

A Philosophical Essay for the Reunion of the Languages eBook

A Philosophical Essay for the Reunion of the Languages

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A Philosophicall ESSAY for the REUNION OF THE

Languages,

Or,

the Art of Knowing all by the Mastery of one.

Oxford Printed by hen: Hall for James good. 1675.

The Printer to the

Reader.

Meeting by chance with this ingenuous offer, I thought it might not be improper since I found it in another dresse, to make it speak another Language too, which among the most creditable of Europe, hath not desisted from its claim to Antiquity: There are very few Nations but have, at sometime or other, laid in their pretences to a supremacy for their Language, and have boasted an assistance from unsuspected reason and Authority: But however variously the controversie hath been manag'd, the modesty, and ingenuity of this Author hath rendred, his designe more plausible, for having without any private regard (in such cases most usuall to the spruce and flourishing Air of his owne Native tongue) made that noble Language of the Romans the Basis of his project; And finding him throughout altogether free from prejudice and partiality, I thought an antevue of so excellent and usefull, a designe would not be unacceptable to the more ingenious part of the world, and that I ought not to neglect so faire an opportunity of recommending to their consideration that illustrious dialect, which as it is certainly of all others the most valuable, so to the shame of these modern ages, is either exceedingly impair'd or lost in its familiar uses among those who challenge the title of the Beaux Esprits_ of the times. The aime therefore of this Projector being to facilitate and expedite the Mastery of this as well as others, its survey may possibly appear not altogether ungratefull if it be but in hopes to find this encouragement that we shall be able to reserve some number of years from our usually taedious application to its study for other eminent uses, and commence men & Schollers at a much easier rate and in an earlier age then now commonly practic'd; I should prevent the Author if I should entertaine you with any farther commendation of it then that he hath taken for his model the most creditable and plausible Language of the world. If at any time you divert your selfe with reading Novels; you will here meet with notions that are both Philosophicall and Airy, and in order to the maine designe for the most part purely scientifick and demonstrative; and after if all you shall think that you have not mispent your time by observing something that is either a usefull or pleasurable I shall have my designe and the Author the credit._

Farewell.



* * * * *

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As the Knowledge of forreign Languages ought not to be reputed one of those vain and useless curiosities that serve only to amuse the mind, but is certainly conducive to a thousand different ends; so we ought not to think it strange if our age, which gives such aequall and secure judgement of the value of things shew more of passion then ever for it, notwithstanding all the difficulties that are pretended. I am of an opinion, that one cannot do the world a more acceptable piece of service, then to invent a certain and easie way to become universally acquainted with the Languages, and to quit a subject from those intrigues, in which the more knowing have at present involv'd it, either from a pure impotence to disingage it, or possibly from a fond desire of a freer breath of popular Air from those who are ordinarily most taken with what they least understand.

This designe being only a proper entertainment for the most criticall of the Virtuoses, I am the more inclinable to expose to the public, the project and plain I have form'd, before I intirely abandon the whole to their censure; that I may at first anticipate all manner of reply, and take advantage from the lights of the most accomplit and intelligent persons, if their zeale hath courage enough to make them willing to serve the world in their love and communication.

The Authors designe.

Most men being prepossest with two unjust prejudices against the nature of the Languages, th'one, that they have not all either resemblance or accord among them, the other, that they only depend upon the inconstancie of chance, and the whisling toyishness of custome, it might be thought no matter of extraordinary concernment, if one pretended to succeed in a study of this nature by the single efforts of the memory, without either the vivacitie of imagination, or the force of reason being interress'd.

But being not very well perswaded of the agreeableness of this method, in direct opposition to it, I have fastn'd the whole designe in hand upon these two propositions:

First, that *there is a certain accord between the Severall Languages*: and that therefore they are attainable by comparison.

Secondly, *they are unquestionably founded upon reason*, and therefore that must be made use of in their mutuall reference. It is upon these two foundations that I pretend to establish the true method of gaining a mastery of the Languages, making it appear to the world by a sensible experience that the mind can as easily make reflections upon words, as upon the things they represent: *Imagination* and *Reason* being the two faculties, that can reflect upon their objects, they both will appear in the present designe in their uses suitable to their nature, the effects of *Imagination* shall be visible in the severall resemblances, and the inferences that are thence made; and it will be the worke of *Reason* to reduce all to certain principles, upon which the argumentative part must relye.

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The first part of the Designe.

For the easier exercise of Imagination, I shall acquaint you with a method that will appeare very naturall, by which instead of considering the Languages precisely in themselves (as hitherto hath been usuall) they may be compar'd one with the other without much difficultie, and at the same time their accord, dependance, and mutuall relation, discover'd either from the resemblance of words, the proportion of their scope or compasse, and the conformity of their expressions. Tis true that this agreement, and relation is not a little obscur'd by the severall odd constitutions of mens minds, that checque at, and satisfie themselves with the first, and naked appearance without any farther inquirie, but withall its presently, and easily perceiv'd by those who are happy enough, in a genius for such kind of Learning. Its something like the paradoxes Geometry proposeth upon the relation, and proportion of figures, where we are mus'd at the first draught, and there appeares so little likelihood in them that the unexperienc't would take them only for the tricks and whims of a melancholique brain; whereas an ingenuous Artist, from the most naturall, and simple notions gradually conducts the mind to a kind of insensible discovery of truth, and makes it see on a suddain what it could not expect, and that with such open assurances as quit that from all suspicion, which but now had scarce any face of truth.

Knowing no other method then this, that may be proper to make new discoveries in the sciences I endeavour'd to make what use I could of it, so farr as my subject permitted; And since amidst the severall resemblances of the Languages, there are some so evident, as necessarily grace upon the most unobserving eye, I have so order'd my reflections, that by a reference to these, as models, I might by degrees arrive at the knowledge of the others, which although reserv'd, and sometimes more distanc't, yet are neither less certain, nor reall: not unlike the subalternate conclusions in speculation, which are not a jot the lesse true for being farther remov'd from their first principle.

