

## ARTICLE IV. '

## THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND THINGS.

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HUMAN language may be regarded under two opposite aspects, or according to two diverse theories. The first of these, which may be termed the mechanical theory, considers words as nothing more than the *materials* of thought, out of which the mind constructs its own works in much the same manner as a builder does a house. According to this view, language is something wholly external and artificial, which can be analyzed and put together like any other mechanical product. Words are indeed the signs of thought, but the signification is wholly arbitrary, like that of an algebraic formula. They stand for thought as its representative or substitute, not as its manifestation. There is no interior and vital connection between the two, organizing them into one, but only an outward, mechanical union. There is properly no *soul* of language, and therefore no *life* of its own.

The other view is the result of a deeper and more philosophical insight into the nature of language, according to which words are not so much the materials or instruments, as the natural *body* of thought, and language is not a dead mechanism, but a living organic *growth*, springing directly out of the life of thought, partaking its vitality and pervaded and organized by its spirit. According to this theory, words are not mere arbitrary signs, representing something beyond them, but the manifestation of a spirit that lives *in* them. Their power is not conventional and fixed, like the signs of algebra, something which can be measured and weighed by definitions, but is rather a spiritual and inward power, like that which resides in a human countenance. Language in short, like man himself, is a living thing, subject to the laws and conditions of life. It is the synthesis of two elements, which must be considered together, in their vital unity, as the presence of one and the same fact.

It is evident, at a glance, that we have here touched upon what will be deemed no slight or unreal distinction. These two theories of language differ in their essential and radical idea, and like all other radical differences, must produce a corresponding diversity of effects. According to the idea we have of what language is, will be our everyday use and interpretation of language. This idea will not slumber

in theory, but will pervade and affect, more or less, the whole body and life of literature.

What we propose in the present Article, however, is not to vindicate a theory but to use it. • Accepting the truth of *one* of these conceptions, we shall employ its light in exploring some of the interior or vital laws of language.

It is hoped that the triteness of the theme will not deter the reflective reader from a fresh examination of it, since it is among such common subjects of inquiry that the springs of all that is highest, most earnest and practical in human life lie hidden.

As guide and goal to our investigation, we shall endeavor to keep in view its twofold practical bearing on the interpretation of language and its use in what is termed "style;" for if a true idea of virtue be essential to a perfect style of piety, a true idea of language and of the relation between words and thoughts, is not less essential to a perfect style of writing.

Language we have said, considered as embodied thought, is made up of two elements, which we may designate as soul and body; or, if we adopt a more strict analysis, of three, which three parts may easily be distinguished and referred to their several sources or provinces, mind and matter, the world of spirit and the world of sense. There is, first, the *sound* or articulate enunciation; next, there is the *image* or sensible type, some fact or appearance of nature, represented to the eye of the mind in every word. This, we say, *belongs* to every word, and may be discovered by tracing it to its origin, though in very many words of common use the image is lost or fallen away, and the verbal symbol stands in immediate connection with the idea. Lastly, we have the thought itself, or *idea*, something purely spiritual, born within the mind, of the mind's own essence. This innermost part, the proper *soul* of language, may be most clearly distinguished in what are called "abstract ideas," i. e. ideas abstracted from all sensible phenomena; although these cannot be *represented* without the aid of some form or image.

Take as an example the first pure idea of the reflective consciousness, that of soul or *spirit*. This in all men, and hence in all languages, is the same. While it slumbers in the mind as an idea, it needs no language, and therefore no outward image. But in order to be communicated this idea must link itself to something sensible. Hence the words spirit, *spiritus*, *πνεῦμα*, *רוח*, etc., all of which signify *breath*, the outward and natural symbol of soul, or the invisible principle of life.

Language then is not essential to the existence of thought, but only

to its expression or manifestation. Pure thought, like pure spirit, is certainly a conceivable thing, however rare or impossible it may be to find it. It may exist in the mind as an idea, just as the mind itself may exist without the body; but in order to manifest itself, to become an actual as well as an ideal existence, it must be "clothed upon" with some outward or sensible form. Now there are three modes in which thought can become external. First, the form may be strictly *material*, as in the plastic or fine arts; or secondly what, for want of a better term, we may call *phenomenal*, as in actions; or thirdly *verbal*, as in language. It is with this last form or vehicle that we have more immediately to do, although the essential principle in all is the same.

Thus it will be seen, that language holds a relation on the one side to *thought*, since it is the expression and embodiment of thought, and on the other to *nature*, since it must draw upon nature for its materials. Language may thus be said to stand as a mediator between spirit and matter, or between thoughts and things, not as being something intermediate between both, but as reconciling and uniting both in one organic whole.

We proceed to trace out, more distinctly, this twofold relation.

### I. *The relation of Language to Thought.*

The nature of this relation may be best defined by calling it an *organic* and *vital* relation; the same in kind as that subsisting between the soul and body, or between the life of the plant and its organized form. We use the terms "organic" and "vital" in distinction, on the one hand, from an arbitrary, and on the other from a merely outward or mechanical relation. Thus it is not an arbitrary or accidental circumstance which determines a certain specific form and structure to the oak, another to the vine, and another to man. The laws which constitute each living thing what it is, constitute and preordain the precise form in which it shall develop itself; insomuch that we say, the oak is included *in* the acorn, and grows out of it, although not one of the future *materials* of the tree is contained in it. Again, the animating principle in man and the organic principle in the tree, are certainly distinct things from the material organisms with which they are found combined; yet the two are held together by more than a mechanical union. The latter is not a mere instrument, but the organ and *body* of the former. The life-principle in each penetrates, pervades and assimilates the material part, so that both become truly *one*. What we see is no longer the same when existing as the organ and vehicle

of life, i. e. as *body* and as bare, isolated matter. Not only so, but the vital principle is properly said to create, to organize, and to mould the body in which it dwells. Now just this is what we wish to assert with respect to language. There is an organic and vital relation between thoughts and words, just as there is between soul and body. It is not an arbitrary matter what words shall be used to express a certain thought, but to every thought is assigned a certain form or body, we may say by a natural necessity, as truly as to the planted and germinating seed; and to every thought its *own* body, which, if it be true to itself, it must assume.<sup>1</sup>

Again, it is implied in this organic relation, that language or the outward form of thought, is determined, produced, organized by the thought itself; in other words, the individual form or body which any thought assumes must *grow out of* the inward life and laws of the individual thought, and not be imposed upon it from without.

Lastly, when thus organized and embodied, language and thought are vitally joined together; they are no more twain, but one substance.

In transferring thus the laws and relations of nature to things of the mind, we proceed, let it be understood, upon no mere fanciful analogy. We simply recognize certain fundamental principles, which underlie and pervade both nature *and* mind. We apply to one department what indeed is common to both, but is seen in more clear and palpable operation in the other.

But while the same laws or principles are found in both, viz., what we have indicated by the words life, growth, organization, etc., yet operating through and upon subjects so diverse as mind and matter, the *mode* of working or development in each must, of course, be different. The one is an unconscious process, proceeding according to necessary physical laws; the other a process going on in our own consciousness, and therefore in some sense voluntary, or at least *free*, like all which takes place in the realm of spirit. We therefore have it in our power to violate the law of development and disturb this organic relation, by arbitrarily *imposing* upon the thought a body which does not belong to it. To this, as we conceive, is to be traced all that is false and perverse in the world of letters. For we hold to original sin in literature as well as in theology; an obliquity of lan-

<sup>1</sup> We do not deny that there is *something* arbitrary in the *original* construction of language. What we affirm is the existence of a *law* extending from the thought to the word in which it is expressed, first apprehending, then uniting and assimilating it to itself, so that when once joined together the relation between them *becomes* organic and vital, as we shall see more distinctly hereafter.

guage, which, originating like the former in the will, has with it descended upon all, and from which it should be the aim of all true literary culture to redeem and recover the race.

