

KARL BRUGMANN AND  
LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY LINGUISTICS

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In his 1882 report to the Philological Society Henry Sweet observed:

Passing from general principles to the detailed investigation of each Arian language separately, one is simply appalled by the vast mass of undigested, scattered, and conflicting investigations the student has to try and master. Schleicher's *Compendium* is now so utterly antiquated that no one thinks of using it except for the sake of its word-lists and inflection tables, and in the present revolutionary state of all things philological, it is hopeless expecting any real philologist to make himself the butt of his fellows by attempting to supersede it. (H. Sweet 1882-4: 109)

In 1886, two years after Sweet's words appeared in print, the first volume of a new *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen* appeared in Strassburg from the press of Trübner. By 1892 the three remaining parts had appeared and in 1897 a second edition started to be published. Karl Brugmann (1849-1919), the author of the *Grundriss*, may well be the most representative linguist of the late nineteenth century, though some qualifications are needed. Sociologically Brugmann is wholly representative – intellectually he both is and is not. The distinction calls for further explanation.

The organization of linguistics as we now know it, its insertion into a university system ready to provide it with financial and administrative support, its establishment as a proper academic subject equally recognized by laymen, publishers and academies – all these date from the nineteenth century. A modern department of linguistics in, for example, an American university, is not too remote in its *modus operandi* from a *Sprachwissenschaftliches Seminar* or *Institut* found in a German university of the late nineteenth century or early twentieth century. In their turn those Seminars or Institutes were founded by scholars who had no hesitation in acknowledging that their work depended on work done in the first part of the century and in denying any continuity with earlier linguistic thought. Similarly, the periodicals in which modern linguistic articles are published either were founded in the nineteenth century (*Bulletin de la société de linguistique de Paris*,

*Transactions of the Philological Society*, (Kuhns) *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung*, (Paul und Braunes) *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, *Indogermanische Forschungen*, *Archivio glottologico Italiano*, etc.) or were modelled at a later stage on their nineteenth-century predecessors. The first linguistic societies (*The Philological Society*, the *Société de linguistique de Paris*) are nineteenth-century foundations; other societies have been founded since, but this has been done in full awareness of the link which joined them to the earlier groups.

Against this background my earlier distinctions may be more comprehensible. Among linguists Brugmann belongs to the first, or at most, the second generation of scholars who, if intellectually able, had good reasons to hope that their work would be supported by a university or an institution of learning and who could from the start aim at an academic career with a roughly predictable development. His curriculum is paradigmatic.<sup>1</sup> Born from good middle-class, but not academic, parents in Wiesbaden in 1849, he studied at the local *Gymnasium*, and then read classics first at the University of Halle and afterwards at that of Leipzig (from 1868). There he remained, except for a short period in Bonn, where he took the *Staatsexamen* in 1872, and for his probation year as teacher in the *Gymnasium* of his native city. Back in Leipzig he first became a teacher in the *Nikolaischule*, one of the most famous German schools, and then a young *Privatdozent* in Sanskrit and comparative linguistics (from 1877) and the holder of an Assistantship in the *Russisch-philologisches Seminar*, a university institution which after Ritschl's death was directed by Justus Lipsius and taught classics to people of Russian and Slavic origin. He became *Extraordinarius* in 1882, the year in which he married. He then spent less than three years at Freiburg im Breisgau as *Ordinarius* in the new chair of comparative linguistics and Sanskrit (1884-7) but soon was called back to the newly named chair of *Indogermanische Sprachwissenschaft* (Indo-European linguistics) in Leipzig – a chair which he held until his death. Official recognition frequently came his way: he was a member of seventeen academies and an honorary doctor of Princeton and Athens. Public events did not have a great impact on his life; his one attempt to fight for his country in the Franco-Prussian war was frustrated by poor eye-sight. At his funeral a Leipzig colleague commented that Brugmann's life had been the typical life of the German scholar, poor in external vicissitudes, but rich *im inneren Erleben und stillen Glück* (in inner life and quiet happiness) (Förster 1918: viii). From a modern point of view, it is not an exciting life nor one which would interest a potential biographer. Yet from the point of view of the history of linguistics this career pattern, however trite, is worth rehearsing because it contrasts so remarkably with that of earlier linguists. Even if we think of Germany only and of people whom Brugmann was proud to consider his predecessors, the contrast is obvious. By all accounts W. von Humboldt

(1767–1835) is an exception: a great man of letters, an aristocrat, a founder of universities, but also a man who did not need to earn his living and who owed his fame as much to his political activity as to his written works; a Prussian minister, an ambassador to the Court of St James who spent his spare time learning Sanskrit. Yet even the somewhat more conventional Jacob Grimm (1785–1863) and Franz Bopp (1791–1867) had very different career patterns from Karl Brugmann. Both of them – in spite of their different social backgrounds – had to find patrons and benefactors who could allow them to pursue their studies; neither of them had the benefit of a complete and regular university education in their subject; neither of them could reckon from the start on eventually belonging to the conventional world of university promotion and university chairs. Each ended his life covered in academic honours which match those received by Brugmann some fifty or more years later. The beginning was different. Jacob Grimm, after a series of disparate activities, had his first university teaching position at Göttingen in 1829 when he was forty-four, and even this did not last. Eight years later, together with others, he was dismissed and told to leave the country because he had refused to swear an oath of allegiance to the King of Hanover who had dissolved the Parliament and revoked the constitution. It was not until 1841 that he settled in Berlin as a member of the *Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin Academy of Sciences) with a guaranteed stipend and the right to give lectures. Bopp, on the contrary, obtained his first teaching position in Berlin in 1821, when he was thirty, but no doubt this was due to Humboldt's immense influence and to his firm belief in the importance of Sanskrit, which Bopp had taught him in London. Until then, however, he had led a somewhat erratic life between Germany, Paris and London, supported in turn by Windischmann, who was his *Gymnasium* teacher, but also belonged to the inner circles of the German romantics, and by the odd grant from the King of Bavaria. He had failed to obtain a post in Sanskrit at Würzburg because the faculty of philosophy believed that Sanskrit was a 'luxury item' (Leskien 1876: 145).<sup>2</sup> By contrast Brugmann's career pattern was one which most of his contemporaries shared – nor is this surprising. At the beginning of the century no German university had a chair of linguistics; if we leave aside the first Sanskrit chair, created for A.W. Schlegel in 1818 at Bonn, Bopp's position in Berlin was the first such appointment, and even then the specification of his chair (*Orientalische Literatur und allgemeine Sprachkunde* – Oriental literature and general linguistics) was not as innovative as it looks (Wackernagel 1904: 202). In the late 1890s most of the twenty German universities had appointments in comparative linguistics or related subjects in their faculties of philosophy. A relatively small university like that of Freiburg (which during the 1880s had no more than 270 students on average in its faculty of philosophy, a faculty which included all arts and all sciences) was able to

