THE DE-GERMANICISING OF ENGLISH⑴

Paul Edmund DAVENPORT

English is not an isolated tongue but a member of the Germanic languages, which are in turn members of the Indo-Europan language family. In this case, in saying that certain languages are 'members' of a language 'family', we mean that the said languages have a common origin. The so-called Germanic languages of today (principally English, Dutch, German, and the Scandinavian languages⑵) have a common origin in an ancient, unrecorded language usually called Proto-Germanic. This Proto-Germanic, like Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and the ancient Celtic and Slavonic languages, evolved from a still more ancient language usually referred to as the Proto-Indo-European parent language.

The common application in historical linguistics of such anthropological terms of kinship as 'parent' and 'family', as I have just used them, and 'ancestor', 'descendant', 'sister' (as in 'English and German are sister languages') is quite relevant to the present discussion. Human offspring normally reproduce and thus continue some of the physical features and personality traits of their parents; at the same time an otherwise unique personality develops in each specimen, prompted by inherent tendencies and reactions to environmental influences. In language, of course, quite unlike the animal kingdom, the chain of connection between 'parent' and 'child' is one that evolves slowly and is broken only gradually. Still, when we look at Old English and modern English, or Latin and French, or Sanskrit and Hindi, it is easy to discern a convenient parallelism with the situation of human kinship in the phenomena of historically verifiable lineal connection, the continuation of certain characteristics (such as lexical items and various grammatical features), the development of apparently inherent tendencies (certain types of phonological and grammatical change), and environmental influences (the influence of Norse in the reduction of Old English inflections or the influence of French on the Middle English vocabulary, for example). In the case of Old English and modern English, of course, we may prefer to think in terms of the child and the adult, but the use of the idea of parent and child (or grandchild or great-grandchild as the case may be, though it is neither reasonable nor useful to push the parallelism to this degree of precision) is clearly more justified in the case of Latin and French or, more extremely, Proto-Indo-European and English or another contemporary descendant, where the degree of discreteness, of all the conditions of spatial and temporal and featural discontinuity, is greater. Again, although this is not invariably so in human kinship, the obvious similarities (which are mainly to be found in the basic lexical core) between and contemporaneousness of English and German, for example, force us to regard them as sisters, and then as only cousins of, for example, the two sisters French and Spanish.

I suggested that the use of kinship terms was useful for my discussion. This is because, continuing the anthropomorphism, I wish to suggest that in the course of its history, English has undergone a 'personality change', a phenotypic change, so marked that the English of today has not only disguised its parental origins in many points but has actually obliterated many of the inherited personality traits that it showed when, as what we call Old English, it was a child, and that it has done this to a degree that is remarkable when we consider how the other contemporary offspring (both Germanic and non-Germanic) of the Indo-European parent have developed most of the inherited parts of their personalities.

My use of anthropomorphism has perhaps already made clear what I mean by the 'de-Germanicising' of English, a term I have had to coin. Proto-Germanic (which like Proto-Indo-European, as the speech of illiterate tribesmen, must have been a group of closely related dialects and not a unified language like Classical Latin) split up through geographical isolation in the few centuries before the beginning of the Christian era into three related dialect clusters, known as West Germanic, North Germanic, and East Germanic; the dialects within each of these groups gradually established themselves as virtually distinct languages, in the case of West Germanic as Old English, Old Frisian, Old Saxon, and Old High German. Although there were numerous innovations in each stage of division, each language or dialect preserved the essential linguistic features of the preceding stage. Proto-Germanic was, despite a multitude of changes and innovations, clearly Indo-European in its features, and Old English was clearly Germanic and clearly though less specifically Indo-European in its features. In the fifteen hundred years of its insular existence in Britain, however, the English language has undergone such extensive changes in the features inherited from its Germanic and also Indo-European origins that we might well question its status today. Of course English will, however much it may change and deviate even further from the other contemporary Germanic languages which have better preserved most of their inheritance, always be Germanic in terms of actual historical descent; but the point being asserted here is that in terms of its contemporary features English is no longer either *typically* Germanic or typically Indo-European, although it is, mainly in basic lexical features, still *recognisably* Germanic and to a lesser extent Indo-European.

Here I wish to examine this matter not only synchronically but also from the diachronic viewpoint. Language is constantly changing, and the state of a language at any one moment is the result of preceding change or innovation. The historical processes whereby the personality of English became warped, so to speak, and also the reasons why these processes occurred, are just as important as the details of the contemporary deviation.

It is time to illustrate and indeed to justify the assertion that English has become de-Germanicised, that it has grown unlike its sister languages on the northern European continent. In the following discussion it will not be possible to ignore Indo-European elements, and even the limited treatment I shall give them will help to indicate also the extent of the de-Indo-Europeanising of English (to coin another term).

Morphology. The morphology of late Proto-Indo-European was highly synthetic, characterised by an extremely complicated inflectional system. For nouns there were eight cases (nominative, vocative, accusative, genitive, dative, ablative, locative, instrumental) and singular, dual, and plural forms. Nouns were divided among several declensional types, with a principal division between vowel stems and consonant stems, and sub-divisions according to the quality of the thematic vowel or the stem consonant, though apart from some combinative phonetic changes the differences in terminations among the declensional types were slight. Reconstruction makes it clear that the Proto-Indo-European inflections of, for example, the declensional type most common in terms of the number of nouns belonging to it (the so-called masculine(3) *o*-stem type) must have been something like this:

Sing.	*n.*	*ek^{w}os '*horse*'	*Pl.*	*ek^{w}ôs
	v.	*ek^{w}e		*ek^{w}ôs
	a.	*ek^{w}om		*ek^{w}ons
	g.	*ek^{w}oso		*ek^{w}ôm
	d.	*ek^{w}ōi		*ek^{w}omis
	ab.	*ek^{w}ōd		*ek^{w}omis
	l.	*ek^{w}oi		*ek^{w}osu
	i.	*ek^{w}ô		*ek^{w}ōis

Sanskrit shows the eight cases preserved, but the other two Classical languages, Latin and Greek, reduced them to six cases in the former and five in the latter:

		Sanskrit	*Latin*	*Greek*
Sing.	*n.*	áśvas '*horse*'	equus	híppos

	v.	áśva	eque	híppe
	a.	áśvam	equum	híppon
	g.	áśvasya	equī	híppoio
	d.	áśvāya	equō	híppōi
	ab.	áśvād	equō	—
	l.	áśve	—	—
	i.	áśvā	—	—
Pl.	*n.*	áśvās	equī	híppoi
	v.	áśvās	equī	híppoi
	a.	áśvāṃs	equōs	híppous
	g.	áśvām	equōrum	híppōn
	d.	áśvebhyas	equīs	híppoisi
	ab.	áśvebhyas	equīs	—
	l.	áśveṣu	—	—
	i.	áśvais	—	—

Proto-Germanic gradually reduced the cases inherited from Indo-European even further, eventually to four (though in the extant languages there are still traces of a fifth, the instrumental(4)):

Sing.	*n.*	*ðaʒaz *masc.*, *'day'*	*Pl.*	*ðaʒōz
	a.	*ðaʒan		*ðaʒanz
	g.	*ðaʒaza		*ðaʒōn
	d.	*ðaʒai		*ðaʒumiz

The individual ancient Germanic languages show some syncretism resulting largely from phonological change:

		Gothic	*Old Norse*	*Old English*	*Old High German*
Sing.	*n.*	dags	dagr	dæġ	tag
	a.	dag	dag	dæġ	tag
	g.	dagis	dags	dæġes	tages
	d.	daga	degi	dæġe	tage
Pl.	*n.*	dagōs	dagar	dagas	taga
	a.	dagans	daga	dagas	taga
	g.	dagē	daga	daga	tago
	d.	dagam	dǫgum	dagum	tagum

When we look at the subsequent development of the individual Germanic languages, we find that the tendency to reduce nominal inflections to a minimum has been shared by several of the languages; only modern German and Icelandic show the four cases of old still in operation:

		Icelandic	*Norwegian*	*Danish*	*Swedish*	*English*	*Dutch*	*German*
Sing.	*n.*	dagur	dag	dag	dag	day	dag	Tag
	a.	dag	—	—	—	—	—	Tag
	g.	dags	dags	dags	dags	day's	dags	Tages
	d.	degi	—	—	—	—	—	Tage
Pl.	*n.*	dagar	dager	dage	dagar	days	dagen	Tage
	a.	daga	—	—	—	—	—	Tage
	g.	daga	dagers	dages	dagars	(days')	dagen(s)	Tage
	d.	dögum	—	—	—	—	—	Tagen

Nevertheless, modern English, with only two (phonological) forms, is the simplest. Further, the exceptions to the regular *s*-plural in modern English form no more than a handful, whereas the other languages retain more than one type of plural formation from the ancient period in common use, and in Icelandic and German, which still have rather full inflections, there are several declensional types which differ from each other in the singular as well as the plural(5).

