

JOAN LEOPOLD (Los Angeles)

The Last Battle over the Tower of Babel:  
The controversy between August Friedrich Pott and  
Franz Kaulen

Kaulen, a missionary defender of Biblical monogenesis: 1. Kaulen's use of the views of Humboldtians, *Völkerpsychologists* and A. F. Pott, 2. Kaulen on linguistic diversity, 3. Kaulen on the typology of "isolating", "agglutinative" and "inflecting" languages, 4. the importance of etymology, 5. language and ethnicity, 6. Kaulen's use of historical and theologically-oriented linguistics, 7. Kaulen on "innere Sprachform", 8. Kaulen on the relationship of words and ideas, 9. Kaulen and uniformitarianism, 10. Kaulen on thought as independent of language, 11. Kaulen on religious diversification presaging linguistic diversification.

Pott, a linguist decrying speculative and mythological uses of linguistics by theologians: 1. Pott's support for polygenesis, 2. separation of linguistic methods from others, 3. Pott's distinction between the "genealogical" and "physiological" interpretations of the typology of "isolating", "agglutinative" and "inflecting" languages, 4. the Adamic theory and its overestimation of the pristine character of Hebrew, 5. Pott on natural necessity and human agreement, divine teaching and human invention in the origin of language, 6. Pott on the relation of religious and linguistic development, 7. Pott on Kaulen's sources: Schelling, Bunsen, Max Müller, Ewald.

\*

By the mid-nineteenth century, the supporters of the Bible's views on the unitary origin of language in the Garden of Eden and the diversification of tongues at the Tower of Babel had largely retreated from the field of linguistic scholarship, at least in Germany; they restricted themselves to a theological or philosophical audience. However, one Jesuit scholar, Franz Philipp Kaulen (1827–1907), who had both theological and minor linguistic credentials, did make a final effort to reconcile the findings of recent "scientific" comparative and general linguistics with theological interpretations of the origin of language.<sup>1</sup> This was in his *Die Sprachverwirrung zu Babel. Linguistisch-Theologische Untersuchungen über Gen. XI., 1–9* (Mainz 1861).

---

<sup>1</sup> Pott, *Anti-Kaulen*, p. 290. See also Wedewer, with admiration for Kaulen's one *Ursprache* theory at a later date. Wedewer, *Sprachwissenschaft*, p. 52. On Kaulen's

Kaulen had been a missionary in China and had recently published a chrestomathy and vocabulary of Manchu. His purpose in the *Sprachverwirrung*, he stated, was to reconcile the results of linguistics and the data of Biblical revelation, taking these latter seriously, unlike most linguists. This attempt might be compared with that of Protestant “natural theology” to reconcile naturalistic interpretations of the Bible with natural science (for example, Darwinism) rather than with contemporary Catholic exegesis. But Kaulen was not practicing Protestant Biblical “higher criticism”; rather he was seeking to reassert respect for clerical and traditional Biblical interpretation. He wished to show that the Book of Genesis was an integrated whole and that its “facts” were reconcilable with a “deep” well-founded scientific point of view.<sup>2</sup>

Kaulen contrasted the Biblical view of one original language with the then current linguistic emphasis on the diversity of languages as an indicator of a multiplicity of original languages. Kaulen had in mind the theory of linguistic polygenesis, supported by linguists such as August Friedrich Pott (1802–87), who opposed what he considered to be the Bibliocentric theory of linguistic monogenesis.

Despite this inherent conflict, or even because of it, Kaulen seized upon the work of a linguist least likely to be sympathetic, Pott. He used it, along with that of Humboldtians and *Völkerpsychologists* such as H. C. von der Gabelentz and Heymann Steinthal, to demonstrate a purported convergence between Biblical and modern thought. Kaulen played upon Pott’s renown in emphasizing that Pott was referred to as “Stimmführer der modernen Sprachforscher” by other writers, who coupled Pott’s name with that of the divinity in “wenn Gott und Pott helfen” Kaulen compared Pott’s views on language with Moses’ and found them to be fundamentally similar.<sup>3</sup> Pott, we believe, would have admitted that the common characteristics of languages might be explained by the common nature of the *human spirit*, but not by the supposed common forms of all language, which, he said, turned out *not* to be genealogically related. Pott separated his belief in the general human character of language from attempts to deduce one primordial language or one primordial race.<sup>4</sup> Kaulen also brought the *Völkerpsychologists* to bear on primordial linguistic history. He wrote in their terms about the diversity of language as the result of psychological factors, the role of the individual in modifying language, and the difficulty

