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Grammar, typology and the Humboldtian tradition in the work of Georg von der Gabelentz.

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Abstract

A frequently mentioned if somewhat peripheral figure in the historiography of late nineteenth-century linguistics is the German sinologist and general linguist Georg von der Gabelentz (1840–1893). Today Gabelentz is chiefly remembered for several insights that proved to be productive in the development of subsequent schools and subdisciplines. In this paper, we examine two of these insights, his analytic and synthetic systems of grammar and his foundational work on typology. We show how they were intimately connected within his conception of linguistic research, and how this was in turn embedded in the tradition established by Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), especially as it was further developed by H. Steinthal (1823–1899). This paper goes beyond several previous works with a similar focus by drawing on a wider range of Gabelentz' writings, including manuscript sources that have only recently been published, and by examining specific textual connections between Gabelentz and his predecessors.

Keywords

history of linguistics, typology, language description, grammar, Humboldtian linguistics, Georg von der Gabelentz, H. Steinthal, Wilhelm von Humboldt

1. Introduction

The German sinologist and general linguist Georg von der Gabelentz (1840–1893) has won a secure, if peripheral, place in linguistic historiography for several insights that proved to be productive in the development of subsequent schools and subdisciplines.[1] Prominent examples here are his distinction between 'grammatical' and 'psychological' subject and predicate, which informed later research into information structure,[2] as well as his potential role as a forerunner of

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[1] As is self-evident even at a cursory glance, this paper owes a great deal to Manfred Ringmacher, both for his previous research and for his comments on earlier drafts of this work. Also deserving of thanks for their feedback are Nick Riemer, the judges of the Vivien Law Essay Prize and the two reviewers for *Language and History*.

[2] Gabelentz' 'psychological' subject and predicate essentially correspond to 'topic' and 'comment' in modern theories of information structure, while the 'grammatical' subject and predicate correspond to the formal grammatical categories (see Elffers 1991 and Seuren 1998: 120-133 for historical background). Gabelentz (1869) is the seminal text in which

structuralism.[3] In this paper, we look at two further ideas closely associated with Gabelentz, his foundational contributions to typology and his analytic and synthetic systems of grammatical description.[4] We offer an exposition of these two aspects of Gabelentz' work and show how they were intimately connected within his conception of language research and linguistics, which followed in the tradition established by Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835).

The connections pointed out in this paper have of course not gone unnoticed in the existing historiographic literature. Most notably, Dezső (1999: 410-415; 1990) offers an account of the relation between Gabelentz' analytic and synthetic systems of grammar and his typology, based largely on discussion of relevant passages in Gabelentz' magnum opus *Die Sprachwissenschaft*,[5] while Lehmann (1980: 34-36) briefly explores similar questions, with fleeting references to Gabelentz. This paper goes beyond previous work in several ways, perhaps most significantly by drawing on a wider range of Gabelentz' writings, including manuscript sources that have only recently been published, and by examining specific textual connections between Gabelentz and his predecessors.

We begin in section 2 below with a detailed exposition of the analytic and synthetic systems of grammar and their place in the Humboldtian linguistic tradition. In section 3 we then start joining the dots by sketching Gabelentz' program for general linguistics and showing the fundamental importance of sympathetic and thorough grammatical descriptions of diverse languages within it. We see how his general linguistics was motivated by the same questions posed by Humboldt and his followers, and observe the specific affinities between Gabelentz' work and the approach pursued by H. Steinthal (1823–1899),[6] a scholar remembered in no small part for his – frequently rather innovative – interpretation of Humboldt. Finally, in section 4, we turn to Gabelentz' proposal for typology, and place it in its historical context, as a means for improving cross-linguistic comparisons within his general linguistics.

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he first introduced the distinction; he reprises the core arguments in other places, perhaps most accessibly in his magnum opus, *Die Sprachwissenschaft* (1891: 348-357). It should be noted that there are two editions of *Die Sprachwissenschaft*, the first from 1891 and the second from 1901. The second edition contains substantive additions made after Gabelentz' death by Albrecht Graf von der Schulenburg (1865–1902), Gabelentz' nephew and pupil. In this paper we cite the first edition, to ensure that we do not confound our interpretation of Gabelentz' ideas with any later input from Schulenburg.

[3] Gabelentz' possible role as a forerunner of structuralism is much more controversial; the main arguments for and against this view can be found in Coseriu (1967) and Koerner (1978[1974]) respectively.

[4] While perhaps not as well known as his typological formulations, or even as immediately comprehensible from a present-day perspective, Gabelentz' analytic and synthetic systems of grammar are taken up in some later linguistic work. Probably the first explicit invocation of Gabelentz' two systems is to be found in Schulenburg's (1894) grammar of Tsimshian. Schulenburg espouses his allegiance to the approach (e.g. 1894: 125), but makes a somewhat superficial use of it. The best known appeal to Gabelentz' systems is perhaps Jespersen (1924); in this connection, see also Hjelmslev (1928: 90-91). More recent examples include Lehmann (1980), Mosel (2006) and many of the papers collected in Ezawa et al. (2002). See also Lehmann & Maslova (2004: 1870-1872).

[5] Dezső (1999; 1990), however, cites only the 1901 second edition of *Die Sprachwissenschaft* (see note 2 above on why this is potentially problematic)

[6] Steinthal's given name was 'Chajim', but in print and in library catalogues he is variously referred to as 'Heymann', 'Heinemann' (his mother's maiden name) and 'Heinrich'. In his memoires (reproduced in Belke 1971: 379), Steinthal relates how in his earliest childhood there was no state-sanctioned register of births, deaths and marriages for the Jewish community in his home town and, as a result, his German given name was never officially recorded and was altered arbitrarily. In this paper we follow Steinthal's own practice and simply use his initial, 'H.'

2. The analytic and synthetic systems of grammar

For Gabelentz (1891: 82-88), the key task of a grammar, whether pedagogical or theoretical, is to provide a description of the abilities of a native member of the speaker community. This amounts to being able to understand the language, as hearer or reader, and being able to use the language idiomatically, as speaker or writer, to express thoughts (*Gedanken*).[7] In both cases, the language comes to its users as an organic whole, and the particular expression to be interpreted or to be produced must be considered in the context of all the other possible expressions offered by the language. On this basis, the analytic system of grammar takes the perspective of the hearer or reader and tries to capture the totality of phenomena (*Gesammtheit von Erscheinungen*) to be interpreted, while the synthetic system takes the perspective of the speaker or writer and describes the totality of means (*Gesammtheit von Mitteln*) available for expressing thoughts (Gabelentz 1891: 86):

> The analytic system is concerned with the question: How is the language to be understood grammatically? That is: What are its grammatical forms? How can they be arranged organically? How are their diverse meanings to be explained systematically? Given is the form and sought is its meaning. That is the perspective of the one who receives the speech.
>
> Now[, under the synthetic system,] we take the perspective of the speaker. To him is given the thought that he wants to express and he looks for the appropriate expression; that is, for the appropriate grammatical expression, since we are concerned here only with grammatical forms, not with the material words.
>
> (Gabelentz 1891: 96)[8]

The 'expression of thoughts' is not limited to the simple encoding of logical propositions, as we might assume on a superficial reading. In addition to the purely 'logical' or propositional dimension of language, Gabelentz recognises a range of purposes of speech – from spontaneous exclamatory outburst of feeling to the calculated influencing of the interlocutor (see Gabelentz 2011[1879]: 361, 388-389; 1891: 308-315).[9] He comments that '[l]anguage is articulated expression of thought, and thought is the connection of concepts' (*Sprache ist gegliederter Ausdruck des Gedankens, und Gedanke ist Verbindung von Begriffen*), but adds two additional 'factors' to this logical dimension, the 'psychological' (*psychologisch*), and the 'spatio-temporal forms of relation' (*räumliche und zeitliche Beziehungsformen*; Gabelentz 1891: 82-83). The psychological factor has to do with the relation of the speaker to their speech (*das Verhältnis des Redenden zur Rede*), how the speaker

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[7] Translations of German terms and quotations are my own. In all cases, the original German is also provided in either parentheses or a footnote.