Every thought, truly such, is a *fact*, a spiritual fact indeed, but not the less real, not the less possessing its own laws and principles. Leaving its origin out of view as a mystery we cannot solve, before which, as before every other spiritual phenomenon, we can only bow in wonder,—we approach and study this fact. We distinguish certain general laws, which belong to it as to every created thing, serving to mark its *genus* or kind, and distinguish it from everything else which is not thought. Of this nature are what are called the laws of logic, which relate to its internal form and structure. Logic is the anatomy of thought; its province is reached by stripping off the flesh from the body of the living creature, and laying bare its bones. Logic merely shows what is the essential structure of all thought which is thought, that law or order to which it necessarily conforms, and without which it cannot be. Its rules can never be propounded as rules for thinking or writing; as well might one set up a skeleton before him, and study it daily in order to grow by it.

Beyond these general laws, common to all thought, are certain specific and individual laws, often overlooked, which distinguish each individual thought from every other. For every thought, so far as it is a living thing, like every individual person and mind, differs from every other. Even what we call the same thought in different minds, is not wholly the same; since if it be of the mind, and not simply attached to it, it must partake of the mind's individuality, must be shaped, or in some degree modified by the mental character of the individual. Hence we may infer that its outward form or expression in words, will be no less distinct and peculiar to itself. Accordingly, if we examine the great original thoughts interspersed throughout the literature of the world, and which constitute its treasures, those which stand out most conspicuous above the common level of thought in the race, we shall find the language marked by the same individuality that belongs to the thought. The words present the same bold outlines, the same massive and compact solidity, which constitute the strength and grandeur of the latter. The language fits closely and perfectly the frame of the thought, like the well knit flesh and sinews of an athlete; and for the reason, that it grew out of the thought and is vitally joined to it, bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh. Take, for example, any passage of Milton or Shakspeare, and try the experiment of unclothing the thought or

sentiment, and of substituting other words. You might with equal success attempt to impose a new form on the lily or the swan, or to realize the fable of antiquity by a voluntary transmigration of souls. It is easy to disembody the thought, by analysing, i. e., killing it; but to inclose it in other words brought from without, to make it inhabit another body at your will, is an intrusion on the prerogatives of nature, or rather a violation of the laws of nature and mind, which neither will submit to. There is an organic relation, as we have said, subsisting between every individual thought and the expression of it in words. We may say that the thought *expresses itself* in its own language, and will not have another form imposed upon it by the will. It may even be taken as a criterion of the true expression of a thought, that it cannot be otherwise expressed; that whenever a thought can be expressed equally well in two forms of language, so as to admit of choice or arbitration in the writer, it indicates a want of individuality, and hence of vitality in the thought itself.

Again, every thought, truly such, is a *creation*; a coming into existence of what before was not. Hence, in coming into the world, it must find or fashion for itself a body or vehicle, perfectly adapted to contain and manifest its spiritual nature. This organization of language, or the embodiment of thought, is not distinct from the evolution of the thought itself, but is coincident or identical with it; the process, whatever it be, is one and the same. Thinking, says Plato, is the talking of the soul with itself. Thinking, as an *act* of the mind, is here to be distinguished from a thought or idea *in* the mind, which we have said may exist without language. The same difference is here apparent, as when we speak of a *principle* latent in nature or in man, and the *acting out* of that principle in natural or human life. Thinking, which is the development of latent thoughts or ideas, involves language, just as the vital principle in the plant develops itself only in and through its organization. Hence the labor of thought and composition. True thinking, and all true reading which involves thinking, differs from that superficial and passive operation, which often passes under the name, as the idle gazing upon a scene in nature differs from the deep, genial, plastic activity of nature itself; elaborating out of its own life the manifold forms we behold; putting forth privately, and with tender care, the blades of grass, secretly enamelling the violet and the rose, and building up the oak and the cedar by the slow toil of centuries.

The relation we have found to subsist between thought and language implies, moreover, that language is not merely the embodiment, but the proper *production* and *creation* of the thought. To

make this evident, let us consider for a moment what we really mean by language. This is not, as many seem to suppose, the mere aggregate of the individual words and letters into which it may be resolved. What meets the eye, and can be analyzed by the grammarian, is the least part of language. Words are indeed the materials out of which it seems to be constructed; but words alone, in the popular sense, will not account for, do not really constitute language, any more than the physical or chemical elements into which a rose may be resolved, constitute a rose. The essential nature of a rose does not lie in the materials which appear to the eye, or which the chemist can detect, since these same materials may exist in any other body, but in that invisible power or principle, whatever it may be, which acts and manifests itself through them; which penetrates, informs, in a word *organizes* these elements into the body of a rose and not of a crocus; which remains the same, and thus gives it identity, through all the changes and stages of its growth. So of language. Who knows not that words as used by Milton, fused, spiritualized and transfigured by his genius into the form of a Paradise Lost, are different things from the words found in the dictionary. *There* they are no longer words, but the living radiant *creatures* of his immortal thought, at once vehicle and spirit, like the wheels seen by Ezekiel at the river of Chebar; *here*, they are the dry and scattered *bones* seen by the same prophet, waiting for the breath of life to organize and animate them. It is only when thus organized and vitalized by the power of genius, that we come to understand what language is. The language which such a writer employs is as truly his own creation as the thought which animates it; it grows out of the thought, partakes of its essence, and is linked to it by a vital and indissoluble law. The popular impression, that language is a common and universal property, which thought finds ready existing for its use, is true only in a very superficial sense. Whence, we may ask, did the first writer or speaker derive his language? There was no common stock then which he could draw upon, save only the world of nature without, and the world of mind within him. The hypothesis of a revelation or Divine communication of language is improbable, except perhaps in the sense of a Divine mental illumination, and withal unnecessary, as we conceive. His thought, or reason created for itself a language through its own natural and spontaneous working or development. Being an inherent and necessary want of the mind, without which the mind could not unfold itself, it came or was supplied partly from without, but more and chiefly from within. Thought unfolded into language spontaneously, as the plastic principle in the germ un-

folds itself into the tree; and this process, call it creation, development or growth, is substantially repeated whenever a new thought is born into the world. The elements of language lie around us everywhere, in books, literature and common speech, but more especially as we shall see, in nature; just as the elements of the organic growths of nature are everywhere. But a vital and creative power is needed distinct from and sovereign over these, to appropriate, assimilate, organize and quicken them before they can become language in the highest sense; and this power is thought.

It is the distinction and prerogative of genius, to subordinate everything to itself; to transform all it touches into its own essence. This is especially true in regard to language, which is the nearest to its sovereign agency, being the very incarnation of its might. It is not so much subject to it, as *of* it, and incorporated with it. Hence the individuality of which we have spoken, always impressed upon it, which sets it far apart from all vulgar reach or imitation. Hence too the absurdity, not to say sacrilege, of attempting to interpret such language by a mere logical or grammatical analysis.

We are able to see from these observations, wherein the *vitality* of language consists. This is the vitality of thought, which lives in it, organizes, quickens and new creates it continually. Language may lose its vitality and become dead, by being divorced from the living thought which created it. All mere isolated words are so. They are the disorganized and disintegrated parts of language, which, like the elements of a decayed and crumbled tree, must be reorganized into new forms, must be taken up and combined anew by the creative power of a fresh and living thought, before they can live. And even as in nature, the organic form and structure of the tree may be entire and perfect and yet the life be extinct, so in literature. Much that is written and preserved in books, and is called fine or elegant reading, is of just this description. It is the outward form without the life; all style and no thought. It is truly amazing to see how much of this dead material is accumulated at the present day; whole books filled to repletion with words without thoughts, standing like dead forests, upright, indeed, and "regular" in form and structure, but presenting no fruit nor verdure, sheltering no life, monuments only of past vitality, and soon to crumble into oblivion; to say nothing of what is called the lighter literature of the day, masses of verbiage heaped together with scarcely thought enough interspersed to give it consistence. Wandering through these catacombs of the mind, one meets everywhere with the most admirable "styles," which doubtless when first constructed, were the vehicles of as admirable thought, the fit language

of great and stately minds, but which transported from the past, and made to represent the little and despicable "notions" of their plunderers, become a very mockery.