I should like now to look at the reasons why English so drastically reduced the nominal inflectional system inherited from Proto-Germanic. Old English, as we have seen above, had four cases and two numbers, and altogether had ten declensional types. In addition to the masculine type quoted earlier, to which more than forty per cent of Old English nouns belonged, there were two other common types for so-called feminine and neuter nouns:

Sing.	*n.*	ġiefu *fem.*, *'gift'*	*Pl.*	ġiefa
	a.	ġiefe		ġiefa
	g.	ġiefe		ġiefa
	d.	ġiefe		ġiefum

Sing.	*n.*	sċip *neut.*, *'ship'*	*Pl.*	sċipu
	a.	sċip		sċipu
	g.	sċipes		sċipa
	d.	sċipe		sċipum

A fourth common type was what is known as the 'weak' declension (in origin a consonant stem declension), containing nouns of all three genders with only slight differences in inflection:

Sing.	*n.*	nama *masc.*, *'name'*	*Pl.*	naman
	a.	naman		naman
	g.	naman		namena
	d.	naman		namum

It is clear from the interchange in Old English manuscripts of such originally distinct endings as *-a*, *-u*, *-e*, and *-an* and *-um* that by the late tenth century the inflectional endings were becoming. or had become, obscured, with all vowels being reduced probably to a sound similar to the modern central [ə] and *-m* and *-n* falling together as [n]. There are three major reasons for this incipient breakdown of the inflectional system. The first concerns syllable stress. The late Proto-Indo-European accent preceding the migrations that eventually established the separate language groups was a pitch accent with a variable position that differed both from word to word and also within the word depending on the different morphological forms(6). Proto-Germanic eventually changed the pitch accent into an expiratory accent and fixed it on the root syllable of the word, which was usually the first syllable. The final syllable containing the inflectional form was not pronounced very clearly, and eventually the difference between, for example, *ġiefu* [jíəvu] feminine nominative singular, 'gift', and *ġiefa* [jíəvɑ] nominative plural, 'gifts', disappeared as the final [u] and [ɑ] were both reduced to [ə]: [jíəvə].

The second reason is the contact between Old English and Old Norse. The Danish raids of the ninth century brought many Norse speakers to England, and after settling down they mingled with the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants, especially in the north and east of the country where the influx of settlers had been greatest. Old English and Old Norse were still mutually intelligible, and many words in the two languages differed only in inflectional endings; when speakers of the two languages intermingled, the differences between them tended to be levelled down.

The third reason concerns syntax. It is often said that the word order of Old English was free, because the inflections prevented ambiguity. This is true, however, mainly with regard to the placing of minor elements within clauses and sentences; by the late tenth century there were three major sentence or clause patterns, of which the modern SVO/C was even then the most common, and these patterns operated under rules which were rather well adhered to. In terms of major patterns, then, Old English word order certainly had more variety than that of modern English but only slightly greater freedom; and this 'freedom' mainly involved the displacement of elements from their normal positions for the sake of emphasis or focus(7). (I am not here concerned with verse). The three major patterns, which will be illustrated later, were SVO/C, VSO/C, and SO/CV; as I have just said, SVO/C was by far the most common pattern, and even without inflections the meaning of most sentences would be clear from the word order alone. The patterns VSO/C and SO/CV normally occurred only in limited situations after adverbs, conjunctions, or relative pronouns, so that here too lack of inflections need not cause ambiguity in most cases. In the majority of sentences, then, inflections were not strictly necessary in determining the meaning(8). Conversely, the fact that many inflections were non-distinctive (for example, the nominative and accusative plurals of nouns were the same within each declensional type) must have earlier contributed to the establishment of relatively fixed patterns —word order had come to have a structural function.

A similar syntactic situation prevailed in the other ancient Germanic languages, which did not, however, lose their nominal inflections (German and Icelandic) or reduced them later than English (Dutch and the mainland Scandinavian languages). It is clear, then, that it cannot have been for these syntactic reasons alone that the Old English inflectional system broke down, and that we must seek the explanation of the breakdown in a combination of root-syllable stress, the presence of Norse speakers in England, and restricted syntactic patterns.

By the twelfth century the inflectional endings of nouns were already spelt with *-e*, representing [ə]:

Sing.	*n.*	*OE:*	dæġ *masc.*, *'day'*	*EME:*	dai
	a.		dæġ		dai
	g.		dæġes		daies
	d.		dæġe		daie
Pl.	*n.*		dagas		daies
	a.		dagas		daies
	g.		daga		daie (*later* daies)
	d.		dagum		daien (*later* daies)

Within another two hundred years the nominative and accusative plural *-es* was extended analogically to the other plural cases, and the dative singular in *-e* was dropped, with the result that only two forms existed: *dai* and *dai(e)s* (serving as the genitive singular and as the plural).

dæġ was masculine in Old English; so was *ende* 'end':

Sing.	*n.*	*OE:*	ende *masc.*, *'end'*	*ME:*	ende
	a.		ende		ende

	g.	endes	endes
	d.	ende	ende
Pl.	*n.*	endas	endes
	a.	endas	endes
	g.	enda	endes
	d.	endum	endes

Old English *talu* 'tale, number' was feminine:

Sing.	*n.*	*OE:*	talu *fem.*, *'tale, number'*	*ME:*	tāle
	a.		tale		tāle
	g.		tale		tāle(s)
	d.		tale		tāle
Pl.	*n.*		tala		tāles
	a.		tala		tāles
	g.		talena		tāles
	d.		talum		tāles

(The *-es* of the plural in the Middle English forms (*tāles*) was borrowed from the masculine type). The above three Middle English nouns end in either a consonant or *-e*, there are only two forms, and it is impossible to distinguish between masculine and feminine: grammatical gender has disappeared. Most of the neuter nouns and nouns from the minor declensions quickly conformed to this general pattern(9).

Allowing for some exceptions and variations, we can say that in the fifteenth century *-es* was the regular genitive singular and plural form all over England, and that the modern nominal inflections, or rather inflectional simplicity, had been established by this date. The momentousness of this event should be realised. Nominal inflections had suffered only limited change and loss for several thousand years; now, in just five hundred years from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries (and much less in some dialects), they were almost obliterated(10). The loss of grammatical gender, a logical result of this inflectional obliteration, is even more remarkable as it is without parallel in the other Germanic languages and nearly all other Indo-European languges. We shall find an even more drastic process of simplification in the adjectives, to which I wish now to turn.

In late Proto-Indo-European, nouns and adjectives had the same inflectional forms. In the Classical languages and in Germanic the system of grammatical agreement between adjective and noun known as concord existed, but although it seems clear that it had developed already in late Proto-Indo-European little can be inferred about its exact nature there. In the extant languages, however, the majority of adjectives belonged to the Indo-European *o*- and *ā*-stem types, and a grammatically masculine noun, for example, was accompanied by an adjective in the masculine declension established for that adjective—that is, the concord between adjective and noun was in gender (and case and number) only, not in declensional type.

As the adjective had to change to match the gender of the accompanying noun, the inflectional variation possible for nearly all adjectives was very great. In Latin, for example, the adjective *bonus* 'good' could undergo thirteen changes:

Sing.	*masc.*	*fem.*	*neut.*
n.	bonus	bona	bonum
v.	bone	bona	bonum
a.	bonum	bonam	bonum
g.	bonī	bonae	bonī
d.	bonō	bonae	bonō
ab.	bonō	bonā	bonō
Pl.			
n.	bonī	bonae	bona
v.	bonī	bonae	bona
a.	bonōs	bonās	bona
g.	bonōrum	bonārum	bonōrum
d.	bonīs	bonīs	bonīs
ab.	bonīs	bonīs	bonīs

In Germanic too the great majority of adjectives were Indo-European *o*- (masculine and neuter) and *ā*- (feminine) stems, but at some prehistoric stage pronominal elements were substituted for many of the usual nominal inflections⑾. The situation in Germanic is further complicated by the fact that if the adjective was preceded by a demonstrative adjective (one of which also functioned as an incipient definite article) or a possessive adjective, the declensional type of the adjective changed to a consonant stem (*n*-stem)—the so-called 'weak' declension; for example:

gōd mann '(a) good man', strong declension
se gōda mann 'the good man', weak declension

The adjective in Old English had nine different forms⑿:

Strong:	*Sing.*	*masc.*	*fem.*	*neut.*
	n.	gōd 'good'	gōd	gōd
	a.	gōdne	gōde	gōd
	g.	gōdes	gōdre	gōdes
	d.	gōdum	gōdre	gōdum
	i.	gōde	gōdre	gōde
	Pl.			
	n.	gōde	gōda	gōd
	a.	gōde	gōda	gōd
	g.		gōdra	
	d.		gōdum	
Weak:	*Sing.*	*masc.*	*fem.*	*neut.*
	n.	gōda	gōde	gōde
	a.	gōdan	gōdan	gōde
	g.	gōdan	gōdan	gōdan
	d.	gōdan	gōdan	gōdan
		Pl.,	*all genders*	
			gōdan	
			gōdan	
			gōdra	
			gōdum	

In Early Middle English, accompanying the breakdown of nominal inflections, the strong, inflectionless nominative singular of the adjective was gradually extended through the whole singular, and the nominative plural (the Old English masculine *-e*, feminine *-a*, neuter *-u* (which occurred after a short vowel in the root syllable, as *cwicu* 'alive') all became *-e* [ə]) through the whole plural, so that there remained only a distinction of number and no distinction of case or gender: singular *gǭd*, plural *gǭde* 'good'. Adjectives ending in *-e* in the singular, such as *grę̄ne* 'green', did not show even this distinction of number: singular *grę̄ne*, plural *grę̄ne*. The weak form of the adjective became *gǭde* for both singular and plural (the singular ending from the Old English nominative singular *-a*, *-e*, *-e*; the plural from the Old English nominative plural *-an*, which was weakened to *-en* [ən] and then reduced to *-e* [ə]). The final *-e* in all forms ceased to be pronounced by the end of the fourteenth century, and so in speech there was by this date only one form for the adjective (I am ignoring comparative and superlative forms). Here too, then, by the fifteenth century the modern situation, in this case the invariable adjective, was established.