[8] Original text: 'Das analytische System behandelt die Frage: Wie ist die Sprache grammatisch zu verstehen? Das heisst: Welches sind ihre grammatischen Erscheinungen? wie sind dieselben organisch zu ordnen? wie sind ihre mannigfaltigen Bedeutungen einheitlich zu erklären? Gegeben ist also die Erscheinung, und gesucht wird ihre Deutung. Das ist der Standpunkt dessen, der die Rede vernimmt.

'Jetzt stellen wir uns [beim synthetischen System] auf den Standpunkt des Redenden. Gegeben ist ihm der Gedanke, den er ausdrücken will, und er sucht nach dem richtigen Ausdrucke, – nach dem grammatischen wollen wir sagen; denn nur auf die grammatische Formung, nicht auf die Wahl der Stoffwörter kommt es jetzt an.' The contrast of 'form' and 'material' is discussed in section 3 below.

[9] Gabelentz (2011[1879]) is a reference to Gabelentz' personal notebook entitled 'Zur allgeimenen Sprachwissenschaft', as edited for publication by Manfred Ringmacher. The manuscript is kept in the Gabelentz family collection in the Altenburg branch of the Thüringen State Archives (see Emig 2013 for information on the Gabelentz collection). Although 1879 is given as the original date here, this is probably only the year in which the notebook was commissioned for use; the material contained in the notebook was undoubtedly added to and revised up to a decade after this initial date (see Ringmacher's notes in Gabelentz 2011[1879]: 336-337).

wishes to present what they say; the spatio-temporal forms of relation are perhaps best understood in a Kantian sense. The way these three factors determine the form of expressions in a language constitutes the structure of that language (*Sprachbau*), and grammar is the study of this structure. Structure is in turn made up of the 'inner form' and 'outer form' of the language, two concepts with a strong Humboldtian pedigree. For Gabelentz, the outer form is the perceptible expression – that is, the forms – of a language, while the inner form is the *Weltanschauung* that lies at the basis of the language's structure (cf. Gabelentz 1891: 326-327; 2011[1879]: 354-356).[10] The inner and outer form of a language represent a typical path for analysing thoughts to be expressed in the language. The actual linguistic expression that is produced is synthesised through this process.

> That outer language form, and therefore also the inner form, is an analytic one; that is, the thought is broken down into its parts and then brought to expression in this broken down state. Corresponding to the analysis as a (synthetic) result is an organically articulated body, the sentence or sentence-word, in which the whole and parts stand in a mutual relationship to one another.
>
> (Gabelentz 1891: 82-83)[11]

This conception of linguistic production as a synthetic process that effects an analysis is similarly a motif of the Humboldtian tradition. As Trabant (chapter 8 of 2012; 1986) explains in his exposition of Humboldt's philosophy of language, Humboldt distanced himself from the traditional Aristotelian semiotic-communicative conception of language as a system of arbitrary signs and instead saw language as the locus of the Kantian faculty of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), which creates a synthesis of sensuality (*Sinnlichkeit*) and understanding (*Verstand*). According to Humboldt, a word in language is a combination of a physically perceptible sound and a concept, and it is only through the synthetic process that produces this combination that each, the sound and the concept, takes on a definite shape. This is in contrast to Aristotle, for whom the concept is pre-existing and is merely labelled by the sound.

In Steinthal's later psychologistic theory of language – which draws most heavily on the associationism of Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841) – analysis and synthesis appear in a similar sense as stages in the crucial process of 'apperception' (*Apperception*; cf. Ringmacher 1996: 118-121; Bumann 1965: 63-70; Knobloch 1988: 187-190). Gabelentz' description of the process of speaking quoted above seems to echo Steinthal's position, as in the following succinct if somewhat jargon-laden formulation:

> Representation, in contrast to perception, is not only a higher activity of the consciousness, but also an activity of the consciousness that expands knowledge. The essential feature, however, is […] two-part speech, the sentence made up of subject and predicate. Only at the point of breaking down (analysis) of the content of perception do

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[10] It is widely acknowledged that the terms 'inner form' and 'outer form' appear only briefly in Humboldt's writings and that both the emphasis they have received and the way they have generally been understood reflect more Steinthal's later rendering than anything Humboldt said himself (see Borsche 1989). Gabelentz (1889) also pointed out the diverse range of interpretations applied to 'inner form', by Humboldt and his later followers. Gabelentz (1889) is reproduced and expanded upon in Gabelentz (1891: 316-348).

[11] Original: 'Jene äussere Sprachform, und mithin auch die innere, ist eine analytische, das heisst der Gedanke wird in seine Bestandtheile zerlegt und in diesem zerlegten Zustande zum Ausdrucke gebracht. Der Analyse entspricht als (synthetisches) Ergebniss ein organisch gegliederter Körper, das heisst ein Satz oder ein Satzwort, worinnen das Ganze und die Theile zu einander in Wechselwirkung stehen.' There is a footnote anchored to 'sentence-word' (*Satzwort*), which provides two examples of sentence-words from Latin, 'dormit' and 'laudantur'.

we have speaking, representation, and only with the synthesis of the immediately
unitary perception after such an analysis is the intuition created, in a newly won unity
and indeed with clarified content.

(Steinthal 1888: 375-376; see also Steinthal 1881: 198-263, 396-428)[12]

While the terms 'analytic' and 'synthetic' had a specific theoretical sense among the
Humboldtians, the broader use Gabelentz makes of them to designate the opposed perspectives of
hearer and speaker would seem also to connect to an even older tradition in European grammar-
writing. As Ringmacher (2002) shows in his exploration of the possible antecedents of Gabelentz'
two systems, grammars structured around the two complementary activities of language reception
and production have a long history. In particular, Ringmacher (2002: 162-163) cites several
nineteenth-century pedagogical grammars of Chinese and East Asian languages that maintain this
duality, especially those of Jean-Pierre Abel Rémusat (1788–1832; 1822) and Joseph Henri Prémare
(1666-1736; 1831), and argues that they may have influenced the structure of Gabelentz' own 1881
Chinesische Grammatik. Gabelentz was certainly familiar with these works: he cites both in his
1878 survey of European grammars of Chinese. Another likely precedent – mentioned in passing by
Ringmacher (2002: 156-157) – is the opposition in lexical semantics between the 'semasiological'
and 'onomasiological' points of view, a terminological contrast that was established only after
Gabelentz' death, but the foundations of which were already laid in the first half of the nineteenth
century (see also Ringmacher in Gabelentz 2011[1879]: 337). The relevance of this distinction to
Gabelentz' systems of grammar is perhaps evidenced by his own repeated description of the
synthetic system as a kind of 'grammatische Synonymik' (e.g. Gabelentz 1881: 353; 1891: 97):
Synonymik became a term of art within the semasiological tradition, used to describe the
differentiation of synonyms for the purposes of practical expression of similar thoughts in speech
(see Haßler 1991: 139-146).

The only thoroughgoing application of the two systems that Gabelentz (1891: 92) recognises is
his own *Chinesische Grammatik*, which he also uses to exemplify the approach. He begins with the
analytic system, which for every language will start with the sentence, the primary unit of linguistic
phenomena in all languages, and breaks it down into progressively smaller pieces (1891: 91-92).
The next stages in the analytic system will vary from language to language, depending on each
language's structure. In his Chinese grammar, Gabelentz begins with the rules of word position,
proceeds to auxiliary particles (which have scope over the sentence but are themselves subordinate
to rules of syntax), and then moves to the level of individual words and discusses how their part of
speech is to be determined through the rules applying to syntax and to the particles. The final topic
treated in this section is the division of the text into periods or sentences, which Gabelentz (1891:
93) treats as a 'purely philological art' (*rein philologische Kunst*), a hybrid of grammatical, logical
and stylistic considerations.

