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Contents

The Course of Human Development

19th-century Comparative Linguistics from Schlegel to Schleicher

by

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The investigation that I am going to pursue here is part of a larger effort on my part to understand the relationship between Kant's so-called "philosophical anthropology" and the development of early German anthropology since it is my sense that Kant had a determinate, if indirect, effect on the history of that separate field. For now this larger project has three main foci: an account of Kant's philosophical anthropology in all its parts, an inquiry into Kant's relationship to the theories engaged by German anthropologists between roughly the 1750s–1790s, and finally, an effort to track the subsequent routes taken by German anthropology in the first half of the 19th century. In this discussion I am going look at one particular trajectory in anthropological research where we can see Kant's effect. This trajectory emerges out of the early ethnographical work being done by historians at the University of Göttingen, work that in its attention to language as a window into the past, ran parallel to contemporaneous philosophical discussions by Condillac, Rousseau, and Herder regarding the origin of language. As I have argued elsewhere, it was Herder who would prove to be a turning point in the philosophical debate, so far as he was adamant regarding both the naturalness of language, its rootedness in the material circumstances of a people, and its status as the foundation for cognition, indeed for reason itself.[1] Herder's approach to language, and in particular his tying of it to the *Klima* as much as to the *Kultur* of a people, fitted the theory to his own philosophical anthropology and to the historical development of mankind

[1] Jennifer Mensch, Songs of Nature: From Philosophy of Language to Philosophical Anthropology in Herder and Humboldt, in: International Yearbook for Hermeneutics 17 (2018), pp. 95–109.

as he would present it in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* in 1784.

But rather than rehearse any more of that now, I want to instead provide some general context for the discussions being had regarding language during these years, context which I think will make sense of my thinking that this is an important, if understudied, subject for understanding Kant and his contemporaries on the subject of not only philosophical anthropology, but indeed the work done by Kant, Schiller, and above all Hegel, to develop a philosophy of universal history under whose umbrella, then, philosophical anthropology could be fitted. Once that context has been described, I next want to take a closer look at two figures who represent critical turning points for understanding the connection between a *philosophical* approach to language, culture, and history, and a more recognizably anthropological one. The first figure here is Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), whose works on Lessing, on Greek poetry, whose novel *Lucinde* and the fragments he published in the *Athenaeum* during the mid-1790s are what identify him as one of the great Romantic thinkers. For my purposes here, however, I am going to look instead at Schlegel's 1808 essay *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*, a text that has been described as "having fostered three lines of 19th-century research, namely, Comparative Linguistics (Bopp), Historical Linguistics (Grimm), and Typological Linguistics (Humboldt)."[2] It was this text, more than any other, which drove an enduring German scholarly fascination with India in the first half of the century, and with it the creation of new university chairs in Linguistics and Oriental Languages, with Sanskrit as the primary object of study. These three lines of research came together in our second figure to consider here, August Schleicher (1821–1868). Schleicher, who studied theology in Tübingen during the years when Hegel's posthumously published lectures on the philosophy of history began appearing, is credited with having taken up Hegel's analysis and using it as a basis for a fresh synthesis of linguistic studies, providing thereby a "framework that all subsequent generations of historical-comparative Indo-European linguists adopted, and which dominated the discipline until the 1920s."[3] It is Schleicher, then, who emerges as the keystone figure

[2] Friedrich von Schlegel's piece is available in English translation: Friedrich von Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, in: The Aesthetic and Miscellaneous Works of Frederick von Schlegel, translated by E.J. Millington, London 1849, pp. 425–526. The comment above on this text's importance was made by Konrad Koerner, Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Historical-Comparative Grammar, in: Practicing Linguistic Historiography, Amsterdam 1989, pp. 269–290, here p. 287.

[3] Koerner, Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Historical-Comparative Grammar, p. 287. For Hegel's influence on Schleicher see Robert J. Richards, The Linguistic

for connecting 18th-century *philosophical* anthropology to Darwin's evolutionary theory, but more on that anon.

