two are not engaged in the same work, and the eminent psychologist may show himself but a blunderer when he comes to deal with the facts and principles of linguistic history.

Indeed, although Professor Steinthal does not appear to understand the bearing of the comparison with which he is dealing, he yet goes on to set forth something like what we have just been stating. No single invention, he says, comes without due preparation, consisting in previous inventions and the capacity and insight arising from familiarity with them; and it falls fruitless and is forgotten unless it serves certain definite purposes, founded in the necessities and aspirations of the age in which it makes its appearance. In order to understand the invention of powder or of printing, we need to set the bare facts in relation with the whole history of the times of their production. Undoubtedly; nothing could be plainer than this. And what follows from it? Why, that we study the history of that department of human culture which includes the use of instruments and inventions, comprehensively and in detail, and through the medium of the facts themselves, though at the same time heeding carefully what mechanical science has to say in part explanation of the facts; we trace up invention after invention, inferring, as well as we may in the imperfection of the record, out of what preparation each one grew, and what new conditions it created to favor the production of its

successor. And at last, as it now appears, going back from the almost miraculous appliances of modern culture to simpler and simpler instruments, from iron to bronze, from bronze to stone, we find the beginnings of human effort in this direction to have been pebbles and flakes of flint-stone, and rods and clubs of wood ; and one grand department of man's activity, of the utmost importance in its bearings on the progress, mental as well as physical, of the race, is laid before us, most interestingly and instructively, in at least the main outlines of its development. Such knowledge lies outside the sphere of the physicist, and is unattainable by his methods ; one might study the laws of mechanical force and of chemical combination till doomsday, without advancing a step nearer to its possession. Thus is it, also, with language. A close and instructive analogy really exists between the two subjects, if rightly looked at ; and in failing to discover this, and to put it in place of the other and false analogy, Steinthal has, as it seems to us, failed to draw any valuable result from the whole discussion. What in linguistics corresponds to the invention of a particular machine, or application of force, or useful combination of elements, is not the production of language in general ; far from it ; it is the production of an individual word or form. Every single item of existing speech had its own separate beginning, a time when it first came into men's use ; it had its preparation, in the already subsisting material and usages of speech, and the degree of culture and knowledge in the community where it arose, and it obtained currency and maintained itself in existence because it answered a practical purpose, subserving a felt need of expression. The history of the development of language is nothing more than the sum and result of such single histories as this. The scientific student of language, therefore, sets himself at work to trace out the histories of words and forms, determining, so far as he is able, the chronological place and reason and source of each one, and deriving by induction from the facts thus gathered a comprehension, in no other way attainable, of the gradually advancing condition of mind and state of knowledge of the language-makers and language-users. And if he can determine what, or even of what sort, were the very first elements of language used by men, and why these

instead of other possible elements were used, he has solved the problem of the origin of language; and the history of this other, even grander and more important department of human productiveness, is also laid before us in its main features, though with infinite work yet remaining to be done upon it in detail. All the questions involved in it are primarily historical, to be investigated by studying and comparing the recorded facts of language. Psychology has just as much to do with it as theoretical mechanics and chemistry have to do with the study of human inventions; it is invaluable as critic and aid, but worthless as foundation and substitute. Which of all the innumerable events of linguistic history is accessible to us by the *a priori* method? What word or form in any language under the sun could we have prophesied, from the laws of action of the human mind and soul?

We are obliged, accordingly, to dissent utterly from Steinthal's conclusion, which is expressed in these words: "For us, then, the investigation of the origin of language is nothing else than this, to acquaint ourselves with the mental culture which immediately precedes the production of language, to comprehend a state of consciousness and certain relations of the same, as conditions under which language must break forth, and then to see what the mind gains by means of it, and how under the government of law it further develops itself." Our author, like others before him, here suffers the psychologist to overbear and replace in him the linguistic scholar; he ignores the essential character of the questions with which he deals, and substitutes subjective for objective methods of investigation. So far as we can see, he breaks not less decidedly with the inductive school of linguistics than he has broken before with the inductive school of anthropology. The origin and history of language is a mere matter of states of mind. Neither here nor anywhere else in the chapter do we find acknowledgment of the truth that speech is made up of a vast number of items, each one of which has its own time, occasion, and effect, nor anything to show that he does not regard it as an indivisible entity, produced or acquired once for all, so that when, under due favoring conditions, it has "broken forth," it *has* broken forth, and that is the end of the matter: than which,

certainly, a grosser error in the view of the historical student of language cannot possibly be committed. If such is to be the result of the full admission of psychology into linguistic investigation, then we can only say, may Heaven defend the science of language from psychology! and let us, too, aid the defence to the best of our ability.

We see pretty clearly, by this time, how much and how little we have to expect from Professor Steinthal toward the solution of the real question of the origin of language. It is important, however, that we continue to follow his reasonings and note to what result they actually come.