create a new chair for comparative linguistics and Sanskrit, while at the same time it also had professors who taught Germanic linguistics (Paul) and Romance philology (Neumann), and someone who taught Sanskrit (Holtzmann) first as a *Privatdozent*, then as an *Extraordinarius*. In the summer term of 1887 a much larger university like Leipzig (with an average of more than 1,000 students in the faculty of philosophy) provided linguistic teaching in Slavonic philology (Leskien), Sanskrit and Celtic (Windisch), comparative linguistics (Brugmann), general linguistics (G. von der Gabelentz). *Ausserordentliche* professors taught Sanskrit (Lindner), phonetics (Techmer), Germanic philology (Kögel), Romance philology (Koerting), Armenian philology (Wenzel), etc. These were scholars who were very much *au fait* with comparative linguistics, as were (in the university of Georg Curtius) some of the classicists.<sup>3</sup> By 1902 all German universities had an official position in comparative linguistics (Wackernagel 1904: 206).

In this context, Brugmann is representative in two ways. First because, as we have seen, he shared the career pattern of his contemporaries which differed so dramatically from that of his predecessors; secondly because his prestige became so immense that already when he was in his forties he came to be treated as the 'main' linguist, the 'representative' linguist. In 1893 the editor of an authoritative two-volume book about German universities found it useful to commission two chapters about '*Indische Philologie*' (Indic philology – as distinguished from '*Orientalische Philologie*' – Oriental philology) and about '*Vergleichende (indogermanische) Sprachwissenschaft*', '*Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft*' and '*Slavische Philologie*' (comparative (Indo-European) linguistics, general linguistics and Slavic philology) respectively. The second chapter was written by Brugmann (1893). Years later (1912) the executive committee of a new *Indogermanische Gesellschaft* which was meant to further the study of 'Indo-European languages and culture, and of general linguistics' consisted of four scholars: Brugmann (Leipzig), Wackernagel (Göttingen), Streitberg (Munich), and Thumb (Strassburg) (Thumb 1913: 254); they were obviously chosen as the most representative linguists in Germany but two of them had been Brugmann's students (Streitberg and Thumb). In the forty or so years in which Brugmann held his chair at Leipzig that university not only kept the extraordinarily high reputation it had acquired in linguistics first with Georg Curtius and then with Leskien, but in practice became the obvious training ground for German and foreign linguists. Joseph Wright, the English dialectologist, studied at Leipzig and ended up translating into English the first edition of the *Grundriss* (Wright 1888); later, Leonard Bloomfield went to Leipzig too. There is little doubt that the combination of Brugmann, Leskien, and Windisch on the one hand, and Wundt on the other was largely responsible for Leipzig's attractiveness as a centre of linguistic studies, but among these scholars Brugmann was the most influential for those interested in language. Of him one can say what

has been said of Bloomfield (Hymes & Fought 1975: 103), that he became 'the symbol for an entire period' – with all the complications that this poses for historiography.

What is the intellectual side of the coin? How do we envisage Brugmann's intellectual progress? Where does he stand in the development of linguistic thought? The first impression – one that his contemporaries might have shared – is that we are dealing with a young revolutionary, a hot-headed young Turk who turned into an archetypal member of the establishment. First, we meet a young man in his twenties who risks his career in order to publish one or two controversial articles in the periodical which he co-edits with his teacher, is officially reproached and repudiated and does not apologize, but joins forces with a somewhat older contemporary to create a new periodical, reasserting with vehemence and considerable arrogance the same principles and the same conclusions – a man whose work and strong methodological statements created an apparently unbridgeable division among all contemporary linguists. Later, we find a peace-loving scholar, a great systematizer, the author of some 400 books and articles, someone whose genius was seen to consist in his diligence and working stamina (Kretschmer 1920: 256), but also someone who gave to a later generation the impression that the basic principles of linguistics had been found a long time earlier and that all that was needed was to apply them again and again (Hoenigswald 1980: 23). Common characteristics of the two phases are inexhaustible energy and humourless diligence. How correct is this picture?