The situation in the other contemporary Germanic languages, however, remains a complicated one. In languages where case has, except for the genitive, been abolished in nouns it has disappeared completely in adjectives. But even here, as grammatical gender has nowhere been abolished except in English, distinctions of gender remain as do distinctions of singular and plural, with the one exception of the weak adjective in mainland Scandinavian.

In German, the adjective is in fact invariable in predicative use, but in attributive use number, gender, and case, and also the ancient strong/weak distinction, are fully retained. Indeed, in having two weak declensions, one (*i.* below) for use after the definite article and demonstratives and another (*ii.*) for use after the indefinite article and possessive adjectives, German has extended the ancient system. *gut* 'good' has the following forms in attributive use:

Strong:	*Sing.*	*masc.*	*fem.*	*neut.*	*Pl.*, *all genders*
	n.	guter	gute	gutes	gute
	a.	guten	gute	gutes	gute
	g.	gutes	guter	gutes	guter
	d.	gutem	guter	gutem	guten
Weak *i.*	*Sing.*				*Pl.*
	n.	gute	gute	gute	guten
	a.	guten	gute	gute	guten
	g.	guten	guten	guten	guten
	d.	guten	guten	guten	guten
Weak *ii.*	*Sing.*				*Pl.*
	n.	guter	gute	gutes	guten
	a.	guten	gute	gutes	guten
	g.	guten	guten	guten	guten
	d.	guten	guten	guten	guten

In Dutch too the adjective is invariable when used predicatively, but in attributive use can change not only with gender but with the simple fact of being used attributively. In attributive use *-e* is added when the noun is singular and of common gender (*i.* below) and when the noun is singular and neuter and the adjective is preceded by the definite article or a demonstrative adjective (*ii.*), but if the noun is singular and neuter and the adjective is not preceded by such words, nothing is added (*iii.*)(13); *-e* is added when the noun is plural, regardless of gender (*iv.*):

i. *een goede man* 'a good man'
ii. *dit goede kind* (neuter) 'the good child'
iii. *een goed kind* (neuter) 'a good child'

iv. *jonge kinderen* 'young children'

In Icelandic, the ancient Germanic situation seen earlier in Old English has been retained, with the adjective changing according to the gender, number, and case of the accompanying noun in both predicative and attributive use:

Strong:	*Sing.*	*masc.*	*fem.*	*neut.*	*Pl.*	*masc.*	*fem.*	*neut.*
	n.	góður	góð	gótt		góðir	góðar	góð
	a.	góðan	góða	gótt		góða	góðar	góð
	g.	góðs	góðrar	góðs		góðra	góðra	góðra
	d.	góðum	góðri	góðu		góðum	góðum	góðum
Weak:	*Sing.*				*Pl.*			
	n.	góði	góða	góða		góðu	góðu	góðu
	a.	góða	góðu	góða		góðu	góðu	góðu
	g.	góða	góðu	góða		góðu	góðu	góðu
	d.	góða	góðu	góða		góðu	góðu	góðu(14)

Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish have generally developed along similar lines, and in the treatment of the adjective it will be convenient to deal with them together. All three languages (like Dutch) have only two genders, common (a conflation of the old masculine and feminine) and neuter, and in the strong declension the adjective changes accordingly in the singular but the plural has no distinction of gender; the weak declension of the adjective simply adds *-e* (*-a* in Swedish) to the bare form, and thus has no distinction of gender or number:

			Danish	Swedish
Strong:	Common sing.	–	*en stor mand*	*en stor man* 'a big man'
	Neuter sing.	*-t*	*et stort hus*	*ett stort hus* 'a big house'
	Plural	*-e* (Swed. *-a*)	*store mænd*	*stora män* 'big men'
			store hus	*stora hus* 'big houses'

	Danish	Swedish
Weak: *-e* (Swed. *-a*)	*den store mand*	*den stora mannen* 'the big man'
	det store hus	*det stora huset* 'the big house'
	de store mænd	*de stora männen* 'the big men'
	de store hus	*de stora husen* 'the big houses'

It should be mentioned here that the weak adjective system is one of the features which characterise the Germanic languages within the Indo-European language family—despite the vague similarity of certain features in Balto-Slavonic, it is true to say that no other Indo-European group developed two morphologically distinct forms of the adjective to distinguish definite and indefinite meaning. Its complete abandonment by English is thus of great significance in the present discussion; it has been indicated above that its abandonment was the natural outcome of certain phonological changes.

I shall not look at demonstratives in detail (suffice it to note that in English alone among the Germanic languages are the demonstratives invariable), but I do wish to deal with the definite article, in modern English a simple, invariable little word (the usage of which, of course, is not so simple). Not all Indo-European languages have a definite article, because it is of secondary origin; in those which do, it always developed from a demonstrative. In Proto-Germanic there were two demonstratives, the predecessors of the modern English *this* and *that*; the latter was much more weakly deictic than the other and thus easily adaptable to the very weak deixis the definite article expresses. In Old English its forms were thus:

Sing.	*masc.*	*fem.*	*neut.*	*Pl.*, *all genders*
n.	sē̆	sēo	Ꝥæt	Ꝥā
a.	Ꝥone	Ꝥā	Ꝥæt	Ꝥā
g.	Ꝥæs	Ꝥǣre	Ꝥæs	Ꝥāra
d.	Ꝥǣm	Ꝥǣre	Ꝥǣm	Ꝥǣm
i.	Ꝥȳ, Ꝥon	—	Ꝥȳ, Ꝥon	—

In the eleventh century the masculine and feminine nominatives *sē̆*, *sēo* began to be written *Ꝥe*, taking the *Ꝥ* from the oblique forms. This *Ꝥe* then replaced the neuter nominative *Ꝥæt*, and during the twelfth century, accompanying the Early Middle English inflectional breakdown in nouns and adjectives, the inflected forms of all the genders began to fall into disuse; in the thirteenth century *Ꝥe* was commonly used whatever the old case or gender of the acompanying noun might have been. The Old English neuter *Ꝥæt* was preserved as *Ꝥat*, but from the thirteenth century it was used only in the modern contrastive or emphatic way (that is, as the proper demonstrative) whereas *Ꝥe* had assumed the function of what we now call the definite article.

English has thus had an invariable definite article since the thirteenth century. As the other Germanic languages have retained gender and concord, in them the definite article still varies (as does the demonstrative) depending on the gender, number, and, in German and Icelandic, the case of whatever follows. Consequently, in German we find six different forms:

Sing.	*masc.*	*fem.*	*neut.*	*Pl.*, *all genders*
n.	der	die	das	die
a.	den	die	das	die
g.	des	der	des	der
d.	dem	der	dem	den

in Dutch, two different forms:

Common *de: de man* 'the man'
Neuter *het: het kind* 'the child'
Plural *de: de boeken* 'the books'

in Icelandic, twelve different forms:

Sing.	*masc.*	*fem.*	*neut.*	*Pl.*	*masc.*	*fem.*	*neut.*
n.	hinn	hin	hið		hinir	hinar	hin
a.	hinn	hina	hið		hina	hinar	hin
g.	hins	hinnar	hins		hinna	hinna	hinna
d.	hinum	hinni	hinu		hinum	hinum	hinum

and in Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish, three different forms:

	Danish	Swedish
Common *den:*	*den store mand*	*den stora mannen* 'the big man'
Neuter *det:*	*det store hus*	*det stora huset* 'the big house'
Plural *de:*	*de store mænd*	*de stora männen* 'the big men'

The Scandinavian languages have a suffixed definite article as well as independent forms, illustrated above in the Swedish examples, though usage rules differ from language to language.

