

HENRY SWEET'S IDEA OF TOTALITY: A NINETEENTH-CENTURY
PHILOLOGIST'S APPROACH TO THE PRACTICAL STUDY OF LANGUAGE

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DECEMBER 1994

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Sid Bradley and John Kelly for their supervision in the writing of this thesis, and Mike MacMahon for useful advice and information on the subject of Sweet. I am grateful to my parents, brothers and sister for their encouragement. People who particularly helped are: Jane Jones, Lodi Nauta, Vivian Salmon, Oliver Davies, Mary Cotes, Richard Tuffs, Roy Grant, Graham Wilks, F.R. Miles, as well as many librarians, former colleagues, and fellow research students at York, Oxford, Brussels, and Cologne.

ABSTRACT

Henry Sweet's 'Idea of Totality'. A Nineteenth-Century Philologist's Approach to the Practical Study of Language.

This thesis deals with the links between the linguistic and medieval writings of the philologist Henry Sweet (1845-1912) during the first half of his career (1869-1885) and the role they played in the development of his ideas on the acquisition of foreign languages.

Chapter one sketches Sweet's career and argues that the sources of Sweet's later work in applied linguistics, The Practical Study of Languages (1899), are to be found not only in his research in phonetics but also in his earlier work in Anglo-Saxon and medieval English philology.

Chapter two outlines Sweet's 'practical' approach, as it existed in his early writings of the 1870's, relates it to the then orthodox methods of language learning which he rejected as 'fallacious', and shows how Sweet - while editing the Old English Pastoral Care - found a partial solution to the problem of how to learn a foreign language in the 'synthetic methods' of language learning of the middle ages.

Sweet's assertions about the medieval language curriculum are discussed in chapter three in relation to modern scholarship, particularly his idea of the partial use of aural, holistic approaches to the learning of Latin within the normally analytical medieval curriculum. Themes of the psychology of learning in the Old English Pastoral Care are then compared with Sweet's own approaches to language learning theory.

Chapter four, 'Nature and the Textbook', traces Sweet's Romantic concerns: the nineteenth-century attitudes to science, nature, and philology which coloured his ideas on language and language learning and influenced the ethos and contents of his textbooks.

Chapter five looks at Sweet's psychological concept of 'cross-associations': the mental confusions caused by Victorian education and literacy which had led to the development of what he regarded as a false 'visual conception of language' among his contemporaries.

Sweet's 'synthetic method' of language learning - the most original part of his approach to language learning from this period - is examined in chapter six. His terminology is defined, his indebtedness to medieval practice discussed and the development of his approach assessed through the 1870's and up to the publication in 1885 of his 'synthetic' text-book, the Elementarbuch des gesprochenen Englisch.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND SKETCH OF SWEET'S CAREER.

In those days, when grammars and dictionaries were hardly known or used, Latin was studied much more as a living language than it is now; sentences were grasped as wholes, without the minute analysis of modern scholarship, and were consequently translated as wholes.

(Henry Sweet, the Old English Pastoral Care, 1871)¹

1.1 PRELIMINARY ORIENTATION

This thesis focuses on the early career of the nineteenth-century philologist Henry Sweet (1845-1912), and the development in the 1870's of the 'Practical Study of Language' - Sweet's influential approach to foreign language learning. Sweet is in at least three ways a pivotal figure: firstly, as a philologist his ideas on language are forward-looking and 'modernist'; secondly, Sweet was also a pioneer of modern methodologies of language teaching and applied linguistics; finally, he was also a leading Anglo-Saxonist, particularly for the first half of his career up to about 1885, and one who attempted to apply the lessons of the past. A study of his early writings (with occasional corroboration from later work) shows that Sweet's encounter with medieval culture was extremely fruitful for the development of his ideas on language learning and related topics.

The thesis will thus be a comparative study - centring on Sweet's early writings - of certain problems related to the teaching and acquisition of foreign languages as practised in the early middle ages and in the second half of the nineteenth-century. The problematic areas under consideration are: general cultural attitudes to language and language learning, the scientific study of language, the Romantic view of language as a phenomenon of 'Nature', the contents and arrangement of textbooks, the relationship between colloquial and literary, spoken and written modes of language, the definition and role of notions of the 'word' and the 'sentence', and the psychological processes regarded as relevant in the learning of a language.

1.1.1 Sweet's Approach to Language Learning

The basis of Sweet's interpretation of medieval language learning is seen in the passage (quoted above) taken from his first published book, the edition of the Old English Pastoral Care of 1871. Here, in his first pronouncement on practical methods of language study, Sweet asserts that in the medieval period, when books were in such short supply, Latin was studied not as a dead but as a living language, and was learnt holistically - in stark contrast to modern (Victorian) methods based on analysis. Three features of this passage are particularly worthy of note; the use of the term 'living' language, the emphasis on the lack of written aids for the medieval language learner, and the notion of 'grasping sentences as wholes'. In the course of the thesis, it will be seen that these assertions about medieval language learning are key concerns in the development of Sweet's approach to the 'practical study of language', for they correspond to his Romantically coloured notions of a 'natural' approach to language learning, to his emphasis on an 'oral conception of language', and to his 'synthetic method' of acquiring a foreign language.

The term 'living language' points to Sweet's neo-Romantic view of languages as 'living organisms' - 'natural phenomena' to be investigated by both the observational methods of the Victorian scientist and the imaginative capacity for wonder of the nineteenth-century poet of Nature. Linked to this is Sweet's predilection for 'soothing' nature descriptions which feature so prominently in his language text-books, such as The Anglo-Saxon Reader (first edition 1876) and the Elementarbuch des gesprochenen Englisch (1885). Behind Sweet's ideas on language learning lies the conviction - perhaps not always conscious - that the phenomena of language and nature are intimately linked. Such a view is apparent, for instance, in the idea that children acquire language by 'natural laws of association', that the language of poetry reflects the symbolic workings of the mind, that the categories by which the lexical items of a language are organised depend ultimately on the way things appear or the way they originally appeared to early humans; thus we still say, for instance, 'it rains' or 'the sun rises'.

Sweet shared with many of his philologist colleagues the

view that the real life of a language was in its spoken form and in its dialects. In this respect, literature is too fixed and 'artificial' to serve as material for the language learner. Instead, the student must begin with the spoken language, with the 'natural sentence' rather than any artificial construct. The emphasis on writing fostered by education and printed books has tended, in Sweet's opinion, to create a 'visual conception of language' with a detrimental effect on the learning of languages. This tendency can be countered by phonetics, which Sweet was instrumental in developing, and by a return to the oral attitudes to language and methods of learning practised in the middle ages.

The notion of 'grasping sentences as wholes', the basis of a 'synthetic method' of language learning, is Sweet's most original formulation in his early writings on the 'practical study of language'. While it never became the sole principle behind his approach to language learning, which he developed in further diverse ways during the more purely linguistic and applied linguistic writings of the second half of his career from 1885 to about 1908, it nevertheless remains as the major insight (as we shall see, never fully explored) of Sweet's encounter with the middle ages in the period from 1869 to 1885.

What does Sweet mean by 'grasping sentences as wholes'? As the 1871 quotation shows, for Sweet grasping sentences as a whole is the opposite of 'minute analysis' - his description of the methods of study then prevalent - and implies notions of 'totality' or, as he terms it, 'synthesis'. In general, synthesis means combination rather than analysis, putting together rather than pulling apart. In language learning this involves looking at the whole of a piece before breaking it into parts, and then, once the analysis has been made, returning again to the synthesis.² This is the basis of the approach.

'Grasping sentences as wholes' thus denotes a holistic approach to the acquisition of language. Sweet stresses the primacy of speech over writing (like Saussure), and he emphasises the natural 'breath-group' and 'connected' discourse as the units of language rather than individual written words or artificial sentences constructed according to prescriptive, externally-imposed analytical rules.³ In reaching this insight, he upholds the methods of the 'scientific investigator', striving to observe the

phenomena of nature as they actually are, then applying the results to practical goals. According to his principles of the 'practical study of language' (i.e. applied linguistics), the learner grasps sentences holistically (a process which Sweet terms 'synthesis' or the 'synthetic method') by paying close attention to stress, vowel-quantity and quality, elision, hiatus and intonation - all features that contribute to the full meaning of the utterance.⁴ In the study of medieval texts, the philologist or critic can, according to Sweet, discern the synthetic mentality in the investigatory, almost 'scientific' approach to the observation of nature (as already noted, a highly Romantic aspect of Sweet's thinking), in the phonetic practices of the scribe,⁵ in the oral stylistic features of the author, and in the holistic emphasis on 'natural' sentences (rather than individual words) of the prose translator.⁶ As sentences were grasped as wholes, they were consequently translated as wholes.

Sweet's holistic principle, the focus of the thesis, has been so far neglected in histories of language teaching, perhaps because it forms only one part - albeit an essential one - in his wide-ranging, eclectic approach to the problem of acquiring a foreign language. Sweet maintained there was no 'royal road' to language;⁷ nor was he proposing a new 'one-sided' method to add to the many already in existence. As already stated above, he maintained that synthesis is a valid principle to be employed in conjunction with its opposite, 'analysis' - the breaking up of the 'stream of speech' by word-division and grammatical parsing for purposes of comprehension. But logical analysis should not degenerate into the overriding concern which it had become for his contemporaries, and once a piece of language has been analysed it should be returned to and viewed once again as a whole. A perceptive eclecticism is necessary: the learner should use analysis to support synthesis, grammar rules to ease the acquisition of patterns, association to reinforce grammatical and lexical forms, and translation (sentence by sentence, not literal) to aid comprehension. In the approach taken, the learner will be aware of his or her own needs, abilities and concerns and apply the general principles accordingly.

1.1.2 Recent Research on Sweet in Applied Linguistics

Though his notion of 'grasping sentences as wholes' has been neglected, the significant role Sweet played in the history of language teaching has been traced in outline by the interesting and valuable studies of Howatt and others.⁸ It is now seen that the techniques of phonetics, association, and connected texts which Sweet recommends coincided with and contributed to major developments in language learning theory and practice in England, France, Scandinavia, and above all Germany in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The gaps in this account, particularly with regard to synthesis and the influence of ideas from philology and psychology, will be filled in the course of the thesis. It would take a separate study to trace the influence of Sweet through the twentieth century on such linguists as Harold Palmer, M. Bloomfield and J.R. Firth.

Many of the 'general principles of method' which Sweet and his fellow reformers proposed have stood the test of time and are now fully accepted as part of the modern language teacher's repertoire. Moreover, there are some striking parallels between Sweet's insights and the findings of modern research, and where these occur, they will be noted in the thesis. In particular, the idea of a holistic approach is endorsed in some recent 'learner-centred' research by applied linguists. Thus Skehan distinguishes the affective, holistic learner from the more analytically minded personality, and suggests that teaching practice must be aware of the distinction:⁹

One type of language learner seems to have a language learning orientation which stresses the analysability of language while the other, perhaps more expression-oriented, is more apt to rely on chunks of language and efficient memory.

Unlike the applied linguists, the historians of phonetics have been quicker to recognize the importance of Sweet's 'synthetic' approach. R.H. Robins has pointed to the 'fundamental distinction' Sweet makes between synthesis and analysis.¹⁰ Roman Jakobson termed it 'the idea of totality emphasised by Sweet against the disintegrating spirit of the current dogma...'.¹¹ and Henderson, commenting on the range of his work in her anthology of his phonetic writings, wrote of the

'quality of "wholeness" which is the essence of Sweet's greatness'.¹²

Despite this work, however, there remains a gap to be filled in the accounts of Sweet's language learning theory, particularly with regard to Sweet's sources and the scope of his early ideas. To do justice to the full range of Sweet's thinking, an interdisciplinary approach will be necessary, drawing on the Victorian background in language teaching, educational psychology, philology, phonetics, Romantic nature poetry, natural science, and medieval studies. Sweet's notion of a 'synthetic method' deserves wider recognition, and if applied linguists are to be more aware of the roots of their discipline, then the sources of one of their earliest scholars need to be established and clarified.¹³

1.1.3 Sweet and the Middle Ages

Historical studies of Sweet by both applied linguists and phoneticians have tended, naturally enough, to focus their attention on Sweet's achievements within their own particular fields. Inevitably, however, this focus excludes Sweet's important work in the philological and medieval field, which, as the quotation at the beginning shows, has a direct bearing on his approach to language acquisition.

The question of the best way to acquire a language is, and will possibly remain, despite the advances of empirical research, a perennial problem. Centuries ago, the notion that the sentence, rather than the word, is the basic unit of language was a major tenet of ancient Indian linguistic theory.¹⁴ Debates in the nineteenth century between the supporters of the supposedly traditional 'grammar-translation' method and the Reformers (Sweet, Ellis, Viëtor, Storm, Jespersen etc.) are paralleled in the discussions of Hartlib and Webbe in the seventeenth century,¹⁵ and John Locke has interesting points to make on learning Latin by 'Roate, Custom and Memory' rather than by grammar rules.¹⁶ In the eleventh-century, Ælfric the Grammarian arguably used a 'direct method' in his educational colloquy.¹⁷ Though language learning certainly is a perennial issue, it is also true that each age has its own emphases - and that the emphasis of one

period can become a corrective to that of the other. It is here that the Sweetian approach to early medieval learning proves illuminating.

Sweet lived in what students of literacy term a 'typographic', print-based culture.¹⁸ It was his contention that printing and writing, grammars and dictionaries had produced in the average nineteenth-century educated individual a view of language as a visual phenomenon. In his reaction against such a mentality (or, arguably, his overreaction), he came to emphasise the primacy of speech and the aural grasping of sentences as wholes, and thus naturally found himself more in tune with the apparently highly oral-based culture of the medieval period in whose literature he was steeped. On a number of occasions, but most clearly in his discussions on language study of 1884 and 1885,¹⁹ his edition of the Pastoral Care of 1871, and his review articles of the 1870's, he argued that medieval people made use of these very methods which he was seeking to propagate in his ideas for reform.

While historians of language teaching undervalue Sweet's notion of a 'synthetic' method, they nevertheless agree on his contribution to the Direct Method and to the development of applied linguistics. By contrast, in medieval studies, there has been little acknowledgement of Sweet's potential contribution to our theoretical understanding of the medieval curriculum.²⁰ The manuscript studies of Wieland and Lapidge²¹ and others point to a laboriously word-for-word, analytical style of study in the period, the very opposite of Sweet's view of the oral grasping of whole sentences. Yet the historians of literacy now emphasise the 'transitional literacy' of scribes who allowed oral formulas to affect their copying, of 'the tenaciousness of orality' in medieval manuscript culture, and of the 'persistence, even among the educated, of listening to a statement rather than scrutinising it'.²² There are clear parallels here to Sweet's approach. His view of medieval learning in its auditive and holistic emphasis has some support also in the views of Leclercq and others on the devotional and meditative practices of early medieval learning.²³ Thus Sweet's claim that his approach was a return to medieval methods deserves taking seriously. In the light of modern research, both the background in medieval education, and the

medieval psychology of learning that forms a major theme of the Pastoral Care will be seen to form an essential background to Sweet's progress towards a valid method for the 'practical study of language'.

1.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF SWEET'S SCHOLARSHIP

Assuming, for the moment, that Sweet's career conveniently divides around 1885, we need to face the question: are we justified in treating his ideas as a unit, or should we distinguish early and later versions of his approach to language study? The answer appears to be that many of his basic ideas are formulated quite early, but then undergo amplification - and occasionally more subtle modifications. Sweet frequently produced a revised, extended version of an earlier work, often including whole passages almost word for word from the original. Thus his piece on Anglo-Saxon poetry (1871) is the precursor of his paper on Shelley's nature poetry of 1888, the paper on the history of English sounds of 1874 becomes a book in 1888; the Handbook of Phonetics of 1877 is adapted and brought up-to-date in his (shorter) Primer of Phonetics of 1890 with further, less immediately obvious modifications for the edition of 1906. Such minor changes can disguise the fact that the aims of a book have changed: the Anglo-Saxon Reader, originally a primer for beginners (1876) gradually becomes a book for more advanced students (1881) and the version of 1894 begins to reflect Sweet's renewed interests in the criticism of literature. For the purposes of this study it is important to note that there were various different but related explorations of the 'Practical Study of Language(s)',²⁴. Although Sweet's core ideas remain unaltered, a chronological development is clearly discernible and must be kept in mind in our discussion.

1.2.1 The Anglo-Saxon and Applied Linguistic Phases of Sweet's Scholarship

Is it justified to isolate stages in this development? A look at Sweet's career is appropriate (although, again, specific details must be reserved for later). Here the published

biographical sketches, albeit brief, are invaluable: particularly those by his contemporaries Wyld, Brandl, and Onions, as well as later, more critical accounts by Wrenn and, most recently, in the work of the historian of phonetics M.K.C. MacMahon.²⁵

Sweet showed little promise at King's College School, London, and progressed only as far as the Upper Fourth. Occasional later remarks reveal that his schooling generally had a negative effect on him: he was left with a distaste for Latin and Greek and he came to despise the lifeless and meaningless methods by which these (and other) languages were taught at most Victorian public schools.

An early intellectual interest was in alphabets, and following on from this, Sweet became interested in the notation of speech sounds, studying under Melville Bell, the inventor of an 'organic' phonetic script known as Visible Speech; his interest in phonetics developed later through contact with the ideas of A.J. Ellis and Eduard Sievers.²⁶ His later enthusiasm for the reading and spelling reform movements (and hence also for the reform of language teaching) stems from these interests.

After leaving King's College School, London, where he probably first began to learn Old English, Sweet studied historical grammar from 1864 to 1865 at Heidelberg, attending the lectures of Adolf Holtzmann and teaching himself the details through a close study of Grimm's grammar.²⁷ He may also have studied Sanskrit under Holtzmann. Anglo-Saxon became an absorbing interest, initiated by his reading of Grimm, and perfected apparently through the books of Rask, Vernon, Thorpe.²⁸ He perhaps also used the work of the Anglo-Saxon scholar Oswald Cockayne, a Latin teacher at King's College School, who taught Sweet in the Upper Fourth, although Wyld later stated that Sweet was not influenced by Cockayne.²⁹ In the period up to and including his study of classics at Oxford (1869-1873), Sweet studied the Northern languages intensely, including Icelandic, Danish and Swedish, apparently in his spare time while working in the office of a mercantile firm. Both the Bodleian and British libraries became favourite haunts, and he gradually developed his palaeographic skills as he read through scores of Old English manuscripts.

At Oxford, Sweet met Friedrich Max Müller, then Professor of

Modern Languages and head of the Taylorian Institute (there was at this time no possibility of reading for a degree in modern languages), and in 1870 he gained the Taylorian prize in German language and philology, his only academic distinction for the university itself.³⁰ In 1873 (the year he barely passed his classics degree), he published a study of the sounds of Danish, and in the following year the first version of the History of English Sounds. The culmination of this early language-learning period is the essay 'Words, Logic, and Grammar' (1876) and the pioneering Handbook of Phonetics (1877), as well as the draft of The Practical Study of Languages, not published until 1899.

From 1871 onwards, Sweet began to produce his major work in Anglo-Saxon studies, initiated through his membership of the London Philological Society (from 1869), and through his friendship with F.J. Furnivall, the general editor of the Early English Text Society. While still an undergraduate, though admittedly older than the average, he quickly gained a reputation for his erudition, and from 1870 he became the regular contributor of reviews and short articles on Old English for the new fortnightly journal of literature, science and art, The Academy (founded 1869). Fellow contributors included W.W. Skeat, Max Müller, Matthew Arnold, and the scientist Alfred R. Wallace. From his active involvement with The Academy, we can assume that Sweet was au fait with current literary, linguistic, anthropological and general scientific debate as well as his own Old English and German philological interests. In 1876, he became President of the Philological Society and published two presidential addresses (1877 and 1878) notable for their wide reading in philology and phonetics, and for their comments on the practical study of languages. His most well-known works of this period are the Anglo-Saxon Reader (1876) and the Second Anglo-Saxon Reader (1887), but as well as numerous short notes and articles, he also wrote the important editions of Old English texts: the Pastoral Care (1871), Orosius (1883) and the Oldest English Texts (1885). The latter book was, according to Onions (p. 519), the product of 'seven years of the closest work', which put the early history of English on a sound basis, while the Anglo-Saxon Reader was 'a selection of Old English literature that has not been surpassed in any similar compass'.

According to the account of Sweet by his pupil Alois Brandl (later professor of English in Berlin), it seems that Sweet was initially supported financially by a private income, but in the 1880's he had to supplement this with books for the Clarendon Press (Brandl, p. 11). These were 'works for beginners' (Wyld, p. 4), a series of primers for the practical mastery of languages, ancient and modern: Anglo-Saxon Primer (1882-96: eight editions), First Middle English Primer (1884), Second Middle English Primer (1885), Anglo-Saxon Reading Primers, 2 vols. (1885), Elementarbuch des gesprochenen Englisch (1885), Primer of Spoken English (1890), A Manual of Current Shorthand (1892), First Steps in Anglo-Saxon (1897), Students' Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon (1897). Apart from the Anglo-Saxon Primer, still in print today in a revised edition³¹, the most important of these is the Elementarbuch, the book which, in Onions's phrase, 'taught phonetics to Europe', or, perhaps more correctly, taught English to Europe.³² Eagerly awaited,³³ the Elementarbuch was intended to put into practice the theory outlined in the paper to the Philological Society on the 'Practical Study of Language' of the previous year.

In the more purely philological field, Sweet published his much-acclaimed History of English Sounds in 1888. Subsequently, the 1890's saw the publication of Sweet's work in grammar and syntax: A New English Grammar, 2 vols. (1892, 1898). His later work then moved into the wider fields of comparative philology with his 'Linguistic Affinity' and The History of Language (1900). Following his appointment as Reader in Phonetics at Oxford in 1901, Sweet revised and re-published his work in phonetics, as in The Sounds of English (1908).

It is tempting to isolate significant dates and phases in Sweet's career. While Wyld and Brandl treat his output more as a unity, Onions chooses to emphasise 1876, the year of publication of the Reader:

In the twenty years following he produced most of that pioneer work which, by its range and originality, distinguishes him as the greatest philologist that this country has produced.

Wrenn sees 1885 as highly significant, and finds support for his

view in Onions and in the autobiographical preface which Sweet wrote for the Oldest English Texts. In this year, apparently through various misunderstandings, Sweet failed to gain the (new) Merton Professorship of English language and Literature which he had hoped for in order to found an 'English school of philology' to rival that of Germany. According to Wrenn, this was the turning-point. Sweet now 'abandoned publication in those Anglo-Saxon studies which alone should have led to his recognition as England's greatest Anglo-Saxonist' (Wrenn, p. 517) and his dominant interest became once again grammar, as he returned to many of the ideas of 'Words, Logic, and Grammar' (1876), eventually publishing his New English Grammar in 1891.

Against this view, it may be objected that the History of English Sounds appeared three years after 1885, although, as MacMahon points out, this was Sweet's 'last major scholarly study in the field of medieval English studies' ('Sweet's Linguistic Scholarship', p. 96). After this there is only minor work: his shorter manuals of early English appeared throughout the 1880's and 1890's. Nevertheless, in this period Sweet seems to have revived his interest in Anglo-Saxon literature - witness the discussions of The Seafarer in 'Shelley's Nature Poetry' (1888 and 1901) and in the 1894 edition of the Anglo-Saxon Reader. In fact, Sweet explicitly admitted this, stating in the preface to the second part of his New English Grammar, the syntax of 1898, that he had been so long in publishing it because he had 'returned' to comparative philology, in fact to revisions of two earlier projects: the Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon (published 1896) and a new revised edition of the Anglo-Saxon Reader (1894). Furthermore, Sweet's Anglo-Saxon period did not preclude work in other fields. He was already preparing his New English Grammar in 1881, bringing forward for discussion some points from it at a meeting of the Philological Society reported in The Athenæum (December 24, 1881). In general, however, Wrenn's interpretation of Sweet's departure from pure Anglo-Saxon studies is correct, but I would add that Sweet's return to grammar also meant a return to 'the practical study of language', the first (unpublished) version of which he had drafted (as we have seen) in 1876/7 - the same period as 'Words, Logic, and Grammar'. To qualify Wrenn's account slightly, we might say that Sweet

remained a phonetician and general philologist all his life but was particularly wide-ranging in the early period of his career up to 1877. In this early period too we must place the development of his theory of language acquisition. He then went through a more exclusively 'Old English phase' from 1878 to 1888, after which he did not embark on any totally new project in Old English. From about 1885, Sweet began a period of grammatical and practical language work which culminated in The Practical Study of Languages of 1899.

Howatt's account of Sweet's theory of language learning focussed almost entirely on this latter phase of Sweet's career. Yet there must remain some doubt about whether the Anglo-Saxonist phase is entirely separate from Sweet's later career. We should recall that many of Sweet's ideas were formulated quite early, including the first draft of the Practical Study of Languages (1876/7). It will be the business of the thesis to investigate the germs of ideas in Sweet's formative and early periods and to take seriously Sweet's claim that the 'practical study' involves a (partial) return to the synthetic methods of the middle ages.

1.2.2 Sweet's 'Practical' Style of Scholarship

There remains one important point to add to this sketch of Sweet's career, namely his style of scholarship. Unlike many of his contemporaries, such as Wilhelm Viëtor or Theodor Benfey, Sweet did not disparage the practical applications of theory and scholarship:

I think I cannot better introduce the subject of this address than by quoting from Professor Seeley's introduction to his Expansion of England. The passage is as follows: 'It is a favourite maxim of mine that history, while it should be scientific in its method, should pursue a practical object. That is, it should not only gratify the reader's curiosity about the past, but modify his view of the present, and his forecast of the future.' Now, if we only substitute 'philology' for 'history', these words will define exactly the position I take up with regard to language. I am strongly of the opinion that the science of language, while it should be scientific in its methods, should pursue practical objects.

(Spelling Reform and the Practical Study of Language, 1885, p. 3)

The major application of philology was, in Sweet's opinion, to

aid the 'practical study' of language, by providing general theoretical principles on which this practical study should be based. Conversely, the practical study also assisted the theoretical: Sweet saw it as essential for grasping the individuality of every language or period of a language, whatever field the student intended to move to subsequently, be it history, literature, philology or theory of language. Sweet seems to favour the term 'practical study' for its wide coverage of meaning: 'practical study' may imply the mastery of the phonetics, grammar, and 'genius' of one's mother tongue as a foundation for further language study, the application of this foundation to problems of spelling reform (particularly for English), to the study of varieties of English by dialectologists, to the recording and learning of unwritten 'savage languages' by missionaries and explorers, and finally to the learning of foreign languages - either dead languages such as Latin and Old English, exotic languages like Chinese and Arabic, modern languages like French and German, or English as a foreign language (Sweet's primers aim particularly but not exclusively at German speakers). Sweet's Handbook of Phonetics (1877) first states these aims, especially the 'importance of phonetics as the indispensable foundation of all study of language - whether that study be purely theoretical, or practical as well' (Handbook, p. v), while the Practical Study (1899) and the earlier writings on this theme aim to establish the general principles on which these various practical approaches should be based. This book of 1899 attempted in fact to 'give a comprehensive general view of the whole field of the practical study of languages' (1899, p. viii).

In the two 'Practical Study' papers of 1884 and 1885 Sweet spoke of 'a science of living, as opposed to dead or antiquarian philology, based on phonology and psychology' (1884, p. 49). This point is further elucidated in the book of 1899 (p. 1):

The scientific basis of the practical study of languages is what may be called 'living philology', which starts from the accurate observation of spoken languages by means of phonetics and psychology, and makes this the basis of all study of language, whether practical or theoretical. The opposite of living is 'antiquarian' philology, which regards the present merely as a key to the past, subordinating living to dead languages and sounds to their written symbols.

Sweet clearly thought that sound, 'scientific' (i.e. scholarly)

principles were indispensable for both 'theoretical' and 'practical' studies. He sharply criticised some English scholars for their careless dilettante theoretical work, but equally sharply many German scholars, not for their attention to detail, which he admired, but their lack of Übersicht, for their inability to see the wood for the trees. Consequently he attacked the inclusion of redundant theoretical detail in books supposedly practical in purpose, and deplored the downgrading of the supposedly 'merely' practical, when it could be equally scientific in quality.

Capable of some extremely detailed theoretical work himself, for instance in The Oldest English Texts or the New English Grammar, Sweet became an adept of the practical manual, but he perhaps also used the practical approach for another purpose. Onions stresses Sweet's independence of any school of thought, while Wrenn notes the frequent incompleteness of his work and his urge to move on to new areas. Jakobson takes this further, for he sees Sweet's work as incomplete because it was often exploratory. He suggests that Sweet's approach shows a dissatisfaction with the 'narrowly causal, genetic bias of his epoch' (p. 244) but at the same time an unwillingness to attempt a frontal attack on it; instead, Sweet made a series of 'bold sallies and flanking movements' which explored new ideas. By this means, within the sphere of the 'practical study of language', Sweet nevertheless succeeded in 'raising new problems and in trying new methods', one of which is the 'idea of totality' (Jakobson, p. 250) and its relation to the 'synthetic methods of the Middle Ages' - the subject of this study.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRACTICAL STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND THE RETURN TO THE METHODS OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

I, for one, am strongly of the opinion that our present exaggeratedly analytical methods, which are the fruit not only of scientific philology, but also of the elaboration of grammars and dictionaries, are a failure compared with the synthetic methods of the Middle Ages, by which sentences were grasped as wholes, not analysed and put together like pieces of mosaic work, and that any real reform will involve, partially at least, a return to these older methods.

(Sweet, 'Practical Study of Language', 1884, p.34)

2.1 THE EARLY VERSION OF SWEET'S 'PRACTICAL STUDY OF LANGUAGE'

In 1884, after six years of absorption in Anglo-Saxon studies leading to the publication a year later of the Oldest English Texts,¹ the philologist Henry Sweet turned his attention once more to another of his major interests, the 'practical study of language'. In a long paper published in the Transactions of the London Philological Society, in fact an 'abstract' of a book already written in 1876, Sweet outlined his own contribution to that burning issue of the 1880's, the reform of language teaching.²

In his approach, which might be termed a 'phonetic/psychological' method, Sweet highlighted 'synthesis', the process by which sentences are 'grasped as wholes' phonetically, and 'association', the process by which the forms of a language are combined together in the mind, associated with their meanings and retained in the memory. The two principles are embodied in a method of language study based on 'the living language', 'phonology and psychology', and 'connected texts' ('Practical Study', 1884, Collected Papers, pp. 35, 38-40).

Rather than learning a language in the current way through the literary language, with grammar rules and their exceptions, translation exercises, parsing, and vocabulary lists, the learner should begin with phonetic exercises and then go on to study the colloquial language through texts written in phonetic script:

with due regard for 'the phenomena of stress, intonation and quantity, which are the foundation of word-division, sentence structure ...' (1884, p. 40). In practice, this meant in the case of a modern language like English that the phonetic notation ignored standard word-division in favour of 'stress-division' into phonetically analysed 'breath-groups' with diacritics and signs to indicate sentence-stress and intonation, as in the Elementarbuch (1885). For a dead language the same principle applied, though not as comprehensively; thus the Anglo-Saxon Primer (1882) uses a normalised orthography with signs to mark long vowels and word-stress and diacritics to indicate where the letters <c> and <g> are pronounced with palatalisation.

The 1884 paper listed also the selection criteria for the 'connected texts' and outlined the basic techniques to be used with them. The texts would be simple descriptions, narratives and idiomatic dialogues selected to cover the elementary vocabulary, a principle adhered to in the Elementarbuch and also even in the Primer - where the texts chosen are in simple prose style, which, as Sweet tells us elsewhere, is an approximation to colloquial style (see chapter four, section 4.2 below). Grammar would consist of a commentary on these texts being studied, vocabulary would be studied through thematically arranged idioms and collocations in context, and translation would be used sparingly, mostly to give the sense rather than a literal rendering. Only when the colloquial language was mastered with ease and fluency would the student go on to study the literature, or take up comparative philology or history. This, in brief, was Sweet's method outlined in the course of his 1884 paper, and he called on the universities to implement a programme of reform.

The beginning of the paper set the context for his discussion. Sweet recalled that he had written a much longer work on the subject in 1876 but had not published it - his only published statements on the topic were 'scattered remarks' in earlier work; he cites his Presidential Address (1877), 'Words, Logic, and Grammar' (1876) and the preface to his Handbook of Phonetics (1877).³ He now felt he was part of a reform movement that was gathering momentum. The 'main impulse' he says, was the publication of Storm's Englische Philologie in 1881,⁴ and he mentions his review of Storm published in Germany that same

year.⁵ The following year saw the publication of a controversial and influential work by the teacher, phonetician and philologist Wilhelm Viëtor. 'Der Sprachunterricht muß umkehren!' ('Language teaching must start afresh!') was the cry of this anonymously published pamphlet,⁶ which created a furore of debate on its appearance in Germany in 1882 and was surely known to Sweet. Writing in a similar vein, Sweet began the 1884 paper with his own attack on the prevailing methods.⁷

According to Sweet, the 'present exaggeratedly analytical methods' of mind training and grammar-translation exercises which 'put together sentences like pieces of mosaic work' have failed to teach languages efficiently and have not yet been replaced. Nor has traditional philology taken the lead in showing the solution to the problem, for the philological approaches to language learning frequently add to the mental load with their 'one-sidedly historical' grammars and etymological dictionaries and their neglect of phonetics. Accordingly, Sweet demanded a return to medieval methods, for it was here that he found the phonetic mentality still intact, and here also were many analogies to his own 'synthetic' approach.

The opening passage of the 1884 paper is thus of prime importance - it expresses concisely the development of Sweet's ideas on the practical study of language over fifteen years of exploratory work in languages, phonetics, and medieval studies. Much of this introduction to his 1884 paper is repetition and forceful re-statement of ideas present in the earlier writings - not only those he mentions but also in other books, papers and articles - beginning with the edition of the Old English Pastoral Care in 1871,⁸ where he first formulates the notion 'grasping sentences as wholes', and finishing with an unpublished paper (on methods of language learning) in 1878,⁹ the year he started work on the Oldest English Texts. Gathered together, these ideas form a coherent thesis which informs the opening remarks, quoted above, of the 1884 paper. Essentially, Sweet's early work in the field of language learning theory can be seen on the one hand as a reaction to the practices of his contemporaries and on the other hand as a search elsewhere - particularly in the early middle ages - for new ideas and inspiration.

In this chapter, then, I will begin the main discussion with

an analysis of Sweet's approach to the practical study of language from the early part of his career, and go on to look at the learning 'methods' of the 1860's and 1870's, which he mostly rejected, though not without conceding that they had insights to offer. Some writers, I shall argue, may have influenced him more than he acknowledges. I then discuss in detail the origins of Sweet's argument - developed in the early 1870's - for a medieval oral-aural approach to language and, consequently, for a return to the 'synthetic methods' of the middle ages.

2.1.1 General Features of Sweet's Method in the 1870's

As already stated, the essence of Sweet's method is encapsulated in the phrase 'the accurate observation of spoken languages by means of phonetics and psychology'. This approach is found in his various early scattered remarks on the practical study of language, in which Sweet places great emphasis on the interrelated principles of the 'natural sentence', 'association' and/or 'synthesis', and 'observation'. While these ideas are developed further in later works, all three occur in some form or other in the early writings of the 1870's.

2.1.1.1 'The Natural Sentence'

The first of these - the natural sentence - is linked to a concept of nature and science to be examined further in chapter four; it is formulated as follows in some remarks on the need for a 'thorough reform of the practical study of language' in the Presidential Address to the Philological Society of 1877:¹⁰

Instead of a cumbrous analysis, the learner will begin with what is really the ultimate fact in language - the natural sentence, which will of course be presented in a purely phonetic form.

(Presidential Address, 1877, pp. 93-4)

This is, of course, a re-statement of the notion of 'grasping sentences as wholes' of 1871, here the emphasis lying on the naturalness of speech. For Sweet, the sounds of the spoken language are a natural phenomenon to be 'investigated' scientifically - the ethos lies behind the approach in his paper on Danish (1873/4), his History of English Sounds (1874),¹¹ and

in this view of sound-change as a phenomenon of Nature:

In fact, Nature itself, and not least as shown in language, is extremely given to hair-splitting, and often paves the way for the most violent changes, as, for instance, diphthongisation, by minute and almost inappreciable modifications, which it is the business of the trained phonetician to detect and analyse.

(Presidential Address, 1877, p. 86)

The term 'natural sentence' echoes his interest in the 'natural utterance' of the translators of the Pastoral Care (1871) which we will look at below (2.3.3). Although Sweet assumes one of the goals of practical language learning to be the study of the literature (1884, p. 35; Anglo-Saxon Reader, 1876, pp. v and viii¹²), he strongly condemns beginning with the literary language; in keeping with his emphasis on natural speech, he regards the spoken as the source of the literary language, hence the axiom that 'the living form of every language should be made the foundation of its study'. Moreover, it will be seen, this principle of grading and selecting the language to be learnt is even adaptable to a dead language such as Anglo-Saxon.

2.1.1.2 Association and Synthesis

From a psychological point of view, Sweet sees language learning as a process of synthesis, combination, connectedness, or association, the psychological process of learning by which the learner combines the elements of the language into wholes and retains them in his or her memory. In the mind of the learner, words and sentences become associated with ideas, actions and events (Practical Study, 1899).¹³ On this principle, then, 'turn down the gas' or Old English 'weorþan æt spræce' would be learnt as one unit. Because of the combinatory process of the mind, it is essential for efficient learning that wrong combinations, or 'cross-associations' are avoided, and hence crucial that correct associations, based on observation, are fostered from the outset ('Words, Logic, and Grammar', 1876, Collected papers, p. 3; Anglo-Saxon Reader, 1876, pp. v-vi; 1884 paper, pp. 39-40). Association became increasingly important in the later formulation of Sweet's approach (see chapters five and six, sections 5.1 and 6.4).

2.1.1.3 Observation

A third general feature of Sweet's early theory of language study is observation. Aiming at a total view of language and its acquisition, Sweet sees the whole of language as 'an incessant struggle and compromise between meaning and pure form' ('Words, Logic, and Grammar', 1876, p. 16). A dispassionate observation of the formal facts of the language is therefore essential. This is the function of phonetics - to observe and establish the actual forms of the language, which are in fact 'groups of sounds' or 'breath-groups' (ibid, p. 3) with their patterns of intonation, stress, quantity, inflection and agglutination, i.e. 'phonetic synthesis', all of which may contradict the more rational side of language as mirrored in its rules of word-division and grammatical analysis. As Sweet often stressed, language has its irrational aspects, such as the ellipsis of 'at his brother's', or the fact that English has no general word to express the 'running' of a horse (1884, p. 48). It is not possible, he maintained, to force any language to conform to prescriptive rules based on logic without first observing how that language actually works. The separation of logic from language was the main thrust of his treatise 'Words, Logic, and Grammar' (1876), but it was an insight Sweet gained early - witness the following remark of 1871 from a review of a manual of English rhetoric by E.A. Abbott and J.R. Seeley:¹⁴

Not only has logic nothing to do with English, it has no connection with language at all: the circumstance that we employ language to formulate trains of reasoning is an accident, which does not justify the intrusion of logic into any work on language, much less one which treats - or professes to treat - of a special language.

(The Academy, II, 1871, p. 451)

The three general features outlined above form the framework for Sweet's concrete recommendations to teachers and learners. The following discussion of these techniques will follow the order in which Sweet presents them in the paper 'The Practical Study of Language' (1884), the fullest account of his method before the definitive treatment of 1899. For most of Sweet's points, parallel passages will be noted from before 1878. Again it should be remembered that the papers of 1884 and 1885¹⁵ are

very similar in structure to the book of 1899. It seems likely that all three works originate in the unpublished treatise of 1876 and in the writings of the early 1870's from which it developed.

2.1.2 Phonetic Texts

Putting the principle of observation and association into practice, the first few pages of the 1884 paper are concerned with phonetics - which in the preface to his Handbook of Phonetics Sweet had called the 'indispensable foundation' of all language study (1877, p. v). The basic technique is to study pronunciation not by the inexact method of imitation (History of English Sounds 1874/1879, p. 8; 1884 paper, p. 40), but by close observation of how the sounds are produced (1874, p. 72) and drilling in the articulatory motions of the speech organs through exercises, like a musician's scales (1884, p. 45; Presidential Address, 1877, p. 94).

To assist in these exercises, Sweet recommends a phonetic spelling 'giving a genuine and adequate representation of the actual language, not as is often the case, of an imaginary language, spoken by imaginary correct speakers' (1884 paper, p. 39). For the foreign learner, the phonetic spelling avoids the 'disturbing associations' of the written symbols (Words, Logic, and Grammar, 1876, p. 3) - otherwise known as 'cross-associations' - and helps the learning process of association, strengthening the learner's grasp of forms and meanings. The consequent emphasis on minute distinctions thus guards against confusions between closely allied languages (1884, p. 40).

The phonetic script has the advantage of conveying much fuller information on the pronunciation of connected speech. For modern languages, Sweet emphasises in his early writings a phonetic script which indicates synthesis and sentence stress; thus the notation reproduces 'stress-division' rather than word-division, an attempt to render visually on the page the 'natural sentence' of the spoken utterance - or, as he says in his article 'German Grammars of English' (1874) - to write down the living language exactly as it is heard, writing only one word where one word is heard, and 'disregarding the traditions of the printing office'. This synthetic approach is put forward as an idea in

early articles, treated in depth in 'Words, Logic, and Grammar' (1876), and applied to the study of one modern language (English) in the 1885 Elementarbuch des gesprochenen Englisch (see chapter six, section 6.3.3).

Phonetics is useful also in that it can help overcome the mental barrier some English-speakers have to foreign languages, showing them that accurate distinctions are necessary, for it is not sufficient to pronounce the letter <é> of French 'été' with diphthongal English vowels as [eitei] (1885 paper, p. 7), and showing them moreover that a knowledge of the sounds of one's own language would help with those of the foreign:

It is also certain that the wretched way in which English people speak foreign languages - often in such a style as to be completely unintelligible to the natives - is mainly due to their persistently ignoring the phonetic peculiarities of their own language. When once we know that the supposed long vowels [of English] are all diphthongs, we are forced to acknowledge that the genuine ii's and uu's [i.e. long i: and u:] of foreign languages are really strange sounds, which require to be learnt with an effort, in the same way as we acquire French u or German ch.

(History of English Sounds, 1874, p. 72)

In this sense, a phonetic study of the mother tongue also belongs within the sphere of the practical study of languages. Finally, phonetics has the added advantage of bringing the literature to life (Academy II, 1871, p. 296¹⁶), through its focus on stress, intonation and quantity, 'which are the foundation of word-division, elocution and metre' (1884, p. 40).

2.1.3 Grammar as a Commentary on the Text

After phonetics, the next stage is grammar: 'each sentence should be analysed and mastered phonetically before its grammatical analysis is attempted' (1884, p. 41). The grammar should be 'a commentary on the facts of the language' (such facts include derivation, composition, inflexion, sentence-stress and intonation), and should comment on and explain the reading texts.

Such an approach to grammar is in keeping with Sweet's strictures on close observation of the actual existing forms of language (rather than prescriptive rules about what it should be) and has its origins in his earlier work. For instance, Sweet

suggests in a review of 'German Grammars of English' in 1874 that if the language were transcribed without prejudice, writing one word where one is heard, then English might appear more like a 'symmetrically developed agglutinative language' rather than a language with 'no grammar' (Academy, V, 1874, p. 68). Thus the phrase 'I love' could also be represented 'i-love' as the 'I' is almost as much a dependent inflexion as the '-o' in the Latin 'amo' (Academy, 1871).¹⁷ 'I' is in fact a 'half-word' ('Words, Logic, and Grammar', 1876, p. 7), for 'a word is, phonetically speaking, a stress-group' and 'I' cannot normally exist on its own without an accompanying verb, the independent emphatic form being 'me' (for further discussion, see section 6.3.2).

Another example of grammar as observation and commentary is Sweet's treatment of the the English future tense, which need not, in his opinion (in 1876), be regarded as an analytical construction made up of three words, but as one agglutinative form with three variants (ibid, p. 23):

the positive future: hiylgou
the negative future: hiywountgou
the emphatic future: hiywilgou.

In keeping with the idea of grasping sentences as wholes, accidence and syntax are thus taught simultaneously, equal weight being attached to both form and meaning. Grammar rules will still be used, but Sweet insists that every rule should have its example, 'generally an unambiguous sentence which will bear separation from its context' (1884, p. 41). This principle is adhered to in the Anglo-Saxon Primer, (1882, p. vii).

2.1.4 Synthetic Meaning Study

Similar techniques are applied to the lexis of the language. Synthetic meaning study includes 'the whole vocabulary of a language' and arranges the commoner words in sentences 'under different categories of time, space etc.' (1884, p. 42), a scheme used in the Elementarbuch (1885). Sweet's model for such an arrangement is the 'wonderfully acute and full work' of Roget's Thesaurus, ('Words, Logic, and Grammar', 1876, pp. 15-16), and it would, at least initially, replace the dictionary:

There will, instead, be a carefully graduated series of vocabularies of words arranged, not alphabetically, but in sense-groups, as in Roget's 'Thesaurus', with full examples, the most elementary of these works containing about 3000 of the commonest words, as embodied in the most natural and idiomatic sentences. When the student has carefully studied such a book from beginning to end for a year, he [sic] will probably have a better practical command of the language than is now attainable in ten years.

