

# Introduction to “Principles of the History of Language”

by Hermann Paul

Solomon D. Katznelson\*

Hermann Paul’s “Principles of the History of Language” is widely known as a classic work that offers a theoretical summary of the neogrammarian views, which dominated the field of philology abroad—and to some extent in Russia—during the last quarter of the 19th century and throughout the first quarter of the 20th century. This book is sometimes referred to as a “Neogrammarian catechism”. Phillip F. Fortunatov (1956:29), an outstanding Russian comparativist and the founder of the Moscow school of linguistics akin in its views to the German neogrammarians, said that this was “a very good general tractate on the history of language, whose writing style is perhaps not popular, but clear.”

Paul’s work, with its first edition published in 1880 (the last, fifth edition was published posthumously in 1937<sup>1</sup>) is still relevant today, despite neogrammarians no longer taking center stage in science. Significant advances, in the last few decades, within comparative historical and comparative typological philology as well as achievements in the fields of phonetics, linguistic geography, etc., have considerably weakened neogrammarian theory and discredited its basic tenets. There is hardly a linguist nowadays who would take it upon himself to defend the positivists’ subjective psychological approach and their take on the forces behind language development. Yet it would be a grave mistake to completely discard neogrammarian theory as outdated. Certain of its crucial features are still valid in modern philology—both Soviet and foreign—despite all the new and successful methods in language research. In one, most important area of linguistic research, namely, the internal history of language, or, as it is sometimes referred to, historical grammar, neogrammarianism still plays the lead role by providing guiding principles for the selection and organization of empirical data.

The contribution of new scholars—first of all, the structuralists—to the history of language is still quite scarce in terms of its quantity, whereas in terms of quality it often amounts to simply applying structuralist terminology to the neogrammarian system. It is not surprising, therefore, that even today university-level courses in history of language are based exclusively on textbooks and study materials compiled by neogrammarians and their associates.

Overcoming neogrammarianism in theoretical and empirical linguistic research has become a pressing issue, which is far from being resolved and which will require the joint efforts of experts in the history of different languages.

To be able to accomplish that task, one must study neogrammarianism and related trends in depth. Here Paul’s work can become an invaluable resource as it provides a comprehensive overview of the empirical foundation and theoretical principles underlying the neogrammarian theory of language.

The neogrammarian trend emerged in Germany in the 1870s. The most prominent members of the school included August Leskien, Herman Osthoff, Karl Brugmann, Berthold Delbruck, Hermann Paul, Wilhelm Braune, and others. In Russia, the Moscow school of linguistics headed by F. F. Fortunatov was closely following the neogrammarian trend, with the Kazan school of linguistics headed by Jan Baudouin de Courtenay maintaining a somewhat looser connection.

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\* Translated by Ilana Mezhevich.

<sup>1</sup> Translator’s note: Katznelson is mistaken here. The fifth edition is from 1920, and from later on the book has been published without changes.

Among other supporters of the neogrammarian views were Scandinavian scholars Sophus Bugge and Karl Verner, Frenchmen Michel Bréal and to a certain extent Ferdinand de Saussure, Italian G. I. Ascoli, an American philologist W. D. Whitney, and others. However, the general theoretical stance of de Saussure, just like that of Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, had always displayed a number of peculiar features that markedly distinguished it from the strictly neogrammarian theory of language.

The new trend in comparative historical linguistics emerged on the basis of many observations and discoveries that provided a deeper insight into the history of Indo-European languages. Systematic observation of actual pronunciation and the examination of physiological and acoustic conditions under which sounds form and interact in human speech led to the emergence of phonetics as an independent linguistic discipline. Approaching historical records from the phonetic perspective, scholars could bypass the aberration of writing systems and gain insight into the actual processes hidden behind letters. The discovery that sound change can be tied to a particular position or to the interaction between sounds within a word, and that morphology can affect a word's phonetic properties was especially important for historical phonetics. As a result, the neogrammarians were able to formulate more precisely the phonetic laws discovered by the founders of Indo-European linguistics and to eliminate a number of false exceptions. In the domain of grammar, the new era was marked by the discovery of several morphological processes, which shed new light onto the formation and role of inflection in the grammar of a language. The Neogrammarians' predecessors tended to overestimate the importance of inflection viewing it as the hallmark of grammar, whose deterioration meant degradation of the grammatical system. To explain inflection they appealed to an agglutination theory, according to which inflected forms result from fusion between initially amorphous monosyllabic roots.