1. From Ethnology to Anthropology

Debates surrounding language have distinct histories in the 18th and 19th centuries. The earliest philosophical debates were part of more general considerations on the nature of cognition, with positions such as Locke's nominalism, Berkeley's theory of visual signs, or Leibniz's efforts to discern a universal grammar for the sake of overcoming theological disputes, in the forefront of discussions. As the century progressed, however, theories regarding the *origin* of language took precedence, and these were initially divided between those who took language to be a signature gift from God, one marking our special status as God's favoured species, and those who instead followed the position advanced by the French materialists, like Condillac, who believed that language could only be natural in its origins and that it existed, therefore, on a continuum with animal communication. By mid-century virtually every theorist had advanced some speculation on the topic, and it was thus no surprise when Pierre Louis Maupertuis, who had been hired by Frederick the Great to reestablish the reputation of Berlin's Academy of Sciences, and who had published his own "Reflections on the Origin of Languages" in 1748, set as a question for the Academy's annual essay competition: "What is the reciprocal influence of the opinions of a people on a language and of the language on opinions?"[4] In 1759 the prize went to the Göttingen theologian and Orientalist, Johann David Michaelis, for an essay that explored the factors contributing to a nation's linguistic potential, such that a language could be ranked on a scale of perfection according to the "degree of genius, understanding, and knowledge," of its speakers. Herder's 1767 *Fragments on Recent German Literature* might have included criticism of Michaelis, but Herder in fact agreed with the basic thrust of this position since, as Herder saw it, the store of linguistic forms received by a community determined how its life force could be expressed,

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Creation of Man: Charles Darwin, August Schleicher, Ernst Haeckel, and the Missing Link in Nineteenth-Century Evolutionary Theory, in: Matthias Dörries (ed.), Experimenting in Tongues: Studies in Science and Language, Stanford 2002, pp. 21–48, and Tuska Benes, In Babel's Shadow: Language, Philology, and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Germany, Detroit 2008, p. 230.

[4] Adolf Harnack, Geschichte der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Bd. 2, Berlin 1900, p. 306.

thus imprinting the reason and character of a people, and, as he put it there, guiding their development from origin to old age.[5]

Now as I said at the outset, this philosophical investigation into first, and more generically, the connection between language and cognition, and then, with Herder, into the connection between language and the *material* and *spiritual* makeup of a people, this enquiry was to large extent contemporaneous with a separate set of investigations into language that were taking place in history departments in Germany. The initial stages of this began with the German exploration of Siberia, with Daniel Messerschmidt as the first Western explorer to travel to the farthest borders of China and Mongolia between 1720–1727. Messerschmidt's collection of cultural artifacts moved to the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1728, where another German, a historian from Leipzig named Gerhard Friedrich Müller, was working as a secretary. Müller mounted his own Kamchatka expedition in 1733 and spent the next ten years traveling as far as the Siberian frontier, and amassing an enormous catalogue of items related to the history, geography, and language of the Siberian peoples, all of which fell under the title, as he labeled it in 1737, of a "*Völker-Beschreibung*."[6]

This kind of all-encompassing work to describe a people's way of life was renamed "*Ethnographia*" in German historical writing starting in 1767. And while this might seem like a simple case of finding a Greek-sounding equivalent to "*Völker-Beschreibung*" the new name reflected rather changes in an understanding of the task of history itself. In this vein Ethnography was coined on analogy with Geography, with both seen as subsets of Historiography. Ethnographical praxis was defined, moreover, by a people's language group, and the study of language was considered to be more stable as a source of historical evidence for a *Volk* than geographical location, given the realities of ongoing migration patterns. In 1772 the Göttingen historian

[5] Johann Gottfried Herder, Fragments on Recent German Literature, in: Johann Gottfried Herder, Selected Early Works, 1764–1767, translated by Ernest A. Menze with Michael Palma, Pennsylvania 1992, pp. 85–233. A helpful overview of Michaelis, Süßmilch, Herder, and other thinkers engaged by the question of language at this time in Germany is in Benes, In Babel's Shadow, pp. 23–63. The best treatment of Herder's manner of connecting language and a people can be found in Sonia Sikka, Herder on Humanity and Cultural Difference: Enlightened Relativism, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 162–184. For discussion of Schlegel's debt to Herder see Michael Forster, German Philosophy of Language: From Schlegel to Hegel and Beyond, Oxford 2011.