(Presidential Address, 1877, Collected Papers, p. 94)

In studying the vocabulary, a distinction should be made between general sentences, 'which can be formed a priori, by combining their elements', and special sentences, i.e. idioms like 'never mind', which can only be learnt as whole items, on a same level as simple words like 'salutation' or 'indifference' (1884, pp. 42-3). Similarly, 'natural and usual' adjective-noun combinations would have to be learnt; for instance, there are limits to the possible permutations when combining the adjectives white, high, square, angry with the nouns man, coal, snow, or word. Here Sweet touches on the topic of collocation developed much more fully by J.R. Firth in the twentieth century.¹⁸

2.1.5 Sentence by Sentence Translation

Unlike what Sweet - following Franke - calls the 'translation' method, which based the study of a language like Latin on the daily translation exercises, often very literal and 'mosaic-like', from Latinised mother-tongue sentences, the synthetic method follows a sentence by sentence approach. Translation is used only at certain stages (1884, p. 48):

- 1) At first every sentence is accompanied by a free translation.
- 2) Parsing is done without translation.
- 3) When parsing and periphrasis in the target language fail a translation is given to explain the passage.
- 4) Once the basic language is mastered then translation to and fro between the two languages is encouraged as 'not only harmless but positively useful and would be a great safeguard against the tendency to mix the two languages together'.

These views, and the preference for free translation, will be seen below (2.3) to have some relevance to Sweet's discussion (1871) of Alfred's rendering of the Cura pastoralis.

2.1.6 Dead Languages

Essentially, Sweet argues in his 1884 paper, dead languages are to be studied like living ones. He recommends that an accurate and consistent pronunciation be adopted to retain the associations between the meanings and the sounds represented by the written forms (1884, p. 49). The same point had been made in the preface to his Anglo-Saxon Reader (1876, p. v):

By adopting a consistent system of pronunciation the student's grasp of the language becomes twice as firm as when he learns it only by eye, and there can be no greater help in the practical acquisition of inflection and derivation than a knowledge of the phonology of a language.

Attention to pronunciation should be aided by phonetic punctuation and diacritics added to the traditional orthography of the dead language. 'Cross-associations' - that is, erroneous connections made by the associative tendency of the mind between disparate forms of the language - would be avoided through the marking of accent and quantity (1884, p. 49). Thus nominative terra and ablative terrâ should be distinguished by their sound and, to aid the learner, by their notation.

Even more so than with modern languages, the 'evil effects of teaching languages through their classical literatures' should be carefully avoided. The reason is that 'in dead languages, every natural obscurity is increased tenfold, owing to our unfamiliarity with ancient circumstances and trains of thought' (1884, p. 49). Again this is a point made eight years before in the Anglo-Saxon Reader, where Sweet recommends beginning with the prose, for the poetry requires 'long and sympathetic study' (p. viii) before it can be appreciated. In general the beginner's aim should be to gain a 'sound elementary knowledge of the language itself' (p. v), after which Old English literary and historical studies will then follow naturally.

According to Sweet, Latin should be taught through the simplest possible descriptions, narratives and dialogues 'from which every literary complexity and artificiality has been carefully weeded' (1884, p. 49). There should be no Virgil until the learner is able to 'read simple prose and poetry with perfect ease' and 'converse fluently on elementary subjects'. Sweet adds a comment here on medieval practice:

This would be, in the main, simply a return to the methods of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, carried out, of course, in a far more perfect way.

I will discuss this statement again below (2.3.5), for it is a brief but clear indicator of Sweet's views on medieval education.

2.1.7 Text and Context

Throughout the practical study of a language, the principles of observation and association determine the learning process. Although the basis is the spoken language, and not the literary, study is still based on texts, but these are phonetic transcriptions of colloquial language which indicate the actual sounds infinitely more precisely than a mere reliance on imitation; furthermore, they are 'connected' texts rather than lists of words, or unconnected phrases and sentences. Sweet's reason for this is consistent - the text forms a context, a connected whole appropriate for synthetic learning and retention in the memory. Such texts aim to cover the three basic types of language: description, narrative, and dialogues, and are taken, to begin with, from 'descriptions of nature and natural phenomena, the different races of man, houses, food, dress, & c.' in order to cover the main areas of basic vocabulary (1884, p.44). Later, the student will study condensed treatises on subjects such as history, geography and science, and only later still will he or she tackle the literature. Against the then norm, Sweet proposes that dictionaries should be avoided and chosen words should be explained by paraphrases in the target language and placed at the bottom of the page.

The context-based approach also favours the practical study of grammar in that the learner meets real language in use; the grammatical rules 'include nothing that is not required for the explanation of the texts' (1884 paper, p. 41), and paradigms merely sum up, as economically as possible, the instances of language use observed in the texts (1899, p. 104). The 'fundamental principle' of repetition in different contexts (1885, p. 13) ensures that the learner meets the common forms of the language, including the common irregularities and widely-used idioms, which will be learnt as separate lexical items rather

than as exceptions to rules, as discussed above (2.1.4). The texts themselves will be as natural and colloquial as possible (1884, p. 44) in order not to do violence to the natural synthesis and genius of the language - most of the existing methods used unauthentic texts specially written to illustrate one particular usage or grammatical rule. The total vocabulary for the method is relatively small - approximately three thousand words (Presidential Address, 1877, p. 94; 1899, p. 172) - but it is commanded with 'ease and certainty' (1884, p. 45) and, as he said in 1877 in a passage already quoted (2.1.4), it will give the student a 'better command of the language than is now available in ten years'. Finally, Sweet stresses the importance of cultivating the memory through systematic training (*ibid*, p. 54) - presumably by the regular adherence to the principles outlined above.

2.1.8 The Originality of Sweet's Method

To sum up, the characteristics of Sweet's 'practical study of language' are: the spoken language, phonetic texts based on breath-groups, grammar as a commentary, synthetic meaning study, association and cross-association, sentence by sentence translation, and connected texts. The list gives the main points as discussed in the paper of 1884 (and the similar one of 1885), which in many ways brings together in one published format the ideas developed between 1871 and 1878. Some confirmation of this is afforded by a notice in The Academy (Nov 10, 1877) informing its readers of Sweet's work in progress; as has been noted already, the book referred to was not in fact published for another twenty-two years:

The other work [in progress] treats of the Practical Study of Language. It consists of a criticism of the present system from a phonetic and logical point of view, followed by a sketch of a rational system based on the general laws of association, in which various modifications of the present grammatical system are advocated, together with the abandonment of dictionaries in the teaching of languages and the substitution of a methodical study of word-meanings. Other collateral subjects are treated of, among which may be mentioned the comparative value of ancient and modern languages for training the mind.

This summary, read in conjunction with other work from the 1870s as outlined above (see also Appendix I) and checked against the paper of 1884, gives a fair account of Sweet's early thought on language learning. Of the ideas on language learning put forward here, the most original are his notions of the natural sentence, cross-association, and the associative, synthetic method of 'grasping sentences as wholes' (to be discussed in chapters four, five, and six).

Some of the features of this approach, as set down in 1884, are shared by other theorists. Fellow members of the Philological Society Ellis (1875) and Sayce (1879) also stress the primacy of the spoken language.¹⁹ Indeed the emphasis on phonetics, along with the notions 'thinking in the language' and 'connected texts' belong also - as Sweet admits - to the approaches of the early 1880's by Storm, Franke, Klinghardt, and Kühn.²⁰ As Sweet's own influential work in phonetics was certainly known to them, we may believe Sweet's claim that he developed his ideas independently of them. There is one exception. Before 1880, Sweet has much to say about breath-groups and whole sentences, but he has no explicit discussion of connected texts, and this notion may in fact originate with Storm, in his influential Englische Philologie (1881), and with Viëtor in the above-mentioned 'Quousque Tandem' pamphlet.

But there were also differences between Sweet and these other reformers. Certainly, as Sweet later said (1899, p. x), his attitude to translation was different from that of the other reformers, who nearly all (except Storm) wished to ban it completely from the classroom.²¹ Sweet also differed from all, particularly Storm and Viëtor, in his exclusion of theorising (etymology, comparative philology etc.) from the course until a practical knowledge had been acquired. His most original contribution to the debate, and one for which there are essentially no parallels in the other scholars' work, is his development of the idea of 'synthesis' and his presentation of the language in a series of graded colloquial sentences and vocabularies in a phonetic script based on the 'natural sentence'.

In general, it has been seen that most of the features of method presented in the 1884 paper originate in work from around

1876, many of them going back to ideas explored in articles and papers of the early 1870's. It is here, in the scattered remarks which make up Sweet's earliest version of the 'practical study', that we must look to find his reactions against the approaches to language learning and published 'methods' of the 1860's and early 1870's.

2.2. EDUCATIONAL REFORM: THE REACTION AGAINST THE CURRENT METHODS

To me, and I trust, to the great majority of those whom I address, the great attempt to educate the people of England which has just been set afoot, is one of the most satisfactory and hopeful events in our modern history.

(T.H. Huxley, Lecture to the Midland Institute, 1871)

It may seem paradoxical to say that the present crisis of education in England contains much that is favourable to a consideration of the true scope of classical education, and of the best means for improving its methods.

(H. Nettleship, The True Aim of Classical Education, 1872, p. 3)²²

2.2.1 Calls for Reform in the 1870's

The decade from 1870 was a great period of educational reform touching all areas of society. Urged on by a desire to improve the lot of the working class and to halt the decline of Britain's commercial and industrial standing abroad, Gladstone's Education Act of 1870 introduced 'the first scheme of education in England which can truly be called "National", as really providing for the elementary education of every child in the country'.²³ The atmosphere was apparently highly conducive to the reform of methods by the 'practical educationists'.²⁴ Teachers and methodologists debated the pros and cons of the 'look-and-say' and the 'phonetic' method of teaching children to read,²⁵ and the movement for spelling reform began with new force to assert itself throughout the decade,²⁶ linked with the social concern for the 'unlettered millions' of the nation. Spelling reform would also lead to language reform, in the tradition of Sheridan and the elocution movement of the eighteenth century:²⁷

it was felt that a 'firm control of pronunciation' would eliminate vulgarisms and thus abolish 'one of the most important barriers between the different classes', to use Sweet's phrase of 1877.²⁸ Even the classics were influenced by these movements: a vigorous controversy over the pronunciation of Latin began in 1870, principally in the pages of such journals as the new Academy²⁹ and its older cousin the Athenæum, and consequently, at the request of the headmasters of the public schools, the two professors of Latin at Oxford and Cambridge E. Palmer and H.A.J. Munro collaborated in 1872 on a joint recommendation for a reformed pronunciation (essentially what has now been adopted as standard).³⁰ With reform so much in the air, and with a new emphasis on pronunciation, the debate inevitably began to affect language teaching methodology in general.

Almost all Sweet's discussions of the practical study of language, however brief, contain an attack on the 'present exaggeratedly analytical methods' (1884) of language teaching. The Pastoral Care of 1871 suggests that the 'minute analysis' of modern scholarship prevented the true grasp of 'living' languages (see 2.3.1). The preface to the Anglo-Saxon Reader of 1876 also criticises beginning with an 'artificial analysis' as practised in many approaches to Old English at that time. Elsewhere, the attack is directed against teaching the basics of a language through its literature, before the learner can even pronounce or speak basic phrases. 'What should we say,' asks Sweet in the presidential address of May 18, 1877, 'of a music-master who gave his pupils a sonata of Beethoven to learn the notes on, instead of beginning with scales? Yet this is precisely our present system of teaching languages.'³¹ In a preface written on August 27, 1877, Sweet says: 'if ever our present wretched system of studying modern languages is ever to be reformed, it must be on the basis of a preliminary training in phonetics' (Handbook of Phonetics, p. v). The point, I think, is clear: Sweet's own proposed system was a reaction against prevailing methods.

This characteristically antagonistic approach to the issue is also taken in a paper on the practical study of language which Sweet read to the Philological Society on March 15, 1878. The full text was never published, but brief references to it occur, and, on May 17, Sweet gave an outline of its contents in his

second presidential address to the Philological Society:

[I] .. attempted, on the basis of my own practical experience and of the various systems that have been tried, to determine the general principles on which a reform must be based.

(‘English and Germanic Philology’, May 17, 1878, p. 95)

This paper is almost certainly based on the treatise he had begun writing in 1876, and as outlined above it is remarkably close in structure to ‘General Principles of Method’, i.e. chapter 9 of The Practical Study of Languages of 1899. Sweet admitted that chapter 21 of this book was printed verbatim from the 1876 draft, and throughout the book there are many passages based closely on those in earlier work, particularly the papers of 1884 and 1885. While chapter 9 contains advice on learning Chinese, which he did not study until the 1890’s (Onions, p. 520), and references to Gouin, whose book on the ‘series method’ did not appear until 1880, it apparently preserves, sometimes verbatim, Sweet’s earlier attacks on the ‘fallacies’ of the mid-nineteenth-century methods (to be discussed shortly). The following is my summary of this chapter, entitled ‘General Principles of Method’, in which he criticises the then popular methods on the basis of general principles not adhered to:

The difficulty with learning languages is that they are partly irrational in such features as grammatical gender and arbitrary vocabulary, or irrational combinations of words into sentences like ‘how do you do?’ or ‘never mind’; these idioms have to be recorded in the dictionary, which deals with the special facts of a language, while a grammar covers the general facts. The ‘arithmetical fallacy’ of Ollendorffian methods is to assume all words can be combined rationally, thus excluding all ‘really natural and idiomatic combinations’. Equally fallacious, but for different reasons, is the Natural Method, which assumes that a second language can be learned in the same ways as a child acquires its mother tongue, but which fails because the adult’s mind is already formed and the learning process is thus beset with interferences from the native language (cross-associations). Though some learners are naturally more linguistically gifted than others, all minds work by the same fundamental laws of association and memory. It is doubtful whether historical etymologies, ‘roots’ or comparative philology really help to acquire vocabulary, and often chance resemblances such as ‘hasty’ and Latin hasta are just as useful. In general, a one-sidedly antiquarian approach obscures ‘a clear idea of the structure of the language of a given period as an organic whole’.

A comparison of the above with a report in The Athenæum on the

paper of March 15, 1878 shows clearly that Sweet's chapter 9 must have existed in a very similar form in the original draft, and confirms the point argued above that many of Sweet's ideas originate in his early career:

After noting the essentially irrational nature of languages, the learning of which consequently involves the laborious formulation of a large number of arbitrary connexions between ideas and sounds, Mr. Sweet criticized the present method of study, and insisted on the importance of one based on the natural laws of association. The real distinction between grammar and dictionary - that the former deals with general facts and the latter with special ones - was pointed out, and explanations given of the unpractical nature of the books in use, in retaining obsolete and rare words worse than useless to the beginner, while omitting the common phrases of nineteenth-century life. Attention was drawn to the fact that words cannot be dealt with like the digits of arithmetic, but that of many combinations only a few are used, so that a command of the language can be attained only by the learner being familiarised with those actually occurring. Some amusing specimens were given of the results of the practice of beginning the study of foreign languages with the literary instead of the with the conversational dialect; and the fallacy of the historical method, in subordinating a harmonious knowledge of the language as it is to that of its archaic features, was dwelt upon.

In papers such as this one of 1878, Sweet mostly focussed on the 'defects' or 'fallacies' of the current approaches. He did, however, make a partial exception in the authors of the new 'methods' and textbooks (as we shall see, he names Ahn, Ollendorff, Thomas, Prendergast and 'Nasmyth'), acknowledging - in a comment of the previous year - that there were 'sound principles scattered through these various systems' (1877, Presidential Address, p. 93). In the discussion below, therefore, it will be necessary also to consider the proposals of the method-writers from the point of view of what may have influenced Sweet positively (in this respect see also 2.2.8; 2.3.1; 5.1.2; 6.2.2).

In 1877, when Sweet wrote in his Handbook of Phonetics of the 'present wretched system of learning modern languages', he was, at least on this point, in full agreement with the authors of the new 'methods' and with other contemporary reformers. David Nasmith, whose method is mentioned by Sweet - though he misspells the name - as the 'latest one' (Presidential Address, 1877, p.

93) and discussed by Ellis ('Acquisition', 1875, pp. 175-80), was a London barrister and writer of language text books who enjoyed a reasonable degree of success in the 1870's.³² Like Sweet, Nasmith roundly condemned the failure of the 'classical method', his term for the 'present system'; in the preface to his Practical Linguist (1871, p. v), he writes:

Any attempt to facilitate the study of foreign languages is justified by the fact that the existing systems, whatever be their merits in particular cases, are nevertheless essentially unsatisfactory. The authors of the various systems extant have, to a large extent, failed to make the acquisition of a language by means of books, that which it is by nature - an easy and agreeable undertaking.

Another well-known methodologist, Thomas Prendergast (1806-1886), a former civil servant and magistrate in India and inventor of the 'Mastery System'³³, shows a similar dissatisfaction with the current situation:

The source of all our blundering over foreign languages is the mistaken notion that the attainment of the colloquial power depends more upon reasoning processes, than upon efforts of the memory.

(Prendergast, Mastery of Languages, 1864, p. 29)

There are signs here that both Nasmith and Prendergast have influenced Sweet; I will return to the question shortly (2.2.8).

Other writings with which Sweet was not directly acquainted reiterate the general and deep-seated dissatisfaction with the classical method. In 1852, J.S. Blackie, Professor of Humanity (Latin) at Aberdeen, had contrasted the 'facility by which foreign languages are acquired in the country where they are spoken, and the slow, painful and unsatisfactory process by which they are often inculcated in schools, and by private teachers'.³⁴ Earlier still, an article in the Edinburgh Review of 1826 spoke of the 'waste of mortal time, parental money, and puerile happiness, in the present method of pursuing Latin and Greek'.³⁵ The grievance was nothing new.

In the early 1870's the complaint was similar, the main objection to the standard method being, as before, the poor results obtained for the effort invested. Thus for Nasmith, the classical method fails to teach pupils to speak the language and wastes their time: after eight to twelve years of Latin and

Greek, no one can speak and few even read the language with ease or pleasure (Practical Linguist, p. v). Sweet's own view of his training in the classics was similar: he had 'had enough of them at school and college' (Presidential Address, 1877, p. 81) and he felt that drilling children in the classics had the harmful effect of instilling a 'distaste for literature in general'.

These complaints often confounded two separate problems. The first was the issue of the curriculum and its aims and objectives - the question of whether the classics should be taught at all, or whether they should be replaced by other subjects. The second was the question of the best method of teaching to use, whatever the language involved, and on this point it was often argued, by traditionalist and reformer alike, that the recommended method would apply to both 'dead' and 'living' languages. When we look at the details of the classical method, it will be seen that Sweet and the other would-be reformers objected both to its general aims and its actual classroom techniques.

2.2.2 The Classical Method: Aims and Objectives

The traditional aim of the classics was to transform the youth into a gentleman. The young gentleman-to-be was trained in the rules of grammar, the formation of Latin sentences, the parsing of Latin extracts, the close reading of Latin literature and finally the composition of Latin verses. The full process was a lengthy one, beginning with preparatory school or tutor, continuing at public school, and ending on graduation in literae humaniores at the age of 23 or 24.

This was a high objective, and clearly not suited to everyone. 'Latin,' said Locke, 'I look upon as absolutely necessary to a Gentleman', though not useful, he nevertheless added, to those 'intended for trades'.³⁶ In 1863, Thomas Cox, headmaster of the College Grammar School, Dulwich, took pains to remind tutors of their duties to boys destined for mercantile careers rather than more gentlemanly occupations:

the instructors must remember that all attempts at Latin and Greek versification must be arrested by twelve years of age, and great exertions must be made for a sound knowledge of the English and French languages, so taught as to give the boy an anxious desire to continue his studies at his leisure

time, while engaged in his mercantile career.

(Hints on Classical Tuition, 1863, p. 7)³⁷

The lot of the non-classically minded pupil is remarkably similar to Sweet's experience of Latin and Greek at school. Having failed to get beyond the Upper Fourth and not switching to French from Latin (probably because of his Oxbridge aspirations), he left, studied at Heidelberg, and on his return worked in a merchant's office, at the same time studying Icelandic in his idle moments.

For those who made the grade, the advantages of the Classical method were held to be: a preparation for future life, literary and moral cultivation, the ability to produce 'ornamental scholarship' and, most importantly, 'mental-training'. A cultivated gentleman was prepared for a career in law, the civil service, medicine, the Church; he had the 'stylistic models of the ancients' at his command;³⁸ the classics gave him a 'vestibule to the moral sciences';³⁹ 'a great classical scholar is an ornament, and an important acquisition to this country' (Smith, 1810, p.51); his mind was formed by the 'subtle organisation, the variety of harmony, the flexibility and strength and beauty, which make Greek an almost perfect type of human speech'⁴⁰. John Conington, professor of classics at Oxford University in the 1850's and 1860's, had summed up the mind-training philosophy in 1854, in his inaugural lecture 'The Academical Study of Latin':⁴¹

Thus the exegetical study of the classics, as appears to me, fulfills the two great conditions of an educational instrument: it gives at once a general and a specific discipline; it encourages exuberant variety of interest along with severe precision of aim.

(Miscellaneous Writings of John Conington, p. 225)

By the 1870's, the 'modern' focus of the Victorians on the progress of science had brought these ideals under attack. In 1872, H.A.J. Munro, Professor of Latin at Cambridge, reviewed the Miscellaneous Writings in The Academy, praising Conington's discussion of the 'advantages of mental discipline to be gained by studying the classical languages'.⁴² His tone in this article, however, was less confident than that of his predecessors. A similar defensive note is apparent in a review in The Athenæum, which commented:

The Inaugural Lecture on 'The Academical Study of Latin' is perhaps more important at this time than the discourses which it introduces. When Cabinet Ministers and University Professors are found to heap contumely on unproductive learning, it is refreshing to meet with such passages...

(The Athenæum, June, 1872, p. 743)

The Cabinet Minister alluded to may be Lord Stanley (Edward Henry Stanley, 1826-93), member of the Derby Administration, who, in a speech at Liverpool in 1864, had expressed the wish that in schools and colleges, less attention were given to 'the works of man' and more to those of 'Nature'. Stanley went on to say that there were many highly-educated young men in England who knew how to write Latin and Greek verses, but did not know why water runs down a hill.⁴³ The point was emphasised yet again by Professor T.H. Huxley in 1870: the existing educational institutes had fallen behind their age, he argued, and a scientific education was now superior to a classical one. For Huxley, the man who knows about the chalk in the carpenter's pocket has a 'truer, and therefore better, conception of this wonderful universe, and of man's relation to it, than the most learned student who is deeply read in the the records of humanity and ignorant of those of nature'.⁴⁴

The current style of philology was also hostile to the traditional classical ideology. In the writings of Latham, Earle, Furnivall, Sweet and many others the new science of English philology naturally upheld its own advantages, namely a knowledge of English origins and the social customs of 'our ancestors' and a lasting contribution to the investigation of phenomena.⁴⁵ John Earle, Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, cautiously suggested that ordinary people should know Anglo-Saxon, that it should become a 'border of native culture' around 'more recondite studies'.⁴⁶ Sweet brusquely swept this aside as insufficient: Old English is not a fringe, 'least of all round ornamental scholarship' ('English and Germanic Philology', 1878, p. 99).

It will be clear, from the above, how Sweet stood in this controversy, for he regarded his own work as a contribution to modern science. As for culture, he evidently preferred the products of his own native English to those of the classical world. We have also seen that he regarded the confusion of mind-

training or logic with language as mistaken and devoted a whole section of his book on language study - in both early and late versions - to refuting this fallacy. While he accepted 'the superiority of most ancient languages' in the 'simplicity, clearness, and sonorousness of their phonetic structure', he explicitly stated that Latin and Greek had 'nothing to do with intellectual training'.⁴⁷

2.2.3 The Classical Method: Teaching Techniques

The mainstay of the classical teaching method was the Eton Latin Grammar, based on the work of the Humanist William Lily (?1468-?1523), the first to re-introduce classical Latin into England after the Middle Ages. Another popular text-book was the more 'modern' Public School Latin Grammar.⁴⁸ The methods employed with these grammars were well-established by tradition and consequently there are few written descriptions of them. However, one probably typical account of the methods used is the headmaster's guide for tutors mentioned above.

In this pamphlet of 28 pages are Cox's 'hints to tutors' - a classic first-hand account of grammar-translation techniques - enthusiastically extolling as truly excellent the 'system of parsing Latin at our best public schools' and showing the tutor how best to teach the Eton Latin Grammar to his young charges. Here we see that it is not only the rational superiority of Latin and Greek which makes these languages suitable for mental training, it is also the demanding, rational nature of the methods used, the constant labour of analysis, parsing and construing under which the pupils have to work which 'inures' them to difficulties in later life (Smith, p. 44). In this respect, Cox is unwilling to be too harsh, though the very fact that he mentions this as a possibility reveals how prevalent the attitude was.

I cannot subscribe to the assertion that, 'the greater the difficulties a boy has to contend with, the better the preparation for the struggles of after life'. Neither can I believe that, because our word 'school' is derived from a Greek word, signifying leisure, no very serious or long continued attention ought to be exacted from boys.

(Cox, Hints, p. 27)

Cox's method begins with *accidence*. The tutor teaches the pupil the 'force and value of the terminations' of the noun declensions 'musa', 'magister', and 'dominus', with which the Eton grammar begins. Great pains will be taken to ensure the child (of seven) knows the meanings of related English words 'muse', 'music', 'musician', etc. by 'directing him to search the dictionary, and from it to write down the various meanings he may find'. By constant repetition, and writing down many examples of each type, the 'tyro' then learns the five declensions of nouns and adjectives. As already mentioned, the focus is on the endings; 'neither ought the pupil's attention to be distracted by the article or rather the demonstrative pronoun, but his whole attention should be confined to the terminations'. The same applies to verbs, and the child will be tested on his knowledge about the system by asking him the character of the third person singular of Latin verbs: 'he will answer the letter t'.

If we now compare this introduction to Latin to Sweet's initial stage of pronunciation described above, we find the only common feature is the need for repetition. Otherwise, Sweet's recommendations are the antithesis of those of Cox. The latter begins with writing, with lists of words, dictionary work, and abstract rules, whereas Sweet has pronunciation, systematically chosen colloquial phrases, associations and common expressions, but 'bare lists of words' are avoided, and 'no grammatical analysis is attempted as yet'. Thus 'hands and feet' is taught as a collocation before the plural rule is known, and combinations of article and noun (such as OE 'ðæt wif') or demonstrative and noun are given together to indicate the gender by context and association.

Further features of Cox's Hints could be highlighted to show the huge contrasts between the two approaches. Here are some examples: Cox delays syntax until the greater part of the *accidence* is known; Sweet teaches syntax and *accidence* simultaneously on the basis of connected texts. Cox has all rules and paradigms learnt by heart; Sweet restricts rules to the most useful, and paradigms are used only to sum up information already acquired in context. Sweet teaches idioms through text study and thesaurus, Cox recommends exercises, especially 'double translation' of Caesar into and out of English, taking care to

preserve the Latin ordo intact - in other words, the English translation is compelled to follow the syntax of the Latin (Cox, p. 24). The contrast with Sweet's axiom of 'free translation' could not be greater (see p. 28 above). After a year of study, 'the tyro may commence prosody' (Cox, p. 25). At this point, not a word has been said on pronunciation, yet now the pupil must learn to distinguish long and short vowels and syllables, something which on Sweet's method would have been started at the outset. By 1870, when Sweet was formulating his theory, more attention was being paid to the pronunciation of Latin (see 2.2.1 above). In general though, Sweet's contention that the English gentleman learned language as a purely visual phenomenon is surely justified by this brief look at a contemporary account of the classical method.

2.2.4 'Pieces of Mosaic Work'

The technique of exercises recommended by the classical method was taken over by the teachers of modern languages in the German grammar schools. Here the text-books of J.V. Meidinger (1756-1822) and Karl Ploetz (1819-1881) are typical: with exercises, lists of rules, and even longer lists of exceptions. According to Howatt, one 'extensively-used' text-book of German in England, which had gone through fifteen editions by 1864, was that of Rev. J.G. Tiarcks; its main characteristics as described by Howatt are its extremely abstract rules and its numerous exceptions.⁴⁸ Sweet later referred to such a text-book for German (no author is mentioned), which gave the rule that nouns in -ung were feminine; instead of giving examples, there followed a list of exceptions, which became so firmly fixed in his mind that he knew the exceptions better than the regular form; thus, to continue his anecdote, he knew the archaic form 'Hornung' for years before he found a use for it - reading Walther von der Vogelweide (probably at Heidelberg).⁴⁹ It was this idea of 'cross-associations' (i.e. misleading confusions) which Sweet sought to avoid in his own approach.

According to Howatt's account, the eighteenth century had been much more exclusive in its teaching of modern languages - almost solely to the sons of gentlemen, often by tutors, and with

texts, grammar and dictionary as the major tools. Now, in the nineteenth century, as the teaching of languages grew in the schools, it became more convenient to teach on the basis of exercises designed to practice the grammar rules that had been learnt, a method which also fitted the mental training ethos. Blackie made the following comment:

[The classics teacher] is apt to imagine that his disciple must learn what he learns principally by the eye and the understanding; and so the teacher does not trouble himself much with frequent vocal appeals to the ear.

(Studying and Teaching of Languages, 1852, p. 12)

The 'neglect of the ear' (a phrase Sweet would have favoured had he read Blackie) meant that the teacher gave the pupils 'secondary and artificial' written exercises for them to work on quietly in class. These exercises tended to be unconnected sentences, in an unnatural English written specifically to cover the grammar rules and paradigms to be drilled. It is this which Sweet referred to as the 'analytical' approach, which put together sentences a priori like 'pieces of mosaic work', ignoring the actual facts of synthesis, association, and idiom. The expression here quoted occurs also in the theories of Prendergast, and it may well be the source of Sweet's notion:

Whatever its origin may have been, each language appears before us as an opus operatum, a highly-finished piece of mosaic, which children do not pull to pieces though the learned do.

(Prendergast, Mastery of Languages, p. 126)

In their recognition of the increasing complexity of the Meidinger type of text-book, the individual reformers of the 1860's and earlier tried to considerably simplify the grammar-translation approach. Franz Ahn (1786-1865), schoolmaster in Aachen, became a specialist in the simplified primer and was particularly successful in terms of book sales. Each unit of his primer contains a paradigm, the briefest of rules, a list of words and simple oral drill translation sentences to practise them.⁵⁰ At the end of the book, some moral fables occur as reading texts, and, akin to Sweet's 'synthetic meaning study', a set of vocabularies arranged by topic.

Despite the simple and accessible arrangement, an improve-

ment on Meidinger and Ploetz, it will be noticed that the mosaic-like exercises remain, as they do in the books of Ahn's like-minded fellow reformers H.G. Ollendorff, a well-known name as a text-book writer,⁵¹ and in the 'Mastery Series' of Thomas Prendergast (mentioned in 2.2.1 above), whose writings attracted the attention of the educationist R.H. Quicke in the early 1870's.⁵² Here are three sentences from a Prendergast exercise:

Have you not made it?

Have you the letter which you wished to give to me?

Can't you let that letter which you have composed be given up to me directly?

(Prendergast, Mastery Series. German, p. 6)

Prendergast's Mastery of Languages contains some interesting theoretical discussions of the language learning process; in particular, as R.H. Quick wrote, his 'observations on memory seem to be well worthy of notice',⁵³ and I shall look at certain of these later (2.2.8 and 5.1.1). However, his actual practice sentences are 'repulsive and long',⁵⁴ a verdict similar to that of Sweet (Practical Study, 1899, ch. 9), and they have an air of artificiality, more so, perhaps, than the simpler ones of Ahn, whose theoretical writings are minimal:

Charles, as-tu ma plume? Louis as-tu mon livre? Henri a ta plume, et Louis a ton livre. Tu as raison. Mon fils a tort.

(Ahn, Nouvelle méthode, p. 10)

As Kroeh pointed out in 1887, the sentences of Ahn and Ollendorff were often castigated as trivial and banal in content, yet they had their successes.⁵⁵ The reason was their accessibility to the private learner, and their emphasis on speaking, though the drills themselves did not approximate to real colloquial speech. Sweet's summary of their efforts was as follows:

The well-known systems of Arnold, Ollendorff, Ahn, Prendergast, &c., are all based on the fallacy that words, like the nine digits of arithmetic, can be combined into sentences ad libitum by the help of a few general rules. I learned Greek on this system at school, and one of the sentences I met with has stamped itself indelibly on my memory: 'The philosopher pulled the lower jaw of the hen.'

(Presidential Address, 1877, p. 93, note 2)

2.2.5 The 'Crude Form' System

The Educational Times of 1875 published a talk given by A.J. Ellis at the College of Preceptors in London, the main forum at the time for professional debate and exchange. Ellis spoke at length on Nasmith's Practical Linguist and suggested how the phonetic approach to teaching might be used in conjunction with the graded vocabulary of this book. In the discussion that followed, also reported in the journal, a Mr. Robson, of University College London, argued 'forcibly' for the 'intellectual advantages of the Crude Form system' (Ellis, 'Acquisition of Languages', p. 181).

The 'crude-form system' was a mid-nineteenth-century attempt to apply the results of comparative philology (especially Pott) to language learning - it analyses each word into its constituent parts based on a root or 'crude form'. Cox, in his Hints on Tuition, recommends using the system to complement the teaching of accidence; the pupil will write 'exercises contrived from the German plan of the crude forms, which are so managed that the young child can write a short Latin sentence'. The crude form is given and the child is taught to supply an ending. Cox describes it thus:

Without injury to the child's health or mental faculties, if carefully managed, this system of analysis and synthesis will lead him to trace effects to their causes, and to strip the crude form of its prepositions and terminations with the power to reconstruct these divided portions of words.

(Cox, Hints, p. 15)

It should be noted that Cox regards the system as complementary to the process of training the mind which the traditional method was intended to further.

The 'crude-form' system became the hobby horse of Thomas Hewitt Key, Professor of Comparative Grammar at University College London and a leading figure in the first decades of the Philological Society. Founded in 1842 by Edwin Guest, the Philological Society in its early membership had included a substantial number of former Cambridge classicists, such as Key, and George Long, who were interested in doing 'both classical and new philology, a combination that was unusual at the time'⁵⁶. It should be added that they also endeavoured to apply this

combination to the teaching of languages. This was eventually considered as a reform by many, and the Eton Latin Grammar was, according to one member of the Society writing in 1867, now replaced by the Public School Grammar - the Society could look with pride at the efforts of Professor Key, 'who first introduced the Crude Form system, which after years of ridicule and indifference has now attained a kind of imperial sanction'.⁵⁷

The seal of approval was later questioned. In 1875, it still had its supporters at the College of Preceptors, though Key's work was no longer in favour with many philologists. By the time of the 1880's Reform movement, the Reformers were criticising the complicated nature of the system. W.H. Widgery (1856-91), a schoolmaster at University College School, London, pointed out the absurd complexities it could lead to in Allen (1836). Here, 'condiderunt' is divided into eight constituent parts: con-d-i-d-er-u-n-t (i.e. preposition, reduplicator, connecting vowel, root, flexion syllable, tense vowel, plural sign, and person sign).⁵⁸ Sweet regarded the crude forms as unnatural abstractions, unlikely to aid the observation of language as it was actually used and spoken (1899, p. 86). The fact that it agreed with the classical ideal of mental training as well as containing the latest discoveries of philology does much to explain its popularity.

2.2.6 The 'Etymological Fallacy'

The mental-training ethos of the classical method received a further boost from philology in the early 1870's. The respected American philologist and professor of Sanskrit at Yale, William Dwight Whitney, made the following criticism of the Ahn/Ollendorff approach:⁵⁹

such a system has its unquestionable advantages where learning to speak is the main object directly aimed at, and where the smallness of the classes and the time spent with the instructor render it possible for the latter to give each pupil that amount of personal attention and drilling which is needed in order to make the system yield its best results.

However, he goes on to argue, such a method is impracticable in schools and colleges where 'circumstances and methods of instruction render translation and construction the means by

which the most useful knowledge and the best discipline can be gained'. For Sweet, of course, 'translation and construction' led to 'putting words together like pieces of mosaic work'. Whitney's view is reverting to what Blackie had called 'learning by the eye and by the understanding', for Whitney urges the student to master the principles of grammar, then acquire by reading 'a fair vocabulary and a feeling for the right use of it'; the student will learn to speak and write rapidly and well 'when circumstances require of him that ability' (Whitney, 1871).

Seizing on Whitney's arguments here, Hermann Breymann, lecturer in French at the Owens College, Manchester, argued in the preface to his French Grammar Based on Philological Principles (1874) that 'any teaching which fails to form or educate the mind must remain barren'.⁶⁰ The fault of the Ollendorffian approach was that it contained no 'explanations', addressing itself only to the learner's memory and not to 'his faculty of judgement'. Instead, according to the Educational Review of French Language and Literature which Breymann quotes, modern languages must be 'placed on a higher and more scientific foundation' and must be taught 'according to the more logical method which is applied to the teaching of the dead languages'.⁶¹ For Breymann, this meant that the study of French ought to be also historical and comparative. In this way, philology not only supported the mental training of the classical method but also added to it.

We have already touched on Sweet's view of the relation between logic and language. It will come as no surprise that he disagreed, strongly as ever, with the views outlined above. Here is his characteristic rejection of the usefulness of historical philology to the teaching of French; the analogy is with anthropology, probably his reading of E.B. Tylor:⁶²

To argue that irregularities are rational because there was once a reason for them, is like maintaining that it is rational of tailors to put buttons at the back of dress coats because in the older forms of dress coats such buttons were used to fasten up the long coat-tails which are now shortened.

(Paper on the 'Practical Study of Language', 1884, p. 47)

This application of philology to practical learning Sweet came to

call the 'etymological fallacy'. Its supporters stressed its interest value, for as Max Müller suggested, 'there is no longer any excuse, why, even in the most elementary lessons ... the dark and dreary passages of Greek and Latin, of French and German grammar, should not be brightened up in the electric light of Comparative Philology'.⁶³ Breymann, in the 1870's a typical practitioner of this method, argued that history not only added interest, it also awakened the 'faculty of judgement', and at the same time eased the learning process:

If we follow the historical and comparative method, most of the grammatical forms which used to be considered irregular appear in quite a different light; as apparent exceptions to the rule, they only serve to confirm it.

(French Grammar on Philological Principles, p. x)

For Sweet, the historical explaining away of irregularities is a prime example of the etymological fallacy:

It is easy enough to prove to a foreigner beginning English that the irregular plurals men, feet, mice, etc. are quite as respectable formations as the regular plurals in -s, but this does not in the slightest degree lessen the mental strain of fixing them in the memory; nor does it obviate the difficulty of passing from the regular to the irregular forms without confusing them one with another.

(Spelling Reform and the Practical Study of Languages, 1885, p. 4)

From a psychological point of view, then, language acquisition is not at all eased by etymology. For this reason, he puts common collocations such as 'hands and feet' in the initial, phonetic, stage of his method, where they can be acquired without the 'psychological break' which the later learning of the plural -s rule will cause (ibid, p. 12).

2.2.7 'The Elaboration of Grammars and Dictionaries'

As a philologist himself, Sweet favoured the study of etymology and historical grammar, but not as aids to language learning. Instead the practical study treats each language and period of a language as an 'organic unity' having its own individuality which the student must get to know before going on to comparative, historical, or literary studies (Anglo-Saxon Reader, 1876, pp. v-vi).

Far from easing the study of a language, philology, if wrongly applied, actually complicated the practical study of a language. Sweet regarded the Eton Latin Grammar as 'abstruse' (Academy, V, 1874, 67), and the same goes for the English grammars of Fiedler, Koch and Mätzner - they are 'too elaborate and abstruse for popular use' (Academy, II, 1870-1, p. 343). When he came to review these 'German Grammars of English' in 1874, he first of all praised their fullness, accuracy and method, especially when compared to the work of English philologists.⁶⁴ Yet there were problems. The grammars did not distinguish the individuality of the different periods of English,⁶⁵ and were 'one-sidedly antiquarian'. 'By antiquarianism,' he continues, 'we understand an admiration for what is old simply because it is old, often accompanied by a corresponding contempt for what is new'. The neglect of the living languages leads to a disregard of synthesis and phonetics as 'mere pronunciation'. The grammars thus become unhelpful for any one wishing to undertake a practical study of the modern language or one period of the language.

The problem of over-elaboration also applied to dictionaries. 'The present seems an age of Dictionaries,' said the Athenæum, reviewing the inadequacies of the latest re-issue of Johnson's Dictionary in 1870.⁶⁶ But few, if any, met the needs of the learner. Sweet, as we saw above, rejected the use of a dictionary in favour of vocabularies, or notes on the text. His primers of the 1880's all illustrate the principle as, to a lesser extent, does the Anglo-Saxon Reader - reviewing Sweet's Reader in The Academy (January-June 1877, p. 383), Skeat praised the useful inclusion in the glossary of references to passages from the texts themselves in order to illustrate the context and usage of the word.

2.2.8 'Sound Principles': The Influence of the Method-Writers

If mind-training did not work, and if philology had failed to show its true application to the problem, where else was there to turn? The 1870's saw the first stirrings of the academic study of education in England, with the appointment of Joseph Payne of the Philological Society as Professor of Education at the College of Preceptors, but little had been achieved.⁶⁷ Apart from this,

there were the individual teachers and authors of methods. We have so far looked mostly at their weaknesses; we now need to examine their useful insights and their influence, in a positive sense, on Sweet.

Their major insight, despite the oddness of their exercises, was an emphasis on speech. Ahn viewed language learning as a natural process, like a child acquiring the mother tongue, as did Prendergast (see 4.5 below), and both Ahn and Ollendorff stressed oral drilling. Prendergast was much more of a theorist, and emphasised the importance of the aural memory and the need to fully 'master' the pronunciation of a sentence before moving on to the next one. Again, the emphasis on the sentence has clear links with Sweet's own sentence approach, as does the assertion that many people have 'extensive eye-knowledge of a living language' without the ability to utter a single comprehensible or fluent sentence (Mastery of Languages, 1864, p. 238).

Perhaps the most fruitful of Prendergast's insights is into the influence of literacy on language learning, evidently derived from his work as a magistrate in India, where he came across several different languages and numerous illiterates (ibid p. 40). He noted the success in languages of couriers, travellers and missionaries, and the even greater success of illiterate servants compared with their masters on short tours abroad (p. 37). There seems to be a great difference, he notes, between the educated literate and the [oral] illiterate approach to language. Like Sweet, he is interested in the oral nature of language and its relevance to the learning process, and the following is typical of the numerous musings on the theme which occur in his book (further examples are given in Appendix II):

When we learn our first lessons, we are apt to think that if we can remember the spelling of the words, and can write them correctly, we have at all events, retained the substantial part; and that the correct sounds and tone may be attended to afterwards. Sounds may be deemed immaterial and insubstantial when compared with letters, which are rendered palpable objects by means of paper and ink; but the words of a living language are nothing but sounds. Sounds are the substance; and the letters, or symbols are their shadows. Beginners are very apt to lose the substance by snatching at the shadow.

(Prendergast, Mastery of Languages, p. 148)

Prendergast's interest in analysing the letter-based, visual

mentality of the modern educated European is strikingly similar to Sweet's remarks on the subject in his early writings (extracts from both authors on this topic are reproduced in Appendices I and II); an instance of their similar approach is Sweet's analysis of the writers of the 'German grammars of English':

The antiquarian philologist, having the written symbols constantly before his eyes, gradually comes to abstract them entirely from the sounds they stand for, and at last regards them as the language: any attempt to discover the real language represented by these symbols is looked on by him with supreme contempt, as a mere question of 'pronunciation'.

('German Grammars of English', Academy, V, 1874, p. 68)

For Sweet, the training of the philologist obscures the understanding of the nature of language and the relationship of speech to thought, a line of argument also taken in his anonymous review of A.J. Ellis's On Early English Pronunciation (Athenæum, June 4, 1870).⁶⁸ Alexander John Ellis, long-standing member of the Philological Society, was, beside Alexander Melville Bell, one of Britain's foremost phoneticians at this time. As we shall see in the next section, Sweet was extremely impressed with Ellis's work and its significance, for it established definitively how widely the spoken language had diverged from the written since the fifteenth century, and he wrote an enthusiastic review for The Academy (1871).⁶⁹ Such passages as the following must have struck Sweet's imagination. Here Ellis is writing of the difference between spoken German, usually dialect, and Hochdeutsch, generally regarded as the 'Schriftsprache':

In the same way we have a literary language in English, a written language, having only a remote connection with the spoken tongue, and shaped by printers as an instrument intended to satisfy the eye.

(On Early English Pronunciation, II, 1869, p. 622)

In his review (which I discuss further in 2.3.2), Sweet compares written English to Chinese, in that 'the visible symbol of the word gradually acquires an independent value, and it suggests an idea without any reference to the sound it originally represented' (Academy, June 1, 1871, p. 295). From the notion of the dominance of the visual symbol, the next step is to postulate a different way of thinking in 'highly civilised

communities'. This is perhaps just a vague exploratory notion in the 1871 review, but gels into a clear idea three years later. In the History of English Sounds (1874, pp. 19-20), we find a discussion of the visual and typographic mentality of the average person educated according to the existing methods (for this and parallel texts, see Appendix I). The following passage speaks for itself, and will stand as a conclusion to this section on Sweet's reaction to current methods:

An educated man in the nineteenth century is one who has been taught to associate groups of type marks with certain ideas: his conception of language is visual, not oral. The same system is applied to other languages as well as English, so that we have the curious phenomenon of people studying French and German for twenty years, and yet being unable to understand a single sentence of the spoken language, and also of Latin verses made and measured by eye, like a piece of carpentry, by men who would be unable to comprehend the metre of a single line of their own compositions, if read out in the manner of the ancients.

