

In no department of knowledge has the scientific spirit worked a greater change than in the science of language. With the exception of suggestions by Leibniz, who clearly saw the necessity of founding the theory of language on a broader basis than the small number of classical and modern tongues then current afforded, and of some glimpses of a correcter view such as those contained in the much ridiculed writings of Lord Monboddo, we find, up to the end of the eighteenth century, hardly any attempt towards a methodical treatment of the great problem. Philosophical theories and vague etymologies, amounting frequently to little more than punning with words, brought the subject into ridicule. Herder has the great merit of having urged the importance of the study of language and literature in primitive forms¹ as the great gateway into anthropology

(1751). The question attracted considerable attention, partly through the eccentricities of Lord Monboddo, of which it has been well said that they appeared more ridiculous to his own than they would to the present age, partly through the controversy which arose shortly after on the publication of Horne Tooke's celebrated "*Ἔπεα πτερόεντα*, or the Diversions of Purley' (1786). Herder was acquainted with Monboddo's work, having occasioned a translation of it to be made and written a preface (1787); but he does not seem to have taken any notice of Horne Tooke (1736-1812), who, as the historian of the science of language (Theodor Benfey, '*Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft*,' München, 1869) says, would, for his novel ideas and method, deserve to be put at the entrance of the modern linguistic epoch, had he been able

to avail himself of a knowledge of Sanskrit.

¹ This refers to the second greatest work of Herder, his collection of popular songs, published under the significant title of "*Voices of the Peoples*" ('*Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*,' 1778), a work which had the greatest influence on German literature as well as on modern philological studies. See Benfey, *loc. cit.*, p. 316, &c. That the publication of the '*Percy Ballads*' (1765), of Macpherson's '*Ossian*,' and of Lowth's '*Lectures on Hebrew Poetry*' (1753), formed a great stimulus to Herder in his historical and poetical studies is shown by Haym in many extracts and passages, also in the prefaces of Herder himself and of his editor, Joh. von Müller (Herder's '*Werke*,' 1828, '*Zur schönen Literatur und Kunst*,' vols. vii. and viii.)