[6] My account here and in the following paragraph is indebted to the research done by Han F. Vermeulen, Before Boas: The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment, Lincoln 2015. See also Han F. Vermeulen, The German Invention of *Volkerkünder*: Ethnological Discourse in Europe and Asia, 1740–1798, in: Sara Eigen/Mark Larrimore (eds.), The German Invention of Race, Albany, New York 2006, pp. 123–145.

August Schlözer published a treatise on universal history that distinguished between a knowledge of peoples [*Völkerkunde*], and knowledge of the world [*Weltkunde*], and this takes us at last to the moment when the term "anthropology" would be introduced. This occurred in 1775, when Schlözer's colleague in Göttingen, Johann Gatterer, reorganized the research field again, by making ethnology a subdivision of geography. As Gatterer had it, geographical investigations should be divided into four discrete inquiries: the study of physical geography in terms of natural boundaries or *Gränzkunde*, the study of countries or *Länderkunde*, political geography or *Staatenkunde*, and finally the study of people and of peoples, which he called either "*Menschen- und Völkerkunde*," or "*Anthropographia und Ethnographia*." Regarding the latter category, Gatterer believed that the historian should include information on a people's stature and colour, i.e., physiological characteristics, but this was just part of the general description of a group and was of little importance compared to their language, culture, religion, etc. This lack of emphasis on the physical description of groups was continued in subsequent ethnological studies, studies that were thus increasingly in tension with the very different trajectory taken by the anatomical studies being pursued by the physical anthropologists in the Göttingen medical faculty.[7]

The path taken by historians towards the creation of ethnology as a discrete branch of historical enquiry is of interest in part because it was during these same years that Kant also began to think about the different domains covered by physical geography. "Physical Geography" was the name of Kant's most popular course, the one he had begun teaching in 1756 and would continue to teach until he retired in 1796. By the mid-1760s, however, Kant was rethinking the course in light of its two connected subfields, of "Anthropology" as a study of human customs and morals – of 'what man can make of himself,' as Kant put it – and of "Empirical Psychology," as a study of the contents of our mind so far as these were devoted to feeling, emotion, and other aspects of our embodied life. So while it is well-known that Kant created a new "Anthropology" course in 1772 – an annual offering that would go on to eclipse the Physical Geography course in popularity – what is less often appreciated is the manner

[7] In line with my larger project I will just note here in passing that it was not the case that physical anthropology – with all its racial biometrics and scales of beauty and so on – was slowly prevailing over cultural anthropology. On the contrary, the link between cultural anthropology's attention to language as the defining feature of a people, and a people's "concomitant" mental and physical characteristics (the central object of interest for many 19th-century physical anthropologists), only occurred in the wake of *philosophical* efforts to provide a universal history and, within that, a philosophical anthropology.

in which this caused Kant to rethink the 'empirical psychology' sections of his other courses as a result.[8]

This took place during the so-called 'silent decade' of Kant's career, the ten-year period during which Kant worked on the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It was during this decade that Kant struggled to define his understanding of not just cognition – one standing in contrast to the "medical anthropologists" and other "physiologists of reason," as he called those interested in tracing the nerves and fibres of the brain – but also of the contributions to be made by philosophy in the arena of natural historical investigations. It was during this period that Kant offered a theory of geographic distribution, and the subsequent physiological bases that could explain the seeming differences between the many "varieties of mankind," and it was in these years that he developed a distinctive approach to what he now called "pragmatic anthropology." Kant was aware of Schlözer's work; he had read Herder's ethnologically oriented treatise on universal history, and his essay on the *Oldest Document of the Human Species*, both published in 1774, and he carefully studied Gatterer's book on geography when it appeared in print a few years after that.[9] Given Kant's wide-ranging scientific interests and activity, it is curious then that he never explicitly took up the question of language, publishing nothing on its origin, nor making space in the *Critique of Pure Reason* for arguments outlining its possible connection to cognition.[10] Indeed the fact that he did not do so, goes some far way toward explaining the lack of scholarly attention that has been paid so far to the connection between the progressive histories produced by Kant and his contemporaries and the later joining of linguistics and physical anthropology in the lead up to evolutionary theory. That aside, we should not ourselves make the mistake of ignoring the importance of the philosophical and historical debates surrounding language during this timeframe.