The above remark was published in 1874, but Sweet was clearly thinking along these lines in 1870, at the start of his career, when he began work on the Old English Pastoral Care (the work was announced in The Athenæum, January 15, 1870, p. 96). By the time he completed his introduction to the edition, he had already established a fair reputation as a philologist and phonologist. He had studied German philology at Heidelberg (his prowess in this field shown by his winning the Taylorian scholarship in 1870) and had written the chapter on Anglo-Saxon verse for the new edition of Warton's History of English Poetry (1871). From 1870 he was also the chief contributor of articles on German and Anglo-Saxon philology to the new journal The Academy, publishing review articles on March's Anglo-Saxon Grammar (1870), Earle's introduction to philology (1871), Ellis's Early English Pronunciation (June 1, 1871), Loth's Anglo-Saxon grammar (July 1, 1871), and Abbott and Seeley's manual on the study of language (October 1, 1871). In these articles we see his rejection of 'mind-training' (Abbott and Seeley), his dislike of the elaborate German grammars of English (Loth), some exploratory remarks on language learning and synthesis (March and Earle), and his important rejection of the visual mentality of the current methods of studying languages (Ellis).

2.3 THE OLDER METHOD: LATIN AS A LIVING LANGUAGE

2.3.1 The Influence of Nasmith

It is in the light of these early articles that we must read his remarks on medieval literacy and education in the introduction to the Pastoral Care (1871-2, p. xli), which I cited at the beginning of chapter 1 (a fuller text is given in my Appendix I). Here Sweet discusses the syntax and style of Alfred's translation from the original Latin of Gregory and writes:

In those days, when grammars and dictionaries were hardly known or used, Latin was studied much more as a living language than it is now; sentences were grasped as wholes, without the minute analysis of modern scholarship, and were consequently translated as wholes.

The main point here is that of 'grasping sentences as wholes', an approach to language that is encouraged when the 'living language' is the object of study, as was the case, so Sweet would have it, in the middle ages. Essentially, this is the same point he made later at the beginning of his 1884 paper (see 2.1 above). The appeal to medieval practice is also, however, the attitude of David Nasmith in the introduction to his Practical Linguist (1870, p. vi; see also my Appendix III); the relevant passage reads:

In the middle ages, when Latin was the common medium of communication among literary Europeans, it was practically a living language, and men and women who laid any claim to learning spoke it fluently and wrote it correctly and with ease.

The parallel may be a coincidence, though Sweet was certainly aware of Nasmith's method by 1877. As a young but already established medievalist, Sweet was naturally in a better position than the lawyer Nasmith to test the validity of this suggestion. Piecing together the various scattered discussions of the subject, I will argue in the rest of this chapter that Sweet had the following view of medieval language study: in particular he focusses on the medieval scribe, whose thought processes he assumes are discernible in the scribal practice of the manuscripts, and on the medieval translator, who reveals his or

attitude of the scribe and the oral mentality of the translator - appear to be confirmed for Sweet by the findings of the historians of education, who show that the Anglo-Saxon teachers taught Latin orally by means of simple dialogues, before they went on to teach grammar and literature.

2.3.2 The Phonetic Habits of the Scribes

Following Ellis in Early English Pronunciation, Sweet writes in his Academy review that a crucial role is played by the invention of printing, for this leads to the visual mentality of the modern educated person:

When writing is an art practised by the few, and literature is handed down orally, the scribes are hardly influenced at all by orthographic traditions. In highly-civilised communities again, where writing is universal, and literature is represented almost entirely by printed books, the visible symbol of the word gradually acquires an independent value, and it suggests an idea without any reference to the sound it originally represented.

(Academy, II, 1871, 295)

By contrast, as Sweet writes four years later, the pre-typographic scribe was forced to think aurally by the pressure of circumstances prevailing:

Before the invention of printing the case was very different. The Roman alphabet was a purely phonetic instrument, the value of each symbol being learned by ear, and consequently the sounds of the scribe being also written by ear. The scarcity of books, the want of communication between literary men, and the number of literary dialects - all these causes made the adoption of a rigid, unchanging orthography a simple impossibility.

(Sweet, History of English Sounds, 1874, p.20)

Moreover, because the scribe uses the roman alphabet with its phonetic values to render the sounds of the spoken language rather than an orthography with fixed spellings, he or she is compelled to 'habits of phonetic observation' (ibid, p. 21). Thus, according to Sweet, the scribes attempt to render fine distinctions of sound reflecting the way they speak (see 5.3 for examples and discussion); what is more, such distinctions, almost allophonic in their fineness of observation, further indicate the oral conception of language which was fostered by medieval

culture and its approach to the teaching of language.

Although my purpose at this point is to report the development of Sweet's ideas, it should be noted that Sweet, in reacting against the attitude of his contemporaries, has overstated his case. As I shall argue later (5.3), there is much evidence to suggest that both late West Saxon and fourteenth-century English had achieved the status of a Schriftsprache with standard forms and standard spellings of words to which scribes from other dialect areas attempted to conform - though apparently not always successfully, so that to this extent Sweet is correct to assert that they thought phonetically.

Sweet formulated his principle of scribal 'habits of phonetic observation' in 1874, but he had already acted on it in his study of the phonology of the two early Pastoral Care manuscripts - Hatton 20 and Cotton Tiberius B. XI - both of which he regarded as 'genuine and accurate specimens of Alfred's language written during the reign' (p. xvii). The consistent application of the principle led him to distinguish - the first scholar to do this - between early West Saxon as exemplified by Alfred's English and the late West Saxon of Ælfric and his contemporaries. The distinction was endorsed by the later studies of Sievers and Cosijn, who gratefully acknowledged Sweet's achievement.⁷⁰

Taking further the principle that the scribes 'tried to write as they spoke' which he had learned from Ellis, and following Earle's observation that 'if language is used unreflectingly the lighter words will get absorbed by those of greater weight'⁷¹, Sweet began to note instances of 'synthetic forms' in the manuscripts he was studying. Occasionally, instead of dividing words, the scribe attempts to show how adjacent words affect each other phonetically, for instance, ne and wæs become næs, and minor form words such as particles and prepositions are joined in the script with the adjacent content words to which they belong. Sweet eventually applied this 'synthetic method' to his phonetic approach to language learning, developing his idea of the 'breath-group' and producing phonetic texts for his textbook of modern English which ignore orthographical word-division. The implied argument, never quite stated as such, is that if the scribe 'grasped sentences as wholes' phonetically, then so did

the contemporary learner of Latin. Chapter six will follow this discussion of scribal method further (see esp. 6.2.1 and, for Sweet's application of the technique, 6.3).

2.3.3 The Oral Style of the 'Pastoral Care'

I turn now to Sweet's discussion of the style of the Pastoral Care, and the role this edition played in the development of Sweet's thinking on these issues. Sweet states his case with some qualifications, and although each stage of the argument is clear, the connections between them are not always clarified. Moving from the discussion of the phonology of the text, Sweet shifts his attention to the Alfredian prose, seeing it not only as a case-study in translation, but also as a case-study in the processes of learning Latin as manifest in an application of Latin-learnedness, namely the rendering of a text into English (his justification for such views is discussed shortly, in 2.3.4). The external evidence as to whether Alfred was in fact learning Latin through this translating process is not discussed by Sweet, although this may have been the case (see 2.3.5 and chapter three, 3.1.2 and 3.2.5).

Sweet's initial point is that the Alfredian translations are 'faithful representations of the natural utterance of the translators'. There appear to be two reasons for this in Sweet's argument. The first is that the translators are not greatly influenced by Latin prose - their writings form part of a native historical prose tradition independent of Latin models and going back to the rude beginnings of the abrupt, disconnected oral style in the story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the 'force and simplicity' of the accounts of Alfred's campaigns (also in the Chronicle). The Orosius is the translation closest to this native prose in content and style, while the Bede is 'less idiomatic' and the Pastoral Care, Sweet admits, is most influenced by the Latin. The foreign influence, however, is only indirect, 'chiefly showing itself in the occasional clumsiness that results from the difficulty of expressing and defining abstract ideas in a language unused to theological and metaphysical subtleties' (Pastoral Care, p. xl).

The second part of Sweet's argument appears to be this; the

expressing and defining abstract ideas in a language unused to theological and metaphysical subtleties' (Pastoral Care, p. xl).

The second part of Sweet's argument appears to be this; the translators of the Pastoral Care are composing orally and thus allow their own natural utterances to emerge in their written style. Sweet seems to be suggesting that the 'abrupt, disconnected style of oral conversation' characteristic of the Cynewulf and Cyneheard annal is also evident in the paratactic syntax of the Pastoral Care: here the 'monotonous repetition of such words as ðonne and forðam in the most varied senses' is highlighted (Pastoral Care, p. 265.10):

Ðonne bið suiðe sweotol ðatte him ðonne losað beforan Gode his ryhtwisnes, ðonne he ðurh his agene geornfulnesse gesyngað unniedenga, ðonne bið suiðe sueotul, ðat he ðat good na ne dyde ðar he hit for ðam ege dorste forlætan.

It is very evident that his righteousness before God is lost, when he sins unnecessarily of his own desire, when it is very evident that he did not do good, when from fear he durst neglect it.

Other features of this style - as listed by Sweet - include the tendency to correlation of constructions such as forðam ... forðam, swelce ... swelce etc., pleonasms i.e. redundant expressions (279.21), loose use of modal auxiliaries (169.7, 199.2), and anacoluthons (i.e. lack of grammatical sequence) seen in the opening sequence 'Ælfred cyning hateð gretan... & ðe cyðan hate' (3.1) and elsewhere (99.17, 101.15, 107.20). All these features occur regularly in natural speech, for 'language cannot follow the swiftness of thought', as Kellner, a scholar strongly influenced by Sweet, put it in 1892, referring to these passages from the Pastoral Care.⁷² Sweet's emphasis on the frequent pleonastic repetition of the personal pronoun 'he' (etc.), as in 'se oferspræca wer ne wierð he næfre geryht ne gelæred on ðisse worlde' to translate 'vir linguosus non dirigitur super terram' (PL 77,73),⁷³ should also be compared with his similar remarks in 1876 on colloquial idioms in modern English such as 'my brother he's coming' ('Words, Logic, and Grammar', p. 29).

In support of Sweet, numerous passages might be cited in which the above mentioned syntactic features are apparent. The 'occasional clumsiness', as Sweet calls it, comes out in the following (95.15-23):

Se lareow sceal mid geornful[li]ce ingehygde foreðencean na ðæt an ðætte [he] ðurh hine nan woh ne bodige, ne eac ðæt he nane ðinga ðæt ryht to suiðe & to ungemetlice & to unaberenlice ne bodige, forðam oft ðæt mægen ðære lare wierð forloren, ðonne mon mid ungedafenlicre & unwærligre oferspræce ða heortan & ðæt andgiet gedweleð ðara ðe ðarto hlystað, ond eac se lariow bið gescinded mid ðære oferspræce, ðonne he ne conn geðencean hu he nyttwyrðlicost laran mæge ða ðe ðarto hlystan willað.

The teacher must consider beforehand with careful meditation not only how he is to avoid himself preaching bad doctrine, but also how he is not to preach what is right too excessively or too immoderately or too severely; for often the virtue of doctrine is lost when the heart and understanding of the hearers are led into error with unseemly and imprudent loquacity, when he cannot think how he may most usefully teach those who wish to hear it.

Here chiefly the repetition of near-synonyms and conjunctions creates the rather clumsy effect. Yet the effect can be much more forceful and clear on other occasions, for instance the discussion of the priest's robes in chapter XV (93.14):

On ðæs sacerdes hrægle wæron bellan hangiende. ðæt is ðæt ða weorc ðæs sacerdes & eac se sæg his tungan clypien ymb lifes weg. Ac ðonne se lareow hine gegearwað to ðære spræce, behalde he hine geornlice ðæt he wærllice spræce; forðon gif he unendebyrdlice onet mid ðære spræce, & wilnað ðæt he ðy wi[s]ra ðynce, ðonne is wén ðæt he gewundige ða heortan ðara gehirenda mid ðære wunde, ðæt is ðæt he hie gedweleð & unwislice geiecoð ða idelnesse ðe he ofaceorfan sceolde.

Bells hung on the priestly robe, which means that the works of the priest and his voice are to proclaim the way of life. But when the teacher is ready to speak, let him be careful to speak warily; for if he hastens on irregularly with this speech that he may seem the more wise, it is probable that he will wound the hearts of his listeners by leading them into error and foolishly increasing the frivolity which he ought to prune away.

The repetition of ðonne and ðæt is ðæt and the pleonastic 'wounding with a wound' (avoided, incidentally, in Sweet's deliberately free and idiomatic translation) points to a 'plain style' charged, it might be argued, with a strong dose of 'natural' orality.

Long after Sweet's analysis of early Old English prose in the 1870's, the vexed question of the style of the Pastoral Care and related prose has not yet been settled, as a brief look at comments on the prose by Wrenn, Andrew, Robinson and Mitchell,

Bately, and Brown indicates.⁷⁴ Wrenn wrote in 1967 of the 'prentice hand' of King Alfred in the Pastoral Care, 'unnatural in syntax and often unclear', and S.O. Andrew (1940) had seen parataxis as either an effective rhetorical device, or 'simply a lack of grammatical subordination such as we find in the language of children and some primitive peoples'. Robinson and Mitchell, on the other hand, stress the powerful dramatic effectiveness of the device when well-used; Bately too writes of the power of this prose and even suggests that 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' and the travel account in the Orosius are perhaps paraphrases of oral accounts. Sweet's contemporary, the American Anglo-Saxonist F.A. March, argued that, while Anglo-Saxon literature, both verse and prose, was based on speech, it was formed by a process of selection and combination of the best elements into an elevated kind of speech (perhaps he means here what some call 'oral literature'), which is then passed on by education and the 'imitation of successful compositions' and preserved by a 'certain elevation and cultivation of mind'.⁷⁵ Sweet's reply focussed on the gradual development of the older stages of English into modern English (for which he cited Swift and Defoe as models) and emphasised yet again the naturalness of speech:

Professor March surely forgets that for scientific purposes artificial literary speech is worth nothing compared with that of everyday life, with its conscious, unsophisticated development. It is, besides, very questionable whether there ever was an artificial literary prose language in England in early times.

Sweet's predilection for 'natural' prose, probably linked to other interests in 'Nature' which he shared with some of his contemporaries (see chapter four, section 4.2), perhaps led him to underplay rather too much the role of literary cultivation and to argue that early prose was chiefly colloquial.

2.3.4 Grasping Sentences as Wholes

In the preface to his edition of the Pastoral Care, once he has established (at least to his satisfaction) the colloquial nature of the translation, Sweet now comments on its relationship to the original Latin. For Sweet the Pastoral Care is a 'very close rendering', but there is an 'anxiety to bring out the

meaning of the Latin as vividly as possible'. This anxiety is seen in the frequent paraphrases of the original Latin wording:

The rendering of the simplest passages is often attended with wide deviations from the words of the original, which are transposed, omitted and expanded, even when it would seem simpler and easier to have followed the original literally.

(Sweet, Pastoral Care, p. xli)

After giving a few examples of 'doublets', where one Latin word is rendered by two English ones (as in 'ða ðegnas ond eac ða ðeowas' for servi, in the heading for ch. XXIX), Sweet now breaks off his discussion (for the full text, see Appendix I). He presumably thought the examples he had given were sufficient to confirm the truth of the above statement. Various studies since the time of Sweet confirm that, on the whole, Sweet's summary of the relationship of the Old English to the Latin is correct (although the doublets may reflect a deliberate bookish use of a glossed Latin text with alternative renderings rather than a free, idiomatic translation⁷⁶). As Brown puts it, Alfred's usual practice is 'dissolving the long Latin sentences, dense with nouns and participles, into combinations of short clauses that may preserve little more than Gregory's thesis,'⁷⁷ a verdict very close to that of Sweet. One example, taken more or less at random, will suffice to indicate the general soundness of Sweet's approach to the style of the Latin-Old English translation.

In an early chapter of the work, Alfred expands a dead metaphor in Gregory's Latin passibus ('step by step') into the much more concrete image of a ladder leading up to the floor (literally 'grain-floor') of the mind:

Nu ic wilnige ðætte ðeos spræc stigge on ðæt ingeðonc ðæs leorneres, suæ suæ on sume hlædre, stæpmælum near & near, oððæt hio fæstlice stonde on ðam solore ðæs modes ðe hi leornige; & forðy ic [hi] todæle [on] feower

Now I wish this discourse to rise in the mind of the learner as on a ladder, step by step, nearer and nearer, until it firmly stands on the floor of the mind which learns it; and therefore I divide it into four parts

(Sweet, Pastoral Care, 23.16-19)

On the evidence of Migne's edition, the Latin of Gregory is syntactically more compact and terser:

Quadripartita vero disputatione liber iste distinguitur, ut ad lectoris sui animum ordinatis allegationibus quasi quibusdam passibus gradiatur.

(PL, 77, 13)

('Now this book is divided into a four-part disputation, that it may reach the mind of its reader by well-ordered expositions, as it were step by step.')

For the Old English version, the word order of the Latin has been completely rearranged, as though the translator kept only the meaning in his mind and refused to analyse word for word the original Latin. This is what interested Sweet in Alfred's style of translation, and led him, in the passage already quoted, to postulate the translator as 'grasping sentences as wholes', the essential process behind his own 'synthetic method'.

The stages of Sweet's argument, then, are thus: he begins with a treatment of phonology behind which we must assume his views on the phonetic approach of the scribes (see 2.3.2 above); he continues with a discussion of the prose style as essentially oral (2.3.3); finally he has remarks on the sentence-by-sentence approach of the translator. He then states that the translating style is to be explained by the medieval method of language study, which grasped whole sentences rather than analysing according to the contemporary nineteenth-century methods and approaches.

Various questions are raised here. What did Sweet mean by all this? Why should the scribes' phonetic script, the author's colloquial style, and the paraphrase-approach of the translation be linked in Sweet's mind to a theory of language learning? To answer these questions will require, inevitably, a degree of interpretation, but they demand an answer.

By 1871, when he wrote about 'grasping sentences as wholes', Sweet was convinced of the 'visual' conception of language in contemporary education and conversely, I will suppose, of the aural conception of the middle ages. He writes, as we have seen, of literature being handed down 'orally', and of the 'natural utterance' of the translators; elsewhere he states that it is inconceivable, 'in those illiterate times' for the scribe of Hatton 20 to have re-read his work against the original manuscript (Cotton Tiberius B. XI). In remarks such as these, Sweet is circling around a concept which he cannot exactly

pinpoint, akin to the modern notion of the orality/literacy divide.

In such (relatively) recent theories as those of Marshall McLuhan, Jack Goody, and Walter Ong, to mention only a few of the pioneers,⁷⁸ the middle ages form a transitional period between the introduction of the roman alphabet (in the British Isles and Western Europe) and the invention of printing, during which many of the pre-literate oral processes of thought continued to hold sway. The professional status of the scribe, the lack of universal literacy, the traditional reliance on the spoken word and memory as the source of knowledge, the persistence of rhetoric as the means of expression, all these factors combine to form a consciousness or mentality not yet re-structured by the influence of printing and textuality. Ong's notion that 'writing restructures consciousness' is there in Prendergast's explorations of the literate mentality and in Sweet's speculations on the 'visual conception of language' fostered by nineteenth-century education. Ong's 'psychodynamics of orality', which include such stylistic characteristics as 'additive rather than subordinative', 'aggregative rather than analytic' and 'redundant or copious', sound rather like Sweet's evaluation of the oral style of the Old English prose of the Pastoral Care (with its parataxis, anacoluthons and pleonasm).

Sweet's approach to orality through phonetics, mentioned only briefly by Ong,⁷⁹ is potentially more interesting than has hitherto been supposed. Phonetic synthesis, as defined by Sweet, may explain not only the practice of the scribes but also a whole attitude to language in a transitional oral culture in which the meaning of any communication is associated directly with the sound of the utterance when spoken rather than with the letters and words of which it is composed when written down. In such a culture, it would be natural for a sentence-by-sentence approach to be taken to the processes of translation and language acquisition.

2.3.5 Sweet's View of Medieval Language Learning

Apart from the phonetic habits of the scribes and the oral

style of the Alfredian translator, did Sweet have any other evidence for his views on medieval education? In tackling this question, we must recall Sweet's career up to this point, for it shows the extent of his knowledge of the middle ages. Sweet had learned Old English probably while still at school; he had then studied Old Icelandic while working in a mercantile office in the 1860's,⁸⁰ and Ellis had based the section on Icelandic in Early English Pronunciation on Sweet's findings (Athenæum, June 4, 1870, p. 738). The notes to the Pastoral Care reveal that he was widely read in most of the published Old English texts, and apparently also many of the unedited manuscripts of the Bodleian and the British Museum: in his work on the Pastoral Care he consulted at least fifty manuscripts of the late Anglo-Saxon period, as well as most of the Alfredian manuscripts (Athenæum, July 20, 1872, p. 83). Though his comments on medieval culture are brief, they suggest wide reading and knowledge of his subject.

If Sweet was so widely-read, why did he not discuss in more detail his theory of medieval learning? One answer is perhaps to be found in the preface to the Anglo-Saxon Reader (1876, p. v), where he suggests that the priority is knowledge of the language; he therefore refrains as much as possible from historical or literary comment on the content of the texts:

There can be no doubt that the first object of all who occupy themselves with Old-English literature, whether with a view to the literature itself, to historical investigations, or to a better understanding of the development of the English language generally, must be to acquire sound elementary knowledge of the language. Everything else will then follow naturally.

To find a coherent account of medieval language study, we must move forward in time to his paper of 1884 and his discussion of learning 'dead languages'.

Here, after detailing his method for the practical study of language, Sweet states that the same approach would be used for teaching Latin and other dead languages - they are to be studied like living languages (see above, section 2.1.5). By adopting a consistent pronunciation the student will 'retain the associations between the meanings and the sounds represented by the written forms' (1884 Paper, p. 49). Secondly, he stresses the

need to avoid 'cross-associations', or confusions between similar forms, by marking quantity and accent (features of phonetic synthesis). Rather than being taught through its literature, Latin should be taught using the simplest prose descriptions, narratives and dialogues 'from which every literary complexity and artificiality has been weeded'. Virgil will not be tackled until the learner can read simple poetry and prose with ease and converse on simple topics. As we saw in the outline of Sweet's 'practical study', he concludes that this would be 'simply a return to the methods of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, carried out, of course, in a far more perfect way'. Here, then, is Sweet's view of medieval language learning, and it is repeated again in the 1885 paper, almost word for word, although this time, in the above passage, Sweet misses out the word 'Renaissance', perhaps significantly, as his main interests were medieval.

As well as his general reading of early texts, various influences may have led to these views. One writer we have already looked at is Nasmith (2.2.1; 2.3.1). Like Sweet, Nasmith also sees printing as vital to the change in attitude to language learning between the medieval and modern periods, for the printed book leads to the teaching behaviour noted by Blackie (see 2.2.4 above); instead of speaking the lessons, the teacher leaves the pupil to acquire the language by eye from the book:

It is not too much to say that from the moment printing enabled and induced the master to delegate a part of his work to the inanimate book, he began to neglect his duty; for though he placed in the hand of his pupil an instrument which, as an auxiliary and supplement to the right discharge of his own functions, was of the greatest value, yet not being a real equivalent, he imposed upon the learner a task which time has abundantly proved was in itself sufficient to prevent his ever mastering the language.

(Nasmith, Practical Linguist, 1870, p. vii)

By the 1870's, various historians had published a limited amount on the history of medieval learning and its methods. The fullest treatment is Wattenbach's work on the history of writing, scribal technique, and manuscripts, published in 1871 as a collection of articles to pave the way for his later Schriftwesen im Mittelalter.⁸¹ Other works by Sharon Turner, Pauli, Bass Mulling-

er, and others have scattered comments on early education.⁸² Two authors that Sweet is likely to have known are Thomas Wright and Oswald Cockayne. Wright had published a useful edition of Anglo-Saxon glossaries of various dates, including Ælfric's Colloquy, a pedagogical work which Sweet was to discuss in the Practical Study of 1899.⁸³ For his Elementarbuch of 1885, Sweet drew on passages from Wright's social history of the middle ages.⁸⁴ Cockayne, as was stated in the introduction above, was Sweet's teacher at King's College School, and Sweet had certainly read Cockayne's Shrine, and probably also his Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England, an edition which prints, with commentary, many of the scientific and educational writings of the Anglo-Saxon period.⁸⁵ Cockayne also edits various examples of the colloquy, commenting on the conversational, 'colloquial' style of instruction in Latin, which differs from the nineteenth-century teaching of Latin.⁸⁶

While these materials confirm that scholars in medieval studies in 1870 knew sufficient about medieval techniques of learning to endorse Sweet's views on the oral study of Latin in the ninth century, they are not enough to suggest that they regarded a process of grasping whole sentences as the norm in the medieval schoolroom. Here Sweet's silence on the content of the text is puzzling, for it is in the Preface to the Pastoral Care, and in the main text itself, that we find evidence to support his approach.

The fact that Sweet produced a careful, accurate edition along with a translation of the Old English text is enough to prove he was familiar with its contents. Although Sweet does not even mention it in any of his extant writings, we can nevertheless read - in Sweet's translation - that Alfred himself, in his preface to the work, explicitly links his translating procedure with his method of learning the Latin of the text. Using familiar Classical and medieval terms, Alfred describes his translation as sometimes word for word and sometimes sense for sense. This is a common topos echoed in the verbum ex verbo and sensum ex sensu of a later preface by Ælfric of Eynsham (also edited by Sweet); it goes back to Cicero and Roman rhetoric.⁸⁷ However, Alfred's account differs from the norm in that he also discusses his learning procedure for acquiring Gregory's Latin

text. In Sweet's translation, the passage reads:

When I remembered how the knowledge of Latin had formerly decayed throughout England, and yet many could read English writing, I began, among other various and manifold troubles of this kingdom, to translate into English the book which is called in Latin *Pastoralis*, and in English *Shepherd's book*, sometimes word by word and sometimes according to the sense, as I had learnt it from Plegmund my archbishop, and Asser my bishop, and Grimbold my mass-priest, and John my mass-priest. And when I had learnt it as I could best understand it, and as I could most clearly interpret it, I translated it into English...

(Pastoral Care, 7.15-25)

This statement implies that Alfred would learn whole units of the Latin from his advisers and teachers and, for each unit, fully assimilate its meaning before translating it into English. This is the original Old English wording:

Siððan ic hie ða geliornod hæfde, swæ swæ ic hie forstod, & swæ ic hie andgitfullicost areccean meahte, ic hie ón Englisc awende ...

Like Zupitza in his Übungsbuch,⁸⁸ Sweet gave what in most contexts is the usual interpretation of leornian as 'to learn'. The passage forms one of the selections for his Anglo-Saxon Reader, and in a review of the Reader in 1877, Körner disagreed with Sweet and Zupitza on leornian, suggesting that 'to meditate' was the preferable interpretation and translating the passage as 'after having meditated the contents of this book, so that I understood it and was able to expound it, I translated it into English'.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, as later scholars have shown, the notions of 'to learn' and 'to meditate' are not mutually exclusive, but complimentary features of meditatio, the process of medieval monastic learning so well described by Jean Leclercq:

For the ancients, to meditate is to read a text and to learn it 'by heart' in the fullest sense of this expression, that is, with one's whole being: with the body since the mouth pronounced it, with the memory which fixes it, with the intelligence which understands its meaning and with the will which desires to put it into practice.⁹⁰

We shall have more to say about meditatio shortly (3.1.7; 3.2.5), for this aspect of medieval intellectual life seems, at least in part, to support Sweet's contentions about synthetic methods and grasping sentences as wholes.

At the very least, most modern scholarship agrees with the view of Alfred's translation that 'the "sense by sense" paraphrase predominates'.⁹¹ Few, however, follow Sweet's argument to its final conclusion, that the style of the Old English forms evidence for a holistic approach to the learning process, though Bately quotes it with interest in her edition of the Orosius.⁹² The various influences of Prendergast, Nasmith, Ellis, and arguably also King Alfred, pushed Sweet towards linking his views on current issues of education, phonetics, and the practical study of language to a new insight into medieval education. The validity of this insight will be considered in my next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THE MEDIEVAL BACKGROUND:

SYNTHESIS AND LEARNING IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES.

for the voice of the teacher penetrates the heart of the hearer much more easily if he fix it there with good examples; that is that he is to display openly what he commands with his words, to help it to become effective.

(Alfred the Great, c. 890)

These pieces will prove that the Saxons, in their way, tried to learn languages.

(Oswald Cockayne, 1864)¹

1. SYNTHETIC METHODS?

This chapter considers the question raised by the above discussion of synthetic approaches to learning of whether Sweet's theory is a 'return', as he claims, to 'the methods of the middle ages'. I will confine the discussion to the early middle ages, for that was Sweet's principal area, and look initially for any evidence in the work of historians of education and in the medieval sources that holistic, auditory methods of learning and assimilating pieces of Latin were used - within (or perhaps despite) what was essentially the analytical approach of the medieval trivium, in which the pupils 'read the texts with minute attention: word for word, line for line'.² While it is true that the detailed study of texts was a major feature of the medieval curriculum, it should also be remembered that one of the basic goals of early medieval elementary education was to learn to recite the liturgy and meditate orally on the truths of scripture. In such a context, the written Latin texts were also studied and acquired to a great extent orally and aurally.

The evidence for such an approach will be drawn from the then dominant monastic psychology of learning and will be considered under the heads of memorisation, auditory memory, liturgy and repetition, unconscious learning, lectio and analysis, the art of memory, meditation and association, and reminiscence. Initially the argument will move away from Sweet

and the development of his ideas; instead his model of synthesis and its validity for medieval education will be assessed and tested against the evidence now available. I then return to the Pastoral Care, and Sweet's translation of the text, in which many of these features of medieval learning are illustrated, and assess the extent to which they may have influenced him.

3.1 The Importance of Memorisation

In the early medieval schoolroom, whether it was the inner cloister of the monastery or the more open institution attached to a monastery, a cathedral school or even a royal household, the learning techniques of the monastic milieu were dominant.³ Great emphasis was placed on oral memory. In an age when the expense of books was prohibitive and most temporary writing was done on portable wax tablets, there was a much more pressing need to commit large passages of useful Latin to memory. Such useful Latin would include the pedagogical proverbs, fables, dialogues and colloquies;⁴ it would also include the literature of Antiquity important as a stylistic model in its letters and poetry;⁵ still more important were the patristic theological writings and, above all, the books of the Latin Bible.⁶ In particular the Book of the Psalms had to be memorised, for it was the basis of the monastic office and liturgy and the most common devotional reading for both clergy and laity; for both these reasons it was the first textbook used in the school and in terms of surviving manuscripts the 'commonest book in Anglo-Saxon times'.⁷

By the early eleventh century, memorisation of the two most basic of Christian texts, the creed and paternoster had even become a legal obligation in the Laws of Cnut, and Wulfstan's canons require that 'ælc man leornige þæt he cunne pater noster and credan'.⁸ Instructions to memorise, however, go back to late Antiquity. In a letter to the mother of a new-born girl, Jerome gives the following advice:⁹

Let her every day repeat to you a portion of the scriptures as her fixed task. ...Instead of jewels or silk let her love the manuscripts of the holy scriptures and in them let her prefer correctness and accurate arrangements to gilding and Babylonian parchment with elaborate decorations. Let her learn the Psalter first, with these songs let her distract

herself and then let her learn lessons of life in the Proverbs of Solomon ...Let her then pass on to the Gospels and never lay them down.

The injunction to begin with the learning of the psalms became a basic principle of medieval education, as many historical studies show.¹⁰ An indication of this is seen in the jottings by pupils of verses from the psalms, probably as an exercise in learning or practising written skills using material which had already been learnt orally - these probationes pennae are found occasionally in manuscript margins, and verses from the psalms are written on one of the few surviving wax writing tablets from the period.¹¹ Further light is thrown on this by the Merovingian, Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon saints' lives, which frequently describe their protagonists as learning the psalms in the early years of their education.¹² Studies of individual centres of learning tend to confirm the primary role of learning the psalms in the monastic programme. In Romance-speaking areas such an activity was more purely religious, for Latin was much easier to learn, and the vernacular was perhaps considered as merely a low form of 'correct' Latin.¹³ For German-speaking areas, however, learning to recite the psalter from memory was certainly the first phase in the acquisition of Latin.¹⁴ In the British Isles, Latin was clearly a foreign language and the Classical grammars of Priscian and Donatus were complemented by an Insular tradition of grammars more suitable for non-native speakers,¹⁵ while English culture produced the first ever grammar of Latin in the vernacular.¹⁶

3.1.2 Two Case Studies of Auditory Memory: Alfred and Godric

What actual methods of memorisation and learning of Latin were employed? Many of the sources are not explicit, but the question can be approached through two case-studies of medieval learners in which more detail is recorded.

The first of these, and probably the best known account in an Anglo-Saxon context, is chapter 23 of the Life of King Alfred by Asser, where he describes the young Alfred as so attracted ('illectus') by the illuminated initials of a codex of English poems that he was spurred on to learn the poems by heart at the instigation of his mother.¹⁷ According to Seth Lerer, Asser's

history may not represent the actualities of Anglo-Saxon culture here and may be an idealised account of the development of an unlearned boy into a literate Christian king; at first the boy Alfred learns to read ('legit'), but without the understanding (i.e. not 'intellegit') which he later acquires as an adult.¹⁸ Other scholars take Asser's history to be at least based on fact,¹⁹ and interpret the legit rather differently. At this early stage - before his twelfth year as Asser's chapter 25 tells us - Alfred could not read; if this is true, the obvious question to raise is how he accomplished the learning task. As Asser tells the story, Alfred took the book from his mother and went to his teacher; here the manuscript text has the problematic 'magistrum adiit et legit'. According to Keynes and Lapidge,²⁰ the et may be a scribal error for qui, in which case it means that the teacher read to Alfred, who learnt by hearing the poems recited, in other words by 'aural learning' as O'Keefe puts it (Visible Song, p. 82). Such a style of 'reading' is pictured by Bass Mullinger in his study of early medieval education published in 1877, here writing about the school of Rabanus Maurus at Fulda:²¹

We may picture to ourselves a group of lads seated on the floor, which was strewn with clean straw, their waxen tablets in their hands, and busily engaged in noting down the words read by the scholasticus from his manuscript volume. So rarely did the pupils, in those days, gain access to a book, that to read (legere) became synonymous with to teach.

Earlier, in his Life of Alfred the Great (1853), Rheinhold Pauli had written that the boy Alfred 'had the book read to him, and repeating after reading, learnt to recite the songs'; citing Thorpe's edition of Florence of Worcester, the author states that this was the 'usual mode of teaching and learning', and he points out that 'the meanings of loqui and legere [were] confounded with the idea conveyed in recitare', referring also to Grimm's note on Gothic rôdjan for loqui contrasted with OE rêdan for legere.²²

This would tally with other chapters (76-7, 81, 88) which describe Alfred's later habit of listening to Latin texts read aloud to him and 'acquiring some acquaintance with almost all books' (ch. 77), presumably learning at least their content by 'carefully mulling it over in the depths of his mind' (ch. 88). The view of Alfred learning by listening is well established, going back also to Sharon Turner's early nineteenth-century

account of how Alfred's instructors 'recited or interpreted to him the books he commanded'.²³

If the et of 'adiit et legit' is taken as 'and', the term legit must imply the highly analytical learning process of lectio (see section 3.1.4 below) - Alfred 'read with' the teacher and so learnt the poems. Whatever the process involved it is not purely rote-learning, for the understanding is brought to bear on the task:

Alfred spoke as follows in reply to his mother, forestalling his brothers (ahead in years though not in ability): "Will you really give this book to the one of us who can understand it the soonest and recite it to you?" Whereupon smiling with pleasure she reassured him, saying 'Yes, I will'. He immediately took the book from her hand, went to his teacher and learnt it. When it was learnt, he took it back to his mother and recited it.

(Keynes and Lapidge, p. 75)

Nevertheless, some kind of aural learning procedure is implied, perhaps listening to the teacher and repeating, afterwards 'mulling over' the content in the mind (see the discussion of meditatio at 3.1.7). Probably in Alfred's case the listening was highly intensive, done 'with great application to the best of his abilities' (Keynes and Lapidge, p. 91).

The second case-study I wish to take comes from the life of St. Godric of Finchale, born shortly after the Norman Conquest and brought up on the creed and paternoster as the Anglo-Saxon laws required. According to chapters 9 and 16 of the vita as edited by Stevenson,²⁴ the illiterate former merchant Godric was given a psalter at the age of forty, which he gradually began to learn, carrying it everywhere with him in his hermit existence until he had learned all the psalms. By listening to the reading and chanting of the liturgy at St. Mary-le-Bow, he eventually achieved a passable level of Latin (Stevenson, pp. 41-2, 59-60). If the story is to be believed, Godric is one of the few medievally known to have learnt Latin on his own, and he does this by a combination of intense study, memorisation and aural learning.

In the logocentric, oral culture in which both Alfred and Godric lived it was natural for learning to take the form of memorisation of what was heard, what Alfred called the word ðære lare or 'word of instruction' (see 3.2.1). In these two case

studies, the learning of Latin is an aural activity, an intense listening to something read aloud. This is what Chaytor calls the highly-developed 'auditory memory' of the Middle Ages,²⁵ which, according to Clanchy, became the cultural norm:

Medieval writing was mediated to the non-literate by the persistence of the habit of reading aloud and by the preference, even among the educated, for listening to a statement rather than scrutinizing it.

(Clanchy, From Memory to Written Record, 1979, p. 150)

3.1.3 Liturgy and Repetition

The auditory memory for a Latin scriptural text was aided by the fact that it was repeated dozens of times. This was particularly true in the monastic context, where the psalms were chanted in the long daily round of the Divine Office and the whole psalter was, according to the provisions in chapter 18 of the Benedictine Rule, covered in a week.²⁶ In England, the tenth-century Benedictine Reform added further occasions for hearing psalms chanted in the daily programme and the novice monks took an active part in this with their teacher.²⁷ Periods of time were also allotted for private reading, each monk receiving a book to read during Lent, and throughout the year the lector would read to the monks during meals.²⁸ The sheer weight of repetition must have aided retention and recall.

It is perhaps to be wondered that the weight of repetition did not become a burden and lead to 'verbal satiation', the phenomenon which Sweet called 'a blunting of the mind' (see 6.5). There is some indication that it did. Ælfric tells the story of monks complaining that they had to get up several times in the night to sing the Te deum.²⁹ More seriously, the Cluniac monastic reforms of the late eleventh century did in fact overload the monastic memory with psalmody and elaborate liturgy, to such an extent that by the mid-twelfth century Peter the Venerable had to introduce further reforms aimed at making the liturgy more intelligible and slower, so that it would fit the demands of monastic memory and meditation.³⁰ In tenth- and eleventh-century English monasteries, however, the repetitions of the liturgy probably furthered rather than hindered learning. The Latin

psalms and other texts were still chanted slowly enough to allow for meditation and assimilation of their meaning.³¹ Moreover, because the meaning of the text was held to be open-ended and its mysteries inexhaustible, the text itself resisted satiation (see 3.1.7 and 3.1.8 on meditation and reminiscence). In short, there was a strong motivation to learn and memorise these texts.

3.1.4 Unconscious Learning

Because of the frequency of repetition, it was inevitable that unconscious learning should take place. Riché cites instances from saints' lives where the mother is reading aloud to the child, who falls asleep but nevertheless assimilates the lesson by some almost hypnotic effect. An instance occurs in a life of the eleventh-century Wulfstan of Worcester, who also is described as having psalms read to him while he is asleep.³²

As learning was based on repeated hearing of orally recited texts there was some danger that it would remain purely mechanical - that the words would be learnt but not the meaning. In the account of Alfred learning the poems, we have already seen Asser emphasising that Alfred understood what he had learnt. Nevertheless, this was not always the case, for it was (and still is) possible to learn a few phrases and use them appropriately without full comprehension. A set-piece that occurs in several early medieval teaching colloquys - including an early-eleventh-century colloquy by Ælfric Bata - is the following dialogue between a bishop and his subordinate:³³

Et episcopus dicit ad principem sacerdotum: 'An habes Latinam linguam?'

'Etiam, uel utique; non tam bene sapio, quia non multum legi, sed tamen fui inter scolasticos et audiui lectores docentesque predicantesque atque illam mirabiliter die et nocte meditantes atque dicentes et obsonium facientes. Unde et ego ex illis aliquid, quanquam sum paruus ingenio, lingua tamen meditatione pauca fona, .i. uoces uel uerba, recognosco, sed etiam haec regulariter respondere non possum. Ignoro enim regulas grammaticorum nec [scio] exempla poetorum.'

Et dixit ille clericus ad episcopum: 'magister aue! [...] et animaduerte, quod canonicus sermo regulis gramaticorum non seruit neque exemplis poetarum.'

[sic]

(Early Scholastic Colloquys, ed. Stevenson, p. 10 - also pp. 26 and 42-3)

('And the bishop says to the chief of the priests: "Do you have any Latin?"

"Yes; or indeed, I do not know Latin so well, since I have not read much, but I was among the scholars and heard the lecturers and those teaching and preaching and those meditating on it marvellously day and night both while speaking and taking their food. From this even I recognize something from them, although I am lacking in ability, yet by long meditation [I recognize] a few "phones", i.e. sounds and words, but I cannot respond with these regularly. For I do not know the rules of the grammarians or the examples of the poets."

And the cleric said to the bishop: "Greetings, master, and understand that canonical speech does not keep to the rules of the grammarians or the examples of the poets."')

The priest in this dialogue appears to have learnt his Latin by hearing it in various contexts, yet his learning has remained passive - he is still unable to speak more than a few phrases. It is perhaps for this reason that in the Pastoral Care (ed. Sweet, 137.5-7 and 81.5-11), Alfred - and of course Gregory before him - talks of the need for the 'word of instruction' to be fully understood, to penetrate (ḡurhfaran) the heart of the listener (see 3.2.1 below). The theoretical implications of the problem had been considered by St. Augustine in De magistro:³⁴

We do not learn from words as mere words, that is as sound and noise. Those which are not signs cannot be words. If I hear a word, I do not know if it is a word or not until I know what it means. Once we establish its link with things, we come to know its meaning.

In the De doctrina christiana, Augustine stresses the importance of moving from the words to the truths they signify:³⁵

There is a miserable servitude of the spirit in this habit of taking signs for things, so that one is not able to raise the eye of the mind above things that are corporal and created to drink in eternal light.

This fits in with the conception of the mind in Alcuin and others, who maintain that the soul [mind] is made up of understanding, will and memory and that these three are an indivisible trinity.³⁶ All are involved in the psychology of learning. Thus for Alcuin (and Cicero whom he follows) the memory is a treasure store of both words and things and these must not only be retained but also understood:

Carolus Rex: Quid dicis de nobilissima, ut reor, rhetoricae parte, memoria?

Albinus Magister: Quid aliud, quam [Mss., nisi] quod Marcus Tullius dicit, quod thesaurus est omnium rerum memoria, quae nisi custos cogitatis inventisque rebus et verbis adhibeatur [Al. adhiberetur], intelligimus omnia, etiamsi præclara fuerint, in oratore peritura. (PL, 101, 941B)

('Charlemagne: "What do you say about what I consider the most noble part of rhetoric, namely memory?"

Alcuin: "What else but what Cicero says: that memory is the treasury of all things, and unless it guards the thoughts, things and words of what we have invented [in the sense of rhetorical inventio], and we understand them all, we are useless in our oratory."')

In the twelfth century, one of Hugh of St. Victor's precepts is that the pupil should participate actively in the learning process.³⁷ Yet as Riché points out, pupils did not always do this - it was quite possible to memorise and learn to read Latin texts without understanding their meaning.³⁸ In the fourteenth century the problem is still felt, for in Chaucer's Prioress's Tale one of the choir-boys tells the boy protagonist that he cannot teach him the meaning of the Latin words of what they are singing, for he knows 'but smal grammeere' (other than the texts he has already learnt).³⁹ Like the initial mechanical phonetic stage of Sweet's practical method, the medieval school achieves initially good pronunciation, recitation and memorisation. It seems that the medieval world encouraged the oral style of learning, synthetic in its grasping of whole texts, but not, at this stage, necessarily teaching the meaning.

There is a striking confirmation of this in the exceptional case of the twelfth-century nun, Hildegard of Bingen. As a woman, Hildegard seems to have received only the basic education, that is to say, instruction in the Latin psalter and liturgy.⁴⁰ From fairly early in her life, she began to see visions which eventually became the basis of her writings.⁴¹

In her early letter to Bernard of Clairvaux where she first publicly admits to the visions, Hildegard describes the experience of reading a Latin text, which is best explicable if we assume that she had learnt the words aurally:

For in the text, I understand the inner meaning of the exposition of the psalms and gospels and the other books which are shown to me by this vision. The vision touches my

heart and soul like a burning flame, showing me these depths of interpretation. Yet it does not show me writings in the German tongue - these I do not understand. I only know how to read the words as a single unit - I cannot pull the text apart for analysis.