New findings showed that apart from agglutination, other morphological processes affected the development of inflection: word-internal shift of morphological boundaries (restructuring and simplification) and analogy. It became obvious that "roots" were not only a property of the most ancient state of a language; they existed throughout the entire history of that language and were changing along with other morphemes in the word. This new, deeper understanding of the nature of inflection was accompanied by the realization that grammatical functions can be expressed just as well by other means. Such means included word order, auxiliary words, intonation, stress, etc. Advancements in the areas of phonetics and grammar boosted the development of etymology. Numerous etymological studies have now shown that sound change and semantic change are usually independent of one another. As a consequence, the study of semantic change grew into an independent linguistic discipline, semasiology. New research shed new light onto such issues as language splitting and emergence of dialects.

New, deeper understanding of linguistic facts made scholars reconsider the main theoretical tenets adopted in the first half of the 19th century, no doubt under the influence of Romanticism. According to the early comparativists, all human languages followed the same path, evolving from the initial amorphous pool of isolated "root" words through agglutination and to inflection. In order to reconcile this theory of universal morphological development with the multitude of existing grammatical systems, some extravagant guesses were put forward, such as, for example, Wilhelm von Humboldt's theory that each language had its own peculiar nature, or "inner form", which was predetermined by "the national character" and remained constant throughout the entire lifespan of this language. While perceiving the emergence of a grammar system as an emergence of inflection, and deterioration of inflection as a sign of the language's degradation, some older comparativists, for example, August Schleicher, divided the history of a language into two phases: a prehistoric creative phase and a later, historic phase of degradation and decay, thus denying the existence of any creative processes during the language's historic phase.

Neogrammarians and their associates once and for all did away with early comparativists' speculations on the unique status of inflection, a universal path of morphological development, Humboldt's "national character," and a metaphysical opposition "prehistoric vs. historic". Their disillusionment with the theories of Humboldt and Schleicher urged neogrammarians to abandon a philosophical approach to language and turn to the empirical investigation of history of particular languages and language groups. Their state of mind was, to a large extent, influenced by positivism and its contempt for philosophy of any kind, which prevailed among the bourgeois scholarship of that period. Neogrammarians were no longer interested in such general philosophical issues as the relation between language and thought, reasons for variation among the structures of different languages, etc. Their theory is inductive; they purposefully confined themselves only to those conclusions, which, as far as they believed, arise from the empirical study of the history of language. If, despite all that, a positivist linguistic theory still makes use of some speculative or tentative notions, then this must be a drawback of any strictly empirical investigation, which, as Friedrich Engels notes, would ignore all philosophy only to find itself in the grip of a philosophy, often of the nastiest kind.

In his book, Hermann Paul offers the reader a detailed introduction to the main areas of linguistics, explains how each of them sprang from research conducted under the new approach, and clarifies the general premises of historical linguistic research. Paul, of course, expresses mainly the views of the German neogrammarians, and occasionally he also presents his own position, which diverges from the viewpoint of other representatives of the contemporary linguistics.

The book's least interesting specialized section is perhaps chapter 3 devoted to sound change. Paul's general views on phonetics have long been outdated, not only relative to modern phonology, but also relative to the work by the Kazan school of linguistics, where the notion of a phoneme was first introduced. However, in some of his discussions, Paul appears to allude to a "phoneme-like" concept. For example, Paul distinguishes between a stable sound image and variable articulatory realizations of a speech sound, and it is the sound image that he considers the basis of a speech sound as a constant formation fixed by its usage. Paul does not recognize a capacity to signal semantic differences as a basis for distinguishing between speech sounds and their positional variants. Nevertheless, he is clearly aware that the number of phonetic nuances is always greater than the number of basic phonetic units, as "closest variants are very often mutually exclusive, and if we count as a single sound all those phonetic nuances whose distinction has no practical value, then their number in any given dialect would roughly correspond to the number of letters in the alphabet" (1920:§267). Yet Paul does not venture beyond such isolated statements. As far as historical phonetics is concerned, Paul is correct in emphasizing the purely empirical, matter-of-fact nature of so-called "sound laws" whose list constitutes the historical phonetics portion of the neogrammarian history of language. "A sound law", Paul rightly points out, "does not tell us what would always happen under certain general conditions; it only records a regularity within a certain group of historical phenomena" (1920:§46). Thus, a sound "law" is not a law in the same sense as it is in chemistry or physics. Paul is correct in emphasizing the flawed nature of the "laws" observed in phonetics; however, he is wrong in denying the possibility of true sound laws in linguistics. The Kazan school had a more sophisticated take on those issues, and its member M. Kruszewski was defending, in his unmediated debates with Paul, "the existence of universal phonetic ... laws, which in essence are no different from the laws of physics or chemistry" (Kruszewski 1883:60). To support his argument, Kruszewski appealed to comparable sound changes documented in different languages or in different stages of the same language.