Thus tis that a Language with which we are already acquainted, either by the assistance of Art, or Conversation, leads us to an intimacy with those that were altogether unknown to us before, and that their relation redresseth the treachery of the memory in the close and juncture of one with the other.

But that I may compasse this my designe with lesse trouble, my greatest care is to make choise of one Language as a rule to measure by, and a principle to reduce all the rest too: for to pretend to compare them immediately one with another, as some would have it, is to cherish confusion among those things that demand the most of order.

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The veneration that I have alwayes had for antiquity, made me think at first of ingaging for the *Hebrew*, as being (for ought we know) the earliest, the most noble, and most naturall Language of the world and that from which all others, in a manner, derive themselves. But it was not long before I began to consider, that this would directly crosse the first principles of my intended method, and appear a kind of indeavour to teach an unknown Language, by another, of which we have the most imperfect, and slender information of all. The kindnesse, and inclination I ought to have for my own Country, had almost perswaded me to rest my self there, and to make my native tongue the basis of this universall reduction but then the rest of the Europaeen world (which I have no reason to slur or contemne) would have as ill resented the project, as we did it in the Germans, who would long agoe have challenged this honour to themselves. I had in the end no other course to take, but to throw myselfe upon the *Latine*, in which I luckily met with all the necessary conditions that did easily, and plausibly conduce to my design'd attempt.

To say the truth *Aristotle* himselfe, a man of a judgement in such things the most exact that ever was to take a *measure* from, demanded but three qualifications, *viz. Universality, Certainty, and Proportion*; that it should be generally known to all those that are to make use of it in the quality of a measure, that it should be fixt, and determin'd in its selfe, and then that it should be proportion'd to all those things, to which it prescribes their bounds, all which characters do with advantage combine in the *Latine*, and that with such propriety that they cannot be attributed to any other without some sort of injustice; for the greatest part of the other Languages they are determin'd to the extent of a particular Kingdom or Country, the *Latine* hath no such disadvantage upon it. It is to speak properly the Language of Europe: Religion, and the Sciences have more enlarg'd its dominions, then all the conquests of the Romans; tis almost the common Idiom of the North, and universally knowne to persons of birth and education, who alone are presum'd to stand in need of the assistance of forraigne Languages.

It disownes the common imperfection of others, which by nature being subject to change, cannot by consequence, serve for a certain determinate rule in all ages; and if it now survive through the large extent of its entertainment, it hath much the advantage of others, that are in a manner deceas'd to this that is fixt, and retain'd by a well assur'd custome and if its being universally known allows all persons to share its uses, so its being stedly, and unalterable, secures it from all the uneven changes of time.

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As to its proportion, it in a manner keeps a mean between the Ancient and Modern Languages, it is neither altogether so pure as the one, nor so corrupt as the other, and so with the same ease is applicable to both; and in earnest is infinitely the most compendious, it being farre less trouble to passe from the mean to an extream, or from the extream to the mean, then to trace it from one extream to another. However this would seem incommodious beyond all redresse, to attempt to reduce all the Languages, either to the most ancient, or else to any one of the most modern, because in reality, the former have no more relation to the later, then these have with others of the same age, which have been as so many channels to derive Antiquity to us.

Besides the Latin makes a friendly meeting between the Eastern, and Western Languages; as to the first alone it owes its birth and life, so the others do to it.

It seems then no more difficult to attain the one, by streaming it up to the fountain, then to gain all the rest by making a like descent, by way of resemblance to what we observe in nature when we discern, as well the effect by the cause, as the cause by the effect. In one word, to make up all the differences that may arise about the supremacie of the Languages, I consider the Latin under three different regards, as the *daughter* of the Languages of the *East*, as the *Mother* of those in the *West*, and as the *Sister* of the more *Northerne*.

As it is abundantly copious, and rich, having been refind, and improv'd for more then 3000 years by an infinite variety of nations, with whose spoils it is now invested, so it may have a very great number of resemblances, under which with little difficultie it will admit of a reference to all the rest. For in conclusion, to reduce all to the most refin'd, and polite Language, is not what I pretend to; the Barbarous stile of the ancient Romans will do me as much service, as the quaintnesse, and elegance of Cicero; the Latin of the declining Empire, since the irruptions of the Northern Nations, may be admitted into this designe to as good purpose, as the language of Augustus his time; any sense is the same of that of the *Sciences*, which makes one almost altogether distinct from what is common and vulgar; the proper names of Philosophy, naturall History, and Divinity, those of Physick, and the Mathematicks, of Arts, Law, and Commerce; the names of illustrious persons, people and places, of which History furnisheth us with a plausible account, will afford me no lesse assistance on this occasion, then the names of things that are most common.

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After having made choice of a Language in order to the design, I am in the next place to determine my self to a *certain number of them*, the reunion of which may be justly thought a modest and reasonable attempt; for as there are some, the knowledge of which will be of very little use; so I am obliged to prescribe some bounds to a designe that would lead me to something indetermin'd, and infinite, and withall I suspect the inlargement both of mind, and memory to compasse all; especially considering the consequence of some to be indifferent, neither that of Biscany, nor the lower Brettagne should in my opinion much afflict any mans braine, nor do I believe that there are many more in the world interest for them, then there are for the dialect of Finland or Frizland, or the Barbarous jangling of the Negroes and Savages. In the choise that I was to make I could not but give the preference to those of the greatest credit and repute, *took some Prince* (excuse the allusion) *who having laid his design to reunite all the Kingdomes of the world, began his conquest upon those Nations that were most formidable and renown'd, from an apprehension that the rest in a little time would be less able to make any opposition.*

As I am not of an humour to attempt any thing without an incouragement from reason; or to give my selfe any trouble through a kind of caprice, purely to gratifie my curiositie; *Religion, State, and the Sciences* are the *three grand rules* from which I make a judgement what Languages are really the most important and noble; I have only therefore selected such as *Europe* may use to the best advantage, either for the defence of the Church, the good of the State, the advancement of the Sciences, or the perfection of the most laudable Arts. It is for this end that I have entertained in my designe all the Languages that concerne Religion, and make a particular mention of such as furnish us with originall texts, and the most authentick translations of the Bible, being of no mean consequence towards the faithfull interpretation of our sacred Records, and the confirmation of the Articles of our Creed.