(tr. R. Carver, in Bowie and Davies, pp. 127-28)

What we have here is surely an example of 'grasping sentences as wholes' with a simultaneous intuition of their meaning, a description of the process made by a person who had perhaps not enjoyed the full training in analysis that marked the second stage of the medieval curriculum. Here then is one case at least where Sweet's synthetic model can be applied successfully, and Hildegard could be classed according to Skehan's categories as an 'expression-oriented' learner 'more apt to rely on chunks of language and efficient memory'.⁴²

3.1.5 Lectio and Analysis

In most cases, it was the analytical and interpretative techniques of grammatica and lectio that finally taught the early medieval pupil the meanings of the text.⁴³ Grammar was taught by rule, and, in the basic text-book of Donatus, by the question-and-answer technique of the catechism:⁴⁴

Partes orationibus quot sunt? Octo. Quae? Nomen, pronomen, verbum, adverbium, participium, coniunctio, praepositio, interiectio.

The following extract from the early personification allegory of Martianus Capella - known to the Anglo-Saxons and influential through the middle ages - gives an imaginative account of the rigorous discipline and analytical teaching methods of Lady Grammar:⁴⁵

Whenever she accepted pupils, it was her custom to start them with the noun. She mentioned also how many cases could cause faults or could be declined accurately. Then, appealing to her pupils' power of reasoning, she firmly held the different classes of things and the words for them, as often happens with those who need her attention. Then she used to ask them the moods of the verbs and their tenses and the figures, and she ordered others, on whom complete dullness and inert laziness had settled, to run through the steps and to climb upon as many works as possible, treading on the prepositions or conjunctions or participles, and to be exercised to exhaustion with every kind of skill.

In the passage from Bata quoted above it is noteworthy that the cleric admits he has not read enough, by which he almost certainly means the process of lectio, the highly analytical task of legere ab aliquo, in which the pupil read and declined the words of a text with the grammar master (Leclercq, Love of Learning, p. 151). This intense parsing was inherited from antiquity.⁴⁶ Although it fixed the grammatical form and meaning of the text in the memory, this was at the expense, so Anselm of Canterbury complained in the eleventh century, of much drudgery, for both teacher and pupil.⁴⁷

The manuscripts themselves, whether used in the school or not, suggest the approaches taken to grammatical study. The evidence of glossing in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts (psalters and Latin poetic set-texts) reveals the thoroughness with which the texts were analysed grammatically in the early medieval period.⁴⁸ Interlinear and marginal glosses and symbols indicate the parts of speech, the tense, the subject of the sentence, the 'logical' word order, proper nouns, etymological origins of words etc.⁴⁹ To this extent then, the reading phase of the medieval method also corresponds to Sweet's grammatical stage, though evidently in a more rigorously analytical manner. Sweet himself edited the glosses and studied the glossing techniques of early Anglo-Saxon manuscripts,⁵⁰ and in this respect his assertion of 'synthetic methods' is surprising, for the kind of evidence here points to the opposite conclusion, yet he made no attempt in his written work to discuss the question.⁵¹

3.1.6 The Art of Memory

Did the Middle Ages recommend any other learning techniques other than analysis? In medieval thought the art of memory was part of rhetoric, but this was less known and used than the techniques of grammatica, which aided the exegesis of the text. One technique which may have been employed was mnemonics. The studies by Yates and Carruthers have shown that the Classical art of memory was revived in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (along with a renewed interest in rhetoric) and remained extremely popular up to the time of the Renaissance. Both scholars suggest that the art may have been used in the earlier centuries as part of the commonplace practice of the classroom,

though for this the evidence is hard to come by. Yates suggests that while the thirteenth-century Dominicans Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas transform the Classical art into a memory technique linked to prudence and the cardinal virtues, this may nevertheless be based on an earlier didactic and ethical use of the art transmitted to the early Middle Ages by Late Antiquity.⁵² Carruthers devotes a large section of her book to Hugh of St. Victor (twelfth century), for he is apparently one of the first medieval writers to discuss at great length the actual classroom techniques, rather than more general didactic techniques (as for instance in the Pastoral Care, which I discuss in 3.2 below). Carruthers suggests that because Hugh refers to the memory techniques in his educational treatise De tribus maximis as commonplace 'puerilia', they may have been in use for centuries.⁵³

Clearly memorisation was well established, but it is uncertain whether early medieval education taught the visualisation techniques that classical rhetoricians employed to fix large portions of texts and speeches in their minds, that is to say, the orderly placing of images against distinct backgrounds (loci) as recommended by Cicero in De oratore and by the anonymous author of Rhetorica ad Herennium (thought to be by Tullius, i.e. Cicero, in the later Middle Ages).⁵⁴ Alcuin knew neither of these works, as Yates points out, and bases his dialogue De rhetorica on Cicero's earlier work, De inventione; he therefore does not know any particular mnemonic methods other than the regular practice of learning, writing and thinking, and the avoidance of drunkenness;⁵⁵ this is clearly not the art of memory as revived by the thirteenth century. But despite the alleged paucity of theory about visualisation techniques,⁵⁶ the actual practice of writers, scribes and artists points to possible acquaintance with the memory techniques, as reflected for instance, in some of the rebus-type illustrations of the Utrecht Psalter.⁵⁷

In the twelfth century, Hugh of St. Victor knows the place and image technique of the Ad Herrenium. He also seems to be familiar with the recommendations of Quintilian that a text should be divided into manageable parts in order to memorise it, a common sense precept now supported by modern research

findings.⁵⁸ Another source for the technique of text-division may be the fifth-century Marriage of Philology and Mercury by Martianus Capella, which had been translated into German in the eleventh century and was certainly popular in the twelfth century. This is Martianus's version of Quintilian's method:⁵⁹

But, as said before, this matter requires much practice and labour, whence it is customarily advised that we should write down the things which we wish easily to retain, so that if the material is lengthy, being divided into parts it may more easily stick (in memory). It is useful to place notae against single points which we wish to retain. (When memorising, the matter) should not be read out in a loud voice, but meditated upon with a murmur. And it is obviously better to exercise the memory by night, rather than by day, when silence spreading far and wide aids us, so that the attention is not drawn outward by the senses.

Quintilian had other recommendations for the student:⁶⁰

to learn a passage by heart from the same tablets on which he has committed it to writing. For he will have certain tracks to guide him in pursuit of memory, and the mind's eye will be fixed not merely on the pages on which the words were written, but on individual lines, and at times he will speak as though he were reading aloud ... This device bears some resemblance to the mnemonic system which I mentioned above, but, if my experience is worth anything, is at once more expeditious and more effective.

Hugh of St. Victor appears to take up Quintilian's idea, saying that a student should use the same manuscript for studying a particular text so that the visual form, layout and colour of the page will aid the visual memory:

Therefore it is of great value for fixing a memory image that when we read books, we study to impress on our memory through our mental-image-forming power (per imaginationem) not only the number and order of verses or ideas, but at the same time the colour, shape, position and placement of the letters, where we have seen this or that written, in what part, in what location (at the top, the middle or the bottom) we saw it positioned, in what colour we observed the trace of the letter or the ornamented surface of the parchment.

(De tribus maximis circumstantiis
gestorum, trans. Carruthers, p. 263)

It is likely that this form of visual memory was practised in the early medieval school, though how consciously and deliberately it

was implemented is arguable.⁶¹ We should recall our two case studies from the start of this section. Both Alfred and Godric learn from a manuscript book they keep for the purpose, though this is perhaps from force of necessity. In Alfred's case, he is described as 'attracted by the beauty of the initial letter in the book' (ch. 77), a description which is echoed in William of Malmesbury's life of Wulfstan where the young saint is captivated by the miracle of the precious decoration of a psalter (Book I, 1).⁶² The visual form of the text, then, acted as a mnemonic for the aural and oral learning process, though not in the systematized way of the later art of memory manuals with their techniques of picturing images and backgrounds in the mind.

3.1.7 Meditation and Association

In none of the early medieval theories of learning discussed so far is there much room for ideas of 'combination', 'association' or 'connectedness' which Sweet held to be essential for the practical study of language. In the discussion so far we have seen that the aural memorisation of whole texts is to an extent synthetic, but is followed by an intensely analytical approach to the study of the curriculum texts. Some of the techniques of memoria may have been applied to the assimilation of pieces of Latin, using visual images as it were as pegs on which to fix the orally delivered text. This is not an aspect of medieval culture in which Sweet was interested, although his own phonetic scripts do of course serve to strengthen visually the oral associations; in fact he considered memoria technica as the irrelevant forming of extraneous associations and not part of a natural learning process (1899, p. 110). One aspect of early medieval learning remains to be considered, however, and this is the phenomenon of meditatio, a mode of thought with strong claims to be associative and one which would fit quite neatly into the association/synthesis model.

We have already made glancing references to the phenomenon, for instance in the extract from Martianus Capellanus. A further instance is the cleric in Aelfric Bata's dialogue, who claims that by long 'meditation' he will be able to utter a few Latin sentences. Asser also describes the process by which Alfred learned as 'mulling things over in his mind'. This, basically, is

the meaning of meditari, a combination of study and explorative meditation and thought. The full connotations have been treated in depth by Jean Leclercq:

In secular usage, meditari means in a general way, to think, to reflect, as does cogitare or considare; but more than these, it often implies an affinity with the practical or even moral order. It implies thinking of a thing with the intent to do it; in other words, to prepare oneself for it, to prefigure it in the mind, to desire it, in a way, to do it in advance, briefly to practise it. The word is also applied to physical exercises and sports, to those of military life, of the school world, to rhetoric, poetry, music and, finally, to moral practices. To practice a thing by thinking of it, is to fix it in the memory, to learn it.

(Leclercq, Love of Learning, p. 20)

With such a definition in mind, we can see why Ælfric Bata's cleric chose to 'meditate' before attempting to formulate his phrases in spoken Latin. As the biblical verse 'os justi meditabitur sapientiam' implies, meditatio is a religious exercise, and this is the use of the word in Bede's description of Aidan on his travels, teaching people 'meditari ... id est, aut legendis scripturis aut psalmis discendis operam dare' ('to meditate, that is they had to read the scriptures or learn the psalms').⁶³

But along with its religious use meditatio is also a means of aural learning, and one with strong links to the acquisition of Latin speech. In fact, as Martianus Capella discusses it, meditation is speech, but differs from lectio in that it is not reading with a loud voice but meditating on the text 'with a low murmur' (see 3.1.6 above). The low murmur is a characteristic of the technique:

This results in more than a visual memory of the written words. What results is a muscular memory of the words pronounced and an aural memory of the words heard.

(Leclercq, p. 90)

We can speculate that when the young Alfred went to his teacher with the book of poems, the teacher instructed him in this technique just as monks and laymen were instructed by Aidan in Bede's account. Indeed we find that, for Cassiodorus, who was known to the Anglo-Saxons, meditation was a school exercise.⁶⁴

The effectiveness of the exercise is clear from the many references to it, and its success is based on the intensity and commitment with which it was practised.⁶⁵ This intensity is summed up by Leclercq, who relates it to the trinitarian conception of the mind discussed above:

For the ancients, to meditate is to read a text and to learn it 'by heart' in the fullest sense of this expression, that is, with one's whole being: with the body since the mouth pronounced it, with the memory which fixes it, with the intelligence which understands its meaning and with the will which desires to put it into practice.

(Leclercq, p. 22)

3.1.8 Reminiscence

The combination of the various techniques of frequent listening, repetition, rote-learning, grammatical analysis, murmuring the words and 'mulling them over in the mind' is responsible for the phenomenon of reminiscence in monastic thought. Basically, this is a type of associative thinking in which the mind of the writer (or speaker) is so absorbed in biblical words, phrases and images, that 'a mere allusion will spontaneously evoke whole quotations and, in turn, a scriptural phrase will suggest quite naturally allusions elsewhere in the sacred books' (Leclercq, p. 91). This has implications for the study of language in the period because it tends to encourage, in the composition of a text or discourse, the partial quoting of other authors and texts, and often the whole tenor of a person's Latin is coloured by their meditated (oral/aural) reading. We can observe this in the style of St. Patrick's Confessio, particularly as his Latin was learned late and remained unpolished, as he himself admitted.⁶⁶ In chapter one he writes:

Deum enim verum ignorabam et Hiberione in captivitate adductus sum cum tot milia hominum secundum merita nostra, quia a Deo recessimus et praecepta eius non custodivimus et sacerdotibus nostris non oboedientes fuimus, qui nostram salutem admonebant et Dominus induxit super nos iram animationis suae et dispersit nos in gentibus multis etiam usque ad ultimum terrae, ubi nunc parvitas mea esse videtur inter alienigenas.

(St. Patrick, Confessio, ed. Hood, p. 23)

('For I was ignorant of the true God and was led from Hibernia into captivity with so many thousands of men

according to our deserts, for we drew away from God and did not keep his commandments and were disobedient to our priests, who reminded us of our salvation; and God brought upon us the fury of his anger and dispersed us among many nations even to the ends of the earth, where now my insignificance is seen among foreigners.')

Patrick's Latin is a series of phrases, quotations and reminiscences of the Latin Old and New Testaments, just as John Bunyan's English is a style drawing heavily on the patterns and syntax of the King James version.

The phenomenon of reminiscence has been most thoroughly examined by Jean Leclercq, and a recent study of medieval memory follows his analysis closely.⁶⁷ According to Leclercq (pp. 91-2), reminiscence accounts for the many digressions in Augustine, Gregory, and early medieval writers, particularly in the exegesis of scripture, and explains why the same sequence of words is found several times in the same author, or alternatively why the same wording occurs in several authors without one necessarily citing the others. Leclercq's explanation is that 'quite simply the same words evoke similar quotations' (p. 91). Often the connections evoked are not logical but imaginative and associative:

The mere fact of hearing certain words which happen to be similar in sound to certain other words, sets up a kind of chain reaction of associations which will bring together words that have no more than a chance connection, purely external, with one another. But since the word or passage which contains the word comes to mind, why not comment on it here?

(*ibid.*, p. 92)

The hold of reminiscence on medieval thinking only begins to weaken after the rise of scholasticism with its greater use of orderly, dialectical exegesis and written (rather than mental) bible concordances, and its emphasis on rhetorical dispositio (arrangement) and clear sequence of ideas in the Ciceronian art of memory.⁶⁸

To illustrate how reminiscence works, we can take an example at random from Gregory's Regula pastorali. In chapter xxv (PL, 77, 96-7) Gregory's theme is those who shun the office of preaching through false feelings of humility, basically the idea of not using one's talents, to which he refers later. But he

begins by recalling Solomon's question about the use of hiding away one's wisdom:

Unde et bene quidam sapiens dicit: 'Sapientia abscondita et thesaurus invisus, quæ utilitas in utrisque (Eccli. xx, 32)?'

The reference to Solomon and the word abscondita then evoke another context which continues the theme:

Unde et bene per Salomonem dicitur: 'Qui abscondit frumenta, maledicetur in populis (Prov. xi, 26).'

After some lines of discussion, the word maledicetur is seen to have called forth another quotation, this time from Jeremiah:

Unde et bene per prophetam dicitur: 'Maledictus qui prohibet gladium suum a sanguine (Jer. xlviii, 10).'

The chain of association continues on the word gladius, recalling a verse from Deuteronomy xxxii, 42 (and later in the chapter a verse from Exodus) and on the expression a sanguine which evokes a speech by St. Paul in Acts xx, 26-7. Later in the chapter the original word abscondita is taken up in a verse from the psalms 'justitiam tuam non abscondi in corde meo' ... and so on. Each new allusion is woven into the argument and related to the theme, but the initial association is almost always verbal rather than thematic. In the discussion below, we will observe this kind of thinking in Alfred's epilogue to his translation of the Pastoral Care, where different words and images on the theme of water occur in a chain of associations that links a ship, storm, waves, a dam and a well with the ideas of thought, memory and learning.

It is clear then, that associative thinking was a basic early medieval mode of thought. Depending as it did on recitation and memory for words and phrases it was basically oral and auditory in nature. Thus through the oral, meditational techniques taught to pupils by their monastic educators, reminiscence by verbal association must have formed a major part of the preliminary training in Latin at that time.

3.2 SYNTHETIC LEARNING PSYCHOLOGY IN THE PASTORAL CARE

A close reading of the Pastoral Care suggests various parallels between its author and Sweet. These are potentially interesting and need to be considered for the light they throw on Sweet's ideas on language study. If the similarities are convincing, it may be that they support the argument that Sweet was steeped in the oral/auditive culture of the middle ages and was thus influenced consciously and unconsciously by medieval approaches to language and the process of learning.

3.2.1 Teaching through the Spoken Word

The clearest and most obvious analogue is the emphasis on teaching as an oral activity. In this respect, the text itself is replete with formulaic references to the oral nature of the process of teaching and learning: through ðā stefne ðære lare 'the voice of instruction' (tr. Sweet, Pastoral Care, 93.5), or ðā word ðære lare 'the words of instruction' (95.25, 137.5, 381.4-5), or even simply 'speech' spræc (93.17) or cwide as in ðone cwide ðe sanctus Paulus cwæð (53.7). The learners themselves are described as 'hearers' gehirenda (93.20, 147.11) and are urged to 'hear what is written' ac gehieren hwæt awriten is on Salomonnes bocum (322.25) or hie sculon gehieran ðone cwide ðe be him gecweden is on Salomonnes bocum, hit is gecweden ... (331.13-14). Such formulas are common in medieval authors, and testify to the residual orality in which they were steeped.⁶⁹ The formulaic references to speech also reflect the fact that most reading was done aloud, that even when works were not orally composed, they were nevertheless conceived with the purpose in mind of oral performance or recitation.⁷⁰

In Alfred's Pastoral Care, more so even than Gregory's Regula pastoralis, a basic theme is that of the teacher. Thus, as Potter points out,⁷¹ Gregory's 'ars est artium regimen animarum' is rendered by Alfred 'the art of teaching is the art of all arts' (Sweet's translation, 25.17). In another passage, the praedicator of Migne's Latin edition of Gregory is rendered lareow 'teacher' in an image which further emphasises the oral nature of the teaching activity:⁷²

Thus also the words of instruction are seed, and they fall on the heart of the hearer, whether they be profitable or not. The words are received by the ears and brought forth in the mind by the understanding. Therefore the noble teacher Paul was called by learned men word-sower.

(Sweet, Pastoral Care, 95.25, 97.1-4)

In the above passage, the idea of the spoken language being assimilated before it is consciously tackled by the mind may have appealed to Sweet. Other extracts on the theme of oral teaching highlight the parallel (especially in chapters xiv-xviii in such passages as 95.15-23, 97.7-9, 137.5-7, etc.); the following is almost reminiscent - in Sweet's translation - of passages in his own writings on the psychology of language study and learning:

[The teacher's position] obliges him to speak eloquently; let him then consider that it is equally needful for him, when he has spoken, to act according to his teaching, for the voice of the teacher penetrates the heart of the listener more easily if he fix it there with good examples; that is that he is to display openly what he commands with his words, to help it to become effective.

(Sweet, Pastoral Care, 81.5-11)

3.2.2 The Restless Nature of the Mind

Clearly, not all parallels between Sweet and Alfred are deliberate. Some are almost certainly fortuitous resemblances that arise from the very fact that both are writing on analogous subjects and both emphasise attitudes to the human mind that have changed little over the centuries. One instance of this is their views on the nature of motivation and attention - the authors of the Pastoral Care and the Practical Study of Language consider the human mind to be restless and easily distracted. Thus the Pastoral Care has this to say:

It is written in the Proverbs of Solomon: 'My son, attend to my wisdom and prudence, and direct thine eyes and ears to being able to guard thy thoughts'. For there is nothing in us more restless and changeable than the mind, for it departs from us as often as vain thoughts approach us and is dissipated by each of them.

(Pastoral Care, ed. Sweet, 273.8-13)

The theme of the restlessness of the mind was a favourite topos of Anglo-Saxon poets. Here, for instance, is Sweet's paraphrase

of a passage from the Seafarer:

My mind departs out of my breast like a seabird, screams in its lonely flight, returns to me, fierce and eager...

(Sweet, 'Shelley's Nature Poetry', p. 236)

Admittedly in a very different style, the Practical Study expresses a similar underlying attitude:

We can explain the irregularities of a language by means of history, and even prove that they are really more correct than the regular forms, but they still continue to be irregularities, that is, they always cause breaks and inequalities in the series of mental associations called forth by the regular forms, which can only be smoothed over by strict attention and continued practice.

(Sweet, 'Practical Study', 1884, p. 36)

What the Alfredian passage has in common with Sweet is an attitude of controlled attention in the learning process and a desire to avoid 'vain thoughts' or 'conflicting associations'. Both therefore recommend a principle of economy - Sweet's later formulation 'giving the learner only such material as he wants at the time or is likely to want within a short period' (1899, pp. 108-9) seems to echo verses from Solomon and St. Paul quoted by Gregory and Alfred in the Pastoral Care:

Of which spoke the wise Solomon: 'My son, do not divide thy mind among too many things, and thy works likewise.'

(Pastoral Care, ed. Sweet, 37. 16-17)

Of which Paul spoke: 'Desire not to know more than is needful for you, but know what is fitting for you to know and what ye are capable of knowing.'

(Pastoral Care, 93.26, 95.1)

According to Gregory, if a teacher rushes too quickly he wounds the heart of his listeners (93.23); elsewhere he says that with bad habits the mind is 'dimmed' (69.7). Similarly, for Sweet, hurrying causes a blurred mass of associations, while too frequent repetition 'blunts the mind' (1899, p. 253). Thus many of the strategies recommended in both these works concern the avoidance of pitfalls. Finding the mean and balancing opposing tendencies is a major theme of Gregory's work and perhaps struck a chord with Sweet, who stresses that while the learning materials should be interesting they should not be too much so,

as this may distract the student from the task in hand (Practical Study, 1899, p. 111).

3.2.3 Water Imagery

In view of Sweet's concern with association in the process of learning, it will be necessary to consider the extent to which this also features in the approach to learning of the Pastoral Care. Instances certainly occur in the Pastoral Care of associative chains of words and descriptions of meditative, synthetic learning. Before examining these in detail, some attention must be paid to the other descriptions of the learning process that feature in the work.

The main metaphor for wisdom and learning in the Pastoral Care is that of water, which teachers drink and then distribute to the people as instruction. The origins of this metaphor are probably biblical, for it occurs in the psalms and gospels; it seems to have been linked in the minds of some Anglo-Saxon writers with Gregory - Ælfric describes Gregory as drinking þa flowendan lare, 'the flowing water of instruction' (Sweet, Selected Homilies, 56.28), an expression which Alfred had used in his Pastoral Care when he said that the teacher should 'moisten the dried-up hearts with the flowing waves of his instruction', mid ðam flowendan yðon his lare (61.20). Introduced in the second chapter (31.3-8), the image recurs in chapter x (61.18-20) and chapter xlviii (373.1-375.11) as well as Alfred's postscript, where the whole book is referred to as se wæterscipe (467.28) and Alfred urges his audience to drink from it:

Ac hladað iow nu drincan, nu iow Dryhten geaf ðæt iow
Gregorius gegiered hafað to durum iowrum Dryhtnes welle.

But draw water now to drink, since the Lord has granted that
Gregory should direct to your doors the Lord's stream.

(Pastoral Care, ed. Sweet, 469.7-9)

The metaphor is summed up in Alfred's phrase, based on Gregory:

Ac ðæt mennisce mod haefð wætres ðeaw.

The human mind has the properties of water.

(277.5-6)

We can presume that, for Alfred and Gregory, water is appropriate

as a metaphor of learning because it represents knowledge as a natural accumulation, 'a very deep pool is weired in the wise man's mind' (279.15-16) or a well (373.4) which can be drawn on and distributed yet also kept for oneself (375.10). It also explains the phenomenon of forgetting, or allowing one's knowledge to accumulate too much and go to waste:

The human mind has the properties of water. When water is dammed up, it increases and rises and strives after its original place, when it cannot flow whither it would. But if the dam is thrown open or the weir bursts, it runs off, and is wasted, and becomes mud. So does the mind of man when it cannot preserve a rational silence, but bursts out into idle loquacity, and so is diverted various ways as if it were all dispersed in little rivulets, and had flowed out of himself, so that it cannot return again into his own understanding and mind.

(277.5-14)

The image of water represents learning as a verbal process, a gathering of verbal wisdom behind a dam (also 279.14-16) and the flowing out of wisdom in the teacher's loquacity. This metaphor of the well of memory is an old topos found also in the notion of mnemosyne - the conception of language and memory in oral cultures, where words are not visual entities to be 'stored' but actions that occur or events that 'well up' in the mind.⁷³ As an account of the mental process, the image of water can be effectively employed to explain both remembering and forgetting, but it also has its limitations, since it does not attempt to illustrate the process of learning itself by which words 'penetrate the mind of the listener'. Perhaps the closest it comes to explaining this is a sentence in chapter xlvihi:

the teacher is to water men outwardly with the art of his instruction, until they become learned inwardly.

(373.16-17)

A further inadequacy of the model from the point of view of heuristics is that it gives no full account of the process of recall from the memory store other than drawing from a well, which throws no light on how a person selects, from the store, the information or the words that he or she requires. In fact, the method Gregory uses for recall, at least in his discursive, exegetical style, is one of imaginative verbal association (see

3.1.8 above); it remains to be seen whether Gregory or Alfred provide any theoretical content in the Pastoral Care recommending association as a technique of learning.

3.2.4 'Association' in the Pastoral Care

There is little direct discussion of themes of association in the Old English text of the Pastoral Care. Perhaps influenced by nineteenth-century psychology (see 2.1.1 and 5.1), or more likely employing the word in a non-technical sense, Sweet makes occasional use of the word 'associate' in his translation. Given the importance he attached to the process of association these instances will now be considered, although it will be seen that in most cases they have no direct bearing on his theories of language and education.

Sweet employs the word 'associate' to show, for instance, the link between two contrasting ideas:

that when righteousness and mercy are associated in the ruler's authority, he may, while soothing the hearts of his subjects, inspire them with reverence...

(Pastoral Care, 127. 5-8)

Alfred's text has gegadrige, 'gather', and the Latin of Migne's edition permiscet, 'mingles' (PL, 77, 38C). According to Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader, the Old English word corresponding to 'associate' is beodan, which is glossed as 'join, associate' (1894, p. 298), although Whitelock's revision alters this to 'join, unite, add' (1967, p. 382). In these texts it often glosses some form of the Latin jungo ('bind, join') and occurs in contexts where people join or associate with others. Thus Ælfric's homily on the assumption of John the Apostle describes a great crowd of believers joining the apostle - 'him eac to ge^xdeodde' (Sweet, Anglo-Saxon Reader, 1894, 64.90). The word is used for Caedmon joining a monastery (ibid. 48.72; also Thorpe Analecta Anglo-Saxonica, p. 300), and for Jehosaphat's disastrous association in friendship with the evil Ahab (Sweet, Pastoral Care, 353.22-4, 355.7) where it corresponds to the Latin jungo (PL, 77, 91B). In a psychological sense it represents associating inwardly with the vice of pride (Pastoral Care, 375.6; PL, 77, 95-6, 'conjungo'). Also in the context of the mental life,

gepeodnis is rendered by both Sweet and Whitelock as 'association' in the expression 'to gepeodnesse þæs heofonlican lifes onbærnde wæron'. In a linguistic, verbal sense there is one rare instance of beodan to describe Caedmon's joining, adding or associating words in the account of him composing a poem. The Old English reads:

Ða aras he from þam slæpe, and eall þa þe he slæpende song
fæste in gemynd hæfde, and þam wordum sona monig word in þæt
ylce gemet Gode wyrpes songes to-gepeodde.

(Anglo-Saxon Reader, 1894, 48.50-4)

Sweet's note to this passage describes the over-literal Old English as 'stiff and unidiomatic' (p. 212). He quotes the Latin 'eis (cuncta quae cantaverat) mox plura in eundem modum verba Deo digna carminis adjunxit' but typically offers no interpretation of the Old English passage.

It would seem, then, that the Pastoral Care contains no conscious discussion of the associative process such as are found in the twelfth-century writings of Hugh of St. Victor. Nevertheless, the actual practice of verbal reminiscence and associative thinking forms the basis of the book's style even in those passages that are clearly new additions by King Alfred. This is apparent in Alfred's metrical postscript, which, as I have already indicated, describes Gregory's Pastoral Care as se waterscipe. In the subsequent lines of the poem Alfred refers to the biblical 'living waters' (467.30) which are directed through men's minds in various ways ((467.31-469.2); he then in a series of allusions takes up the variations on the metaphor of water to be found in the book he has just translated. These allusions are interesting for their occasional lack of (direct) connectedness, as though the links are associative rather than rigorously logical. As they will need to be considered in detail, I quote the full passage below in Sweet's translation, with the sentences numbered for easier reference.

- (1) Some dam it within their minds, the stream of wisdom,
hold it with their lips, so that it flows not out to no
purpose.
- (2) But the well remains in the man's breast, by the grace of
the Lord, deep and still.
- (3) Some let it flow away over the tract of land in rills.

- (4) That is not a wise thing, if so pure water is dispersed in murmuring, shallow streams over the fields, till it becomes a marsh.
- (5) But draw water now to drink, since the Lord has granted that Gregory should direct to your doors the Lord's stream.
- (6)-(8) Let him now fill his vessel, who has brought hither a watertight pitcher. Let him come back soon. If any man here has brought to this spring a leaky pitcher, let him repair it carefully, lest he spill the clearest of waters, or lose the drink of life.

(Pastoral Care, 469.2-12)

Sentences (1) and (2) read as follows in the Old English; for convenience I quote the lines as arranged in verse rather than the way Sweet printed them, as prose:⁷⁴

Sume hine weriað on gewitlocan,
wisdomes stream, welerum gehaftað,
ðæt he on unnyt ut ne tofloweð.
Ac se wæl wunað on weres breostum
ðurh Dryhtnes giefe deop and stille.

The lines here recall the passage in chapter xxxviii of the Pastoral Care:

Se forlæt ut ðæt wæter, se ðe his tungan stemne on unnyttum
wordum lætt toflowan. Ac se wisa Salomon sæde ðætte suiðe
diop pól wære gewered on ðæs wisan monnes móde, & suiðe lytel
unnyttes utfleowe.

(279.13-16)

Sentences (3) and (4) echo in a similar way a passage (quoted in 3.2.3 above) from the same chapter of the Pastoral Care. Common to the two passages are the words to fenne (277.10 and 469.7) and riðum torinnan (277.12-13 and 469.5), although the order in which these motifs appear is reversed and the syntax differs greatly. Apparently Alfred picks up only key phrases and verbal echoes from the earlier passage, perhaps because he is adapting them to the alliterative style. Another explanation is that he is quoting from memory 'sentence by sentence' rather than 'word for word'. Alternatively, it may be the less directed, more associative memory where, according to the process of reminiscence, 'the same words evoke similar quotations' (Leclercq - see 3.1.8).

The parallels between the two passages are not emphasised by Sweet in his translation as he renders the same word fenn as

'mud' in the earlier and 'marsh' in the later passage. Torinnan and riðum are also translated differently as 'be dispersed' and 'rivulets' and 'flow away' and 'rills'. For this reason, we must retain some caution in suggesting that Sweet consciously recognizes these processes of associative thought and recall in the Pastoral Care.

3.2.5 Contemplation, Meditation, and Learning

Not all the accounts of learning in the Pastoral Care involve the spoken word. Gregory also has his mystical side, and one type of non-verbal knowledge he describes in chapters xi and xvi is that of contemplation, which Alfred usually calls sceawung, by the mind's eye of the divine light (65.5-9). This has links with a mystical conception of language in early medieval education.⁷⁵ St. Paul's visions are described in these terms - the 'sharpness of his mind' is exalted for ðara sceawungge ðara ungesewenlicra ðinga, 'by the contemplation of unseen things' (99.8-9). The idea of sharpness of mind is also associated with perception of light in chapter xi (69.13-15), which talks about those who 'could clearly and sharply perceive righteousness with their understanding', ða ðe mehton smealice & scearplice mid hiera &gite ryht geseon (69.5-7).

The adverb smealice derives from smeaung, which is also used to translate contemplatio (PL 77.19; Pastoral Care, 45.17). Normally, however, smeagan translates meditari, for instance in chapter xxii, which deals specifically with the theme of meditatio ('How greatly the teacher is to be engaged in meditating on holy law') and where the ideal ruler is portrayed engaged in verbal activity: 'meditating on holy scripture' (169.4-5) or 'occupied with reading' (169.17). Smeagan also has the connotations of learning something, whether good or bad so that it becomes fixed in the mind:

forðam ðonne mon smeað on his mode ymb hwelc eorðlic ðing,
 ðonne deð he suelce he hit amete & atiefre on his heortan, &
 sua tweolice & unfasðlice he atiefreð ðas ðinges onlicnesse
 on his mode ðe he ðonne ymb smeað.

when a man meditates in his heart about any earthly thing,
 he, as it were, draws and paints it in his heart, and thus he
 dubiously and unfirmly paints the likeness of the thing he
 meditates on in his mind. (157.11-14)

Smeagan, then, connotes ideas of learning both verbal and non-verbal and may have some links with the non-verbal learning process of sceawian.

The regular word for 'to learn' in Old English is leornian, which Alfred sometimes employs to translate meditari. Thus intenta meditatione discatur (PL, 77.13) becomes 'geornlice ... leornode' (Pastoral Care, 25.15), and meditando didicerunt (PL, 77.15) is rendered 'swa hie on bocum leornodon' (29.18-19). It is perhaps for this reason that Körner suggested to Sweet that when Alfred said he 'learned' the book first before translating it, the Old English word should be rendered 'meditated' (see 2.3.5 above). It must be clear from the foregoing discussion that both meanings are implied - leornian and smeagan are related concepts though the former has more verbal connotations, while the latter is more meditative and associative in meaning. Both result in spræc (or cwide), the verbal expression of the acquired knowledge in the form of the discourse of the text, sermon, or poem.

The three-stage process of leornian, smeagan, spræc is illustrated in various passages from the Alfredian corpus, perhaps most clearly in the account of the poet Caedmon:

and he eall þa he in gehernesse geleornian mihte, mid hine gemyndgade, and swa swa clæne neten, eodorcende in þæt sweteste leoð gehwyrfde, and his song and his leoð wæron swa wynsum to gehyrenne, ðæt þa sylfan his lareowas æt his muðe writon and leornodon.

(Anglo-Saxon Reader, 1894, 48, 74-8)

('and everything he was able to learn from listening he remembered, and ruminating like a clean animal turned into an exquisite song, and his singing was so beautiful to hear that even his teachers wrote and learned from what he uttered.')

Caedmon first listens and learns his material aurally; the second stage of the process is one of memory and rumination,⁷⁶ which implies the quiet murmuring of the words and the mulling over in the mind which we noted as characteristics of meditative learning. The third stage is production of a discourse, here a song (or poem), which starts off another process of learning in those who hear him.

The aural learning stage is defined by the words geleornian æt ('to learn from'), an expression listed as a collocation in the glossary of the Anglo-Saxon Reader. The phrase occurs in the

Alfredian preface to the Pastoral Care, where the learning process again begins with geleornian æt: Alfred learns the contents of the Regula pastoralis from his assistants (Archbishop Plegmund, Bishop Asser, and the priests Grimbold and John), continues with forstandan (understanding how to expound it most meaningfully, i.e. smeagan) and, once everything is fully understood, finishes with awendan, translation into English discourse, this time a book (7.15-25).

In another passage, a short description of Moses pictures the learning process as one of going in and out of the temple:

Forðam Moyses oft eode inn & ut on ðæt templ, forðam he wæs ðærinne getogen to ðære godcundan sceawunga, & ðærút he wæs abisgod ymb ðæs folces ðearfe. ðærinne he sceawode [on] his mode ða diogolnesse ðære godcundnesse, ond ðonon utbrohte ðam folce, & cyðde hwæt hie wyrcean & healdan sceoldon.

Therefore Moses often went in and out of the temple, because in it he was led to divine contemplation, and outside he occupied himself with the people's wants. In it he contemplated in his mind the mysteries of godliness, and brought them out thence to the people, and proclaimed what they were to do and to observe.

(Pastoral Care, 101.24-103.3)

The final stage of the process is described as ^{cyðan}~~ewepan~~, in other words the cwide or discourse, while the middle stage here is sceawung, or non-verbal learning.

In this example, the non-verbal learning process takes place in a state of withdrawal and silence. This is a common theme in Gregory, that the teacher must be called from his inner contemplation to deal with the outer needs of the people (e.g. Pastoral Care, ch. 5). Yet for Gregory this inner contemplation is necessary - the teacher is to have 'more leisure to understand secret and spiritual matters' so that teaching will be effective (ch. xviii, Sweet, Pastoral Care, 131.16). The fact that contemplation is in silence is emphasised in the description of Jeremiah's unwillingness to teach for fear of 'losing what he had gained in silence and meditation':

[Heremias] ondred ðæt he forlure sprecende ða gestrion ðe he on ðære swigean geðencan meahte...

(Pastoral Care, ed. Sweet, 49.19-20)

In chapter xlii, Alfred talks of the value of silence (307.19-20):

Ongean ðæt sint to manianne ða unbealdan & ða unfæsōrædan
ðæt hie hera mod mid stillnesse & gestæððignesse gestrongien.

The irresolute and infirm of purpose, on the other hand, are to be admonished to strengthen their minds with calmness and constancy.

However, this is not apparent in Gregory's Latin as edited by Migne:

Atcontra admonendi sunt inconstantes, ut mentem gravitate roborent.

(Regula pastoralis, PL, 77, 80C)

The idea of stillnis may thus be an addition by Alfred; it recalls the emphasis on meditation in silence in the passage from Martianus Capella quoted above. As a prerequisite of translating, stillnis is also mentioned in Alfred's preface:

Therefore it seems better to me, if ye think so, for us also to translate some books which are most needful for all men to know into the language which we can all understand, and for you to do as we very easily can if we have tranquility [here: stilnesse] enough...

(Pastoral Care, 7.6-10)

This middle stage, then, either takes the form of ruminative murmuring of words or silent contemplation. In both cases the emphasis is on the meaning, which is assimilated by some silent and perhaps associative process of acquisition within the mind. Early medieval education - as presented in the Pastoral Care - thus provides, in its psychology, for the grasping of whole pieces of meaningful language, and for their gradual accumulation within the well-like depths of the mind.

3.3 THE EXTENT OF MEDIEVAL INFLUENCE

Whatever the significance to be attached to the parallels between Sweet and Alfred, the search for 'synthesis' in the Pastoral Care is a fruitful one, despite the necessary limits of space which this study of Sweet's educational ideas sets on such an undertaking. In the past, Alfred's Pastoral Care has been studied mainly for its preface, which is so obviously a fascinating piece of original prose by Alfred himself.⁷⁷ The main text of Alfred's translation from Gregory, on the other hand, has

been largely ignored, and in this respect, Sweet himself perhaps set the trend with his (questionable) assertion that the text was largely of philological rather than literary interest.⁷⁸ A notable exception to this ignoring of the Pastoral Care is the work on Alfred by Frantzen, who stresses the insights into medieval psychology which a study of this text could provide.⁷⁹ I have already mentioned, in addition, Potter's emphasis on the theme of teaching in the work. Applying the model of 'synthesis' to the text reveals further the concerns of Alfred the oral teacher, expressing the themes of the give-and-take of the process of learning and teaching through the extended metaphor of water, a recurrent image and idea in the text of the Pastoral Care.

As was argued in chapter two, Sweet based his contention that the medievals had an 'oral conception of language' and used 'synthetic methods' of practical language study on the evidence of the vernacular language itself: the phonemic script in which it was written, the synthetic forms and stress-division employed to a certain extent by the scribes, and the 'oral' paratactic style of 'natural' prose so common in the work of the Alfredian translators and annalists. We saw also that Sweet supported this contention with remarks on the oral methods of practical language study in the medieval period - probably referring to the colloquies by such as Ælfric and the catechistic, question-and-answer techniques of teaching spoken Latin, as commented on by Sweet's contemporaries Cockayne, Wright and Nasmith. But direct comment on the themes of the texts is conspicuous by its absence.

In this chapter, the evidence of the medieval historical background, and the themes and contents of the early medieval texts have been considered - all areas on which Sweet expressly refused to comment. Nevertheless, the Sweetian model of phonetic synthesis, grammatical analysis, and synthetic study of connected texts can be applied with a moderate degree of appropriateness to early medieval writings on learning and meditation and to the selected case studies of King Alfred, Godric of Finchale and Hildegard of Bingen.

Of these, Alfred the Great was the main object of interest as far as the Victorians were concerned, and the historians of the period such as Sharon Turner, Pauli, and Bass Mullinger,

recognised and remarked - though sometimes patronisingly - on the way Alfred learned by listening and meditation, by a process of grasping whole chunks of Latin aurally, meditating on them and learning them. Whether Sweet knew these historical studies is uncertain. We can be more certain, however, of his knowledge of the primary texts, the Anglo-Saxon sources themselves, and in particular of Alfred's major educational treatise, the Pastoral Care. Thematically, this work is concerned, among other topics, with the techniques of teaching through the spoken word, of penetrating the hearts of the listeners, of promoting sound learning and retention as well as mental growth and development; it also contains various instances of learning by listening (leornian æt) and meditation (smeagan), including the well-known account from the preface of how Alfred 'grasped whole sentences' while preparing for his work of translation; here, at the very least, the parallels with Sweet can - and should - be noted.

CHAPTER 4

NATURE AND THE TEXTBOOK:

THE BACKGROUND IN SCIENCE AND ROMANTIC PHILOLOGY.

It appeared to me to be plainly dictated by common sense that the teacher, who wishes to lead his pupil to form a clear mental picture of the order which pervades the endlessly shifting phenomena of nature, should commence with the familiar facts of the scholar's daily experience; and that, from the firm ground of such experience, he should lead the beginner, step by step, to remoter objects and to the less readily comprehensible relations of things.

(T.H. Huxley, Physiography, 1877, p. v)

The core of Sweet's synthetic approach to the practical study of language is the injunction of 1877 to begin with the 'natural sentence', a phrase that echoes his interest of 1871 in the 'natural utterance' of the prose style of the Pastoral Care. By natural he seems to mean 'simple and spontaneous' on the one hand and on the other 'concerned with the physical phenomena of nature'. Linked to this is his idea that a practical method should use 'natural idiomatic texts', and that the student should ideally begin with 'nature descriptions'. His views here are coloured by a complex of personal and scholarly attitudes (revealed in his early writings) to the origins and true character of language and literature, to scientific approaches to education, to the observation and investigation of natural phenomena, and to 'Natural approaches' to language study. All these factors form the background against which Sweet comes to regard language and speech as a phenomenon of nature, to be studied scientifically; they also strongly influence the style and content of the material he selects for his textbooks, which reveal an almost Romantic ethos. Sweet's 'Natural' method is not, however, the pure spontaneity of the school of Jean-Jacques Rousseau; while he grants an imaginative, poetic aspect to science, as in Shelley, he feels the practical study of language should be tempered, as in the anthropology and 'physiography' of Tylor and Huxley, with the rigour of scientific method.

4.1 SWEET'S PERSONAL AND SCIENTIFIC INTERESTS IN NATURE

The first point to make on Sweet's interest in nature is purely anecdotal and comes from the autobiography of Otto Jespersen, who remarks that Sweet, though extremely short-sighted, was never given glasses as a child. When he finally received them after adolescence, a whole new world opened up to him - he had not known what trees and birds looked like to people with normal sight (Jespersen, En Sprogmands Levned, p. 156). A strong interest in the wonders of the natural world appears to have resulted from this experience, along with a predilection for nature poetry apparent in most of his non-phonetic writings, as we shall see below.

If his eyesight was poor, his acute sense of hearing certainly compensated for it, and this in particular was noted early by Ellis during the debate in the periodicals about the pronunciation of Latin. In The Academy (January 1, 1872) H.A.J. Munro, professor of Latin at Cambridge, while accepting Max Müller's view that the pronunciation of the Latin letter <u> (as in 'uideo') was close to that of the German <w>, asserted that 'a few weeks ago the untutored ears of half a dozen of the best philologists in Oxford were unable to perceive the slightest difference between his [Müller's] English w and their own'. Referring to this in the next issue (Academy, January 15, 1872), Ellis wrote: 'May I suggest that the "untutored ears" at Oxford would derive every possible information on the subject from the "tutored ears" and lips of Mr. Henry Sweet?' Already, Sweet's phonetic abilities were being talked about. And it was here, in the area of phonological investigation, that Sweet considered himself to be just as much an investigator of natural phenomena as any other scientist, for instance a zoologist:

One of the most striking features of the history of linguistic science as compared with zoology, botany, and the other so-called natural sciences, is its one-sidedly historical character. Philologists have chiefly confined their attention to the most ancient dead languages, valuing modern languages only in as far as they retain remnants of older linguistic formations - much as if zoology were to identify itself with palæontology, and refuse to trouble itself with the investigation of living species, except when it promised to throw light on the structure of extinct ones.