In the chapter dedicated to semantic change, Paul's point of departure is the distinction between two types of word meaning: usual (that is, context-independent) and occasional (that is,

specific to a particular speech act). Paul describes in detail the means of word “individualization” (that is, when the usual meaning of a word becomes occasional within a particular speech act), thus acting as a precursor to Charles Bally’s (1955:87f.) teaching on actualization of words in sentences.

In the chapter on semasiology, his polemical remarks against so-called “general meaning” (1920:§53) deserve special attention. Supporters of “general meaning”—particularly, Hermann Steinthal, with whom Paul argues—deny polysemy and reduce all meanings of multiple meaning words to a single all-encompassing meaning. Paul formulates criteria for identifying instances of polysemy that cannot be reduced to monosemy; these criteria allow one to distinguish between a word’s occasional meaning and a separate meaning derived in the course of language development. Paul’s ideas about “general” meanings are especially relevant in light of the structuralists’ attempts to rely on this concept in their defense of the Saussurian thesis on the “parallelism” between language and thought.

Classification of the types of semantic change makes up the core of the chapter on semasiology. Paul attributes semantic change to instability of the individual mind that causes constant fluctuations and boundary shifts between usual and occasional meanings. According to Paul, the resultant lexical changes underlie not only semantic narrowing and broadening, but also the creation of new *semes* through the use of metaphors. Paul’s equating metaphorical processes with the expansion of a word’s meaning brought about a legitimate reproach and provided a basis for accusations in logicism (cf. debates with Wundt, Paul 1920:§62, note). However, Paul’s concepts overall have another, more significant flaw. As Paul believes that new meaning arises out of deviations and shifts due to the unstable nature of individual minds and word use, he distorts the very essence of semantic development by overlooking its objective grounds and social historical conditioning. Meanings of words are abstractions forged in the process of social development, a sort of a reflection of real-world objects. Putting aside secondary, purely stylistic lexical additions, the volume and the content of lexical meanings in a way reflect real-world differences between objects. To analyze lexical meaning as a product of arbitrary individual psychological processes means to defend an idealist and subjectivist position with respect to one of the most crucial aspects of semasiology.

Much of Paul’s book is devoted to grammar issues. He pays particular attention to word formation and word-form creation morphological processes within “inflectional groups” (the processes of “isolation” and “analogical leveling” of formal groups, word restructuring and emergence of new affixes, etc.). With respect to the analysis of inflectional groups, Paul emphasizes the notion of a language grammar as a system and the connections that it implies. Paul (1920:§178) notes that “a particular linguistic phenomenon can only be studied if one constantly takes into account the relevant linguistic data in their entirety; this is the only way one can arrive at understanding of causal connections.” Following Paul, the concept of system should be applied beyond the specialized area of morphology. “If the history of semantic development ever becomes an independent area of science,” he continues, “it will have to study those interconnections most thoroughly.”

Here Paul expresses ideas that were fleshed out in more detail at the Kazan school, as well as by F. de Saussure and the structuralists. One should not overestimate the importance of Paul’s words as he immediately contradicts himself by saying that “any interaction between linguistic phenomena is characterized precisely by a lack of universal logical connections” and that “in that area we constantly deal with chance.” Thus, he gives up systematic relationships and causal connections in favor of the preconceived notion that language is overwhelmingly governed by chance.