He next calls upon us to observe that, as regards the so-called invention of speech, natural laws and mental conditions are one and the same thing. "The mental condition and the relations of consciousness are here the actual forces themselves which produce language." But our observation refuses to show us any such thing. Speech is a body of vocal signs, successions of vibrations produced in the atmosphere by the organs of utterance, and apprehended by the organs of hearing. Are the lungs, the larynx, the tongue, the palate, the teeth, the lips, even the air about us, parts of the mind? If so, what is the body? and what are its acts, as distinguished from those of the mind? So far as we can see, the word "jump" is just as much and just as little an act of the mind as jumping over a fence is; each is an act of the body, executed under direction of the mind indeed, but by bodily organs, namely, the muscles. The mind's immediate products are conceptions, judgments, feelings, volitions, and the like; psychology, surely, ought to teach that. An utterance is like nothing else in the world so much as a gesture or motion of the arms, hands, fingers. The latter is in like manner the effect of an act of will upon bodily organs that are obedient to the will; it differs only in being brought through another medium, the luminiferous ether, to the cognizance of another receptive organ, the eye. The hands can make an indefinite number of such motions, and combine them in every conceivable variety; and the mind, acting on and developing the hints afforded by what may be called the natural gestures, is capable of using these motions as instrumentalities for the ex-



pression of its thoughts ; and it does so use them when circumstances limit it to this kind of instrumentality. In like manner, the voice can utter an indefinite number of articulate sounds, and can put them together into combinations practically infinite ; and here, again, founding on the natural cries and on imitative sounds (perhaps also on other bases, the whole to an extent and in a manner not yet fully determined, and the determination of which would be the real and final solution of the remaining questions as to the origin of language), the human mind has been able to avail itself of this instrumentality in order to the expression of its acts ; and it does so avail itself in every normally constituted human being. There is no more intimate connection between the mind and the articulating apparatus than between it and the fingering apparatus ; words are just as extraneous to the mind — only lying within its convenient reach, and so capable of being put to use by it at pleasure — as are twistings of the fingers and brandishings of the arms or feet. These truths seem to us so plain, so self-evident, that we are at a loss to conceive how they can be opposed by any valid argument ; we never have seen anything brought against them that could stand a moment's critical examination. That there is, therefore, any such wide and essential difference as our author would postulate between the material of speech and those purely physical and independently existing substances which the mechanically inventive mind turns to its purposes, does not appear. The difference is in reality great enough, and for that very reason does not require to be exaggerated. To contract it one way, and identify words outright with sticks and stones and metals, is at the very least no worse than to stretch it the other way, and to identify them with mental acts.

Steinthal's inferential assumption, then, from which we have necessarily to set forth in order to the further prosecution of our inquiries, is this : " that a certain condition of mental culture must be given, in which there lies a certain material, and which is governed by such laws that speech must necessarily come into being." We should state what of truth there seems to us to be in this in a very different manner, somewhat thus : A certain state of mind being given, consisting in the

apprehension of an idea that calls for expression, and in the desire to express it, and a certain material lying ready at hand, or being producible and habitually produced in indefinite quantity, the laws which govern human action in general in the adaptation of means to ends cause the production of an item of speech ; and speech in general is made up of such items, so produced. I employ the words "locomotive" and "spectroscope" now simply by imitation, because some one else has employed them before me ; the man who first employed them did so because his "mental culture," by reason of the invention of the one or the other instrument, had got into such a "condition" that he wanted a name to call them by ; and he knew where to find it. Does Professor Steinthal believe that states of mental culture and laws of consciousness actually produced the two words in question ? We hardly credit it ; although it would seem a necessary inference from what he says. Perhaps he would not allow that these are parts of "language" at all, in the peculiar and psychological sense of that term. But we do not know where, in that case, he would stop, in excising and amputating the members of the body of speech. The queer new word *apperception*, which makes such a figure in his writings and in those of his school, would, for aught that we can see, have to go too. More probably, he has never brought his doctrine to the test of actual fact in recent times at all ; and he would perhaps claim that productions of words in these modern degenerate days are of a very different character from those of earlier ages. That is to say, he would fly with his pet theory from the clear light of the present into the dimness of the past ; and the further back into the dark he got, the more confident he would be of its truth and sufficiency. For our part, we think no explanation of the facts of language which does not account for the nearest present just as well as for the remote past has any good claim to acceptance. Of course, some of the important determining circumstances and conditions have been in constant change since the beginning, and this change requires to be fully allowed for ; it is to be read in the antecedent forms of language, as we reconstruct them by taking away, one after another, the productions of the later time. And we need not absolutely deny the possibility that

other principles have been at work than those we now perceive working ; only, they have to be inductively established before we shall accept them, and not simply " assumed " as part of a doctrine which appears not less inconsistent with the former than with the present phenomena of linguistic growth.

Our author proceeds : —

" This means, then, that language is not an invention, but an origination or creation in the mind, not a work to which the understanding has furnished the means, not an intentional application of a means sought after and found for the relief of a conscious necessity, nor even the happy turning to account of an accident for the enrichment of mental working (for this also presupposes reflection or consciousness as to the possible utilization of what had thus turned up), but language has come to be without being willed into existence. The laws which, while remaining unconscious, yet govern the elements of consciousness, operate, and execute the creation."