The revolutionary phase coincides with the beginning of the so-called *junggrammatische Richtung*.<sup>4</sup> The articles which angered Georg Curtius, Brugmann's teacher and one of the most influential linguists of the period, concerned highly technical questions of Indo-European reconstruction; one (Brugman 1876a) argued for the attribution to Indo-European of a vocalic [ŋ] sound, the other (Brugman 1876b) discussed the inflection of a noun type (the *r*-stems) and also gave reasons for reconstructing for Indo-European a set of vowels which made the parent language much closer to, for example, Greek than to Sanskrit, thus destroying one of the accepted views about the development and branching of the Indo-European family. This was not all; in both articles, which conspicuously lack the clarity which marked the older Brugmann's productions, there were, admittedly in footnotes, long methodological discussions. The principles advocated were later repeated with greater clarity and greater emphasis in the 1878 preface to the *Morphologische Untersuchungen*, the real manifesto of the movement (Osthoff & Brugman 1878), signed by the two editors but written by Brugmann alone. These principles were: a) the methodology used in the study of language must be explicit and must be based on a different conception of language from that popularized by Schleicher; language cannot be an organism which develops according to laws of its own independently of the speakers;

historical linguistics is a form of history, not a form of science, b) we can understand how languages change only if we observe how change occurs in present-day languages and assume that the same types of development apply to all phases of linguistic history (the uniformitarian principle), c) sounds change according to 'mechanical' laws which in principle suffer no exception, nor is the speaker conscious of the progress of sound change (the regularity principle), d) analogy, which is determined by psychological factors, is one of the main causes of language change, now and at all stages. This is a crude summary of the manifesto, though less crude than the one which has become familiar through the polemical stance of its adversaries and the overemphatic claims of partisans. The former either dismissed a) and b) as trivial, or found them unpalatable, or did both, though for the most part they saw no reason to discuss the two points, since they were not relevant – or so they thought – to the technical work of the comparative linguist; they found c), the regularity principle, both old hat (had not Schleicher and Curtius himself been constantly in favour of a more rigorous application of sound-laws?) and wildly exaggerated (the exceptions to sound-laws were obvious); as for d), they found it difficult to accept that analogical change (*falsche Analogie* or *Formübertragung*) could occur in the earliest stages of language or could be more than a *pis-aller* explanation for changes which were not really understood. They were also, and rightly, irritated by the somewhat woolly dualism between 'mechanical' sound-laws and 'psychological' analogy. Some of the partisans did not fare much better; most of them concentrated on c) and used it both as a *cri de guerre* and as a password which would instantly distinguish friends from foes.<sup>5</sup>

The young Brugmann was not alone in his views; in the mid-1870s they had been formulated by a group of Leipzig people in their twenties and early thirties: among others there were the Slavist Leskien, the most senior, who was already an *Ordinarius*, the classicist and Indo-Europeanist Osthoff, the Sanskritist and Celtologist Windisch, the Germanist Braune, the Orientalist Hübschmann, and a frequent visitor, Karl Verner (Brugmann 1909: 219). They formed a sort of coterie which indulged in frequent outings and discussions, in sharp criticism of other work, and in a series of arrogant statements: the subject needed to take a new direction and they were going to show the way. The phenomenon is not unique. Writing of a lively and very successful group of Oxford philosophers in the late 1930s, of their self-centred attitude, and of their assumption that no one existed 'outside the magic circle', Isaiah Berlin (1980: 115) concludes: 'This was vain and foolish and, I have no doubt, irritating to others. But I suspect that those who have never been under the spell of this kind of illusion, even for a short while, have not known true intellectual happiness.' This – one understands from the literature of the period – was the atmosphere in which the *Junggrammatiker* lived. They felt, and partly were, revolutionary; in their



mind – and this is perhaps the most striking fact from a modern point of view – it was equally important to have the ‘right views’ about the number and nature of vowels to be attributed to Indo-European and to be ready to reconsider from the beginning the view of language which their textbooks (and here again Schleicher’s *Compendium* was the most important) had promulgated. They felt, nor does it matter whether this was true or not, that they had new things to say both about the techniques and about the theory, and that there was no distinction between the two; they also felt, perhaps misguidedly, that they were at long last joining the two strands of linguistic thought which their predecessors had separated: the tradition of philosophical thought about language (as they would have put it) and the concrete work of comparison and reconstruction, whose origins they saw in the early nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Finally, they felt daring and courageous; in the gossipy intrigue-ridden atmosphere of German universities (Gildersleeve 1884: 354) too uncompromising a stance might have damaged their career prospects.

This is not the place to discuss how original the Neogrammarians were (Robins 1978); in their opposition to Schleicher’s conception of language as an independent organism they obviously had predecessors both in Germany (Steinthal) and outside (Madvig, Whitney, Bréal, Ascoli, etc.); their uniformitarian views were also common to many of the people I have just mentioned (Aarsleff 1979; Christy 1983); the importance of analogy had been previously recognized by a number of people again in Germany and outside (Morpurgo Davies 1978: 39, 46, 57). Schuchardt (1885), in the most intelligent of the anti-Neogrammarian pamphlets published at the time (Fought 1982), had no hesitation in stating that the only new principle was the regularity principle (which he wanted to attack) – yet, as we have seen, even this limited claim to originality was not generally accepted. If so, both the challenging tone of the manifesto and the violence of the polemics it provoked are hard to understand. However, two points need to be stressed. The first is the general antitheoretical and antimethodological mood of contemporary German linguistics, which made any strong methodological statement, such as those included in the preface to the *Morphologische Untersuchungen*, singularly distasteful to the reader. The causes were manifold. Some were related to the intellectual climate of the period, which was more data- than theory-oriented. Others were intrinsic to the subject: the obvious successes had been reached independently of methodological and theoretical discussions and sometimes in spite of them: Bopp’s importance, for instance, was due to his ‘concrete’ results; his original aim of demonstrating that the earlier phases of language reflected the logical structure of thought had not been achieved. Still others are probably to be seen in the close link which had always existed between comparative linguistics and classical studies; most of the Neogrammarians and their

opponents had been trained as classicists and classicists were (and to a large extent still are) reluctant to indulge in methodological discussions. Ritschl, the great Latinist, who, after his Bonn successes, had been largely responsible for resurrecting classical studies at Leipzig, had explicitly stated it in the fourth of the ten commandments which he and Lehrs had composed (partly in jest) for the benefit of classicists: 'Du sollst den Namen Methode nicht unnütz im Munde führen' (Thou shalt not take the name 'Method' in vain) (Ribbeck 1879-81.2: 450). Among Ritschl's pupils there were Georg Curtius, Schleicher, Schuchardt, Sievers, Joh. Schmidt, Clemm, Windisch, Meister, Brugmann, Cauer. If we added here the list of Curtius' pupils we would obtain an almost complete roster of German linguists of the second part of the nineteenth century. Karl Brugmann, who had been a devoted member of both Ritschl's and Curtius' seminars, must have felt very strongly indeed if he had allowed himself to break the fourth commandment.