Turning now to the verbal system, we shall find that English has generally simplified its Germanic and Indo-European inheritance, and has also made some characteristic innovations of an analytic nature. In Proto-Indo-European, aspect was of more importance than tense; most of the languages descended from Indo-European changed the different aspects (present, imperfect, aorist, perfect, and future) into tenses, although the distinction between aspect and tense is often delicate and sometimes blurred. Germanic drastically reduced its inheritance to a two-term system, where the preterite tense was (and still is) concerned primarily with the specification of time in the past, and the present tense expressed durative aspect and could both refer to the future (as still in modern English: *I go there tomorrow*) and have no strict temporal reference (*the earth revolves around the sun*, *honesty is the best policy*). However, dissatisfaction was obviously felt with being thus unable to indicate precisely the aspectual and temporal relations of an action or state to the point of orientation(15), as the individual Germanic languages began to develop periphrastic forms to do exactly this(16); in the ancient period their use was somewhat limited and their meaning not always the same as today. In Old English, for example, although the preterite was commonly used where we should now use a perfect (*i.* below), a pluperfect (*ii.*), or a past progressive (*iii.*):

i. *Ꝥās ȳtemestan* worhton *āne tīd* 'these last *have worked* one hour'
ii. *wolde Grendle forgyldan gūꝤrǣsa fela Ꝥāra Ꝥe hē* ġeworhte '(he) wanted to repay Grendel for the many attacks which he *had carried out*'
iii. *Ꝥā Ꝥā menn* slēpon, *Ꝥā cōm his fēonda sum* 'while the men *were sleeping*, one of his enemies came'

periphrastic tenses did exist, and were formed with *habban* 'to have' or *wesan* 'to be' plus a past participle to give the ancestors of the modern perfect (*i.* below) and pluperfect (*ii.*) tenses:

i. *nū iċ hæbbe ġestrīened ōꝤru twā* 'now I have gained another two'
ii. *siꝤꝤan iċ hīe Ꝥā ġeleorned hæfde, iċ hīe on engliśc āwende* 'then when I had studied them, I translated them into English'.

wesan was used with intransitive verbs, and this use of the verb *to be* instead of *to have* in forming perfect and pluperfect tenses continued with intransitive verbs of motion until the eighteenth century: *the children of Israel were gone forth*, *he is come.* In the eighteenth century *to have* came to be used in such expressions by analogy with normal perfects. The other Germanic languages have preserved the distinction, as in German *ich bin gekommen* 'I have come', Dutch *ik ben gevallen* 'I have fallen'.

The periphrastic tense system continued to develop in English, and in the Late Modern period we see also the very important, full development of the progressive tenses, which had their origins in Old English(17) and came to be used more independently in Middle English (*hę wolden beo wuniende* 'he wanted to be living', *wę han bęn waitynge al this fourtenyght* 'we have been waiting all this fortnight'), and which are completely unparalleled in any other Germanic language. As the present progressive can refer not only to what is happening now but also to what is scheduled to happen in the future (*I am going to Tokyo tomorrow*), and as the past forms have a very useful imperfect aspectual sense (*I was reading a book when the telephone rang*, *I had been waiting for two weeks when the parcel arrived*), these tenses are in constant use in the present-day language.

The periphrastic tense system of modern English is undoubtedly the most complex among the modern Germanic languages. In German, for example, the significant nuances between the English *I live* (in the sense 'dwell') and *I am living* are lost in the single form *ich wohne;* and *ich wohnte* has to duty for *I lived* and *I was living*. Then in Dutch, for example, although analytic perfect and pluperfect tenses exist, as they do in all Germanic languages, their use is not as wide as in English and they are not used in describing actions or states continuing up to the time of the utterance or to the point when another event took place (that is, up to the point of orientation)(18); thus *I have been here for ten months* is in Dutch *ik ben hier al tien maanden* (lit. 'I am here already ten months'), and *he had been waiting an hour* is *hij wachtte al een uur* (lit. 'he waited already an hour').

Proto-Indo-European had three voices (active, middle, and passive) and five moods (indicative, subjunctive, optative, injunctive, and imperative). In the ancient Germanic languages the synthetic middle and passive voices had been largely given up, although Gothic retained the passive and Old Norse had a synthetic middle or medio-passive voice; the West Germanic languages used periphrastic constructions to express the passive. In the modern Scandinavian languages the old medio-passive still exists as a passive voice, although periphrastic constructions with the verb *to be* are also in use now, for example Norwegian *lysene tennes* 'the lights are turned on' and *lysene blir tent* with the same surface meaning but with a completative sense or implying actual occurrence of the event. Proto-Germanic retained the indicative, optative(19), and imperative moods of Indo-European, the last one in an attenuated form. The ancient Germanic languages made no great changes, but in the course of their subsequent history all except Icelandic and German have virtually given up the optative(20). In English from the post-medieval period until the late nineteenth century, optative forms were quite common in the few instances where they are morphologically distinct from the indicative: the present 3 singular without an *-s* (*if he fail*) and forms of the verb *to be—I, you, he, we, they be; I, he were*(21). In modern English, it is the modal auxiliaries that have largely taken over the functions of the optative, perhaps more so than in any of the other Germanic languages, and their use was already well developed in Middle English: *hit was grẹ̄t wonder that Nature myght suffre any creature to have such sorwe* 'it was a great wonder that Nature might permit any creature to have such sorrow', *Ꝥat ȳ mowe riche bẹ̄* 'so that I may be rich', *in covenaunte Ꝥat Clement shulde Ꝥe cupppe fille* 'on condition that Clement should fill the cup'.

Although the movement in English away from synthetic tenses and moods is paralleled in the other Germanic languages except Icelandic and German, none of them has developed such a subtle and complex periphrastic system as English. When we look at verbal inflections, however, we shall find that the mainland Scandinavian languages have gone further than English in that they have discarded all personal inflections, which are normally rendered unnecessary by the presence of subject pronouns or nouns.

In Proto-Indo-European there were two main sets of distinctive inflectional forms of verbs for three persons in the singular, dual, and plural; the first set, known as primary endings, was used for the present indicative and aspects of the subjunctive, and the second set, known as secondary endings, for the imperfect and aorist indicative and aspects of the optative. The perfect had a separate set of endings. Germanic developed the primary endings for its present indicative tense and the secondary endings for the present optative. The preterite endings are clearly a conflation of perfect and aorist forms, but the origin of the singular terminations of the weak verbs is a much disputed problem. The Indo-European and Germanic situations are too highly complex to treat in any detail here, but if we look at the verbal endings in the ancient Germanic languages we shall see that English and the mainland Scandinavian languages have done well to simplify them:

		Gothic	*Old Norse*	*Old English*
		lagjan *'to lay'*	leggja	lecgan
Pres. Indic. Sing.	1	ik lagja	ek legg	iċ lecge
	2	Þu lagjis	Þú legr	Þū leġst
	3	is lagjiÞ	hann legr	hē leġÞ
Pl.	1	weis lagjam	vér leggjum	wē lecgaÞ
	2	jus lagjiÞ	ér legið	ġē
	3	eis lagjand	Þeir leggja	hīe
Pret. Indic. Sing.	1	lagida	lagÞa	leġde
	2	lagidēs	lagÞir	leġdest
	3	lagida	lagÞi	leġde
Pl.	1	lagidēdum	lǫgÞum	leġdon
	2	lagidēduÞ	lǫgÞuð	
	3	lagidēdun	lǫgÞu	

		Old High German
		leggen
Pres. Indic. Sing.	1	ih leggu
	2	dū legis
	3	ër legit
Pl.	1	wir leggemēs
	2	ir legget
	3	sie leggent
Pret. Indic. Sing.	1	legita
	2	legitōs
	3	legita
Pl.	1	legitōm
	2	legitōt
	3	legitōn

Although the Old English situation was far more complicated than the modern one, we can see that Old English had already reduced the plural of both tenses to single forms by generalising one of the persons. Phonological changes gradually simplified the forms further during the Middle English period:

		EME:	*ME:*	*LME:*
Pres. Sing.	1	legge	leye[a,d]	lay
	2	leist	leist	layst
	3	leiÞ	leiÞ	layÞ, lays[e]
Pl.		leggeÞ	leye(n)[a,b,c,d]	lay
Pret. Sing.	1	leide	leide[d]	layd
	2	leidest	leidest	laydst
	3	leide	leide[d]	layd
Pl.		leiden	leide(n)[c,d]	layd

a: medial consonant replaced on analogy with 2 and 3 singular forms
b: the literary standard of the late fourteenth century used Midland *–e*(*n*)
c: final *–n* in such inflections was generally lost in the fourteenth century
d: final *–e* ceased to be pronounced by the end of the fourteenth century
e: *–s* was originally a Northern form, but later became general

With the later disappearance of *thou* (2 singular) forms, the modern situation of one marked form in the present tense (the 3 singular) and an invariable preterite tense was established.