There are statements in this paragraph to which we can yield a partial assent. That men have willed language, as language, into existence, or, in its production, have labored consciously for the enrichment of their mental working, we do not believe, any more than Professor Steinthal does. But consciousness has its various spheres and degrees. The first man who, on being attacked by a wolf, seized a club or a stone and with it crushed his adversary's head, was not conscious that he was commencing a series of acts which would lead finally to rifles and engines, would make man the master (comparatively speaking) instead of the slave of nature, would call out and train some of his noblest powers, and be an essential element in his advancement to culture. He knew nothing either of the laws of association and the creative forces in his own mind that prompted the act, or of the laws of matter which made the weapon accomplish what his fist alone could not. The psychologist and the physicist, between them, can trace out now and state with exactness those laws and forces ; can formulate the perceptions and apperceptions and reflex actions on the one hand ; can put in terms of *a* and *b* and *x* and *y* the additional power conferred, on the other hand ; and can even maintain, as we infer, that those laws and forces and formulas produced the man's act ; while all that he himself knew was that he was

defending himself in a sudden emergency. We are not loath to admit that all the later advances in mechanics have been made in a similar way, each to meet some felt necessity, and to seize and realize an advantage which the possession of what had been done before him enabled the inventor to perceive as within his reach; and all the mental progress of the race (which is founded on physical well-being, since there could be no philosophers until there was spare fruit of other men's ruder labors to feed and support them), and all science and art, have depended in great part on those advances in mechanics, and have come as their unforeseen results. Professor Steinthal, as we have seen above, does not relish or accept this view, and thinks it a part of the philosophy of the last century. What man does not win directly, by the free play of his inherent creative forces, is to him only such a degradation of human nature as psychology spurns. While he remains in this frame of mind, we have no hope that he will accept our view of the history of origination and development of language, which is closely akin with what we have just laid down respecting that of mechanical invention. Men have not, in truth, produced language reflectively, or even with consciousness of what they were doing; they do not, in general, even so use it after it is produced. The great majority of the human race have no more idea that they are in the habit of "using language," than M. Jourdain had that he "spoke prose"; all they know is that they can and do talk. That is to say, language exists to them for the purpose of communication simply; of its value to the operations of their own minds, of its importance as an element in human culture, of its wonderful intricacy and regularity of structure, nay, even of the distinction of the parts of speech, they have not so much as a faint conception, and would stare in stupid astonishment if you set it forth to them. And we claim that all the other uses and values of language come as unforeseen consequences of its use as a means of communication. The desire of communication is a real living force, to the impelling action of which every human being, in every stage of culture, is accessible; and, so far as we can see, it is the only force that was equal to initiating the process of language-making, as it is also the one that has

kept up the process to the present time. It works both consciously and unconsciously: consciously, as regards the immediate end to be attained; unconsciously, as regards the further consequences of the act. When two men of different speech meet, they fall to trying simply to understand one another; so far as this goes, they know well enough what they are about; that they are thus making language they do not know: that is to say, they do not think of it in that light. The man who beckons to his friend across a crowded room, or coughs or *hems* to attract his attention, commits, consciously and yet unconsciously, a rude and rudimentary act of language-making,—one analogous doubtless with innumerable acts that preceded the successful initiation of the spoken speech which we have. No one consciously makes language, save he who uses it most reflectively, who has his mind always filled with its character and worth,—indeed, hardly even he; perhaps (to take an extreme case) the man who produced *apperception* itself only knew that he was finding a sign for a conception which he had formed, in order to use it as a factor, a kind of  $x$ , or  $\pi$ , or  $O$ , in his reasonings. And so men have gone on from the beginning, always finding a sign for the next idea, stereotyping the conception by a word, and working with it till the call for another came; and the result, at any stage of the process, is the language of that stage. Precisely here, then, is where comes in the operation of those “unconscious laws which govern consciousness,” to the direct action of which our author would vainly ascribe the whole production; they shape into a regular and well-ordered whole the congeries of items thus miscellaneous and as it were accidentally produced; they create out of words a language; they give, in a perfectly unconscious way, that completeness, adaptedness, and proportion which make the instrumentality represent the nature and answer the higher uses of the minds from which it proceeds.

In the creative forces of the human soul, as by their free and spontaneous action the producers of spoken language, we have, then, no faith or belief whatever; indeed, to our unpsychological apprehension, there is something monstrous in the very suggestion or implication that a word is an act of the mind. Conceptions and judgments, these and their like are what the

mind forms; for them it finds, under the social impulse to communication, signs, in those acts of the body which experience shows to be best suited to its use; and the sum of these signs is language. Whether we shall call language-making invention, or production, or creation, or giving birth, is quite immaterial, provided we understand what the process really is, and how far it is faithfully represented by any or all of those terms. "Invention" is doubtless a name invested with too much false suggestiveness to be conveniently used; yet we are confident that many of those who have used it were much nearer the truth in their conception of what they thus denominated than is Professor Steinthal. "Growing organism," "unfolding germ," which he goes on in the immediate sequel to apply, — though also innocent enough, if employed with a full realization of how far they are figurative merely, — are far more dangerously misleading. That they mislead him into some strange ways and hard places, we shall have no difficulty in proving.

He next proceeds, namely, to abolish the distinction which he had before laid down so sharply between the first coming into being of language and its later acquisition by children. That, it appears, was a provisional concession to our weakness; a kind of scaffolding, by the aid of which we should rise a step in the argument he was constructing. Only, it must be confessed, the scaffolding is to our mind so much more substantial than the main structure, that we shall prefer to cleave to it, and stand or fall with it. Hear him: —

"Respecting language, it has been already observed that it no more admits of being taught and learned than seeing and hearing do. Who, I pray, has ever observed that children were taught to speak? Many a one, however, has perhaps already noticed how vain is the effort sometimes expended in teaching the child. But I assume with certainty that every one who has had occasion to watch a child from the second to the fourth year of life has often enough been astonished to see with what startling suddenness (*wie urplötzlich*) the child has used a word or a form. One seldom knows where the child got that. He has grasped it at some opportunity or other, and to grasp is to create" (*ergreifen heisst erzeugen*)!