A second reason for the violence of the anti-Neogrammarian reactions is again linked to the 'concrete' nature of the questions discussed by the contemporary German linguists. In spite of their methodological statements Brugmann and his group were as data-oriented as the others. All the five volumes of the *Morphologische Untersuchungen*, edited and written by Osthoff and Brugmann, consist of articles about specific problems in the historical grammar of Indo-European and the Indo-European languages. Often enough the conclusions reached by the two authors differ from those of their predecessors; this is to be expected, but what must have been difficult to bear for those whose favourite views were attacked was the statement, repeated on all possible occasions, that the new conclusions entirely depended on the correct application of the new principles.<sup>7</sup> Consider, for instance, Brugmann's discussion of the origin of the verbal endings in Indo-European. The standard view, after Bopp, Schleicher and Curtius, was that they were pronouns which somehow had been joined to a preceding verbal stem. For the first person singular active Schleicher (1871: 647f, 653ff) reconstructed a *ma* pronoun which appeared in a weakened *mi* form in e.g. Sanskrit *ásmi*, Greek *eimí* 'I am', Sanskrit *bhárāmi* 'I carry'; was lost in Greek *phérō* 'I carry'; lost the *m* in the Greek perfect *léloipa* 'I have left' from a supposed *leloipma*; lost the *a* in Greek *épheron* 'I was carrying' with later change of *m* to *n*, and lost both final *a* and *m* in the Greek aorist *étupsa* 'I beat' (presumably from *-ama*). For the second person singular he reconstructed *tva* 'thou' which yielded the Greek 'present' *-sí* and *-eis*, 'past' *-s*, and 'perfect' *-tha*. None of these phonetic changes, except for that of final *m* to *n*, is paralleled in any other Greek form. Brugman(n) (1878a: 133-50; cf. 1886-92.ii.2: 1335-45; 1904a: 588-90; 1897-1916.ii.3: 583-99; 1921) reconstructs four different endings of first person: 'present' *-mi* and *-ō* (same function, different types of verbs); 'past' postvocalic *-m* (> Gr. *-n*) and



postconsonantal  $-m$  (> Gr.  $a$ ); perfect  $-a$ . Sanskrit  $-āmi$  in *bhārāmi* (<  $*-ōmi$ ) owes its form to the contamination of  $-ō$  and  $-mi$  verbs. For the second person he reconstructs 'present'  $-si$ , 'past'  $-s$ , perfect  $-tha$ . The reason? Only in this way can we account for the attested forms without postulating sound changes for which no other evidence is available. The consequences? The second person endings and some of the first person endings show no obvious similarity with the pronominal forms; hence it is not legitimate to assume that all personal endings are of pronominal origin. Is a different origin plausible? Brugmann's answer is that, if we look at the history of attested languages, we see that verbal endings have a multiplicity of origins: nominal forms, analogical remodelling of pre-existing endings, pronominal suffixes, etc. There is no reason to assume that the parent language, for which presumably we can reconstruct only a late phase, that is, a phase which was in itself the product of a long historical development, was different: a clear-cut example of application of the four principles mentioned above – and one which was bound to irritate because it cut across a series of lengthy arguments which had been pursued for some seventy years (cf. Curtius 1885: 147ff; Delbrück 1880: 61ff, 96ff). Moreover, the conclusions led to some form of retrenchment: Max Müller (1866: 244), to take just one example, had argued that future work was likely to account (mostly in compositional and pronominal terms) for the origin of all grammatical forms; thanks to 'careful inductive reasoning . . . in the end grammatical analysis will become as successful as chemical analysis'. Essentially Brugmann and the others were saying that that was not a real possibility: reconstructed Indo-European is just a stage of language like all others. Was this not a betrayal of the whole discipline?<sup>8</sup>

Between the early 1880s and the early 1890s, in addition to innumerable reviews and a large number of articles, Brugmann coedited and to a large extent wrote three more volumes of *Morphologische Untersuchungen* (1880, 1881, 1890), compiled an edition and a descriptive grammar of Lithuanian legends and folk songs, the result of field work which almost doubled the material then available for the language (Leskien & Brugman 1882), answered the anti-Neogrammarian criticism with a book 'On the present state of linguistics' (1885a), founded and coedited an influential new periodical, the *Indogermanische Forschungen* (1892ff), and wrote for Müller's *Handbuch* a fundamental historical grammar of Greek; the first edition appeared in 1885 but in 1889 Brugmann produced a completely rewritten edition of almost double the size. In 1892 he completed the four parts of the *Grundriss* (1886–92), which presupposed a first hand acquaintance with all ancient Indo-European languages and what had been written about them (a second and fully rewritten edition appeared between 1897 and 1916). The amount of authoritative work done in a relatively short period is almost

incredible – it is of course what made Brugmann a ‘member of the establishment’. To the modern Indo-Europeanist the very name of the *Grundriss* may conjure up the image of a lengthy unoriginal compilation which must be used because nothing has ever superseded it, but should also be attacked because it stands for dull respectability. If this is so now (and I doubt it) certainly it was not so at the time. The only immediate predecessor of the *Grundriss* was Schleicher’s *Compendium* and, as Henry Sweet had pointed out (see above), no part of the *Compendium* was any longer acceptable: in Indo-European studies everything was in a state of flux. How much this was felt when the *Grundriss* came out emerges from the words of Wilhelm Streitberg who was twenty-two when the first volume appeared; in 1921 he wrote:

One must have lived in that great period of the development of linguistics to be able to understand what impression this first volume made. Even today I still feel the joy which took hold of me, as a very young student, when on an autumn evening I found the first volume on my desk; I can still see myself breathlessly turning page after page till terribly late at night, incapable of extricating myself from the fascination [*Zauber*] which emanated from the book. (Streitberg 1921: 33\*)

Brugmann’s achievement did not consist only in discovering or collecting the right answers to the old problems; he had to find out what the problems were because they were no longer the same – and I speak of ‘concrete’, not of theoretical problems. Consider a trivial example, once again from the history of the personal endings: for Max Müller (1862: 272; 1866: 304) and Schleicher (1871: 656) the *ta* demonstrative in a weakened form yielded in Indo-European the third person singular ending *ti*; this, they assumed, became *si* through a normal change of Greek and then, through another normal change, intervocalic *s* was lost; hence *phēreti* > *phēresi* > *phērei* ‘he carries’. Brugmann could not accept the conclusion because in Greek all instances of *si* < *ti* are preserved; it is only inherited intervocalic *s* which is lost. Hence the origin of *phērei* becomes a serious problem, which Brugmann tried to solve at different times in different manners (1878a: 173–9, 1886–92.ii.2: 1347–8; 1904a: 590f; 1897–1916.ii.3: 582; Brugmann & Thumb 1913: 397f, etc.); whatever the solution (and a generally accepted solution has not yet been found) the form could no longer be used as positive evidence for a pronominal origin of the endings. On the other hand the objections to the old view presupposed a number of important assumptions about the relative chronology of sound change, the ordering of rules, and so on. More important still, the regularity principle was in fact compelling the Neogrammarians and their followers to test all observable instances of linguistic change against a definite parameter: each instance had to be classified as either ‘sound-change’ or ‘non-sound-change’, depending on the existence or otherwise of regular sound correspondences between the

old and the late form. Thus the shift from \**ebherom* to Greek *épheron* was an example of 'sound-change' (in Greek regularly \**bh* > *ph* and \**-m* > *-n*) but Greek *pherei* could not be derived from \**bhereti* through sound-change since *-ti* does not regularly become *-i*. If the shift was not an example of sound-change, further classification was needed: analogical change, dialect borrowing, any other type? New problems arose and these, both at a general and a specific level, were the problems which the *Grundriss* had first to recognize and then to tackle.

The *Junggrammatiker* in general and Brugmann in particular have often been accused of ignoring the systemic aspect of language. This may be true – though not always – in their study of sound-change, but when they considered analogical change the position was entirely different. Here, they saw, and saw very clearly, that no item could be studied in isolation. Any discussion of specific examples of analogical change presupposed a reconstruction of the relevant *états de langue* and an analysis of the intricate web of relationships (phonetic, grammatical and semantic) in which the linguistic form considered was included. At this stage we are not too remote from the distinction between synchrony and diachrony which Saussure was to make famous (Jankowsky 1976) and from the structural conception of language which we also associate with the name of Saussure. A number of points confirm that this is so in Brugmann's work. On the one hand we have not one (Lieb 1967; Koerner 1975: 784) but numerous references to *statistisch* ('statistic'/static) methods of analysis; the adjective is used jointly or synonymously with *beschreibend* (descriptive) (Brugman(n) 1875: 651; 1884b: 1363; 1885a: 18; 1887; 1892: 15, etc.), is contrasted with *sprachgeschichtlich* (historical/diachronic) (1884b: 1363; 1887) or *historisch* (historical) (e.g. 1892: 15), and is by no means meant in the pejorative sense which one might expect (e.g. 1875: 651). More important, however, than mere terminology is the way in which Brugmann argues in specific cases for the need to distinguish between, for instance, an etymological account of the segmentation or meaning of some forms and the actual segmentation or meaning which we must attribute them at a particular linguistic stage. Thus both in the first and (at greater length) in the second edition of the *Grundriss* Brugmann (1886–92.i: 14–19; 1897–1916.i.1: 32–40) makes much of the distinction between elements which we want to segment because they were originally free forms, such as the *heit* (hood) of German *Mannheit* (manhood), and elements which we segment on 'psychological' grounds, such as the various morphs of Greek *pa-ter-es* 'fathers', where *-es* indicates nominative plural. Similarly, Leo Meyer is attacked (1884a) for his incapacity to recognize that forms like Greek *apneustos* 'breathless' (instead of the expected \**apneutos*) owe their *-stos* termination to the analogy with adjectives where *-tos* was added to an *s*-stem; at the same time, however,