('Words, Logic, and Grammar', 1876, p. 2)

Sweet's literary interests, evinced above all in his writings on nature poetry, were subordinate to but not wholly divorced from his other, stronger concern with the scientific investigation of the sounds and grammar of speech. For a long period, the poetic side, clearly there from the start in his Sketch of a History of Anglo-Saxon Poetry (1871), seemed to become submerged in his intense work on the Oldest English Texts (1885) or the History of English Sounds (1888). Sweet was perhaps following his own recommendation, in his address on English and Germanic philology of 1878, that every philologist, while retaining a 'general knowledge of the results of the other studies when necessary', should specialise in one of the four special branches of English philology:

- (1) Old English and Comparative Teutonic philology (general Indogermanic philology)
- (2) Middle-English and English languages (modern dialects, practical phonetics)
- (3) English literature (middle-age literature generally, especially French)
- (4) Old French and comparative Romance philology.

'The separation of literature from language is most important,' Sweet adds, 'as experience shows that these subjects cannot be united in one person without one or other of them being practically sacrificed to the other'. In fact, experience proved otherwise, for he was instrumental in setting up the Shelley Society with Frederick Furnivall,¹ and in 1888 published a detailed piece of work on Shelley's nature poetry (originally a paper to the Society); his 1894 edition of the Anglo-Saxon Reader also contained a critical analysis of the poem, The Seafarer, although the original 1876 edition had promised to refrain from such commentary. It is evident that Sweet would have been qualified at least in breadth of interest for the new chair at Oxford in 1885, the Merton Professorship of English Language and Literature, which, after a hard-fought election with many contenders, including the Classically-oriented John Churton Collins, eventually went to the German-trained, more narrowly linguistic philologist Arthur Napier.²

Sweet announced his literary interests to the world with the publication of his sketch of Anglo-Saxon poetry, included in the

re-issue of the classic Warton's History of English Poetry in 1871.³ Few students or scholars of Old English will read this in the late twentieth century, and E.G. Stanley's account of it in his The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism (1975) implies that Sweet dwells on those typical preoccupations of Victorian critics of early medieval poetry, namely the Anglo-Saxon 'tendency to melancholy and pathos', 'heathen fatalism' and 'nature description'.⁴ But while this is true, within the limited space of his survey Stanley perhaps gives a false picture of the extent of Sweet's literary criticism. Above all Sweet stresses firstly the simpli-city and freedom of form - 'the leading principle in Anglo-Saxon poetry is to subordinate form to matter' with a metre 'which would adapt itself to every phase of emotion and change of action', and secondly the conciseness and directness - 'everything that retards the action or obscures the main sentiment of the poem is avoided'.⁵ While he does not put it in such terms, Sweet admires the natural, uncultivated characteristics of Old English poetry and contrasts it favourably with the artificial technicalities of the later Icelandic poetry. Incidentally, it should be noted that in a later review of a book by F. Metcalfe (1880), there is further evidence that - despite Stanley's account - Sweet was not wholly concerned with seeking out Northern paganism:

In his boundless enthusiasm for the picturesque heathenism of the Norsemen he [Metcalfe] abuses the Old English for being Christians, and King Alfred for translating Orosius and Boethius, and entirely fails to appreciate the unique features of Old English civilisation - the wonderful way in which our ancestors assimilated Roman and Celtic culture and the spirit of Christianity while at the same time vigorously maintaining their national characteristics.⁶

Nevertheless, as Stanley points out, Sweet is interested in 'descriptions of nature', asserting that they are 'not unfrequent in Anglo-Saxon poetry, and form one of its characteristic features'. This is not a popular opinion among today's scholars, who tend to see the set-piece descriptions of Old English poetry as highly stylised and formulaic.⁷ Sweet argues rather that Homer and the Italian poets have elaborate descriptions of gardens, but 'hardly any of wild nature' and while thirteenth-century German poetry has a strong feeling for nature, there is no distinctness

or individuality: 'nothing but the general allusions to the brightness of flowers and the song of the birds, which soon petrify to mere formula'. By contrast, he goes on to say, such passages as the description in Beowulf of Grendel's abode have qualities of vividness and individuality akin to the 'most perfect examples of descriptive poetry in modern English literature - perhaps the highest praise that can be given'. By modern literature, Sweet meant not only contemporaries like Tennyson and Browning, but also what Stopford Brooke - later the first President of the Shelley Society - called 'the great Natural School', Coleridge, Shelley, Wordsworth and other Romantics.⁸ Sweet saw a 'strong bond of union between the two literatures' ('Sketch', p. 7), and in 1888 developed his thesis in greater depth, focussing on the affinities between ancient poetry and the modern investigator, and the gradual development of an interest in the feeling for wild inanimate nature through Milton (in such poems as L'Allegro) and Gray ('seeking an antidote' in Northern poetry), and finally in the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe and her school. In a true Progressivist vein, he concludes:

Then, after a long torpor, men awakened to the conviction that their future progress would depend mainly on their further advance in the knowledge of nature. Hence it is that the extremes meet, and that the modern lover of nature - whether as poet or man of science - feels himself in some respects nearer to the primitive barbarism of the Veda than to the scholars of Greece and Rome, or even his own Chaucer and Shakespeare. (p.270)

In this attitude to nature, Sweet's taste is close to that of contemporary men of science such as J.S. Mill and Darwin, with whom he shared a liking for Wordsworth, and to that of poets such as Tennyson, Browning, and Hopkins, who in the face of modern natural science and its recent achievements strove to make painstakingly accurate records of their observations of the natural world, for - as Buckley comments - 'writing in an age of analytic science, the Victorian poet felt less free than Shakespeare to depart from the literal truths of inanimate nature'.⁹ Sweet would have agreed, pointing out that Shakespeare 'saw no incongruity in making heaven "peep through the blanket of the dark", which to a modern reader has a downright ludicrous

effect' ('Shelley's Nature Poetry', p. 243). Accustomed through Shelley and Wordsworth to treating nature with awe (and one might add, through the efforts of such as Ruskin), Sweet stressed the 'imaginative element' in science, and the 'intellectual contemplation of nature' which 'has its source in the emotions of wonder and curiosity' ('Shelley's Nature Poetry', pp. 245, 231).

Sweet's own scientific interests developed above all through his early association with 'an important new enterprise in the magazine world'.¹⁰ The Academy, 'a record of literature, learning, science and art', was founded in 1869 under its first editor Charles Appleton, apparently in response to Matthew Arnold's praise for the literary influence of the French Académies.¹¹ As John Gross points out, this fortnightly periodical followed Mark Pattison's idea that the role of the university was to supply the 'harmonising hand of liberal culture'; 'unashamedly erudite', with most of its shareholders Oxford dons, it kept alive a tradition of haute vulgarisation.¹² As its editor himself wrote, its purpose was to write from a 'European and cosmopolitan point of view' on 'permanent works of taste and real additions to knowledge' in order to be a journal 'on which the general reader might rely for guidance through the waste of superficial and ephemeral literature'.¹³ Looking back from 1929 to the 1870's, Frederick Boas wrote:

Its first number contained an imposing list of contributors; in literature Matthew Arnold, in aesthetics Sidney Colvin, in theology Lightfoot and Cheyne, in science Huxley and Lubbock, in classical scholarship Mark Pattison, Conington, and Robinson Ellis.¹⁴

The list could be extended for subsequent numbers to include in phonetics A.J. Ellis, in philology F. Max Müller, in English studies W.W. Skeat, all friends or associates of Sweet.

It has long been recognized that the nineteenth-century periodicals play a role in the 'construing of Victorian reality'¹⁵, and a study of The Academy provides insights into the general intellectual culture in which Sweet participated as his ideas developed in the 1870's. After the first volume (1869-70), the publisher Murray disagreed with Appleton's eclectic 'impartiality' in matters of theology and the journal moved to Williams and Norgate for the publication of the second volume. It

was here that articles by Sweet began to appear, and he soon became the leading contributor of articles on Old English and German philology. Sweet's first article for The Academy - a review of March's Anglo-Saxon Grammar - was published in the issue of October 22, 1870, along with literary, scientific and topical news, and review articles on Dickens's Edwin Drood, political ballads of Germany, Alpine flowers, drawings by Michelangelo, the fourth gospel, J. Lubbock's and E.B. Tylor's latest work on primitive culture, T.H. Huxley's Lay Sermons and John Tyndall's Scientific Use of the Imagination, D.B. Monro on comparative mythology and the Odyssey, and I. Bywater on Clement of Alexandria.¹⁶ This was the range of reading available to Sweet, if he so much as glanced at the journal in which he had published the second article of his career,¹⁷ and they reflect his minor enthusiasms for myth, science and the imagination, and speculations on the mind of primitive man. Such interests are not of course peculiar to Sweet; indeed they constitute yet another example of what Dale has called (referring to Matthew Arnold and Friedrich Max Müller) 'one particular mid-Victorian conjunction of science, language and literary theory'.¹⁸

It is perhaps here that we detect the beginnings of his interest in the work of the anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor and the scientist Thomas Henry Huxley,¹⁹ both of whom can be seen to influence his work from at least as early as 1876, when he published An Anglo-Saxon Reader and the paper 'Words, Logic, and Grammar'. These two works contain occasional notes or comments on 'poetry in its earliest form' and 'primitive man', reminiscent of Tylorian anthropology.²⁰ Tylor joined the Philological Society in 1871, and in 1877, after hearing Sweet read 'Words, Logic, and Grammar' to the Society, he invited Sweet to read a version of it to the London Anthropological Institute.²¹ The academic exchanges continued with Tylor's use of Sweet's writings in his Anthropology (1881) and Sweet's quoting of Tylor on the origins of language and poetry in 'Shelley's Nature Poetry' (1888) and The History of language (1900).²² Sweet's textbook of English - the Elementarbuch (1885) also contains adaptations of Tylor's Anthropology (1881) and Huxley's Physiography (1877).²³

Through The Academy, and through The Athenæum, to which he occasionally also contributed, and through other well-known

general-interest journals such as The Saturday Review and Macmillan's Magazine, or the newer and more specialised Nature (founded 1869) and Mind (1876), Sweet presumably kept himself informed of current debate in the scholarly and scientific world, outside his own direct interests, for which the Transactions of the Philological Society served. Within the covers of the Academy, there are short pieces by Sweet on myth and the origin of language, beside his more usual linguistic and medieval topics discussed in chapter two.²⁴ As well as his own specialisations, publications which must have interested him in the period up to 1877 include Darwin's Origin of Species, Tylor's Primitive Culture, the writings of Max Müller, various books on the origin of language, and general linguistic works by Benfey and Sayce.²⁵

4.2 OBSERVATION AND NATURE DESCRIPTION

For Sweet, the faculty of observation - objective, without prejudice - was essentially an article of faith in his approach to science and scholarship, and he uses the term on numerous occasions. Observation was the link between the nature poet of ancient times and the modern poet, for both looked at nature 'with the eyes of a scientific investigator'. In philology he felt the way ahead was 'the observation of the phenomena of the living languages' (Presidential address, 1877, p. 91). 'We must learn,' he says in 1876, 'to observe things as they are without regard to their origin, just as a zoologist must learn to describe accurately a horse, or any other animal' (Words, Logic, and Grammar', p. 2). In phonetics, he rigorously defended the Bell/Ellis approach against accusations of 'hair-splitting':

These critics forget that sound generalisations can only be based on a minute study of details, and that in all sciences the only way to arrive at trustworthy results is by pushing the observation of details as far as human faculties permit.

(Sweet, Presidential Address, p. 86)

Observation, moreover, was an educational duty for the nation, since the vastness of the empire 'forces us to grapple with languages' (ibid, pp. 91-2),²⁶ and he goes on: 'We ought to be able to send out yearly hundreds of thoroughly and specially

trained young men .. men whose observing faculties have been trained from childhood'... 'who have emancipated themselves from the narrow prejudices of one-sided Aryanism'. Here again, as with the pressing need for educational reform and improvement of the nation's industrial standing that led to the Education Act (see 2.2.1), we sense in Sweet's words the urgency of the 1870's - the new colonial annexations in Asia and Africa requiring new commitments and new skills.²⁷

With observation as a chief virtue, and 'sloth and prejudice' as vices, Sweet is typical of a certain sort of Victorian reformer; if any specific influence were to be sought, it would surely be in the tireless activities of his friend F.J. Furnivall, founding literary and scholarly societies and organising evening classes for the Working Men's College in London.²⁸ Another model was certainly Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-95), man of science, lecturer at the Royal School of Mines from 1854, member of the London School Board after the Education Act of 1870, and likewise a popular educator at the South London Working Men's College and other institutes throughout the country. The following extract (published later in his Lay Sermons) from a lecture to the College on 'A Liberal Education',²⁹ illustrates a similar preoccupation to that of Sweet:

The mental power which will be of most importance in your daily life will be the power of seeing things as they are without regard to authority; and of drawing accurate general conclusions from particular facts.

To achieve such aims, Huxley recommended the teaching of 'modern geography, modern history, modern literature; the English language as a language; the whole circle of the sciences, physical, moral and social' (ibid, p. 40). Such a recommendation is reminiscent of Sweet's plan in the teaching of foreign languages to use 'condensed treatises on special subjects, such as history, geography, natural science' ('Practical Study', 1884, p. 46); naturally Sweet would approve of teaching 'the English language as a language' - as we have seen already. In the preface to Physiography (p. v), one of the text books Huxley compiled for the purpose of introducing lay people to the study of 'nature' and, it will be recalled, one of Sweet's acknowledged sources for his

Elementarbuch, Huxley outlined his educational procedure:

It appeared to me to be plainly dictated by common sense that the teacher, who wishes to lead his pupil to form a clear mental picture of the order which pervades the endlessly shifting phenomena of nature, should commence with the familiar facts of the scholar's daily experience; and that, from the firm ground of such experience, he should lead the beginner, step by step, to remoter objects and to the less readily comprehensible relations of things.

Huxley's principle of graded selection of text and material, coupled with the emphasis on observation, surely lies behind Sweet's selection criteria for his own primers and readers of the 1880's. As was pointed out in chapter two (2.1.7), Sweet recommended in 1884 beginning the study of a language with 'descriptions of nature and natural phenomena, the different races of man, houses, food, dress, & c.' in order to 'include the whole of the elementary vocabulary of material things, phenomena and actions'. The Elementarbuch (1885) closely follows this scheme, beginning, in a large section entitled 'Nature', with a description of the earth - and how an observer, by watching a ship sailing out to sea, can determine the curvature of the earth. Many of the other text-books follow suit: A Primer of Spoken English begins with a text for children - a description of the sun rising in the morning:

The sun says: 'My name's Sun. I'm very bright. I rise in the east and when I rise it's day. I look in at your window with my bright, golden eye and tell you when it's time to get up'.

(transcribed from Primer of Spoken English, p. 45)

Similarly, the first text of Selected Homilies of Ælfric gives us Ælfric on the creation; while that of First Steps in Anglo-Saxon is the Old English text of Bede's De temporibus - another description of the earth, almost a medieval variant on the Huxley text of the Elementarbuch ('the sun goes between heaven and earth; by day it is above the earth and by night below it').³⁰

Sweet probably shared Huxley's view of a liberal education, and selected the texts for his primers accordingly, recommending that advanced students move on to 'condensed treatises on special subjects, such as history, geography, natural science', but he also had a reasoned linguistic and pedagogical justification for his choice of primer. In The Practical Study of Languages (1899),

Sweet presents the requirements for a reading book as: connectedness; variability - the length of each piece should vary 'on both sides of the average' [sic]; clear context; limited vocabulary; the most necessary elements given first, i.e. 'those elements of the language which are the common foundations of the the colloquial, the literary, the familiar, and the scientific and technical strata of the language'; familiarity of subject - such as descriptions of one's own country; simplicity of language - colloquial not literary, free from metaphors and other figures of speech, but not 'abrupt disconnected dialogues, full of unnecessary idioms and slang' (1899, pp. 168-177). As we have seen in chapter two (2.1.7), such requirements were intended to combat the confusions and artificialities of the existing textbooks. Sweet is almost, but not quite, recommending a kind of Basic English, as was introduced in the 1930's.³¹ His notion of a core of 'colloquial language' is perhaps not as simplified and reductive, however. He believes 'there is a certain foundation of English style and phraseology, which is even older than the nineteenth century; there are whole pages of such writers as Swift and Arbuthnot, which, with very little alteration, are good colloquial English of the present day' (pp. 175-6). This core is 'natural':

The great advantage of natural idiomatic texts over artificial 'methods' or 'series' is that they do justice to every feature of the language, if only representative pieces of the three great classes of text are chosen [i.e. description, narrative, and dialogue].

(Practical Study, 1899, p. 177)

Even descriptions of nature fit into his 'colloquial' core, for while continuous descriptions are a monologue, hence not true to life and not colloquial 'in the strict sense of the word', they nevertheless 'give the literary style simplified to the utmost degree in the direction of the spoken language'.

The following is an example of such a 'natural idiomatic text', taken from the first section of his Elementarbuch (given here, for the purposes of the present discussion, in standard orthography):

People used to think the earth was a kind of flat cake, with the sea all round it; but we know now that it's really round,

like a ball - not quite round, but a little flattened, like an orange. We can easily see that the earth's round by watching a ship sailing out to sea: as she gets further and further away, she seems to sink more and more into the water, till at last we can see nothing but the tops of the masts.

(Sweet, Elementarbuch, p. 1)

The prose here is a model of the clear, simple, familiar style Sweet was urging text-book writers to adopt. In accordance with his 'requirements' for the reading-book, Sweet is careful not to quote Huxley verbatim, but simplifies, selects, edits and re-orders. Huxley's prose style - characterised in the following passage by its use of the subjunctive 'be', and the nautical idiom 'stand out to sea', and, in general, its more leisurely descriptions and scholarly explanations - is in keeping with the gentleman of science, but not suited to Sweet's purpose:

If a ship be watched, as she leaves port it will of course be seen that she gets smaller in size and fainter in outline the further she stands out to sea. But in addition to this change of size and distinctness, the figure of the ship suffers a change. In fact the hull of the ship seems gradually to sink into the sea, and at length disappears altogether. Yet it might be fairly supposed that the hull, being the largest part, would remain longest in view. After the hull has passed out of sight, the lower sails, in like manner, are lost to view; then, the upper sails appear to dip beneath the water; and last only the tops of the masts are to be seen peeping above sea-level.

(Huxley, Physiography, p. 318)

Such evidence as that which has been adduced in this chapter, proves conclusively that the earth has a curved surface, and that the curvature is of a globular body. Very delicate operations have enabled men to determine the figure of the earth with the greatest accuracy, and have shown that this figure is not exactly that of a true sphere. The sphere is, in fact, a little flattened in the neighbourhood of the poles, so that, using a popular expression, it may be likened to the shape of an orange... (p. 325)

Huxley begins his book with a description of the Thames at London Bridge, and Sweet does likewise on the first page of his reading-book, yet Sweet also introduces material from much later in Physiography, as can be seen from the above extracts, so that the Elementarbuch begins with a description of the earth, as in his Selected Homilies. It may seem a trivial difference, but Huxley specifically recommends not beginning in this way, for it

contradicts his purpose of moving out from 'the familiar facts of the scholar's daily experience' to wider and more complex issues. Sweet evidently finds it preferable, or more apposite to begin with a description of the earth - as for instance the passage from the Old English poem The Phoenix, which Sweet recommends beginners to the poetry should commence with in his Anglo-Saxon Reader (1876, p. viii). Despite his fully justified linguistic reasons for using nature descriptions, it may be that Sweet's personal and literary interests also play a significant role in explaining the contents of his text-books, the selection and ordering of the texts, and the hidden agenda or philosophy that lay behind them.

On the question of the use of nature descriptions, Sweet admitted, in 1899, that there were 'divergences of taste': he personally found them 'soothing and pleasing even if a little commonplace', but Paul Passy, a like-minded phonetician and fellow-member of the International Phonetic Association, thought that no French boys had the patience to go through them; while Johan Storm claimed that most pupils had enough of them at school.³² Jespersen wrote later that 'pieces which are merely descriptive of nature' could be boring 'unless written in such a masterly manner as Sweet's Elementarbuch'.³³ Often, Sweet's approach to nature is neo-Romantic in flavour, despite his phonetic rigour, and despite his avowed 'prejudices against German linguistic mysticism'³⁴; he complained, for instance, that Grimm's law 'has been compared to a rolling wheel; it has been described as a primary and mysterious principle, like heat or electricity; but I am unable to see in it anything but an aggregation of purely physiological changes, not necessarily connected together'.³⁵ Nevertheless, these pragmatic, public utterances may conceal a private, more contemplative side to his character. Indeed, Onions maintained that Sweet was interested in Swedenborg - perhaps a later interest, for there is a reference to Swedenborg in Sweet's Practical Study (1899, p. 78) on the fact that he wrote in Latin (rather than his native Swedish), but that is all the extant evidence to go on.³⁶ It is unlikely, then, that Sweet's notion of the 'intellectual contemplation of nature' has much to do with Swedenborg's idea that 'the spiritual world flows into the natural world'³⁷. However, there is at least

something basically Romantic in Sweet's approach, which bears comparison to comments on the interrelations of the human mind, language, and nature by such writers as Coleridge, Shelley, Matthew Arnold, Stopford Brooke, and E.B. Tylor.

4.3 NEO-ROMANTIC INFLUENCES

Sweet owes little directly to Coleridge, yet there is an interesting analogue in the latter's approach to the learning of German. In his journal, kept during his period of study in Germany, Coleridge divided his vocabulary into ten generic categories based on aspects of the natural and human world such as 'Names of Spirits, Men, Birds, Beasts, Fishes and Reptiles'; 'Sight and Motion'; 'Sound and Motion'; 'Inanimate Things on the Land, the Productions of Nature'; 'Inanimate Things in Air, Fire and Water'; 'The Works and Inventions of Man, Clothes, Houses, Machinery, Ceremonies, Festivals'; these are akin to Sweet's 'descriptions of nature and natural phenomena, the different races of man, houses, food, dress & c.'. Although Sweet did not know Coleridge's Notebooks and probably regarded Coleridge as too far under the influence of 'German language mysticism', the same ethos pervades both approaches to language learning and vocabulary, described as follows by a biographer of Coleridge:³⁸

These categories suggest the way he approached language poetically, less a taxonomy of objects, but rather as a creative power in itself "re-inventing" the world in terms of human perceptions, rather like the Epic Poem.

On the subject of Shelley, we are of course on safer ground in postulating direct influence. A Shelleyan concept which Sweet made particular note of is the idea that he uses imagery 'drawn from the operations of the human mind' - in fact the common Romantic idea that close affinities exist between the mind and nature.³⁹ Sweet was struck by the way Shelley hit on similar images to the Old English poets: thus for Shelley, the sky is 'the sun's path' (Laon and Cythna, V. 24) and a cloud is compared to a rock, reflecting the fact that OE clūd meant 'rock': 'the Old English clūd was evidently first applied to the heavy cumulus, and then to clouds generally' ('Shelley's Nature

Poetry', pp. 265-6). Even more striking for Sweet were the parallels between Shelley's Alastor and Laon and Cythna and the 'startlingly modern' Seafarer, particularly lines 58 ff. where the poet uses an image of the mind as a seabird impelled 'irresistibly over the the wide waste of waters, over the whale's path' (ibid, p. 236). When he included the latter poem in his Anglo-Saxon Reader in 1894, Sweet found another 'striking parallel', which presumably confirmed his idea that the imagery represented some archetypal urgings of the human spirit. In his notes on the poem, he first gave his view of its theme:

the simplest view of the poem is that it is the monologue of an old sailor who first describes the hardships of his seafaring life, and then confesses its irresistible attraction, which he justifies, as it were, by drawing a parallel between a seafarer's contempt for the luxuries of life on land on the one hand and the aspirations of a spiritual nature on the other, of which a sea-bird is to him the type. In dwelling on these ideals the poet loses sight of the seafarer and his half-heathen associations, and as inevitably rises to a contemplation of the cheering hopes of a future life afforded by Christianity.

Another note highlights line 53 - the image of the cuckoo boding the arrival of summer and the accompanying, irresistible urge to depart on a wandering life of hardship which the seafarer feels (Reader, 1894/1922, pp. 223-4). Here is the passage in question (with a modern translation) followed by Sweet's comment on the parallel he found to it in a report of travels in Siberia by George Kennan, a popular travel writer and explorer, who in turn may have drawn on the account in Dostoevsky's House of the Dead of the Siberian convict growing restless at the onset of the warm season, which fills him with 'indefinite desires and aspirations, a vague melancholy' and an urge to take to the travelling life, 'serving under General Cuckoo':⁴⁰

Bearwas blostmum nimað, byrig fægriað,
wongas wlitig[i]að, woruld onetteð:
ealle þa gemoniað modes fusne
sefan to siðe, þam þe swa þenceð
on flodwegas feorr gewitan.
Swylce geac monað geomran reorde,
singeð sumeres weard, sorge beodeð

bittre in breosthord. Ðæt se beorn ne wat,
secg esteadig, hwæt þa sume dreogað,
þe þa wræclastas widost lecgað!

(The woodlands take on blossoms, the cities grow more lovely, the meadows become beautiful, the world hastens onwards: all these urge anyone eager of mind and spirit, who thus longs to travel far upon the ocean paths, to the journey. The cuckoo too serves warning by its mournful cry; summer's herald sings and foretells cruel distress at heart. That man, the fellow blessed with affluence, does not understand this - what those individuals endure who follow the ways of alienation to their furthest extent.)

(The Seafarer, lines 48-57)

A striking parallel is afforded by a passage in Kennan's Siberia (Century Magazine, 38/176):--'For two or three months a ... stream of escaping convicts runs from the Kara penal settlements in the direction of Lake Baikal. The signal for this annual movement is given by the cuckoo, whose notes, when first heard in the valley of the Kara, announce the beginning of the warm season. The cry of the bird is taken as evidence that an escaped convict can once more live in the forests; and to run away, in convict slang, is to "go to General Kukushka [cuckoo] for orders" ... With many convicts the love of wandering through the trackless forests and over the great plains of Eastern Siberia becomes a positive mania. They do not expect to escape altogether; they know that they must live for months the life of hunted fugitives ... But in spite of all this, they cannot hear in early summer the first soft notes of the cuckoo without feeling an intense, passionate longing for the adventures and excitements that attend the life of a brodyag [vagrant or tramp].'

(Sweet, Anglo-Saxon Reader, 1894, pp. 223-4)

For such neo-Romantic approaches to the affinity between nature and the workings of the mind, Sweet seems to have found support in Arnold's critical concept of 'natural magic', as discussed in 'The Study of Celtic Literature' (1866), a work Sweet admired. Arnold made much of the Celtic use of colour in the Welsh Peredur (from that medieval work of great fascination to the Victorians, the Mabinogion), and wrote of the 'Celtic nearness to nature and her secret' and 'a magically vivid and near interpretation of nature'.⁴¹ Here is Sweet's translation of the 'Grendel's abode' passage from Beowulf, where he feels such qualities also appear:

They hold a hidden land: where wolves lurk, windy nesses, perilous fen-tracts, where the mountain stream shrouded in mist pours down the cliffs, deep in earth. Not far from here stands the lake overshadowed with groves of ancient trees,

fast by their roots. There a dread fire may be seen every night shining wondrously in the water. The wisest of the sons of men knows not the bottom. When the heath-walker, the strong-horned stag, hard-pressed by the hounds, coursed from afar, seeks shelter in the wood, he will yield up his life on the shore sooner than plunge in and hide his head. That is an accursed place. The strife of waves rises black to the clouds, when the wood stirs hostile storms, until the air darkens, the heavens shed tears.

(‘Sketch of the History of Anglo-Saxon Poetry’, 1871, p. 11)

As his paper Shelley’s Nature Poetry confirms, Sweet admires here the vivid ‘sense of awe and weirdness’, along with the figure of the stag, a touch ‘peculiar to Old English poetry’ (Collected Papers, p. 236). Inevitably, perhaps, this passage is included in the Anglo-Saxon Reader.

Stopford A. Brooke, clergyman and literary critic, author of the widely read Primer of English Literature (1876), and first president of the Shelley Society (1886), shared many of these views in his works of criticism, which were popular at the time, especially in the eighteen-seventies,⁴² but generally dismissed by harder-minded contemporaries and by posterity.⁴³ A ‘professed disciple of Wordsworth’ interested in ‘the wondrous connection between all things in Nature’⁴⁴, Brooke admired how Shelley ‘is involved in Nature, and describes what he sees of her with the closest accuracy to the general and changing impression of the scene’,⁴⁵ a view that coincided with or influenced Sweet’s approach. Like Sweet, Brooke admired the idyll of The Phoenix in one of his books on Old English literature,⁴⁶ and dismissed (in 1892) the second - explicitly Christian - half of The Seafarer, as ‘a sad business’.⁴⁷ Sweet subsequently relegated the last sixteen lines (109-124) of the poem, ‘just before the text becomes corrupt’, to the notes of his Reader (1894, p. 222), thus providing a satisfactory conclusion and a parallel to the ending of The Wanderer, but thereby perpetuating a generally held ‘half heathen’ reading of the poem until well into the twentieth century and revealing what may be limitations in Sweet’s access to the idioms, imagery and conventions of early medieval poetry. Any weaknesses in Sweet’s reading of medieval culture must be borne in mind when considering, as we shall in later chapters, Sweet’s interpretations of medieval approaches to language.

Compared with Stopford Brooke, E.B. Tylor’s emphasis was

more anthropological and evolutionary, centring on the origins of nature poetry, particularly as reflected in the mind of primitive man as he gradually came to terms with the external world by an imaginative though sometimes misleading experimental approach, reasoning by analogy and striving towards mastery of the environment⁴⁸. Brooke quotes Tylor on one occasion in his discussion of the settlement of Britain by the Anglo-Saxons and its reflection in their folk-beliefs and poetry:

We hear of the wudu-mær, 'wood-nymph' - "a record of the time," thinks Tylor, "when Englishmen believed, as barbarians do still, that the Echo is the voice of an answering spirit."

(Brooke, History of Early English Literature, p. 193)

The origin of myth, the object of much of Tylor's research, lies in the tendency to impute will and personality to phenomena:

When the cause of anything presents itself to the ancient mind as a kind of soul or spirit, then the cause or spirit of summer, sleep, hope, justice comes to look like a person. No one can really understand old poetry without knowing this.

(Tylor, Anthropology, p. 395)

The myth-making tendency survives in modern poetry, for 'the modern poet still uses for picturesqueness the metaphors which to the barbarian were real helps to express his sense' - a Herderian approach with which Sweet fully agreed.⁴⁹ Here is Sweet on Prometheus Unbound ('Shelley's Nature Poetry', p. 229):

The first germs of those emotions which inspire the nature-poetry of a Shelley or a Wordsworth must be sought in the purely physical sensations of pleasure and pain which man has in common with the higher animals. The emotions which inspired Shelley in that famous description of sunrise which opens the second act of his Prometheus Unbound, can be traced back step by step to the sensations of a shivering savage basking in the genial warmth and welcome light which relieve him from the discomforts and terrors of the night. To the emotion of fear is nearly allied that of wonder and awe; and with the growth of intellect, wonder would naturally develop into curiosity and the desire to fathom the mysteries of nature.

Sweet then cites the Prelude and the boy's fears on 'the silent lake' and Myers's interpretation - that 'the boy's mind is represented as passing through precisely the train of emotion which we may imagine to be at the root of the theology of barbarian peoples';⁵⁰ there follows a similar passage on

Shelley's 'mythopoeic faculty' - 'the faculty of finding concrete forms for thought and of investing emotion with personality' - quoted from the critic J.A. Symonds also writing on Prometheus Unbound.⁵¹ Once more Sweet seeks the explanation in the writings of Tylor, who discusses the opening lines of Queen Mab, where Shelley likens the dawn on the sea to a throne, and its reddening to a rose or to blushing:⁵²

Now this is the way in which early barbaric man, not for poetic affectation, but simply to find the plainest words to convey his thoughts, would talk in metaphors taken from nature. Even our daily prose is full of words now come down to ordinary use, which show vestiges of this old nature poetry, and the etymologist may, if he will, set up again the pictures of the old poetic thoughts which made the words.⁵³

4.4 ETYMOLOGICAL SPECULATION AND THE THEORY OF SURVIVALS

The etymological pursuit of the 'old poetic thoughts' is of course the domain of philology, tracing back words to their roots in the postulated 'Indo-Germanic', or 'Indo-Aryan' (as it was called). Thus we find one of the great philologists of the day Friedrich Max Müller, speculating on why the word 'soul' (Gothic saivala) should be related to saius ('sea') and Greek seio ('to shake'): 'we see that it was originally conceived by the Germanic nations as a sea within, heaving up and down with every breath, and reflecting heaven and earth on the mirror of the deep'.⁵⁴

Sweet had his own speculations, for instance the etymology of Old English garsecg ('sea'), as 'the ravager'.⁵⁵ Sweet reached this result in his characteristically rigorous way, rejecting the explanation gar + secg = 'spear-warrior', which the 'older school' of English philologists saw as 'a welcome reminiscence of Neptune and his trident'- he presumably agreed with Monro's remark in the Academy (1874) that 'a little ingenuity would suffice to construct equally good explanations of the same data'.⁵⁶ and probably felt, like Tylor, that too much mythologising could produce 'mere fancies, as mythical as the myths themselves'.⁵⁷ Certainly, as we have seen, a review of Metcalfe of only a year later gives a severe criticism of whimsical approaches to 'the gospel of Germanic heathenism'.⁵⁸ Dismissing, then, the

'trident' theory for garsecg as having 'no support in Northern mythology', Sweet turns to other interpretations, and promptly rejects Leo's explanation that the word is a description of 'breakers' on the sea.⁵⁹ Sweet now puts into practice two principles which he felt the 'old school of philology' failed to do, namely to trace a word back to its oldest forms and to justify the derivation by the laws of sound change.⁶⁰ Accordingly he suggests that garsecg is a popular etymology of the sort, he notes elsewhere, that turns asparagus into sparrowgrass (History of English Sounds, 1874, p. 16). In the same way, Garsecg is a Volksetymologie for an older form gasric attested on the Franks Casket, justifiable by the analogous transposition of <s> and <l> in the proper name Cynegils from Cynegisl in Bede, and the forms gyrdels and gyrdisl in the Epinal Glossary, for which the <sl> is the older form.⁶¹ Gas- is then seen to be cognate with ON geisa ('to chafe, rage') and combined with an affix -ric as in the name of the Vandal king Gaisaricus, German 'Wüterich', that is 'the ravager' [or, I would add, 'the rager'].

In the same volume of Englische Studien (1879), Sweet also hypothesised on the origin of some of the entries in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, such as the metaphorical and alliterative phrase: 'the Welsh fled the English like fire':

[A.D.] 473. Hêr Hengest and Æsc gefuhton wiþ Wêalas, and genâmon un-ârîmedlicu here-rêaf, and þâ Wêalas flugon þâ Engle swâ swâ fÿr.

(Anglo-Saxon Primer, 1882, p. 80)

This he attributes to an old oral poem now lost, but surviving in the Chronicle entry in the poetic diction of 'herereaf' and the f alliteration.⁶² Here Sweet is less rigorous in his scholarship, perhaps becoming too freely speculative, merely taking up a suggestion made by Earle in his edition of the Chronicle. Earle had suggested that the Chronicle was a chronology rather than a history, a memoria technica designed to 'characterise the receding series of years, each by a mark and sign of its own', akin to the knotted strings used by primitive tribes, each knot signifying a particular event. The chronicle layout reflected this: a list of numbers for the years each with a blank space adjacent to it in which the scribe entered the annal: the Roman numeral coupled with a short, pithy entry triggered the riches of

the memory and provided 'the text for a winter's entertainment'. This is the reason why the entries usually begin not with a temporal adverb but the spatial adverb her, which signifies 'in this place, at this point of the series', and acts as a trigger to recall the story, or even the poem, commemorating the event.⁶³ Thus the annals for the years 455 to 634, arranged in factors of 8 and 4 are reconstructions of the 'half-lost early history of Wessex, at the time of the first compilation (855)':

Embodying antiquities of a high type, it is not the oldest composition preserved in the Chronicle. It is such history as could still be made out of oral traditions, and it probably represents the collected information of the bardic memory aided by the runic stones, and the roll of kings. Its character is betrayed by an artificial chronology in which the numbers 8 and 4 are prevalent factors.

(Earle, Chronicle, p. ix)

Intrigued by these ideas, Sweet develops them in his short article; at the same time, he may also be linking them with the Tylorian notion of the vestiges of old poetry surviving in prose and speech of later periods.

The idea of origins seems to have held a considerable fascination for him; here is Sweet again, speculating this time on the origin of verbs and parts of speech:

It must be borne in mind that primitive man did not distinguish between phenomena and volitions, but included everything under the head of actions, not only the involuntary actions of human beings, such as breathing, but also the movements of inanimate things, the rising and setting of the sun, the wind, the flowing of water, and even such purely inanimate phenomena as fire, electricity, & c., in short, all the changing attributes of things were conceived as voluntary actions.

(Sweet, 'Words, Logic, and Grammar', 1876, pp. 485-6)

Subconsciously, Sweet may have in mind the intermingling of human, animate and inanimate activity that features in the Old English poem Gnomic Verses, included in the Anglo-Saxon Reader as an example of 'poetry in its earliest form' (1876/1894, ch.XXVIII, p. 168); the first nine lines of the poem, for instance, place in parallel the activities and/or attributes of a king, cities, wind, thunder, Christ's powers, providence, and the seasons; later (lines 16-27) we hear of courage, a sword, hawk,

wolf, boar, a good man, spear, gemstone, stream, mast, sword, dragon, fish, and again a king. The immediate purpose of the passage in 'Words, Logic, and Grammar' is, however, to point to the origin of verbs from the simple root with a personal pronoun following, an idea based ultimately on Bopp or, more directly, on his acquaintance^{with} Max Müller's idea of the 'roots' or 'phonetic types' to which the Indo-European languages could be traced.⁶⁴ The combination root + personal pronoun in turn led to the development of inflections - he is presumably thinking of forms such as Latin porto, -as, -at, etc. Later in the same discussion he argues that Modern English, if observed in its living spoken form, is found to require a pronominal prefix for such expressions as (itreinz) 'it rains' and (ithæpnz) 'it happens', as well as in colloquial forms like (maibrædhæhijz kæmiq), 'my brother he's coming'.⁶⁵ This 'synthetic' approach will be treated more fully later in chapter six (6.3).

Like Max Müller⁶⁶, Sweet regarded language as a natural phenomenon, a 'living organism', as he called it in a quasi-Schlegelian way⁶⁷; and thus, unlike the medieval view, recorded in Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Primer in the biblical stories of Babel and of Nebuchadnezzar (who is deprived of the human, rational faculty of speech), and unlike what Aarsleff and Taylor call the 'Adamicist' view of language held by Coleridge and by Sweet's contemporary Archbishop Trench, who regarded language as 'sacred',⁶⁸ Sweet and Müller both considered language as a natural faculty - evolved or latent - of the human mind. Müller held out against Darwin and his supporters in his insistence that language was the 'Rubicon' which no brute could cross,⁶⁹ whereas Darwin felt that 'the lower animals differ from man solely in his almost infinitely larger power of associating together the most diversified sounds and ideas'.⁷⁰ Sweet was perhaps closer to Darwin in thinking that the traditional language of communities was preceded by 'what we may call "natural language", which consisted partly of gestures, partly of sounds and sound-groups directly associated with the ideas they represented.'⁷¹ Following Tylor, he also believed in evolution from concrete, active meanings to abstract ones, 'in part a product of Lockean associationism', comments Leopold.⁷² Locke had proposed that 'if we could trace them to their sources, we should find in all

languages the names, which stand for things that fall not under our senses, to have had their first rise from sensible ideas' and that from this 'we may give some kind of guess what kind of notions they were and whence derived, which filled their minds who were the first beginners of languages, and how nature, even in the naming of things, unawares suggested to men the originals and principles of all their knowledge ...'⁷³ The tradition of such thinking had passed to the nineteenth century through Condillac and Horne Tooke.⁷⁴ On this aspect Sweet wrote that the 'ultimate ideas of language' are not concerned with the findings of modern psychology or metaphysics, 'for at the time when language was evolved, these conceptions were already stereotyped in the form of simple ideas':

Even such universally known facts as the primary data of astronomy have had little or no influence on language, and even the scientific astronomer no more hesitates to talk of the 'rising of the sun' than did the astrologers of ancient Chaldæa. Language, in short, is based not on things as we know or think them to be, but as they seem to us.

The constant reference to the 'rising of the sun' in his neo-Romantic discussions on the origin and nature of language and also in his language primers (see 4.2 above) seems for Sweet to be a classic example of how the primitive observation of nature influences the old poetry, and indeed language itself. The notion of the vestiges of simple ideas like 'sun-rise' in modern language informs also his discussion of 'living philology' and the 'practical study of language'.

As I emphasised in chapter two, the Sweetian axiom is that 'the living form of every language should be made the foundation of its study' ('Words, Logic, and Grammar', p. 61). With Max Müller and his theory of 'dialectal regeneration', by which dialects were regarded as the reviving force behind renewal or renaissances of the literary language,⁷⁵ and with James Murray and his idea of the 'spontaneous growth of natural grammar' in dialects⁷⁶, Sweet felt that 'the real life of language' is in its spoken forms and dialects - these views will be examined further in chapter six (on 'synthesis'). The natural basis of the spoken language is opposed by Sweet to highly developed, 'artificial' literary languages such as Latin, Greek, or Sanskrit. 'In its

first beginnings,' he said in his paper to the Spelling Reform Association (1885, p. 6), 'every literary language must of necessity be purely colloquial, except when influenced by some older literary language'. This principle derived from his work on the Pastoral Care where he postulated that the natural simplicity of the prose style reflected the natural utterance of the speakers (see 2.3.3). While in literature we may read of 'the bright sun' or 'the silver moon', although the epithets convey no information and 'tell us nothing that is not already implied in the words sun and moon themselves', the spoken language, by contrast, is 'stricter in its use of epithets', for 'it hardly ever introduces an adjective or other qualifier except to convey some definite information' (Practical Study, 1899, p. 51). The literary language also contains superfluous forms such as hath and heaven for has and sky, or vague forms like the Greek meropes anthropoi for 'any attribute predicated of man':

In simple colloquial prose on the other hand, the meaning of a word is generally perfectly clear from the context: indeed, in such a sentence as 'the sun rises in the east, and sets in the west,' the meaning of only one of the chief words is a clue to that of all the others.

(Sweet, 'Spelling Reform', 1885, p. 7)

Thus in using for his text-books nature descriptions such as passages on the curvature of the earth (Elementarbuch), the morning sun (Primer of Spoken English), the movement of the sun between heaven and earth (First Steps), Sweet felt he was producing texts in natural colloquial English, familiar in content and in accordance with the primal simple ideas derived from nature on which language is ultimately based.

4.5 THE NATURAL APPROACH TO LANGUAGE LEARNING

The interrelated ideas on nature and language discussed in this chapter form what might be called Sweet's Natural Approach to language study. They differ, however, from the tradition of the 'Natural Approach' to language learning which began with Montaigne and Rousseau⁷⁷ and continues in the late twentieth century in the work of Krashen⁷⁸. The history of this 'Natural

Approach' has been covered by A.P.R. Howatt⁷⁹ and includes such figures as N.G. Dufieff, author of an oral drill system of teaching;⁸⁰ the influential pedagogue Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) popularizer of 'object lessons' (e.g. 'this is a book' etc.)⁸¹, Lambert Sauveur (1826-1907) exponent of the Natural Method in America⁸², Maximilian Berlitz (1852-1921) founder of the Berlitz Schools⁸³, and François Gouin (1831-1896), the inventor of the 'Series Method' based on mental visualisation and enactment of verbal actions observed in the manner in which children learned their own and foreign languages.⁸⁴ With the exception of Gouin, who came too late to influence him anyway, Sweet does not mention these writers and no further study of them will be attempted here.

Sweet was aware of the 'Natural' methodology in such authors as Ahn, Prendergast, and Nasmith. Ahn claimed that the best method was to learn a language like a child learning its mother tongue, word by word through oral exercises, for to begin with the phrase was 'contrary to nature' - such an opinion was unlikely to impress Sweet, if he bothered to read Ahn's preface.⁸⁵ Nasmith, as we saw in chapter two (2.2.1), thought that learning by nature was an 'easy and agreeable undertaking' and that the medievals had learnt Latin so easily because they were taught 'as a mother teaches her child English'⁸⁶. Nasmith's system of 'numerical value', or frequency count of lexis was however a distinct improvement on Ahn and recognized as an innovation by Ellis and others at the College of Preceptors, though ignored by Sweet.⁸⁷ Prendergast believed that the way children acquired language by playful negotiation and repetition could be drawn on in devising a teaching method that emphasised the sentence;⁸⁸ this is clearly of relevance to Sweet, and will be returned to in my chapter on 'synthesis' (6.2.2).

John Stuart Blackie (1809-1895), Professor of Humanity (Latin) at Aberdeen, has already been mentioned in chapter two with regard to his emphasis on the spoken language and his protests about 'the neglect of the ear' in language pedagogy. Blackie felt that the two basic approaches to a language were firstly by Nature and secondly by Pedagogy⁸⁹. The natural method, suitable for children, is basically an imitative approach which follows Pestalozzi's principles of object lessons, and frequent

repetition; it is however superseded by pedagogy, when the student can exercise greater maturity of intellect and the teacher can exploit a systematic plan; in fact, as he says, 'a young man can learn more in three months than a child in six years'.