Hitherto we have considered thought in its abstract character, as detached from the individual mind which originates it. But all thought is *personal*, i. e. is the product and property of an individual spirit. Its whole value is that it belongs to a subject, and is the expression or manifestation of the individual mind, just as language is, in a more outward degree, of thought itself. It has no absolute and independent existence or life apart from the life of the mind, any more than virtue or love or any other personal and spiritual attribute. It is true we often speak of thought as impersonal, or as detached from its personal ground, but here, as when we speak of volition, action, character, etc., we abstract or set off, in order to distinguish the effect from the cause, or the property from the subject, not as implying any actual separation. If this view be correct, or if it indicate a partial truth, for we admit that it does not embrace the whole truth on this subject, its application to language will be obvious. The personal life and character of the individual extends and passes into the thought, and through this into the language, so that this becomes linked to the former not only by organic and vital, but even also by *moral* laws. As man is not a mere bundle or aggregate of powers, but an organic whole, as no faculty exists or acts isolated or independent of the rest, but all are combined in the unity of the moral life; so this life includes within its sphere all the developments or outward actings of these powers. This is readily enough conceded in the case of bodily acts, which though outward and physical, have yet a moral value attached to them. We simply assert the same in respect of language, which is a kind of bodily act of the mind. But this province of our subject is so fertile of reflection, and connects at so many points with what is most vital in the whole philosophy of man, that we must restrict ourselves to one or two inferences more immediate to our purpose.

It follows from the personality of thought, that all true language is a direct and spontaneous growth or development of the individual being. Its whole significance lies in this, that it is an integral part of the man himself; that it expresses not what he has, nor what he thinks simply, but what he *is*. This we say is the *true* idea and import of language, though we need not add that as such it is seldom realized. It is a serious and significant fact, that language as used by the mass of mankind, is anything but a true growth and exponent of the individual man. We speak not here of any wilful or conscious insincer-

ity; the very seriousness of the evil in question is that it is below consciousness, is so deeply rooted and grounded in the character as to become almost a part of human nature, and operates by a kind of necessity. The words of most men are separated from themselves by a double divorce; the first, between the thought and its expression, their language being conformed, not to the internal and individual law of the thought, i. e. vitally grown and wedded to it, but to some external conventional "style" or standard; the second, between the thought and the *being* of the individual (and here we deem that we touch the fundamental error), for thought, even when genuine, is too rarely an *original* and *vital* growth of the mind which holds it. It is a thing *acquired* and held in the memory as a possession, not evolved from within as a growth. It is seldom indeed assimilated to the mind by reflection, as all which is received into it must be before it can pass into knowledge. Knowledge comes thus to be merely the sum of what a man has, not the result and exponent of what he is. It is something detached from the true substance and being of the man, as truly so as if it were a coin in the pocket instead of a thought in the mind. What wonder that language should so often be the powerless and lifeless thing it is, when thought itself is divorced from spirit and converted into mental lumber! Hence the false and pernicious maxims that lie at the root of all false culture; which speak of the learner's *acquiring* knowledge, or the writer's acquiring a style, as if either were a thing to be imported from without, and not rather produced or educed from within.

This *organic unity* subsisting between thought and its expression on the one hand, and between thought and *spirit* (including the heart or whole moral life) on the other, is what we cannot insist upon too strongly, since upon it depends all true *effect* whether of character or genius, if not the reality of genius itself. Indeed, the difference between a man of genius and an ordinary man, we are persuaded, is more a moral than an intellectual difference, at least as these words are commonly understood. If we might indicate it in one word, it would be *integrity*, comprehending in this, sincerity and entireness; or since genius manifests itself chiefly in this department, we may call it *intellectual integrity*, integrity possessing and pervading the mind, thoughts and words, in distinction from moral integrity, of that which is applied and limited to moral actions. Two conditions belong to this power, or at least to every manifestation of it, viz. thought and its expression. Now whatever may be the differences of these, since they must necessarily differ in power and value in different individuals, which differences constitute the *more or less* of genius, yet there

is one element or quality common to all, which stamps every thought and word of genius, a sort of family likeness running through and marking all as of one family or kindred. This is sometimes called "originality," sometimes "vitality;" we call it here *integrity*. It is that which connects or links together in one vital whole the innermost power and being of the man with the outermost expression of it. A man possessing it, is not one thing in himself, another in his thoughts, and another in his words; but the stream of life and personality, so to speak, flows out through all in one unbroken current, just as we see it in childhood, which is the truest type and symbol of genius. Hence the spontaneousness which always characterizes this power. Hence, too, the originality or individuality of the man impresses itself upon his language. The language of a man of genius is a living growth, not borrowed from without, not isolated and detached from the living soul which utters it, but is an integral and organic part of the man himself. The same spirit which animates and informs the body, which looks out through the countenance, informs and dwells also in his words. Hence they are *living* words. The human soul is embodied and enshrined in them as truly as in any other part of the man. "The words that I speak unto you," said Christ, "they are *spirit*, and they are *life*." And this leads us to make one remark respecting *interpretation*. To interpret a writer's language, we speak of that which is worth interpreting, by the appliances of logical or grammatical rules, or any merely external system of hermeneutics, appears to us very much like the attempt to interpret a *smile* by the laws of physiology. It is not what a smile is physically, as a certain contraction of certain muscles, nor what it is generically, as an expression of mental pleasure; but what we wish specially to know is, what does *he*, the individual, here and now, *mean* by it? To know the full meaning of a smile, we must first know (constructively, at least) the individual character of which this is a symbol, and as such partakes of that character; next, the peculiar thought or emotion or spiritual current which gave rise to it and flows through it, whether complacent fondness or mirth or derision. In other words, we must look at it not from without but from within, by a profound sympathy with the spirit and mind of the individual, not with the eyes only, but with the heart. And this is as truly necessary in the case of words as of looks. No one truly comprehends his author, no one is fit to be an interpreter, who cannot look as far behind and below the letter as the heart is below the countenance; who is not so penetrated with the *spirit* of the writer, as to supersede in a measure the help of the words.

We cannot conclude this part of our subject concerning the relation

of words to thoughts, without analyzing this relation a little further. It is not the whole truth to say that language is an expression of thought; it is also, in some sense, a *limitation* of thought, a compression of the infinite life and activity which belongs to mind within certain *terms* or limits. In language, certain thoughts stand forth from the mind, embodied in words. But these embodied thoughts do not express or exhaust all that is in the mind of the writer or speaker. No poet, we may believe, ever expressed a tithe of the poetry and beauty that was in him. Behind and below all that is written, is an infinite deep of thought, which cannot be embodied in words, which outreaches all possible combinations of language. Now this unuttered thought, so far from being of no account because not put into language, is, if we may be pardoned the paradox, the most essential part of language. It is that from which the latter grows, which *charges* it, so to speak, with its spiritual and vital energy. It is only through this vital or *electric* connection with what cannot be contained in words, that words themselves derive their almost magic might, that they become vehicles of power, of beauty or of terror—are spells to awaken and thrill the world, or but empty sounds, according to the spirit which employs them. All words are powerful according as they are symbolical or suggestive. Their value lies not so much in what they express as in what they indicate. Or, more strictly, the individual thought embodied and expressed in words, is a symbol, more or less suggestive, of what lies below and is unexpressed. The great secret of writing with effect, therefore, is to employ such words or symbols as are most suggestive and characteristic; which indicate, most truly and comprehensively, not only what is in them but what lies beyond them.