I am in the next place obliged to find a place for such as concern and relate to State affaires, the most renowned Empires, Kingdomes, and warlike Nations, which may afford a suitable entertainment for all sorts of people, and withall very much conduce to the succesful management of forraigne businesse, the most important negotiations, Embassies, the transactions of war or peace, as well as the most hopefull designes of travellers. But above all I find myself concern'd for those that give us the most refin'd and polite discoveries of wit and Science, and have been cherisht and nurst up to our hands by the most knowing and ingenious of all Nations.

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I can hardly believe I shall meet with any inclinable to quarrell me for the number of 24. that I have thought on for my designe, since I presume it no easie matter for the most nicely curious to find a just occasion; and although there are none of them that are not unquestionably deriv'd from the same originall, it being no great difficulty to convince any well settled head, that in the propriety of speech there is but one mother Language: Yet to avoid confusion I distribute them all into 7. different orders, as they seem to carry an immediate reference to the Languages, which are the commonly suppos'd originals: such are in the opinion of the Learned the *Roman*, and the *Greec*, the *Teutonic* and *Sclavonic*, the *Hebrew*, *Scythian*, and the *Persian*.

The Roman Idioms are the *Italian*, *Spanish* and *French*, which cannot now be unknowne to any but such as are shamefully ignorant; I may adde likewise the *Portuguese*, which although not very different from the *Castilian*, yet is not wanting in its owne particular beauties, and hath receiv'd no mean accession of use and honour from the conquests of its Kings in the most remote parts of the world.

To the Greec I shall reduce its 3. principall relations, viz the Literall Greec, such as we meet with in our old Classic Authors, the vulgar as it is commonly used since the declining age of the Empire at Constantinople, and the Coptique or AEgyptian, which is but a remainder of the famous government of the Ptolomies in AEgypt: for although in its idiome there be something yet remaining of an originall stamp, either in that its words seem to touch upon the auntient Language of the Pharaohs, or that its inflection no way resembles the Greec, yet the Empire of Alexander and his successors induc'd such a confusion, that the Greec hath almost got the better, and involv'd all the lesser remains of Antiquity.

Under the Teutonic I comprehend the Almain or high German, the Flemish or low Dutch, the English and the Danish, which is to this day entertain'd in the most Northerne regions, and may give us some intimations of a clearer light then any besides, as having yet carefully secured some footsteps of the ancient Language.

The Sclavonic is accompani'd with 3. more considerable dialects the true Sclavonic, the Polish, and Muscovitish, to which the valour of the Nations that speak them have brought more reputation then any other ingenious performances.

The Hebrew hath no less then seven in its retinue, the pure Hebrew, such as we meet with in our Bible, the Language of the Rabbins and Talmudists, the Chaldee, the Syriaque, the AEthiopick or Abyssin, the Samaritan, and the Arabique, which in our age hath so inlarg'd its dominion, that its either spoke or understood in the three parts of the Old World Asia, Africa and Europe; and hath alone produc't such a prodigious number of books, that one would scarce believe how a Nation so famous for its exploits in warr should have so much leasure to attend to the improvement of learning.

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The Scythian hath two very illustrious dialects in its traine, the Turkish and lesser Tartarian, both which may serve in some measure to acquaint us what Languages are used in the North of Asia.

The last is the Persian, which is not only universally priz'd in the Empire of the Sophy, but a common entertainment in the Court of the grand Seigneur, as well as in that of the Mogull, where it is hugely valued and esteem'd.

As this reference of the Languages to one another would be to little purpose, if the less qualifi'd and accomplit were not capable of judging of it, since tis for them principally I am most concern'd, I believ'd therefore it would be necessary intirely to retrench all that strange variety of characters, whose odd and fantastick figures do strangely divert the imaginations of those, who are not well qualifi'd to conceive them. Neither do I intend to humour my selfe in that vaine kind of ostentation that some affect, to make this kind of writing one of that most mysterious parts of their learning, but have found out a method of expressing the sounds of all the distinguishing characters of each Language onely by the Roman, and that in a manner as easie and disingag'd as it is accurate and new; insomuch that the resemblances of words, which altogether disappear'd under those uncouth figures (which like a veile intercepted them from the less clarify'd eye) presently face the light, there being nothing left to interpose between them, and a closer consideration, which notwithstanding shall not acquit me from my designe of discovering an expedient to decypher with ease all those severall kinds of writing, and of fixing them upon the imagination in such a manner as without difficulty can admit of no confusion.

After having remov'd this first obstruction, which hath so long imbroild and retarded the knowledge of the Languages, that I may with less trouble reduce them to their first principle, I shall run near the same course, that hath been successively taken in their removall, so farr as any history can informe us, upon which I principally lay the stresse and basis of my designe by producing such arguments from it, the force of which cannot plausibly be eluded. For I do not believe that any of the more curious will find fault with me for fastning the origine, and alliance of the Language upon the same bottome with the begining and first society of mankind, who are observed never to shift their Country, without having their Language to bear their Arms and Customes company. As I never thought fit to dispute it with the Learned, why they did not make use of the affinity of the Languages, which sometimes are of clearer notice to them to discover the the first rise of a people more remote, and with which they are lesse acquainted; So I hope I may be permitted to make what advantage I can of the first combinations and colonies to give a clearer light to the beginnings and connexion of the severall Tongues,

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there being something near the same, or a like proportion between both: as for instance, To make good the opinion of Dionysius Halicarnasseus, and Quintilian, who both pretend that the Latin tongue is no more then a Dialect of the Antient Greek, is but in plain and easie words to give an account of all the little settlements, and Plantations in Italy, which for some continuance of time was only inhabited by colonies from Greece.