This, in essence, was also Sweet's objection to the natural method. As I discussed in chapter two (2.2.1), he probably had much to say on the various systems then in use in his paper of 1878, now no longer extant. In 1884 in his resumé of his approach to the practical study of language, he had little space to elaborate, though he did say that 'natural methods' were uneconomical and impossible, for 'learning is not "natural"'. Even the 'natural' mastery of one's own native language is far from perfect (1884, p. 53), otherwise the phenomenon of language change would not occur. In 1899, in chapter nine of The Practical Study of Language, we read what Sweet probably said in his paper of 1878 on this topic (1899, p. 74-5). Word-learning when young, he asserts, has a 'peculiar vividness', because the concept and the word are learnt together. The child has the 'power of imitation' and 'an openness to new impressions' which are lost in adulthood but are offset in the adult mind by the advantages of a greater power of concentration, generalization, and abstraction, and a knowledge of words and combinations.

Sweet in 1878 may have been aware of a series of articles in the new journal Mind written by Taine, Darwin and Pollock, and devoted to the question of how a child learnt its mother tongue. Pollock noted some parallels to the 'savage';⁹⁰ these are treated in fuller, anthropological manner by Taine,⁹¹ whose discussion recalls the speculations on 'primitive thought' by Sweet and Tylor:

All this closely resembles the emotions and conjectures of primitive peoples, their lively and deep admiration for great natural objects and the power that analogy, language and metaphor exercise over them, leading them to solar and lunar myths & c. If we admit that such a state of mind was universal at any time, we could at once divine the literature and legends that would be formed. They would be those of the Vedas, of the Edda, and even of Homer.

(Taine, 'Acquisition of Language by Children', p. 258)

Darwin's conclusions are more cautious and less literary, but

akin to the speculations on the origin of language to be found in his Descent of Man published a few years before:

Finally, the wants of an infant are at first made intelligible by instinctive cries which after a time are modified in part unconsciously, and in part, as I believe, voluntarily as a means of communication, - by the unconscious expression of the features, - by gestures and in a marked manner by different intonations, - lastly by words of a general nature invented by himself, then of a more precise nature imitated from those whom he hears; and these latter are acquired at a wonderfully quick rate.⁹²

Sweet was, I imagine, in general agreement with these accounts of language development in children, and would have seen their relevance to his views on the origin of language but only their partial relevance to the method of studying a language as an adult, for reasons already stated. In his book of 1899, he made a point of disagreeing with Gouin, the currently favoured exponent of the Natural Method, who claimed that the acquisition of languages was an easy and natural process. Sweet commented that the process is in fact unnatural because 'it involves constant conflicts with the associations of the learner's native language' (Practical Study, 1899, p. 84). We have arrived here at the problem of association, a 'fundamental law' of psychology and the subject of my next chapter. Language itself may be natural, and language acquisition depends on observation of language in its natural state - but the actual process of learning it is decidedly unnatural.

CHAPTER 5

CROSS-ASSOCIATIONS AND THE VISUAL CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE.

After noting the essentially irrational nature of languages, the learning of which consequently involves the laborious treatment of a large number of arbitrary connexions between ideas and sounds, Mr. Sweet criticized the present method of study, and insisted on the importance of one based on the natural laws of association.

(The Athenæum, March 23, 1878, p.385)

5.1 CROSS-ASSOCIATIONS

5.1.1 The Natural Laws of Association

On March 15, 1878, a paper by Sweet entitled 'The Practical Study of Language' was read to the London Philological Society. Sweet mentions it in his report on the year's work in English and Germanic philology, but he never published it. A brief account of the paper was printed in The Athenæum on March 23, 1878, pp. 385-86 (see the full passage cited in 2.2.1 and Appendix I below). From this summary of his paper, we see that Sweet regards the process of language learning as 'laborious' rather than 'natural', despite his interest evinced elsewhere in 'natural' language (see chapter four). A further point to note is the emphasis placed here on 'arbitrary connexions' and 'the natural laws of association' - evidently Sweet is writing within the same Lockian tradition of psychological thought as was Darwin in the passage quoted at the end of the previous chapter.

For Locke, the mind is essentially passive, a receiver of ideas from the external world which are then arbitrarily connected with articulate sounds as signs of these ideas.¹ Ideas not received with due frequency or attention then 'fade and often vanish out of the understanding, leaving no more footsteps or remaining characters of themselves than shadows do flying over fields of corn; and the mind is as void of them as if they had never been there'.² In the eighteenth-century development of Locke's ideas, David Hume, and the Empiricist School which he

founded, regarded the ideas as faint images in thought of impressions or sensations, and these ideas are combined into more complex ideas by the 'gentle force' of association, which depends on the three qualities of resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect.³

Association became a dominant form in learning theory handed down to the Victorians through the Empiricist tradition, the 'arch-priest of associationism' being James Mill (1775-1838).⁴ It went through various modifications and adaptations by numerous psychologists, notably in the writings of his son, John Stuart Mill (1806-73) and in the work on 'apperception' by such theorists as Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841), whose ideas were influential in education, and, among many others, Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920); these later versions will be seen to have relevance to Sweet's notion of synthesis and will be considered in chapter six (esp. 6.1.3 and 6.5). It is a vast field,⁵ and no effort will be made here to trace its history except for a few examples in the work of linguistic pedagogues within the sphere of Sweet and his colleagues at the Philological Society.

One may cite, for instance, a book already referred to, John Earle's Philology of the English Tongue (1871), which Sweet reviewed for The Academy. Here Earle writes on the 'radically symbolic' nature of language⁶:

This fundamental truth is however overlaid and concealed from view by a mental habit which we call Association. We became acquainted with objects and ideas at the same time that we learnt how to name them, and the names have become so intimately identified with the things, that it is only by force of reflection we can verify their symbolic nature.

The process of association in the child's mind between sounds and facts or things is also the focus of a lecture on education by Joseph Payne, member of the Philological Society and Professor of Education at the College of Preceptors:

The mind impressed through the ear, by sounds evidently connected with a definite meaning, begins at once to seek for the meaning through the facts with which the meanings are associated. The language of facts or things interprets the language of sounds, and through this necessary interpretation the child learns the language of sounds.⁷

Again we should note the passive role of the mind as receptor or

(as the metaphor ultimately implies) a wax tablet on which sensations are 'impressed'; like Darwin's primitive man, the child's language is acquired by a natural or 'necessary' process of association.

Payne's view of language development may be compared with a passage on the same topic by Melville Bell (Sweet's tutor in phonetics in the late eighteen-sixties), writing in 1845 on how the child learns to speak through prattling, and 'strives, with instinctive energy to give utterance to every sound with which it has learned to associate an idea';⁸ or again with the schoolmaster W.H. Widgery, writing with a wide knowledge of previous scholarship on the subject (including citations of Ellis, Sweet, and others):

The child learns to speak by associating ideas which it already has with sounds imitated at first without any regard to meaning; the meaning is coupled to them later by association.⁹

This, then, is the child's means of acquiring language by the 'natural laws of association'; as much as possible the adult learner should try to exploit the same laws. In essence, the same argument occurs in Thomas Prendergast's Mastery of Languages (1864, pp. 29-48), where he maintains that words are 'mere sounds' impressed on the mind by association; at the same time they are also 'representative signs' and in learning a language we have to consider 'how we may best contrive to establish so complete an amalgamation of the sound with the thing signified, that the words will come spontaneously to the lips when we want to give utterance to the ideas which they convey' (p. 33). A.J. Ellis, who was a member of both the College of Preceptors and the Philological Society and who influenced Sweet considerably, also emphasised the principle that 'words must occur to the speaker literally as quick as thought, or they fail in their use'.¹⁰ The principle turns up in Sweet's work in the notion of the 'instantaneous' association of the sound with the meaning and the method of practising the pronunciation of isolated vowels, consonants in syllables, words, sentences 'till they run glibly from the tongue without effort or hesitation'.¹¹ While the immediate association of sound and sense comes naturally and with ease when learning one's mother tongue, Sweet feels - despite

Nasmith and the Natural Method - that this is not the case for the study of a foreign language by an adult.

5.1.2 Wrong Connexions of Ideas

The difficulty is that when an older learner with a mother tongue already acquired embarks on the study of a language, he or she comes into conflict with previous learning experience (combinations of associations). The result is that confusions ensue, which Sweet calls 'cross-associations'. When the adult, whose linguistic habits are fixed, is faced with a strange sound, he or she 'naturally identifies it with the nearest equivalent in his own language' or 'analyses it and gives the two elements successively instead of simultaneously' (History of English Sounds, 1874, p. 8). This associationist view of the learning process is evident in the Anglo-Saxon Reader. A basic theme in the preface to the first edition is the danger of the beginner in Old English forming 'positively injurious' connections (Anglo-Saxon Reader, 1876, p. vi). Beginners must, says Sweet, adopt 'a consistent pronunciation', for then their grasp of the language will be twice as firm as when it is learnt only by the eye; they should also avoid 'incessant comparison with and reference to the divergent forms of other allied languages' - (comparative philology does not come until later). Sweet's principle is 'to exclude from the text all anomalous and exceptional forms, especially when they tend to unsettle the learner's mind, and prevent him from impressing firmly in his mind the regular forms' (p. vii).

A further type of cross-association occurs, as we have seen in chapter two, between two contrasting but similar linguistic forms in the target language; the two forms may not look alike in their spelling but are pronounced alike through interference from the student's mother tongue, as in the English learner's pronunciation of amat and amet, or they are pronounced alike because the educator does not provide the necessary phonetic information, for instance to distinguish nominative domina from ablative dominâ. But often, and for Sweet more seriously, the cross-associations go deeper than this, and pervade the whole system of learning, so that 'an educated man in the nineteenth century is one who has been taught to associate groups of type-marks with certain ideas:

his conception of language is visual not oral' (History of English Sounds, 1874, p. 19). As Prendergast put it before him, words may be said to have a threefold nature, 'for, in the eyes of educated men, the sound and the meaning are inseparably connected with the symbols that represent them to the eye. But this ideal inseparability is a source of infinite difficulty and confusion, from which the uneducated are exempt' (Mastery of Languages, p. 37).

Here Locke's (rather than Hume's) more negative conception of the 'association of ideas', is relevant, for the result of what Locke calls the 'wrong connexion in our minds of ideas' is to produce 'unreasonableness' and 'prejudice', even 'madness':

Some of our ideas have a natural correspondence and connexion one with another; it is the office and excellency of our reason to trace these, and hold them together in that union and correspondence which is founded in their peculiar beings. Besides this, there is another connexion of ideas wholly owing to chance or custom; ideas that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in some men's minds that it is very hard to separate them, they always keep company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the understanding but its associate appears with it; and if they are more than two which are thus united, the whole gang always inseparable show themselves together.

(Locke, Essay, book II, ch. xxxiii)

For Thomas Prendergast, who knew Locke's work on education and admired his recommendations on rote learning, it is what he calls 'excursions' of thought - that is, analytical study methods - which allow the harmful associations to assemble:

Such excursions of thought are not merely useless but positively obstructive, because they employ the imagination and the reasoning powers, when they are not required; they crowd the memory with fanciful associations, which only produce confusion and perplexity; and they divert the attention from the pronunciation, to fix it on the spelling and etymology.

(Prendergast, Mastery of Languages, p. 135)

Sweet's perspective is comparable. In the study of language, to avoid prejudices forming by false associations, he asserts that the first requisite is a knowledge of phonetics, 'the form of language':

We must learn to regard language solely as consisting of groups of sounds, independently of the written symbols, which

are always associated with all kinds of disturbing associations, chiefly historical.

(*'Words, Logic, and Grammar'*, p. 3)

Judging by the frequency with which philologist colleagues such as Earle and Murray reminded their readers that writing is 'but an external and necessarily imperfect vesture', a 'drapery ... the only guide to the living organism which once breathed within', that words are 'combinations of sounds not strings of letters',¹² it is clear that this kind of recommendation fell on stony ground as far as many of Sweet's contemporaries were concerned. The fault for this lay partly, as we have seen (2.2), in the analytic teaching methods employed. Summing up the work of the reformers in his pamphlet of 1888, and echoing the statement by Sweet from 1884, Widgery remarked that the teachers themselves, by beginning Latin too early, create certain 'beliefs and prejudices': that 'languages are to be learnt by the eye', that 'the letter is more important than the sound', that 'languages are built up mosaic-like out of paradigms and syntax rules' (Teaching and Learning, pp. 20-1).

A similar point had been made by Prendergast twenty years before in discussing the problems of the foreign learner when confronted with English orthography, for the familiar letters are employed in an unusual manner:

The latter suggest to the mind other sounds and other meanings, which ought not to be remembered. But we have not that control over the memory which enables us to dismiss anything from it at will. Much less can we discard things of which we are constantly reminded by seeing them before our eyes. When the spelling of a word suggests a variety of different sounds, uncertainty ensues, and a difficulty is gratuitously created which may be avoided by merely learning the sound, unwritten.

(Prendergast, Mastery of Languages, 1864, p. 39)

Here we have exactly Sweet's concept of cross-associations, and this must surely be one of the 'sound principles scattered throughout their works' which he mentioned when he briefly discussed the work of Prendergast and others in 1877 (see 2.2.1 and 2.2.8). Prendergast's solution to the problem of visual and orthographic cross-associations is regular oral practice:

But every instance in which we actually make use of a word,

or of a phrase, in the daily practice of oral composition, produces an impression on the memory far more efficacious and enduring, than that which results from recognizing it in a book, from seeking it cursorily in a dictionary, from writing it down, from hearing others use it, or from all these combined.

(Prendergast, Mastery of Languages, 1864, p. 36)

Sweet differs from Prendergast only in one respect - after beginning with the 'sounds unwritten', he would also employ a phonetic script. Evidently it is the sheer strength of the visual associations which has to be allowed for; their strength explains why the visual associations so easily form cross-associations with the aural ones. The solution is to make sure only appropriate associations are made. As he argues in 1899 (referring obliquely to the ancient trope verba volant, scripta manant), 'the spoken word is fleeting, the written word is permanent' and hence the phonetic notation serves to correct the impression of the ear and strengthen the hold on the spoken word:

The spoken word is fleeting, the written word is permanent. However often the learner has the elements of such a word as ennui repeated to him, it is still a help to have the impressions of the ear confirmed by association with the written symbols of such a transliteration as (ânyî).

If cross-associations were to be avoided, then the corollary for Sweet was that the orthography had to be reformed (see 5.2.1); alternatively, at the very least, allowance had to be made for the effects of association in the teaching methods adopted.

Against the difficulty of teaching children the difference between letters and sounds, various teaching methods were tried. Writing in Macmillan's Magazine (1869-70), the philologist and clergyman F.W. Farrar complained of the 'inveterate conservatism which seems to fence in our educational systems' and recommended a new spelling book where 'the child learns the functions of the letters long before he is puzzled by their names and order'.¹³ His colleague Ellis¹⁴ extolled another method for tackling the problem of teaching children to read, which went by the name of 'Look and Say' and existed in various versions,¹⁵ this particular one being Curwen's system,¹⁶ 'in which each printed collocation of letters, separated by spaces from others, is regarded as a separate sign to be memorised separately, and associated with a

certain sound and meaning ...' Earlier, one of Bell's assaults on the problem had printed all 'silent letters' in capitals 'in such a way as to accustom THE EYE to the full orthography of the word', the rationale being that memory for spelling lies 'more in the eye than the ear' and that 'the orthography of words is associated less with the sounds of the component letters than with the pictorial [image] of the verbal combination as a whole' (a compromise with which Sweet probably did not agree). In general, the Look and Say and alphabetic-syllabic teaching methods were successful throughout the century in promoting literacy,¹⁷ but whether they even attempted to dispel prejudices about letters and sounds is another question - as we shall see shortly.

In dwelling on the prejudice against regarding language as sounds, Sweet and like-minded linguists fell into their own error, that of underestimating the psychological complexities involved in the process of reading. Howatt¹⁸ has shown that Marcel's Language as a Means of Mental Culture (1853) had much to say of interest on this topic. It was, however, neglected by the reformers, despite the fact that Marcel had also espoused Pestalozzi's oral 'object lessons' for teaching a foreign language to children. Here is Marcel's definition of reading:¹⁹

Reading is that operation of the mind by which ideas are attached to the written words as the eye glances over them. ... we have here nothing to do with the uttering of sounds previously known on perceiving words which represent them.

As Howatt reminds us, this is also the way of thinking in recent cognitive approaches to the psychology of reading, such as the writings of Frank Smith, who proposes that 'readers must bring meaning to print rather than expect to receive meaning from it'; in other words, we can read - in the sense of understand print - without producing or imagining sounds.²⁰ Sweet would have probably considered this merely a concession to the visual prejudice of the age; he does not refer to Marcel, though he suggests that 'cursory' wide reading is possible at a later stage of learning in order to extend the learner's vocabulary (Practical Study, 1899, p. 251), no doubt with some kind of faint, sub-conscious vocalisation involved.

Marcel was not completely ignored. The educationist R.H.

Quick, acquaintance of Ellis and participant at meetings of the College of Preceptors, devoted some attention to Marcel²¹, and in a lecture on the study of language (1872)²² dubbed Marcel, along with Hamilton,²³ a 'rapid impressionist' - in contrast to the 'total retainers' such as Prendergast and Quick himself, who aimed at the 'mastery' of a small amount of language, and at progress in steady stages. Prendergast, writes Quick elsewhere, was right not to overload the memory, since 'many beginner's books seem written exclusively for young Mezzofantis'.²⁴ (Cardinal Mezzofanti was a Victorian linguistic legend: a prodigious learner of languages who was dismissed by Benfey, Farrar and Sweet as irrelevant to linguistic theory.²⁵) By contrast, Marcel recommended covering ten pages of language text per day, a stark contrast to Sweet's call for a careful, thorough study of phonetic texts.²⁶ In Sweet's opinion, beginners are prone to rushing too quickly, and, as Prendergast says in a passage quoted above (2.2.8), are apt to lose the substance - the sounds of the language - in their effort to snatch at the shadow - the letters.

5.2 THE 'VISUAL CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE'

5.2.1 The Debate about Spelling Reform

As I have said, the attempts to teach general literacy were in the end successful, but for Sweet and the other reformers the side-effect of education was to instil 'wrong connexions' between letters and sounds, or between letter-combinations and ideas, and to nurture prejudices about the true nature of language. Thus in the mid-seventies, with debate focussing on the reform of English spelling, Professor A.H. Sayce, the Oxford Semiticist, comparative philologist, deputy to Max Müller, and friend of Sweet, wrote to the Academy:

What is wanted is that, as Mr. Sweet says, 'every sound [should] have a distinct symbol, and every symbol one invariable sound'. As pronunciation varied, therefore, the spelling of words would vary also, and the philologist would be able to make the same use of printed texts that he now makes of manuscripts.

'Variations in educated speech,' Sayce asserts, would not be a

problem, as they would be merely 'like different printing-presses'. Essentially very close to Sweet in his argument, Sayce continues as follows:

An arbitrary spelling like that of English dissociates the language of the eye from the language of the ear, and makes it exceptionally hard for an Englishman to learn to speak a foreign tongue. And more than this: it tends to disguise the real nature of speech and to create an attitude of mind which has been the cause of numberless false theories in the science of language.

(The Academy, March 10, 1877, p. 209)

It is this 'attitude of mind' which Sweet felt he had to fight - often with a crusading spirit that made him many enemies.

Schemes for spelling reform were proposed on several occasions, notably at the Spelling Reform Conference on May 29, 1877, chaired by Sayce and Morris, with addresses by Sweet, Murray and Ellis - a similar meeting of philologists taking place in America under March shortly afterwards.²⁷ The proposals met with numerous objections from contemporaries. These make for fascinating reading from the standpoint of the late twentieth century;²⁸ the critics are at once reasonable when they argue about the cost and practicability of the reform and at the same time, in many of their statements, they confirm what Sweet, Ellis and Sayce are saying about the linguistic prejudice and visual conception of language so prevalent at the time. An instance of such prejudice is found in Rational Spelling: A Conservative Scheme for National Spelling Reform by Dr. George Farley. F.R.S., professor at King's College, London, written in 1878 partly in reaction to the schemes of March and Ellis. Farley's own scheme is workable, basically 'the omission of duplicated consonants', though it has some oddities like suxeed and the unphonetic unecesarily. However, his comments on Ellis's notation 'Glosik Speling'²⁹ seem to be (perhaps) provocative, or (more likely) naively letter-based, revealing a basic ignorance of the difference between voiced and voiceless th; he remarks first that German speakers of English sometimes say 'di, dis, dat' for 'the, this, that', then adds: 'but we have no recollection [sic] of ever having heard anyone, native or foreigner, pronounce them as dhi, dhis, dhat.'³⁰

Another reaction to Ellis came in a letter by one James

Spedding, who wrote of the need 'to arrest the process through which so many of our words are rapidly losing their original and characteristic features'. His convoluted justification for this hinges on the avoidance of the vowel now known as schwa, which he is vaguely aware of, but wishes to proscribe out of the language:

Many a delicate a and u will be degraded into a slovenly e or u, but they will not be sanctioned by authority [i.e. if a reform takes place]; whereas, if they are exhibited to the learner as the true vowel sounds which the a and o represent, he will try to pronounce them, and the distinction between the final syllables in 'Ithuriel' and 'etherial,' 'sequel,' and 'equal,' and 'antiquarian,' 'symptom' and 'system,' & c. will be lost to the language.

(Academy, June 2, 1877, p. 489)

Various letters went to and fro in the pages of the Academy as Spedding and Ellis crossed swords on these questions and each time Spedding exhibited further confusions. Ellis complained of the artificiality and pedantry of public speakers attempting to pronounce every single letter of words as they were spelt. The following ripostes are typical of Ellis's arguments:

As long as people call ea a diphthong and i a vowel there is not much hope for them. (Academy, June 16, 1877, p. 535)

I wish to speak like an educated inhabitant of the metropolis of England who has learned to speak by association with educated men, not as one who has had to pick up his knowledge from the letters because he was unfamiliar with the sounds.

(Ellis, Academy, July 7, 1877, p. 13)

This last quotation illustrates the extent to which the debate was also a pressing political and social issue for many of those involved - as it was to remain until at least the time of Bernard Shaw (who treated some of the social questions arising from this issue in his plays Pygmalion and Major Barbara).

One further aspect to the debate is seen in the arguments of those opponents of reform who preferred to leave English orthography as it is for aesthetic or historical reasons. One of these is Archbishop Trench, who has already been mentioned for his Adamicist belief in the 'sacredness' of words, with which the 'sciolists', as he called the phonetically minded philologists, should not interfere. His defence of the language and his appeals to Coleridge's lingua communis and Schlegel's 'care of the

national language' stemmed from a widely felt anxiety (emphasised by Dowling and Taylor) that not only the orthography but the language itself, the classical English of the great writers like Shakespeare and Milton - and with it the sense of values and culture - was under attack from the materialist science of the philologists.³⁰ Taylor, in the study already cited, sees the eventual 'triumph of Henry Sweet' as the vindication of 'synchronic phonetic principles' (Hardy's Literary Language, p. 371). This perhaps ignores Sweet's literary concerns, discussed in chapter four. Nevertheless, the idea put forward by Müller, Sweet and others that the literary standard was 'artificial' compared to 'natural' speech and dialect must have seemed like a rejection of literature, despite the protestations of Ellis that spelling reform 'would not change the inward life of literature' (On Orthography, 1877, p. 22), and despite Sweet's conviction that phonetics would 'bring to life' both the literature of the past and the rustic dialogue of the modern novel.

Trench was fascinated by the etymology and history visible and present in a word and usually preserved in the traditional spelling. Any reform would, of course, 'wipe out long pages of history' as an article in the Saturday Review (probably by Freeman) put it (July 1, 1871, p. 19). Sweet and the reformers had various replies to this. The first was that many etymological spellings were in fact introduced much later by printers through the influence of Latin; thus debitum later gave rise to a spelling debte, although the older English word had been written dete or dette (from French). One of the compromises the Philological Society made with its opponents was to limit their proposals initially to restoring the older phonetic spellings rather than devising new ones; Sweet produced a list of these, along with false etymological spellings to be abandoned, and he recommended such older spellings as cum, and hav (with the omission of e), ake and feeld (Academy, July - December, 1880, pp. 50, 87, and 371). In reply to Freeman, Sweet later said that we would not know the history of the language if the spelling had been fixed, and we would still write 'aetaticum' for 'age' (Spelling Reform and English Literature, 1884, p. 5).

5.2.2 Personal Anecdotes

Examples of what Sweet would call the visual conception of language are to be found in other contexts outside the debate on spelling. Here, for instance, is a short piece from the first volume of the Quarterly Review of Education (1871), briefly informing the reader of Müller's theory of roots and the apparently novel idea that words are not based on letters:

Mr. Max Müller tells us that, contrary to general imagination, all words are not derived primarily from letters but from roots. This must necessarily be the case. Letters are simply an invention, the result of language.

(Quarterly Review of Education, 1871, p. 52)

Often the general prejudice about orthography and pronunciation is exemplified in personal accounts - short anecdotes by Ellis, Sweet, Jespersen and others about ordinary educated people making wildly inaccurate statements on the way they spoke their own language.³¹ One occasion for remarks of this sort was the publication of Sweet's Elementarbuch des gesprochenen Englisch in 1885. Two years after its appearance, Jespersen was staying in England with A.H. Keane, professor of Hindustani, and showed him the book; Keane was evidently shocked by the forms given in it - we shall see some examples in chapter six (6.3), but I imagine he objected to such forms as 'what's he like?' transcribed (-whotsij laik\?), 'I wouldn't do it if I were you' given as (-ai wudnt duwit\, if aiwəjuw), or 'when do you have breakfast' as (whendju hæv brekfəst\?). Here the fact that in rapid speech 'he' becomes (ij), 'do it' often takes an intervocalic /w/, and 'were' and 'do' are occasionally reduced to (wə) and (d) respectively is hard for many native speakers to accept. Some are perhaps even unaware of the differences between careful and rapid speech, while others deny that they 'drop their aitches', presumably because the visual form <he> is so fixed in their minds that they imagine they must say /h/ whenever the word 'he' is spoken. Returning now to Jespersen's anecdote about Keane, it seems that the professor considered such forms vulgar, and was even more shocked, to the point of denying it, when Jespersen demonstrated that Keane's wife used these forms (it is not revealed exactly which) spontaneously in her normal conversation. Jespersen was

amazed at the inability of educated people to recognize their own speech when they see (my emphasis) a representation of it:

Det var ikke første og blev ikke sidste gang jeg oplevede at intelligente mænd ikke kendte deres nærmestes udtale og bildte sig ind at en form, som de så skrevet fonetisk, var simpel, skønt den hørte til naturlig dannet sprog.

('This was not the first time, nor the last, that I found that intelligent people did not know the speech habits of their nearest relations, and imagined that a form they saw written phonetically was vulgar, even though it belonged to natural educated speech.')

Sweet tells a similar story, which he had from some of his German students, who listened to a scholar proscribing some of the forms in the Elementarbuch; whispering among themselves, the students decided to record every instance of these forms in the man's speech and, for the rest of the lecture, there was periodic suppressed laughter as the hapless lecturer proceeded to use the very pronunciations he had rejected.

As early as 1874, Sweet had proposed a reason for such cases in the idea that most people have a 'double pronunciation', one learned by imitation, the other an unconscious modification:

If asked to pronounce the sound distinctly they will give the former sound, and will probably disown the latter as a vulgarism, although they employ it themselves in rapid conversation.

Ellis offers the following case as an explanation:

As Klopstock laid it down: if you want to know how a man pronounces a word, don't ask him, but lead him to introduce the word unconsciously in conversation, and then observe. Directly a man attempts to pronounce words isolatedly, he becomes confused, and forms theories, and belies himself. A lady having told me she always said lek-tyer, and never lek-cher, said lek-cher over and over again to me in the course of the following conversation, without being conscious of it.

(Ellis, Academy, 1877)

There are at least two explanations for this lady's behaviour. The first is that she insisted, come what may, that she always uttered the standard pronunciation /ləktjə/ rather than the form /ləktʃə/ with the /tʃ/ affricate (given as ch in Ellis's notation above); in other words, she refused to accept that her speech changed in rapid conversation. Alternatively, she saw the letter

changed in rapid conversation. Alternatively, she saw the letter <t> in her mind's eye when asked to focus on the pronunciation of the word in isolation and consequently thought that this must be reflected in the way she said it. In 1890, while discussing the role of analysis and synthesis in the processes of association, the American psychologist William James noted a similar mental state evoked by considering a word in isolation:³²

This is probably the reason why, if we look at an isolated printed word and repeat it long enough, it ends by assuming an entirely unnatural aspect. Let the reader try this with any word on this page. He will soon begin to wonder if it can possibly be the word he has been using all his life with that meaning. It stares at him from the paper like a glass eye, with no speculation in it. Its body is indeed there but its soul has fled. It is reduced, by this new way of attending to it, to its sensational nudity. We never before attended to it in this way but habitually got it clad with its meaning the moment we caught sight of it, and rapidly passed from it to the other words of the phrase. We apprehended it, in short, with a cloud of associates, and, thus perceiving it, we felt it quite otherwise than as we feel it now, divested and alone.

Admittedly, James is writing here about the visual perception of a word on a page; but there is in common with Ellis's explanation the unnatural feeling that is evoked by focussing on a word in isolation, away from other forms with which it usually combines.

5.2.3 Antiquarian Philologists

It was not only in personal and sometimes trivial anecdotes of the confusions of non-linguists that the 'visual conception of language' revealed itself; even scholars themselves, particularly the 'older school' of philologists, were prone to it. A much quoted example is that of Jacob Grimm, who when expounding in his Deutsche Grammatik the phonological changes later known as Grimm's Law, entitled that section 'Von den Buchstaben' ('On Letters'), and even stated that the word schwarz is made up of seven sounds s-c-h-w-a-r-z.³³ Sweet felt that such attitudes were still rife, and in his review of On Early English Pronunciation in 1871 he called for a phonetic training for dialectologists so that the dialects were recorded in an accurate and consistent way;³⁴ eight years later, Walter Skeat was still taking trouble to persuade members of the Dialect Society of the need for

Sweet nevertheless criticised the confusion between sound changes and 'mere letter-changes' (Academy, 1871, p. 506), and in the same year commented on a newly published etymological grammar of English: 'Mr. Loth assumes, or at any rate, leads his readers to assume that the present confusion in our orthography existed from the beginning of the language' (Academy, July 1, 1871, p. 343). We have already seen Sweet's attack in the Academy (1874) on the 'one-sidedly antiquarian' authors of 'German grammars of English' for their lack of phonetic insights (see 2.2.8). A similar article in the Athenæum in 1870 - anonymous, but in fact by Sweet - reviews Ellis's On Early English Pronunciation, praising it for its findings on orthography and pronunciation and attacking the kind of grammarian who 'tells us that the Anglo-Saxon i of min remains unchanged in English while the u of hus becomes ou'.³⁶ As the article of 1874 (see Appendix I for further comparison), this review also set up a straw man in the figure of the unphonetic 'grammarian':

If asked whether the spoken English word mine would suggest to an Anglo-Saxon the idea of 'meus', or indeed any idea at all, the comparative grammarian would probably have to confess, firstly, that he had never considered the question at all, and secondly, that he did not deem it of the slightest importance, being merely a question of 'pronunciation'.

(Sweet, Athenæum, June 4, 1870, p. 737)

This may be compared with Sweet's article on German grammars of English:

The antiquarian philologist, having the written symbols constantly before his eyes, gradually comes to abstract them entirely from the sounds they stand for, and at last regards them as the language: any attempt to discover the real language represented by these symbols is looked on by him with supreme contempt, as a mere question of 'pronunciation'.

(Sweet, Academy, January 17, 1874, p. 68)

or the passage cited in chapter two from Sweet's (signed) review of Ellis:

When writing is an art practised by the few, and literature is handed down orally, the scribes are hardly influenced at all by orthographic traditions. In highly-civilised communities again, where writing is universal, and literature is represented almost entirely by printed books, the visible symbol of the word gradually acquires an independent value,

and it suggests an idea without any reference to the sound it originally represented.

(Sweet, Academy, June 1, 1871, p. 295)

In general, Ellis's work was well received by the academic world. Even the Saturday Review, or 'Saturday Reviler', as it came to be called for its caustic wit,³⁷ was convinced by Ellis, although the reviewer could not resist repeating a joke by Dean Alford, author of a famous book on language use,³⁸ who renamed Ellis's journal Fonetic Nuz as 'Frantic Nuts'.³⁹ This reviewer, probably E.A. Freeman⁴⁰, referred to the 'one darling dream of many of us [which] Mr. Ellis has worked hard to overthrow', namely the misconception that English pronunciation had never changed and that Old English win was pronounced as in modern wine.

A battle still had to be fought, however, with one unphonetic grammarian. This was R.F. Weymouth. Member of the Philological Society though he was, he could not be persuaded to relinquish the 'darling dream' and in 1874 published his own On Early English Pronunciation in which he argued that English pronunciation had not changed since the time of Chaucer and that the i of Old English win was in fact pronounced as in wine.⁴¹ He also attacked Ellis's axiom that 'the orthography shows the sound' pointing to words such as knight and wright. In a review of the book, Sweet seems baffled that Weymouth insists on a modern pronunciation for win, and on Weymouth's latter point, defends Ellis, saying that it is not meant to be a universal principle:

Mr. Ellis only claims to have established that before the rise of printing the scribes wrote not by eye but by ear, and that, although the values of the letters were necessarily traditional, their use in expressing the actual sounds used by the writer was not so, but was guided by ear.

(Sweet, Academy, October 24, 1874, p. 461)

Ellis's axiom that the 'orthography shows the sound' will be returned to shortly.

5.3 THE ORAL CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE

The achievements of Ellis and Bell appeared almost revelatory to Sweet at the start of his career. In his review of

Ellis, and on numerous occasions thereafter, he praises Bell's Visible Speech as creating for the first time a phonetic alphabet where the relationship between sound and symbol was not completely arbitrary. Thus on Bell's system each element of the symbol indicated the places of articulation and other features of the sound, or in Sweet's words:

the traditional letters are entirely rejected, and a regular system of symbolising the physiological formation of each sound is employed; the reader only has to follow the directions given by the shape of the letter itself, and he will accurately reproduce the sound, even if it be one which he has never heard before.

(Academy, June 1, 1871, p. 294)

It was one of Bell's showpieces, when attempting to popularise his new invention, to elicit a sound in any dialect from his audience, write it down in Visible Speech notation, and then have one of his sons come into the room and read it off almost perfectly.⁴² For those present at such meetings - and Sweet must have seen something of the sort when he studied with Bell - the corollary of the demonstration was obvious; to cite his anonymous review in the Athenæum (1870): 'Language is a collection of articulate sounds. Written language is a collection of visible signs representing sounds of the living language, which sounds, either alone or as part of a sound-group, are associated with certain ideas', or in Murray's words quoted by Sweet in 1873: 'It cannot be too often or too loudly be repeated that words are combinations of sounds, not strings of letters'. To these pronouncements I add that of another colleague, A.H. Sayce writing in 1879 on how to learn a language:⁴³

Language consists of sounds, not of letters, and until the fact is thoroughly impressed upon the mind, it is useless to expect that languages will ever be studied aright.

It is only with this realization, with this 'oral conception of language', with as it were the prerequisite mentality, that the 'synthetic method' of language study can be approached and applied with success. The realization came to Sweet in full force in his study of Bell's Visible Speech in the late 1860's, and even in 1898 he still felt this, lamenting the then situation at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association; despite

the fact that Bell had brought out his notation in 1867, and despite the German reforms of the 1880's, the teaching profession had still been unable to implement an efficient method of language teaching:⁴⁴

The idea of teaching modern languages without phonetics was not only absurd, but inconceivable ... It certainly seems strange that, thirty years after the appearance of Bell's Visible Speech, and more than thirty years after the publication of Ellis's work on pronunciation, it was necessary to stand up and advise an audience to re-import methods which were to a great extent of English growth.

This brings us back to Sweet's review of Ellis, where these ideas were first expressed. For Sweet, as the controversy with Weymouth showed, Ellis's contribution was to demonstrate that it was in fact possible to use the scribe's orthography, from the time of Chaucer and earlier, as a reliable guide to the early pronunciation of English. Ellis achieved this by working backwards from the modern pronunciation, comparing carefully the statements of early phoneticians such as Hart, Bullokar, Gill, and Butler. A real key for comparison was found in Salesbury's Welsh and English Dictionary (1547) which provided a treatise in English on Welsh pronunciation. Through all this data it became possible to make lists in the consistent notation of Ellis's 'Palæotype' showing the changes in the sounds of words from Chaucer, through Spenser, to Dryden:

| | | | |
|-------|------|-------|--------|
| hand | hand | hænd | 'hand' |
| taale | taal | tæal | 'tale' |
| rain | rain | ræain | 'rain' |

The result was the 'important law' that the scribes tried to write as they spoke', The findings were similar for Old English, particular help being afforded by a manuscript containing some of the Septuagint in Anglo-Saxon letters⁴⁵ 'not a mere translation of the original but evidently intended to represent the Byzantine pronunciation, which nearly resembled the modern Romaic' (Sweet, Academy, 1871, p. 295), or, as Ellis himself put it, 'not to reproduce the original letters but to be intended to represent the sounds in reading' (Early English Pronunciation, p. 517).

The 'importance' of all this for Sweet was firstly, that it provided a basis for working with accuracy and certainty on the

historical phonology of the various stages of the language; secondly, each period of the language is seen to be separate, a significant idea in the development of Sweet's view of language study and medieval studies: 'the language of these poets is no longer dead, it lives, and has an individuality of its own' (also his view in 'History of English Sounds', 1874, the Anglo-Saxon Reader, 1876, 'Practical Study of Language', 1884); thirdly, it could be seen that in contrast to the prejudices of his own day, the medievals have an oral conception of language, a way of thinking about language at odds with the modern. Much of Sweet's early published work is based on these principles, in descending order of importance, the last point being occasionally touched on, yet forming an underlying assumption behind his researches. In 'The History of the "th" in English' (1869), his first paper to the Philological Society, Sweet attempts to apply the assumption that the scribes wrote as they spoke to explaining the history of the graphic form <th> and the sound which it represented and to the explanation of such words as Old English broþor and fæder (Modern English brother and father)⁴⁶. Though unable to use Bell's phonetic symbols in his discussion (probably because of type-setting problems), Sweet makes careful use of Bell's phonetic terms to identify the sounds he is referring to, though occasionally the reader may wonder whether it is the graphic or phonic form that is indicated (in the absence of modern conventions <> for letters, // for phonemes, and [] for phones). Thus he comments on the phonetics of a 'very remarkable δ ' in the Pastoral Care (Hatton MS) where the normal inflection -st is written -s δ as in ' δ u me tældes δ ' and ' δ u me ciddes δ '.

The change of a stopped into a divided consonant [Bell's term for a 'fricative'] is evidently due to the assimilating power of the preceding -s, and might almost be intermediate to the stopped t and the primary g, a relation which is distinctly shown in Mr. Bell's speech symbols.

Here 'the preceding -s' means the preceding letter <s>, that is, the phoneme /s/. In Sweet's interpretation of this orthographic peculiarity, the letter < δ > represents a voiceless consonant, an allophone of /t/ intermediate in sound to [t] and [s].

In general, however, this article was not successful. Sweet assumed that the scribes used the letter <o> in the older

manuscripts 'pointing to an exclusively vocal production in the earliest period of the language'. This would therefore disprove Grimm's Law that a 'tenue' like t changed to an 'aspirate' th, since for Sweet it is phonetically more plausible to assume that [t] became [d] and then [^hð], 'by allowing the voiced breath to escape by side apertures' (TPS, 1868-9, p. 278). Though this theory soon proved to be erroneous, and Sweet altered his view in later writings, it was nevertheless based on sound principles, and in Wrenn's estimation, some passages of this article 'would seem all but to anticipate Verner's discovery, failing to cover only its last and final stage'.⁴⁷ As Winfred Lehmann says, 'after Verner, linguists dealt with all the phonological markers of an utterance'.⁴⁸ It was now seen to be necessary to observe the influence of accent in Indo-European and its role in causing an exception to Grimm's law (IE k,t,p > Gmc h,p,b) so that Indo-European [k,t,p] became Germanic [ɣ,ð,v] 'in syllables which in Arian were unaccented', as Sweet later wrote.⁴⁹

In the edition to the Pastoral Care, Sweet was more successful in showing certain phonetic practices of the scribes and, as I have already emphasised, made the distinction between Early and Late West Saxon, which is now recognized as standard.⁵⁰ The major features of the two periods are worked out in the introduction (pp. xxi-xxxiii). It is a 'special characteristic of the period' to labialise the a before a nasal giving moniɣ, monn, ond, long, while Ælfric and Wulfstan have manig, mann, and, lang.⁵¹ Other differences include: early onwald/onweald for later onwald, early meahte/mæhte for later mihte, etc. The distinction made by Sweet has become a foundation built on by later scholars, who now recognize - in contrast to Sweet - the normative Schriftsprache status of late West Saxon.⁵² While late-twentieth-century scholars agree with Sweet that early West Saxon writing developed as a phonemic system,⁵³ perhaps because it was based on the essentially phonemic approach of the Latin alphabet⁵⁴ or because people naturally and intuitively write phonemically when representing their language by means of an alphabet for the first time,⁵⁵ it is nevertheless generally agreed that late West Saxon orthography had become fixed and consistent by the eleventh-century⁵⁶ even to the extent of being 'artificial' - in that it did not show such sound changes as the 'merger of unstressed

vowels to a central sound'.⁵⁷

Sweet's achievement, the beginnings of which must be traced to this edition, was to show his contemporaries what would now be called the 'phonemic' basis of the scribe's orthography. At the same time, he was keen to explore unusual spellings in the manuscripts he studied, and to interpret them as attempts by the scribes to render their speech phonetically. Instead of absolute consistency of orthography, so the argument seems to run, the scribe attempts to render allophonic varieties. Thus one feature of early West Saxon is the archaic inflection -a in earda, a dative singular (36.5), and anra (167.2) for anre, which occasionally appears in the weakened form -æ as in the form gefyldæ of the clause 'hu ða ciricean giond eall Angelcynn stodon maðma & boca gefyldæ' (5.10). A few other phonetic sensibilities of this kind will be considered below. It should, however, be noted that they may be orthographic idiosyncracies: while a book by Toon (1983) argues, like Sweet, that 'scribes (unconsciously) recorded their phonetic habits', King (1992) has attacked the 'naive and dubious supposition .. that Old English spelling was allophonic'.⁵⁸ Various unknown factors have to be considered such as the date and origin of manuscripts, the different orthographic traditions of each dialectal area and their mutual influence.⁵⁹

As we have seen, Sweet's main concern in the eighteenth seventies was to persuade his contemporaries to give up their prejudices firstly about the phonemic character of medieval orthography and secondly about the likely pronunciation of medieval English. His efforts - and those of Ellis - were gradually successful.⁶⁰ After the Pastoral Care, Sweet's next offering was a paper on the sounds of Danish in which he outlined, with very little data other than his own observations, the main features of spoken Danish (TPS, 1873). There followed the 1874 version of The History of English Sounds, where, as I discussed above and in chapter two (2.3.2), he developed his notion (already formulated in his review articles on Ellis and on 'German Grammars of English') of the 'oral' conception of language evinced by the old scribes. This comes out in the general assumption of the whole work: 'the all-important principle that the Middle Ages wrote not by eye, but by ear, and consequently that their varying orthographic usage is a genuine

criterion of their pronunciation' (p. 162). Accordingly, the main section of the book is a list in three columns, akin to that already cited from his review of Ellis, in which the Old, Middle, and Early Modern forms of the word can be compared through a consistent notation. The introduction to the book contains a theoretical discussion of the three main types of sound-change (which he terms 'organic', 'imitative' and 'external') and a section on 'general alphabets', to which I will return shortly.

For each period of the language, and for each sound, Sweet includes notes explaining the development of that sound, and it is here that his assumption of the phonetic practices of the scribe is evident. In discussing the old short a, for instance (pp. 27-8), he points out that it is preserved in Old English firstly before a single consonant + a, o, or u as in hara, haol, caru, and before nasals as in bana, lang. In other cases it is replaced by æ, seen in dæg, appel, craftig - wherever the a is not supported by a back vowel in the next syllable it is weakened to æ. The a before nasals is liable to interchange with o before nasals (bona, long) particularly in the earlier period, but later survives in a few frequent words, such as bonne, on, and of (an exceptional case of o + f, which also occurs in the name Offa, from Aba). In Sweet's view, the scribe writes æ to represent a sound between [a] and [e] and thus thinks phonetically, the æ combined with the a being a diacritic. Graphic evidence for the employment of diacritics is provided by an Exeter Book riddle, which spells in Runic letters COFOAH, evidently for haofoc or hafoc ('hawk'). Here, Sweet comments, an æ labialised before an f (as in of = af) is written ao, 'with the evident intention of indicating a sound between a and o, just as æ points to a sound between a and e' (p. 27).

Elsewhere in the book, but particularly in 'General Alphabets' (pp. 19-22), a section which he considers 'original' (p. 162), and which is perhaps to be compared with one of those 'exploratory sallies' that Jakobson found so interesting in Sweet's work, we find a more general discussion of the scribe's use of the alphabet (see extracts from this discussion in Appendix I). Here again he discusses the scribe's use of digraphs which developed whenever there was a need to represent a new sound, as in the distinction developed in Welsh between <ff> and <f>, or

<g> and <gh> in Italian. Sweet's test for a digraph is this: if boec and beoc occur on the same page (as a plural or oblique case of boc), then because of its arbitrary position before or after the <o>, the <e> is a modifier and not part of a diphthong. This discussion serves as an example to his previous more general remarks on the actual working practices of the scribes.

