HARVARD STUDIES IN CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY, VOLUME X

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PREFATORY NOTE.

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SOME QUESTIONS IN LATIN STEM FORMATION.

By J. B. Greenough.

THE science of Linguistics is really less than a century old, a very short time indeed even to gather and coördinate any considerable body of facts, much less to schematize and explain them. So the complexity of the facts and the great significance of some of the minutest of them often lead men to subtlety of reasoning on subjects which would really find their explanation in the most obvious phenomena. The development of words from simpler elements, technically called stem formation, is a case of this kind. If you take up almost any book on this subject you are sure to find the most ingenious theories invented to account for things that ought to suggest their own explanation if looked at from the fundamental points of view already established in the science. No question has been more ingeniously discussed than that of the origin of the Latin gerund. Dozens of far-fetched and fine-spun theories have been worked out to account for its form and use. Yet it seems that the great fundamental principles as they are already settled beyond controversy are sufficient to account for all the facts about this seemingly difficult question. Let us examine a few of these principles.

All agree that the Indo-European family of languages has developed its words by a process of stem formation in which significant elements, presumably verbal roots, have been enlarged and differentiated by the addition in sequence of other significant elements, mostly of pronominal origin, and that these combinations thus grown or made have been again and again subjected to the same process in a greater or less degree, but always following the same type according to the genius of the particular branch of the Indo-European family. The Northern European languages have generally short words, because this process of further formation was in some manner arrested early ; the Southern European and the Asiatic languages of the stock have long ones, because the process was fostered and continued to a very great

extent. The process is well exemplified by the series *Ausones*, itself
evidently formed by a familiar suffix, on (**en**) (*i.e.* **aus** + on) *Aurun-
cus*, † *Aurunculus* (cf. *sermunculus*) *Aurunculeius* (cf. *Pompeius*). If
this word had not been appropriated to an individual or family we
might have gone on to † *Aurunculeitas* (cf. *Appietas*, actually made
by Cicero) or † *Aurunculeare* and from that to † *Aurunculeatura* or
farther still unless the word should break down under its own weight.

Another principle is that in this continued process two or more
of the elements successively added become fused together so as to
be regarded as a single suffix and used as such. For instance, in the
series mentioned, unculus comes to be felt as an integral element and
so is applied as a whole to words where the intervening steps do not
appear and probably never existed. Thus we have *avunculus*, with-
out any *avo* (*-onis*), or *avuncus*. By comparing several series of words,
however, we can in almost all cases recognize the steps of the process.

These two principles of stem formation have been followed in the
Latin language more, perhaps, than in any other, so that the Latin
vocabulary is particularly rich in such long and highly developed
words, whereby the shorter have been in great measure superseded.

Another principle is that words in the process of development
tend to become specialized in particular meanings. In their origin
adjectival in sense, *i.e.* expressing qualities either active or passive
or sometimes both indifferently, they become participles, nouns of
agency, names of instruments, or even, more exactly, names of per-
sons, places, or of any idea that seeks expression in human speech.

A fourth principle, not so freely recognized, but to my mind equally
certain, is that scientifically no derivative is strictly (*i.e.* originally)
made either from a verb or noun as such. Derivation evidently goes
far back of any such distinction as verb and noun. The elements
used were neither verbs nor nouns, because they were both at once, and
in this state of language the type of derivation was fixed. The later
derivatives, consciously made, come from parts of words abstracted as
stems and treated in the old manner just as if inflexion had never
existed. Any form that seemed like a root or a stem could be con-
ceived as a suitable element for further formation on the fixed pattern.

Thus the word *laudator* is not in a strict sense derived from *lau-
dare*. The tor type must have become fixed long before there was

any verb or noun like *laus* or *laudo.* Such forms as *actor, genitor,* were early developed in the language and had become attached to *agere* and *gignere* as nouns of agency for those verbs. So on the same pattern were produced *laudator, auditor,* and the like. All this depends on the principle that composition and stem formation preceded in idea and type any inflexion or distinction of parts of speech whatsoever.

Our principles then are :

First. Stem formation by successive addition of suffixes.

Second. The fusing together of two or more of these suffixes so as to make a new available one.

Third. The specialization of the meanings of the words at any stage of their development.

Fourth. Derivation proceeds by stems and antedates inflexion and parts of speech.

In view of these principles, when we find the long words which are so characteristic of Latin, the natural presumption is that (apart from obvious composition) the words have been built up by continuous further formation by means of the living elements existing in the language, and unless some controlling reason appears to the contrary, this presumption is to be taken as true. As the suffixes are for the most part of pronominal origin we must, in analyzing a word, take off successively from the end the recognizable suffixes and discover the stems or the various steps through which the word has passed in its further formation.

Now it is noticeable in Latin that among the numerous derivatives there are a number of sets or series of words, in which each word has the same final letters with different letters in the body of the word, but with only slight differences in meaning. We have, for instance, *figura* (the only one of its kind) alongside of *pictura* (one of a large number). If we proceed by the method above indicated, we find in one case a root fig + stem-suffix u + stem-suffix ra, in the other pig + tu + ra. It seems obvious that we have here two differently formed stems continued by the same suffix ra.

In a pair of somewhat similar formation, *maturus* and *Matuta,* the same stem is continued by means of different suffixes. Compare this

† *matu-* with *mane,* and we see ma + tu and ma + ne. So we may con-
clude that the much-used tura is a compound suffix formed of tu + ra
and is really the feminine of tu + ro.[1]

Again we have *rationalis, rationabilis,* and *ratiocinabiliter* (imply-
ing a † *ratiocinabilis*). We instantly recognize ration + ā + lis, ration
+ a + bilis, and ratiocinā + bilis. This process, which is a well-known
one, ought to be carried still further, so that the ultimate analysis of
the last form should be, on the same principle, ra + ti + on + co + no + a
(representing the formative elements of a verb stem, treated, however,
according to old patterns as a productive stem in conformity with the
fourth principle above) + bo + lis. We notice in the process that
ra + ti may be bracketed, as in *mens, mentis ;* that ti + on may be brack-
eted, as in *mentio, mentionis ;* that co + no may be bracketed, as in
lenocinium ; and that bo + lis are fused in the same manner. These
again are often fused with ā, as we ultimately get the practical suffix
in our *bearable.* So the steps are † *ratis, ratio,* † *ratiocinus, ratiocinor,
ratiocinabilis* (as implied in the adverb). It is to be noticed that in
any single word we can rarely be sure of the chronology, so as to
know whether the fusion of the suffixes came before or after the
formation of the particular word, but by comparison we may always
be sure of the type, and may confidently by means of daggers give the
typical intermediate steps. This to my mind is the only proper way
of analyzing words so as to give certain conclusions. Let us apply
it to less obvious cases.

Some most difficult series are those in

lis	bilis	——	tilis
ris	bris	cris	tris
lus (lum)	bulum	culum	——
rus	brum	crum	trum

As we see, the letters vary in the middle, but the last elements are
the same. The words in each of these series have nearly the same
meaning, and in view of the principles laid down we may assume
on the face of the matter that the varying letters come from different
stems, *i.e.* from the use of different suffixes at some stage of the pro-

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[1] The length of the u is only incidental, and need not be considered here.