Upon what other terms I hardly understand this new project should be surprizing to any, it being not the meer effect of imagination, or an humorous Idea, neither will it much ingage any sort of people, but only such as can easily dislodge their prejudices when their owne lights shall assist in their conviction, and that from such assurances as shall be most free from suspicion, being faithfull deductions from the histories of the Colonies. But as it is impossible that the Languages should not be liable to severall alterations and mixtures from the different associations of people in severall removes, so neither is it to be believ'd that this was done all on a sudden; there seems to be a resemblance between the words that make up the Language and Travellers, who do not put off their accustom'd usages and manners so soon as they arrive at a new Country, neither are they naturaliz'd, but with time and by degrees become masters of the Air, humors, and qualities of the persons with whom they converse.

Since then this corruption is but of a graduall and intensible growth, there is a necessitie, for its more certain discovery, of an orderly reflection upon the very first beginnings of the differences, being in the interim very sollicitous to prevent a false retreat that might either ingage me too farr, or else in some unluckie circumstances, from which it would be no little difficulty to retire. And this seems to be the only way that I could find out to scatter a certain Air and appearance of truth upon all that regard the present subject, which hath no farther a probability then what is given it from such a carefull mannagement, that shall suffer no pass from one extreame to the other without touching upon that mean which is as it were the time of communication between both, for it is from this chain of words and sequel of alterations that all the suitableness, and likelihood of this present method principally depends.

Although in reality there is no reason to doubt but that the French is a corruption of the Latine, I could not however very easily perswade my selfe that the word *dechoir* should derive its selfe from *cadere* of the Latines, if I did not perceive all its severall and distinct conveyances through the Alembic. They that first corrupted the Language of the *Romans* instead of *cadere* made use of *cader*, as the Italians do to this day, who commonly cut off the final vowels where they obseve them to follow Liquids. They that came after proceeded yet farther

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in their retrenchment, and from *cader* form'd *caer*, as the Spaniards now use it, by taking away the letter *d* according to their ordinary custome, when it is seated in the middle of words. There are another sort of people yet more sturdy and blunt in their formes of speech, who would say *Car* or *Ker* by a contraction of the two Vowels into one, as is observable among the Peasants of France, and those of Picardy, who retain very much of Antiquity, which seems to be agreeable with the manner of speech among the Ancient French, who delighted to shorten and contract their words as much as possible, that they might make up a Language altogether as free as their humour, some of the most remote of these would instead of *Ker* pronounce *Cher* by a change of that firm and surly letter into one more easy and soft as we yet find it Customary in the remains of some of the Ancient Romans, and then after all by the turn of a Vowel into a Diphthong, from *Cher* is form'd *Choir*, which now begins to be out of date altho its Composit *dechoir* be still of plausible and commendable use. Thus 'tis that *Cadere*, *Cader*, *Caer*, *Car*, *Ker*, *Cher*, *Choir*, and *Dechoir* make up but one intire chain and connexion, yet all to very little purpose if any one of the degrees by chance should have been wanting.

For this reason altho I consider every Language in its greatest perfection, yet for clearing its originall in rendring this sequel of words more open and palpable I have been oblidg'd to make numerous reflections upon the older forms of speech as well as Orthographie, by which a better discovery may be made of all the varieties that occure in pronunciation, as also of the severall medlies and Gibrish of the Provinces of Each Empire that speak the same Language, but most of them in a singular fashion.

So that it is most certain that that Language which is most quaint and polite is very often the lesse pure and most debauch't, if we make an aequall judgment from its originall which is the most unquestionable rule: Upon which account the dialects of Province, Gascogne, Languedoc, and that which is known by the name of the Antient Gauls is infinitely lesse alter'd and distanc't from its original, then the Languages of the Court and Nobility, who take a pleasure in receding from the Latin: Those of Lombardy and Naples are for the most part lesse corrupt than these of Siena and Florence; Altho the Spaniards have a saying among them, that the Catalonian and that of Arragon is commonly more pure then the Castilian that is more Pompous. And not to spare the French more then the Spaniard, if they have reason to boast their Language to be the most refin'd and Polite of the world, yet their Neighbours might justly returne upon them, that of all the Dialects of the Latin, there is none more degenerate than theirs, forasmuch as its quaintness ariseth from its sweetness, so that it is not attainable without a strange descent from its principle. Thus *le Capo* of the Italians, *le Cabo*, of the Spaniards, *le Cap*, of the old French and *le Kef* of Picardy are all variously alterd from *Caput* of the Latins, but none so much as *le Chef* of the French, which notwithstanding claims the same Originall.

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But this is not all; as the resemblance and connexion of the Languages is not alwaies the same but depends more or lesse upon the communication of the Nations that speak them, So it's not necessary that this method should be invariable, it must admitt of alteration with its subjects, and accomodate it selfe to the diversity of Tongues.

There is much more of Art requir'd to reduce those which only carry a resemblance in their words, and abundantly lesse for those which withall admitt of an analogie in inflexion, And Since the same words which allow of this accord may have it in severall distinct manners they are not all (if I may be permitted to say so) neither of Kin, nor alliance in the same degree; their relation is sometimes nearer, Sometimes at a greater distance, for we may by way of analogie discours at the same rate of the genealogie of words as we do of the degrees of consanguinity; for if the one sort be rang'd under the same Line either direct or Collaterall, the others admitt of a little deflection and do not exactly corespond; some are allied in the first, some in the 2d degree, some in advancing from the branches to the stock, others in a descent from that to the branches, in a word this accord is neither always immediate nor at all directly opposite.

