

INTRODUCTION.

is more certain. In the Spanish language the senses of both verbs are retained in *haber*; and the Welsh *hapiaw* gives us the true original signification.

In like manner the primary sense of *venio* in Latin, cannot be certainly determined without resorting to other words, and to kindred languages. In Latin, the word signifies to come or arrive; but in Spanish, *venida*, from *venir*, the Latin *venio*, signifies not only a coming or arrival, but an attack in fencing. *Venio* coincides in origin with the English *find*; Saxon *find-an*; German and Dutch *finden*, to find, to fall or light on; Danish *finde*; Swedish *finna*, to find, to discover, to meet, to strike against [offend]. The primary sense of *venio* then is not merely to come or arrive, but to rush or move with a driving force; and this sense is applicable to *coming* or *going*.

That the primary sense is to fall or rush, we have evidence in the Latin *ventus*, and English *wind*, both from the root of this verb. We have still further evidence in the word *venom*, which in Welsh is *gwynenyn*; *gwen*, white, and *gwynn*, rage, smart, whence *gwynn*, wind. *Venom* is that which frets or excites a raging pain. Hence we may infer that *L. venor*, to hunt, to chase, is of the same family; and so is *venia*, leave, or leave to depart, or a departure, a leaving, coinciding in signification with *leave*.

The latter word, *venia*, proves another fact, that the primary sense of *venio* is, in general, to move in any direction, and that the Latin sense of *com*, is a particular appropriation of that sense.

In ascertaining the primary sense of words, it is often useful or necessary to recur to the derivatives. Thus the Latin *lento* is rendered to *hurt*; but, by adverting to *allido*, *elido*, and *collido*, we find that the original signification is to *strike*, *hit*, or *dash* against. *Hurt* then is the secondary sense; the effect of the primary action expressed by the verb.

So the Latin *rapio*, to seize, does not give the sense of *rapidus*, rapid, but the sense of the latter proves the primary sense of *rapio* to be to *rush*, and in its application, to *rush* on and *seize*.

These examples will be sufficient to show how little the affinities of language have been understood. Men have been generally satisfied with a knowledge of the appropriate sense of words, without examining from what visible or physical action, or primary sense, that particular application has been derived. Hence the obscurity that still rests on the theory of language. It has been supposed that each word, particularly each verb, has an original specific sense, or application, distinct from every other verb. We find, however, on a close examination and comparison of the same word in different languages, that the fact is directly the reverse; that a verb expressing some action, in a general sense, gives rise to various appropriate senses, or particular applications. And in the course of my researches, I have been struck with the similarity of manner in which different nations have appropriated derivative and figurative senses. For example, all nations, as far as my researches extend, agree in expressing the sense of *justice* and *right*, by *straightness*, and *sin*, *iniquity*, *wrong*, by a deviation from a straight line or course. Equally remarkable is the simplicity of the analogies in language, and the small number of radical significations; so small indeed, that I am persuaded the primary sense of all the verbs in any language, may be expressed by thirty or forty words.

We cannot, at this period of the world, determine, in all cases, which words are primitive, and which are derivative; nor whether the verb or the noun is the original word. Mon. Gebelin, in his *Monde Primitif*, maintains that the noun is the root of all other words. Never was a greater mistake. That some nouns may have been formed before the verbs with which they are connected, is possible; but as languages are now constructed, it is demonstrably certain, that the verb is the radix or stock from which have sprung most of the nouns, adjectives, and other parts of speech belonging to each family. This is the result of all my researches into the origin of languages. We find, indeed, that many modern verbs are formed on nouns; as to *practice* from *practice*; but the noun is derived from a Greek verb. So we use *wrong* as a verb from the adjective *wrong*; and the latter is primarily a participle of the verb to *bring*. Indeed a large part of all nouns were originally participles or adjectives, and the things which they denote were named from their qualities. So *pard*, *pardus*, is from *pard* *brad*, hail; and the animal so named from his spots as if sprinkled with hail, or rather from the sense of separation. *Crape*, the Fr. *crêpe*, is from *crêpe*, to *crisp*. *Sight* signifies, primarily, seen; it being the participle of *seen* contracted from *sigan*. *Draught* is the participle of *draw*, that which is drawn, or the act of drawing; *thought* is the participle of *think*.

As the verb is the principal radix of other words, and as the proper province of this part of speech is to express action, almost all the modifications of the primary sense of the verb may be comprehended in one word, to *move*.

The principal varieties of motion or action may be expressed by the following verbs.

1. To drive, throw, thrust, send, urge, press.
2. To set, fix, lay. But these are usually from thrusting, or throwing down.
3. To strain, stretch, draw, whence holding, binding, strength, power, and often health.
4. To turn, wind, roll, wander.
5. To flow, to blow, to rush.
6. To open, part, split, separate, remove, scatter. See No. 16.