It is impossible here to detail the historical processes whereby the other Germanic languages evolved their contemporary forms, but it is obviously essential to compare their present state with that of English:

		Icelandic		*Danish*[a]		*English*	
		leggja		lægge		to	lay
Pres. Indic. Sing.	1	ég	legg	jeg	lægger	I	lay
	2	Þú	leggur	du	lægger	you	lay
	3	hann	leggur	han	lægger	he	lays
Pl.	1	við	leggjum	vi	lægger	we	lay
	2	Þið	leggið	I	lægger	you	lay
	3	Þeir	leggja	de	lægger	they	lay
Pret. Sing.	1		lagði		lagde		laid
	2		lagðir		lagde		laid
	3		lagði		lagde		laid
Pl.	1		lögðum		lagde		laid
	2		lógðuð		lagde		laid
	3		lögðu		lagde		laid

a: Norwegian and Swedish are very similar

		Dutch		*German*	
		leggen		legen	
Pres. Indic. Sing.	1	ik	leg	ich	lege
	2	jij	legt	du	legst
	3	hij	legt	er	legt
Pl.	1	wij	leggen	wir	legen
	2	je	legt	ihr	legt
	3	zij	leggen	sie	legen
Pret. Sing.	1		legde		legte
	2		legde		legtest
	3		legde		legte
Pl.	1		legden		legten
	2		legde		legtet
	3		legden		legten

It is worth pointing out in this context one respect in which English and its Germanic relatives have, perhaps inevitably, moved along the same lines. The verb used in the paradigms above, *to lay*, is a 'weak' verb, forming the preterite with a dental infix. Weak verbs are a uniquely Germanic innovation, but in the ancient languages they already far outnumbered the so-called 'strong' verbs which use an Indo-European system of vowel alternation known as Ablaut to form the preterite(22). The strong verb system had already ceased to be productive in the earliest extant languages, and since then the number of such verbs has steadily declined in all the languages while additions to the vocabulary have been assigned to the weak conjugation. There are over three hundred strong verbs in extant texts of the Old English period; from the Middle English period on, however, by analogic transference to the weak conjugation and by lexical replacement with verbs from French and Latin(23), that number has dwindled to the sixty or seventy that remain today.

Syntax. It is possible to reconstruct a great deal of the morphology of Proto-Indo-European from the evidence of the languages descended from it. The evidence of syntax is somewhat more difficult to use in reconstruction. In terms of major patterns of word order OV must have been the most basic in late Proto-Indo-European, as Latin, Sanskrit, and pre-Classical (but not Classical) Greek show a clear preference for the order (S)O/CV: Latin *puer puellam amat* 'the boy loves the girl'. Latin is so highly synthetic, however, that these words can be put in any order without obscuring or changing the meaning (*puellam* is accusative singular of *puella*, and is thus the object of the verb whatever its position in the sentence), and in Latin we do in fact find such patterns as *puellam puer amat* (OSV), *amat puer puellam* (VSO), and *amat puellam puer* (VOS), the difference among these sentences being one of emphasis or focus. In the ancient Germanic languages also, there is evidence that the nucleus of a sentence was O/CV, with the subject often left unexpressed when understood (pronominal subjects, for example, could usually be understood from the personal inflections of the verb); when expressed, the unmarked position for the subject was before this nucleus (that is, in head position; head position of a non-subject was, however, emphatic). This order is found in many Runic inscriptions: *ek hlewaʒastiR holtijaR horna tawiðō* 'I, Hlegest of Holt, made the horn' (SOV; fourth century); *rūnōR writu* 'I write (=carve) runes' ((S)OV; sixth century). In early Old English the same (S)OV is very common: *wē Gār-Dena in ġeārdagum Þēodcyninga Þrym ġefrūnon* 'we (have) heard of the glory of the Spear-Danes, of the kings of people, in days of yore'. In early Germanic, however, SVO is well testified (cf. *ek orte Þat arīna* 'I made this stone', Runic, fourth century) and it is this pattern that was to become the normal one in simple declarative sentences in all the ancient Germanic languages㉔.

The process whereby the pattern SVO was established as the normal one during the Old English period is very complex (a brief summary has been given in Note 7); it is of no great importance for the present purpose, as it was the rules established in the tenth century with which English had subsequently to deal, and it is also to be understood in what follows that similar rules were in operation in the other Germanic languages. Late Old English prose shows, as mentioned earlier, three major clause patterns: SVO/C, VSO/C, and SO/CV. I should like now to look at these in a little more detail and to illustrate them:

i. **SVO/C**: In the simple sentence this was the common pattern: *hēo beswāc hine* 'she betrayed him', *iċ ġesette Þē ofer miclu* 'I shall set you over great things'. When the verb was auxiliary plus infinitive, the object usually came directly after the auxiliary and the infinitive was left to the end: *iċ wolde Þās lȳtlan bōc āwendan* 'I wished to translate this little book'.

ii. **VSO/C**: I. After the majority of adverbs or adverb phrases, VSO/C was the normal order: *Þā rīnde hit* 'then it rained', *Þȳ ilcan ġeare drehton Þā herġas Westseaxna lond* 'in the same year the armies harassed the West-Saxons' land'. But SVO/C also occurs sometimes: *æfter Þissum hē fērde tō Philistēa lande* 'after this he went to the land of the Philistines'. (A few traces of this pattern remain in modern English, after *hardly* and *scarcely* when they occupy front position: *hardly had I entered the room when the telephone rang*).

II. After *Þǣr* used existentially and not locally (the ancestor of the modern *there is*...): *Þǣr sindon līðran wederu Þonne on Brittania* 'there is milder weather than in Britain'.

III. In questions, imperatives, and negatives when *ne* has front position: *wilt Þū hāl bēon?* 'do you wish to be whole?', *swiga Þū* 'be silent', *ne mæġ nān mann twām hlāfordum Þēowian* 'no man may serve two masters' (but cf. *hit nā ne feoll* 'it did not fall').

iii. **SO/CV**: In dependent clauses introduced by a subordinating conjunction or relative pronoun, the verb usually occupied final position: *ġif hwā Þās lȳtlan bōc āwrītan wile* 'if anyone wishes to copy this little book', *oÞ Þæt hīe bēġen tō sǣ becōmon* 'until they both reached the sea', *Þā sċipu Þe Angelcynnes land ġesōhton* 'the ships which came to England'. It is not uncommon, however, to find SVO/C in dependent clauses: *for Þǣm hiera cyning wæs ġewundod on Þǣm ġefeohte* 'because their king was wounded in the battle'. Dependent clauses usually followed the main clause; correlation, however, often caused them to precede: *Þā sēo wyrt Þone wæstm brōhte, Þā ætīewde se coccel hine* 'when the plant brought forth the crop, (then) the cockle showed itself'. Even without correlatives, some types of dependent clause are often found before the main clause, especially conditional clauses: *ġif Þū hine forstenst, wē fordīlgiaÞ Þē and Þīnne hired* 'if you protect him, we shall destroy you and your household'. It should be noted, as it will be important when we look at the other Germanic languages, that a preceding subordinate clause without correlatives did not cause any change in the word order of the main clause in Old English.

In Middle English (particularly in prose) SVO/C fully established itself as the normal pattern in declarative main clauses and was at the same time gradually extended to other types of clause; by the mid-fourteenth century it was becoming normal in dependent clauses which earlier had the pattern SO/CV illustrated above, and also in clauses introduced by adverbs or adverb phrases which earlier had VSO/C:

a man hadde twǭ sones 'a man two sons' (SVO; second half of the fourteenth century); *ȝef Þū it soge* 'if you saw it' (Conj. SOV; late thirteenth century), but *ȝyf hę̄ were yn orysūn* 'if he was at prayer' (Conj. SVC; early fourteenth century); *Þogh every day a man hyt haunte* 'though a man practise it every day' (Conj. SOV; early fourteenth century), but *Þeȝ sume men bō Þurȝut gǭde* 'though some men are thoroughly good' (Conj. SVC; *c.* 1200); *his wīf, which him loveÞ* 'his wife, who loves him' (Rel. OV; late fourteenth century), but *ān ċæste Þat was scort* 'a chest that was short' (Rel. VC; late twelfth century); *Þǭarǭs up ūre Lord* 'then our Lord rose up' (Adv. VS; early fourteenth century), *Þan wolde hę̄ schewe* *hem his entent* 'then he would show them his intention' (Adv. VSO; late fourteenth century), but *nowe hę̄ tākes hys lę̄ve* 'now he takes his leave' (Adv. SVO; late fourteenth century).

The pattern VSO/C was now typical of question sentences, though it continued to be used often after temporal adverbs into the Early Modern period.

In prose of the late fourteenth and the fifteenth century the modern SVO/C was the normal pattern in all types of non-interrogative clause, and although variations were not infrequent they were usually stylistic, mainly to achieve some special emphasis. This quite rapid spread of SVO/C in Middle English is usually explained by saying that the reduction of inflections in Middle English made it necessary for the word order to become more rigid and so the variety of syntactic patterns was accordingly reduced. There is undoubtedly much truth in this statement. Even in Old English, however, the SVO/C pattern can be found in dependent clauses, and was in fact quite common in causal clauses (cf. above, *for Þǣm hiera cyning wæs ġewundod on Þǣm ġefeohte*). Hypotaxis in Old English was not as highly developed as it later came to be, and the majority of sentences produced in speech (especially) and in writing must have been simple sentences with SVO/C order; the commonness of this pattern must have helped its spread into dependent clauses. Further, English from the eleventh to the fifteenth century went through a profoundly traumatic experience of disusing structurally and functionally unnecessary forms in the morphology and of generalising the commonest forms. I believe that this psycholinguistic experience cannot but have affected the syntax also. The desire to generalise the commonest syntactic pattern and the fact that a more restricted word order would obviously be valuable given the disuse of the majority of inflections would greatly reinforce each other.