---

biography, see Erwin Gatz, “Kaulen, Franz Philipp”, *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 11, 1977, pp. 357–358. (For the question of theological interpretation of the origin of language see also Albertz in the present publication, vol. II.)

<sup>2</sup> Franz Philipp Kaulen, *Linguae Mandshuricae Institutiones* [...], Regensburg 1856. Kaulen, *Sprachverwirrung*, pp. v–vi, 1–2.

ibid. p. 68, 212.

<sup>4</sup> ibid., p. 27, quoting Pott, *Ungleichheit*, p. 242. Kaulen, *Sprachverwirrung*, p. 176.

of defining the ever-changing boundaries of languages and dialects. That more and more languages were being discovered did not dismay Kaulen. He considered modern linguistics' main achievement to be its continuing success in grouping languages into "families" and "stems" showing, that the earlier one went back in time, the closer the members of linguistic "families" or "stems" approximated each other, thus leading to the conclusion that there had been one original language.<sup>5</sup>

Kaulen pointed to the admitted inadequacies of the so-called "physiological" typology of "isolating", "agglutinative" and "inflecting" language, as further evidence for a possible unitary origin of language. Closely related languages could have striking differences in the placement of grammatical markers (Danish *Folket*, Dutch *het volk*). And there were countless middle steps between the three classifications, so that a language could be more or less close to any of the three types. The only possible genetic conclusion, he felt, would be that all these formations developed gradually from one type. Languages probably ran through all the stages of typological classification, interpreted historically [or rather in terms of evolution]. First there was isolation of roots, then agglutination of form-roots with content-roots and then the inflected merging of the two. Subsequently, the opposite process — of simplification from synthetic to analytic languages — set in.<sup>6</sup>

But as *Die Sprachverwirrung* continued, Kaulen increasingly hurled barbs at Pott, saying that Pott could not prove that linguistic dissimilarity meant different genetic origin.<sup>7</sup> Kaulen turned Pott's rationalistic scepticism against him, maintaining that even scepticism might cause one to support or at least not deny the theory of the unitary origin of language.

[...] die Frage nach Einheit oder Verschiedenheit des Ursprungs sämmtlicher Sprachen kann nicht anders beantwortet werden, als auf Grund der *Wurzelforschung*, indem bloss die Wurzeln uns dasjenige Element in der Sprache darstellen, das vor aller geschichtlichen Veränderung deren wesentlichen Bestandtheil bildet. Da solche Forschungen nur erst für einen sehr unbedeutenden Theil der Sprachen auf der Erde geführt sind, so kann die uranfängliche Einheit aller Sprachen nicht aus wissenschaftlichen Gründen geleugnet werden.<sup>8</sup>

Kaulen urged that investigation of etymology and of laws of sound change continue especially for non-Indo-European and non-Semitic languages so as to lead to the simplest forms of linguistic roots. By analogy with what he considered current successful comparisons of roots,

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 6, 13–15.

*ibid.*, pp. 47–53, 56.

*ibid.*, p. 65, 67.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 57.

Kaulen speculated that one could expect to prove the identity of roots in all languages.<sup>9</sup>

Kaulen also in passing attempted to generalize from language to ethnicity. He wrote of one “indogermanisches Urvolk” migrating from the Himalayas. He cited Pott as his authority for this, but Pott in the passage referred to had only mentioned Indo-Germanic languages and their, more potential than real, identical origin in one fundamental Indo-Germanic language.<sup>10</sup> Kaulen accepted the idea of the possible future linking of the three typological stages of language (isolating, agglutinative, inflecting) with specific groups of peoples — respectively the Chamitic, Japhetic and Semitic peoples mentioned in the Bible.<sup>11</sup>