Prodigious! Then, doubtless, the man we lately imagined, who "grasped" the stick or stone for purposes of self-defence,

really created it; and the said stick or stone was his mental act! If we can go on smoothing away differences and effecting identifications at this rate, we shall soon have all the elements of the discussion reduced to a condition of chaotic nebulosity out of which we may evolve just what suits our individual taste. Seriously, we should not have supposed any man, at this age of the world, capable of penning the sentences we have quoted. To deny that children learn their language from those about them is to abandon definitely and finally the ground of sound reason and common sense. What if you cannot sit down with spectacles on nose, and book and ferule in hand, and "teach" a child to speak? Is that the only way of teaching? Then we do not "learn" a tune, for example, which we have heard from the street-organs till our souls are weary of it; we are simply brought into such a condition of mental culture that our creative forces in their unconscious workings produce the tune. Would this statement be a whit less absurd than that which our author makes about language? It has even become with us an item of popular wisdom, as attested by a proverb, that example teaches better than precept. Children do, indeed, "grasp" just what they can, what they best understand and are prepared for, of the language which is current in their hearing, and we cannot follow the movements of their minds closely enough to tell beforehand what that will be; although we can act upon the hints their imperfect efforts give us, and help and correct till the step they are striving to take is taken. Does any one before whom some unforeseen new acquisition is blurted out by a child doubt that the child has heard it somewhere, at some time, and is simply reproducing it by imitation? If otherwise, why are not the current expressions of another language sometimes generated by the creative forces of the childish soul? Put the German child, along with its German-speaking parents and brothers and sisters, in an English-speaking community, so that it hears both languages every day, and almost every hour, and it acquires (or produces) both, apparently as well and as easily as it would have acquired (or produced) either alone under other circumstances. Is there nothing like learning there? Then how would Professor Steinthal explain

it? But he proceeds: "We have no right whatever, then, to speak of the learning of language on the part of children. For where there is no teaching, there there is no learning." Most true, indeed; there never yet was an effect where there was not a cause. But then we assert with equal confidence, that where there is learning, there there is also teaching; because, where the effect is, there we know there is a cause, if we can only find it; and the cause in this case is not hard to discover, if one will but open his eyes. Further: "What the gardener does with seeds out of which he wishes to rear plants, is all that we do with our children in order to bring them to speech: we bring them into the necessary conditions of mental growth,—namely, into human society. But as little as the gardener makes the seed grow, do we make or teach the child to speak: in accordance with the laws, in one case of nature, in the other of mind, does the flower spring up on the one hand, the language in the consciousness of the child on the other." We are heartily tired, we must say, of these comparisons that go limping along on one foot, or even on hardly the decent stump of a foot, deficient in the essentials of an instructive analogy, fit only to confuse and mislead. Let Professor Steinthal show us, if he can, a seed which in the forest would send up an oak, in the orchard an apple-tree, in the garden a tulip or an onion, according to the bed in which you planted it, or whose product, if planted in a bed of mingled tulips and onions, would be both a tulip and an onion at the same time; and then we will acknowledge that he has found something analogous with the child that grows up a user of language. What right, again, has he to assume that human society is the one necessary condition of mental growth? Mere physical growth, with the experience and observation it brings, brings also mental growth; but even our author, apparently, does not hold that it would bring language, or certainly not any given language. No; the one thing above all others that human society affords the young child, is the opportunity to acquire the form of human culture possessed by that society, of whatsoever kind or degree it may be; and because language is a part of culture, it, too, with all the incalculable advantages it brings, is acquired along with the rest.

Our author here quits for a moment his similitude of a seed,



to point out "how rude the view was which regarded the invention of language as that of a machine, and the learning to speak of the present day as a new fabrication of an invention previously made." No doubt; we got past that long ago; only we were less impressed by the rudeness of the view itself than by the inutility of quoting and opposing it, and the helplessness of the reasoning by which it was opposed. If we have got to put in place of it the view that language is a growing organism or a sprouting germ, we shall wish that we had our old adversary back again. Next, reverting to and adopting an idea which he had in an earlier paragraph expressly repudiated, as a mere "playing with words," he pronounces language an invention to which men were impelled by a mental "instinct," and which is continually reproduced by the same "instinctive" powers; and declares that if we know these latter, we know also the first invention. To this we demur: comprehending the forces in action is a very different thing from comprehending the history of their action, and knowing what were its first products. These same identical forces, in their present observable modes of action, produce some hundreds or thousands of wholly dissimilar linguistic "inventions." Which of all these was the first invention like, or how did it differ from them all? The question, in short, is one of fact, and our author would fain treat it as one of theory only. The infinite diversity of human speech ought alone to be a sufficient bar to the assertion that an understanding of the powers of the soul involves the explanation of speech. There are current in the world say a thousand different names for *mind*, or *love*, or *finger*, or *two*, and each of them is current, not among minds of a certain degree of culture everywhere, but within certain geographical limits among minds of every grade; which of them is the product of an instinctive action of mental forces, and which of them could have been determined *a priori* by a knowledge, however penetrating and intimate, of those forces?