In 'General Alphabetic', Sweet returns to the argument of 1871, the review of Ellis, which, it will be recalled, contrasted the attitude of 'highly-civilised communities', where the visible symbol of the word has an independent value detached from the sound it originally represented, with that of the medieval period, which is alleged to be 'hardly affected' by orthographic traditions, since writing is confined to a few, and literature is handed down orally. Here, as we have seen, Sweet goes too far, for the orthography of late West Saxon is demonstrably that of a fixed literary dialect. Nevertheless, with other pressing concerns in mind, Sweet now takes up this argument again, attacking the 'visual conception' of language of the 'educated man in the nineteenth century' who treats French and German purely as written phenomena and composes Latin verses by eye, like pieces of carpentry (see 2.2.8 and Appendix I). For Sweet, the case was very different before the rise of printing, when the value of each symbol was learned by ear, and thus also written by ear, without 'the adoption of a rigid, unchanging orthography'. To the two causes just mentioned, Sweet now adds the 'scarcity of books', the lack of communication between literary men, and the number of literary dialects. In taking the argument further, Sweet admits that orthographic traditions did exist, but 'their influence was next to none at all'. As 'literary cultivation' developed in the fourteenth century, for instance, there came 'a certain roughness and carelessness in distinguishing shades of sound' when compared to the practice of the thirteenth century:

But such defects, although inconvenient to the investigator, do not lead him utterly astray, like the retention of a letter long after the corresponding sound has changed or been lost, which is so often the case in orthographies fixed on a traditional basis.

Sweet's final comment here refers to the training of the scribe and the influence this has on the approach to language:

... early scribes not only had the advantage of a rational phonetic tradition - not a tradition of a fixed spelling for each word, but of a small number of letters associated with one sound; but, what is equally important, the mere practical application of this alphabet forced them to observe and analyse the sounds they wrote down: in short they were trained to habits of phonetic observation.

(History of English Sounds, 1874, pp. 20-21)

5.4 A TYPOGRAPHIC MENTALITY?

In the above arguments, and, as we also saw in chapter two, in many of his articles written in the 1870's, Sweet sees the rise of printing as highly significant: with printing comes a fixed orthography and gradually a new mental attitude develops among educated people in which language is regarded as essentially a visual phenomenon in contrast to the basic axiom that language consists of sounds. As we have seen, this is the view of the reforming philologists, among whom are Sweet, Ellis, Murray, Nicol, Sayce, Fleay and the members of the Spelling Reform Society, and Max Müller. Thus Müller could write:

Language exists in man, it lives in being spoken, it dies with each word that is pronounced, and is no longer heard. It is a mere accident that language should ever have been reduced to writing, and have been made the vehicle of a written language.

(Max Müller, Lectures, 1871, I, p. 52)

Müller's emphasis on the primacy of speech was popularised through his Lectures on the Science of Language first published 1861-4, but, as was pointed out earlier, it is an attitude which seems to arise perennially in the history of linguistic thought and language teaching.⁶¹ As I wrote in chapter two, a pedagogical pioneer in this kind of thinking, at least as far as nineteenth-century language teaching is concerned, is John Stuart Blackie, but A.J. Ellis (in The Alphabet of Nature, 1845, p. 145) should also take some credit:⁶²

It is impossible for us to suppose those whom we address ignorant of reading and writing, but it is at the same time difficult for them to form a just conception of the real nature of spoken language, while they habitually refer it to

the conventional symbols by which it is usually indicated - we can hardly say represented.

All these theorists shared a basic attitude in common, namely a belief in the primacy of speech (their mutual influences will be touched on in the next chapter). Despite this shared belief, however, only a few of them - and then only those interested in the practical learning of a foreign language - draw any conclusions about the actual significance of the contrast between the oral and visual approaches, the transition between nonliterate/aural and literate/visual attitudes.

As was pointed out in chapter two, Blackie and Nasmith had made a few remarks on the 'neglect of the ear' in the nineteenth-century teaching methods; here is Blackie's comment on the use of visual supports to the memory:

Memory certainly, on the exercise of which the power of language so much depends, is often more weakened than strengthened, as Plato wisely foresaw, by the use of paper and written notes, now so common.

(Blackie, On the Studying and Teaching of Languages, p. 3)

The reference in the above is probably to Plato's Phaedrus, where Socrates holds that writing weakens the memory by causing people to rely on external memory for what they lack in internal resources.⁶³ Nasmith (2.3.1 and 2.3.5) takes this type of argument further in his suggestion that the 'inanimate book' replaced the essential oral communication needed to teach a language (as Latin was taught in the middle ages):

It is not too much to say that from the moment printing enabled and induced the master to delegate a part of his work to the inanimate book, he began to neglect his duty; for he placed in the hand of his pupil an instrument which, as an auxiliary and supplement to the right discharge of his own functions, was of the greatest value, yet not being a real equivalent, he imposed upon the learner a task which time has abundantly proved was in itself sufficient to prevent his ever mastering the language.

(Nasmith, Practical Linguist, p. vii)

In Blackie's and Nasmith's view, then, the technology of literacy, that is, the use of paper and printed books, had an adverse effect on language learning methodology.

For Prendergast and Sweet, as was suggested in the preceding discussion, the spread of writing not only influenced methodology, but even affected the way that language itself was conceived. Thus Prendergast speaks of the threefold nature of words in the minds of the educated (as sound, meaning, and visual symbol), and later contrasts the educated attitude with that of the illiterate:

Beginnners ought to abjure the notion that words are mere combinations of certain letters to which they owe their origin, and that reading is the first step to be taken. Letters are not the elements of language, but the rudiments of the art of writing, with which millions of our fellow men in all parts of the world are still unacquainted.

(Prendergast, Mastery of Languages, p. 40)

The hypothesis that writing 'restructures consciousness' is a basic tenet of the theories of orality developed, not without some controversy, in the last two decades (2.3.4). Sweet's comments on the 'oral conception of language' have clear parallels to these much more developed theories and show again, as Jakobson observed, that Sweet's writings on the 'practical' study of language gave opportunities for sallies into new and little explored areas. The following similarities may be noted. First there is the notion of the written standard language as a 'grapholect', an elaborate construct, an artifice, sustainable only by the dictionary and the book, and far beyond the relatively meagre resources of a purely oral dialect.⁶⁴ Second, there is the notion that printing turns the spoken word into a visible and tangible, enduring object, to be seen as self-contained text rather than heard as utterances within a dialogue. This then produces the 'typographic mentality' which tends to conceive of the world in terms of visual textuality, making mental constructs and tackling cognitive problems by means of visual comparisons: isolating and grouping visual words as concepts, 'looking things up', making lists, diagrams, charts etc.⁶⁵ Linked to such notions of a visual mentality is research on the influence of orthography on children's and adult's awareness of language.⁶⁶ Thirdly, there is the mentality of scholars themselves, studying the products of 'oral' art forms as though they were fixed texts, 'assuming, often without reflection, that oral verbalisation was essentially the same as the written verbalisation they normally dealt with

[...] except for the fact that they were not written down' (Ong, Orality and Literacy, p. 10). Finally, we have the recognition that within manuscript culture, the 'typographic mentality' is less developed: people still conceive of writing as conveying the spoken word to the ear, more stress is laid on aural memory, and residual customs of the oral mentality still prevail (Clanchy, Memory to Written Record, 1993).

Sweet often did exploratory work and then moved on, as we have noted. The question therefore remains as to the extent to which his notion of the contrasting conceptions of language in medieval and modern times - an idea which is not found in his later writings - is a Victorian precursor of Ong's theory of the orality/literacy divide, (in Sweet's case with particular application to the 'practical study of language'). Sweet's discussion does not quite attain the insights of Ong's idea of a 'typographic mentality', principally because he does not attach enough importance to writing. The achievement of recent scholarship on writing and 'grammatology', as it has been called,⁶⁷ is to show that writing itself can be studied as an autonomous system, independent of the system of the spoken language.⁶⁸ Like Saussure, Bloomfield and many twentieth-century linguists, Sweet assumed that the legitimate function of orthography is to give a 'faithful representation of the sounds of the spoken language', an attitude that leads to the view that writing is merely the representation of speech and that reading is vocalisation, rather than a cognitive, reconstructive activity. Here, there is clearly an overreaction against the graphic prejudices of the nineteenth century. Similarly, in looking at the orthography of the medieval scribes (and arguably influenced also by his Romantic leanings) Sweet perhaps ran the risk of assuming too much phonetic observation on the part of the scribe, although this does not disprove his general comments on the vestigial orality of medieval manuscript culture.

Despite some reservations, Sweet's arguments have not lost their force. There is, in fact, a good deal of very cogent evidence that the alphabet and orthography in which a person has been schooled do affect his or her conceptions of the sounds, phonemes and even the morphological structure of the native language (and hence presumably of foreign languages too). One

type of research has shown, for instance, that in phoneme deletion tasks conducted orally, illiterate adults are baffled, while educated native speakers of English can easily carry out the deletion of /r/ from 'grow' to give 'go' or /t/ from 'bite' to give 'buy'. The strategy they use is to internally visualise the word 'grow', delete the <r>, and then pronounce the result; if however, the phoneme is not directly represented in the spelling of the word (e.g. delete /k/ from 'fixed', or /f/ from 'coughed') only a fairly small percentage of participants can do the task.⁶⁹ A convincing confirmation of such research projects is the case of Chinese literates who can read the traditional logographic characters but are unable to do phoneme recognition tasks which other Chinese literates - conversant also in the pinyin alphabetic script - can carry out with ease.⁷⁰ Other studies indicate that even the identification of syllables and morphological structure may depend on orthography.⁷¹ It is possible, as some now argue, that writing systems provide the models and concepts by which we understand the structure of speech⁷² - a view propounded also, as we shall see in the next chapter, in Sweet's 'Words, Logic, and Grammar'.

CHAPTER 6

SWEET'S SYNTHETIC METHOD.

From the point of view of the practical study of language the synthetic method implies that the analysis of the language is not carried further than, at the most, cutting it up into sentences, which are grasped and learned as wholes, instead of being separated into words, and put together like pieces of mosaic, as on the analytic method.

(Sweet, Practical Study of Languages, 1899, p. 97)

6.1 ORIGINS AND BACKGROUND

In chapter two I argued that Sweet's most original contribution to the debate on language study of the mid-1880's was the development (in the 1870's) of his idea of 'synthesis' and his presentation of the target language in a series of graded texts and vocabularies in a phonetic script based on the natural sentence. Furthermore, the synthetic approach to be employed was for Sweet simply a return to the methods of the middle ages, though carried out 'in a far more perfect way'. For both the medieval and the modern approach, the basic prerequisite was an oral conception of language and a close observation of the formal facts of the language. As we have seen this was, in Sweet's view, an attitude into which the medieval scribes had been trained by the 'rational phonetic tradition' of trying to use the given values of the roman alphabet flexibly - to write as they spoke rather than as a fixed orthography dictated.

In the modern world of the nineteenth century, it was the role of phonetics to teach an oral conception of language. For Sweet the basic approach to phonetics elaborated in his Handbook of Phonetics (1877) is twofold: to firstly isolate from the 'stream of speech', by analysis, the individual elements of sound which make up the phonology of a language and identify the means of their articulation by the speech organs, and secondly, to study synthesis, the way in which these identifiable segments in fact always occur in larger groups of sounds, combined through stress, quantity, and intonation. To represent these observable

facts, a phonetic notation should be used 'written as accurately as possible, so as to show the real synthesis of the language[s], and [...] not patched together, as is too often the case, by joining words together in the artificial pronunciation of the pronouncing dictionaries' (Handbook of Phonetics, 1877, p. xi).

The twofold approach of phonetics is applied to the practical learning of a foreign tongue as follows. As was seen in chapter two and elsewhere, the active task of the foreign language learner is first of all to drill the speech organs to articulate the individual sounds of the target language and then to combine them quickly, fluently and accurately into syllables and larger groups of sounds using the means of synthesis available to the language, and carrying out the process naturally rather than artificially (as the quotation at the beginning of this chapter emphasises). This is what Sweet seems to be describing in a letter to Johan Storm which he wrote on a trip to Sweden while preparing a phonetic study of the sounds of spoken Swedish (published in the Transactions of the Philological Society, 1878). Here we have a brief glimpse of his own practice when learning a language; it is his own personal approach rather than a description of a general method, but the same basic principle prevails:

Now that I understand everything without effort, I try to grasp the intonation of sentences as wholes, and to analyse the separate words afterwards.¹

In Sweet's view of language, it is implied, though never stated as such, that the process of speech production is closely akin to that of speech perception. The synthetic method is therefore essential to the process of understanding, to the hearer's cognition of a spoken discourse; from the passive point of view of the receptive listener, synthesis seems to imply accurate observation, a mode of analysis of the language, but one which does not go too far: 'not carried further than, at the most cutting it up into sentences, which are grasped and learned as wholes, instead of being separated into words, and put together like pieces of mosaic, as on the analytic method' (1899, p. 97). The learner must observe the 'stream of speech' and extrapolate the actual forms of the language, the 'groups of sounds' ('Words, Logic, and Grammar', p. 471) with their patterns of intonation,

stress, quantity, inflection and agglutination, all of which may contradict the more rational side of language as mirrored in its rules of word-division and grammatical analysis. As I argued in chapter two, it is the synthetic mode of observing which Sweet finds characteristic of the medieval approach:

In those days, when grammars and dictionaries were hardly known or used, Latin was studied much more as a living language than it is now; sentences were grasped as wholes, without the minute analysis of modern scholarship, and were consequently translated as wholes.²

Because living speech is produced in synthesised combinations, it must also be perceived as such; this is the argument for Sweet's synthetic method.

In addition, as we shall see shortly, the notion of 'grasping sentences as wholes' links Sweet's approach also to a type of mental-organisational learning theory becoming popular in the late nineteenth century and akin to later gestalt psychology in that the whole or the totality is emphasised in perception and learning rather than the atomistic piecing together of discrete mental elements (i.e. the so-called 'ideas' of associationist psychology). This gestalt-related approach is the Herbartian notion of 'apperception', sometimes also referred to as synthesis, which will be looked at below.

Sweet's term synthesis thus covers at least two, and probably three, techniques: (1) practice in natural speech production, i.e. the combination of the segments of speech into groups of sounds and utterances; (2) an observational technique - the observing of speech by the hearer as consisting of groups of sounds; and (3) a holistic, mental organisational technique by which the mind assimilates and groups experience and learning. In the first and second of these techniques, analysis and synthesis are seen as complementary, for both are involved in speaking and listening. The reason for Sweet's attack on contemporary analytical methods is that in learning a language, care must be taken to avoid a minute, artificial, or exaggerated mode of analysis, which misrepresents the facts of the language and thus hinders the acquisition of that language. Analysis must take place, but it must be the right kind of analysis.

In this chapter, I will trace the background and development

of Sweet's conception of synthesis, and examine the details of the synthetic method in theory and practice, particularly as outlined in the paper 'Words, Logic, and Grammar' and as presented in his textbook Elementarbuch des gesprochenen Englisch; I then look at the notion of association groups, based a good deal on Hermann Paul (and ultimately Herbartian in origin), which Sweet used to underpin his phonetic approach with a learning theory based on the tenets of one school of thought in late-nineteenth-century educational psychology; the implications of association for the practical techniques of language learning are then examined. Finally I give a brief discussion of what Sweet understood as the basic processes that go on in the mind of the learner engaged in a 'synthetic' approach to the practical study of language.

6.1.1 The Term 'Synthetic Method'

Although Sweet speaks, in the Pastoral Care edition (1871), of 'grasping sentences as wholes' and explicitly opposes his method to that of 'analysis', the actual word synthetic does not appear in the edition, although the term synthesis occurs in the paper on Danish (1873) and is basic to the arrangement of the Handbook of Phonetics (1877). The first occurrence in print of the expression 'synthetic method' is in the Transactions of the Philological Society of 1882-4, though Sweet probably conceived the idea much earlier, for, as we have seen, he admits that the bulk of this paper was written in 1876, but its publication had been delayed until he had produced the Elementarbuch as a practical illustration of the ideas he was expounding (and also, though he does not say this, until he had finished his work on the Oldest English Texts). At the beginning of this paper, it will be recalled, Sweet emphasises the (early) medieval influence on his thinking in this area:

I, for one, am strongly of the opinion that our present exaggeratedly analytical methods, which are the fruit not only of scientific philology, but also of the elaboration of grammars and dictionaries, are a failure compared with the synthetic methods of the Middle Ages, by which sentences were grasped as wholes, not analysed and put together like pieces of mosaic work, and that any real reform will involve, partially at least, a return to these older methods.

The wording here echoes the passages of 1872 and 1878 quoted above, where the phrase 'grasping sentences as wholes' is contrasted with 'analysis'. A similar contrast occurs in the preface to the first edition of the Anglo-Saxon Reader (1876/1881, p. vi):

Every language has a right, both from a scientific and a purely practical point of view, to be considered as an independent unity, as a living organism with living inflections, derivations and constructions of its own, which are handled with full consciousness by those who speak the language, and are not the result of an artificial analysis.

Since 'Words, Logic, and Grammar' (1876) and the Handbook of Phonetics (1877) also distinguish the analysis and synthesis of sounds, it seems clear that the term 'synthetic method' must go back to the 1870's. Further confirmation of this is found if we look again at the report in the Athenæum on a paper which Sweet gave in 1878 (see my Appendix I), which mentions a 'harmonious knowledge of the language as it is' ('harmonious knowledge' is perhaps concomitant here with 'synthetic grasp'). Certainly the emphasis on natural associations in this report, and in a similar one in The Academy, indicates that association, a notion linked to that of synthesis, formed the psychological background to his method. For all these reasons, therefore, I suggest that the passage at the beginning of the 1884 paper also formed part of the original 1876/1877 draft.

Though Sweet talks of the 'synthetic methods of the Middle Ages', the term synthesis itself is not medieval but decidedly modern, its first occurrence being in 1611, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. The basic definition of the term is 'the putting together of parts or elements to make up a complex whole' or, as the adjective synthetic is defined, 'of, pertaining to, consisting in, or involving synthesis, or combination of parts into a whole; constructive'. As a concept, it seems to have enjoyed a wide currency in nineteenth-century writing in many fields - from art and literary criticism to psychology, philology and phonetics. Its varying uses in these fields together form the sum of finer connotations by which the term was understood in the late nineteenth century.

6.1.2 Synthesis in Phonetics

It is to phonetics that we must turn to find the source of Sweet's basic use of the term 'synthetic'. The fact that the publication of Visible Speech was so influential on Sweet might lead us to suppose that A.M. Bell would also have influenced Sweet's ideas on a 'synthetic method' of language study. This does not, however, appear to be the case. Bell's achievement concentrates on the analysis of speech sounds and their points of articulation rather than on the way sounds and spoken words combine (though Sweet later adapts Bell's notation very effectively to represent synthesis). Indeed, Bell's particular interest in elocution in such books as The Art of Reading³ led him rather to stress the phonetic individuality of words (note also his punctuation):

The perfection of articulation, is to distinguish every separate word, as plainly to the ear, in speech, as the printer does, in type, to the eye.

In his elocution system, Bell nevertheless recommends reading exercises in which words 'intimately connected with each other' are grouped together, as in the following:

The man - who is - incapable - of at once - deducing - such conclusions, - ought - to be regarded - as - destitute - of the reasoning faculty ...

(Bell, Art of Reading, 1845, p. 30)

I doubt whether such exercises would have impressed Sweet, who, certainly much later in his career, found something unnatural in elocution, and reportedly regarded Bell's own pronunciation as slightly artificial.⁴ In Bell's Standard Elocutionist, however, there is an interesting definition of speech as 'variously modified emissions of breath', which may have struck a chord with Sweet, as also the instruction to speakers that pauses should not be made only where the punctuation indicates but also at 'every cessation of the outward stream of air'.⁵

While Bell's strength was the analysis of sounds, A.J. Ellis had a much greater interest in the study of the 'glides' which occur in moving from one fixed position to another during the articulation of sounds, for instance in his early Essentials of Phonetics,⁶ where he also makes a distinction between theoretical

and practical phonetic alphabets (which Sweet later termed narrow and broad transcriptions). In the case of the theoretical alphabet Ellis cautiously states that he will 'not divide the words when written according to the complete alphabet, as they are usually divided, but as the syllables form themselves into natural groups'. On this notation, for instance, the phrase 'representation of the sounds of language' is rendered:

(rep/rɛ-zentáʃ'n uděsaʊndzuvlájwej)

With respect to this notation, Ellis asks the reader to make 'great allowances' for the pronunciation exhibited, as the conversational tone is 'difficult to seize or appreciate' (Essentials of Phonetics, 1848, p. 104). He appears not to have continued the approach later, for he remarks in 1877 with guarded interest that on the subject of the separation of words 'Mr. Sweet has lately had occasion to advance opinions, which require careful consideration' (The Academy, June 23, 1877, p. 558). The allusion here is to Sweet's 'Words, Logic, and Grammar', to be looked at below (6.3).

Ellis also occasionally uses the term synthesis, for example in a pamphlet on the phonetic basis of the 'Reading Method', where he writes of the need to know 'the mechanism of speech and the operations actually performed in the synthesis and analysis of spoken sounds'. In a paper to the Philological Society of 1872, he laments the 'ignorance of synthesis' - 'this assumption that all nations combine sounds in the same manner'.⁷ During the debate on the pronunciation of Latin, he outlined the areas of research that still needed to be covered, almost all of which are covered by the the study of phonetic synthesis:

But leaving these general considerations of elementary sounds, of which our knowledge is least incomplete, we know almost nothing of the mode in which different combinations of these elements combine into those extra-ordinary masses of articulate sounds which they utter so glibly. The action of vowel on vowel, of consonant on consonant, of vowel on consonant and conversely, of general syllabification, of the hierarchy of syllables in a word as indicated by accent, stress, quantity, voice inflexion, pitch, emphasis, intonation, glide, hiatus, catch and so on, whereon depend the whole force and meaning of words, and, combined with powers of appreciation and imitation, all the habits of change and interchange of sounds, - the very foundation of

philology, without which a proper conception of the descriptions of sound given by men of different nations and ages cannot be formed, - all this, the main ingredient in the problem of restoring classical pronunciation, - is as good as utterly unknown (Ellis, Academy, April 15, 1871, pp. 230-1)

Basically, this is the conception of special synthesis (the effect of sound on sound) and general synthesis (stress, intonation, quantity) to be found throughout Sweet's work in phonetics and phonology, for instance in his two versions of History of English Sounds (1874 and 1888), and his Handbook of Phonetics (1877, pp. 57-99), in which all the above features of sound listed by Ellis are examined. It has been pointed out by historians of phonetics that one of Sweet's achievements in this field, and a reason for his continuing relevance, is his adaptation of Bell's Visible Speech notation to the meticulous observation of all manifestations of language with no a priori assumptions about relevance, and with an equal emphasis on synthesis alongside analysis. Thus the Bell-Sweet notation includes symbols for two types of pause: one for 'glottal closure with distension of the larynx, from pressure on the confined breath, and percussive emission on opening the passage' and one for 'cessation of breath'; there are also symbols for general modifiers such as breath, voice, whisper, wheeze, nasality, different types of rounding, etc.⁸

In the following example of Sweet's writings on phonetic synthesis (History of English Sounds, 1888, p. 8), the symbol (j) shows the 'mid-back-wide' vowel as in standard English 'father', the modifier (+) indicates the long degree of quantity (as opposed to 'half-long' or 'short'), while three further symbols indicate 'breath expelled from the lungs with degrees of force':

level force } +=
 increasing } +<
 diminishing } +>

'The influence of force on the synthesis of speech is very important,' Sweet comments, 'for the sense of unity and separation depends on it.' Whereas continuity of force gives a sense of unity, as in }+> or }+<>, discontinuity as in }+>> gives a sense of separation, 'the }+> being broken up into two syllables'. Stress, as defined by Sweet, is 'comparative force',

since every syllable (vowel-group) must be uttered with a single impulse of breath, and in language 'the tendency is against uttering two successive syllables with the same force'. The practical application of these phonetic investigations will be looked at below (6.3.3) in my discussion of the Elementarbuch.

6.1.3 The Background in Psychology and Learning Theory

Sweet's concern with totality and grasping the sentence as a whole in his synthetic method places his approach firmly within an influential nineteenth-century school of thought in the psychology of learning. According to the contemporary Cambridge psychologist G.F. Stout (1860-1944), in his Analytic Psychology (1896),⁹ the psychological world at this time was divided into 'two camps' (reminiscent of Sweet's opposition between analysis and synthesis in philology): on the one side stood the champions of Association with their 'bias towards psychological atomism', and on the other were the champions of 'Apperception' - a Wundtian term going back to Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1834), a theorist whose conception of the mind as essentially a unity was popular among late-nineteenth-century educationists.¹⁰

Apperception in the Herbartian use of the term is 'the assimilation and identification of a new idea [or sense-impression] by the mass of ideas already in the mind'. In this view, association is not 'the sole ultimate form of cognitive combination' (Stout, Analytical Psychology, II, p. 41). As William James put it in 1890, discussing the role of association in the psychology of learning:

It is obvious that the advance of knowledge must consist of both operations; for objects at first appearing as wholes are analysed into parts, and objects appearing separately are brought together and appear as new compound wholes to the mind. Analysis and synthesis are thus the incessantly alternating mental activities, a stroke of the one preparing the way for a stroke of the other, much as, in walking, a man's two legs are alternately brought into use, both being indispensable for an orderly advance.¹¹

On the older associationist view which went back to Locke, Hume, Hartley and their followers (reviewed in 5.1.1), in the everyday act of perception of a stone, for instance, the perceptual elements of shape, size, weight, colour, hardness etc. were

regarded as combining to form our idea (i.e. our sense impression or perceptual image) of a 'stone', whereas according to the Herbartian view, the mass of previous experience in the mind 'apperceives' the object as a whole (as in later gestalt theory). Thus in the writings of John Stuart Mill and Wilhelm Wundt, which adapt or depart from the older rigidly associationist approaches, there is talk of mental 'compounds' and 'creative syntheses', while favouring a conception of the mind as a unity, and Herbartian notions of 'association groups' and 'apperception masses' ('die Masse der Vorstellungen') also underlie the writings of the Language Teaching Reformers in the 1880's such as Franke, Viëtor, Hermann Paul, and W.H. Widgery.¹² These writers do not influence Sweet in the early 1870's, so - while they all share the same intellectual background - we must conclude that Sweet developed his idea of synthesis independently of them.

A close parallel to Sweet's approach to synthesis occurs in the writings on psychology of the younger scholar G.F. Stout, although, it must be said that there is little evidence of mutual influence. Stout himself favoured his own variant of apperception which he called 'noetic synthesis'. Arguing by analogy with art in support of his theory that the perceived whole is more than a mere combination of discrete parts, he cites the popular art critic Hamerton (Thoughts about Art, p. 180):¹³

Synthesis in form does not merely arrange given forms, but runs into, and modifies every line in the forms themselves. A great inventive artist never in a picture draws anything exactly as it is, but compels it into such shapes as he wants in that place having reference all the time to all the the shapes either already put, or to be put, in all the other parts of the picture.

(quoted in Stout, Analytic Psychology, II, p. 76)

Music too provides Stout with an analogy to the workings of the mind, for he finds an example of a high level of noetic synthesis in Mozart's autobiographical account of his methods of composition. In Mozart's mind the whole piece of music appeared 'almost complete and finished' and he did not hear the parts successively but 'gleich alles zusammen', that is 'everything together simultaneously' (Stout, Analytic Psychology, II, pp 38-9). Rather like William James, but going further, Stout argues for the mutual implication of synthesis and analysis:

every new synthesis results from the further determination of a psychical whole which in some way already exists. The new synthesis consists in the distinction and definition of the parts and relations within this prior whole.

(Stout, Analytic Psychology, II, 39)

The parallels with Sweet's notion of synthetic learning will be discussed later in this chapter (6.2.2 and 6.5); for now, we should note the features of mutual modification, simultaneity, and totality which inform this notion of synthesis. Interestingly, in the following passage, Stout uses another analogy - this time the example of a man learning a language - to illustrate the mutual implication of analysis and synthesis. Here, the parallels with Sweet's notion of the 'stream of speech' and 'grasping as wholes' should be noted:

He analyses in so far as he distinguishes the separate words and sentences from the stream of words in which they occur; on the other hand he at the same time, and by the same process, combines and identifies as a whole the sounds which enter into the comprehension of the units of speech which he learns to distinguish.

(Stout, Analytic Psychology, II, p. 39)

6.1.4 Other Connotations in Nineteenth-Century Writing

For the sake of completeness, I look now at some other uses of the term 'synthesis' in other fields. These may or may not be part of Sweet's attitude, yet they cannot be ignored, as they are clearly part of the general connotations of the term, which differ somewhat from those of the late twentieth century.

6.1.4.1 Art History

I return first of all to art history and to Hamerton's Thoughts about Art (1873), already quoted in the extracts from Stout. The notion there that 'synthesis' implies not the mere 'arrangement' of forms but their mutual 'modification' is akin to Sweet's idea of synthesis in language: the individual sounds modify and effect others depending on their phonetic environment, stress, emphasis and intonation; likewise (as was discussed in chapter two, 2.1.4) words occur in combinations and idioms such

as 'put up with', the meaning of which cannot be obtained by isolating its component parts.

Two further passages highlight the concern with totality which marks Hamerton's work. On the achievements of Goethe as writer, artist, and art-critic, he writes:

He perceived that the effect of everything depends upon its surroundings, and that to detach and isolate is to destroy.

(Hamerton, Thoughts about Art, p. xx)

On the process of painting itself he comments (p.101):

Since painting is ... work emphatically synthetic (being the union of many forms and colours and lights and darks into artistic wholes).

As in the passages by Sweet quoted above (6.1), here again is the contrast between, on the one hand, organic totality and connectedness and, on the other, exaggerated or even destructive analysis - the same sort of thinking which led to Sweet to speak of phonetics 'breathing life' into the dead letters of old manuscripts. Another nineteenth-century nuance of the term synthesis is also heard here, and one which Sweet perhaps appreciated, namely, the notion of artistic wholeness, the aesthetically pleasing aspect of the organic whole. This is akin to Sweet's neo-Romantic conception of language as a 'living organism' and his view of method as a 'harmonious knowledge of language as it is', opposed to 'arithmetical' analytical methods which he even terms 'monstrous' in the comment of 1899 (p. 97).

6.1.4.2 Synthetic and Analytic Languages

A further important synthetic/analytic distinction is the classification of languages devised by early-nineteenth-century philologists. A highly inflected language like Latin is described as synthetic because it expresses various meanings such as tense, person and mood through the combination (or synthesis) of various meaningful elements into one word. A classic example given by the American comparative philologist W.D. Whitney is that of amabor, which breaks down into ama ('loving' - the root), b (futura), o (first person) and r (passivity), whereas the equivalent phrase in an analytic language like English consists of four separate

words: 'I shall be loved'.¹⁴ According to the OED, the term synthetic was first employed in this way in 1816 by Duponceau.¹⁵ Certainly by the mid-nineteenth century the distinction was well established and almost inevitably formed part of the debate on the origin of language and the nature of linguistic change. With the descent of synthetic Latin into its analytic Romance-language descendants it was only too easy to argue that the original languages were inflected and synthetic and that modern analytical languages had arisen as a process of decay or, as Jacob Grimm put it in a work Sweet knew well, 'der progressive Untergang der Flexionsfähigkeit' ('the progressive decline of the inflectional capability').¹⁶

In addition, though perhaps linked to this attitude, was the aesthetic preference noted above (6.1.4.1) for artistic wholes and organic unities. Accordingly, inflected languages were considered to be neater, more expressive, and in fact more beautiful than their analytic counterparts. Jacob Grimm, for instance, talked of the 'edlere, reinere Formen' ('nobler, purer forms') which the earlier, richer inflectional system of the German language exhibited over the later language, which has only six declensional endings compared to the twenty-five of Old High German, and which has lost the Wohllaut - the earlier harmonious sound of its -a and -u endings (*ibid.* pp. 61-2 and 64). This aesthetic appreciation of a harmonious sound-system is echoed by Sweet in his piece on 'Mind Training' (1877) where he writes of the superiority of most ancient languages in the 'simplicity, clearness, and sonorousness of their phonetic structure' (in Practical Study, 1899, p. 274) and in a eulogy of English at the end of the 1884 paper on the 'Practical Study', where he speaks of 'the richness of our sound-system, both consonants and vowels, the delicacy of our intonation and stress distinctions, and the comparatively rational nature of our grammar' (Collected Papers, p. 55).

An extreme form of the argument for the superiority of the synthetic languages is Farrar's Families of Speech, which praises the compactness of 'recommence' which in literal English would be 'to be going into again with' as it derives from Latin re cum in it i a re. Compared with some American Indian languages where 'I smoke' is rendered, he says, by the

agglutinative compound 'I breathe-the-vapour-of-a-fire-of-herb-which-burns-in-a-stone-bowl-wedged-into-a-pierced-stone', the inflections of Latin and allied languages show 'the immense victory of the Aryan [Indo-European] race, in adopting inflectional synthesis as the basis of their grammatical structure'.¹⁷

Synthesis in a language was also held to be more logical as well as more aesthetically pleasing. The argument for inflectional superiority on rational grounds is met in Wilhelm von Humboldt: the inflected form is superior because it expresses the meaning without the extra connotations that inevitably accompany the individual words of the analytical form.¹⁸ Essentially, this formed a basic argument for the use of Latin and Greek in schools (as we saw in chapter two, 2.2.2), and Sweet's reaction was to point to such agglutinative forms in English as (hiylgou) and (hiywountgou) where 'there is as much obscuration of the formative elements as in the traditional inflexions' ('Words, Logic, and Grammar', 1876, p. 23). On Sweet's view, then, English is not a wholly analytical language and the distinction obscures some basic facts which the learner of the language has to be aware of. In fact, as I shall argue shortly (6.2.1), it is in reactions to current dogma about synthetic languages and inflexion that Sweet begins to develop his first explorations in the idea of a 'synthetic method'.

6.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SYNTHETIC METHOD

As Sweet came to see language as a natural living organism based on colloquial speech, and as he began to develop his ideas on the contrast between the phonetic spelling of the old scribes and modern 'visual' orthography, he gradually developed two notions of central importance to his 'synthetic method'. Firstly, he began to realize that there are numerous phonetic fusions - in any language, but noticeably so in English - which standard orthography and word-division obscures; here the influence of his work on medieval texts is very evident, as also is his rejection of the notion that 'synthetic' forms are restricted only to the so-called 'synthetic' languages. Secondly, and at the same time,

he started to develop his idea of the sentence (rather than the word) as the unit of language. In both of these, the connotations of the term 'synthesis' as discussed above all play a role.

6.2.1 Synthetic Forms in Medieval Manuscripts

In the previous chapter, I gave some examples of what Sweet regarded as the oral conception of language in the spelling practices of the medieval manuscripts which he had studied - not only phonemes, but even allophones are rendered by the scribes, whose 'rational phonetic tradition', in which a small number of letters are associated with one sound, rather than a fixed orthography with each word always spelt the same, forces them to habits of phonetic observation. In addition, as well as rendering the sounds of individual words, the scribes' phonetic preoccupations lead to their notation of numerous synthetic fusions, now referred to by phonologists as 'enclitic' forms, in which words are assimilated and fused into larger units. Sweet soon began to note such forms, an early example of this being his introduction to the Pastoral Care, in which he observes the 'delicate distinction' between wile, wiste and their negative equivalents nyle, nyste where 'the labialized vowel of the contractions of ne-wile, ne-wiste is evidently due to the absorption of the w' (Pastoral Care, p. xxvii). He also notes 'assimilations' of d and t in the forms ðatte for ðæt ðe and compares this with mittyoē for mit ðy ðe and witteah for wiðteah in the Old English Dialogues of Gregory, as well as assimilations of this sort in the later, twelfth-century Ormulum.

In a later discussion of this phonetic scribal practice, he cites more examples, explicitly under the heading synthesis: the attempts by scribes to render stress, intonation, and 'the modifications which words undergo in different surroundings' (History of English Sounds, 1888, p. 71). He notes the distinction made between full emphatic forms and unstressed ones, which eventually led, in English, to the separation of one and off from an and of. As he recognizes, the scribes are not consistent: more often than not, they found it 'more convenient to write the emphatic form everywhere'. This leads to the abandonment of synthesis as the scribes begin to pronounce each word 'detached, in its emphatic form, free from sandhi and

consonant-mutation'. He also comments briefly on manuscript punctuation, for instance the acute accent, which originally served to indicate a rising intonation:

Our punctuation-marks seem to have been originally modulative, and a comma is still more or less equivalent to ('), though punctuation is now mainly logical. (p. 71)

(Sweet, History of English Sounds, 1888, p. 71)

Further remarks focus on the general disregard for word-division in Sanskrit sandhi and in early Greek and Latin manuscripts, and the way, in the early Middle Ages, 'subordinate words, especially prepositions, were generally run on to the following noun etc. to which they belonged'; this 'grouping of subordinate words around their centre' is particularly common in Old Irish, where for instance indfhirsin was written for ind fhir sin 'of-the man this' (i.e. 'of this man'). Such forms have also been commented on in the recent book Pause and Effect by M.B. Parkes, who argues that the scribes felt much freer to render their spoken vernacular phonetically, in contrast to the fixed status of Latin orthography.¹⁹ Sweet took up Old Irish later, but his original observation of the phenomenon goes back to the Pastoral Care, which he began probably in early 1870, according to an announcement in the Athenæum (January 15, 1870, p. 9). A quick glance at the oldest surviving manuscript of the Pastoral Care (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 20) is enough to confirm Sweet's remarks on word division and the joining of subordinate words to the nouns and verbs to which they belong, and studies by Rademacher and Saenger confirm his point.²⁰ Here, for example, are a few lines from the Pastoral Care, quoted in 2.3.4 above (ed. Sweet, p. 23), in which I attempt to show how the scribe of Hatton 20 (f. 6r, line 7-9) makes use of space:

Nuicwilnige ^χæt^χte ^χeos sprac stigge on^χæt inge^χdonc ^χæs leorneres
 suæsuæ onsume hlædre stæpmælum near &near oð^χæt hio fæst lice geston
 de on^χæm solore ^χæs modes ^χehileornige. &for^χy: ictodæle feower \

It should be noted in this entirely typical example of scribal practice that the preposition on is invariably written together with the following word as one unit (except in the case of an

error in line 9 where a corrector has added the missing on above the word feower); likewise the form ðæsmodes shows the article written with its following noun (though the practice is not consistent; on the same pattern, the personal pronouns ic and hi are written with the following verbs to which they belong, giving such forms as ictodæle, or, with the relative, ðehileornige. The principle behind this tendency is stress (an unstressed word may be written with the word following it), but it is not absolutely consistent, and occasionally, as in fæst lice, a word itself is divided into stem and suffix. Following the conventions of the Early English Text Society, Sweet added modern punctuation to his edition, and rearranged the division of words conventionally, but not without remarking on the scribal practice as he did so.

Before his edition was completed, Sweet also read Earle's Philology of the English Tongue (which I cited earlier for its reference to the laws of association). In this book, as part of his distinction between presentive words (objects and conceptions) and symbolic words ('I, you, they, they, where, but, never' etc.) Earle hits on a phenomenon which he terms symphytism (Philology, pp. 249-52). In the process of change by which some originally presentive words become symbolic, there occurs symphytism: 'a relative lightening of vocal energy' in the words of lighter weight and 'a clinging adherent tendency to attach themselves to other words'. Earle isolates two types: firstly the particle composition of ne + verb as in nelt (ne wilt), nam (ne am), a + noun as in 'awinter warm, asumere cold' (Owl and Nightingale), and a + adjective giving abroad, along, around; secondly flexion, in such examples as: wenestu (wenest þu), shaltu, etestu in the poem Owl and Nightingale (AD 1250) and comparable to 'cudto?' and 'cudtono?' in Bamford's Dialect of South Lancashire.²¹

In his review of Philology of the English Tongue in 1871, Sweet takes Earle to task for not pushing these observations on 'symphytisms' far enough.²² There is no reason, thinks Sweet, not to call these forms inflections merely because they have appeared at a later stage in the history of the Indo-European languages - he clearly has no time for any such ideas on the superiority of Aryan inflection as held by Farrar and Humboldt (see 6.1.4.2 above). Sweet now takes up an argument we have seen

him developing five years later in his 'Words, Logic, and Grammar'. In 'the original Aryan language' - he argues in his review - the relations of words were expressed by a fixed word-order (as in Chinese and modern English), a leading feature being that the emphatic (presentive) word was placed before the symbolic one; but then, at a later stage, 'a general attrition of words took place', the result being 'the uniform postposition of the symbolic element in Greek and Latin'. But this should not lead us to assume that 'flection' cannot occur in 'præposition': 'yet,' Sweet says, 'this is all the difference between Latin and English: Latin says love-I, English I-love.' He continues:

There is no reason why we should not write ilove in one word; the voice runs on without any pause, just as in amo, which, if I love is correct, ought to be written am o. The fact is that the whole question of word division requires to be investigated systematically. One result of such an investigation would be to modify our views on the subject of 'inflection' very considerably.

(Sweet, Academy, 1871, p. 506)

Sweet does not take up this investigation until 'Words, Logic, and Grammar' in 1876, although he attempts one more sally at the question in his 'German Grammars of English' of 1874. Here again he uses what he sees as the inadequacies in the scholarship he is reviewing to pursue his own reflections. Some of this argument has already been touched on. Sweet paints the portrait of an imagined 'antiquarian philologist' pushed by a Socratic questioner into giving the definition of a word as 'a group of type-marks separated from other groups by spacing'. Sweet's Socrates then has him hear a spoken sentence in an unknown African language and asks him to identify the words; naturally, the philologist will respond by asking to see the sentence written down. However, if the language has no alphabet, the philologist 'will have to confess that he is utterly ignorant of the real nature of a word'; and pushed even further, he will eventually admit that if he notes down an English sentence exactly as he hears it, writing only one word where he hears only one, and 'disregarding the traditions of the printing office', he will come to the conclusion that 'English is a language of great inflexional complexity', that it is a 'symmetrically developed agglutinative language'.

6.2.2 The Sentence as the Unit of Language

If this is the true structure of English (and other languages), then it follows that the language learning process should reflect it, hence Sweet's notion of 'grasping sentences as wholes' which he includes in the Pastoral Care. If word-division does not exist phonetically, then, as Sweet maintains in 1877, we must 'begin with the natural sentence' when studying a language practically. The idea of the sentence as the basic unit of language teaching had been arrived at separately by Thomas Prendergast, who influences the College of Preceptors; it also occurs in the work of A.H. Sayce, who, certainly at first, appears to be working along different lines to Sweet, if not wholly independently.

Prendergast's 'Mastery' method of language study aimed at the thorough acquisition of - at first - a limited number of whole utterances: 'a stock of words engraved in the memory in purely idiomatic combinations',²³ and a training in the spontaneous substitution of synonyms and variations within the sentences to be learned. This, he argues, is the way the child acquires a language, learning for instance five syllables 'give me some of that' then gradually using variations such as 'give me that', 'I want some of that', etc. Prendergast's text books on this pattern were popular, going through numerous editions,²⁴ but the exclusive use of one technique with too much reliance on substitution (Sweet's 'arithmetical fallacy') was heavily criticised. The criticisms ignored the more interesting points in Prendergast's theory. These include such features as 'the globe of language' and 'memory'; both are central to Prendergast's theory, and both are paralleled in Sweet's approach.

By the 'globe of language' Prendergast refers to the totality of language and the need to begin with every-day sentences taken from it rather than simplified 'very incomplete utterances' such as 'it rains', 'milk is white'. 'John walks' (Mastery of Languages, 1864, p. 115). Like Sweet, Prendergast begins with the assumption that language is an 'opus operatum, a highly-finished piece of mosaic, which children do not pull to pieces, though the learned do', and that 'sentences of a good

length should be learned coherently first and then analysed afterwards' (Mastery, pp. 126-7). Unlike Sweet, he does not investigate the phonetic side of synthesis, though he does recommend the usefulness of 'combinations of nouns with possessive pronouns and prepositions' and supports his point with the example of a Hebrew sentence containing 'only seven words', each of which is a 'rudiment':

And he sent me / to your territory / with his wife / and her brothers / to save them / from their enemies / who were pursuing them.

(Prendergast, Mastery of Languages, p. 116)

Like Sweet also is Prendergast's theory of combination based on association psychology. In the discussion above (5.1), brief mention was made of Prendergast's warnings against 'crowding the memory with fanciful associations' which is reminiscent of Sweet on cross-associations. Also similar is his belief in the 'uncertain duration of an impression' and his observation that, unlike the native tongue, foreign words are not associated in the memory with any of our everyday feelings, habits or ideas and are thus more difficult to recall (p. 31). As with Ellis and Sweet and their desire to obtain immediate association of sound and concept, Prendergast wants to achieve 'so complete an amalgamation of the sound with the thing signified, that the words will come spontaneously to the lips when we want to give utterance to the ideas which they convey' (p. 33). His solution is to present words always in 'idiomatic combination', rather than 'unconnected' (pp. 34, 37), so that they are recalled either by 'an accidental association of ideas', or by 'a faint recollection - an echo, as it were, of the rhythm of the original expression'. In a passage recalling Locke on the 'wrong connexion in our mind of ideas' ... 'the whole gang always inseparable' (see chapter five, 5.1.2), Prendergast whimsically compares words to prisoners bound together and thus more easily recaptured if they escape:

The words of a foreign tongue which we commit to memory are prisoners of war, incessantly trying to escape, and it requires great vigilance to detain them, for unless our attention be continually directed towards them, and unless we muster them frequently, they steal away into the forest and disperse. But when they are bound together in sentences, the

same degree of watchfulness is not required, because they escape with difficulty, and a whole gang of them may easily be traced and recaptured at once.