Only after citing as authorities those linguists most opposed to his opinions did Kaulen go on to call upon those seemingly more favorable to the *Ursprache* theme, for example, August Schleicher and theologically oriented writers who were seeking to link Oriental languages into a far-flung “Turanian” group (Friedrich Max Müller) or to find common root words and a common origin for the Indo-European and Semitic languages (Julius Fürst, Franz Delitzsch, Heinrich Ewald). Kaulen echoed Pott’s praise of Müller, but glossed over the grave misgivings that Pott had felt about Müller’s and Bunsen’s comparison of roots and classifications of languages in the mid-1850’s. Kaulen lauded their work of this period as providing the first building blocks for proof of the original unity of language<sup>12</sup> und supported Bunsen’s emphasis upon comparison of roots rather than grammatical forms.<sup>13</sup>

Kaulen’s Biblical orientation surfaced with greater frequency in later portions of the book as he continued to write about the *Ursprache*. He held that the original language of all mankind was still preserved by some

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33, 36.

*ibid.*, pp. 16–17, 20–22, 65; Pott, *Etymol. Forsch.*<sup>1</sup> 1, p. xxvii.

Kaulen, *Sprachverwirrung*, pp. 229–230. Kaulen took a rather old-fashioned position that the only inflecting languages were the Semitic, and he claimed that Bopp, Burnouf and Boehtlingk supported this view. He seemed to place the Indo-European languages in the agglutinative category. *ibid.*, p. 47.

*E. g.*, Pott, in Kaulen, *Sprachverwirrung*, pp. 24, 26–27; pp. 20, 22, 68; 69–70. Pott, “Kennzeichen”

<sup>13</sup> Kaulen’s view of the nature of the root was, on some points, not far removed from Pott’s. Kaulen wrote that roots were ideal sound constructs. The Chinese and the Trans-Gangetic languages were composed solely of roots; but these roots, comparative linguistics taught, were really remnants of older linguistic forms. They were viewed as roots for practical reasons associated with current usage. Kaulen, *Sprachverwirrung*, p. 39. On Pott’s view of the root as the abstracted vocal and ideal unity of genetically related forms, not as an independent historical fact, see Bense, “Bemerkungen”; Horn, “Pott”, pp. 322–324; Pott, *Etymol. Forsch.*<sup>1</sup> 1, pp. 147–148; Pott, *Etymol. Forsch.*<sup>2</sup> II/1, 1861, p. 1, 78, 91, 194, 196; also Ellis, “Third Annual Address”, p. 101, 105.

people, after the destruction of the Tower of Babel, and that this language was a predecessor of Hebrew.<sup>14</sup>

Just as he approached his opponents head on, as if they were friends, Kaulen also addressed some of the most difficult concepts in general linguistics, seeking support for his ideas. Not only had linguistics showed the widely differing *external* formations of language or linguistic “stems”, it also had alluded to diverse, uncombinable “inner forms” The external formative elements of language, here interpreted as the phonological, were basically the same everywhere, Kaulen said, because human vocal chords were constructed in the same way, and so must articulate sound be. But the inner linguistic form needed further examination.<sup>15</sup>

The “innere Sprachform,” he maintained, had been of minor importance to Wilhelm von Humboldt; but Karl Wilhelm Ludwig Heyse and Steinthal had given it added significance. Humboldt had only meant by “innere Sprachform” the general form of thought as it was expressed in each individual language by vocal means. Heyse, Steinthal and now Pott applied it to “the real system of grammatical categories of a language” which reflected a mode of thought or logic distinctive to each people, not a general logic. Kaulen asserted that Humboldt had believed that there was only *one* inner form, common to all languages, because the logical categories expressed in language were the same everywhere; they were not subjective. Even adopting Steinthal’s approach, Kaulen postulated that an *Ursprache* could have had all the categories which were found divided up among later languages. Or the *Ursprache* might not yet have developed definite grammatical forms or categories, but might have expressed all these relationships by means of juxtaposition of roots, a stage through which even the most developed languages has passed.<sup>16</sup>