Did pine forests, continues Professor Steinthal, have to wait for man to plant them? Did they not grow of old after the same laws as when we now plant them? Then the language of the first men grew out of a like germ, and by the same laws, with that of every child of the present generation. We have

already seen how "rude" this analogy is, and to how little valuable knowledge it conducts us. We pass it here, then, and go on to consider the further arguments by which it is followed up, and which are as extraordinary as anything in this extraordinary chapter.

We quote our author's own words:—

"But, it will be said, the conditions into which the germ fell were not the same, for the children of later generations come into the society of speakers, while the primitive man had to do at first with non-speakers. That is so. Still, from it follows only that the primitive man learned to speak under more unfavorable circumstances than our children now produce their speech; namely, there was wanting to the conditions in which the former lived a single circumstance, the language of the society in which he lived. But this circumstance is not essential.[!] It is human society alone that is indispensable to man. If he has this, he will either learn to speak along with it, in case it is not yet able to speak, or, if it already possesses speech, he will necessarily create his own speech entirely after the analogy of that which his society has."

Here, we acknowledge, Professor Steinthal occupies a position one step nearer the truth than that of those who maintain, or imply, that a solitary man would form a language for himself. But he occupies it only by the sacrifice of consistency. Where are those creative forces of the human soul which the present century has learned to recognize as doing such wonderful things? Shall we push the botanical parallel a little further, and say that the flowers which our "germ" produces are diœcious, or triœcious, or polyœcious, and cannot be expected to reproduce from a single individual? The additional strain thus put upon it would be, to our sense at least, hardly perceptible. The burden of proof obviously rests upon those who hold that, while the creative force, as regards language, of the soul *A*, and the soul *B*, and the soul *C* is each equal to nothing, that of  $A + B + C$  is of such immense power that only the nineteenth century has been found able to estimate it. Perhaps if Steinthal would really look into the question otherwise than psychologically, he would find that the only thing which human society furnishes, and which nothing else can furnish, toward the production of language, is the impulse to communi-

cation ; and that no other inducement than this has operated or can operate to draw out the powers of the human soul in the direction of language, and bring them to action and to consciousness. Where, again, resides the "necessity" which compels the creative soul of each new member of a community to produce a language precisely accordant with that of the community? Individuals of every variety of endowment are born in every community, in every class of the community; why does each one grow up to talk after the same fashion as those with whom he associates; speaking not only their speech, but their dialect, with their limitations, their least peculiarities of tone and phrase, even their mispronunciations and grammatical irregularities and blunders? Here, too, if our author would study the facts and learn what they teach him, instead of trying to get above and domineer them, he might soon convince himself that children really do, as he himself maintained in an earlier part of the chapter, "appropriate" their speech; that they *learn* it, as much as they do mathematics or philosophy, only by a different process.

We quote the remainder of the paragraph, the last which we shall find it necessary to treat thus:—

"With reference to what has been set forth, we can already say what will become yet plainer hereafter; man learns not so much to speak as to understand. Neither the primitive man nor the child of later generations makes or creates language, but it rises and grows in man; he gives it birth (*er gebiert sie*). When it is born, he has to take up his own child, and learn to understand it. The primitive man in the primitive society, like the child in later times, has to learn, not to speak, but to understand. The latter learns to understand the developed speech of later generations; the former, the language that is just breaking forth, just coming out into the air; and as the child has not created the language which he learns, so also the primitive man learns the primitive speech which he in like manner has not created; which is, rather, only born from the soul of the primitive society."

This may be called the climax of the chapter. We have now our solution of the question complete. Do you ask what was the origin of language? Why, there was once a primitive society, and (more fortunately endowed than "corporations" in our days) it had a primitive soul; and this soul possessed

primitive creative powers, which were not possessed by the souls of the individuals composing the community, although these too were creative; and these powers, not by creation, or invention, or making of any kind, but simply obstetrically, gave birth to primitive speech. But that is not the sole origin; the same obstetrical process repeats itself each day in the soul of every new member of the human race; language "originates" anew in every individual. Are you satisfied now?

Could there be more utter mockery than this? We ask for bread, and a stone is thrown us. What have these statements to do with the origin of language? Why all this long talk in order to arrive at a result so simple? We could have conceded at the outset that it is the powers with which man is endowed that produce language, and that they are on the whole the same powers in every individual of the race, and powers which, through the whole history of the race and of language, act on the whole in the same way. Yet their products, in different communities and in different ages of the same community, are exceedingly different. There are thousands of dialects to-day, the speakers of each of which are unintelligible to those of every other; and each is so unlike its own ancestor, from time to time back in the past, that no one would be intelligible to the speakers of any other. What is the reason of all this? and what was the still earlier and unrecorded condition out of which each, or all together, arose? Respecting each word of every language now existing, we know that it is used by the new individuals born into its community because it was used before, and the new-comer had only to imitate his predecessors, to do as they set him the example. Now what did the first speaking individuals do, who had no predecessors to set them an example? What, or of what kind, were the significant utterances they used, and how did these obtain their significance? To reply to these questions is to determine the origin of language; and Professor Steinthal does not so much as lift his finger toward answering them. He shows the same incapacity of appreciation respecting the main point as we had to notice in regard to one or two preliminary points at the commencement of the discussion. We have an historical inquiry before us, and he wants to force it into a metaphysical form.