When discussing historical changes in word formation, Paul pays special attention to changes that concern “derivational relations.” For example, Old German actor nouns with a suffix *-er* did

not derive directly from verbs but from deverbal action nouns. Consequently, in Old German such actor nouns and verbs were linked indirectly. Later a direct connection established: In Modern German, such actor nouns derive directly from verbs (1920:§169). In the course of historical development, the relation between the base and its derivative can change profoundly. For example, in Middle High German, the verb *gîtesen* ‘to be greedy’ derived from the noun *gît* ‘greed’, while in Modern German the verb *geizen* is the base for its derivative noun *Geiz* (§168). His distinction between diachronic and synchronic derivation shows that in certain cases, Paul recognized that one could not replace synchronic relations with diachronic ones, though not as clearly as modern linguistics does.

Special chapters are devoted to parts of speech and sentence constituents. In the chapter on parts of speech, Paul demonstrates convincingly that the traditional way of classifying parts of speech, which was inherited from ancient grammar, is purely empirical by nature and is lacking a consistent logical foundation. However, Paul does not propose anything to replace the outdated viewpoint. Concluding his critical assessment, he states that “the phenomena and their combinations one has to deal with are so variable that an eight- or nine-way classification is clearly not sufficient here. Why? There are many intermediate stages, which allow for the gradual transition of a word from one class to another” (1920:§248). Then Paul considers transitions from one part of speech to another. Thus, in the spirit of Cratylus, the problem of discrete parts of speech is obliterated by “intermediate stages” and “gradual transitions.”

In his analysis of sentence (chapter 6), Paul proceeds from the idea that a bipartite structure is the defining property of the sentence. According to Paul, every sentence is necessarily a combination of two conceptions, one of which acts as the psychological subject and the other as the psychological predicate. Paul engages in heated debates with Wundt, who considers the sentence to be a product of analysis, of the breaking up of a single conception into elements. While Paul insists on treating the sentence as an act of synthesis, he admits during those debates that occasionally a sentence can display signs of analysis, thus approaching the dialectical vision of the sentence as a contradictory union of analysis and synthesis.

Any theory of sentence grounded in the bipartite principle faces the huge challenge of one-part sentences, such as nominal or impersonal sentences. The solution Paul proposes is not convincing. Paul believes that one-part sentences in fact also contain two parts, because in this case the conception of the real-world situation necessarily completes the sentence by functioning as the missing element. The idea of including a conception of an external object among sentence-internal elements is by itself unacceptable, just as, according to Paul’s (1920:§218) own opinion, it is unacceptable to assume ellipsis in cases of an “incomplete sentence.” But even if this could be allowed, the benefit turns out to be quite illusory. Any speech act is always accompanied by some conception of the external situation. Even if one can turn a one-part sentence into a bipartite sentence by adding a mental image, the bipartite principle still cannot be upheld because by the same token the main sentence type—that is, bipartite—would be converted into tripartite.

In the chapter discussing the main syntactic relations, especially noteworthy is Paul’s attempt to derive secondary sentence [non-obligatory, IM] components from the primary [obligatory, IM] ones. The distinction drawn by Paul, as well as by other scholars, between psychological and grammatical sentence components is no doubt justified, although the interconnection and content of these categories still need to be explored.

The wealth and diversity of the empirical data presented in the grammar chapters are amazing. There is hardly another work on general linguistics that devotes so much attention to grammar. Along with morphology, syntactic relations and typical Indo-European syntactic constructions are discussed at length. With respect to historical grammatical change, Paul again argues that any development is mainly due to constant individual deviation from accepted usage,

the lack of stable boundaries between word categories, the permanent flux of occasional meanings of individual word forms, and contamination of syntactic types.

Assessing the book as a whole in terms of the material it uses for illustrative purposes, it should be noted that the sample of languages is somewhat limited. The book mainly uses data from Classical languages, as well as Germanic and Romance languages. The choice of material is explained, to some extent, by methodology (mainly so-called “school languages” are used), and to some extent by Paul’s Germanistic background. Another relevant factor is that there were not enough historical data on many other languages as historical comparative linguistics dealt primarily with Indo-European languages.

With regard to the theoretical sections of the book, one should consider, first of all, Paul’s vision of the goals and methodology of linguistic research.

The subject of linguistic research is such that it can only be studied using a historical method. Paul emphasizes that linguistics is essentially a historical science, and that there may be no type of linguistics other than historical linguistics.