Kaulen went on to try to imbed his theological concept of the *Ursprache* in a philosophy of language which could be related to Steinthal’s and Wilhelm von Humboldt’s. He wrote that there was a direct, unique relation between each concept and its expression in the one original language. Words did not express objects, relationships or ideas. Rather, they usually derived from one of the characteristics of a thing, which had taken hold of the human imagination. (An example was Sanskrit *dubitr*, daughter, from “the milking one”.) These characteristics were concrete; and Kaulen agreed with the sensationalists that abstract ideas had first been expressed through sensible images.<sup>17</sup>

---

Kaulen, *Sprachverwirrung*, p. 71.

ibid. p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> ibid. pp. 57–59. ibid., p. 27, quoting Pott, *Ungleichheit*, p. 242. ibid., p. 60.

ibid. p. 31 n. 45; pp. 36–37, 78, 85–86. Kaulen’s semantic argument concerning *dubitr* was much closer to the views of Max Müller than those of the Humboldtians. However, his acceptance of sensationalist theories brought him, in that regard,

Ancient languages, particularly the Semitic, were rich in sound symbolism and closely related to music and poetry. The connection between sound and meaning was conscious, symbolic, not merely conventional. The relation of sound to language was, however, not solely a symbolic one, but also an “organic” or “pathognomic” one, as Steinthal would say. Alternatively, from a religious point of view, Adam could be said to have been aware more completely, clearly and definitively than any other man of the relation of sound to meaning, for he had developed all knowledge from first principles and could see the “nature of things” Thus words were *signa naturalia*, signs not only of thought, but of things themselves. These words were most economically expressed, probably in the first instance by monosyllables. According to Kaulen, language existed fully as *energeia*, to adopt Humboldt’s usage, only in Paradise. Language had no subjective “innere Sprachform” for Kaulen, since there was only one, totally logical form of thought expressed in language from its beginnings.<sup>18</sup>

Kaulen rejected Steinthal’s uniformitarian view that man had always been in approximately the same circumstances on earth and had developed language originally in the same way in which he would develop it now. In Kaulen’s view of linguistic change, the two episodes of man’s decline — the Fall and the Tower of Babel — were exceptional events which had diminished the *Ursprache*’s fullness, correspondence with reality and primordial unity. After the Fall, the same external forces began to operate upon language that still affect it today. But it was only after the Tower of Babel that there developed a multiplicity of languages and heathen, polytheistic religions.<sup>19</sup>

Nonetheless, Kaulen did not adopt Max Müller’s theory that, unlike at present, early thought could not have occurred without language. For Kaulen, language was not a necessary concomitant of primitive (Adamic) thought. Thought could develop, then as now, earlier than and independent of language.<sup>20</sup>

The origin of language lay for Kaulen in both divine provision and human creativity. Language was a faculty built into man by God, in that God gave man the capacity for language, the necessary speech organs and the ability to give ideas an organic linguistic expression. But Kaulen

---

closer to the Humboldtians than to Max Müller. (For Humboldt’s theory see also Trabandt in the present volume.)

<sup>18</sup> For Pott’s published works on sound symbolism, see, for example, B 47, 54, 125, 163, 229, 232 and 236, in Leopold, *Letter Liveth*. Kaulen, *Sprachverwirrung*, p. 71, 81; pp. 73, 82–83, 92; p. 84; pp. 88–90.

ibid., p. 108; pp. 140–142 (for Steinthal’s uniformitarian position, Christy in the present volume).

<sup>20</sup> ibid., p. 119.

allowed that early man had free will in the act of using the “Sprachform” prepared for him by God.<sup>21</sup>

Just as Kaulen used modern linguistic theory before turning to religious explanations of the unitary origin of language, he discussed naturalistic theories of the origin of races (even Darwin’s, which tended to support a monogenetic interpretation) before going on to Biblical evidence. Minute evolutionary differentiation and the alteration of racial characteristics by climate, geography and mode of life were important “scientific” explanations of the development of many races from one primeval pair. To this Kaulen added a religious cause, that the diversification of religions into polytheisms (as opposed to an original monotheism) occasioned the real separation into peoples. Thus, in essence, his explanation of linguistic development had a religious basis. The diversity of languages was due to the differentiation of peoples, which was the result of the falling away from the original religion. Kaulen pointed to the greater linguistic similarity between Chamitic and Japhetic [=Indo-European] languages than between either of them and the Semitic languages as a parallel to the religious divide, between Chamitic and Japhetic polytheism and Semitic monotheism. With the advent of Christianity, Kaulen hoped that the reunification of the world’s religions and ways of speaking could be achieved.<sup>22</sup>