While the arrangement of the analytic system may be very different across languages, given the
diverse range of linguistic structures the world's languages exhibit, the synthetic system, which

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[12] Original: 'Vorstellen ist gegen Warnehmen nicht nur eine erhöhte, sondern auch eine die Erkenntnis erweiternde
Tätigkeit des Bewusstseins. Das wesentliche aber ist […] die zweigliedrige Rede, der Satz aus Subject und Prädicat.
Erst diese Zerlegung (Analyse) des Inhalts der Warnehmung ist Sprechen, Vorstellen, und erst die Synthese nach solcher
Analyse der unmittelbar einheitlichen Warnehmung, erwirkt die Anschauung in wieder gewonner Einheit und zwar mit
aufgeklärtem Inhalt.'

begins with categories of thoughts to be expressed, should be amenable to a more general cross-linguistic arrangement, since the categories are more likely to be shared across languages: 'It should be possible to find a generally valid scheme for the arrangement of the synthetic system. Such an arrangement should contain spaces for everything a language might want to express through grammatical means, irrespective of the number of these spaces that each language under consideration would fill' (Gabelentz 1891: 104-105).[13] While there may be a universal range of categories, the inner form of each language may target only some of them; in modern terms, we might say that there is variation in what has been grammaticalised across languages. The synthetic system in Gabelentz' Chinese grammar begins with the formation of individual words, and then moves on to how they may be replaced by pro-forms and ellipses in the sentence. The next level is made up of the functional categories subject, predicate, object, 'psychological subject' (i.e. topic; see note 2 above), copulas and modality. This is followed by an exposition of the expression of different logical relations in the sentence. As with the analytic system, the synthetic system then blends into wider, not purely grammatical parts of the language description, in this case into stylistics (Gabelentz 1891: 105-108).

The other major source we have for his views on the application of the analytic and synthetic systems is a sketch of the structure of a Sanskrit grammar that Gabelentz (2011[1879]: 356) made in his personal notebook.[14] He imagines the grammar as a sort of ring which, beginning with the sentence, embarks on an exploratory and inductive analysis of the grammatical phenomena presented in the language to eventually arrive at the roots. The roots then serve as the primary material for the synthetic part of the grammar, which recapitulates each part of the analytic system to arrive back at the surface phenomena of the language. A phonology of the language (*Lautlehre*) and an account of its writing system (*Schriftlehre*) are included only as 'propaedeutic' (*propädeutisch*) parts of the grammar, no doubt because they have no functional or meaning-bearing properties. The phonology and writing system are similarly dealt with as preliminaries in the *Chinesische Grammatik* (Gabelentz 1881), along with introductory historical and cultural information about the Chinese language and its speakers, the place of the language from the perspective of historical-comparative linguistics, and a general account of the structure of the language. In the Sanskrit grammar, sandhi is not treated as part of the preliminaries because it is required in the analytic system in order to find the abstract roots of concrete words and then in the synthetic system to return to those words. Figure 1 below is Gabelentz' diagrammatic representation of the structure of the ideal Sanskrit grammar.

[13] Original: 'Für die Eintheilung des synthetischen Systemes ein im Wesentlichen gemeingültiges Schema zu finden, müsste wohl möglich sein. Ein solches müsste thunlichst Fächer für Alles und Jedes enthalten, was eine Sprache durch grammatische Mittel ausdrücken mag, einerlei wieviele dieser Fächer von der jeweilig zu behandelnden Sprache ausgefüllt werden.'

[14] Ringmacher, in his notes to Gabelentz (2011[1879]: 256), points out that Gabelentz' use of Sanskrit to exemplify his systems of grammar follows an established fashion of his time, according to which Sanskrit was generally considered the prototypical object of linguistic enquiry, having displaced Latin in this role.
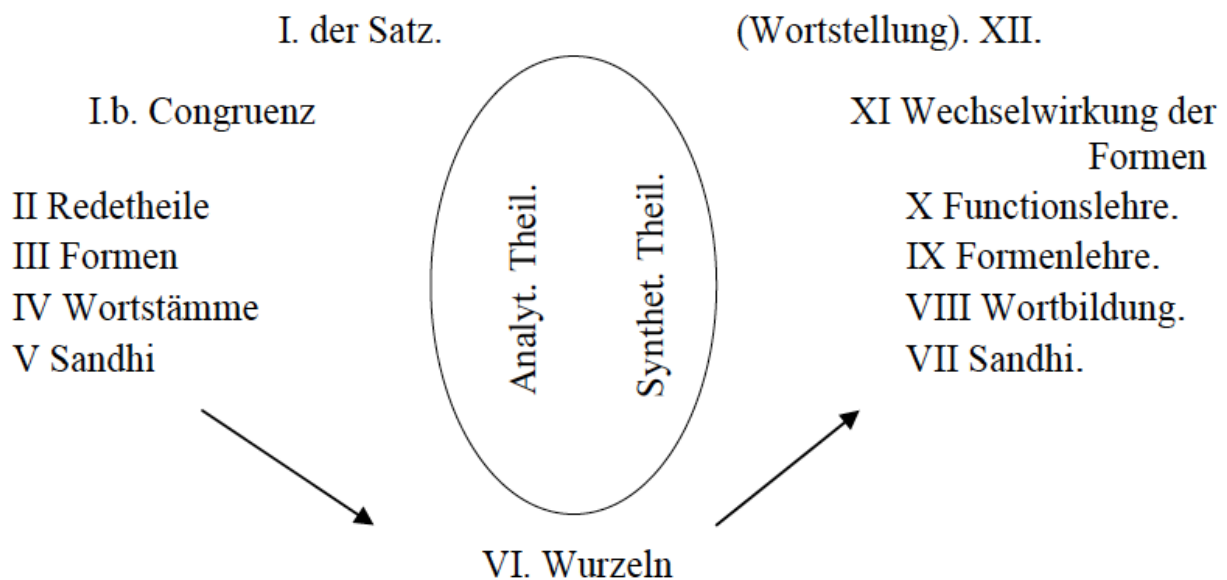
Figure 1 (Gabelentz 2011[1879]: 356)

3. The goal of general linguistics

The goal to which general linguistics must aspire can be no other than to establish the mutual relations between national character and language. Here the mental and temperamental type, the living conditions, the level of civilisation of peoples and families of peoples – there the phenomena, the forces and achievements of their languages. And, between these two, equations that say: the more so on this side, the more or less so on the other.

(Gabelentz 1891: 457)[15]

So formulated Gabelentz the goal of general linguistics: the ultimate task is to establish the mutually determining relations between a people's character and the structure of the grammar and vocabulary of the language they speak. In the passage cited above, Gabelentz (1891: 457) continues to note that this goal of general linguistics can only be reached via an inductive – that is, empirical – path, with comprehensive descriptions of languages, encompassing their grammar, vocabulary, their phenomena and purposes. The analytic and synthetic systems are the means to these comprehensive descriptions.

This goal can be recognised as Humboldtian, and, at least in its initial formulations, was specifically cast as part of the movement of *Völkerpsychologie* established by Steinthal and Moritz Lazarus (1824–1903).[16] These affinities are the key to understanding the broader theoretical

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[15] Original: 'Das Ziel, dem die allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft zuzustreben hat, kann kein anderes sein, als dies, die Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Volksthum und Sprache festzustellen. Hüben die Geistes- und Gemüthsart, die Lebensbedingungen, der Gesittungsstand der Völker und Völkerfamilien, – drüben die Erscheinungen, die Kräfte und Leistungen ihrer Sprachen. Und, zwischen diesen beiden, Gleichungen, die besagen: Je mehr auf der einen Seite so, desto mehr oder weniger auf der anderen Seite so.'

[16] The programmatic introduction to Lazarus and Steinthal's *Völkerpsychologie* is Lazarus & Steinthal (1860). See in particular pp. 23-25 and pp. 42-43 for the place of language study in this program. Ringmacher (1996: 23-26) and Morpurgo Davies (1998: 205-207) provide some general background information on *Völkerpsychologie* and language

motivations behind Gabelentz' analytic and synthetic systems of grammar. In one of his earliest programmatic statements on the nature of language and the goals of linguistics, his 1875 essay 'Weiteres zur vergleichenden Syntax', published in Lazarus and Steinthal's *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, Gabelentz distinguishes the two sides of language, thought and expression, and explicitly contrasts the complementary approaches of historical-comparative grammar and *Völkerpyschologie*:

> Comparative linguistics follows a dual purpose: first of all, it seeks to order languages according to their relations – this is the genealogical part of its task; but then it also seeks to classify the entire linguistic material according to its content and form, to show what the relationship of the linguistic expression to the concept or thought that is to be expressed could be. I would like to call this the ethnopsychological [*völkerpsychologisch*] side of the problem.
>
> (Gabelentz 1875: 130)[17]

In this passage, Gabelentz (1875: 131) goes on to cite Steinthal's *Mande-Negersprachen* (1867) as an implementation of the ethnopsychological approach he has in mind. Later, in *Die Sprachwissenschaft*, Gabelentz (1891: 87-88) once again compares his systems to Steinthal's *Mande-Negersprachen*, and comments that they are 'based on a basically related but still differing view' (*[a]uf einer im Grunde vielleicht verwandten und doch abweichenden Anschauung beruht*). Steinthal (1886: 143-144) makes a similar observation in his review of the *Chinesische Grammatik*, which Gabelentz (1891: 87-88) in turn cites.