By that Paul does not mean that there can be no descriptive linguistics or that there is no need to describe particular states of a language. A descriptive approach is quite consistent with language’s historical essence. Moreover, even pure description implies, according to Paul, a historical approach to linguistic phenomena, and not only because an adequate description of all historical states of a language is necessary for a comprehensive picture of its historical development. The description of even a single isolated state of a language should be historical in nature; because to describe any state of a language objectively means to measure it by its own standards, to add nothing from either other languages or other states of the same language. In order to make the language in question neither more archaic nor more modern, it is essential that one distinguish its historically outdated features from current ones, initial stages of a phenomenon from fully advanced ones, that is, one must strictly adhere to historical methodology. Describing a state implies taking into account the relative force and degree of productivity of the language’s individual elements; such an approach creates a historical perspective onto the interconnection of the elements that make up the structure of the language at that particular point in time. Here Paul elaborates on the same ideas that were put into words by Jan Baudouin de Courtenay: “Language, just like nature in general, is alive, fluid, and ever changing. Any rest, pause, stagnation are only apparent; these are just instances of movement with minimal change. A static state of language is an instance of its dynamics, or rather its kinematics.”<sup>2</sup>

The overarching historical perspective and flexible approach to interaction between historical and descriptive linguistics give Paul and other members of the positivist movement an advantage over Ferdinand de Saussure with his sharp synchrony vs. diachrony opposition. Curiously enough, some of the shrewdest of de Saussure’s followers from the structuralist camp do not adopt their teacher’s position in this regard. For example, the theses of the Prague Linguistic Circle say: “One cannot erect an impenetrable wall between synchronic and diachronic methodology, as the Geneva school has done” ... “The synchronic description cannot completely exclude evolutionary notions, because even when we study a segment of a language from a synchronic viewpoint, there is always evidence of the current stage being replaced by the stage that is just being formed. First, stylistic elements looked upon as archaic, and second, the distinction between productive and unproductive forms are diachronic phenomena, which may not be ignored by synchronic linguistics” (see Zvegintsev 1956:428).

Paul’s entire work radiates historicism, which is especially valuable nowadays, when bourgeois scholarship exhibits such strong anti-historical trends and when some linguists even call for an abandonment of “the factor of time, which has clouded the 19th century research”

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<sup>2</sup> See J. Baudouin de Courtenay’s obituary by Lev V. Tschërba (1929:325).

(1946:144).<sup>3</sup> What the Soviet reader finds most appealing in Paul's book is his incessant emphasis on the importance of the historical method. One should not, however, overlook the fact that Paul's historical concept, his understanding of the essence of language and of the conditions and forces behind language development suffer from serious methodological flaws, all of which make Paul's historicism quite limited and inconsistent.

One of the major flaws of the positivist theory of language is that it tries to account for all linguistic phenomena and language development in terms of individual psychology. In positivist works, concrete linguistic phenomena lose their contours. Every phenomenon doubles, so to speak. Speaking of words, they distinguish the phonetic aspect of a word and the concept of this word, its meaning and the concept of meaning. Speaking of speech sounds, neogrammarians and their associates distinguish the sound and the image of this sound, articulation and the accompanying movement sensation, the acoustic properties and the sensation they evoke. Here, the cluttering of the story with psychological equivalents of linguistic terms comes from a failure to grasp the principal difference between linguistics and psychology of language. Additional non-linguistic vocabulary is only needed in psychology, the field that investigates the psychological aspect of mental processes responsible for an individual's speech activity. In contrast, linguistics is concerned not with the psychological processes behind speech but with their "results," that is, the elements of language as a system; and it examines those elements in the social historical context, not in the context of individual psychology. By switching from the linguistics viewpoint to the viewpoint of psychology the linguist loses all perspective; he is now studying the processes beyond his area of expertise, his attention being diverted from the social historical conditions in which language forms and develops. Another weakness of the psychological approach to language is its extensive overuse of the notion *association*. By treating all the diverse connections among the elements within a system as *associative* the psychological approach effectively reduces all types of connections attested in a given language to a single, general connection type. Thus, the notion *association* impedes the understanding of the language system, its internal connections and mediations.