7. To swell, distend, expand, spread.
8. To stir, shake, agitate, rouse, excite.
9. To shoot as a plant; to grow; allied to No. 1.
10. To break, or burst; allied sometimes to No. 3.
11. To lift, raise, elevate; allied to No. 9.
12. To flee, withdraw, escape; to fly; often allied to No. 1.
13. To rage; to burn; allied to No. 7 and 8.
14. To fall; to fail; whence fading, dying, &c.
15. To approach, come, arrive, extend, reach. This is usually the sense of *going*; allied to No. 31.
16. To go, walk, pass, advance; allied to No. 6.
17. To seize, take, hold; sometimes allied to No. 31.
18. To strike; to beat; allied to No. 1.
19. To swing; to vibrate. No. 29.
20. To lean; to incline; allied to the sense of wandering, or departing.
21. To rub, scratch, scrape; often connected with driving, and with roughness.
22. To swim; to float.
23. To stop, cease, rest; sometimes at least from straining, holding, fastening.
24. To creep; to crawl; sometimes connected with scraping.
25. To peel, to strip, whence spoiling.
26. To leap, to spring; allied to No. 9 and 1.
27. To bring, bear, carry; in some instances connected with producing, throwing out.
28. To sweep.
29. To hang. No. 19.
30. To shrink, or contract; that is, to draw. See No. 3.
31. To run; to rush forward; allied to No. 1.
32. To put on together; to unite; allied to No. 1 and 3.
33. To knit, to weave.
34. To gain, to win, to get. See No. 15.

These and a few more verbs express the literal sense of all the primary roots. But it must be remarked that all the foregoing significations are not distinct. So far from it, that the whole may be brought under the signification of a very few words. The English words to *send*, *throw*, *thrust*, *strain*, *stretch*, *draw*, *drive*, *urge*, *press*, embrace the primary sense of a great part of all the verbs in every language which I have examined. Indeed it must be so, for the verb is certainly the root of most words; and the verb expresses *motion*, which always implies the application of force.

Even the verbs which signify to hold or stop, in most instances at least, if not in all, denote primarily to strain or restrain by exertion of force; and to *lie* is primarily to throw down, to lay one's self down. So that intransitive verbs are rarely exceptions to the general remark above made, that all verbs primarily express motion or exertion of force. The substantive verb has more claims to be an exception, than any other; for this usually denotes, I think, permanence or continued being; but the primary sense of this verb may perhaps be to *set* or *fix*; and verbs having this sense often express *extension* in time or duration. So *teno* in Greek is to stretch, but the same word *teneo* in Latin, is to hold; hence *continuance*.

Let us now attend to the radical sense of some of the most common verbs. *Speaking*, *calling*, *crying*, *praying*, *utterance of sounds*, is usually from the sense of *driving* or *straining*. Thus in Latin, *appello* and *compello*, though of a different conjugation from *pello*, *depello*, *impello*, are from the same root; and although the Latin *repello* does not signify to *recall*, yet the corresponding word in Italian *riapparellare*, and the French *rappeler*, signify to *recall*, and hence the English *recall*. Hence also *peal*, either of a bell or of thunder. This is the Greek *βαλλω*, and probably *παλλω* is from the same root. The sense of *striking* is found in the Greek verb, and so it is in the Lat. *laqueo*, Eng. *clock*. But in general, speaking, in all its modifications, is the straining, driving, or impulse of sounds. Sometimes the sense coincides more exactly with that of *breaking* or *bursting*.

Singing is a driving or straining of the voice; and we apply *strain* to a passage of music, and to a course of speaking.

I am not confident that I can refer the sensation of *hearing* to any visible action. Possibly it may sometimes be from striking, hitting, touching. But we observe that *hear* is connected in origin with *car*, as the Latin *audio* is with the Greek *αωω*, the ear; whence it appears probable that the verb to *hear*, is formed from the name of the ear, and the *ear* is from some verb which signifies to shoot or extend, for it signifies a limb.

The primary sense of *seeing*, is commonly to extend to, to reach; as it were, to reach with the eye. Hence the use of *behold*, for the radical sense of *hold* is to strain; and hence its signification in *beholden*, held, bound, obligated. See the verb *See* in the Dictionary.

The sense of *look* may be somewhat different from that of *see*. It appears in some instances to have for its primary signification to *send*, *throw*, *cast*; that is, to hurl, or cast the eye or sight.

The primary sense of *feeling* is to touch, hit, or strike; and probably this is the sense of *taste*.

Wonder and astonishment are usually expressed by some word that signifies to stop or hold. Hence the Latin *miror*, to wonder, is the Armoic *miret*, to stop, hold, hinder; coinciding with the English *moor*, and Spanish *amarrar*, to *moor*, as a ship.