Steinthal's stated aim in the *Mande-Negersprachen* is to demonstrate that the indisputable unity of human languages lies at the functional psychological level, and not as the structural level, as was supposed in the tradition of *grammaire générale*, which maintained that proper analysis would reveal the correspondence between linguistic and logical forms (Steinthal 1867: vi-vii). His demonstration proceeds through a detailed description of the Mande languages from two opposite directions, from linguistic structure to the underlying thoughts and from thoughts to their expressions; that is, from the analytic and synthetic perspectives.

> In precisely the same way is the inner unity of languages asserted up until now a phenomenon that is no longer based on their linguistic form at all, but rather on the logical and metaphysical forms of the content of thought, which in turn lies completely outside languages. Just as both frogs and men breathe, the Soso language and Sanskrit have words for activities and substances – that is, the metaphysical categories for the content of the representations here are like the chemical processes there. But just as,

study. The Humboldtian character of Gabelentz' approach was recognised by his contemporaries. Reviewing the 1901 second edition of *Die Sprachwissenschaft*, the Indo-Europeanist Ludwig Sütterlin (1863–1934; 1904: 319) commented: 'Even though its first edition came out as recently as 1891 and its second edition in 1901, Gabelentz' book seems to us like a remnant of a former time: with him dies a point of view that in the end was established by Wilhelm von Humboldt.' (Original text: 'Das Buch von der Gabelentzens mutet uns, obwohl seine erste Auflage erst 1891 erschienen ist und die zweite 1901, schon wie ein Ueberbleibsel aus vergangener Zeit an; es stirbt mit ihm eine Betrachtungsweise aus, die sich in letzter Linie von W. von Humboldt herschreibt.') Note that this Ludwig Sütterlin is not to be confused with the Ludwig Sütterlin (1865–1917) who designed the Sütterlinschrift. See also Ringmacher (2011) for discussion of Gabelentz' Humboldtianism.

[17] Original text: 'Die vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft verfolgt einen doppelten Zweck, einmal will sie die Sprachen ihrer Verwandtschaft nach ordnen : das ist der g e n e a l o g i s c h e Theil ihrer Aufgabe; dann aber will sie auch das gesammte Sprachmaterial nach Inhalt und Form klassificiren, darthun, welches das Verhältniss des sprachlichen Ausdrucks zum auszudrückenden Begriffe oder Gedanken sein könne: und dies möchte ich die völkerpsychologische Seite des Problems nennen.'

from a physiological point of view, human breathing with the chest is not to be found in frogs and even lower animals, Soso lacks the nouns and verbs of Sanskrit.

(Steinthal 1867: viii)[18]

In place of the equation of language and logic, Steinthal recognises an ideal, the *Sprachidee*, towards which all languages strive, and which they reach to differing degrees. The essential criterion for judging a language's success in reaching the ideal is whether it has only material elements (*Stoff*), or whether in addition to material elements it has also *Form* that expresses the mental relations between the items of *Stoff*. His broader project was then a kind of typology, where each language was classified – and judged – at the highest level by the putative presence or absence of *Form* (he eventually settled on the dichotomy of *Formsprachen* vs. *formlose Sprachen*), and then into subordinate categories common in nineteenth-century morphological language classification (see Ringmacher 1996: 129-181; Bumann 1966: 103-115; Morpurgo Davies 1998: 212-219).

Steinthal's scheme of classification, and the value judgements attached to it, was an attempt to systematise Humboldt's notion of language as the locus of synthesis (discussed in section 2 above). The ultimate goal of languages is to achieve the best synthesis of sound and thought and, according to Steinthal, the presence and use of form in a language is the decisive measure of how close a language has come to this goal. Humboldt (1836: 10) did indeed believe in an 'idea of perfection in language' (*Idee der Sprachvollendung*) that strove to achieve existence in reality and, in this way, language was one aspect of the 'common human mental force' (*die allgemeine menschliche Geisteskraft*). He saw inflection as exhibited by the Indo-European languages as true grammatical form, since it is only here that the process of synthesis is properly achieved. The inflected word combines the concept and its relation to the rest of the proposition – expressed by the word stem and affix respectively – into a single package where the individual identity of the concept is preserved. This is in contrast to isolating structures, as in Chinese, where the concept maintains its individual identity but the relation finds no formal expression, and incorporating structures, as in Nahuatl, where the relation is expressed, but only because one concept swallows up another:

> The Mexican [i.e. Nahuatl] method of incorporation attests to a correct feeling for the formation of the sentence in that it puts the indication of the relations within the sentence directly onto the verb; that is, at the point at which the sentence wraps itself together as a single unit. In this way, this method is distinguished essentially and advantageously from the lack of specification in Chinese, where the verb is not even clearly indicated by its position, but is rather often only materially recognisable through its meaning. [...] Sanskrit indicates each word as a constitutive part of the sentence in a very simple and natural way. The method of incorporation does not do this, but rather, wherever it cannot put everything together as one, allows indications to emerge from the middle of the sentence, much like peaks, which show the direction in which the individual parts must be sought, according to their relationship to the sentence.

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[18] Original: 'Ganz ebenso ist auch die bisher behauptete innere Einheit der Sprachen eine Erscheinung, die gar nicht mehr auf der sprachlichen Form, sondern auf den logischen und metaphysischen Formen des Denkinhaltes beruht, die eben darum ganz außerhalb der Sprachen liegt. Wie der Frosch und der Mensch athmet, so haben die Soso-Sprache und das Sanskrit Wörter für Thätigkeit und Substanzen; d.h. wie dort der chemische Proceß, so sind hier die metaphysischen Kategorien für den Inhalt der Vorstellungen dieselben; wie aber physiologisch genommen das menschliche Athmen vermittelst der Brust bei den Fröschen und noch niedrigern Thieren nicht zu finden ist, so geht auch dem Soso das Nomen und Verbum des Sanskrit ab.'

(Humboldt 1836: 169)[19]

But despite his praise for Indo-European inflection, especially as manifested in Greek and Sanskrit, Humboldt insisted that no actual language reaches perfection. Greek and Sanskrit merely stand highest on the scale towards perfection (see Trabant 2012: 143-147).

As Ringmacher (1996: 129) argues, Steinthal's endeavour to classify is the main point of difference between him and Humboldt: Steinthal thought that Humboldt should have provided a classification of languages but had never carried his ideas to their conclusion (cf. chapter 5 of Trabant 2012; chapter 6 of Trabant 1986; Coseriu 2002: 36-38). Before he undertook the detailed demonstration for a single language contained in the *Mande-Negersprachen*, Steinthal had already begun pursuing this project with the more general cross-linguistic investigations presented in *Die Classification der Sprachen dargestellt als die Entwicklung der Sprachenidee* ('The classification of languages represented as the development of the idea of language'; Steinthal 1850), and the much longer *Charakteristik der hauptsächlichsten Typen des Sprachbaues* ('Study of the character of the main types of language structure'; Steinthal 1860). The study of language was cast as a key component of *Völkerpsychologie* right from the introduction of the approach under this name in Lazarus & Steinthal (1860: 23-25; see also Bumann 1966: 100-102).

Gabelentz maintained the core goal of *Völkerpsychologie*, establishing the causal connections between the structure of each language and the social, physical and, above all, mental life of its speakers, and he also continued its commitment to empirical demonstration as opposed to the *a priori* speculation of the *grammaire générale* tradition (see Gabelentz 1891: 11-12). He rejected, however, the notion of a *Sprachidee* as an immanent force driving all languages in a single direction:

> W. von Humboldt and, following him, H. Steinthal (e.g. *Charakteristik* [1860] p. 312) search for and find in the multitude of individual languages 'the continual self-perpetuating development of the *Sprachidee*'. They understand this development of the *Sprachidee* as the realisation of a linguistic ideal. I cannot agree with them on this point. If the category of idea is applied to diverse languages, then the realisation of this idea can be only the diversity of languages, since the idea of the language faculty only fulfils itself in all directions of its operation. But there are many of these directions.