Pott, as one of the founders of comparative Indo-European linguistics along with Bopp and Grimm, was incensed by Kaulen’s book, both for its unscientific, theologically oriented content and for the lip-service and misinterpretation it applied to linguistic scholarship, particularly that of Pott and of those general linguists closest to Pott, that is, Humboldt and Steinthal. Pott wrote that Kaulen’s book “hat um desswillen leicht für Manchen etwas Verführerisches, weil es mit dem Scheine der Wissenschaft schlimmen Missbrauch treibt und sich gar oft die Redeweise der Wissenschaft aneignet, ohne solche zu sein, ja im Grunde, ohne auch nur es sein zu wollen.”<sup>23</sup>

Pott was often most outraged when his views were misinterpreted, even with great respect, in order to support the opinions of his opponents. Thus he had recently produced an entire book, *Die Ungleichheit menschlicher Rassen* [...], to counter the use of his own and other scholars’ arguments in Arthur de Gobineau’s *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* (4 v. Paris 1853–55). *Anti-Kaulen oder Mythische Vorstellungen vom Ursprunge der Völker und Sprachen* followed this Pottian pattern of starting from a current “reactionary” use of linguistics to provide a work critical of unscientific or mythological linguistics, based on Pott’s collectanea. Pott mixed correc-

ibid. p. 124.

ibid. p. 201; p. 202; pp. 204–205; p. 235; pp. 246–247.

<sup>23</sup> Pott, *Anti-Kaulen*, p. 290. Leopold, “French-German Connections”. Tylor, “Pott”.

tions of Biblical etymologies with analysis of different peoples' cosmologies and interpretations of the origin of language, the history of mythology and the results of contemporary ethnology. Unlike Kaulen, he began mainly from mythological and ethnological interpretations of early man's history, which he debunked, rather than from a linguist's own interpretation of the origin of language or speech. Our discussion will concentrate on the sections concerning the origin of language.

Pott thought that, in desperation, theologians were looking to ethnology and linguistics for foundation stones to prop up their "knowledge" of man. Pott wanted to deny theology this assistance and himself shied away from linguistic or ethnological speculation about the origin of man or language. He ridiculed theological discussions of the language of God in Genesis, the language of man after death, the language of the angels, and the language of the snake in Paradise. He tended to favor the polygenetic theory of multiple origins for human languages and races. He did not find the "scientific" proof of a monogenetic origin of languages or races in the work of Müller, Bunsen or Kaulen. Nor did he allow Kaulen to shift the burden of proof from theologians to linguists, as if one had to accept the Biblical story of monogenesis of languages and races unless linguists could conclusively disprove it. Methodologically, Pott would not admit theological methods or evidence into linguistics. He advocated the strict separation of linguistic methods from all others when dealing with linguistic history. Only linguistic techniques, not theological speculation, should apply.<sup>24</sup>

Pott repeated his opposition to the glossing over, by Müller, Kaulen and others, of the distinction Pott had made between "genealogical" and "physiological" relationships among languages. The "genealogical" relationship could possibly show that a group of languages, such as the Indo-European, had a common origin in a common group of speakers of the original common language; but "physiological" relationship, among languages that might have structural similarities called "inflecting" "agglutinative" or "isolating", did not necessarily mean that these languages were genetically related or that their speakers had been. Pott mistrusted Kaulen's and Bunsen's reliance upon root analysis alone to demonstrate the original unity of languages and he protested the way in which Ewald and Müller ignored linguistic *form* when they compared roots.<sup>25</sup>

