

Pott, August Friedrich, b. Nov. 14, 1802, Netelrede (now Nesselröden), near Hannoversch Münden, Germany, d. July, 5, 1887, Halle an der Saale, Germany; general linguist and Indo-Europeanist.

After wide-ranging studies at Göttingen University from 1821 to 1825, P., whose inherited means were very modest, took up teaching at the Gymnasium of Celle, but after obtaining his doctorate from Göttingen in 1827, immediately abandoned his secure post in order to study comparative Indo-European grammar under F. → Bopp at Berlin. Qualifying as a *Privatdozent* in 1830, he was offered the newly established *Extraordinariat* in Comparative Grammar at the University of Halle in 1833 on the recommendation of Bopp and W. v. → Humboldt. Promoted to *Ordinarius* in 1838, P. held this chair until his death in 1887, amid much political strife (with liberalism, P.'s life-long creed, going out of fashion in academic circles after 1848), and fighting a running battle with the university administration about his permanently low salary.

Steeped, on the one hand, in traditional general or philosophical grammar and, on the other, in the fledgling comparative Indo-European grammar and philology, much of P.'s work can be seen as an attempt to bridge the dramatically deepening chasm between these two traditions. The latter field had recently become vastly more respectable, largely owing to Bopp's success in uncovering the (agglutinative rather than flec-tional) origins of the grammatical forms of Sanskrit and its relations, but with academic success, its scope was threatening to become ever narrower. General grammar, often denigrated for its neglect of actual cross-linguistic diversity past and present despite its universal aspirations, also continued to have its champions (including notably Humboldt, P.'s other patron) who did much to place linguistics that could truly be called general on a more solid empirical footing, but it was unable to establish a firm foothold in the academic syllabus, at least in Germany.

His first major work, the two-volume *Etymologische Forschungen auf dem Gebiete der Indogermanischen Sprachen* (1833/36), established his reputation as the leading light of the new historicism that was in the ascendant; P.'s lasting fame, if somewhat diminished, even within his own lifetime, by the triumph of the Neogrammarian movement, is that he is regarded, together with Bopp, J. → Grimm, and R. → Rask, as a founding father of the new-style scientific historical-comparative grammar, inaugurating in particular the historical study of sounds and words (or rather roots) of the entire

Indo-European family, according to the comparative method. Once installed at Halle, and without forsaking the concerns of a Indo-Europeanist grammarian, lexicologist, and philologist, P. sought to widen the scope of his comparative enquiries far beyond the Aryan realm, without, so far as possible, lowering the methodological standards just attained; and he would insist, perhaps contrary to the terms of his employment but fully justified by his publishing record, that his professorship was one for general linguistics, the first of its kind.

It was not only in order to augment his meager professorial income and to obtain free books that P. was such a prolific contributor to leading reviewing journals (for example, *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, or *Hallische Jahrbücher*), taking note of the widest conceivable range of publications (including his own) on virtually all of the world's linguistic groupings. It was also a matter of principle for him to assimilate as much information about languages and cultures as could be found in print, and to do the same was his urgent advice to his fellow general linguists, for whose benefit he published (1884–90) a series of extensive literary surveys intended as an introduction to this discipline (whose academic precariousness is reflected in the fact that not a single doctorate or *Habilitation* was supervised by P. during his 54 years at Halle). Apart from covering linguistics for general reviewing journals and to some extent also for the *Brockhaus Encyclopädie*, P. was closely associated with several specialist journals (including Albert Höfer's *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft der Sprache*, 1846 to 1853, and Friedrich Techmer's *Internationale Zeitschrift für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft*, from 1884 to 1890, both exemplary but short-lived) and learned societies (in particular the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* which P. served as librarian) that were newly founded in these times where so many frontiers seemed extendable.

Far from merely reverencing his patron Humboldt, P. re-edited, copiously annotating, and writing an introduction to the master's famed *Kawi* treatise (cf. 1876), P. was one of the very few contemporaries (others were H. E. Bindseil and H. C. v. d. → Gabelentz, both acquaintances of P.'s) to take the Humboldtian research program of an 'encyclopedia of grammatical categories' seriously, which was intended to help overcome the limitation of linguistic typology to the hackneyed distinction between isolating, agglutinative, inflectional, and more recently also polysynthetic, morphologies. P.'s numerous and often voluminous con-

tributions to this program were devoted to categories such as person (1843), numerals (1847, 1868, etc.), proper names (1853, etc.), gender (1856), and reduplication and gemination (1862). A Humboldtian view of Indo-European subject and object cases that took into account case-marking patterns found in Basque and Greenlandic also afforded P. (1873) the insight, much debated until today, that Indo-European too might once have had a contrast of ergative and absolutive rather than nominative and accusative cases.

Even within the confines of Indo-European, P. concerned himself much more intensively than was the custom with the development of and the relations between modern languages, notably Romance and Latvian in the West and Kurdish in the East. While P. was not the first to demonstrate the Indic provenance of Romany, his corroboration (1844/45, etc.) was by far the most thorough and raised Romany studies to a new professional level.

One grand theme that fascinated P. throughout his life was the nature of the linguistic sign. Devoting innumerable articles to the motivations for the choice of sound forms expressing notions in diverse lexical domains (including the animal, vegetable, and mineral, and such natural phenomena as were prone to be endowed with mythological significance), he more unusually went on to explore the question of sound symbolism in the grammatical domain, focusing for example on the perfect tense (1884/86). A comprehensive treatment of the 'symbolic' relationship between form and meaning, distinguished on the one hand from the 'imitative' and 'analogous' (and thus not quite corresponding to what is nowadays called 'iconic') and from the 'cyriologic' (or conventional) on the other, remained unpublished (1887); P. died as he was preparing the 500-page manuscript for print.

In the last of his open letters to P., published in 1877, H. → Steinthal, his old rival in superintending the Humboldtian legacy, concluded melancholically that in their way of doing linguistics, they were at odds with current fashions and that their time was the past. He was only partly right. Aspiring to professionalism as a general linguist, P. was a hundred years ahead of his time, if not more.

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