He ignores all that has been accomplished in our day by the historical study of language; there is not a sentence in the chapter, so far as we have observed, which implies the existence of such a branch of knowledge as comparative philology. Whatever he may have learned and done in that direction, he keeps it out of sight here, and lets us behold only the psychologist. He ignores all that has been done by anthropology, in tracing out the history of other departments of human culture, and determining the general character of the process of development by which man has become what he is. We can hardly say that his theory is antagonistic to these sciences, or inconsistent with them, so much as that it has nothing in common with them. It belongs to the period before they came into being. Born in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it is nevertheless the child of the eighteenth, or of any earlier century you may choose. There was needed to produce it only an exalted idea of the creative forces of the human soul; and that, we venture to say, might have been found in at least a few exalted heads among the philosophers of any age. This may be, after all, the deeper reason why it seeks its antagonists among the linguistic theorizers of another century than ours. Views similar to those which we have been sustaining in opposition to it have been within not many years drawn out in a systematic and consistent form, based upon the established facts of linguistic and anthropological science, and extended by inductive methods over the whole ground of linguistic study, from the present time back to the beginning; and here, it might fairly be thought, Professor Steinthal would have found foes better worth contending with, and an opportunity to test the soundness of his views by seeing how effectively they could be made to confront the living and aggressive views of others; but he does not take the slightest notice of them, direct or implied. References, it is true, to other students of language, of any class, are very rare in the volume; the psychologic method is mainly independent of all aid, save from the soul of the investigator.

There remains, however, one more shift of ground for our author to make in the progress of his ratiocination. As he has successively set up the provisional assumptions that language is an invention and a product, and, after reasoning awhile

upon them, has got above and discarded them, so he now treats in the same way his last thesis, that language is a birth. Noting that speech does not exist in grammar and dictionary, but in the actual use and utterance of men, he pronounces it "no abiding existence, but a fleeting activity." It is "a mere possibility, which under due circumstances expresses itself, is exercised, and then becomes reality, but only for the moment. . . . Language is not a something, like powder, but an occurrence, like the explosion; it is not an organ, like the eye and ear, but a capacity and activity, like seeing and hearing." All this, again, is in our opinion very verbiage, mere turbid talk, and mainly growing out of the fact that our author does not distinguish between language as a faculty, or the power to speak, and language as an actual concrete possession, or the set of audible signs which we first hear, then understand, then learn ourselves to make and use. The lack of this distinction underlies a considerable part of the false reasoning of the whole chapter, but it is especially fatal here and in what follows. The fault, it must be confessed, is in no small measure that of language itself. If the term *sprache* in German, and "speech" and "language" in English, did not apply indifferently to both things, if we were compelled to use one word where we meant the faculty, and another where we meant our current phraseology, the words and forms we make, half the mistaken views of language now in vogue would lose their foundation, and become even transparently absurd. The power to say "water" and to use it as the sign of a certain conception is a part of my human nature, shared by me with every normally constituted human being; it is a "capacity and activity," though in a sense so different from those of seeing and hearing that we can only marvel at Professor Steinthal's mentioning them together, and fear that there is unsoundness in his psychology as well as in his linguistic philosophy. Seeing and hearing are capacities with which the will has nothing directly to do; they are passive, receptive; only refrain from shutting our eyes and ears, and visible and audible things cannot but impress the sense, and impress it practically alike in all men; while, on the other hand, an act of the will is necessary to every sound we utter, as much as to every gesture we make. In short, we have here one more of

those unfortunate comparisons of which our author is so prolific in this chapter. But the word "water" is neither a capacity nor an activity; it is a *product*, not less so than is a machine, though in quite another way; it is capable of being first originated, or produced, or invented, at a given time, and thenceforward reproduced by learning and imitation; it is capable of being described, and depicted, and represented, and set down in dictionary, and its use regulated by grammar. Think of a grammar of capacity, a dictionary of activities! And of such products as "water" is all human speech, in the concrete sense of the term, composed. When, then, the paragraph goes on to say, "Such was and is language at all times. The primitive man saw not otherwise and spoke not otherwise than we at the moment when we speak," we answer that the statement is either a truism or a falsity, according as it is understood; and that, as the writer appears to suppose it has both senses, he is partly right and partly wrong; but that the truth is a worthless one, and all the point lies in the part that is false. That the primitive man had a mind like ours and used organs like ours, and that their joint working was after much the same fashion as in us, is so palpably true as to be almost impertinent; but that he said "water," as we do, and for the reason that he had heard some one else say it before him, is not true; and we crave to know whether he said anything when he had formed the conception of water (a conception which he was fully capable of forming without speech); and, if he did, what it was, and why.

That which follows is in the same strain. There is, we are told, absolutely no essential distinction between the original creation of language, the process of children's learning to speak, and the speaking which now goes on daily and hourly everywhere where human beings are to be found. There is no origin of language, otherwise than as it originates anew in every word we utter. And now all is finished. To adopt one of our author's favorite comparisons, the question of origin is not a substantial thing, like powder; it is a mere fleeting aspect, like the explosion; a little smouch, a momentary bad smell, and it is over; we are left with only the mortification of having concerned ourselves about a matter in which there was absolutely nothing.