I described the basic sentence patterns of Old English in some detail because, as I shall now illustrate, most or all of them are in regular use in all the modern Germanic languages except English: only English has discarded the traditionally fundamental patterns of Germanic syntax. It will be seen that all the languages except English have developed the principle of keeping the verb as the second main idea of the sentence (as seen in Old English pattern *ii.*) to the extent that if a subordinate clause precedes the main clause, the verb in the main clause must precede its subject㉕. The English translations themselves illustrate the English pattern.

Normal word order: SVO/C (Old English pattern *i.*):

i. Simple affirmative sentences:

Icelandic: *Gísli las bókina* 'Gisli read the book'

Norwegian: *han kjøpte billett* 'he bought a ticket'

Danish: *jeg så manden i går* 'I saw the man yesterday'

Swedish: *min fru talar svenska* 'my wife speaks Swedish'
Dutch: *ik gaf de bedelaar wat geld* 'I gave the beggar some money'
German: *der Onkel reicht dem Vater die Nüsse* 'the uncle passes the nuts to the father'

ii. Subordinate clauses introduced by conjunctions or relatives (Scandinavian only; Dutch and German still use Old English pattern *iii.*):

Ic. : *bókin, sem Gísli var að lesa* 'the book which Gisli was reading'
No. : *hvis du kommer med toget, skal jeg møte deg på stasjonen* 'if you come by train, I will meet you at the station'
Da. : *da jeg ikke kendte hans adresse, kunne jeg ikke skrive til ham* 'as I did not know his address, I could not write to him'
Sw. : *jag vet inte, vad han har gjort* 'I don't know what he has done'

iii. SAux. O/CInf. (see Old English pattern *i.*) (Dutch and German only):

Du. : *ik zal haar morgen spreken* 'I shall speak to her tomorrow'
Gm. : *ich werde das Buch kaufen* 'I shall buy the book'

Inversion: **VSO/C** (Old English pattern *ii.*):

i. Questions:

Ic. : *er Gísli heima?* 'is Gisli home?'
No. : *kjøpte han billett?* 'did he buy a ticket?'
Da. : *bor han her?* 'does he live here?'
Sw. : *talar er fru svenska?* 'does your wife speak Swedish?'
Du. : *was U thuis?* 'were you at home?'
Gm. : *hörst du nicht die Lieder der Kinder?* 'do you not hear the children's songs?'

ii. If the subordinate clause precedes the main clause:

Ic. : *Þegar við vorum búin að borða, Þá fórum við að hátta* 'when we had eaten we went to bed' (but *við fórum að hátta, Þegar við vorum búin að borða*)
No. : *hvis det regner, tar jeg en drosje* 'if it rains, I take a taxi' (but *jeg tar en drosje hvis det regner*)
Da. : *da jeg kom hjem, mødte jeg hende* 'when I got home, I met her' (but *jeg mødte hende, da jeg kom hjem*)
Sw. : *när vedhuggaren hade tappat sin yxa, visste han inte, vad han skulle ta sig till* 'when the wood-cutter had lost his axe, he did not know what to do' (but *vedhuggaren viste inte, vad han skulle ta sig till, när han hade tappat sin yxa*)
Du. : *als ik hem zie, zal ik het hem zeggen* 'if I see him I will tell him' (but *ik zal het hem zeggen, als ik hem zie*)
Gm. : *als er nach Hause kam, sah er seinen Onkel* 'when he came home he saw his uncle' (but *er sah seinen Onkel, als er nach Hause kam*)

iii. If the adverb has front position:

Ic. : *vel las Gísli* 'Gisli read well' (but *Gísli las vel*)
No. : *der kjøpte han billett* 'he bought a ticket there' (but *han kjøpte billett der*)
Da. : *ofte har jeg set hende* 'I have often seen her' (but *jeg har ofte set hende*)
Sw. : *om somrarna bor vi på landet* 'in summer we live in the country' (but *vi bor på landet om somrarna*)
Du. : *morgen gaan we niet naar school* 'we are not going to school tomorrow' (but *we gaan morgen niet naar school*)
Gm. : *glücklicherweise war der Soldat zugegen* 'fortunately the soldier was present' (but *der Soldat war glücklicherweise zugegen*)
Subordinate clause order: **Conj./Rel. SO/CV** (Old English pattern *iii.*) (Dutch and German only):
Du. : *als ik hem zie, zal ik het hem zeggen* 'if I see him I will tell him'
Gm. : *der Junge ging ins Bett, weil er krank war* 'the boy went to bed because he was ill'

In addition to these basic syntactic matters, there are a great many smaller points in which English now differs from most of its contemporary Germanic relatives. Here I shall deal with only the most important of these, concerning the auxiliary *do*(26).

It will be clear from examples already given for a different purpose that Germanic languages usually form questions by inverting the order of subject and verb, and form negative sentences simply by the insertion of a negating particle: cf. above, German *hörst du nicht die Lieder der Kinder?*, where both occur in one sentence. Only English makes use of a special auxiliary in these functions. In questions with the verb *to be* inversion is of course used, as in *were you home?*, but in other cases the SVO order so fundamental to English is retained by the use of auxiliaries, incluing *do*, in head position, so that the verbal form with full meaning comes after the subject: *have you heard the news?*, *do you think it will rain?*, *would you like a drink?* Although other Germanic languages use temporal and modal auxiliaries in a similar way, English alone developed the pattern for regular use in forming questions. The usage can be seen developing in the Middle English period: in Chaucer, for example, we can find *fader, whȳ dō yẹ̄ wẹ̄pe?* 'father, why do you weep, why are you weeping?' instead of the older pattern *whȳ wẹ̄pe yẹ̄?* It took a long time for this new structure to become established, however, and as late as Shakespeare the old structure is not uncommon: we find *Goes the King hence today?*, *What said he? How looked he? Wherein went he?* beside *Did he ask for me? Doth he know that I am in this forest?* As well as maintaining (and indeed, because it maintained) the SVO order, the new structure helped to avoid the potential ambiguity of sentences with a nominal subject and object: *does the king love the queen?* is clearer than *loves the king the queen?*

This use of *do* in questions was established during the seventeenth century, but its use in negative sentences (without another regular auxiliary) was even later in becoming established; the length of time involved is in fact not very different as the proper development of the use with negatives is, although the earliest example occurs in Caxton (1489), post–medieval. In Milton we can still find, for example, *though we mark not*, *she speaks not*, and in Dryden *I say not, if I lose not*, beside the increasingly common use with *do*. By the mid–eighteenth century, however, negative sentences without *do* already seem archaic.

Vocabulary. The principal difference between the vocabulary of English and that of the other Germanic languages is the very heterogeneous nature of the former. When the Anglo–Saxon peoples came from the northern European continent and settled in England in the fifth and sixth centuries A. D., they brought with them a language containing few elements from outside the native Germanic stock. When a new object or concept had to be named, various processes of word formation were available, including the use of prefixes and suffixes, compounding, and root–creation (that is, coining an entirely new word), all of them of Indo–European age. The technique of compounding two native elements was one of the most important: *leoht* 'light' and *fæt* 'vessel', for example, were put together to produce *leohtfæt* 'lamp'; *fruma* 'beginning' and *weorc* 'work' gave *frumweorc* 'creation'. In poetry this technique was used to produce very vivid metaphorical synonyms called kennings: 'ship' was expressed by such descriptive terms as *ȳⱣhengest* 'wave–horse' or *ȳⱣlida* 'wave–traverser', and 'sea' by *hronrād* 'whale–road' or *swanrād* 'swan–road'. Even in Old English, however, many words were borrowed from Norse and from Latin, in the latter case primarily to express the ideas and objects of the new religion, Christianity (such words as *abbod* 'abbot', *discipul* 'disciple', *offrian* 'offer', *prēost* 'priest', *scōl* 'school'). And then, from the eleventh century, English came almost to abandon the technique of using its own resources to produce new words as it embarked on a voracious process, which has never stopped, of borrowing words from oher languages.