It would be interesting here to contrast the power of different writers in this respect; to look at what may be termed the comparative *depth* of their words. Some writers seem to be all surface in their language, to possess no silent and reserved stores of thought underneath the page, no soil to which what is given forth is attached, and from which it grows. Their sole labor seems to be to empty themselves in words. Their language is not so much the expression or growth, as the *eradication* of thought. They are not content to put forth an idea, but must pull it forth with all its roots (if by any means, in any rare interval of reflection, it has taken root in the mind) and lay bare all its hidden fibres, dissevered from their vital attachments in the soul, as if they feared there might be some secret shred of thought within, which the world should not discover! Hence their words are as powerless as they are shallow and "obvious." Involving no thought in themselves, they demand no thought in the reader; of course they cannot

be misunderstood, for there is nothing below or behind them to understand.

With others, and these are invariably the men of most thought, and who have therefore most to express, words are used chiefly as external symbols, the summits, as it were, of what lies concealed and cannot be expressed. The "art" or excellence of such writers consists in *suppressing* rather than expressing the entire thought. This is especially true of that which involves strong emotion, which is uttered in the fewest words, but these the deepest and most intense. It is as if silence were the only fitting language, and the few words that escape were the involuntary outbreak of thoughts too great for control. More than this were a violence done to nature, an overstepping of the boundary between language and its mental interpretation, between what can be written or spoken, and what can only be *meditated*. The words of Milton and Shakspeare are mostly of this nature. They contain much—more, a great deal, than all their commentators have gotten out of them; but they suggest and indicate far more. They open recesses and mines of thought, deeper and richer than language can explore. They are transparent windows, through which we look down into an unknown and infinite deep, "the unknown depth of *silence*," as Carlyle calls it.

Every one who has studied Shakspeare, has been astonished at the wonderful depth of his characters. By a few significant actions and speeches seemingly the most casual, he lays open a whole internal world of character. We seem to know the beings thus casually presented to us, *personally*, all their past experience and history, not simply what they here say and do. What in actual life takes us years of intimacy to attain, is here accomplished by a few touches and incidents, we know not how. There seems an utter disproportion between the means employed and the result. The Oriental fable is for once realized, and the poet, by the utterance of a magic word, lets us into the inmost enchanted chambers of the heart. But it is the word of a master, which none other can pronounce. There are certain outward traits and demonstrations which *involve* the whole internal character, as the blossom involves the whole past growth, and all the individual parts of the plant which produces it. The poet, by seizing upon these, has put us in connection with all the secret principles and workings of which they are the result. Now just what these outward traits are to character, certain *words* are to the inner world of thought; and whose has the insight and the skill to seize them, whether poet, or orator, or essayist, is the man of power.

The connection we have thus attempted to trace between thoughts

and words, applies to what is strictly and distinctively thought, i. e. a distinct mental act or conception; for though all which is thought may not and must not be worded in language, yet what is thus worded must in a manner stand for and represent the rest, as a flower may be said to represent the entire plant. But there is a whole department or province in the soul, a deep and fertile province, which is not made up of thought, which therefore cannot be represented by words; the province of *feeling*. Who has not experienced at times the utter inadequacy of words to measure and express what he felt. Who has not found a broad chasm, as it were, between his meaning and his words, which he wanted another language to bridge over; for want of which, while his thought has found its way out in words, the feeling which was blended with it, and was its soul, remained unexpressed. We pity the man, we had almost said, who can tell all that he means; whose soul is never visited by an inspiration which he cannot utter in words; which all the powers of language, aided by tone, looks, action, everything in nature and in man, can only suffice barely to indicate. It is to meet this want of a language to express what is below and greater than thought, that *music* exists. Music comes from a depth and reaches a depth in the soul where thought and feeling are one; or rather, where feeling has not yet emerged into thought, but swells and heaves in its first chaotic ferment, and must express itself, if at all, in broad, interminable *surges* of sound. The feeling inspired and expressed by music, is of something *infinite*, without beginning or end, of which the sound is a sensible image or echo. Hence its appropriateness as a vehicle of worship. Its language is, "*more—more.*" Hence a strain of music never seems to *end* with the words, but only to become inaudible. Music is the inarticulate speech of the heart, which cannot be compressed into words, because it is infinite.

## II. *The relation of Language to Nature; or of Words to Things.*

Thought, as a pure idea in the mind, is formless and incorporeal; but in order to manifest itself, it must enter into or incorporate itself, in some outward form, must link itself to an *image* which shall locate, convey and represent the thought, as the body the soul. For this the world of nature exists, which is an exhaustless treasury of forms and images adequate for every birth of the mind. From its myriad objects and appearances, thought may supply itself with its necessary and appropriate vehicles. But here, as already observed, it is not an arbitrary choice or allotment which assigns to every thought its own body. A fixed law reigns here, as in all other organic forms of life, a law seated in the thought itself, which, from all the material elements

around it, selects and appropriates those only which its inherent nature and wants demand. The possibility of this organic union or incorporation presupposes a certain affinity to exist between the two terms. There is, indeed, a most wonderful analogy and correspondence between the human mind and nature, as if each were created and conformed unto the other; a correspondence extending to the minutest features and operations; so that not a thought can arise or be born in the world of mind, but its corresponding image or symbol forthwith presents itself in the world of nature. The two domains are everywhere interlinked by the vital nerves of language, holding them together at every point, and weaving them into one indissoluble whole; just as in man himself, who partakes of both, these two elements are seen to meet and blend in one harmonious and vital union.

But the true relation which language holds to nature, can be understood only as we conceive of nature as being itself a language, the language of a universal mind; as the creation and embodiment of the Divine thoughts. Here we trust we shall be pardoned if we indulge in a little metaphysical analysis, for the sake of precision, on what we deem a fundamental point in the philosophy of language.

Every *thing* in nature embodies and represents some *thought*. This we presume will not be questioned, except perhaps by those who *derive* all thought from things sensibly perceived, and who cannot therefore conceive of the former as the ground or original of the latter. But for such it may be sufficient to reply, that the things must first have been *thought of*, i. e. existed as thoughts in the mind of the Creator, else how could they have been created? These thoughts, moreover, of which things are the sensible types, are not to be considered as abstractions merely, remote from the things themselves, or as resident only in the mind of Deity; but as vitally present *in* the objects we behold, in the same sense at least that a human thought is present in the word which expresses it. It is true we do not commonly recognize these indwelling thoughts, as such, in the things around us, partly because our conceptions of nature are so grossly material, and partly because we are wont to disguise them under a different name.

The most rigid and penetrating insight into the world we live in, conducts us to a point where we must recognize two elements as entering into the constitution of all things, the material and the spiritual; or, to speak more modestly, since we know not what is matter or spirit, the sensible and the intelligible, that which appears to sense and that which mind only can perceive. The further we get below the surface of things, the more does the former disappear, as being only the *παίσμαρον*, the outward index or symbol, of which the latter is

the substance. The dynamical theory of the universe, which is slowly but surely superseding all other views of nature, resolves all natural phenomena into certain elemental and vital *forces*, acting not blindly but intelligently, or at least intelligibly, and hence called *laws* of nature. These it is the province of science, in its various departments, to explore; and beyond these it is impossible to go in the analysis of things. These, in fact, are *all* with which we have to do either practically or scientifically. Thus the mechanist deals with matter only as the manifesto of a certain law or *force* called gravity. The chemist regards it as a complex of *powers* interacting in certain determinate *ratios*. The physiologist has to do with the higher power of *life*, as it develops itself by embodying its own idea in organized forms.