Here, for the first time, Professor Steinthal is seized with a slight misgiving. May not his conclusions strike some persons as paradoxical? May it not appear that he arrives at this general identification of everything in language by ignoring essential distinctions? We seem to hear from his readers one universal cry of assent. But it does not reach his ears; and he proceeds to reason down his misgiving, after his peculiar fashion. Accepting, apparently, as impregnably established the general impression that there must be something deep and wonderful about the origin of language, he endeavors to remove any possible scruples on our part as to the identity of everything else with it, by proving that these everythings are also deep and wonderful, each in its way. In the first place, he assumes that any one of us who is profound enough will have already convinced himself that children's learning to speak is just as mysterious as the primitive man's creation of speech. We confess, however, that we are not profound enough for that; that the acquisition of language by children does not seem to us any mystery at all. We stand in an attitude of constant wonder and admiration before the human mind, with its wealth of endowments, its infinite acquirements, and the unlimited possibilities of its future; but that a child, after hearing a certain word used some scores or hundreds of times, comes to understand what it means, and then, a little later, to pronounce and use it, perhaps feebly and blunderingly at first, — this does not seem to us any more astonishing than the exercise of the same child's capacities in other directions; in acquiring, for instance, the command of a musical instrument, or mastering the intricacies of mathematics. Our admiration is called out in a much higher degree by considering what this simple instrumentality finally comes to be in the matured man, what power it gives him over himself and others, and the secrets of the world about him. And we wonder most of all when we consider the history of language, and see how its growth has gone hand in hand with the cultural development of the race, at once the result and the efficient aid of the latter. In fact, we think our appreciation of the wondrous character of language a vastly higher one than Professor Steinthal's; for, while he holds that any two or three human beings, putting



their heads together, in any age and under any circumstances, not only can, but of necessity must, produce it in all its essential features, we think it a possible result only of the accumulated labors of a series of generations, working on step by step, making every acquired item the means of new acquisitions. But let us see what he has to say in the way of setting forth the deep mystery of our daily speech, that we may be thereby led to regard ourselves as the true originators of language. "Only notice how, on the one hand, a person speaking in a strange tongue, *with which he is not very familiar*, gathers the words laboriously together in his memory and combines them with reflection; and how, on the other hand, when we use our mother-tongue, the words flow in upon us one after another in right order and in proper form." Well, we notice it, as directed; but we fail to see the mystery. On the contrary, we think our author has unwittingly solved the whole problem by the suggestion which we have italicized; the one language is familiar, the other is not. So the practised pianist sits down at his instrument with a sheet of dots and lines before him, which to another are devoid of all meaning, a mere intricate puzzle; and his fingers move over the white and black keys as if they went of themselves, without the direction of his will; and the puzzle is translated, at first sight, into ravishing music. But give him a new-fangled method of notation, "with which he is not familiar," and turn his key-board the other way, so that the tones go down in the scale from left to right, and behold, how changed! now he labors painfully from note to note, stumbling and tripping at every step. Or change the mathematician's whole system of signs and symbols, and see what a weight you have hung at his heels, until he shall have worn it out by sheer dint of dragging it over hard places. Let one pass, however, a series of years in complete divorcement from his mother-tongue, and in the enforced daily and hourly practice of another, and the balance of familiarity is shifted; the latter becomes the one which he wields with ease and adroitness, the former the one in whose use he stumbles, and has to labor and reflect. Is there anything in all this that is not fully explainable on the supposition that language is an acquired instrumentality? Is there, indeed, anything that is explain-

able on any other supposition ? Here, once more, as it appears to us, our author has failed to see the point of his illustration, and draws from it an unwarranted conclusion. All our readiness to appreciate the wonders of language will not lead us to see anything marvellous in the fact that one manages a great and intricate instrument with which he is familiar better than one with which he is unfamiliar. Next we are called upon to observe that the difficulties and imperfections of some men's expression in their own mother-tongue show us how admirable is that gift of speech by which the word flows forth of itself. Very well ; but what follows further ? Simply that men's gifts are various. Just so one person can never learn to be more than a passable pianist, if even that ; and there is an immense difference in the skill and effect with which two individuals will wield the resources of the higher mathematics. We by no means jump from this to the conclusion that music and mathematics did not have their weak beginnings and their slow development, and that the living musician or mathematician is in essentially the same position with every one of his craft from the beginning, and really produces or brings to birth all that they have recorded for him to learn.