As has often been pointed out, in Germany, a country that had little political determinacy before 1871, language provided socio-political and

[8] For more on this see Jennifer Mensch, From Anthropology to Rational Psychology in Kant's Lectures on Metaphysics, in: Courtney Fugate (ed.), Kant's Lectures on Metaphysics: A Critical Guide, Cambridge 2019, pp. 194–213.

[9] Han F. Vermeulen, The German Invention of *Volkerkünder*, p. 136.

[10] Michael N. Forster offers a suggestive reconstruction of Kant's consideration of the link between language and cognition *vis-à-vis* not only his relationship to Herder and Hamann, but with respect to the absence of any such discussion in the critical project. See Michael N. Forster, Kant's Philosophy of Language?, in: Tijdschrift voor Filosofie 74/3 (2012), pp. 485–511. Susan Shell describes the link Kant draws between language and nation in his lectures on anthropology. See Susan Shell, Nachschrift eines Freundes: Kant on Language, Friendship, and the Concept of a People, in: Kantian Review 15/1 (2010), pp. 88–117.

cultural identity in a way that little else could; the "German-speaking lands" were just that.[11] This sense of a shared cultural consciousness lay at the heart of Herder's analysis as much as it engaged Goethe and Schiller in their efforts to position Weimar as the site of an authentically German theatre for the arts, and to inaugurate a definitively German poetic and literary tradition. More broadly considered, across the 18th and 19th centuries, language served all manner of agendas and scholarly pursuits. In the 18th century it was taken up by historians as a means for filling in the historical record; in the 19th century comparative linguistics offered up its own "fossil record" as a means for filling in the gaps of evolutionary history. It was used as proof of mankind's special creation but also taken to be only a highly-developed form of animal communication. In philosophical discussion it was seen both as a product of reason and as the only possible basis for the development of reason itself. And with Herder, it became the material and spiritual basis of a *Volk*, the product of both *Klima* and *Kultur* alike.

Although Kant seems to have ignored the issue when it came to cognition, seeing language as something outside the transcendental conditions for the possibility of experience, the *Critique of Pure Reason* was in fact quickly attacked for this omission, since, as Hamann put it: "The major question still remains, how is the capacity to think possible? No deduction is needed to prove the genealogical priority of language over the seven holy functions of logical propositions and syllogisms."[12] And, of course, Herder devoted an entire chapter of his *Metacritique of the Critique of Pure Reason* in 1799 to just this issue, after which Kant's supporters, particularly K.L. Reinhold, tried to show that Kant's table of categories could indeed be adapted toward a universal theory of language. The idealists – Schelling, Novalis, Hegel – followed Fichte's lead here. In 1795 Fichte had published his own essay *Concerning the Faculty of Speech and the Origin of Language*, in which he sought to transform the philosophical approach from one oriented by the natural history of language to one that instead looked for its *a priori* history. In Fichte's treatment language assumed an idealised status as its own organic entity, one that was working through history to achieve its full realization; a conception that moved through the German Idealists, via Schlegel in particular, to 19th

[11] Tuska Benes develops this point in Tuska Benes, From Indo-Germans to Aryans: Philology and the Racialization of Salvationist National Rhetoric, 1806–30, in: Sara Eigen/Mark Larrimore (eds.), The German Invention of Race, Albany, New York 2006, pp. 167–181.

[12] Johann Georg Hamann, Metacritique on the Purism of Reason, in: Johann Georg Hamann, Writings on Philosophy and Language, translated and ed. by Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge 2007, p. 211. Hamann's piece was written in 1784 and given to Herder, but while it was circulated, it was not published until 1800.

century linguistic theory. Wilhelm von Humboldt was the most energetic, tying Kant's categories of the understanding to a theory of mental development such that a study of languages could reveal both families of descent and patterns of historical progress, even as he borrowed the sense of language as a living organism from the Idealists.[13]