Brugmann states that, if it is really necessary to segment (*secieren*) such forms as *agnōstos* 'unknown' or *apneustos*, it is better to analyse them as *agnō-stos*, *apneu-stos* etc. than as *agnōs-tos* etc., even if *-tos* is the older suffix, because 'im Sprachbewusstsein' (in the speaker's linguistic intuition) there was by then a *-stos* suffix as well as a *-tos* suffix. In the same review he argues against treating roots as original free forms. All that we can say, he maintains, is that some phonetic sequences are treated as units from a morphological point of view since they may be compared with similar sequences: *bher-* in Greek *pherō* 'I carry' (<\**bherō*) as *der-* in Greek *derō* 'I skin'. We now realize that just like 'statistisch' ('statistic'/static), terms like 'psychologisch', 'Sprachbewusstsein' (linguistic intuition), 'Sprachgefühl' (linguistic feeling) can be used to refer to a synchronic analysis of linguistic facts. Yet, the psychological terminology also presupposes some form of structural approach. One could quote striking formulations such as that of Brugmann (1904a: viii) according to which language is a highly complex human activity 'bei der die verschiedenartigsten Faktoren in gegenseitiger Abhängigkeit zum Ganzen zusammenwirken, bei der im Grunde alles durch alles bedingt ist' (in which the most varied factors work together in mutual dependence on the whole, in which fundamentally everything is determined by everything else),<sup>10</sup> but they are probably less significant than the concrete examples of application of structural principles. In an attack against an earlier book by Leo Meyer, Brugman (1880: 977) takes issue with the statement that some Greek imperatives, *ithi* 'go', *stēthi* 'stay', are neither aorists nor presents, that they are not marked for duration. This, he argues, may have been true in origin but it does not follow that it is true at a later period; it is far more normal that forms of whatever origin which come to belong to a linguistic system differently organized from the original one modify their meaning and function accordingly. In ignoring this, Meyer is guilty of a common *Grundfehler* (basic mistake). In his inaugural lecture in Freiburg, Brugmann (1885a: 22f) was even more explicit in the discussion of that basic mistake: language is not something which exists outside the speakers; all linguistic elements are linked in our psychic organization, our linguistic perception. It is impossible from this point of view to distinguish between old and new linguistic forms; there are no Indo-European forms in Greek or Latin or in any other Indo-European language; in Greek there are only Greek forms, in Latin Latin forms, and so on, because in any language what is inherited has become something new and specific: 'the whole organism of the representations [*Vorstellungsgruppen*] which exist in our consciousness has been repeatedly altered and consequently the position of each individual element has changed'; we ought not to treat language as if it were a 'mere aggregate of words'.

The old organic conception of language has been seen (by Cassirer 1945, for instance) as a pre-form of structuralism – and there is little doubt that for

some scholars at least it fulfilled exactly that function – and other functions too (Morpurgo Davies 1986). In Brugmann (and obviously in Paul) the awareness that linguistic elements are interdependent and cannot be treated in isolation has not disappeared but if anything has become stronger. Only it has a new justification: it is based on a psychological view of language as something which cannot exist independently of the speaker, and, as Brugmann would have put it, of his association processes.<sup>11</sup> Analogy is based on these association processes, and analogy, as is now clear, is envisaged as a major force, responsible both for language creativity as a purely synchronic process and for language change. On the one hand it accounts for analogical creation – for the creation of new forms, new sentences etc., and on the other for analogical change – for the replacement of old forms or constructions with new forms and constructions (cf. e.g. Hoenigswald 1978, Morpurgo Davies 1978). The latter is what the historical linguist is most interested in, but the latter cannot be separated from the former. The result is that in the concrete work of Brugmann or Brugmann-like linguists both synchrony and diachrony play a necessary part – nor is there any sign that the two were confused. If a greater role is played by diachrony it is because, in agreement with Paul and most contemporary linguists, Brugmann attributes explanatory power to historical study alone (Kiparsky 1974). Yet it is this constant awareness of the systematic nature of the linguistic fact which accounts for the systematic nature of Brugmann's work; in all his opus there is a general reluctance to investigate facts in isolation.

Let us now return to Brugmann's conventional image. How correct is the view that I described earlier? Did he really change from a young revolutionary into a member of the establishment; did he really assume that all problems of method and theory had been solved in the 1870s? The answer to the first question is that certainly his status changed in the way indicated but any comparison with a rabid young leftist who betrays his youthful convictions to enjoy middle-aged comforts is misplaced. Brugmann did abandon his polemical stance but not his convictions – nor was there any reason to change them since they became commonplace.<sup>12</sup> No one tried to resurrect Schleicher's concept of *Glottik* as a science or of language as an independent organism; consciously or unconsciously uniformitarianism was accepted, at least among specialists. The debate about sound-laws largely concentrated on the formulation and the rationale of the statement but for a while at least the procedures followed in historical study and reconstruction, Brugmann's main concern, did not greatly differ from scholar to scholar. Indeed the beginning of this convergence is earlier than the 'coming out' of the *Junggrammatiker*.<sup>13</sup> Discussion about analogy continued, but no one doubted its importance. In Indo-European studies

Brugmann's *Grundriss* in its two successive editions and in its shortened version (Brugmann 1904a) became the standard text and Schleicher's *Compendium* was entirely abandoned. A success story – nor did Brugmann live to see the shift in interests from diachronic to synchronic and theoretical linguistics which was partly determined by Saussure's *Cours*. But should we infer that between the late 1870s and the late 1910s no change occurred and Brugmann's thought remained stagnant? His contemporaries recognized in his work an increasing interest in syntax and in semantics (Förster 1918: x), and it is noticeable that syntactic and semantic problems loom large in the work of the last twenty years. The new edition of the *Grundriss*, which was not completed, did not separate study of forms and study of functions as the earlier edition had done. In this, Brugmann was following the model of his own Greek grammar which included a syntactical part and of the *Kurze vergleichende Grammatik* (1904a) where he had justified his undertaking with the observation (quoted above) that in language 'everything depends on everything else'. The monographs on the nature of composition (1900), on the demonstrative pronouns (1904b), on the numerals (1907), on differences in sentence formation (1918), on the simple sentence (1922), all belong to the late period, together with a number of semantic studies. The approach is the historical-comparative one which we recognize in the earlier work and the aim is again that of reconstructing Indo-European and understanding the changes from Indo-European to the attested languages; what is new is an attempt at offering both definitions and preliminary generalities before the historical work starts. Obviously we recognize everywhere the influence of Delbrück, the author of the three volumes on syntax (1893–1900) which were added to the first edition of the *Grundriss*. But what matters is the change in attitude. A review of Delbrück (1893–1900.1) published in 1894 by Streitberg, Brugmann's pupil, is representative of a widely spread set of reactions, which at some stage may well have been shared by Brugmann himself. There Streitberg (1894: 176) reaffirmed that the final aim of all serious work must be to clarify the historical development, i.e. [sie] 'auf Gesetze zurückzuführen' (to reduce it to laws). And he continued: 'the naked fact is indifferent; it becomes valuable when we are able to insert it into a system, thus validating and understanding it'. This, he argued, may explain why the study of phonology and morphology is privileged; for syntax we have not yet gone beyond the mere statement of facts; the password which will open the entrance to the *Zauberberg* (magic mountain) is still escaping us. By 1904 the older Brugmann had realized, as the young Streitberg had not, that even the standard historical work about phonology and morphology presupposed some syntactical notions and that, both if they were wrong and if they were right, it was better to make them explicit than to ignore their existence. In the second edition of the *Grundriss* Brugmann had found it useful to introduce some general account of