I add besides that as there are, some allied two or three ways and that since the first division have contracted new and closer relations, so I confesse there are others that content themselves with their Originall reference, and that have scarce any other agreement among them than what depends upon the common tie and union that they have with their first principle, which in reallity is no more then this famous Mother Tongue of which some make a mystery without well understanding what they say: For altho it hath subsisted in its selfe before the first confusion, yet we must not think of discoursing of it at the same rate, nor put our minds upon the harasse of receiving it.

'Tis no more now as some fondly imagine a particular and distinct Language from others, so that there is but one way to regain it and reestablish it at least so far as is necessary for a compleat execution of my designe, and that is to make a judicious choice of all that is primitive and most simple among the Remains of the antient Language either by considering the first combinations of sounds or by a regard to the earnest ideas of the mind, that were apply'd to these sounds; to the end that we may referr thither by a sequel, all the essentiall and fundamentall words of each Language as to their fountaine; which admitting of divisions, runnes now in lesser streams which assume the names of Originalls; because they have their rise from that grand Source where the first inhabitants of the world ingrost all. So that it may be truly said of this Mother Tongue that it is in no sense a part as being really every where either in sums of its divisions or in its effects and dependances something like your vertues of the elements and the originall seeds of things, that Subsist not of themselves but in the mixtures that compose them.

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I shall possibly be wonderd at, that being able to accomplish all by this single method, I have not in the interim recours to it, when all other ways prove unserviceable; But after all, tho this method be perhaps more ingenuous and of a more profound speculation, it is not however the most naturall and compendious, be it never so refind'd or accomodate to my designe, and I hardly understand the reason why any man should affect a crooked and uncouth road to active at his purpose when the streight lyes before him.

The second part of the desine.

Comparison alone is not (in the opinion of some) sufficient to accomplish the present intention, however accurate it be; if it want the supports of *reason*, it may rationally be suspected for being more airy then solid, and without injustice the same character may be given to some of those unusuall Chances that sometimes produce the most surprizing effects. Besides altho the vivacity and force of imagination be easily admitted into the relations of the Languages, and leaves there forcible impressions, yet it neither warrants certitude, nor dislodgeth confusion; 'tis reason alone that establisheth the mind in its cognizances, and credits all its conceptions with order, tis that alone which perfects the combination of all their relations and agreements according to the naturall connexion which they have with the same principles on which they depend in Common.

That which seems to be of greatest moment is that the principles be plausible and rationall and such as man may lay a stress on without suspicion or fear, and this is that which in a singular manner the principles of this Art challenge to themselves, being in my opinion infinitely more sensible then those which Philosophy proposeth under the characters of uncontroleable truths; I have therefore taken them all from the very natures of the subject of which I am treating *viz*: from the deflections and different regards under which the consideration of words may be manag'd; wch may last of all serve for an assurance, that chance hath not all that Empire and authority, that is given it over the Languages; and that it would be no great difficulty to make it appear, that in the Languages themselves there are well fram'd and solid reasons, for every thing that appears otherwise, and hath been hitherto suppos'd to be the bare effect of Caprice.

It may be perceiv'd by the very effects themselves that it will make up a science fully demonstrative, and back't with such consequences, as may very well passe for compleat models in this kind: And above all the scope of its principles infinitely shortens the way without being at all oblig'd to make a descent to a thousand taedious and wearisome differences; which appear much better, and in a more elegant manner in their principles then in themselves, which is an incouragement for me to hope that a Language for the acquset of which we have formerly by a close application numbred severall years, will by this means be made the divertisement of some hours, or at most but some few days.

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Words being in the opinion of all men but significant sounds, they may be taken either as they are *Natural sounds*, or *arbitrary signs*, I would say, either as they are the proper effect of the motion of our organs, or as the lively representation of the thought of our minds. And since they make their passes from one Language to another they cannot well admit of any alteration in this their transit but in three respects; for whatsoever change be suppos'd it will necessarily fall out, either in the *sounds themselves* that compose the words, or in *their significations*, or in their *different modifications*, and its from these three distinct regards that the generall principles have their rise, upon which I have fastn'd this new Systime of the Philosophie of the Languages.

That I may make my procedure more justifiable and artificiall, I examine with all exactnesse the different organs of the voice, the various motions of the muscles belonging to these organs, and the admirable concent and accord of those motions; and these I make use of to demonstratively explaine the precise number of all the simple sounds, that enter into the composition of the Languages, to discover the nature and proper pronunciation of these sounds, and by consequence to disclose their nearnesse and affinity, the resemblances of some, and the disproportion of others, their accord and opposition, their Sympathy and Antipathy, in a word, all their combinations and mixtures, their divisions and distinctions, their orders and severall degrees. From whence I conclude that all the astonishing and surprizing depravations and Corruptions that are met withall in the words that one Language borrows from another, in changing or in transposing, in adding or retrenching, have their basis in nature; which never attempts any thing but to the purpose, and with a sollicitous care, when to us it appears to have acted with an open and observable neglect.

We may Study Nature upon the Latine it selfe which may serve as well for a model as it doth for a principle; It will in the first place acquaint us that the Vowels are almost accounted for nothing, for altho there are some of them that admitt of easie changes among themselves according as they are more open or reserv'd, we know neverthelesse that there are none of them but what may be absolutely shifted into the place of another of what kind soever, either immediately, or by succession and degrees. For a finall confirmation of this we have no more to doe but to make an easie comparison of the different derivative of the same word, the reference of these three *Cepa*; *incipio* and *occupo*, to the Verb *Capio* may serve for an instance, if we shall but grant the truth of this principle which the orientalistes have always suppos'd, who form the greatest part of their words from the sole change of their Vowels.