In the Middle English period, following the Norman Conquest, thousands of French words gradually mixed with the earlier vocabulary. As the French were the ruling class, many words were from the fields of government (*government*, *baron*, *parlement* 'parliament'), law (*crȳme* 'crime', *fraud*, *iugge* 'judge'), the Church (*convent*, *hermitage*, *salvation*), the military (*armee* 'army', *batayle* 'battle', *sergeant*), art and scholarship (*arte* 'art', *peyntynge* 'painting', *sculpture; gramere* 'grammar', *logik* 'logic', *study*), and social life (*daunce* 'dance', *feaste* 'feast', *venison*). Many Old English words were replaced by French ones, though often the English word and the French word continued to exist side by side (as *kingly* and *royal*). Also in Middle English, and especially afterwards during the Renaissance, the English vocabulary was again invaded by Latin, which was still the international language of educated people and scholarly writing. Many of the words introduced this time remain learned and obscure words (such as *incubus*, *lapidary*, *supplicate*, *zephyr*), but many others have passed down through every level of the language (*adapt*, *atmosphere*, *distract*, *expensive*, *gesture*, *history*, *include*, *individual*, *picture*, *quiet*, etc.). With the discovery of the Americas in the fifteenth century and the development of trade routes to Asia, many words for objects from these places (*chocolate*, *tomato*, *potato* from the Americas, *banana*, *curry*, *gorilla*, *thug*, *zebra* from Asia or Africa) found their way into English, either directly or via another European language. During and after the Renaissance many words (such as *anonymous*, *catastrophe*, *criterion*, *idiosyncrasy*, *tantalise*) entered English from Classical Greek, which came to be widely studied in this period. However, the greatest influx of Greek was with the development of science, especially from the seventeenth century onwards; the words *telescope* and *microscope*, for example, date from this century. But it should be noted that in the case of scientific terms Greek words as such are not normally borrowed: *telescope*, *microscope*, and the majority of the tens of thousands of other such words are made up of Greek roots or elements and are thus completely artificial Greek.

One very notable result of these centuries of borrowing is the great number of synonyms or near-synonyms in English, often with one word being a popular word from Old English and the other or others being rather more learned words from French, Latin, or Greek, for example: *kingly* (Old English), *royal* (French), *regal* (Latin); *fellow-feeling* (Old English), *compassion* (Latin), *sympathy* (Greek); *fear* (Old English), *terror* (French), *trepidation* (Latin); *clear* (French), *transparent* (French from Latin), *pellucid* (Latin), *diaphanous* (Latin from Greek).

In modern English the very core of the vocabulary is still Germanic, and as it is in constant use we cannot exaggerate its importance. Nevertheless, in terms of numbers, it is a fact that eighty per cent of the Old English vocabulary is no longer in use, and that most of the more than ten-fold increase that the English vocabulary has seen in the last thousand years is not of native origin. No other Germanic language has a vocabulary as hybrid as this. It is true, for example, that Danish absorbed many words from its neighbour German and for a time was much influened by French and Latin. Nevertheless, the heterogeneity of the Danish vocabulary can bear no comparison with the breadth and depth of that of English. It is also true that most of the Old English processes of word formation never died out completely (cf. the compounds *housekeeper* (from 1440), *bodyguard* (1735), *caretaker* (1858)—and there are many others, including those imitating the

French technique of compounding a verb-stem and a noun: *breakfast*, *scarecrow*, *spendthrift*, etc.), and that in the twentieth contury certain formative affixes (*-y*, *-less*, *-ish*) and certain types of compounding (*blood bank*, *credit squeeze*, *disc brake*) have become very produtive again; but these processes have never ceased to be very alive and very active in the other Germanic languages. When the telephone was invented, English of course invented a word from Greek elements, but German used two native elements to give it a very transparent name: *fern* 'far' and *Sprecher* 'speaker', thus *Fernsprecher*, literally 'far-speaker'. Again, where English prefers Greek for the names of diseases German makes readily understandable compounds: *Leberentzündung* 'hepatitis' (lit. 'liver-inflammation'), *Gehirnhautentzündung* 'meningitis' (lit. 'brain-membrane-inflammation'), *Bluterkrankheit* 'haemophilia' (lit. 'blood-sickness'). This is typical of all the Germanic languages except English; and if a page of English and a page in any other Germanic language are compared, it will generally be found that the number of non-Germanic words in the English text is about five times greater than that in the other language.

Conclusion. It should be clear from the preceding discussion that on the levels of morphology, with:

i. the virtual abandonment of inflections in nouns and verbs, and their total abandonment in adjectives (unique in Germanic)
ii. the abandonment of grammatical gender and of concord (both unique in Germanic)
iii: the reduction of the definite article and demonstratives to single forms (both unique in Germanic)

and syntax, with:

i. the abandonment of major syntactic patterns still of fundamental importance in other Germanic languages
ii. the development of features unparalleled in other Germanic languages (progressive tenses, certain modal and auxiliary structures, conversion(27), and numerous others)

and vocabulary, with:

i. resort to extensive (extra-Germanic) borrowing
ii. the virtual abandonment of many Germanic methods of word formation

English has indeed grown unlike its Germanic relatives. It should be clear also that this transformation is, for the most part, not of very recent origin: Old English was still synthetic, and modern English since 1500 has been very analytic with subsequent developments increasing the degree of analysis; it is in fact in the five centuries of the Middle English period that the major transformation took place.

When we consider the above points and the fact that there are certain exclusively Germanic features which English has not given up, such as the dental preterite and the specific two-term tense system, it is not difficult to realise that this 'de-Germanicising' of English, as I have called it, is essentially part of a much wider and more general drift away from Indo-European synthesis towards analysis. As I stated earlier in this lecture, Proto-Indo-European was characterised by a highly developed inflectional system; but all the individual languages descended from it have moved in the direction of a more analytic structure to varying extents. It is possible to parallel the situation of English within Germanic in other groups; for example, if we think of modern Irish and modern Welsh, both Celtic languages, we shall have to compare the former to modern Icelandic and the latter to modern English, although the comparison is entirely relative because Welsh is not as advanced morphologically as English in the development of an analytic structure. The de-Germanicising of English must, then, be seen within the wider context of the de-Indo-Europeanising of English; English has become not only much less characteristically Germanic than its sisters but also much less characteistically Indo-European than both its sisters and most of its cousins, few if any of which have gone as for as English along the road to analysis. And this development of an analytic structure, essentially a shift from the use of taxemes of selection in the form of inflections to the use of taxemes of order to determine the relationships of words in a sentence, is the most basic element of the 'personality change' mentioned earlier.

Notes

(1) The following is a somewhat expanded text of a lecture delivered before a meeting of the Nagano ELEC in March 1979.

(2) There are two more independent languages in the Germanic group, Faroese and Frisian, but as they are of minor status I have not provided illustrations from them in this paper. The former is very similar to, though featurally not quite as archaic as, Icelandic, and the latter resembles Dutch.

(3) The origin of grammatical gender is a much disputed problem and no really satisfactory theory exists. One of the most common explanations is as follows. In Proto-Indo-European the common *o*-stem type quoted in the text referred to an individual animal and the common *ā*-stem type was used generically; the male animal came to represent the individual and the female to represent the general type. The originally generic sense of *ā*-stems is indicated by such words of feminine declension as Latin *scrība* 'scribe', *agricola* 'farmer', *nauta* 'sailor'; such people were usually men, and the words denote beings of a general type (but it is also possible to regard them as collec-

tives). The fact that the female came to represent the general type is supposed to be demonstrated, for example, by the English *cow*, which refers to the female animal but is in fact a reflex of the Indo-European generic term for 'cattle' (*g^{w}*ōus*). *ā*-stem forms used collectively gave rise to the neuter plural which has the same terminations as the feminine singular in the nominative and accusative; originally a collective singular, it was reorganised and given formally plural terminations in the other cases and a singular declension essentially the same as the masculine. Inanimate objects come generally to be assigned to this class, but obviously there was later class transference and realignment as many inanimate objects belong to the most common masculine and feminine classes in all the ancient languages descended from Indo-European. It is at least clear that, whatever its origin may be, the function of grammatical gender in late Proto-Indo-European was a congruence marker between nouns and their modifiers.

(4) Gothic shows remnants of the vocative, which had become formally identical with the accusative. (The Germanic examples which follow in the text use a different word, as it is not always possible to quote cognates from every language).

(5) Apart from a handful of completely irregular plural formations in each language, such as we find in English, there are also in very common use three different types of plural in Danish (Norwegian is similar), illustrated by:

dag 'day', pl. *dage*
uge 'week', *uger*
år 'year', *år*

five types in Swedish:

flicka 'girl', pl. *flickor*
gosse 'boy', *gossar*
dam 'lady', *damer*
rike 'kingdom', *riken*
bad 'bath', *bad*

two types in Dutch:

boek 'book', pl. *boeken*
zoon 'son', *zoons*

and thirteen major types in Icelandic and four in German, too complicated to give space to here.

(6) Four accent stages have been discerned by phonological investigation of reflexes: in the first two expiratory accent predominated and caused reduction of unstressed vowels and then loss of the reduced forms, in the third and fourth pitch accent predominated and caused qualitative Ablaut. The variable position of the accent is reflected in, for example, Greek *anḗr* nominative singular, 'man', *ándra* accusative singular, *andrós* genitive singular.