articulatory phonetics, largely based on Sievers' manual. A similar attempt is made for some syntactical concepts: the second volume starts with a discussion of what is meant by *Satz* 'sentence' and with the statement (admittedly common to Paul and Delbrück) that the sentence is theoretically prior to the word. Some of the arguments reappear in Brugmann 1918 (which would repay much closer study) and in the posthumous book about the syntax of the simple sentence (Brugmann 1922), which was meant to be a part of the *Grundriss*. For the student of sound-change a basic knowledge of phonetics is indispensable; similarly, the mature scholar came to recognize that morphological and syntactic change cannot be studied without dedicating some thought to the basic foundations of morphology and syntax. In this he certainly foreshadowed later developments in linguistics.

The contrast between the preface to the *Morphologische Untersuchungen*, the first, and the second edition of the *Grundriss* is interesting in other ways too. The first edition of the *Grundriss* offers almost no general statements; the second contains a chapter about *Lautgesetze* (1897–1916.i.1.: 63ff) written in a very different tone from the relevant part of the manifesto. No mention is made of the 'blind necessity' of sound-laws and of their mechanical-physiological nature; more interestingly, Brugmann now realizes that 'pure' dialects and 'pure' linguistic communities do not exist; everywhere there is a degree of linguistic mixture. If so, a sharp definition of the regularity principle is impossible. Yet, Brugmann argues, that should not induce us to reject it, since the results of its application are obvious; rather, we must acknowledge that we know nothing about the ultimate causes of sound-change, and little about the manner in which it develops.

I mentioned earlier that intellectually Brugmann is not wholly representative. This is partly because the amount and the importance of the work he did is unique, but mainly because a serious reading of his works does not confirm the most generally accepted image. In his assessment of the German contribution to comparative linguistics Meillet (1936 [1923]: 159) acknowledged that 'l'édifice solide de la grammaire comparée des langues indo-européennes, des langues romanes, des langues germaniques, a été fondé par les Allemands, et construit, en très grande partie, par des savants allemands' (the foundations of the comparative grammar of the Indo-European languages, of the Romance languages, of the Germanic languages, were laid down by the Germans, and the edifice itself, in all its solidity, was also built for the most part by German scholars). Yet he also wrote that: 'Le défaut fondamental des travaux allemands est que les faits y sont trop considérés en eux-mêmes et que trop souvent les auteurs semblent satisfaits quand ils ont fait la critique des sources et rangé les données dans des cadres à peu près constants' (The basic defect of German works is that the facts are looked at too much on their own and that all too often the authors seem to be

content to produce a critical examination of the sources and a classification of the facts according to an almost fixed model). It is likely that the works he had in mind were Brugmann's books or the Brugmann-like manuals to which he had referred earlier in the same article; if the former is true, this is perhaps an occasion on which it is possible to disagree with Meillet. What is absent in Brugmann, in contrast with some of his followers or imitators, is the stolid satisfaction of the man without problems. He did not have the intellectual elegance which characterized Saussure or Meillet, nor did he have, as did Meillet, an instinctive feeling for the links between cultural and linguistic facts, or for the social nature of language, but he had the constant urge to consider and reconsider what the problems were, to vary their formulation and his own solutions, to emphasize rather than bypass the difficulties. He also realized that his subject had reached a stage at which it was necessary to deal with it in its entirety. He was no great theoretician, but he succeeded in making clear to an antitheoretical generation that even the most technical work depends on definite assumptions which need to be spelled out before they can be accepted or rejected – above all he had the courage and the stamina to put his views to the test in a monumental book which is still the most complete historical account available of a language family.

## NOTES

- 1 The most detailed account is that in Streitberg (1921); less useful, but worth reading are Förster (1918), Streitberg (1919a), Kretschmer (1920), Devoto (1930), Sommer (1955). For a list of Brugmann's writings see Streitberg (1909 and 1919b). The Brugman family adopted the Brugmann spelling of its name in 1882 (Streitberg 1919a: 143).
- 2 For W. von Humboldt cf. most recently P. Sweet (1978–80); for Grimm's earlier activity cf. Ginschel (1967) and for a general bibliography about him see Denecke (1977); for Bopp see Lefmann (1891–7).
- 3 Basic information and statistical data about the German universities can be found in Lexis (1893 and 1904); for Leipzig in particular cf. Leipzig (1909); for the names and basic biographical data of all Leipzig professors see Leipzig (1961). For our period, lists of lectures and lecturers in German universities were regularly printed in the *Literarisches Centralblatt*.
- 4 The bibliography about the *Junggrammatiker* or, in the current mistranslation, Neogrammarians (for the name see Pedersen 1983: 79f) is now immense: for it cf. Morpurgo Davies (1975: 644–7), but add at least Vennemann & Wilbur (1972), Koerner (1975: 659–92), Jankowsky (1976), Wilbur (1977), Robins (1978), Hoernigswald (1978), Christy (1983).
- 5 Joseph Wright may serve as an example. His enthusiasm was such that as late as 1890 he could end – abruptly – a letter to a student, who later became his wife, with the words: 'Die Junggrammatiker sollen leben!' (E. Wright 1932.1: 197); he

also wrote to the same student that 'the dialect of Wellington has some very important sound-laws' (*ibid.* 187) and that 'Phonology corresponds to Pure Mathematics and Accidence to applied (mixed) Mathematics' (*ibid.* 202). In 1886 he spent his holidays with a German colleague and they 'discovered almost daily new sound-laws and etymologies' in his native dialect (*ibid.* 85). All this is naive, to say the least, but we may ask whether in the late nineteenth century J. Wright would have started his very useful work on English dialects if he had not learned, at the Neogrammarians' feet, that the scholarly study of living languages was both respectable and essential.