The culmination point of the psychological approach to language is the denial of languages and dialects as social historical phenomena. "We must admit," Paul (1920:§22) assures us, "that, as a matter of fact, there are as many individual languages in the world as there are people." According to Paul, every individual human being speaks a special dialect with its own developmental path. According to this subjective interpretation, the actual languages of the world result simply from "individual differences growing beyond a certain point." However, when confronted with facts Paul (1920:§22) makes confessions that clearly contradict those ideas. When talking about conditions under which an "individual language" is formed, Paul finds, unexpectedly, that "communication is the only source of the language used by an individual." But if communication is the ultimate source of language, doesn't this mean that the scholar of language should consider specific social conditions in which such communication takes place? In some cases—for example, in the last chapter, which deals with the "common language"—this is exactly what Paul does. According to Paul, a common language arises out of practical necessity. And the development of the new language is not arbitrary but is based on a dialect that has "a certain natural advantage compared to other dialects, for example, in the domain of economics, politics, religion, literature, or in several domains at the same time" (1920:§298). Overall, however, Paul is far from acknowledging that society and communication play an active part in speech formation. According to Paul, the evolution of a language is conditioned by the phenomena of individual speech. As far as communication is concerned, it is deemed a secondary factor conducive to geographical propagation of individual innovations. These ideas of Paul's are

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<sup>3</sup> Translator's note: The author is not given and we have not been able to find the quotation in the Bulletin.

not too different from the ideas of the so-called “sociological trend” in linguistics. When Ferdinand de Saussure and Jan Baudouin de Courtenay state that apart from individual psychology, linguistics should also be rooted in sociology, this alone does not take them beyond the neogrammarian subjectivism. Because they too, just like Paul, see individual psychology as the key factor in language development, while sociology is only used for explaining external changes in language (that is, language mixing, changes in the relation between dialects and standard varieties, changes in a geographical linguistic landscape, etc.). Thus, the neogrammarian interpretation of the history of language turns out to be an idealistic distortion of the essence of language and of the conditions of its historical development. It ignores the creative part that people play in the creation of language and the social historical conditioning of language development as a whole. Thus, a close scrutiny of the neogrammarian historicism reveals its irremediable weakness when it comes to the critical issue for the history of language, that is, reasons behind language development. Such is a historicism that does not take into account the creative contribution of the social historical factor.

However, the neogrammarian historicism does not only ignore the actual history of a society. It does not have any concept of development either; it does not acknowledge that the process of language development is subject to rules.

When describing the functionality of language, Paul distinguishes two polar aspects of it: actual speech of individuals on the one hand, and usage, that is, the accepted norm of use, on the other. In these one can't help but recognize the prototype of de Saussurian “speech” (*parole*) and “language” (*langue*). Again, actual speech of individual speakers is the key factor in evolution of language. According to Paul, speech of an individual person is loose and unsteady, just like its source—the mechanism of individual psychology. Although the accepted norm restricts actual speech to some extent, subtle, barely noticeable deviations gradually penetrate the norm and change it. Paul says that for such change to take place, individual deviations must not neutralize one another but constantly proceed in the same direction within the speech of both, a single person and different people. But such coincidence – and incessantly recurring coincidence at that – can only be a matter of chance. According to Paul, chance is exactly what defines the entire life of a language. Under this view, the process of language development is an eternal chaotic process of random fluctuations and variations, which occasionally coincide or balance one another out thereby shifting the accepted norm a little. There is nothing inherent to the norm itself that would determine the general direction of this development. Any direction of movement is as plausible as any other. Assuming that development means gradual ascent from the lowest forms to highest, and from the simplest forms to more complex, Paul's theory of language evolution has absolutely nothing to do with development. Interestingly enough, as far as this particular issue is concerned, the Kazan school improved significantly on the neogrammarian concept of language evolution. Jan Baudouin de Courtenay wrote: “The life of words and sentences within a language is comparable to a perpetuum mobile consisting of a scale that constantly oscillates (fluctuates) but at the same time constantly moves in a predetermined direction” (see Tscherba 1929:325).

Paul's reasoning regarding the relation between the speech of individual people and the accepted norm has a weak spot. As we have seen, Paul admits that an individual masters speech in the course of interaction with other individuals. He also admits that there is an accepted norm, or usage, that functions as a regulator of spoken communication. Any deviation from that norm is immediately spotted and resisted by others. Paul is aware of this, and his theory is based on a supposition that there exist such deviations, which are negligible and thus do not upset the norm, and only later, as they gradually accumulate, do they begin to affect the norm without anyone noticing. Thus, in a roundabout way, bypassing the control of the communication participants, deviations from the norm are planted. But only one of the two is possible: either deviations in individual speech are within the range of the norm and thus do not upset it, which means these are



not true deviations but acceptable variations; or these are genuine deviations, in which case, no matter how subtle they are, they will be noticed and met with resistance by the listeners. In order for deviations not to be regarded as such and be let through by the censorship of the norm, the accepted norm itself has to change. Thus, Paul's logic is flawed because he mistakes a consequence for a cause. One cannot conclude that the accepted norm changes as the result of unnoticed deviations because the latter are only possible when the old norm becomes shaky and is ready to be replaced by a new one.