Pott rejected Kaulen's Adamic theory. Pott seemed scandalized by Kaulen's claim of linguistic superiority for Hebrew, over languages like Greek and Latin which Kaulen considered agglutinating. Pott denied the deduction that Hebrew was closest to the original language of Adam and

<sup>24</sup> Pott, *Anti-Kaulen*, p. 176; p. 71; pp. 107–109; p. 110; p. 127.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 112–113; p. 292.

pointed to its own defects, such as unsuitability for composition and for expression of rhetorical periods. He rejected the idea that one could consider Hebrew as older or more original because it employed more sound symbolism than other languages. He did not mention, except briefly in passing, his own theories of the importance of sound symbolism in linguistic forms. He claimed that Kaulen raised Adam before the Fall to the level of a god, with a complete, purely objective language, a language that Pott thought was humanly impossible.<sup>26</sup> Pott doubted that one person, such as Adam, could have given rise to language. He asked whether it was not necessary to have linguistic interaction among the members of a family at least, if not a people, for a full language to develop. The few words that Adam was supposed to know did not comprise a “language” for Pott. And what about additional vocabulary and the parts of speech? Were they missing from this Adamic language? If Adam and Eve had had a language in which each word corresponded to true knowledge of a thing, as Kaulen said, they would have had no need to communicate with each other, because they already knew everything. Language for them could not have been a means of communicating the world of the senses to their understandings.<sup>27</sup>

Pott then summarized ancient and modern, Western and non-Western interpretations of the origin of language and script in human agreement (*thesis*) or in natural necessity (*physis*), in divine teaching or in human invention. For Pott, as for Steinthal, languages were a product of human freedom and thus subjective, although this freedom and subjectivity were conditioned by one’s own mother tongue and one’s natural and social environment. However, for Pott unlike for Steinthal, there were certain [quasi-Kantian] categories which underlay parts of speech and grammatical forms, concepts such as space, time, number, rest and movement, being and becoming. These were more the product of necessity.<sup>28</sup> For Pott, unlike for Kaulen, divine intervention played no part in the origin of language.

On the relation of religion to linguistic development, Pott also differed sharply with Kaulen. Pott, like many anthropological writers on religion would, denied Kaulen’s contention that religious affiliation paralleled linguistic grouping or that the development of religion could have followed a course from monotheism to polytheism as that of language supposedly had from the one *Ursprache* to many languages. In Germany, the advent of Lutheranism had not created a linguistic split. Among the Jews at least, Pott said, the reverse pattern of development from polytheism

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* p. 296; p. 152; p. 130; p. 133. On Pott’s study of sound symbolism, see n. 18 above.

Pott, *Anti-Kaulen*, p. 73; p. 132.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 102 ff.; also pp. 137 f., 214 ff; pp. 196, 207–209.

to monotheism was much more likely. Pott also quoted the botanist Matthias Jakob Schleiden and Wilhelm von Humboldt to introduce the prevailing scientific view that there was a law of development or progress from the incomplete to the complete, rather than the reverse. Thus man generally had not decayed from a perfect state, as Kaulen supposed, but improved himself from a less perfect condition.<sup>29</sup> Pott undoubtedly resented, too, the affront to linguistics that was implied by Kaulen's insistence that the diversity of languages, so admired by the Humboldtians, was the result of man's sin, man's denial of God and man's polytheism.

Pott took special exception to many of Kaulen's sources, who were more famous than Kaulen himself. He correctly saw in Schelling's *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie* the source of the idea that monotheism evolved into two-deity systems and then polytheism. Schelling recognized the same principle of development in languages, which were originally monosyllabic, then disyllabic and later polysyllabic. Schelling likewise assumed, Pott thought, an original unity of the human species. So did Darwin, whom Pott considered a strange bedfellow for Kaulen. Pott was suspicious of Darwin's influence in the humanities, particularly in linguistics, and scoffed at the ape ancestors and monogenesis to which Darwinism pointed.