2. Friedrich Schlegel's Comparative Linguistics

With this broad context in view, I think we are at last in position to appreciate a closer look at our two figures, Schlegel first and then at least briefly at the now forgotten August Schleicher. As I mentioned at the outset, Friedrich Schlegel is counted by philosophers as a central member of the German Romantic circle, and here one thinks in particular of his works from the 1790s. At the turn of the century, however, Schlegel moved to Paris for seven years, and it was during this time that he studied Sanskrit and developed an expertise in Indian history, literature, and mythology. He was of course in close communication with his brother throughout this period – and indeed August Wilhelm Schlegel would follow his brother in this pursuit, eventually assuming Germany's first chair in Sanskrit studies in Bonn in 1819, and leading what would become the base for an influential line of linguistic interpretation thereafter – and he sketched out an early program for comparative linguistics once he had worked through the various vocabularies, dictionaries, and grammatical accounts sent to him by Alexander Humboldt who was still making his way through central America at this time.[14]

Schlegel's path was perhaps diverted to "Indology," as it was called then, after reading August Bernhardi. Bernhardi was a friend of the brothers Schlegel and Humboldt, and his 1797 Greek grammar book was widely used in schools at the time. It was after reviewing Herder's *Metacritique* for the *Athenaeum* that Bernhardi was inspired to write a two-volume *Theory of Language* (1801–1803), wherein he argued for a new type of universal grammar on the back of Kant's table of categories, and posited "*Sprach-Grundsätze*" as necessarily mediating between sensibility and the understanding.

[13] The great contrarian here was Max Müller, who argued that such naturalising of language was dangerous since it suggested that mankind was not in fact the product of God's "special creation," for proof of which he appealed to the Critique of Pure Reason, so that Kant in fact ended up being used to 'support' both sides of the argument by the middle of the 19th century.

[14] On A.W. Schlegel's work to racialize philological discourse see Benes, From Indo-Germans to Aryans, p. 176.

A.W. Schlegel reviewed Bernhardi's first volume, but suggested that a comparative approach to languages would be required in order to discern any truly universal structures.[15]

Friedrich Schlegel's 1808 essay *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* was meant to offer just this, and it was indeed the first part, with its long comparative discussions of roots and verbs and prefixes that came to shape the three branches of 19th-century linguistics mentioned before, even as the greater bulk of Schlegel's text was devoted rather to an account of what this revealed for understanding the history, culture, poetry, plastic arts, and mythology of the Indians. Schlegel's overall intentions were clear from the start of the book, for his was a search for an *Ursprache* as much as it was an effort to locate an original *Heimat* for the German peoples; a mission that surely met a receptive audience in the wake of Napoleonic conquest.

Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier thus opened with Schlegel's declaration that just as Europe had experienced its Renaissance with the translation of Greek texts in the 16th century, the time was ripe for a second rebirth, this time through the study of Indian language and literature, which was "no less grand and universal in its operation," and would carry "no less influence on the sphere of European intelligence."[16] Explaining that "the comparative study of language, in elucidating the historical origin and progress of nations, and their early migration and wanderings, will afford a rich subject for investigation," chapter one laid out the case for German interest in this field.[17] What the study of the roots, grammar, and internal structure of Greek, Latin, the Persian, as well as the German languages revealed, according to Schlegel, was a clear community of origin, and that origin was Indian. Schlegel was sure of his method, telling readers that "[t]he structure or comparative grammar of a language furnishes as certain a key to their general genealogy as the study of comparative anatomy has done for the loftiest branch of natural science."[18] What followed were pages and pages of comparative analyses of Sanskrit and each of the Indo-European languages, with many pauses taken for illustrations of "simple matters of fact," e.g., lists like: shrityoti/er schreitet; vindoti/er findet; Moushyo/der Mensch.[19]

As Schlegel warmed to the topic, the analysis grew increasingly bold in its ranking of languages according to their affinity with Sanskrit, a language

[15] August Wilhelm Schlegel, Miscellen, in: Europa: Eine Zeitschrift, ed. by Friedrich Schlegel, Stuttgart 1963, Volume 2, pp. 193–195.
[16] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 428.
[17] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 429.
[18] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 439.
[19] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 430.

that grew out of the "mental and sensory complexity" of the Indians,[20] a language that was due to the Indian's "clear perception," "fine imitative faculty," and above all, to their "power to invent, discover, determine, and, by the use of varied declensions, transform the language into a living organization, ever advancing, and developing itself by its own internal strength and energy."[21] It was this productive capacity, the living germ at the heart of Sanskrit, that gave strength to its progeny, a vitality that was revealed in its basic construction as an "inflected," as opposed to "amalgamated" language. Comparing the "living productive germ" of Sanskrit to the mere "agglomeration of atoms"[22] in the "inferior" languages of South America,[23] Sanskrit showed no such amalgamation, for