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The same is not altogether allowable in relation to the Consonants, where we must not admitt indifferently all sorts of changes; the sole affinity of the Organs is that which must regulate almost all their varieties: the Labiall letters easily supplant one another but the Dentall or Linguall with more difficulty succeed them as being not of the same order; For as these consonants, M. B. P. V. F. make neer the same sound, which is modified by the divers force of the Air opening the lips after severall forms. So the Letters D. T. Z. S. ought to make an order by themselves, having a particular relation to the point of the tongue, which only by touching upon the teeth in various manners frames their pronunciation.

But it is not a single and easie reflexion, that can absolutely determine whether two letters have resemblance and proportion, because there are some of them that being made up of the movements of severall organs, maybe differently alter'd according to their various resemblances, so the letter H. carrys not only the resemblance of a guttural as it is pronounc'd by the assistance of the muscles of the throat, but also as an Aspiration besides the regard it hath to the whispers of the tongue, and the 6. Aspirates of the Lips, Teeth, and Palate. However if the precipitance or forwardnesse of any, hath by chance brought into use, other methods of altering sounds, as they have not so certain a foundation in reason, so neither can they be receiv'd within the Compas of this Art, at least being not establisht by a regular and constant analogie.

From the sound of words, I passe to their *signification*, which in the same dialect may be call'd the soul of a word, as the sound is its body; to expresse it in other terms, then what seem to relish the dry and unpleasant humour of the Pedant or Grammarian; I suppose that words being the expressions of our thoughts, and our thoughts the representations of objects, the different significations that are given to words, principally depend upon the various conceptions, that every Nation frames of the same objects, agreeable to what seems most neerly to concern it.

This ingageth me to explaine the intire sequel, and naturall dependances of our Ideas, and the manner of their forming; of which the world hath yet receiv'd a very imperfect account. In order to this, you may understand what those objects are, of which we have proper Ideas, and what those are which we conceive by forreigne images, and that we do not name but in figurative terms; whence ariseth that alliance and resemblance of our Ideas, and why the greatest share of our words if refer'd to their first originall, are but metaphors which represent objects to us in such terms as are proper to another, with which it hath some agreement, or neere relation, and withall what are the grand principles of metaphors; either of Attribution or Proportion, that do not only make op the beauty, but almost the intire body of the Language.

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Our Ancestors that gave no names to things, but by a directing prudence, purposing to distinguish the works of Nature and Art, had an especial regard to the naturall resemblance they had with any thing that was most known to them, and that was already distinguisht by its character, or to any one of their most prevailing properties, or to the principall action that distinguisht them from other beings. They made use of almost the same artifice, to impose names upon things more expressive of their properties, by considering them only with reference to their operations, of which they were the immediate principles. As for the operations, themselves being not aequally knowne, nor aequally obvious to sense they plac't the same subordination in the terms they made use of to represent them, that Nature hath establisht in our apprehensions and cognisances.

There being therefore nothing in the world of which they could have fram'd a more distinct Idea, then of the *motion* of bodies; which is obvious to all the senses, we must not wonder if considering Locall motion as the first and principall object of their knowledge, they afterwards gave no names to the Operations of each being, but such as seem'd to express some relation either to motion in generall, or to its different species, or to some one of its dependances such as are place, figure, situation, extention, Union and seperation, in a word to all the resemblances and agreements that in any way or kind relye upon motion. For if Modern Philosophy that Studies Nature by a closer application then formerly, pretend to a clear and evident explication of Naturall effects in the referring them all to the *Sole movement of matter* as their true cause; there is much more reason that in order to the giving an account of all that is to this day past among the Languages, we should have recours to such terms as are expressive of motion, since it is not to be doubted but that all others that are reducible, may be referr'd hither as to the first principle of their signification.

Besides motion is allow'd a far greater Scope and extent among the Languages then in Nature for 'tis to that we referr our most refin'd and spirituall conceptions I mean such as we frame of the operations of our souls and the propensions of our wills, So when we say that the mind or understanding applyes it self to think, to conceive, to discours, to explaine, to disimbroile, to disingage a businesse, to discover a truth; when we talke of troubles, aversions, of hurries and consternations of the soul, to expresse such actions as are most remote from sense, we make use of such Images as are corporeall in their first originall, although for the most part they have lost their proper significance to assume another that is purely figurative.

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'Tis by their Principles I reduce to naturall reason all imaginable ways by which words alter their primitive signification to imbrace another, either more enlarg'd or reserv'd, or never so little diversifi'd either in Proportion or Alliance; for tis no easie matter for words to travell from one Country to another without meeting with the same casualties, that use to befall forreign Plants which, are seldome remov'd into a new soile, but degenerate and either lose some of their Native virtue, or acquire some new. But most people having met wick this generally proposall, to expresse at first appearance, what they think with as little trouble as is possible, it thence falls out that to ingrosse a great deal of sense in a few words, they scarce allow enough precisely to marke out the simple ideas of their minds, fitted out to all their severall resemblances, they that are most simple in themselves, are commonly compounds in their significations, neither is there any one of the least considerable, but what is diversify'd in each Language by a thousand different modifications.