(Gabelentz 2011[1879]: 387-388)[20]

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[19] Original: 'Die mexicanische Einverleibungsmethode zeugt darin von einem richtigen Gefühle der Bildung des Satzes, dass sie die Bezeichnung seiner Beziehungen gerade an das Verbum anknüpft, also den Punkt, in welchem sich derselbe zur Einheit zusammenschlingt. Sie unterscheidet sich dadurch wesentlich und vortheilhaft von der chinesischen Andeutungslosigkeit, in welcher das Verbum nicht einmal sicher durch seine Stellung, sondern oft nur materiell an seiner Bedeutung kenntlich ist. […] Das Sanskrit bezeichnet auf ganz einfache und natürliche Weise jedes Wort als constitutiven Theil des Satzes. Die Einverleibungsmethode thut dies nicht, sondern lässt, wo sie nicht Alles in Eins zusammenschlagen kann, aus dem Mittelpunkte des Satzes Kennzeichen, gleichsam wie Spitzen, ausgehen, die Richtungen anzeigen, in welchen die einzelnen Theile, ihrem Verhältniss zum Satze gemäss, gesucht werden müssen.'
[20] Original: 'W. von Humboldt und nach ihm H. Steinthal (z.B. Char. S.312) suchen und finden in der Menge der einzelnen Sprachen "die fortwährend sich vollbringende Entwickelung der Sprachidee". Unter dieser Entwickelung der Sprachidee verstehen sie die Verwirklichung eines Sprachenideales. Hierin kann ich ihnen nicht beistimmen. Es werde die Kategorie der Idee auf die mannichfaltigen Sprachen angewendet, so kann die Verwirklichung dieser Idee eben nur die Mannichfaltigkeit der Sprachen sein. Denn nur in allen Richtungen seines Wirkens erfüllt sich die Idee des Sprachvermögens. Dieser Richtungen sind aber viele.'

It is in this passage above, contained in his notebook, that Gabelentz first outlines his functionalist conception of language, which we discussed in section 2. In his later published writings, including *Die Sprachwissenschaft*, this retreat from the *Sprachidee* results in a jettisoning of the sharply judgemental features of Steinthal's work, and a call for subtler, more fine-grained characterisations of languages. Gabelentz sees Steinthal as turning Humboldt's differences in degree into differences in kind:

> Where Humboldt speaks of languages 'whose grammatical forms are not of such a formal nature as the inflectional languages' – so still grammatical forms and of a formal nature – Steinthal sees an abrupt dualism, and divides languages into formless and formal languages, and judges the forms of the languages harshly, whether they are really formal or not. What for his great predecessor were indicators of a less formal nature are for him a sign of formlessness, and only within these two sharply delineated categories does he allow different levels of lower or higher development.
>
> (Gabelentz 1891: 324)[21]

But in a subsequent passage, where Gabelentz praises James Byrne's (1820–1897) *General principles of the structure of language* (1885), Humboldt is criticised for perpetuating the same 'abrupt duality'. Gabelentz' father, Hans Conon von der Gabelentz (1807–1874), is held up as an example for his appreciation of diverse languages on their own terms:

> Indeed the Humboldtian view is still haunted by the abrupt dualism between Hellenes and barbarians, people of culture and savages. He speaks of perfect and less perfect languages; even in the way the difference is represented, it is not gradual but an opposition, and Steinthal was right when he took it as such and spoke of formal and formless languages. Even earlier this opposition did not seem plausible to many who delved into the so-called formless languages. In particular, my unforgettable father liked to emphasise the unique beauty and fineness of this or that exotic language, and then he would describe how the world of representations was formed and articulated in it.
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> (Gabelentz 1891: 405)[22]

Elsewhere Gabelentz points out how arbitrary Steinthal's separation of the formal from non-formal seems to be: he appears to simply grasp at features that confirm his pre-existing opinions. Of

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[21] Original: 'Wo HUMBOLDT von Sprachen redet, "deren grammatische Formen nicht so formaler Natur sind, wie die der flectirenden", – also doch immerhin auch grammatische Formen und formaler Natur sind, – da sieht STEINTHAL einen schroffen Dualismus, theilt die Sprachen in formlose und in Formsprachen und geht mit den grammatischen Formen der Sprachen scharf in's Gericht, ob sie auch wirklich formal seien oder nicht. Was seinem grossen Vorgänger als Merkmale minder formaler Natur galt, das ist ihm ein Zeichen der Formlosigkeit, und nur innerhalb dieser beiden scharf geschiedenen Kategorien lässt er verschiedene Stufen niederer oder höherer Entwickelung zu.' This text, quoted from *Die Sprachwissenschaft*, was originally published in Gabelentz (1889: 193). Cf. note 10 above.

[22] Original: 'In den HUMBOLDT'schen Anschauungen spukt doch noch etwas von dem schroffen Dualismus zwischen Hellenen und Barbaren, Culturmenschen und Wilden. Es wird von vollkommenen und minder vollkommenen Sprachen geredet; allein wie der Unterschied dargestellt wird, ist er nicht graduell sondern gegensätzlich, und STEINTHAL hatte Recht, als er ihn so auffasste und von formhaften und formlosen Sprachen redete. Dieser Gegensatz hat schon früher Manchem nicht eingeleuchtet, der sich wahrhaft philologisch in sogennante formlose Sprachen vertiefte. Mein unvergesslicher Vater zumal hob gern hervor, wie eigenthümliche Schönheiten und Feinheiten diese oder jene fremdartige Sprache aufweist, und dann schilderte er, wie sich in ihr die Welt der Vorstellungen formt und gliedert.' This passage comes immediately after the material from Gabelentz (1889) incorporated in *Die Sprachwissenschaft*. Cf. note 10 above.

Chinese, which Steinthal (1860), after some vacillation, eventually classed as a *Formsprache*, largely on account of its highly developed syntax, Gabelentz observed:[23]

> But on the other hand the syntactic rules of Chinese are counted as a virtue, and since Siamese, Annamite, and Barmanish [Thai, Vietnamese and Burmese] make use of the same means, the differentiation between attribute and object [in Chinese] is emphasised, [even though] it is also lacking in our Indo-European languages, as well as in other languages. And so Chinese is violently torn apart from its genetic cousins, just because we did not want to deny the old civilised nation [the Chinese] a *Formsprache,* and were afraid of accepting those poorer cousins into the best company.

> (Gabelentz 2011[1879]: 358-359; cf. Gabelentz 1887: 99)[24]

Instead Gabelentz (1891: 342-348) recognises a *Formungstrieb* (drive to formation) in all languages of the world, which may manifest itself in different and incommensurable ways. He sees this drive as a natural desire for expressiveness in language. In speaking, we want not only to communicate information, but also to be able to shape the expression as we please. To properly recognise and appreciate the direction the *Formungstrieb* has taken in each language, we need to understand it thoroughly and on its own terms. An exhaustive *Synonymik* of the grammatical and lexical apparatus of the language – that is, a description under the synthetic system – can provide such an understanding (cf. Gabelentz 2011[1879]: 357-362).[25]

> From the outset we must recognise this drive in every human language. […] In its degree and direction the drive expresses itself differently, and because of this only those with the deepest knowledge of the language would be able to judge it justly. An exhaustive *Synonymik*, both in lexical and grammatical dimensions, would have to lead to the knowledge of to what extent and where the language-forming spirit applies the urge for the subjective shaping of the world.

> (Gabelentz 1891: 347)[26]

Despite initially aligning himself with Steinthal and his *Völkerpsychologie,* Gabelentz' later work would seem to be largely a reaction against the direction in which Steinthal took Humboldtian linguistics, although Humboldt himself does not entirely escape Gabelentz' criticism. Gabelentz rejected Steinthal's parameters for language classification and criticised his work for its insufficient sympathy for the peculiar nature of individual languages and the crudeness of its generalisations. It would seem that he sought later to distance himself from *Völkerpsychologie*: Gabelentz (1875), cited above, is the only place where he explicitly links his own work to *Völkerpsychologie*. In his

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[23] See also Ringmacher (1996: 160-164) for Steinthal's complex and vacillating views on Chinese.

