

**A TREATISE ON LANGUAGE:  
OR, THE RELATION  
WHICH WORDS BEAR TO  
THINGS. IN FOUR PARTS**

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A Treatise on Language: Or, the Relation Which Words Bear to Things. In Four Parts by A. B. Johnson

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**A. B. JOHNSON**

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BY A. B. JOHNSON.

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## P R E F A C E .

IN 1828 the following work was first published. It was entitled "The Philosophy of Human Knowledge, or, A Treatise on Language;" and was the first part of a series of experimental investigations which were to include language, physical actions, thoughts, and feelings. The publication of 1828 was limited to the investigation of language; and as the present publication possesses the same limitation, and the other topics, though in progress, may never be completed, the first half of the original title is omitted, and the present publication is designated A Treatise on Language.

Except many gratifying letters received by me from strangers in various states of our Union, and one extensive review, the preceding edition of this work excited no attention. The edition has, however, been long since absorbed spontaneously by the publick, and I have received repeated applications for further copies.

The form of lectures to which the preceding work was subjected, has been retained as a means of lessening the natural wearisomeness of instruction. In other respects, the work has been newly arranged and simplified. The present edition contains also much that is not in the former; yet the lectures are still little more than heads of discourses. They are sufficient to indicate my views of language; while persons who shall accord with me in these views, will readily discover new illustrations of the rules which I have given, and new rules for

verbal positions to which I have not adverted. Indeed, all that the book contains is the elucidation of but one précept: namely, to interpret language by nature. We reverse the rule and interpret nature by language. The précept itself which I have sought to illustrate, I profoundly respect; but whether I have demonstrated its importance, the publick must determine. Amid active and extensive employments, and with no external stimulus to literary pursuits, I shall be satisfied if the succeeding discourses shall commend the doctrine to the efforts of men whose understandings are more comprehensive than mine, and whose labours the world is accustomed to respect. As, however, the following sheets are the painful elaboration of many years, when my language or positions shall, in a casual perusal, seem absurd, (and such cases may be frequent,) I request the reader to seek some more creditable interpretation. The best which he can conceive should be assumed to be my intention: as on an escutcheon, when a figure resembles both an eagle and a buzzard, heraldry decides that the bird which is most creditable to the bearer, shall be deemed to be the one intended by the blazon.

THE AUTHOR.



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