(7) The rules of positional syntax changed profoundly during the Old English period, from the early (S)OV (see page 90) through a stage of putting light elements at the beginning of the clause and using the pattern VSO to mark the whole clause, on to a situation where the verb in an unmarked independent clause occupied second position

and VSO was retained to mark the whole clause; as first and second positions for the verb were now characteristic of such clauses, dependent clauses, which had not developed any fixed position for the verb, came to put the verb in end position. This is essentially the situation that had developed by the mid-tenth century, and considering the variety of patterns thus found up to this date it is not surprising that the impression should be gained that the word order of Old English was free. Within each of the above stages, however, the positioning of elements within clauses was not an arbitrary matter.

(8) It is often said that the reduction of inflections in Early Middle English made it necessary for the word order to become rigid and for prepositions to become more widely used. Although this statement is essentially true in its own context, I have here somewhat reversed this theory and suggested that because the word order was *already* fairly rigid in late Old English the Early Middle English reduction of inflections was able to proceed apace; *further* 'rigidity' was then consequent on the Early Middle English reductions. I think that the same holds true with regard to prepositions. Prepositions were already widely used in Old English and were normally followed by the dative, accusative, or genitive of the noun (in descending order of frequency); they thus duplicated the meaning of the endings and also added meanings which the endings could not supply (the dative alone, for example, could not provide the very different meanings of the two prepositions *mid* 'with' and *of* 'from'). After a preposition, then, case was generally unnecessary in determining the meaning, though there are the exceptions of the few prepositions that could be used with two cases, for example *on* with the accusative which meant 'on, into' and with the dative which meant 'in'. After the reduction of inflections it became necessary for prepositions always to be used in situations where Old English could have used case inflection alone: in adverb phrases of time, for example, where Old English sometimes used a prepositional phrase with the noun in the dative (*on þissum ġeare* 'in this year') and sometimes the dative alone (*þissum ġeare* 'do.').

(9) The *-es* plural from Old English was anyway the most common type, but the rapid analogical spread of *-es* in Middle English may have been influenced by the French plural in *-s*, which was the plural termination of a majority of French nouns.

(10) The speed of decay is not unparalleled outside the Germanic group: in Vulgar Latin, for example, the case system broke down in the first few centuries of the Christian era, though Old French preserved a distinction of nominative and oblique in both singular and plural until the thirteenth century.

(11) In Old English pronominal elements are found in the accusative singular *-ne* (cf. *þone,* accusative singular of the demonstrative *sē*), in the nominative and accusative plural *-e* (a weakened form, cf. the plural demonstrative *þā*), and in the genitive plural *-ra* (cf. *þāra,* genitive of the plural *þā*).

(12) It seems unnecessary here to illustrate the adjective from the other ancient Germanic languages, but for reference it might be mentioned that the adjective in Gothic had twenty-three forms, in Old Norse fourteen forms, and in Old High German nineteen

forms.

(13) *ii.* and *iii.* reflect the ancient weak/strong distinction.

(14) The final *-n* in weak oblique forms as seen in Old English was lost before the Old Icelandic period.

(15) Cf. modern English *I have written the letter*, *when I had written the letter I went and posted it*, *I have been living here since 1973*.

(16) It is possible that these forms developed in late Proto-Germanic as most of them have a common structure in the individual languages: Norse and the West Germanic languages all form perfect and pluperfect tenses with the verb *to be* (Old Norse *vera*, Old English *wesan*) in the case of verbs of motion and *to have* (*hafa*, *habban*) in other cases, plus the past participle. Gothic, however, shows no trace of such formations; the only periphrastic form is a past progressive tense (formed with the verb *wisan* 'to be' and the present participle) which occurs only occasionally and probably developed under the influence of the Greek text being translated. The lack of genuine periphrastic tenses in Gothic has led to the suggestion that such structures in West Germanic and Norse are imitations of similar developments in Vulgar Latin, with which the German tribes at least must have come into contact.

(17) They occur most commonly in Old English in translations from Latin, where they were usually used to render Latin participial constuctions. In other contexts they often seem no different in meaning from a simple tense, although sometimes they express a clearly durative aspect: *Gode Þe biÞ eardiġende on heofonum* 'God who is dwelling in heaven', *Þǣr wæs twelf mōnaÞ wuniende* '(he) was living there for twelve months'; they are rarely found expressing temporary contemporaneous happenings, which is the most important modern use (*I am writing a letter now*).

(18) What they are used for in Dutch is to express completion of an action, which is only one of their functions in English: *ik heb hem een brief geschreven* 'I have written him a letter', *wij hadden het boek gelezen* 'we had read the book'.

(19) This form is commonly called the subjunctive. Genetically, however, it is derived from the optative in both the present and the preterite; functionally, it covers the old subjunctive (to express expectation or probability), opatative (to express a wish or hypothesis), and injunctive (to express an unreal condition).

(20) Swedish uses it perhaps more than any of the others except Icelandic and German, though it now seems to be falling gradually into disuse.

(21) All these forms derive directly from the Old English synthetic optative: present 3 singular in *-e* (lost in pronunciation in the fourteenth century, hence the modern inflectionless form), *iċ*, *Þū*, *hē bēo*, *wē*, *ġē*, *hīe bēon* (this, the second, present optative of *bēon* 'to be' became the only form in Middle English), *iċ*, *Þū*, *hē wǣre*, *wē*, *ġē*, *hīe wǣren*.

(22) The very high degree of regularisation of these vowel alternations as tense markers is a Germanic innovation, however. There were six such alternation series in the Germanic strong verb system:

		Present	*Pret. Sing.*	*Pret. Pl.*	*Past Part.*
I	*Proto-Gmc*	ī	ai	i	i
	OE	ī	ā	i	i
		(bītt *waits*	bād	bidon	biden)
II		eu	au	u	o
		ēo	ēa	u	o
		(ċēosan *to choose*	ċēas	curon	coren)
III		e, i	a	u	u, o
		i, e	a	u	u, o
		(bint *binds*	band	bundon	bunden)
IV		e	a	ǣ	o
		e	æ	ǣ	o
		(beran *to bear*	bær	bǣron	boren)
V		e	a	ǣ	e
		e	æ	ǣ	e
		(cweÞan *to say*	cwæÞ	cwǣdon	cweden)
VI		a	ō	ō	a
		a	ō	ō	a
		(faran *to go*	fōr	fōron	faren)

There is also a seventh class of rather different origin.

㉓ The former process can be seen in such verbs as *help–helped–helped* (Old English *helpan–healp–holpen*, strong class III), *flow–flowed–flowed* (*flōwan–flēow–flōwen*, strong class VII), and the latter in such verbs as *deceive* (from French, replacing Old English *beswīcan*), *receive* (French, replacing *Þicgan*), *ascend* (Latin, replacing *stīgan*), *protect* (Latin, replacing *beorgan*).

㉔ This shift from (S)OV to SVO is seen already in Classical Greek, and eventually developed in all the Romance, Balto-Slavonic, and Germanic languages.

㉕ It has been seen above (page 91) that in Old English correlative conjunctions were generally used when the subordinate clause preceded the main clause, and that the correlative element in the other main clause caused the inversion of subject and verb there. The same rules operated in the other Germanic languages (cf. Old Norse *Þá er Þórr kom á miðja ána Þá* óx *mjǫk áin* 'when Thor came to the middle of the river, it swelled greatly', Old High German *er thanne Abraham wari*, *er bim ih* 'before Abraham was, I am') and it is probable that, unlike English, even after the disappearance of the correlative element from the main clause this established VS word order was retained.

㉖ Two others of importance would be *i*. the use in English of the gerund, which does not exist as such in the other Germanic languages; they have to use either an infinitive (cf. Swedish *han kunde inte låta bli att skratta* 'he could not help laughing', *han gjorde det utan att tänka* 'he did it without thinking') or a *that*-clause if the English gerund is followed by an object (cf. Swedish *vi kunde inte rå för, att de förde oväsen* 'we could not help their making a noise'), and *ii*. conversion, for which see the next note.

㉗ Conversion is a functional shift in which a word changes the word class to which it normally belongs; it is both made possible and encouraged in English by the lack of inflectional distinctions among the various word classes. In Old English (as in the other Germanic languages in every period) there were numerous morphologically distinct derivative forms, such as *bite* 'bite', *bītan* 'to bite'; *dōm* 'judgement', *dēman* 'to judge'; *lufu* 'love', *lufian* 'to love'; *hāl* 'whole', *hǣlan* 'to heal'; *beorht* 'bright', *beorhtian* 'to shine'. That *bite* and *love* can in modern English be both nouns and verbs is a result of the Middle English inflectional decay; with such forms supplying precedents, many more have developed from the Early Modern English period. Only in English can we *head a ball* (noun as verb), *take a break for tea* (verb as noun), *have the blues* (adjective as noun), *let bygones be bygones* (past participles as nouns), *floor our opponent* (noun as verb), *paper a room* (noun as verb), *black our boots* (adjective as verb), *enjoy a quiet read* (verb as noun).