[24] Original: 'Dem Chinesischen andrerseits rechnete man seine Stellungsgesetze zur Tugend an, und da das Siamesische, Annamitische, Barmanische u. A. sich des gleichen Mittels bedienen, so hob man zu Gunsten Jenes die Scheidung zwischen Attribut und Objekt hervor, die u. A. auch in unseren indogermanischen Sprachen fehlt. Nebenher riß man das Chinesische gewaltsam von seinen leiblichen Vettern los, blos weil man doch dem alten Culturvolke nicht die "Formsprache" absprechen mochte und sich scheute jene ärmeren Vettern mit in die erste Gesellschaft aufzunehmen.'

[25] Gabelentz (1891: 462-464) sketches a 'general lexicology' (*allgemeine Wortschatzkunde*), which blends into etymology, as an approach for studying the vocabulary of languages.

[26] Original: 'Diesen Trieb müssen wir wohl von vornherein jeder menschlichen Sprache zuerkennen. […] Nach Mass und Richtung äussert der Trieb sich verschieden, und insoweit vermag nur die eingehenste Sprachkenntniss ihn gerecht zu beurtheilen. Eine erschöpfende Synonymik, sowohl lexikalische wie eine grammatische, müsste zu der Erkenntniss führen, inwieweit und wo der sprachbildende Geist den Drang nach subjectiver Gestaltung der Welt bethätigt.' First published in Gabelentz (1889: 215-216). Cf. note 10 above.

later writings (such as Gabelentz 2011[1879]; 1891; 1894) he usually speaks of *Völkerkunde* ('ethnology') in general (but cf. Gabelentz 1891: 400).

4. Typology

From Gabelentz' conclusion that an 'exhaustive *Synonymik*' of a language is required to discover the path taken in it by the *Formungstrieb,* we might assume that the synthetic perspective alone provides the key to characterising a language. But Gabelentz insisted that both the synthetic and the analytic systems are necessary for reaching the ultimate goal of general linguistics:

> As always both perspectives that we met in the analytic and synthetic systems are relevant: languages need to be judged synoptically, with reference to their phenomena and then with reference to their abilities. But we must assume *a priori* that both form and ability of a language condition each other to a certain extent, and proving this is the third, highest task [of linguistics, after evaluating languages and describing them in detail].

> (Gabelentz 1891: 459-460)[27]

Gabelentz (1891: 462) recognises a long line of comparative studies from the synthetic perspective, which investigate the realisation of individual categories across languages.[28] But there still remained the problem of adequately accounting for cross-linguistic regularities on the analytic side. Gabelentz' proposal for 'Typologie', spelt out in his final, posthumously published paper, 'Hypologie [Typologie]: eine neue Aufgabe der Linguistik' ('Hypology [typology]: a new task of linguistics'; Gabelentz 1894), should perhaps be taken as his solution to this problem.[29]

In this paper, Gabelentz (1894: 5) observes that similar grammatical traits appear to cluster across diverse languages for which none of the usual explanatory factors, such as genealogical relatedness or geographical proximity, can be invoked. He offers the example of the frequent occurrence – attested in such languages as Basque, Tibetan, Greenlandic and those of Australia – of ergative-absolutive case marking alongside genitive modifiers tending to appear before the head noun and adjectival modifiers after the head. Conversely, languages known to be genealogically related frequently differ significantly from one another in their grammatical traits. Here he mentions how three language families – the 'Indo-Chinese', 'Kolarisch' (i.e. Munda languages) and 'Malay'

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[27] Original: 'Wie immer gelten auch hier die beiden Gesichtspunkte, die wir im analytischen und synthetischen Systeme kennen lernten: die Sprachen wollen synoptisch, einmal in Rücksicht auf ihre Erscheinungen, und dann in Rücksicht auf ihre Leistungen beurtheilt werden. Es ist aber von vornherein anzunehmen, dass Beides, Form und Leistungskraft einer Sprache einander einigermassen bedinge, und dies nachzuweisen wäre dann die dritte, höchste Aufgabe.' The other two tasks are set out in the preceding sections, *Sprachwürderung* ('language evaluation') and *Sprachschilderung* ('language description').

[28] He mentions Humboldt's essay on the dual (1997[1827]); August Friedrich Pott (1802–1887; 1818-1882), Friedrich Müller (1834–1898; 1860) and Lucien Adam's (1833–1918; 1883) studies of grammatical gender; Pott's (1847; 1868) research on number systems; Steinthal's (1847) study of relative pronouns; his own father, Hans Conon von der Gabelentz' (1807–1874; 1861), essay on the passive; Georg Gerland's (1833–1919; 1869) book on intensive and iterative forms; and Raoul de la Grasserie's (1839–1914; 1888) *Études de grammaire comparée*.

[29] In Gabelentz (1894) the term 'Typologie' is consistently rendered – in the title, running heads and the journal's table of contents – as 'Hypologie'. This is almost certainly a typographical error that was left standing because Gabelentz passed away before he could correct the proofs of the paper (as an editor's note at the end of the paper indicates). The term appears as 'Typologie' in Schulenburg's revisions to *Die Sprachwissenschaft* (1901). Plank (1991: 428-430) is probably the first published source that examines this terminological problem arising through posthumous publication.

(i.e. the subgroup within Austronesian) – which are characteristically polysyllabic and agglutinative have members that are isolating. This deep agreement in linguistic structure in the absence of the traditional explanatory factors, and disagreement in languages that ought to be similar suggest some necessary connection between these traits, which in turn reflects some common aspect of the mental configuration of the language's speakers or the historical conditions under which they have lived:

> [Languages] are free organic structures, and because they are, and inasmuch as they are, all of their parts stand together in a necessary mutual configuration. This makes sense *a priori*, and cannot be otherwise, and yet a lot is said by it. Everything emerges from the same mental abilities, the same historical conditions that a language is and has: its phonology as much as the structure of its words and forms, its sentence construction and the national style, the grammar and the vocabulary.

> (Gabelentz 1894: 4)[30]

The reiteration of 'mental abilities' and 'historical conditions' as factors determining the organic structure of languages reminds us that Gabelentz is still standing firmly on Humboldtian ground. A glimpse of precisely what Gabelentz had in mind here can be found in *Die Sprachwissenschaft,* in a section devoted to the question of 'language evaluation' (*Sprachwürderung*; Gabelentz 1891: 371-457). Here he carries out several concrete comparisons of structural traits across language groups and links them to the mental and physical conditions of their speakers. The inspiration for this task and the parameters defining it Gabelentz (1891: 372) attributes first and foremost to Humboldt. Given the status Humboldt accords to language as both the product and the continually acting cultivator of the 'national mind' (*Volksgeist*), a language is to be judged in terms of the way it both reflects and stimulates the thinking of the nation that speaks it. But, argues Gabelentz (1891: 373), a singleminded focus on morphology as the measure of linguistic development – pursued by Humboldt, Steinthal and August Schleicher (1821–1868) – has proved to be inadequate in the face of the enormous diversity and complexity that has since come to light in the world's languages. Looking at Indo-European inflection, Gabelentz (1891: 379-381) calls it a 'defective system' (*Defectivsystem*), whose multiple forms for the same grammatical category would seem to be 'waste of energy' (*Energievergeudung*) in contrast to the 'infinitely rich plasticity' (*unendlich reiche Bildsamkeit*) achieved through the simple consistent means of the agglutinative languages. Indo-European inflection, according to Gabelentz, developed during 'the youth of peoples and languages' (*das Jünglingsalter der Völker und der Sprachen*), and is above all a sign of the immense mental energy of the Indo-Europeans. There is no reason to take pride in inflection for its own sake, but we may value it as evidence of the mental strength of our ancestors:

> We should not judge the deeds of youth by their products, but rather by the forces that they reveal. The boy who tears his clothes while wrestling and climbing trees obviously achieves less than the tailor who will repair the damage – not to mention the craftsman who made the clothes. But in his mad game the boy has worked on a future man, the tailor in his workshop on a future coat. It is the same with mental exercises. At least one thing comes out of those empty mental and memory games in which more gifted

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[30] Original: 'Sie sind freie organische Gebilde, und weil und insoweit sie dies sind, stehen alle ihre Teile zueinander in notwendigem Zusammenhange. Dies ist a priori einleuchtend, kann nicht anders sein; und doch ist damit sehr viel behauptet. Derselben Geistesanlage, denselben geschichtlichen Bedingungen entsammt alles, was eine Sprache ist und hat: ihr Lautwesen sowohl wie die Art ihrer Wort- und Formenbildung, wie ihr Satzbau und der nationale Stil, die Grammatik wie der Wortschatz.'

children take delight: a stronger, sharper, deeper understanding. We might not think much of the activities of the Talmudists and Cabbalists, but we cannot forget that it is in their school that Spinoza and Salomon Maimon sharpened their understanding. It might be difficult for us to grasp how our ancestors in prehistoric times came to develop such an intricate language, but it makes sense that in the acquisition and mastering of such a language there lay a powerful and constantly working training of mental forces.