> its structure is highly organized, formed by inflection, or the change and transposition of its primary radical sounds, carried through every ramification of meaning and expression, and not by the merely mechanical process of annexing words or particles to the same lifeless and unproductive root.[24]

Such was the capacity of Sanskrit that Schlegel claimed that its written form had appeared almost simultaneously with it having been spoken; a situation that was distinctive given that most writing had begun as "mere hieroglyphic paintings, images copied from the external forms of nature."[25] By the end of the discussion Schlegel was ready to declare it "a most erroneous proposition to assert that the origin of language and intelligence was everywhere similar."[26] This meant that even though Schlegel took the physical differences between the various races of mankind to be of no material importance,[27] he was still ready to rank the mental and thereby historical development of groups according to their linguistic structure. It was thus no contradiction, in Schlegel's view, to insist, in closing, that "[i]f the uncivilized countries of America and South Africa had remained in their original necessary and barbarous condition, without receiving any new impulse from Europe or Asia, implanting in them the germs of higher intellectual activity, cultivation, and movements, scarcely any history could have existed of those countries."[28] These are sentiments, one can note in passing, that had already

[20] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 446.
[21] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 454.
[22] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 448.
[23] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 452.
[24] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 439.
[25] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 446.
[26] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 453.
[27] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 502.
[28] Schlegel, On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, p. 504.

been well worked out by Schlegel in the lectures on universal history that he had delivered between 1804–1805.[29]

As I have argued elsewhere, Wilhelm von Humboldt is the great transitional figure here, so far as his work in comparative linguistics would prove to be a synthesis of the many lines I have been discussing so far.[30] It was Humboldt who (via Bernhardi) married the Kantian theory of mental cognition to Schlegel's program for comparative linguistics, who accepted universal history's conclusions regarding the stages of mankind's development, and it was Humboldt who had the institutional power in Berlin to create university chairs, even whole programs, devoted to the study of comparative linguistics along just these lines. But rather than repeat any of that again, I want to turn at last to our second figure, August Schleicher (1821–1868).

3. August Schleicher on Language and the Descent of Man

Schleicher, who was just 47 when he died of tuberculosis in 1868, still managed to have had a highly productive career, first as a specialist in Slavic fairytales and then as a theorist anticipating and then supporting Darwin's interest in the evolution of language. He had started out, however, as a theology student in Tübingen, during which time he carefully worked through Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history and began to study all manner of languages: Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit, and Persian. Schleicher left Tübingen to study comparative linguistics in A.W. Schlegel's program at Bonn, where he immersed himself in Humboldt's writings before deciding at last to focus on Slavic literature and languages for his area of specialization. Schleicher's lasting fame rests on his creation of the first map of proto-Indo-European languages (the root of which Schleicher labeled as the "Indogermanische Ursprache"), a map that in its branching structure, anticipated Darwin's own tentative effort to sketch out a possible schema for evolutionary descent.

In 1848 Schleicher published his first major work, a book *On the Comparative History of Languages*, where he followed Hegel in distinguishing a fertile, prehistoric period during which language reached its perfection, from a later period, marked by the rise of reason and will and the concomitant decline of language. As Schleicher put it: "The more freely the spirit unfolds, the

[29] Friedrich von Schlegel, The Philosophy of History in a Course of Lectures, translated by James Robertson, London 1852.

[30] Jennifer Mensch, Songs of Nature. On the connection between Kant's categories and Humboldt's effort to describe the cognitive basis of a universal grammar see also H. Müller-Sievers, Self-Generation: Biology, Philosophy, and Literature around 1800, Stanford 1997, pp. 90–121.

more it extracts itself from language. That is why sounds are worn away and the richness of forms is lost."[31] Schleicher went on to apply Humboldt's (and thus, indirectly Schlegel's) division of languages between inflected, isolating, and agglomerated forms, seeing these as so many stages on the path to structural perfection; identifying their patterns of growth such that isolated types, like Chinese, were akin to crystal formation, agglomerated types grew vegetatively, whereas the inflected, Indo-European languages demonstrated the complexity and self-organising capacity of the animal organism. In 1850's *Europe's Languages in Systematic Overview*, Schleicher explained that languages must in general be seen as natural entities, and as such, "They have never been directed by the will of man; they rose, and developed themselves according to definite laws; they grew old and died out."[32]