- 6 Cf. for example, Brugmann 1885a: 38f (with an interesting reference to Schuchardt). In fact this was not meant as a return to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tradition of linguistic thought; in concrete terms it simply meant that linguists were advised to read Whitney, Steinthal, and perhaps Steinthal's version of Humboldt.
- 7 To say that the main or only principle maintained by the *Junggrammatiker* is that 'the laws of sound-change admit of no exception' (cf. Fiedler ap. E. Wright 1932.1: 87) is historiographically wrong, though this was the interpretation of the controversy given by most of the contenders – and by their descendants; yet at the moment there is a real risk that we may be going too far in redressing the balance and we may underrate the importance of a strict application of the regularity principle in the concrete historical work of the time (cf. Hoenigswald 1978: 21). We are no longer trained to see reconstructions such as those found in Schleicher's *Compendium* (1871) and discussed below, with the result that we tend to forget the impact that the new reconstructions must have had on the specialists.
- 8 This 'dogmatic' scepticism (H. Sweet 1882–4: 108) was as important as the other views, and as strongly expressed. From the height of his twenty-nine years of age Brugman (1878b) felt free to advise a young scholar to refrain from speculations about the 'embryonic' period of Indo-European – all the more free, as he pointed out, because in the past he himself had come close to joining the 'Secte der Glottogonologen' (the sect of the glottogonists). Later (1881: 127) he pleaded against Fick's pupil, Bechtel, for a judicious use of the *ars nesciendi*: 'man hat bisher allzu viele in grauer indogermanischer Vorzeit spielende sprachhistorische Romane zu lesen bekommen, um nicht zu der Erkenntniss zu gelangen, dass nüchterne Zurückhaltung gegenüber den glottogonischen Hypothesen das einzige Mittel ist, um unserer Wissenschaft ihren Character als Wissenschaft zu wahren' (we have had to read too much linguistic fiction set in the misty prehistory of Indo-European, and we are now obliged to realize that a sober avoidance of all glottogonic hypotheses is the only possible way to preserve the scientific character of our discipline).
- 9 I accept here the point often made by Hoenigswald (most recently 1978: 25) that the regularity principle is in essence a tautology; the only way we have of distinguishing between sound-change and, for example, morphological or semantic replacement is to state that sound-change is regular. This does not exempt us from asking why this tautology is so essential to our understanding of language change.
- 10 What is the connection, if any, between this type of formulation and Meillet's

(1903: 407) view of language as a system 'où tout se tient' (where everything depends on everything else) (Szemerényi 1980: 160-2)?

- 11 We do not really know what 'psychological' meant for Brugmann; what was he referring to when he wrote to Ascoli in 1887 (Gazdaru 1967: 58) that the great Neogrammarian controversy had not centred so much on questions which concerned the link between linguistics and *Sprachphysiologie* (linguistic physiology) as much as on questions which had to do with the relationship between *Einzelforschung* (individual research) and psychology? Does this just mean that analogy is more important than sound-change? And what did Kretschmer (1920: 256) mean when he referred to Brugmann's death as signalling the end of an era which had seen the foundation and development 'der psychologischen Methoden der Sprachwissenschaft' (of psychological methods in linguistics)? How much did Brugmann really owe to his Leipzig colleague W. Wundt, the founder of experimental psychology? Streitberg (1921: 37\*) thought that, for instance, Brugmann's work on the demonstratives (1904b) showed the influence of Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie*, but in my view it simply shows the influence of the data about non-Indo-European languages collected by Wundt (1900) in *Die Sprache*. Brugmann (1897-1916.i.1: 67) certainly accepted from Wundt (1886) his view of the regularity principle as a logical postulate, but this had little to do with psychology, and he seems to be much closer to the theory of psychology as psychology of the individual adopted by Paul (and Delbrück) than to the *Völkerpsychologie* of Wundt (cf. Esper 1968: 1-81; 1973). For the early period cf. Brugman (1879: 322): 'It is indifferent for our assessment of the psychological process whether such an innovation has been accepted only by isolated individuals and remains limited to their speech or becomes the general norm in the linguistic community.'
- 12 As early as 1882 Brugman (1882) argued in a review that the name 'Junggrammatiker' ought to be avoided because it reminded one of contrasts in linguistics which by then had mostly been settled, at least in matters of substance rather than of personalities, and, one hoped, would be totally settled under both aspects in the not too remote future.
- 13 Cf. Kiparsky (1974: 340f). A typical example is provided by the history of the so-called *Palatalgesetz* or Collitz's Law, which demonstrated that the Sanskrit vocalic system had undergone profound changes and could not represent the earliest state of affairs: the law was discovered in the mid-1870s more or less at the same time, and probably independently, by a number of scholars: K. Verner, F. de Saussure, Johannes Schmidt, H. Collitz, E. Tegnér, W. Thomsen (Collitz 1886: 1; Osthoff 1886: 14-20; cf. Pedersen 1983: 69; Wilbur 1977: lxxxiv-lxxxviii); the first two could count as Neogrammarians or pro-Neogrammarian (at the time this was true for Saussure), the second two belonged to the opposite party, but both sides acknowledged the importance of the finding and argued for it in similar manner. In this instance acrimony arose, but only because of priority questions.

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