

**ANALOGY AND THE
SCOPE OF
ITS APPLICATION IN
LANGUAGE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649307432

Analogy and the Scope of Its Application in Language by Benjamin Ide Wheeler

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BENJAMIN IDE WHEELER

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Cornell Studies in classical philology

ANALOGY

AND **W. SCHWIDT-WARTENBERG**

THE SCOPE OF ITS APPLICATION
IN LANGUAGE

BY

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ANALOGY, AND THE SCOPE OF ITS APPLICATION IN LANGUAGE.

GENERAL AND INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS.

It is the purpose of the following paper to attempt a coherent classification of the generally recognized products of the action of analogy in language. The material to be employed in illustrating the classifications is rarely new. The discussions of Paul, Osthoff, and Henry present no basis of classification that can be made exhaustive, and hence afford no means of ascertaining what are the limitations of the action of this important factor in linguistic development. Furthermore, the various classifications suggested—most notable of which is Paul's division into "stoffliche" and "formale"—describe only the results of the action of analogy, instead of referring back to the activities of the mind, which produce the groupings, and, in accordance with the groupings, the forms. The classifications, in other words, have been grammatical rather than psychological.

The fact that the subject of analogy has received as yet no systematic recognition in any works published in the English language affords an excuse for the presentation of an otherwise unnecessarily voluminous mass of illustrative material, with a view to emphasizing the exceeding importance of this element in the economy of language. For a like reason has been added in conclusion a cursory review of the recent methodological employment of analogy in determining the nature of linguistic growth and in explaining the forms of speech; and this outline is illustrated by a bibliography of the subject, with chronological classification.

Human life occupies the border-lands of mind and matter, and human speech, like every product of the *entire* human life, is conditioned by the laws of mind and matter alike. As a collection of spoken symbols, language is physiological in its character; as a collection of impressions of sound or impressions of movement stored away beneath the levels of consciousness, it falls within the domain of the psychical, and is psychologically conditioned. Its physiological character subjects it to the laws of sound, which, though they may, as resultants of innumerable compromises between individual tendencies, be regarded as *social* laws, yet in the final analysis owe their peculiar character to the relations existing, in the sound-repertory of the speaking individual, between the various positions of articulation, or between these and the *basis of articulation*, that normal position to which the organs tend to return after every act of articulation (*die Indifferenzlage*). In every closely defined dialectic community the sum of inherited phonetic material must be with individuals essentially the same, the relations of the elements the same, the conditions for phonetic development essentially identical, and minute individual divergences must be continually subject to correction by contact. From the deductive side, accordingly, we are prepared to expect what the advancing experience of linguistic investigation also is indicating with ever-increasing clearness to be the line and direction of truth, — that the laws of sound-change have universal application (*Allgemeingiltigkeit*); i. e., application to the entire like-conditioned material, within the limits of a community-dialect. Induction determines only the line of direction, or the approximate line of direction, toward the truth; but its determinations impose upon the investigator a duty relative to the course and method of his further search. So far as the practical method of research is concerned, the phonetic "laws" are mere formulas for an observed harmony in phonetic development; they indicate for the etymologist the danger-line.

Whereas, therefore, any given phonetic law can be asserted only for a restricted dialectic community, and general phonetic possibilities or phonetic analogies from other linguistic communities have no direct application in the exact study of language,

psychological laws, on the other hand, find no such sharp limitation of application, as they are based upon the universal constituent principles of the human mind. The particular character of these laws is always determined by the relations existing in the storehouses of memory between the various word-pictures or the various thought- or sentence-pictures. Again, the laws of sound-change have application to the entire like-conditioned material of a given language, whereas the intervention of a *possible* analogy is never *necessary*. The Greek *ἄκρω* was always exposed to the influence of its next neighbor *ἔκρω* (and *ἔξ*), but accepted the *spiritus asper*, as far as I know, only in the Heraklean dialect (*ἄκρω*), and the change of consonant only, if at all, in the Elean *ἄκρω*. Thirdly, it is to be noticed that the operation of the laws of sound is unconscious and gradual, so that the old form cannot, except through mixing of dialects, survive alongside the new; with the introduction of *τυψί* the older *τυπά* disappeared from the Ionic-Attic dialect. The products of analogy, however, do not necessarily displace the older forms; thus Germ. *gediegen* survives, in a special use, beside the new *gedieken*. In all linguistic investigation the most rigid discrimination between the operation of the physiological factors and the psychological factors is indispensable. Under one of the two categories may be classed every case of change in language. In Latin *s* between vowels becomes *r*, and *arbōrem* admits of a phonetical explanation; but *final s* does not become *r*, hence *arbōr* beside *arbōs* must be referred to psychological action, namely, the association with the forms of the other cases.

The phenomena of analogy are in the last analysis referable to the unconscious effort of the mind, in its quest for unity, to reduce the apparently incongruous elements of speech to systems and groups; that is, to put simplicity in the place of complexity. We say "apparently incongruous," for the soul is by nature no "Sprachvergleich," and but an indifferent morphologist. It knows nothing of the *history* of forms, but knows them as they *are*,—in their relations to each other. The laws of sound tend generally to disturb unity of system, and introduce a diversity out of which the mind seeks again to restore simplicity, provided always that the diversity do not associate itself

with differences of signification, and by practical usefulness vindicate its right to exist.

In short, therefore, the action of the psychological factor is in the direction of ejecting useless material and traditional red-tape. The mind's method of assorting and systematizing its language material is determined by its habit of grouping or associating ideas and their symbols upon the basis of likeness of signification, likeness of use or function, and likeness in the form of the symbol. In coming to the level of consciousness, a member of a group may be accompanied by other members of its group, and is subject to their influence. The resistance it offers to their influence is partly determined by the intensity of the force by which use has impressed it upon the memory, and partly by the complexity of its relations to various groups, which forbids its yielding to the influence of any one. Children are generous "Analogisten," not only because the traditional variety of form is less forcibly impressed upon their memories by use, but also because the meagreness of their vocabulary admits of less complexity of grouping. The traditional diversity of the *am, is, are*, yields to the simple system *I is, you is, he is, we is*.

We turn now to the discussion of the various phenomena of analogy, arranging them with reference to the various sorts of psychological grouping, and illustrating the various categories from the most widely separated branches of the Indo-European family of languages. To attempt as a primary basis of arrangement a discrimination between formations of new word-material, and modifications of old material, would be vain and useless. So far as the *principles of formation* are concerned, — and it is with these alone that we have here to do, — the difference is at most one of degree. In both cases existing material is newly combined to create essentially a new form; e. g., *departure* and *seizure* are comparatively recent formations on the pattern of the old inherited forms *picture, measure*, etc.; whereas *pleasure* is a modification of an older form (cf. Fr. *plaisir*) after the same pattern.

A classification, furthermore, upon the basis of the *results* of the action of analogy, — e. g., as affecting forms, or as affecting merely sounds, — is artificial, and, inasmuch as it takes no cog-