Now what are these laws or ideal forces? That they are something *spiritual*, is implied in the very idea of force or *power*. That they originate in *mind*, is evident from the fact that they are *ideal* and the sole matter of science. Are they anything else, if we may so designate them, than *efficient thoughts*, thoughts made actual, or *externalizing themselves* in things? Plato's "divine ideas," when rightly understood, as not merely the archetypes but the constitutive soul of all things, are not a mere fiction of poetry, but the result of the calmest and deepest philosophy, and even coincident with the highest teachings of Christian faith. These ideas differ from our own only as being themselves creative or constitutive; i. e. when interpreted into the language of theology, the divine intelligence and power, as manifested in nature, are not separated like the human, and as in our contemplation of them, but exist and act together as one and the same spiritual activity. Viewed on the side of intellect, they are *ideas*, after which the divine working proceeds; on the side of will, they are *energies*, directed always by an intelligent design. Regarded concretely, as the synthesis of both, they are *laws*, i. e. manifestations, in time and space, of a divine, omnipresent *Spirit*, of which nature is at once the language and living organ.

What we wish to come to, from this preliminary view, and which may have been already anticipated, is briefly this: that *the soul of language and the soul of things are the same*. Things, i. e. sensible objects, are the original, divine words, from which our words are derived. In language, we do but imitate or repeat the creative process of nature, and embody in words the same thoughts which are there embodied in things.

If we are understood in what we have here rather summarily advanced, it will be seen that language, as the offspring of reason, deals wholly with the ideal, with *thought* in its immaterial and spiritual essence, and has to do with things only as they are the exponents

of thought. Words represent *ideas*, whether these be considered as furnished to the mind from without, or as generated in it. When applied to external objects, language denotes, not the outward and sensible type, the *material* of the thing, but that which *this* represents. In short, the process involved in language is precisely the same as when we read or translate a book. We first apprehend the thought through its written symbol, and then express or interpret it into another symbol or language of our own. Hence too it will be seen, that the name of a thing, the "word" (*λόγος*) by which it is known, is not that arbitrary and insignificant matter it is sometimes taken to be. It indicates the true *substance* of the thing itself.<sup>1</sup>

To know the full significance of names or words, therefore, is to know and understand things; and to be able to give its true name to any object, requires a previous insight into its real and essential nature. Hence the opinion entertained by Plato, that a superhuman intelligence must have imposed the first names on things.

Again, since words represent something fixed and substantial underneath phenomena, we may see how language, ever wiser than all skeptical philosophy, recognizes even in its most common and popular usage, the identity of things, which a superficial reasoning from appearances would lead us to deny. Thus we speak of a tree, a forest, etc., as being the same from one generation to another, although not one of its original materials may remain. The form of appearance, too, is continually changing, yet it is still the same tree; and this not in a loose sense, but verily and strictly the same. On this ground alone are we able to rest the identity of the human body at the resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The senses alone do not give us the notion of *substance* when we look at a thing, but only certain isolated *sensations* or appearances, as color, shape, hardness, etc. These the mind receives, combines into unity, and attributes to an individual thing or *substance*, which *stands under* or behind them. This is properly an inference or induction of the mind, as truly so as the law of gravitation. Hence we *understand* a thing, when we look through its outward phenomena to its idea or substance. Hence the brute does not attain to the notion of an individual *thing*, because he does not *think*. These words, it is hardly necessary to say, are primarily one and the same.

<sup>2</sup> As we have here touched upon the great question of what constitutes identity, we take the liberty to subjoin a few remarks. Some writers have thrown a good deal of needless confusion over this subject, by confounding identity of substance with identity of matter or material phenomena. Thus it is argued that there cannot be a resurrection of the *same* body, because the body itself does not continue the same from one period to another, since its particles are constantly changing, etc. Now without stopping to inquire whether the popular notions respecting this doctrine are right or wrong, let us simply ask ourselves what we mean when we utter the word "*body*?"

Nature, we have said, is a universal language, whose words are things, and the true prototypes of our words. But these single terms, i. e. individual things, do not comprise the whole of this language, any more than the terms found in a dictionary are the whole of human language. They are only its elements or materials. There are other and deeper thoughts in nature than those which a scientific analysis can discover, thoughts and meanings which can be expressed only by *combinations* of these terms which *are* thus expressed everywhere and constantly, in the thousand-fold linked forms and aspects and voices around us; in the mountain and vale and forest, the deep blue ocean, and the deeper heaven and all which it contains and canopies; moral and spiritual meanings, which carry us far into the heart and mind of nature, or rather of that Being who, in all this wonderful and stupendous language, is evermore expressing Himself! Now as individual objects must be *read* before they can be named, or become words, so these deeper spiritual meanings must be apprehended before they can pass into language, and become the symbols of corresponding thoughts within us; and this is the province or prerogative of the poet, as the former is of scientific insight. The man of science and the poet are both properly interpreters of nature. Both are conversant with the *thoughts* embodied and expressed in nature; only the former stops at the scientific thought; the latter passes beyond this, to the moral and spiritual. Nature is a language, the meaning of which is deep or shallow according to the insight we bring to it; and it is no less absurd to limit its significance to the *literal*, i. e. scientific import

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Simply the sum of its material particles? If so, these would still be a human body, though decomposed and scattered to the four winds. We mean something else; that *viz.* which makes or *constitutes* it a body and not a heap of dust, that which lives and walks before us as the incarnation of spirit. The *substance* of the body, or the *idea* which is represented by the word, is something besides matter or which appears to the senses. It is one and permanent, notwithstanding the manifoldness and flux of the latter. The same identical substance *stands under*, lives through, and causes each successive change of form and particles. It *includes in itself* all the changes and successions of growth, as the mind includes all its own thoughts; and we might just as well say that the mind loses its identity with every successive thought, as the body with every change of its particles.

The bearing of these remarks on the doctrine of the resurrection is obvious. Since the idea or law of the body, and not the matter of it, constitutes its identity, the same body which lives through successive changes of matter, may, for aught we can see, survive or *live over* successive organizations. What we bury in the earth, is manifestly *not* the same body which lived and moved as the incarnation of spirit, but only its *exuviae*, the "remains" of what *was* a body, but is now—dust. *It* therefore need not be raised again. The Bible teaches the resurrection of the *body*, not of the *corpse*.

of its individual terms, than to interpret *Paradise Lost*, for example, by the light of grammars and dictionaries. The moral and spiritual are as truly contained and expressed in it, as the scientific. The poet does not bring his thoughts and impose them upon nature, or merely link them to its forms; they are there already, as truly as what are called natural or organic laws. He simply finds them, apprehends them by the power of imagination. He does not read the inscriptions written upon things, as many are fond of saying, but he reads things themselves, i. e. the real thought and meaning of which they are the language and expression. In other words, what we call the language of nature is not an artificial language, the arbitrary association of natural forms and phenomena with human feelings and fancies, but the true and appropriate vehicle of God's thoughts. Poetry, in its true sense, is the translation of the language of nature into the language of feeling. As science is rightly called the interpretation of nature, i. e. if we understand ourselves, the reading of God's thoughts in nature; so poetry is only a deeper and more thoughtful reading of the same book; viz. an insight into its interior and spiritual meaning, its beauty, its pathos and its passion. Poetry is indeed "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science."

The last and deepest insight we get into nature, is when we read it *religiously*, as a divine revelation, with a heart to understand in it what God would say to his creatures, his intelligent and spiritual, but sinful and *alienated* creatures; when we connect this language vitally with a living, *personal* and omnipresent *Spirit*, who is evermore speaking through these outward symbols to our hearts.

