

It is the object of this paper not to attempt to penetrate any mystery, or to go behind the veil, but rather to show that there is no veil to go behind, no mystery to penetrate; and to point out the fact that in the known phenomena of existing speech we have ample materials for deciding on the nature of primitive language; for I firmly believe that the greater part, if not the whole, of the obscurity in which this subject is shrouded, or supposed to be shrouded, has been created by the dust raised by the disputants battling in behalf of their respective theories, and from their failure to perceive that while, on the one hand, no one theory is sufficient to account for all the phenomena of speech, yet, on the other, all the theories advanced contain a large amount of truth; and error commences in each case at the point where any disputant endeavours to establish his own theory as the only true rule of faith, to the exclusion of all others.

I shall also try to point out that there is no necessity to have recourse to miraculous phenomena of any sort in this inquiry. Those who support the theory of the directly divine origin of language are not the only ones to call the miraculous to their assistance. To my thinking, at least, Bleek's theory of the evolution of language is the most miraculous of all; and not far behind it in this respect is Professor Max Müller's attribution of the power of abstraction to man in his primitive state: of both of which theories, more hereafter.

Before inquiring, however, into the nature of primitive language, it will be necessary to define language itself, more especially in its relation to the first language makers. Language and its object may be defined as "*the intelligible expression of thought in articulate sound as a means of communication between man and man.*"

Some writers define language as being the expression of thought *and feeling*, but I would reply with Schleicher,* that the immediate expression of feeling is not one of the primary objects of language, and that language expresses feeling only in the form of an idea or a thought.†

Having now defined what language is, let us next determine where our inquiries are to commence—at what stage of human progress. There are extreme evolutionists, in linguistic as in biological science,

* Die deutsche Sprache, p. 4.

† The interjections, of course, are the direct expression of feeling, and as such must be excepted from this statement in so far as they are to be considered as a constituent element of language; a point which will be subsequently discussed.