From thence proceed all the methods of inflexion, derivation, and composition that give being to the most subtle kind of Sophistry; all the species and forms of Nouns, Verbs, and particles that make up the oeconomy of a Language, together withall diversity of Numbers, Genders, Cases, tenses, Modes, and Persons which have more of Art than at first sight is imagin'd, for the Custome of Nations hath not only autoriz'd these inventions to vary the Cadence of words, but with an admirable facility to expresse all the deflexions, by which an Idea of the same object may be represented to our conceptions according as it admitts of a mixture of resemblances, which it may have either to its effects or Causes, or as it is related to the severall estates, wherein it subsists, to the differences of time or place, and to all the circumstances that may accompany it, either within or without us. As the more sensible differences of the Languages principally consist in all these modifications; so one of the greatest secrets of this Art is to know how choisly to select and distinguish, both in our ideas and in the words that expresse them, that which is principall and essentiall from what is purely accessory, subtly to difference the first ideas from the second, the second from the third, the simple from the Compound, the primitive and Originall signification from its dependences and references, its modifications and divers restrictions, in one word (if I may so expresse it) not to confound the habit with the person. For in a manner these modifications are the same words, that the habit is to the body; this new dresse that is given to forreign words to fitt them up alamode to the Country, for the most part time so disfigures them and renders them so obscure, that they impose as well upon our eyes as ears, and passe for origalls and Natives of the Country, although in reality they are borrow'd from our Neighbourhood, and sometime from beyond the seas.

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To make a secure judgement therefore of the originall, there remains nothing but to consider them all, naked and intirely disspoil'd of all that trompery that disguis'd them; and that this may be done with more safety we must follow them step by step in their travels, and espie out the different ranges they have taken and the habits they have shifted, to come thus vizarded and masqued to us.

These are the most inlarg'd principles and infallible ways by which I discover this secret and misterious accord of the Languages which without doubt will appear so much the more admirable, as haveing been never to this hour been believ'd that they had any such close tie or relation: But these principles may be apply'd severall ways, and therefore least they should continue undermin'd, I make it appear by the sequel, what in particular must be done in each Language in conformity to its genius and proper Character. This is that which obligeth me to make an exact inquirie into the nature of those Languages I pretend to reduce, I do not content my selfe infallibly to take my draught either in the generall consent of nations, which are as often cheated in their Ideas they have of the Language of each Nation as they are commonly in its manners, or from the particular sentiments of the more knowing or Learned, who without any preoccupation of mind have studied their own Native Language with more then ordinary care. But to make all yet more certain, I principally form my examinations from the very history of the Languages, which is the most aequall rule we can take our measures from, in relation to the present designe.

In order to this, 'tis necessary that we make reflexions upon the first beginnings of each Nation, and that from other memoires then such with which we are for the most part furnish't by the Criticks, and seriously to examine the continuall comerce it hath had with the most considerable of its neighbours, the wars, feuds and Leagues of its Governours with other Princes, the irruptions and invasions of Conquering Nations, that have corrupted its Language as they ingrost its spoils, the frequent Colonies that Conquerors have sent thither besides its voyages at Sea, and its traffick, with the most remote plantations, These are the more immediate causes of this confusion and mixture.

It may perhaps withall be no mean pleasure to see the basis of each Language distinguisht from the changes and accessions of time or revolutions of State, what every Nation hath contributed of its owne to enrich it, what Religion, the Government and what Sciences have communicated to it, what it retains of Antiquity and what new acquests it hath made to retrieve its losses with advantage.

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Afterall, this is yet but the sceleton, or at most but the body of a Language, Its necessary that this rude, and indigested masse made up of so many different dialects should be animated by some secret spirit that should expand it selfe through all its parts and severall members, and reduce them to unity by communicating the same air to them, and that this Spirit or Soul should be the individuall principle of all the effects, and sensible changes, which make us easily distinguish one Language from another: The Temper, Humour, and Nature of a people, the dispositions of their minds, their genius and particular gusts, their more generall and forcible inclinations, their ordinary passions, and such singular qualities, by which one Nation is remarq'd and distinguisht from another, are the most evident signs to discover the true genius of a Language, because they are in reality the immediate causes and the very originalls after which I have copied all my draughts to compleat the present piece, which in my opinion is not wanting in something that is very Naturall, Besides this, the very manners and customes of Nations, their Laws and policy, and their publick transactions, both of peace and War, are things so universally known, that there is no need of any farther search, how to be able to judge by proportion of the genius, and characters of the Languages so securely, as by that of the people that speak them.

But as the care of a Nation to improve and advance the Arts and Sciences and other kinds of good Learning, is that which contributes most to the perfection of its Language, So tis upon the manner in which its receiv'd, and the characters of its Authors, that I cheifly depend to determine, whether it be modest or imperious, whether it relish more of a softnesse, sweetnesse, and delicacy, than of a certain Noble brisque and generous air, whether it incline more to the simplicity of Nature, or the subtile refinements of Art, whether it be polite to affectation, or betray a certain negligence which hath its graces too, as well as its measures of Art, and last of all whether it be not a little cramp't in attempting to be too exact, or else better accomodate it selfe by its freedome from all restraint.

Having discoverd the genius and proper character of each Language, I have fram'd the most perfect Idea that is possible, by way of analogie with the principles of the Platonists, with whose method I was always as much taken as I am dissatisfy'd with their doctrine.

This Idea being unmasqued serves me in the sequell for a generall rule, to establish the true and proper reasons of all that passe for singular and remarqueable in each Language, either in relation to the choice, the mixture, and union of sounds, the force and significations of words, or the Air and manner of expression; For tis most certain that all these things are alter'd according to the genius of a people: So the Spaniards would distinguish themselves from other Nations by

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their haughtinesse, and affected gravity, and their words are easily understood by a certain pompous Air, that seems to border upon grandeur and Majesty: On the Contrary the Italians are the Nation of the world that seems to be most fond of its pleasure, and its naturall, that this softnesse should be communicated to their Language, and that all their words should breath nothing, but what is sweet, polite, and the most exact harmony; their compositions admitt of no sounds but such, as can flatter the Ear, they suffer not the concours of consonants, whose rudenesse may never so little offend the Organ, but they are extreemly in Love with Vowels, and often allow their sequences to make their pronunciation more sweet and delicate. For their signification, that they might mixe an accord with their energie, they have hardly any but what are more or lesse figurative, from a persuasion, that a Metaphor represents objects to the mind, in that most curious and diverting manner, and withall they are carefull to make choise of none, but such as represent the fairest images: They are no lesse sollicitous to diversifie their words by agreeable modifications, their inflexion hath very little uneasie in it, it is all of it aequally facile and gay; their diminutives are exceedingly relishing, because there is something more than ordinarily pretty in them, they are rich in derivatives, and compounds, not only because their pronunciation is more harmonious, but also because they expresse themselves in a more naturall manner, In one word they banish every thing that may appear ingratfull, and are passionately in quest of all that may conduce to the Sweetnesse of their Language.