Here we can see the reason of the close affinity between the human mind and nature, and why the latter is such a perfect mould and mirror of the former. It is because there is mind in nature, because it is itself the language of a universal mind, that the human mind can find in it the vehicles of its own thought. Nature supplies human language with its materials, i. e. with forms and symbols to convey human thoughts, but only because they have first been moulded and organized to convey the thoughts of God. There is thus a twofold union and affinity between language and nature; language has all its roots in nature, but the life which vitalizes it is derived from *mind*, which is present equally in both.

The fundamental law of language, or the expression of human thoughts, is that they be embodied in the very forms or images in which the like thoughts are embodied in nature. Hence a close familiarity with nature, with all its aspects and phenomena, especially

with the *spirit* expressed in and through them, is essential to the perfection of language. For this reason poets surpass other men in the use and mastery of language. A true poet reproduces nature in his own verse. The streams flow, the forests wave, the birds soar and sing with all the truth and reality of nature; and the reason is, that the very spirit which lives and works in nature, animates and moulds his words.

Again, there is in nature a *manifoldness* of meaning. It has not only innumerable voices, but each voice has many tones, which together make up a whole infinitude of meanings. Every individual thing, every leaf and flower and pebble, is crowded with divine thoughts, of which the wisest student may read a part, but not all. Shakspeare, who if any man ever did or could, may be said to have looked through nature, saw in the humblest and meanest thing a world of truth, where ordinary minds saw nothing. Yet not even Shakspeare comprehended the whole meaning of nature, or of a single object. Nature is an inexhaustible book, not only in its extent but its profundity; and for the reason that it is the product and expression of an infinite mind. In like manner we might expect that human language, which is a copy of that of nature, in proportion as it approaches the divine, would be distinguished by the same manifoldness of meaning. This many-sidedness of *things* we might look to see reflected in the *words* of the greatest and wisest minds, i. e. of those who see the deepest into things. This, we need not say, is eminently the fact. Without citing lower instances, look only at the words left us of Christ. What manifold treasures of thought are piled up in a single one of his sublime aphorisms. The profoundest thinker will find in these words enough to task and baffle his deepest insight; and new and still deeper meanings will continue to be found in them to the end of time. So also of the language in other parts of the Bible, especially the symbolic language of prophecy; which, being the language of *things* rather than of words or abstract terms, has necessarily many meanings. The Bible is the most figurative book in existence, and for this reason contains more of truth; or rather, having more of truth to convey, it necessarily resorts to figures or symbols as the only adequate vehicles. Finding therefore one truth or meaning in a text, we are not hastily to conclude that this is all there is in it, or that what another finds is of course false; since in most texts there are many meanings, thought within thought, as law within law in nature. If it be said that we are here advocating the obnoxious and "refuted" doctrine of a "double sense," it may be sufficient to reply, that the Bible was written for persons having two senses as well as one. We hold to an inward and

spiritual, as well as logical insight, one which looks through the latter as the soul looks through the eyes. The logical faculty is very welcome to all it can see in the Bible and elsewhere; only let it not hinder other and higher faculties from seeing too.

But more seriously. Since the Bible is a *universal* book, designed for the whole race and for all capacities, there must be in it a universality of import, as there is in nature, so that the highest and humblest may each find therein his own *level* of truth; and one level no more supersedes or interferes with another, than the laws or truths of mechanics interfere with those of chemistry, or these with the deeper laws of *life*. On the other hand, since there are truths in the Bible which *transcend* any one form of expression, a single truth will often require many forms or figures to express it; and the greater the truth the more forms will it permit and demand, as in nature, the more general or universal the law, the greater the number of its specific manifestations. Every *idea* truly such, comprehends in it many minor thoughts, and hence can be adequately set forth only by many and manifold symbols. We may say that a spiritual truth never can be adequately expressed in language, since every symbol employed is specific and limited, and expresses the idea only in part, holds to it only on one side or border. It therefore requires many and often opposite and even contradictory forms of expression, in order that it may be included and upheld as it were between them. Accordingly, he who looks only at one side of the idea through one symbol, and takes that for the whole, will assuredly err, and this in a twofold degree: first, because he sees only a side or border of the truth; and secondly, because he deems the real truth to be included *in* the symbol, whereas it is only included *by* or *between* this and many others. Only the deep-seeing and comprehensive mind, who can look through *all* the symbols to the central idea, and again through the idea at the surrounding symbols, and thus harmonize all in one total view, can be said to *comprehend* the truth.

To illustrate still further what we mean, by an example: God, the greatest of all possible ideas, is truly said to be expressed in every one of his works. All creatures and things "declare his glory," i. e. are so many symbols expressing each according to its measure, the one great and ineffable Idea. This, we say, and truly, is the *end* of their existence. Yet no one creature or thing, surely, can express or declare the whole glory of God. This can be done only by the whole created universe, all worlds, systems, beings, minds; all events past and to come; all opposites of good and evil; all that exists or comes to pass, in time or place. This is done and is doing forever. Who-

ever, therefore, shall approach this idea from *without*, i. e. through any one of these symbols, (for obviously none but the infinite mind itself can survey them all,) will find something of God therein; but he will be equally sure, unless inwardly enlightened, to include God *within* this one form or symbol. Here we may see the truth and the falsehood of idolatry, which is nothing but a misinterpreting of symbols, through a defect of spiritual insight. But if God himself cannot be adequately expressed in any finite form, neither can those truths relating to his being and government, truths which partake of his infinity and eternity, be adequately set forth in the forms of space and time, or in words drawn from them, but only *shadowed* forth, as eternity itself is shadowed forth by time. It is from losing sight of this, and the mistaking of the shadow for the substance, that all the wars of doctrine have arisen, and never can they cease till interpreters have learned to look beyond the shadow, and above the finite to the infinite; and to read both in and through each other.

We have alluded already in the course of this essay, to the power of imagination. As there is no element so absolutely essential to language, so constantly active in the use and interpretation of it, and at the same time so little understood, we shall devote the remainder of this Article to the consideration of this power and its relation to language, by tracing out as briefly as we can some of its workings.

Imagination may be regarded as twofold; or at least as acting in a twofold capacity, viz. as a *perceptive* and a *creative* power. The first is when it is employed to *read* external objects; by which we mean, the looking through the outward form or appearance to the thought or idea conveyed by it. In this sense it is the power to *see* in all which meets the senses, all the objects and aspects of the material universe, that which they mean or express; whether individual features, or their combination in what is called the face of nature. It is the same thing as when we look thoughtfully into the countenance of a fellow-being, to read therein the spirit and character of the man. It is pre-eminently the *eye* of the mind, without which it may grope and calculate about things, but has no real insight *into* them. Hence it is no less essential to the philosopher, who investigates the science of nature, than to the poet, who looks beyond to its spirit, since both are after the true *meaning* of nature. Thus Kepler, looking long and thoughtfully at the stars, reads in them the laws of physical astronomy, those thoughts or ideas after which the planetary system is constructed, and which had heretofore existed consciously only in the mind of Deity. In the enthusiasm of a true philosopher he exclaims, "O God,

I think thy thoughts after Thee!" Milton, looking on the same objects with the eye of a poet, thus interprets their motions around the sun :

" Where the great luminary  
Aloof the vulgar constellations thick,  
That from his lordly eye keep distance due,  
Dispenses light from far; they as they move  
Their starry dance in numbers that compute  
Days, months and years, towards his all-cheering lamp,  
Turn swift their various motions, or are turn'd  
*By his magnetic beam, that gently warms*  
The universe, and to each inward part  
With gentle penetration, though unseen,  
Shoots invisible virtue even to the deep."

Here the poet anticipates the discovery of the philosopher, and seizes with his imagination the grand truth, which Newton afterwards demonstrates by calculation.