(Gabelentz 1891: 380-381)[31]

Gabelentz provides an extensive illustration of the comparative dimension of this research in his comparison of Malay languages with those of Semitic and Ural-Altaic peoples. In Malay and Semitic languages Gabelentz (1891: 390-393) finds a number of structural correspondences that cannot be attributed to a common origin and so, he concludes, must be due to similarities in mental endowment (*Geistesanlagen*).[32] The shared verb-subject order of Malay and Semitic languages, for example, is taken to be an expression of a 'lively sensuality' (*lebhaftige Sinnlichkeit*), since first the speaker names the impression they have received, and then they name the cause of that impression. This sensuality is in turn evidence of receptivity and egotism, which explains the ease with which both Malays and Semites assimilate foreign thinking and other cultural material and make it their own, as well as their desire to travel and settle in new lands. It is these qualities that make Malays and Semites such successful merchants and students.

The position of the verb before the subject is the expression of a lively sensuality. I receive the impression of an event, name it – that is the verb – and only then do I ask and say how this impression was caused – that is the subject. The received impression is in me; it is an acquired part of me, which pushes itself in this form directly into the foreground. In this respect I call this form of thinking and expression an egotistic one. 'Fall down a stone' can be paraphrased as: 'I see or hear something fall down, and that thing that has fallen down is a stone'. This sensuality is receptive and sensitive and makes the sensation received into the topic of the speech, in other words into the psychological subject of the sentence. Along with this sensitivity and receptivity, and with the egotistical trait that we discovered, there is a powerful covetousness that appropriates foreign material as eagerly as it does easily. The allure of experiencing novel things, seeing foreign things, greed for novelty and knowledge, drives people out to look around in distant geographic and mental regions. The joy in acquisition makes them ambitious merchants in the realm of temporal goods – and sometimes also terrible robbers and thieves – and in the realm of mental goods it makes them studious pupils.

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[31] Original: 'Allein man soll die Thaten der Jugend nicht nach ihren Erzeugnissen beurtheilen, sondern nach den Kräften, die sie offenbaren. Der Knabe, der sich beim Ringkampfe und Baumklettern die Kleider zerreisst, leistet scheinbar freilich weniger, als der Flickschneider, der die Schäden heilen wird, – von dem Meister, der die Kleider verfertigt hat, zu geschweigen. Der Knabe aber hat bei seinem tollen Spiele an einem künftigen Manne gearbeitet, der Schneider in seiner Werkstatt an einem künftigen Rocke. So ist es auch mit den geistigen Übungen. Bei jenen inhaltslosen Geist- und Gedächtnissspielen, in denen sich begabtere Kinder gefallen, kommt wenigstens Eins heraus: ein gestärkter, geschärfter, vertiefter Verstand. Von den Tüfteleien der Talmudisten und Kabbalisten halte man noch so wenig; aber man vergesse nicht, dass in ihrer Schule Spinoza und Salomon Maimon ihren Verstand gewetzt haben. Es mag uns schwer werden zu begreifen, wie unsre Ahnen in vorgeschichtlicher Zeit dazu gekommen sind, eine so verzwickte Sprache auszubilden. Das aber leuchtet wohl ein: in der Aneignung und Bemeisterung einer solchen Sprache lag an sich schon eine mächtig und stetig wirkende Schulung der geistigen Kräfte.'

[32] In his discussion of the historical-comparative method, Gabelentz (1891: 172-173) briefly mentions Macdonald (1889) as a work in which the 'mental relationship' (*Geistesverwandtschaft*) between the Malays and Semites is recognised and then a misguided attempt is made to demonstrate a genealogical relationship between the language groups.

(Gabelentz 1891: 391)[33]

A comparison of Malays with Ural-Altaic peoples offers an instructive contrast, according to Gabelentz (1891: 393-399). Both groups seem to be racially (Gabelentz actually says *anthropologisch*) of 'mongoloid type' (*mongoloiden Typus*) and to have dispersed over a wide area, and yet their languages tend to be very different structurally. This difference in linguistic typology in the face of apparent common racial roots must have as its cause the different climatic and historical conditions to which the groups have been exposed. The homeland of the Ural-Altaic peoples in the steppes provides difficult living conditions and forces a nomadic lifestyle on its inhabitants; and 'in such a school of life man is not raised to spirited initiative, but instead to a sustainable goal-conscious energy' (*In einer solchen Lebensschule wird der Mensch wohl nicht zu munterer Initiative, dafür aber zu nachhaltig zielbewusster Thatkraft erzogen*; 1891: 395). By contrast, the abundant tropical world (*üppige Tropenwelt*) of the Malays stimulates their sensuality and awakens their longing for travel and adventure: 'The herdsman [i.e. Ural-Altaic person] yields to the forces of nature, the seaman [i.e. Malay] takes up the struggle against them; the former is pressured by hardship, the latter is attracted by danger' (*Der Hirt weicht den Naturmächten, der Seemann nimmt den Kampf mit ihnen auf, jenen drängt die Noth, diesen lockt die Gefahr*; 1891: 395). This environmentally conditioned difference in temperament is then manifested in their languages in various ways. Just one example Gabelentz (1891: 396-398) offers is the way in which the plodding Ural-Altaic speaker builds their speech up piece by piece: cause before phenomenon, subject first in the sentence; adnominal and adverbial attributes carefully placed before their heads. The sensual Malay is the opposite: verb first, other parts of the sentence later; heads first, followed by attributes.

Gabelentz' (1894) proposal for typology goes beyond these earlier characterisations in *Die Sprachwissenschaft* by suggesting a method for capturing statistically correlations among structural traits in languages. Looking at the world's languages, we might observe that:

> *A* goes with *B* in ¾ of cases, – *B* with *A* in perhaps ⅗ or ½ of cases; the correlation is not necessary, but it is more frequent than we would want to attribute to chance alone. We may suppose that we are on the trail of two sympathetic nerves, which do not work together completely regularly, and now we would like to know the place and kind of their connection and the reason why this is sometimes disturbed.

(Gabelentz 1894: 5)[34]

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[33] Original: 'Die Stellung des Verbums vor dem Subjecte ist der Ausdruck lebhaftiger Sinnlichkeit. Ich empfange den Eindruck eines Geschehens, nenne ihn, – das ist das Verbum. Dann erst frage und sage ich, wodurch dieser Eindruck verursacht worden, – das ist das Subject. Der empfangene Eindruck ist in mir, ein erworbener Bestandtheil meines Ich, das sich solchergestalt gleich mit in den Vordergrund drängt. Insofern nenne ich die Denk- und Ausdrucksweise eine egoistische. „Herabfällt ein Stein" lässt sich umschreiben durch den Satz: Ich sehe oder höre etwas herabfallen, und das Herabgefallene ist ein Stein. Diese Sinnlichkeit ist empfänglich und empfindsam und macht die empfangenen Empfindungen zum Gegenstande der Rede, m. a. W. zum psychologischen Subjecte des Satzes. Mit jener Empfindsamkeit und Empfänglichkeit und dem egoistischen Zuge, den wir entdeckten, ist aber auch eine mächtige Begehrlichkeit gegeben, die sich Fremdes ebenso gern wie leicht aneignet. Der Reiz Neues zu erleben, Fremdes zu sehen, Neu- und Wissbegier, treibt die Menschen hinaus zur Umschau in fernen Länder- und Geistesgebieten. Die Freude am Erwerbe macht sie, wo es sich um zeitliche Güter handelt, zu strebsamen Kaufleuten, zuweilen auch zu argen Räubern und Spitzbuben, – wo es geistigen Gütern gilt, zu lernbegierigen Schülern.'