About the linguists whom Kaulen cited, Pott here repeated his critical comments regarding Bunsen and Müller, for the former's attempts to emphasize similarities of roots and the latter's to condense languages into broad structural families such as "Turanian" in order to make more probable the unitary origin of language and man.<sup>30</sup> Pott also added to his list the Göttingen Semiticist Heinrich Ewald for his two *Sprachwissenschaftliche Abhandlungen*, I. *Abhandlung ueber den Bau der Thatwörter im Koptischen*, 1861, and II. *Abhandlung ueber den Zusammenhang des nordischen (türkischen), mittelländischen [= Indo-European], semitischen und koptischen Sprachstammes*, 1862. Though Ewald realized the difficulty of the task, he tried to define the above four groups of languages, including Turkic with Dravidian, and to indicate that their similarity and common origin were coming closer and closer to being proved. With these works, Ewald explicitly arrayed himself against those who denied the unitary origin of man and languages. Ewald ignored Humboldt or Steinthal, especially when he maintained that all languages were equal from their beginnings in prehistorically expressing all human conceptions. (Pott disliked the idea of any period of language without history.) Ewald used his own peculiar and outmoded geographical classification of languages and claimed that it was approaching a genetic one, according to Pott. Yet Pott asserted again and again his belief in the polygenesis of languages, at least until *all* languages, including Amerindian,

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 143, 68, 297; p. 149; p. 128; p. 209.

Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie*, pp. 133–136. Pott, *Anti-Kaulen*, p. 171, 181. Cf. Pott, *Etymol. Forsch.*<sup>2</sup> I, p. 93.

Polynesian, Chinese and so on, not just Ewald's four main groups, could be shown to be related. While Ewald did not rely on root comparisons but instead looked at forms of words and sentences, Pott considered his methods as ahistorical as those of Bunsen and Müller. One had to make sure, Pott said, that one did not throw time and causation to the winds as was often done in studying the history of developmental stages, without considering before and after. Ewald frequently used words such as "noch", "schon", "Neuerungen", "Fortschritt", "Rückschritt" and "Stillstand" that to Pott indicated the insecurity of his foundations. The similarities which Ewald found, such as those in prepositions or postpositions, were so common and the selection from among the possibilities was so limited that they could show nothing about genetic relationship, Pott asserted.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to contending that Ewald's monogenetic schema of linguistic evolution was unproved historically, Pott emphasized that it did not support Kaulen's contention that Hebrew was closest to the world's proto-language. Ewald indicated that the *mittelländisch*, or Indo-European, languages in the original homeland of mankind in high Asia were developing through all the linguistic stages. Before they reached their last, complete form, at their earlier stage of agglutination, the *nordisch* (Ural-Altai) languages peacefully and gradually separated from them and kept this form as the Ural-Altai people migrated northwards. According to Ewald, Pott said, the proto-language would have been similar to both Sanskrit and Mongolian. Then, just before the Indo-European languages reached their full development, a language group violently split off and moved to the south. Radical changes developed in this group, which later broke into two language families — the Semitic and the Coptic. The Semitic languages were truer to the Indo-European than was the Coptic, which evolved in a more one-sided and divergent manner.<sup>32</sup>

Thus Pott, in his *Anti-Kaulen*, was attempting to close the door on an era, to shut out of linguistics antiquated, theologically oriented or mythical speculations on the origin of language. Though the work could not have succeeded completely in this goal, nevertheless, was an important collection of old speculations on the subject. And it serves to demarcate historical linguistics' repudiation of the centrality of the origin of language question.

---

Pott, *Anti-Kaulen*, p. 245, 292. Pott, "Kennzeichen"; Müller, "Turanian Family of Languages" Pott, *Anti-Kaulen*, pp. 220 ff. 233—234; p. 230; p. 248; p. 259, 292; p. 237 Ewald's articles were issued separately as they appeared in the *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Historisch-philologische Klasse* 9, pp. 157—219; 10, pp. 3—81.

<sup>32</sup> Pott, *Anti-Kaulen*, pp. 239 ff.