Finally, the Hebrew Psalmist, regarding the same religiously with the eye of devout contemplation, represents the heavens as telling to the earth, night discoursing unto night, of "the glory of God." All these are instances of *imagination* looking through the outward form or letter of the universe, to its inward law or spirit. *Imagination* always has to do with the *truth* of things. It is not as sometimes represented a false and lawless faculty, but the truest of all, since it pierces into the inmost laws and spirit of nature, and does not stop with the bare truth of science. It is no less sure in its operations than reason, but it works more directly and intuitively. It reaches its conclusions, not by slow deduction or calculation, but by direct insight. It is the pioneer and torch of reason, which she sends on before to explore the way and guide her footsteps, or rather it is reason itself kindled to its intensest glow, and lighting up the universe with its penetrating lustre.

*Imagination* is sometimes confounded with fancy, which has to do only with outward and accidental relations or resemblances, and is therefore a superficial and often deceptive faculty. There is the same difference between *imagination* and fancy, that there is between looking at the stars in the light of modern astronomy, and as they appear to the eye under the aspect of constellations; or between perusing a book by its meaning, and amusing oneself with coincidences in the size and shape of the letters. Hence the analogies, so called, which fancy detects in nature, and the poetaster deals in, are always those which strike the senses chiefly, and are most apparent, while those which *imagination* apprehends and embodies are outwardly false, and

whose truth approves itself only to the inward sense. Examples crowd upon us here, but we deem it unnecessary to give them. Whoever can seize the distinction here indicated can adduce them for himself.

*Secondly*, imagination is a *creative* power. And here its relation to language becomes more conspicuous. 1. Its simplest exercise in this capacity is when we give a name to an external object, i. e. when we express or *image forth* our idea of a thing by a word. Here the word which corresponds to the *material* of the thing, i. e. some outward symbol or phenomenon of which it is commonly an imitation, manifests our idea or thought of it, just as its counterpart in nature manifests *its* idea, so that this first step in language is truly a creative process, an imitation by the mind of that which is ever going on in nature. Perhaps this process will be better understood by an analogous example from the department of *pure* ideas. A geometriician represents a mathematical or ideal line by an actual stroke drawn on the slate. This *visible* line or stroke is not the *real* line (which is without breadth or thickness), but only its *image* or symbol, which represents and conveys the idea to the imagination. It is important to remark here, that the same power which creates or constructs the image out of the idea, is employed to read or apprehend the idea through its image; and the same precisely is true in the case of *words*, which also are images of ideas. 2. The next operation of this power is, when we body forth in language the thought or meaning expressed by the *collective* object or features of nature. As when a poet represents the beauty of a summer evening, not by a bare description or detail of its external features, but by first *reading* these features, i. e. receiving into his soul the indwelling law or spirit of the scene, and then expressing this in the same images and symbols in which it is expressed in nature, that is, *re-creating* the scene as a whole through its idea. A perfect example of this is seen in Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Penseroso*. Here the poet looks at nature not so much with the outward eye as with the eye of the mind, and depicts it also with the same faculty, viz. imagination. The scenes and objects presented stand before us *idealized*, and for this reason are more *true* than in an ordinary description. 3. But there are other thoughts to be expressed than these we receive from without, and which we find actually embodied in nature, thoughts born within the soul itself, ideas above nature, which can therefore be only proximately represented by its forms. And here imagination assumes its most important prerogative, in seizing the elements of this natural language, i. e. the forms and appearances of nature, and *re-combining* them into a perfect language

for the mind ; appropriating and assimilating the materials found in nature to the inward thought, just as the organic principle in the tree subordinates the like elementary materials to its own life.

Every moral term, however abstract, if traced to its root will be found to stand originally for something sensible, some fact or appearance in nature, which appearance and not the abstract term is the primary symbol or body of the thought. Thus *right* primarily means *straight* ; *wrong* means *twisted* ; *attention* is a *stretching to* ; *reflection*, *turning back*, etc. These it will be seen are not arbitrary applications, but rest on a real affinity and correspondence between physical and mental phenomena. The image and the thought conveyed by it have an inward relationship which imagination discovers ; and this is not limited to a few striking analogies, but pervades the entire realms of nature and mind, showing that both rest upon one and the same ground.

The human mind, then, through its perceptive and creative faculty of imagination, finding these natural images preadapted to its necessities, transfers them out of the relation and use they hold in nature, and re-combines them after a new and higher law in its own thought ; thus forming a new creation out of the old, but without violence to its laws. This is the creation of *language*, of which imagination is the organising soul. The forms and images without are transferred within, or to the pages of literature, and wrought into new structures, made to body forth and represent new ideas. But this is possible only through a like power with that which originally constructed them, viz. the power of thought.

Thus nature may be said to possess a two-fold existence or life. The first is that which exists for the senses, in the manifold forms and creations around us, which is its earthly and temporal life ; the second when it passes into a higher and spiritual life in the immortal forms of language and of literature. Language also passes through two stages, the primary or *physical*, when words represent simply *things* ; and the secondary or *moral*, when things and their corresponding words become the representatives of *moral ideas* in the mind. This second stage or process is discernible in what are called metaphors, which are things taken from nature to represent or body forth other things or thoughts resembling them ; as when we say *light* for *knowledge*, a *rock* for *stability*, etc. Now in these and similar cases, there is more than an arbitrary association between the thing or sensible image and the moral idea. There is first an inherent and preëxisting affinity or fitness to each other ; next a recognition of this fitness by the imagination ; and, finally, the actual joining or marriage of the

two in a word. Or to vary the illustration, there is in every such word a real *incarnation*; the ideal or spiritual thought enters into a sensible form, so that it addresses the mind through the sense, or rather both at once in the imagination, which is the connecting or mediating faculty between them.

Since almost all the terms of language are thus metaphorical, i. e. are images brought over from nature, we may learn how much we owe to poets who first discover and wed these images or symbols to human thought. Poets are indeed in all ages the creators and regenerators of language. They supply its life by keeping it in ever fresh and vital contact with nature, whence it is derived. The poetry of a language is its true life-blood; and so soon as a language has lost its poetry, i. e. so soon as its words have become abstract, and no longer remand us to nature, or *things* as the types of thoughts, it is already dead; dead not by the extinction of the thought but of its body, the natural image which incarnates the thought. For a word as truly dies when its body decays and falls away, as a man.

In the infancy of a language all its words are poetical, because they are taken fresh from the living mint of nature. They are the true images of *things*, whose presence they recall whenever used. By and by these images become defaced and worn off by constant attrition in the market. They are then like worn out coins, which although "current" have only a *nominal* value. Then new poets or *makers* are needed to restore the original images and to create new. All living languages are constantly undergoing this decay and renovation.

4. The last and highest exercise of the imagination, is when not only individual forms and images, but the universe as a whole is subordinate to some ruling thought or passion of the mind. The *whole of nature* here becomes plastic to the sovereign power of imagination, held in solution, as it were, by the mind, which attracts and crystalizes around its own thought whatever without is kindred to it or can be made to receive its mould. The human world within and the material world without are for the time commingled into one, and love, weep, tremble and rejoice together. This is possible only as the result of high wrought emotion, and under the stress of the most intense and absorbing passion, when imagination is always the most active; and constitutes the highest triumph of the poet and the orator. This triumph is achieved in *Lear*, where the poet gathering around this "despised old man" all the congregated symbols of his state, all that is wildest and most desolate in nature and in man, night and tempest, an open heath and raving lunacy, he sends forth this forlorn but kingly soul to reign among them as the genius of the scene, to

subject and harmonize these discordant elements to his own infinite despair.