This view of language's independence from the will and consciousness of its speakers would be successively downplayed in Schleicher's later studies. A German translation of Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in 1860 and Schleicher's closest friend, Ernst Haeckel, immediately sent him a copy, thinking that Schleicher might find it interesting in light of his hobbyist's interest in botany. Instead, Darwin's ideas provided a new avenue for Schleicher, who saw immediately that evolutionary theory could be supported by linguistics insofar as *its* maps, *its* histories of genealogical descent with modification, were founded upon both material evidence and a complete "fossil record," whereas Darwin's speculations had had to be put forward as only the best available hypothesis for making sense of all the facts. Schleicher argued as much in an open letter to Haeckel which he published in 1863 called "Darwinism Tested by the Science of Language," where he maintained that the development of the history of language paralleled the development of human beings, that written records contained the fossil history of earlier tongues, that the history of languages provided corroborating testimony to the development of higher orders of complexity from initially simpler forms of organization, and finally, that "the same process of competition of languages, the extinction of forms, and the development of more complex languages out of simpler roots all suggest mutual confirmation of the basic processes governing such historical entities as species and languages."[33]

Schleicher's next piece, 1865's *On the Significance of Language for the Natural History of Mankind*, went so far as to suggest that whereas comparative

[31] August Schleicher, Zur vergleichenden Sprachengeschichte, Bonn 1845, pp. 17–18.

[32] August Schleicher, Die Sprachen Europas in systematischer Übersicht: Linguistische Untersuchungen, Bonn 1850, p. 2.

[33] Summarized by Richards, The Linguistic Creation of Man, p. 27.

anatomy had failed in the end to provide any conclusive biometric scales by which one could determine the groupings of mankind, language could do this:

> How inconstant are the formation of the skull and other so-called racial differences. Language, by contrast, is always a constant trait. A German can indeed display hair and prognathous jaw to match those of the most distinctive Negro head, but he will never speak a Negro language with native facility.[34]

Speech, in other words, had a material basis according to Schleicher, and differed according to minimal differences in the brain and speech organs: the lungs, noses, larynxes, throats, and oral cavities of a people. These were the bodily characteristics defining language and thus the organization of mankind. In Schleicher's words,

> Animals can be ordered according to their morphological character. For man, however, the external form has, to a certain extent, been superseded; as an indicator of true being, external form is more or less insignificant. To classify human beings we require, I believe, a higher criterion, one which is an exclusive property of man. This we find, as I have mentioned, in language.[35]

With this comment as our stopping place, I think we still have enough to suggest the means by which the previously independent research trajectories developed by cultural and physical anthropology came together in 19th-century comparative linguistics.

Now it has long been known that, as Darwin came to think about the evolution of species, it was comparative linguistics that provided a central piece of the puzzle. For it was these researchers who had first proposed that we think of languages as organic beings, and that we view the families of languages along genealogical lines. Arguments for a universal grammar, of some unifying structure underlying and connecting the whole web of its individual productions, was critical for Darwin's thinking as he struggled in one notebook after another to link together the manifold diversity of life. Darwin intimated as much already in 1859's *Origin of Species*, when he likened "rudimentary parts" to the unnecessary letters remaining in words,[36] or

[34] August Schleicher, Über die Bedeutung der Sprache für die Naturgeschichte des Menschen, Weimar 1865, p. 16.

[35] Schleicher, Über die Bedeutung der Sprache, p. 18. This program would be developed later in the century under the direction of Carl Meinhof, who was a linguist and minister working with German colonial missionaries. For Meinhof's work to connect Schleicher's theory with a physiological investigation of racial differences see Sara Pugach, Africa in Translation: A History of Colonial Linguistics in Germany and Beyond, 1814–1945, Ann Arbor, Michigan 2005, pp. 71–116.