## Bibliography

- Bense, Gertrud: "Bemerkungen zu theoretischen Positionen im Werk von A. F. Pott", in: *Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung* 29, 1976, pp. 519–522
- Borst, Arno: *Der Turmbau von Babel. Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker* 3/2, Stuttgart 1961
- Ellis, Alexander J.: "Third Annual Address of the President [...]", in: *Transactions of the Philological Society of London*, 15 May 1874, pp. 354–460
- Ewald, Heinrich: "Sprachwissenschaftliche Abhandlungen, I. Abhandlung ueber den Bau der Thatwörter im Koptischen; II. Abhandlung ueber den Zusammenhang des nordischen (tuskischen), mittelländischen, semitischen und koptischen Sprachstammes" in: *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Hist.-philol. Klasse* 9, 1861, pp. 157–219; 10, 1862, pp. 3–81
- Gatz, Erwin: "Kaulen, Franz Philipp", in: *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 11, 1977, pp. 357–358
- Gobineau, Arthur de: *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 4 v. Paris 1853–1855
- Horn, Paul: "August Friedrich Pott", in: *Beiträge zur Kunde der indogermanischen Sprachen* 13, 1888, pp. 317–341
- Kaulen, Franz: *Die Sprachverwirrung zu Babel. Linguistisch-Theologische Untersuchungen über Gen. XI., 1–9*, Mainz 1861
- Leopold, Joan: "French-German Connections in Linguistics: August Friedrich Pott (1802–87) and his French Friends", in: *Essays toward a History of Linguistic Theories*, Lille 1984 (Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the History of the Language Sciences, 1981), pp. 415–425
- Leopold, Joan: *The Letter Liveth: The Life, Work and Library of August Friedrich Pott (1802–87)*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia 1983 (Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science, Series 5: Library and Information Sources in Linguistics 9)
- Müller, Friedrich Max: "The Last Results of the Researches respecting the Non-Iranian and Non-Semitic Languages of Asia and Europe, or the Turanian Family of Languages", in: *Outlines of the Philosophy of Universal History, applied to Language and Religion*, Christian Charles Josias Bunsen, ed. 2 v. London 1854, I, pp. 263–521
- Pott, August Friedrich: *Anti-Kaulen oder Mythische Vorstellungen vom Ursprunge der Völker und Sprachen. Nebst Beurtheilung der zwei sprachwissenschaftlichen Abhandlungen Heinrich von Ewald's*, Lemgo and Detmold 1863
- Pott, August Friedrich: *Etymologische Forschungen auf dem Gebiete der Indo-Germanischen Sprachen mit besonderem Bezug auf die Lautumwandlung im Sanskrit, Griechischen, Lateinischen, Littauischen und Gothischen* [1st ed.], 2 v. Lemgo 1833–1836
- Pott, August Friedrich: *Etymologische Forschungen auf dem Gebiete der Indo-Germanischen Sprachen, unter Berücksichtigung ihrer Hauptformen, Sanskrit; Zend-Persisch; Griechisch-Lateinisch; Littauisch-Slawisch; Germanisch und Keltisch* [2nd rev. ed.] 6 v. Lemgo and Detmold 1859–1876
- Pott, August Friedrich: "Max Müller und die Kennzeichen der Sprachverwandtschaft", in: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 9, 1855, pp. 405–464
- Pott, August Friedrich: *Die Ungleichheit menschlicher Rassen hauptsächlich vom sprachwissenschaftlichen Standpunkte, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von des Grafen von Gobineau gleichnamigem Werke. Mit einem Ueberblicke über die Sprachverhältnisse der Völker*, Lemgo and Detmold 1856

- Pott, August Friedrich: *Die Ungleichheit menschlicher Rassen hauptsächlich vom sprachwissenschaftlichen Standpunkte, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von des Grafen von Gobineau gleichnamigem Werke. Mit einem Ueberblicke über die Sprachverhältnisse der Völker*, Lemgo and Detmold 1856
- Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph: *Philosophie der Mythologie I, Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie*, Darmstadt 1976 (orig. 1856)
- Tylor, Edward Burnett [anon.]: "Pott on Myths of the Origin of Man and Language" (Review of A. F. Pott, *Anti-Kaulen*), in: *Anthropological Review* 2, 1863, pp. 24–30
- Wedewer, Hermann Anton Josef: *Die neuere Sprachwissenschaft und der Urstand der Menschheit*, Freiburg i. Br. 1867