My sense is much the same of other Languages, but because reason it selfe may be suspected by some, especially if at any time it appear too just or plausible, I was the rather concern'd so to order my instances, that besides the induction, I intended custome and experience should support reason, and reason should confirme experience, and withall the examples are so naturally chain'd with their principles, and all of them so distributed in their proper places, that without so much as making the least reflexion, I imperceptibly comprize all the fundamentall and essentiall words of each Language, being willing my selfe to draw all my conclusions from the principles I have mention'd, and to make all necessary inductions, without leaving any thing of trouble or disease to the reader, who in such cases is glad to be quitt from paines and inconvenience, I have some hopes, that a competition thus differently made up of History, reflexions and Criticismes supported by principles, deductions and examples may contribute something to the agreeableness of the designe, and sett off a subject that of itselfe is dry and knotty enough, without making it more unacceptable by that mean and disreputed method, that hath so much decry'd the Critiques, and ordinarily hath given a disgust to a science before it hath been allow'd the least consideration, besides that didacticque way, is by no means proper in the present case, for as there is little pleasure in being taken notice of under the character of a Scholler, so the only remedy is to contrive some way to come to the knowledge of things without lying under the suspicion of having a master.

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Thus you see in grosse and generall, the whole designe exprest in as few words as the brevity of the subject would permitt me; And However rationall it may be in it selfe yet it wants not its adversaries; Some with a great deal of heat, plead that if this method acquiring the Languages, hath any thing in it that is Curious by way of speculation, it is however uselesse enough in relation to its practice, since *Custom* and *Conversation* only (say they) is the great Master of Language, and that we must intirely relye upon memory and the assiduity of constant and resolv'd industry.

Others confesse that it hath in earnest its advantages, but doubt much of the possibility of its execution, hardly beleiving that the Languages have in good truth such an accord and resemblance as I suppose they have, or that there is a possibility for the witt of man now to discover it.

By way of reply to the first, I confesse that one thing I wonder at, is that persons so knowing and ingenuous should so highly declare themselves against the judgement in favour of the memory, I have a very great regard to their qualitie and worth, but cannot submitt my selfe to their opinion, The only way (as I imagine) to Learn the Languages, and that in what number we please, to do it with ease without taediousnesse, confusion, trouble and losse of time, and without the common hazard, of forgetting them with as much ease as we acquire them with difficulty, and to be master of them all in such a manner, as shall relish nothing that is mean or not becomeing a Rationall man, is in one word, to attribute more to the judging and reflecting faculty then to the memory; for if the memory depend and relye only upon the reflexions of the judgement, we have no reason to expect much from its single Conduct, for however plausible it may appear, it will always be slow, limited, confus'd, and faithlesse; its action is not vigorous enough to take us off from those fatigues that distast our most likely enterprizes, and its efforts to weak and Languishing in a little time to execute a designe of so large a compasse as this; being so determin'd as it is, it is impossible it should reduce so great a number of Languages so distanc't in appearance one from another; If at any time it seem extraordinary in an action, its Species are soon displac't by their multitude, and when they are rang'd in the best order imaginable, they continue not so long without being either effect by those that supervene or disappearing of themselves, haveing nothing that can fixe and retaine them, So that the Languages being of so vast an extent, there is no reason that the memory alone should be confided to for their acquist, unlesse we could be content to sacrifice an infinite space of time to the Sole knowledge of words, which being so valuable as it ought to be to us, may be imployd with more discretion and successe, either towards the cognizance of things or the management of businesse.

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To satisfie others, I have nothing more at present to say to them but that if the designe shall appear to them at first sight either fantasticall or temerarious, the execution will soon justifie me, and perhaps convince them that it is not always rationall positively to passe a judgement upon any thing before a close and a narrow search, and that we ought not hastily to despaire of any thing; the gaining of which hath not been attempted all imaginable wayes.

Last of all, as I do not beleeeve my selfe to be deceiv'd in that which make up the grosse and main of the designe, so I do not expect that all that I shall advance in the sequel upon this connexion of the Languages, should be receiv'd by all for uncontrouleable truths, of which I my selfe am sufficiently perswaded; I am too well acquainted with the nature of truth to beleeeve my selfe so succesfull as to have alwayes uncover'd that in the most imbroyld and the most doubtfull affaires of the world; yet I confesse that notwithstanding that great respect that is due to it, I have in some cases lesse regarded it when it did not appear to comply with the capacityes of ordinary men, persuading my selfe that conjecture well fram'd and adjusted by a plausible Air is more rellishing to ingenious persons, then an obscure and fainting truth, of which sort there is a very great number in the present subject.

I propose then to the Learned, this new systeme of the Languages, not as an incontestable Thesis in all its parts but only as an Hypothesis, not altogether irrational and which besides hath this particular advantage, that although it should be the falsest thing in the world in speculation, it may at least be allowable in the practice, And I hope to receive the same favour that persons (that were most obstinately resolv'd against his Hypothesis) granted Copernicus by their confession, that let it be never so false it is however the best accommodated to use and Astronomicall supputations.

FINIS.

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