And so our author goes on from item to item, where it would be tedious to follow him ; everywhere missing the true analogy and suggesting in its place a false one, and therefore deducing from it an argument which is overthrown as soon as stated. We will pass over all of them excepting the last, where he points out that "many a one who at other times is but a stammerer, becomes eloquent when he falls under the influence of passion (*in Leidenschaft gerät*). Just in an excited condition of mind, then, when the clearness of his consciousness is diminished, when he is carried away, the fount of speech flows fullest ; for [reverting suddenly to his favorite obstetrical parallel], the more painful the throes, the easier the birth." Disregarding the slightly paradoxical character of the last statement (as if the throes were not a part of the process of birth itself), as well as the characteristic weakness of the comparison in the essential point (for, to make it good, a violent headache, or severe wrenches of rheumatism, or a sound whipping, ought to make labor easy), we would urge in reply that excitement, up to

a certain point, has never been looked upon as dulling the powers of action, either mental or physical. The man who in the exaltation of passion would show a capacity of doing and daring, of exerting powers of attack and defence, of judging and deciding, which in his cooler moments he never dreamed himself to possess, need not feel that there is anything mysterious in his heightened power of expression under such circumstances. If he can wield the club or discourse upon the musical instrument the better for his passion, he may also better wield the word, without our needing to infer thence that the word is anything more than the instrument of the mind's acts. This, of course, without implying that there are not kinds and degrees of passion which may lame one's powers, either of speech or of action.

We must pronounce, then, Professor Steinthal's attempt to explain away the paradoxical character of his universal identification a complete failure, a mere continuation of the same sophistical reasonings by which he originally arrived at it.

After all this he declines to maintain "that, notwithstanding the essential likeness between the speaking of the primitive man and that of the child and the adult, there are not also, on the other hand, accompanying conditions which modify these three processes, and give to each a peculiar character. Only the differences cannot be understood except on the basis of the similarity." And so, it was necessary to lay down as a foundation that speech is always a creation, its origin the eternal and unchangeable origin of a power and activity in the consciousness of men; then to proceed to find the point of mental development at which speech necessarily breaks forth, and, to this end, to plunge into a psychological development of the processes of human thought. Accordingly, the title of the first succeeding part is "Psychical Mechanics," followed later by "History of Psychical Development."

That this is a direct reversal of the true process we are fully convinced. We repeat in summary the truths which we have endeavored above to establish: that language in the concrete sense, the sum of words and phrases by which any man expresses his thought, is an historical product, and must be studied, before all and above all, in an historical method. The

mental development which it accompanies, and of which it is at once the result and the aiding cause or instrument, is also an historical one, and involves among its elements the whole sum of human knowledge and variety of human institutions. The soul of man has grown from what it was once only potentially to what it is now actually, only by means of its own gradual accumulations of observation and reasoning, of experience and deduction. This historical growth is not to be read in the growth at the present day of an individual soul, surrounded from its birth by all the appliances of culture, with instructors on every hand, with the results of others' labors piled about it for it to grasp, in a profusion that defies its highest powers of acquisition. It is to be read only in the recorded and inferable facts of human history itself; these are to be first striven after and determined by every possible means; and from these we are to reason back to the states of mind that produced them. Doubtless a comprehension of the workings of the human soul under its present conditions will be an aid of high importance, but it will be only an aid. As well found the study of the history of astronomy on that of the laws of planetary perturbations as the study of the history of language on psychology. Psychology may be a valuable handmaid to linguistic science, but it must be a harmful mistress; it may follow alongside of historical investigation, guarding and checking every conclusion, but it has no right to claim to go on in advance and lead the way.

Or, if the case be not so, let it be shown to be otherwise; only do not ask us to accept the reasonings of this chapter, or anything like them, as in the least degree proving it otherwise. If this is the best that can be said in behalf of what we may call the psychologico-obstetrical theory of language, then that theory is an irretrievable failure. We have gone through our author's reasonings in detail, quoting in his own words all the principal passages, that there might be no chance of our misinterpreting his meaning, or of omitting what was essential to the right understanding of the rest; and it is seen with what result. We have not found telling expositions, arguments generally sound and cogent, with here and there a slip or a flaw; we have found nothing but mistaken facts and erroneous de-

ductions. The chapter is not entitled to be called able; even a false doctrine ought to admit of a better defence; we almost feel that we ought to apologize for occupying with its refutation so much of the time of our readers. But we know not where to find at present anything better on this side. Steinthal would, we imagine, be put forward by his party as their strongest man. It is, then, as the representative of a school and a tendency in linguistics that we have taken him up; to show how laming and disabling is the system and method in which he, with his coadjutors, works. Some will say, doubtless, that the fault lies with the metaphysical attitude of mind; that the metaphysician, in his efforts to get into the *a priori* position, to face and dominate his facts, really turns his back upon the foremost of them, as they surround him and drag him on in the opposite direction to that in which he fancies himself to be moving. We would not go so far as that; we are willing to allow, at least provisionally, that metaphysical inquiry carries one up into heights and down into depths that are not otherwise attainable, and that in its pursuit is the loftiest exertion and the keenest enjoyment of which man is capable; the metaphysicians say so, and surely they ought to know. We only demand that when they come down, or up, on to middle ground, when they take hold of matters that lie within the ken of common sense, their views and conclusions shall square with those of common sense; or, if it be not so, that they shall be able to show us why it is not, and to convince our common sense by their uncommon. The upholders of views akin with Steinthal's still constitute — as we hold, merely by force of tradition from the centuries of darkness — the largest and most influential body of writers on the theory of language, and they look down with contempt upon the opposing party as lost in the mazes of superficiality and philistinism. In our view, their profundity is merely subjective, and their whole system is destined to be swept away and succeeded by the scientific, the inductive. This alone is in unison with the best tendencies of modern thought; this alone can bring the science of language into harmonious alliance with the other branches of knowledge respecting man, his endowments and his history.