Closely related to the denial of development as a consistent and rule-governed process is another problem with Paul's metaphysical philosophy of language, namely, the denial of internal laws of language development. Paul argues that the history of language does not contain laws in the same sense as chemistry or physics do. Just like his contemporary bourgeois philosophers, neo-Kantians Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert, Paul divides all scientific disciplines into two categories: the "law-establishing" ones, which can discover laws, and the historical ones, which can only articulate principles, or certain general premises, but never laws. As if language science by virtue of its very subject cannot aim at understanding laws. The most it can lay claim to is uncovering "principles" that make certain changes hypothetically possible. Paul highlights the main thesis of his history of language by placing the word "principles" in the book's title.

It should be noted that such a pessimistic take on language is justified, to a certain extent, by the current state of historical linguistics. By the end of the 19th century, one of the major achievements of comparative historical linguistics had been phonetic laws. However, as rightly pointed out by Antoine Meillet (1954:78), "the formulae of the general evolutionary phonetics express a possibility, not a necessity. One can find out how a consonant would change if placed between two vowels, but this alone does not mean that the consonant will actually change." Even less rigid were the comparativists' formulae for historical grammar and lexicology.

Such a state of affairs within a scientific discipline could lead to different conclusions. Paul's reasoning was as follows: Since historical linguistics only knows "laws" that express a possibility but not a necessity of development, then this must be due to the nature of the subject of the discipline. In this regard, the Kazan school arrived at by far deeper conclusions. Long before Paul's book was published, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay (1871:16) wrote quite correctly that "a consistent mind cannot accept a possibility of events happening for no reason and at the same time not deny science." "If," he insisted, "we explain even the smallest phenomenon in terms of viability, calling, free will, chance, dogma, etc., then to be consistent we have to always allow for such an explanation, whereby interpreting reality as a bunch of incoherent, discordant phenomena, and eliminating all causality and all science."

While he acknowledges that the internal laws of language development "have not been discovered yet," Jan Baudouin de Courtenay does not think that this is because of language or because of science in general, but due to the current state of science. He never questioned the future of science. "It appears," he wrote, "that linguistics nowadays is on the right track toward this goal," that is, toward discovering the "laws of life and language development" (see Tscherba 1929:324).

Paul's concept of language development contains yet another serious flaw, namely, "atomism," which is mainly talked about by structuralist critics of the neogrammarianism. Indeed, Paul considers language development not as development of a system, but as numerous disconnected lines of development. Neogrammarians imagine that each language phenomenon has its own history, independent of the history of other elements within the same language. If neogrammarianism failed to perceive the causality and logic behind language changes, this is largely due to its atomistic treatment of linguistic phenomena and inability to perceive the interconnections among those phenomena which constitute the fabric of language. However, it should be mentioned that in language science, the "atomism" has not been eradicated yet. This

applies not only to F. de Saussure, who limited the notion of system to synchrony without recognizing a system in diachronic changes. The structuralists, who struggle to set themselves apart from the neogrammarians, are also guilty of atomism. The overwhelming majority of structuralists follow F. de Saussure in studying systematic relations only in synchrony while neglecting the history of language. But even those few structuralists who are trying to study the history of language often remain in the grip of atomistic notions and don't notice any internal inconsistencies within the language system, considering it as a "placid," always well-balanced, and largely unchangeable "structure."

We have seen that Paul's historical concept suffers from many fundamental flaws. The neogrammarian theory of language, with its psychological underpinning and denial of laws of language internal development, cannot completely satisfy the Marxist requirements in linguistics. However, one should keep in mind that true eradication of neogrammarianism implies not only criticism of its methodology but also an in-depth study of the history of language with a view to reveal social conditioning and internal regularities of language development. Critical analysis of the neogrammarians' work, including Paul's theoretical research, is a necessary step toward the theoretical and practical eradication of neogrammarianism as a trend that to this day dominates the field of the internal history of language.

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