[34] Original: 'A fällt in ¾ der Fälle mit B, – B vielleicht in ⅗ oder ½ der Fälle mit A zusammen; das Zusammentreffen ist nicht notwending, aber doch häufig, als dass man es lediglich auf Zufall schieben möchte. Man meint, zweien sympathischen Nerven auf der Spur zu sein, die nicht ganz regelmässig zusammenarbeiten, und wüsste nun gern Ort und Art ihrer Verbindung und den Grund, warum diese manchmal gestört ist.'

Gabelentz (1894: 6) goes on to sketch a program for surveying these structural traits and their correlations in as many languages as possible. He proposes establishing a commission that would produce and distribute a questionnaire to exhaustively ask about the presence or absence of possible structural traits in languages, preferably in the form of a kind of dichotomous key, with either yes or no answers to the questions.[35] The commission would then compile the answers and produce a statistical summary of the kind described above. It is this statistical aspect of Gabelentz' proposal for typology, along with the coining of the term 'Typologie' itself in this sense, that has attracted the most attention in the historiographic literature, no doubt because these two innovations have direct analogues in the present-day subdiscipline of that name. Together these innovations place Gabelentz among the 'founding father[s] of typology as we know it today', to follow a formulation Plank (1991: 444) uses in his examination of the historical context of Gabelentz' typology.[36]

But for all its apparent modernity, we should not lose sight of the overriding purpose of Gabelentz' typology as he conceived it. In his 1894 paper, after sketching his statistical proposal, his undertaking returns to Humboldtian general linguistics, with its aim of linking the characteristic forms of a language to the mentality, life and environment of its speakers. But now, with the solid foundation of statistically backed structural generalisations, the approach achieves a new level of rigour, akin to that enjoyed by historical-comparative research:

> Clear but still raw [are the typical traits and tendencies in languages] as long as we can only speak of a correlation and not of a connection. Working out the connection is the third, highest task. And here linguistics will once again have to depend on ethnology and history; it will have reach out from it and also towards it, – it is the construction of a tunnel, undertaken simultaneously from both sides of the mountain. From one side will be explained: this is the character of the language, therefore this is the character of the national mind. From the other side will be concluded: these are the constant living conditions, these are the historical experiences, these the habits and cultural achievements of the people, so its mental type must be like this. Here the picks from the other side become audible, unless we have literally tunnelled wrong. Once again that subjectivity of which general linguistics and its representatives is so often accused may manifest itself. But how far it is pushed back, how far the most objective [data] that we could demand, [data] that can be determined in calculable numbers, now reaches! If the work were to progress to the point of incontestable statistics then general linguistics would no longer need to envy the solid foundations of historical-comparative research. And if the work got further, then we may see realised at the beginning of the twentieth century what the beginning of the nineteenth vainly tried to work out through speculation: a truly general grammar, totally philosophical and yet totally inductive.

[35] The questionnaire-based approach and the proposal for a commission is no doubt inspired by the contemporary work of the dialectologist Georg Wenker (1852–1911), who pioneered the use of questionnaires in large-scale surveys of German dialects, and who actively sought and received sponsorship for his work from the Prussian ministry of culture (see Knoop et al. 1982). Gabelentz himself had experience of official patronage for linguistic survey work: his *Handbuch zur Aufnahme fremder Sprachen* (Gabelentz 1892), a guide to collecting basic vocabularies and grammatical information of languages in German colonial territories, was commissioned by the German foreign ministry (see Kürschner 2014).

[36] Plank (1991) shows Gabelentz' proposal, with its emphasis on the 'statistics of conjunctures', to be one among several similar projects pursued at the time. Among the greatest immediate influences, Plank (1991: 425-427, 438-445, 447-450) cites Raoul de la Grasserie (1839–1914), James Byrne (1820–1897), and August Friedrich Pott (1802–1887), all figures for whom Gabelentz had high praise. Gabelentz' (1891: 405-406) short passage dedicated to Byrne (1885) is mentioned in section 3 above. Gabelentz says that there has been 'no more profound book' (*kein tiefsinnigeres Buch*) addressing these questions since Humboldt (1836). However, Gabelentz feels that Byrne attaches too much significance to the mental endowment of nations in looking for causes, instead of looking to historical and environmental factors. Exemplary in acknowledging such factors, according to Gabelentz, is his own father, Hans Conon.

(Gabelentz 1894: 7)[37]

Gabelentz' proposal for typology is then for a tool within the broader program of general linguistics. It is a means for making generalisations on the structure of languages finer and more rigorous; that is, overcoming the crudeness Gabelentz criticised in Steinthal and others (cf. Ringmacher in Gabelentz 2011[1879]: 339-341; Ringmacher 2001: 1441-1442). This perhaps explains why Gabelentz' (1894) typology paper appeared in the Neogrammarian journal *Indogermanische Forschungen*, a point that Plank (1991: 430, note 14) picks up on when he comments that 'Gabelentz evidently sought to emulate his Neogrammarians colleagues'. We might be able to go one step further and say that Gabelentz not only sought to emulate the Neogrammarians, but that with this paper he in fact intended to advertise to them a method which would make general linguistics a genuine rival in rigour to the historical-comparative school.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have provided an exposition of two signature ideas in Gabelentz' work, his analytic and synthetic systems of grammar and his proposals for typology, and demonstrated how they were intimately connected within his conception of general linguistics. At the same time, we showed, on the basis of textual evidence, how Gabelentz' ideas grew principally out of the work of Humboldt and Steinthal. While the perspectives captured by Gabelentz' analytic and synthetic systems of grammar can be traced far back into the history of Western grammar-writing, the particular approach Gabelentz took was embedded in a specifically Humboldtian philosophy of language and, in its technical elaboration, owed a great deal to Steinthal. These systems then served Gabelentz' final goal of general linguistics – to establish the mutual relations between national character and language – which was Humboldtian in nature, and was to a large extent elaborated in response to Steinthal's *Völkerpsychologie*. Gabelentz leant on the analytic and synthetic systems as the means to truly sympathetic and comprehensive grammatical descriptions of diverse languages, needed to establish the kind of relations that general linguistics should ultimately address. His proposal for typology, made at the very end of his career, was intended as a way of making the cross-linguistic structural generalisations that formed the core data of general linguistics more rigorous, which would put the approach on the same kind of solid scientific footing that supported the historical-comparative method.

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[37] Original: 'Klar, aber auch roh, so lange wir nur von einem Zusammentreffen, nicht von einem Zusammenhange reden dürfen. Diesen zu ermitteln ist die dritte, höchste Aufgabe. Und hier wird sich die Sprachwissenschaft wiederum an die Völkerkunde und Geschichte anlehnen, von ihnen aus- und ihnen zustreben, – ein Tunnelbau, der von beiden Bergseiten zugleich unternommen wird. Von der einen Seite wird erklärt: Dies ist die Eigenart der Sprache, folglich dies die Eigenart des nationalen Geistes. Von der anderen Seite her wird geschlussfolgert: Dies sind die ständigen Lebensbingugen, dies die geschichtlichen Vorerlebnisse, dies die Gewohnheiten und Kulturleistungen des Volkes, also muss seine Geistesart so und so beschaffen sein. Hier werden die Spitzhauen von drüben hörbar, man habe sich denn buchstäblich verbohrt. Da mage nun ein zweites mal jene Subjektivität der Denker zur Geltung kommen, die man so gern der allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft und ihren Vertretern zum Vorwurfe macht. Aber wie weit ist sie zurückgeschoben, wie weit reicht das objektivste, was man verlangen kann, das zahlenmässig festgestellte. Geriete das Werk nur soweit, nur bis zu einer unanfechbaren Statistik, so hätte die allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft nicht länger die sprachgeschichtliche Forschung um ihren festen Baugrund zu beneiden. Und gelänge die Arbeit weiter, dann könnte der Anfang des zwangzigsten Jahrhunderts verwirklicht sehen, was der Anfang des neunzehnten umsonst herauszugrübeln versuchte: eine wahrhaft allgemeine Grammatik, ganz philosophisch und doch ganz induktiv.' Note that the context of this passage makes it absolutely clear that by a *Statistik* Gabelentz means a statistical description of regularities, and not simply a synchronic description of a language, a usage of *Statistik* that was current among the Neogrammarians.

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