

he who forgets that language is but the sign and vehicle of thought, and while studying the word, knows little of the sentiment—who learns the measure, the garb, and fashion of ancient song, without looking to its living soul or feeling its inspiration—is not one jot better than a traveller in classic land, who sees its crumbling temples, and numbers, with arithmetical precision, their steps and pillars, but thinks not of their beauty, their design, or the living sculptures on their walls—or who counts the stones in the Appian way instead of gazing on the monuments of the “eternal city.”

There is one province of verbal criticism which has often been overlooked, or set at nought, and yet would abundantly repay the labour of its cultivation. Words are the signs of thought; and from words themselves (without following them through all their inflexions and combinations in the finished structure of a language,) we may see into the natural feelings and judgments of men, before they become warped by the prejudices of sect or the subtleties of system. If in reading the ancient writers, we meet with words describing virtue and vice, honor and dishonor, guilt and shame, coupled with the strongest epithets of praise or condemnation; then we are certain that these things existed as realities before they became words; or at least, that in the minds of those who, during the early progress of society, built up the ancient languages, they were considered as realities; and on that account (and that account only) had their representatives among the symbols of thought. I believe we might in this way make a near approach to a true system of moral philosophy: and our progress would at every step record a series of judgments, not derived