[36] Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species, London 1968, chapter 8, p. 432: "As the presence of rudimentary organs is thus due to the tendency in every part of the organization, which has long existed, to be inherited – we can understand, on the genealogical

more specifically when suggesting that an ideal human pedigree would be a model for tracing *linguistic* development as much as an account of linguistic descent could serve as a template for the *descent* of man. As he developed the point in the *Origin*, he thus drew a careful parallel:

> It may be worthwhile to illustrate this [genealogical] view of classification, by taking the case of languages. If we possessed a perfect pedigree of mankind, a genealogical arrangement of the races of man would afford the best classification of the various languages now spoken throughout the world; and if all extinct languages, and all intermediate and slowly changing dialects, had to be included, such an arrangement would, I think, be the only possible one. Yet it might be that some very ancient language had altered little, and had given rise to few new languages, whilst others, (owing to the spreading and subsequent isolation and states of civilization of the several races, descended from a common race) had altered much, and had given rise to many new languages and dialects. The various degrees of difference in the languages from the same stock would have to be expressed by groups subordinate to groups; but the proper or even only possible arrangement would still be genealogical; and this would be strictly natural, as it would connect together all languages, extinct and modern, by the closest affinities, and would give the filiation and origin of each tongue.[37]

In 1871 Darwin continued this line of reasoning in *The Descent of Man*, arguing that "The formation of different languages and of distinct species, and the proofs that both have been developed through a gradual process, are curiously parallel," before describing the way in which "languages, like organic beings," exhibit patterns of descent, modification, and eventually extinction.[38]

It is, moreover, interesting to see just how much Darwin appears to have followed Humboldt and Schleicher in giving the highest ranking to inflected languages: to those languages containing more than isolated word-blocks, more even than "agglutinating" languages whose words had "welded" or agglomerated these blocks together, but which, like the inflected Indo-European and Semitic languages, contained new words or "species" altogether. Remarking that a naturalist "justly considers the differentiation and specialization of organs as the test of perfection," Darwin announced,

> So with languages; the most symmetrical and complex ought not to be ranked above irregular, abbreviated, and bastardized languages, which have borrowed expressive words and useful forms of construction from various conquering, conquered, or immigrant races."[39]

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view of classification, how it is that systematists have found rudimentary parts as useful as, or even sometimes more useful than, parts of high physiological importance. Rudimentary organs may be compared with the letters in a word, still retained in the spelling, but become useless in the pronunciation, but which serve as a clue in seeking for its derivation."

[37] Darwin, The Origin of Species, chapter 8, p. 406.

[38] Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man, London 2004, chapter 3, p. 113.

[39] Darwin, The Descent of Man, p. 114.

What the foregoing discussion demonstrates, I believe, is the manner in which scientific theories, seemingly so remote from the philosophical anthropology and universal histories produced by Kant and his contemporaries in the 18th century, betray in fact their own lines of descent, a genealogy that can be most clearly traced via the path laid out for us by comparative linguistics, a science which in Schlegel and Schleicher's hands, became its own form of philosophical anthropology.

Summary

This essay describes early efforts in Germany to develop investigations of a people's history, culture, religion, and language into the new science of "ethnography" in order to trace a connection between this project and later work done by theorists interested in connecting a philosophically inflected sense of a progressive or "universal" world history and the new science of comparative linguistics. While Friedrich Schlegel is positioned as the key figure for making this connection, it was August Schleicher who would prove to be more decisive in making the case for the positive role played by linguistics for recreating the history of mankind across its many great migrations.

Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag zeichnet die frühen Bemühungen nach, die Erforschung der Geschichte, Kultur, Religion und Sprache eines Volkes in die neue Wissenschaft einer „Völkerkunde" zusammenzuführen. Dabei lässt sich eine Verbindung zwischen diesem Projekt und späteren Arbeiten solcher Theoretiker feststellen, die darauf abzielten, die philosophisch ausgerichtete Idee einer „universalen" Weltgeschichte mit der neuen Wissenschaft der komparativen Linguistik zu verbinden. Während Friedrich Schlegel für diese Verbindung zentral gewesen ist, war es August Schleicher, der in entscheidenderer Weise dafür geworben hat, dass die Sprachwissenschaft eine positive Rolle beim Versuch spielen kann, trotz vielfältiger Migrationsbewegungen die Geschichte der Menschheit als ganzer zu rekonstruieren.