It will be seen from this review, what is the relation which imagination sustains to nature, and through this to language. It is the true *mediator* between the mind within, and nature or the world of things without; first, *reading* things, or educing the thoughts contained in them, and then *embodying these thoughts anew*, and sending them forth as things of the mind in the immortal creations of language. In both capacities, whether as looking through the outward forms of nature to the Divine indwelling thought, and thus wedding the universe to the mind as *science*, or as linking its own thoughts to the forms and imagery of nature, as in literature and art, it is the same sovereign, reconciling and assimilating power. Language is the true creature of the imagination, both originally and always; and the power or perfection of the one indicates and keeps pace with that of the other. This is seen most strikingly by contrasting the ancient Greeks and the Chinese, the intellectual antipodes of the human race. The latter people are utterly devoid of imagination, hence they have no language, or none that deserves the name. Of the former, imagination was the distinctive attribute, and in its highest degree; and their language is the most perfect ever created by man, the true child and image of the Grecian genius.

But we may not dwell longer on the nature of this power, the highest, as we think we have shown, among the intellectual powers of man, the most essential to the perception and expression of truth, yet alas, how sadly misunderstood and abused! . We have dwelt thus long on the exposition of it, and still linger a moment in its application, because we feel deeply its claims to a better understanding and regard, and not without the hope of awakening in others a like sense of its value. Without it, as we have seen, language is impossible except as a dead and mindless formula, and thinking, which involves language, is not less dependent on it for all its life and energy. Whoever apprehends the close and vital relation subsisting between thoughts and words, and the consequent reflex influence which the latter must have upon the former; especially whoever considers the almost miraculous charm and potency of "a word fitly spoken," and the pernicious and baneful effect both upon speaker and hearer, of a word *unfitly* spoken, or untrue to the thought, will be able to appreciate that power which *gives* the right word to the thought, which is the sealing and witnessing bond that *unites* the two, and is therefore the only true interpreter and mediator between them.

It is the only security we know of clear, profound and accurate

thinking, since it gives a body, with form and outline, to thought, and thus sets it before the mind with all the distinctness and reality of outward things. It illustrates and irradiates thought, and truth likewise, so that it is beheld in clear sunlight, not as a dim abstraction, but as an actual and living incarnation. The man without imagination may stumble upon truth, or hear its voice and follow it, but cannot *discover* it or discern its form. The difference between *his* thinking and that of its possessor, is just the difference between darkly "feeling after, and haply finding" the truth, and *beholding* it in clear and solemn vision. Hence the Divine revelations made to prophets, in the olden time, were addressed to the imagination, as the only faculty which could truly apprehend and convey them.

To the metaphysician, by which we mean one who is conversant with the *things* of the mind, and not merely with abstract and dead terms divorced from these, and to whomsoever would obey the heaven-descended precept, "Know thyself," this power is the most indispensable of all, and the highest degree of it too. None other can penetrate deep enough into the mind to seize its hidden and central laws, or arrest the subtle and vanishing apparitions that make up its phenomena, hold them in their individual shapes before the eye of the soul, and question them of their birth and issue. None but this can apprehend those tenuous distinctions which are the hieroglyphics of the mind, that must be traced and understood before it can be read. Hence it is that poets have hitherto been our best mental philosophers; and we must believe they will ever continue to be.

But if this high power be thus essential to the thinker and student of truth, it surely is not less so to him who would exhibit it to others. Truth to be seen and embraced, must be embodied, clothed in a sensible and living form, that so it may meet and satisfy the *whole* being of man, and not the intellect alone. To satisfy a living man it must present itself as *life*, having form and breath and motion, and not as a dead abstraction. Hence the universal charm of fables, of ballads, of true romance, and even of allegory; where, as in Bunyan, moral truths are really incarnated, and live and walk in this our human world, and are not apparitions only, ghostly virtues from the realm of shades.

To none, then, for hither our remarks and illustrations tend, to none is this power so absolutely indispensable, especially at the present day, as to the *preacher*, the commissioned seer and herald of divine truth to men. He of all others has to do with *truth*, and with truth alone. He is required to look the deepest into nature and man, to seek out and recognize its sacred presence wherever it abides, in all its near and

open or remote and secret dwelling places, to bring together and build again into a living body the disparted members of truth scattered everywhere among all the sects and schools of Christendom; in short, to read and interpret the divine word, both the written revelation and the no less sacred revelation of things, not superficially but as looking through and beyond the letter to the indwelling spirit. He needs therefore an insight, a searching depth and clearness of vision beyond what logic or hermeneutics can supply, a conscious light shining out of his own spirit, as well as a light meeting him from without. In a word, he needs "the vision and the faculty divine" of imagination, purged indeed and sanctified, first of all to see, and then to body forth in its own form, the truth it is given him to behold. Nothing, we repeat, will compensate for this, not piety itself; for are there not standing examples on every hand, of preachers eminent for godliness and orthodoxy, and sound wisdom withal, whose words are powerless because they come from them not as things, i. e. living and embodied realities, but as ghostly abstractions, detached from all communion with the actual living world, from aught that can move the senses or sensibilities of men, as truly so as if they were demonstrating a theorem in mathematics by the use of exponents  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$ . It is for the sake of the truth itself, which never is thus disembodied except in the mind of man or the domain of pure reason, it is for the truth's sake chiefly that we seek to vindicate the nature and claims of imagination; that in passing from the written word or the universe of things, through the mind of its interpreter, it may not suffer mutilation, but may go forth from man to man in the same radiant and living form in which God has arrayed it.

If it be not too sacred an illusion here, we may refer to the Great Teacher himself, as the highest example of what we mean by the right use of this power. Himself the incarnation of Eternal Truth, it was his prerogative in all that he said to exhibit it in fresh and living forms. Never have we read words so instinct and *alive* with imagination in its very highest activity, as are to be found in the discourses and parables of Christ. Observe how he looks on nature with a spiritual and even poetic eye; how he seizes everywhere its open or lurking analogies, and makes all outward objects tributary to his thought, by furnishing alike the lesson he would teach and the words to convey it; lighting up by his illustrating similes not only the spiritual but the outward and material world, till it almost loses its materiality, and becomes a transparent language. How he goes even beyond the poet and the philosopher in his insight into nature; since to these it yields only partial and superficial meanings, but unveils to him its innermost

divine import, as if the Lord and Author of nature were himself reading and interpreting his own works; making the homeless raven, the deciduous grass, and royally-apparelled lily, perennial preachers of trust and faith, and linking his immortal doctrines to the life-imprisoning seed, the clustered and embracing vine, and the heaven-descended, universal and emancipating light.

Finally, for we must not proceed further, we would recommend to all readers, as one of the best means of cultivating this power, and the only means of getting at the full significance and power of words, to accustom themselves to the calling up of the primary *images* of the words they read, of looking at thought through the medium of *things*, and not merely of abstract terms. The mind will thus have a double grasp upon the thought, first with the senses, and then with the reason, or rather with both in one in the imagination. We shall come to know words as we know men, after the flesh, as well as after the spirit. At the same time it is well, and somewhat important we think, to be able to know and discriminate what is flesh and what is spirit, by a discernment that can distinguish without separating, and can apprehend the limits and power of each in the unity of both.

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## ARTICLE V.

### REINHARD'S SERMONS.

By Edwards A. Park, Professor in Andover Theological Seminary.

#### § 1. *Prefatory Remarks.*

THE clergy of every land are apt to regard their own pulpit as superior to every other. Bossuet, Fenelon, Saurin, Bourdaloue, Massillon, are in France thought to be unequalled. Luther, Dinter, Spener, Herder, Zollikofer, Reinhard, Schleiermacher, Dräseke, Hofacker, are in Germany regarded as without a foreign rival. Who, asks the Briton, have discoursed like Latimer, Barrow, Taylor, South, Tillatson, Whitefield, Hall, Chalmers? And the American is unwilling to exalt any preacher above Edwards, Bellamy, Davies, Mason, and some of more recent times. Now, if it be true that the clergy of every land are superior to their foreign brethren, in their ability to influence their own countrymen, they may still obtain essential aid from