(Prendergast, Mastery of Languages, p. 34)

Prendergast's theory and practice received some attention from educationists in the first half of the eighteen-seventies. R.H. Quick appears to have taken the lead in this; 'how can the learner,' he asks in 1872, 'be got to apprehend the language, not as a collection of particles, but as an organism?' Quick feels that Prendergast goes some way to providing an answer, particular in his emphasis on associative 'chain of recall', idiomatic sentences with variations, and 'frequency of renewal';²⁵ however, as a school teacher, Quick has misgivings about the potential dullness of the method, above all the length of the sentences. Nevertheless he takes up Prendergast's cause again at a meeting of the College of Preceptors with Ellis present (Sweet does not appear to have been involved at all).²⁶ Ellis himself spoke on the same theme in the following year (1875), placing most weight on the work of Nasmith and his 'numerical values' (word-frequency counts) for vocabulary.²⁷ Ellis's other points include having the the ears 'as it were bathe in the sounds'; 'words must occur literally as quick as thought'; 'words are naturally grouped, and their sounds are thus best heard'. All these points overlap with both Prendergast and Sweet and show the impossibility of reducing such ideas to one ultimate source.

A few more examples will suffice to show the extent to which these ideas were 'in the air' in the early eighteen-seventies. 'Language is organic' says a brief anonymous article in 1873 arguing the relevance of philology to language teaching.²⁸ Nasmith, in the short but dense introduction to his Practical Linguist, comments not only on medieval methods before the rise of printing (see my chapter two, 2.3.1, and Appendix III), but also, briefly, on the sentence:

The individual word, the phrase, the sentence, are alike to him ['Nature's student] , he regards each as a sound, simple or complex, which expresses a given want.

(Nasmith, Practical Linguist, 1870, p. vii)

Whether he derives this from Prendergast is not revealed to us.

An article by one 'W.' in 1874, however, does mention Prendergast, and while quibbling over the latter's use of complex sentences, nevertheless approves, particularly of Prendergast's observations on child learners. 'Nature is analytic', says W., and 'presents wholes and aggregates', and he concludes: 'the sentence is the true unit of speech'.²⁹

Exactly this is the conclusion of a book by A.H. Sayce published in the same year: 'language is based upon the sentence, not upon the isolated word'.³⁰ The word, in Sayce's view, is 'merely a 'bundle of syllables and letters, or rather animal sounds; merely the creation of the grammarian and lexicographer. To become language, it must embody thought and emotion; it must express a judgement'. Sayce is coming at the question here from a comparative philological rather than pedagogical point of view. Although he knows Sweet's work, it is the influence of Max Müller which is most in evidence.³¹ Müller believed that, in the evolution of language, primitive man began with general ideas and derived more specific names from them, thus the name of the moon originates in an Indo-European word for 'the measurer'; this suits Müller's main point that language and thought are inseparable:

But though our modern philosophy did not know it, the ancient poets and framers of language must have known it. For in Greek, language is logos, but logos means also reason, and alogon was chosen as the name, and the most proper name, for the brute. No animal thinks, except man. Language and thought are inseparable. Words without thought are dead sounds; thoughts without words are nothing. To think is to speak low; to speak is to think aloud. the word is the thought incarnate .³²

Sayce's view is an extension of this: the whole sentence, the whole logos is the unit of thought; writing on the idea of roots, he argues that language began with phonetic roots grouped together into longer sequences of sound with vague meanings attached to them, out of which linguistic sentences eventually develop:

In other words, language ought first to have been common property, full of vague, instinctively felt signification, but not yet differentiated into individual words with special sounds and meanings. In fact, we ought to start not with the word but a wider indefinite whole, out of which the word, or rather the sentence, has been elaborated; and that whole would have conveyed the same general indeterminate sense to

the several units of the community, whose wants and means of expressing them were the same.

(Sayce, Principles of Comparative Philology, p. 202)

His main theme, then, is that 'the sentence comes before the word, the indefinite before the definite' (p. 211).

His book received mixed reactions. John Rhys, professor of Celtic at Oxford received it favourably, citing the Celtic languages, where grammatical mutation also tends to lay emphasis on the sentence as the basic unit of language: 'words en phrase have no individuality of their own'.³³ Richard Morris, then President of the Philological Society, responded more negatively in his review, asking how it would be possible to know the history of any word 'if it had not had from the first an independent existence out of the sentence in which it was usually employed'.³⁴

At this time (1873-4), Sayce was also familiar with Sweet's writings; he quotes Sweet's passage on the 'antiquarian philologist' and the 'visual conception of language';³⁵ later he was influenced by Sweet's work of 1876-8, particularly 'Words, Logic, and Grammar', which he cites in two pieces written in 1879 and 1880 on how to learn a foreign language.³⁶ In these, he draws on Sweet's point that a phonetic ability will help with the learning of other languages (though he does not give any details on synthesis or related issues). Sayce's main stress is on the 'common usage of the community' as the sole standard of correctness rather than the rigid rules of grammars and dictionaries based on 'the works of a selected number of writers'; the student should begin with the 'living idioms from which alone we can learn the true nature of actual speech', with the sentence, 'the real unit of speech' and not with 'the isolated word'. Perhaps there was some mutual influence; both scholars were developing, each in their own way, a theory of language learning based on the sentence.

Another philologist working on the connectedness of speech was Hermann Paul, Professor of German Philology at Munich University (mentioned briefly in 6.1.3). Paul was interested in the psychology of first language acquisition and its relation to language change, and was influenced both by Humboldt's idea of

the creative element in language and by Herbartian ideas of apperception-masses, which Paul refers to as 'die ganze Masse von Vorstellungen' or 'Vorstellungsgruppen'.³⁷ Paul developed these ideas in the 1880's, too late to influence Sweet or Sayce.

Sweet first becomes aware of the direction of Paul's work in his paper on 'English and Germanic Philology' of 1878, where he quotes the 'importance and interest' of the new views on language change and analogy propounded by Paul (Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache, IV, 1877, 315-32). For Paul, the two indispensable factors which cause change in speech are 'reproduction by memory' and 'new-formation by means of association'. Sweet also agrees with Paul on the 'one-sidedly analytical tendency' of philology and his view that Indo-European was not made up of separate roots, stems, and suffixes, but 'only ready-made words, which were employed without the slightest thought of their composite nature'. For Paul, the ready-made combinations were learnt one-by-one and associated into groups by analogy and, as Sweet paraphrases, 'this grouping not only aids the memory, but also makes it possible to produce other combinations' (Sweet, 'English and Germanic Philology', 1878, pp. 111-12).

Not long after, in a report to the Philological Society of 1880, Sweet greeted the publication of Paul's Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte as 'the most important work on general philology that has appeared of late years'. The first chapter of Paul's book tackles the psychological bases of speech and language change and postulates an 'Organismus von Vorstellungsgruppen' - a totality of sounds, series of sounds, words, utterances, sentences, and phonetic, syntactic and grammatical patterns which are all grouped in the subconscious mind of the speaker, listener or reader through numerous patterns of association, all of which re-arrange and modify themselves continually in order to assimilate new groupings of language. Here the analogy is apparent with Hamerton on synthesis in painting or with Stout's statement that the new synthesis consists in the distinction and definition of the parts within a prior whole. As we shall see, Paul's work is variously reflected in Sweet's work; some influences are discernible in a review of Storm in 1881 and in the paper of 1884, and are more clearly present in sections of his New English Grammar; in the Practical Study of Language of

1899, he expressly develops a Paulian treatment of the language learning process. In passages such as the following, Sweet must have found confirmation and theoretical support for his own ideas of synthesis and grasping sentences as wholes:

Die Vorstellungen werden gruppenweise ins Bewusstsein eingeführt und bleiben daher als Gruppen im Unbewusstsein. Es assoziieren sich die Vorstellungen auf einander folgender Klänge, nach einander ausgeführter Bewegungen der Sprachorgane zu einer Reihe. Die Klangreihen und die Bewegungsreihen assoziieren sich untereinander. Mit beiden assoziieren sich die Vorstellungen, für die sie als Symbole dienen, nicht bloss die Vorstellungen von Wortbedeutungen, sondern auch die Vorstellungen von syntaktischen Verhältnissen. Und nicht bloss die einzelnen Wörter, sondern grössere Lautreihen, ganze Sätze assoziieren sich unmittelbar mit dem Gedankeninhalt, der in sie gelegt worden ist.

(Paul, Prinzipien, 1880/1909, p. 26)

('The ideas are introduced in groupings into the mind and thus remain as groupings in the unconscious. The ideas associate into groups through successive sounds and movements of the speech organs. The groups of sounds and movements become associated with each other and with the ideas for which they serve as symbols, not just word meanings, but also syntactic relations. And not just individual words, but larger series of sounds, and whole sentences associate directly with the mental content which has been placed in them'.)

6.3 SYNTHESIS AND THE NATURAL SENTENCE

6.3.1 Begin with Synthesis

The paper 'Words, Logic, and Grammar' of 1876 was Sweet's major exploration of the implications of phonetic synthesis for the theoretical - and practical - study of a language; in this sense, it may be regarded as a manifesto of the synthetic method. 'we must learn to regard language solely as consisting of groups of sounds,' he declares, 'independently of the written symbols' (p. 3). Moreover, in its uncompromising refusal to treat words as units, it is in fact Sweet's most radical treatment of the subject, much more so, for instance, than his grammar of the eighteen-nineties,³⁸ where he returns to standard orthography and a more cautious (and a much fuller and more comprehensive) approach to the grammatical description of English. In 1876, however, he sets himself a more far-reaching task, and one which

in the end he only partly fulfils, a study of the relation of language to thought:

Such investigations, if carried out consistently, will greatly modify our views, not only of English, but of language generally, and will bring us face to face with many of the ultimate problems of language which have hitherto been rather shirked by psychologists.³⁹

In his paper, Sweet opens the discussion with the basic questions of sentence-, word- and syllable-division, then goes on to look at the role of metrical stress and the relevance of prosody to the analysis of speech, finally offering his solution: a phonetic notation based on sentences divided on the basis of stress-groups. After a discussion of logic (which I will not discuss here), Sweet then goes on to suggest how his synthetic notation gives many insights into the structure of English, of interest for both the practical student and the linguistic scholar. In short, the basic structure of the paper follows the standard Sweetian pattern of first grasping the synthesis of sentences and then analysing the separate words afterwards.

Beginning with speech, Sweet briskly defines it as 'breath-groups', or 'phonetic sentences', within which the speaker normally makes no pause:

This is important to observe, as many people, misled by our ordinary word division, imagine that they make a pause at the end of every word.

(Sweet, Collected Papers, p. 3)

Thus in the sentence 'he took his hat off', hat off forms (according to Sweet) one phonetic unit, as in the single word 'hatter'. Here, in his concern to attack prejudices based on the space-convention of printing, Sweet does not consider the possible articulatory means by which speakers may indicate the juncture between hat and off.

Sweet's second criterion is 'force or stress', in fact 'the most important element in the synthesis of speech-sounds'. Thus from the utterance

(henrikeimhoumyestæde)

he offers the definition that 'a word is, phonetically speaking,

a stress-group',⁴⁰ . Problems naturally arise with word-identification, and Sweet refers to the issue of whether non-literates are able to identify words in utterances, citing Jenner (TPS 1873-4) on the difficulty of identifying words in an unwritten language like Cornish.⁴¹ Without the aid of written word-division it is often presumed that the task of word identification is more difficult for non-literates, though the present discussion on this question remains controversial. For pre-literate children, it seems, from recent research, that lexical items are unanalysed wholes, and that children aged five to seven justify why a word is a word by referring to its attributes: thus tree is a word 'because it has leaves', but the and in are not recognized as words.⁴² On the attitude to the unit of the word in primal oral or partly literate cultures, some consensus can be seen by comparing the work of such scholars as Malinowski, Sapir, A.H. Gardiner, and more recently that of Goody and Scribner and Cole - directors of a large literacy project among the Vai of Liberia .⁴³ While Malinowski in his Coral Gardens and their Magic (1925) asserts that words 'are in fact only linguistic figments, the products of an advanced linguistic analysis', Sapir is more circumspect. In his book Language (1921), he shows the difficulty of giving a functional definition of the word:

In truth it is impossible to define the word from a functional standpoint at all, for the word may be anything from the expression of a simple concept - concrete or abstract or purely relational (as in of or by or and) - to the expression of a complete thought.

(Sapir, Language, p. 32)

His conclusion, endorsed by Gardiner (1932), is that the word has a 'psychological reality' for the speaker of a language:

No more convincing test could be desired than this, that the naive Indian, quite unaccustomed to the concept of the written word, has nevertheless no serious difficulty in dictating a text to a linguistic student word by word; he tends, of course, to run the words together as in actual speech, but if he is called to a halt and is made to understand what is desired, he can readily isolate the word as such, repeating them as units. He regularly refuses, on the other hand, to isolate the radical or grammatical element, on the ground that it 'makes no sense'. (p. 34)

To the above it might be objected that the 'Indian', if from an oral culture, is likely to be re-telling an account rather than 'dictating a text'. It has also been shown by Goody, that in some languages, for instance among the LoDagaa of Ghana, there is the concept 'a bit of speech' in their language but no actual word for 'word'. The same has been found in the language of the Vai of Liberia as reported by Scribner and Cole in The Psychology of Literacy (1981); the indigenous script of the Vai is also interesting in this respect, for it ignores word-division in the same way as late Roman scripta continua. In general, Goody's comments on the notion of the word as a 'logogram endorsed in a box or rubric' are a qualification of Sapir's statement:

The formal separation of words is of first importance for the study of language; implicit separation there is in oral cultures, but not the explicit divisions on which much linguistic analysis depends.

(Goody, Interface, p. 274)

As far as Sweet is concerned in 'Words, Logic, and Grammar', the problem of identifying individual words in spoken Cornish applies equally to well to spoken English. Continuing from his preliminary definition of a word as a 'stress-group', and reminiscent of Bloomfield's classic definition of a word as a 'minimal free form'⁴⁴, Sweet now presents the test of a word as the ability to carry independent meaning combined with 'isolation, or the power of forming an independent sentence', for instance (kəm) or (əp).⁴⁵ Continuing with the pure phonetic observation of the utterance, Sweet now identifies an intermediate class of sound-groups which carry meaning but do not stand alone. Thus while mæn is a 'full-word', the form dhə is a 'half-word', that is, a stressless syllable incapable of forming a sentence by itself. The test of forming a sentence by itself does not apply to the verb, e.g. (gouz), which may be defined as a word, according to Sweet, because: (1) it has full stress; (2) it is linked by analogy with (gou), which can stand alone; and because (3) (hiygouz) is analogous to (dhəmæn) and is 'felt to be a compound'.⁴⁶

On Sweet's analysis, the units of morphology can be distinguished according to their relative freedom of position, application, and form. Thus the word is relatively free in its

position in the following sentences: (gou wei), (ailgou) and (ailgou wei). By contrast, a half-word is semi-inflexional, with unvarying position in (dh mæn) and (dh gudmæn). In the latter form, it is even possible to regard the adjective as an 'incorporation' within the basic form (dh mæn) just as in Gothic an interrogative particle -u- can be incorporated into the form of the verb, giving 'ga-u-laubjais?' (= 'do ye two believe?')

As far as application is concerned, the half-word is generally unrestricted in that it can be applied to most nouns. By contrast, a derivative is restricted in application to certain words, such as 'be-come', but not 'be-go'.⁴⁷

On form, Sweet distinguishes derivative syllables from inflexions. While a derivative syllable is invariable in form, inflexions have phonetic variation and obscuration, an observation he employed also in his controversy with the classicists, for it showed that inflections were not as clear and logical as was often supposed.⁴⁸

Sweet now moves on to tackle syllable-division, defining a syllable as 'a group of sounds containing a vowel, or, in some cases, a vowel-like consonant', a definition which here avoids the question of what is a vowel, focussing on the difficulty of telling 'where the syllable begins' (p. 9). Thus in

teikæpdhættiykæp

we have forms (teik-æp) and (tiy-kæp).⁴⁹ Unlike Bell, who felt that the syllable division was determined by the nature of the sounds which constitute the syllable, Sweet thinks that 'the difference is simply one of stress, the first (k) being pronounced with weak, the second with strong force'.⁵⁰ This yields the definition:

a syllable is a vowel-group beginning with a certain degree of voice, which decreases up to the end of the syllable, till a new stress marks the beginning of another syllable.

Force is also observable in monosyllables; thus we say (kæt), not (kæt) or (kæt). In polysyllables, as 'perfect uniformity is something exceptional' (p. 10), one element takes the main stress, for instance (impenətrəbiliti), and in simple sentences there is also one predominant stress falling on the most important word.

The latter part of Sweet's discussion of synthesis concerns metrical stress:

The origin of rhythm is no doubt to be sought in the natural tendency to alternate strong and weak stress - rhythm is in fact nothing but the utilization of this instinct for aesthetic purposes by making it regular and symmetrical.

(Collected Papers, p. 11)

For Sweet, sentences, words and sounds are analogous to phrases, bars and notes in music;⁵¹ he thinks it important that the principles of metrical stress apply also, to a certain extent, to ordinary speech as well, thus anticipating the concepts of eurhythmy 'rhythmic adjustment of stress patterns' in modern theories of prosody.⁵² In Sweet's words, 'beside the purely logical stress which indicates the various relations of full-words, half-words & c., there is a purely metrical stress, which often runs counter to the other' (p. 12). So we often hear, he claims, the form (itizsou) for (itizsou), the stress falling on 'the most insignificant syllable in the sentence'.

Sweet's explanation is metrical: 'the ear prefers to hear the alternation of weak, strong, weak, to hearing two weaks together followed by a strong'. Another example is the common phrase used when asking the way in English: 'can you tell me the way to ..?' In this instance, the metrical

(kænyutelmiydhəweitu)

is often heard for the logical (kænyutelmiy ...). Such features of eurhythmy have been observed recently in combinations like 'hot and spicy', 'neat and tidy', or in the reversed stress of champagne in 'champagne breakfast'.⁵³

Sweet's conclusion is that a notation system is needed to do full justice to the above phonetic observations. This script will avoid all logical or grammatical commentary on the phonetic text; by which he means that it will avoid capital letters or word division, and will join all half-words to full-words etc. In contrast to the findings of Chomsky and Halle,⁵⁴ and many other recent commentators,⁵⁵ including Stubbs, who argues that there must be powerful reasons for the evolution of alphabetic systems with 'an admixture of morphological and/or syntactic information',⁵⁶ Sweet feels that 'the attempt to indicate

simultaneously the formal and logical side of language by the same alphabet ... is about as successful as most compromises'. The script Sweet proposes here would divide the sentence into musical bars, the beginning of a group of letters indicating full stress; accents would also show secondary stress and the beginning of a stress-group (to indicate sentence stress); other signs would indicate the absence of stress at the beginning of a sentence and breashtaking; finally two accents would give rising and falling tones. All these would express 'clearly and precisely', what punctuation indicates only 'imperfectly and vaguely'.⁵⁷

6.3.2 'Analyse the Separate Words Afterwards'

In 'Words, Logic, and Grammar', after an involved discussion on the relationship of logic to language, Sweet returns once again to his starting point, the breath-group. He now explores the appropriate grammatical analysis to complement the synthesis he has just discussed. By no means giving a comprehensive survey, he offers instead a few examples and specific points about the parts of speech in English. All this is done with a purposely controversial aim. As he later admitted, the paper attempted 'to upset some of the conventional dogmas of philology, logic, grammar, partly by means of a consistent phonetic analysis, and to explain the real meaning of the parts of speech'.⁵⁸

Thus one point of usage much debated by the Fowlers of the Victorian world, Alford and Moon, was whether 'it is me' is acceptable or not.⁵⁹ Moon and like-minded purists prohibited the use of the 'accusative' after the verb to be. Sweet rejected these 'ignorant grammarians' (they are not named) with the observation that, despite its history, the so-called accusative of personal pronouns is now either nominative, accusative, or dative. In fact, Sweet asserts, the pronoun 'I' is an inseparable prefix, a half-word, while 'me' is an independent or absolute pronoun.⁶⁰

His comments on other parts of speech are similar: from the formal point of view, nouns have two cases, a 'common' and a 'genitive' case; adjectives can be divided into special ('bright', 'blue' etc.) and general with the attribute of

'existing in space' (e.g. 'this', 'that'). Articles are prefixes for forming nouns and allow for incorporation of adjectives within the form, as in 'a good man' (əgudmæn) - this is sometimes avoided, as in 'all the way' or 'so great a work'. Verbs in English cannot stand alone without a pronominal prefix; thus the forms (gou) and (rən) could be nouns with one prefix (əgou), (ərən), and verbs with another (aigou), (airən), (wiylgou), (wiydgou), (wiydidgou). Essentially, the verb is recognized by its position: (dhəmenrən), and tends to have a pronominal prefix in colloquial speech: (maibrədhəhiyz kəmiq). Various moods can be identified: emphatic, negative, interrogative, and negative-interrogative, while the inflected subjunctive is almost extinct.⁶¹

In his concluding remarks, Sweet distinguishes between the general facts, that is grammar, and the special facts of the language, its lexicology. The features which any new grammar should cover are: (1) phonology (2) phonetic synthesis: quantity, stress, and intonation (3) word position (4) the parts of speech, inflexion, agglutination. Attention should be drawn to 'nascent forms' in a language - here his remarks on won't as a separate form as it were in the making seem to be confirmed by modern analysis.⁶² His final point emphasises accurate observation, rather than 'habits of erroneous and superficial observation, the evil results of which are seen everyday in scientific philology and in the practical study of languages'.

6.3.3 Sweet's Elementarbuch

The first explicit use of such an approach - as outlined above - for language learning (apart from the texts for phoneticians in a Handbook of Phonetics of 1877) was Sweet's Elementarbuch of 1885.⁶³ In the Vorwort, he explains that the aim of the book is to be an introduction to both the linguistic and the practical study of English and states the main principle behind the book: the colloquial language should be studied first 'in a purely phonetic form' and only later should the student progress to the literary language in conventional orthography. Special emphasis is laid, he writes, on the phonetics of the sentence, an almost totally neglected area. The aim of using such a notation is the following:

Die erfahrung zeigt nämlich, dass wer einmal gewöhnt ist, sich in einem ohne worttrennung geschriebenen texte zurechtzufinden, der wird auch der ebenfalls ohne worttrennung dahinfließenden rede der eingebornen durchaus nicht so rathlos gegenüberstehen wie ein anderer, der nie gelegenheit gehabt, sich im worttrennen zu üben.

(Sweet, Elementarbuch, p. iv)

('Experience has shown that once someone is used to coping in a text written without word-division, when faced with the equally undivided stream of speech of native speakers, he [or she] will be far less perplexed than someone who has never had the opportunity of practice in word-division'.)

To show the kind of mental and linguistic operations involved in 'practice in word-division', I turn now to Elementarbuch, the content of which was discussed in chapter four (4.2), and cite the opening section, entitled 'Neitʃə' ('Nature'):

-pijpl juwsttəpɪŋkði ʒəpwəzə kaɪndəv flæt keɪk\
-wiðə^ʃ sɪjəl raundɪt; bətwiːj nou nauðətɪts riəli raund\
-laɪkə bɔl\
- not ʏkwait raund, bətəlɪtl flætnd\
-laɪkən
orɪŋz.

In this passage we should note first of all that a space does not indicate a pause, but the onset of stress, that is to say, a boundary between each metrical 'bar' (or 'foot' as it is now called). Sweet wants his student to recognize the rhythmical quality of English, what is now known as 'stress-time'.⁶⁴ A lack of space indicates an unstressed syllable; thus, as each 'bar' begins with a stress, all other unstressed syllables that follow are adjoined to it, whether or not they belong there logically or syntactically. Thus the notation gives a purely phonological structure, rather than an attempt (as in 'Words, Logic, and Grammar') to indicate a radical, agglutinative analysis of English - with verbal forms given as (hiylgou) and articles described as 'prefixes' to the noun, for instance (dhəman). In fact, while the texts of the Elementarbuch give stress-division, the grammar and glossary employ standard word-division (but still in phonetic script) and explain the grammar on more traditional lines than the analysis offered in 'Words, Logic, and Grammar', although it must be said that the grammar section contains far more information on stress, quantity, and intonation than other text-books mentioned in my discussion (see 2.2).⁶⁵ Thus the texts

are harder to read at first sight, but the grammatical analysis (the second stage of the method) is made correspondingly easier for the student. Other signs used in the notation are:

- (-) before (pijpl) to indicate a weak stress;
- (\) after (keik) to show falling intonation;
- (•) before (raund) in line 2 to show extra emphasis;
- (V) to indicate a fall-rise intonation on (kwait).

The commas and semi-colons in the passage represent pauses, as in standard orthography.

For the foreign learner, such a notation boasts several advantages, along with one or two difficulties. The first obvious advantage is that the pronunciation provides an extremely accurate model of the living language as spoken by a native speaker. Sweet gives his own pronunciation, rather than prescribing a standard, referring to it as 'the London dialect with which I am familiar, as spoken in educated circles' (p. iii). This is apparent in the very first word (pijpl), in which the vowel is heard as a diphthong rather than as the long [i:] vowel of German or other continental languages. The accuracy of the notation is seen in the rendering of to, was, of in the normal non-emphatic pronunciation of connected speech, as also the second syllable of flattened. The articles a and an are distinguished, as someone used to standard orthography would expect, but so are the corresponding forms of the definite article (ðə) before consonants and (ði) before vowels. In the passage as a whole, a suitable intonation is given, not too difficult for a beginner, but with one 'fall-rise' on quite to indicate the diffidence of the speaker in 'not quite round' (not Vkwait raund).

Another advantage which this kind of phonetic notation offers, at least for that type of learner willing to dispense for a time with the standard orthography, is that, in reading the script, it is probably true to say that most readers or learners are simply forced to read aloud or sub-vocalise - there is no other way to make sense of the notation or to make it 'come alive', as Sweet said in another context. Even more so than the passage just quoted, the following utterance, taken from the section daiθlogz where Sweet attempts to show 'satzphonetik',

will illustrate this feature of Sweet's stress-divided notation:

-ai nidntget apfərənə^h kwətərən^h ^auə^hden

Admittedly, I have quoted this sentence out of context; nevertheless, it is almost impossible to read without vocalisation, and even then, it will probably require two or three false starts before the desired result is achieved, namely the indignant exclamation of an awakened sleeper: 'I needn't get up for another quarter of an hour then!' Apparently, such repeated vocalisations are characteristic of scripts which avoid word-division (explained by the physiology of reading as inducing increased eye-movements):

The experiments performed on English-speaking readers confirm that the suppression or obfuscation of spatial boundaries between words is one factor that both slows down reading and encourages vocal and sub-vocal activity.

(Saenger, 'Separation of Words', p. 203)

Scribner and Cole note the same kind of phenomenon in the reading habits of the Vai, whose scripta continua requires several attempts before the syllables as it were fall into place:

Just as there are no divisions into words, there often are no divisions into utterances or sentence units. For these reasons, Vai readers have had to elaborate special techniques for discovering higher-order semantic units. One common technique, which we have heard over and over again, consists of 're-cycling' - saying strings of syllables aloud repeatedly, varying vowel tones and lengths until they 'click' into meaningful units.

(Scribner and Cole, Psychology of Literacy, p. 165)

Now this is exactly the effect Sweet is aiming to promote with his synthetic script: to adapt Sweetian terms, the foreign language learner is prevented from 'reading by eye' or from 'abstracting the symbols from the sounds they stand for' - the symbol of the word cannot 'suggest an idea without any reference to the sound it represents' and, as with the old scribes, the 'mere practical application of this alphabet forced them to observe and analyse the sounds they wrote down'; in other words, learners have to vocalise and thus constantly drill the spoken language. On the other hand, Sweet's system provides far more information on stress, tone and quantity than the Roman or Vai

equivalents, even in the long undivided utterance just cited. The main difference is that Sweet's notation is mostly based on principles of stress - as he puts it in 1876:

But the abandonment of conventional word-division by no means postulates a return to the old system of writing each sentence without a break. On the contrary, it is clear that the great assistance afforded to the reader by presenting the letters in groups of moderate length was the one great reason for abandoning the original system of non-division. As we have seen, the most important element in the synthesis of speech-sounds is stress. I propose, therefore, to follow the analogy of musical notation, and divide our sentences into bars, making the beginning of each group of letters coincide with a full-stress.

('Words, Logic, and Grammar', TPS, 1876, 483)

Certain difficulties accrue also to Sweet's synthetic script, despite the helpful guide it gives to pronunciation of connected speech. In the opening sentence of the Elementarbuch, for example, the form used to - often mispronounced by foreign learners - is given in an accurate notation with voiceless [s] and [t] and a reduced vowel [tə] for 'to'. In Sweet's notation of the whole clause, the word (-pijpl) is shown with weak stress (-) which thus places a correspondingly heavy stress on the syllable (juwst) in the form (juwsttəpiŋk^ˈði); accordingly 'think' remains unstressed. This is probably the best way to pronounce it, but it is not the only way. The following is also possible:

-pijpl juwsttə piŋk^ˈði əp:wəzə kaindəv flæt keik\,

with a more emphatic 'think' and a 'medium stress' (which I hear) before (w z), instead of Sweet's original:

-pijpl juwsttəpiŋk^ˈði əp:wəzə kaindəv flæt keik\.

Throughout these texts, other permutations are possible, and the learner will gradually have to be made aware of them. There is also the difficulty of pauses, which in normal speech would arguably occur more often than the punctuation suggests - according to one survey, two-thirds of spoken language comes in chunks of less than six words.⁶⁶ Sweet was perhaps wary of indicating such pauses, as this would be too prescriptive, and too much like 'elocution'. One further question is whether the learner would imagine that the spaces between the forms are

indications of pauses, or of 'minimal free forms', which of course they are not; while (pijpl) can stand on its own, this is not the case for (pwz).

The difficulties with the approach were soon realized by Sweet himself, for instance in a letter to Jespersen of 1888, in which he comments on the distinction in the Elementarbuch between word-division in the grammar section and 'stress-division' in the texts:

The objections to the latter are self-evident. The constitution of its groups varies with the slightest change of emphasis, so that they are difficult to recognize, and corrections in printing become troublesome and expensive. The conflict between word- and stress-division is a further source of confusion. But the attempt to combine word-division with accurate stress-marking leads to great complexity and the use of diacritics which are generally omitted in practice.⁶⁷

For a while, Sweet remained undecided, as he admitted in the preface to his Primer of Spoken English (1890).⁶⁰ This was an English version of Elementarbuch with a similar introductory grammar and phonology but a different selection of texts, now given in phonetic script with word-division:

ðə san seiz:
 məi neim z •san. əm verɪ braɪt.
 ʔi raiz in ðɪ ijst; ən :wen əi :raiz ɪt s dei.
 əi luk in ət jɔ̃ windou wɪð məi braɪt, ɡouldn ai,
 ʔn tel jʊ :wen ɪt s taim tə -get ap;

Again we should note the consistency of the notation, which indicates all word-division, even (z) and (s). In this respect, one or two comments are in order. Perhaps the ad hoc method of the medieval scribe is preferable to allowing a (z) to stand on its own; as we saw earlier, in the Irish indhirsin with the weak forms grouped around the emphatic form, or in Sweet's earlier idea of writing (dh gudmæn), the words naturally grouped together are written together as a unit which can stand on its own. But this would lose in clarity, for the learner would require 'diacritics' to mark the stress, as Sweet points out in the letter to Storm.

In the end, to judge from the 1899 Practical Study, Sweet decided against indicating word-division, returning to the idea

of the Elementarbuch and arguing in favour of a phonetic script where the learners have to learn to identify the words for themselves, as they would have to do when confronted with native speakers. The visual associations serve, he says, to confirm the fleeting impressions of the ear (see 5.1.2 above), and in his section on phonetic notation, for instance, he writes that 'as the learner sees the words written in a representation of their actual spoken form, he is able to recognize them when he hears them with comparative ease'.⁶⁹ To clinch his point, he cites French (aksebo) which the learner must recognize instantly in conversation, without pausing to parse it into some kind of Anglicised French like (aa kə səi bou); the same goes for the forms (kɛskʃksa) or (kjɛski). Once learners have come to recognize such forms, the transition to standard orthography will then be made, for 'once the language itself has been learnt, it can easily be read in any alphabet'.⁷⁰ Sweet's justification for this is a variation on the axiom of 'begin with the spoken language', the basis of the synthetic method:

If, then, we first get a thorough knowledge of the spoken form of the foreign language, and then proceed to learn its literary form, we shall be in the same position as regards relative strength of associations as the natives themselves: we shall think in the spoken language because our associations are directly with it, while at the same time we are able to understand the literary language, and, with a little effort at first to write it; but we are no more able to speak the pure literary language than a native is.

(Sweet, Practical Study, 1899, p. 52)

6.4 SYNTHESIS AND ASSOCIATION GROUPS

The whole process of learning a language is one of forming associations. When we learn our own language we associate words and sentences with thoughts, ideas, actions, events.

(Sweet, The Practical Study of Language, 1899)

From the application of phonetic synthesis to the synthetic learning of a language I now turn to the psychological side of the question. As we have seen, Sweet gradually came to tackle the problem of the psychology of learning, the psycholinguistic question of how the learner acquires the language, and of the

mental processes involved in this acquisition. In chapter two (2.1.1), we noted two linked concepts: synthesis and association. While the notion of synthesis is developed partly through his encounter with medieval culture and his interpretations of medieval linguistic practice, the idea of association derives much more clearly from contemporary psychology, receiving further modifications under the influence of Hermann Paul. In Sweet's later book of 1899, association is included in the chapter on 'Special Principles of Method' along with synthesis and connected texts, and receives a much fuller treatment, it will be seen, than in previous (extant) work.

The first pieces in the corpus of Sweet's writing which face the question of learning psychology are 'Words, Logic, and Grammar' and its sister paper 'Language and Thought'; in particular these two papers discuss the learning of vocabulary. The issue, mentioned already in chapters two and four (2.1.4, 4.3, and 4.4) is the problem of finding a consistent and satisfactory scheme of classification for the vocabulary of a language, in other words, to improve on Roget's Thesaurus. Sweet says he has been 'engaged for some years in trying to devise a more consistent and satisfactory scheme of classification' ('Words, Logic and Grammar', p. 15). The scheme was never completed, but Sweet gives examples of the approach he was taking, which differs from Roget's 'extraneous criteria'. Thus Roget classifies food under 'insertion' and therefore 'directive motion', whereas for Sweet 'it clearly comes under "volitional functions of living beings" with, of course, a cross-reference to "insertion" and its other mechanical associations' (*ibid*). Similarly, Roget places theft under 'transfer of property' instead of 'ethics' and knife under 'superficial form' with 'sharp' and 'edge' instead of under 'volition + inanimate thing'. By using external criteria from the world of modern knowledge, Roget's approach could be misleading, for language is 'based not on things as we know or think them to be, but as they seem to us' ('Words, Logic, and Grammar', p. 15). Thus we still say the 'rising of the sun' as did the 'astrologers of ancient Chaldaea'. According to Sweet the ultimate ideas of language are not concerned with logic, psychology or metaphysics 'for at the time when language was evolved, these conceptions were already

stereotyped in the form of simple ideas'. He thus implies that the understanding of semantic associations depends partly on interpreting the Lockian simple ideas that we have inherited from the remote past. In studying a language, this must be taken into consideration in his method of 'synthetic meaning study' which he developed around this time.⁷¹ In his adaptation of the paper for the Anthropological Institute, Sweet makes clear the relevance to practical language study of a 'properly classified' thesaurus:

Such a vocabulary would also form a most valuable foundation for the practical study of language. The study of 3,000 of the commonest words in any modern language by means of idiomatic sentences taken from actual life (not made up artificially, as is done in most elementary books) the whole being arranged according to the meanings, would enable one to express himself on most of the ordinary topics of life with far greater accuracy than is now attainable, even after years of floundering about in the pages of unwieldy and unpractical dictionaries and grammars.⁷²

As discussed above (6.2.2), Sweet came under the influence of Hermann Paul in the late 1870's and was particularly impressed with the German scholar's Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte, for it must have confirmed the notions of association and synthesis he had developed independently. Paul's contribution is to emphasise the role of analogy in language learning and to develop a theory of the mind as active, forming constantly shifting 'association groups' in the unconscious.

One striking parallel with Sweet is Paul's term 'eine gegenseitige Durchkreuzung der Gruppen'⁷³ ('a mutual criss-crossing of the groups'). This is reminiscent of Sweet's idea of 'conflicting associations' which he developed in the 1870's (see 5.1 above) and which, in the 1884 paper, he terms 'cross-association', a similar but more suggestive concept that may imply a cross-over or interference in the system of associations within the memory. Thus the absence of signs to mark quantity and stress in Latin could create 'cross-associations' (1884 Paper, Collected Papers, p. 49). Another passage from the paper (p. 36) implies that the regular grammatical forms of a language are organised mentally into patterns of association:

We can explain the irregularities of a language by means of history, and even prove that they are really more correct than the regular forms, but they still continue to be

irregularities, that is, they always cause breaks and inequalities in the series of mental associations called forth by the regular forms, which can only be smoothed over by strict attention and continued practice.

These two references to association suggest that Paul's views were beginning to be felt in Sweet's formulations of his theory of language acquisition. Further confirmation is found in Sweet's review from three years before of Storm's Englische Philologie for the Göttingsche gelehrte Anzeigen (1881),⁷⁴ in which we find an exact German equivalent of the very passage just quoted from the 1884 paper:

Man kann die Anomalien einer Sprache historisch beleuchten, ja sogar beweisen, daß sie berechtigter sind als die 'regelmäßigen' Formen, aber sie bleiben doch immer Anomalien, das heißt, sie verursachen jedesmal Unterbrechungen und Unebenheiten in den durch die regelmäßigen Formen hervorgerufenen Associationsreihen, die nur durch angestrenzte Aufmerksamkeit und wiederholtes Ueben geglättet werden können.

(Sweet, review of Englische Philologie, p. 1400)

Here Sweet employs the Paulian term Associationsreihen (see end of section 6.2.2) and a little later, in a passage reminiscent of the preface to the Anglo-Saxon Reader, the term Vorstellungsgruppen. Before giving a full critique of Storm's book, Sweet discusses further (pp. 1398-1403) the principles of the practical study of living languages, commenting favourably on Storm's treatment of this issue and concluding with a criticism of the widely held belief that historical philology would prove the cure for the defects of the present methods:

Dabei vergisst man, daß die wahre Sprachwissenschaft, in ihrem ganzen, von uns noch kaum geahnten Umfange, sich für den Sprachunterricht auf ganz andere Weise verwerthen ließe. Von großer Wichtigkeit sind z.B. die Gesetze der Form- und Ideen-Association, deren praktische Anwendung vor allem eine streng phonetische Schreibweise fordern würde, dann auch viele andere Reformen, worauf ich hier natürlich nicht näher eingehen kann.

('Here one forgets that the real philology, of which the true extent is not yet fully conceived, will prove of benefit to language teaching in a very different way. Of great importance, for instance, are the laws of the association of ideas and forms, of which the practical application would require, above all, a strictly phonetic method of notation, and other reforms, which of course I cannot go into any closer here.')

While Paul may well be a major source, it will be clear from the discussion in chapter five that association ideas were 'in the air' and would have been attractive to Sweet because they suited his theory of synthesis (both in its phonetic sense and as a learning technique), which was already well-established by the late 1870's. It is illuminating to consider the contemporary Polish phonetician Kruszewski. Not only did both he and Sweet approach the concept of the phoneme independently, they also applied association theory to language independently - Kruszewski's basic types Ahnlichkeit and Angrenzung are apparently derived from J.S. Mill's laws of 'similarity' and 'simultaneity or immediate succession' in his System of Logic, a work which Sweet mentions in 1899.⁷⁵

Naturally enough, Paul's theory influenced other writers in the period between its publication in 1880 and the appearance of The Practical Study in 1899. Paul's book itself went through several editions (1886, 1898, 1906), each containing additions and re-workings of the material, and it was also translated into English in two separate versions (1889, 1891). Gradually, Paul's views on association began to appear in other publications. The schoolmaster W.H. Widgery, for instance, is clearly echoing Hermann Paul when he writes in 1888 in his Teaching of Languages in Schools:

The whole process of speech consists in the reproduction by memory of forms already heard and in the shaping by analogy of new ones on their model.⁷⁶

And he is probably writing with both Paul and Sweet in mind when he writes that words form into 'unconscious groups' in the mind in which the regular linguistic forms are placed: one should therefore avoid lists of irregular forms (Sweet's cross-associations) because exceptions are often uncommon and should be felt as such when first met, 'a thing impossible unless the mind has been for some time impregnated with the normal types' (Widgery, Teaching of Languages, p. 21).

In the early 1890's, F.J. Furnivall, the leading light and motivator behind the group of philologists connected with the Early English Text Society and the Philology Society, encouraged the Viennese philology lecturer L. Kellner to produce a manual of

historical syntax for the use of students, a companion volume to Richard Morris's Historical Outlines of English Accidence.⁷⁷ Like Paul's work, this contains a section on analogy in which we find the association ideas once more applied to language:

It is one of the fundamental laws of psychology that every word, as well as every ending, and every combination of words, is connected in our minds with other words. All the store of our linguistic requirements is thus divided into groups. Hence, every word we learn associates itself with some group according to certain psychological laws of similarity, contrast etc.

(Kellner, Historical Outlines of English Syntax, p.14)

In Sweet's version of Paul, he focuses (like many theories of association from Hume to contemporaries like J.S. Mill and Tylor) on the categories of similarity and contiguity (Practical Study, 1899, p. 102). Groups of words associated in the mind according to their similarity include words of similar meaning such as 'tree, wood, forest', similar form such as the plural inflection of 'trees, woods, forests', or similar grammatical function ('tree, wood, forest' are all nouns). These groups cross (Paul: 'durchkreuzen'), as 'wooden' associates with 'tree, wood, forest' by meaning but with 'good, green' by grammatical function (p. 102). The category of contiguity (though the term itself is not employed by Sweet) includes collocations and idiomatic combinations, and grammatical gender as in the association in French between 'la' and 'lune'. Common to both groups is that the associates usually occur in the same context of speech or text. This is not always so, since there are also paradigmatic associations within the system; thus 'see, saw, seen' are associated 'though they rarely occur together in a sentence' (ibid. p. 103). Sweet's discussion here follows Paul closely (Prinzipien, 1886/1909, para 12, p. 27).

As was stated above, according to Sweet's principle of association, even the parts of speech form associative categories; thus the series 'tree, wood, forest' are associated by the fact that they are all nouns. On this point, Paul adds the cautious proviso:

Alle diese Assoziationen können ohne klares Bewusstsein zu Stande kommen und sich wirksam erweisen, und sie sind durchaus nicht mit den Kategorien zu verwechseln, die durch

die grammatische Reflexion abstrahiert werden, wenn sie sich auch gewöhnlich mit diesen decken.

(Prinzipien, 1886/1909, p. 27)

('All these associations can arise and become effective subconsciously and they should on no account be mistaken for the categories obtained by grammatical abstraction, although usually they coincide with them.')

It is more likely that the words 'tree, wood, forest' would be associated for their semantic similarity, but the fact that they are nouns may strengthen the association between these words, for recent research suggests that learners more easily associate nouns.⁷⁸ This partly ties in with Sweet's intuitions:

These associations are unconscious but none the less real: every speaker of English, even the most uneducated, knows instinctively what a noun is. The sole problem of grammar is to make these unconscious associations into conscious and analytic ones by defining and analysing them, and stating them as briefly and clearly as possible by means of a suitable terminology.

(Sweet, Practical Study, p. 103)

For Sweet, the associations are 'unconscious'; in the conscious learning process, however, once a certain number of direct associations have been made in the mind, it is useful to make them explicit and sum them up with a rule:

The function of grammar, therefore, is to sum up the associations by which we all understand and speak our own language as well as any foreign languages we may learn. (p. 103)

It follows that the best way to learn gender is to establish a natural association of 'la' with 'lune' (ibid., p. 99) or 'pæt' with 'wif'.⁷⁹ For learning grammatical inflections and cases it is better to 'group parallel forms together as much as possible' (First Steps in Anglo-Saxon, p. v). Accordingly, in the grammar section of First Steps in Anglo-Saxon (1897), the forms of the Old English genitive are presented together for all nouns, definite articles and personal pronouns (para. 41). Only later should one learn the traditional paradigm in which the various cases and genders of, say, the definite article are listed in tabular form. The paradigm acts 'as a guide through the maze of often conflicting associations and also as a test of the

learner's practical mastery of them' (Practical Study, p. 104).

In addition to explaining the combinatory effects of syntax and the method by which syntax is acquired, Sweet's principle of association also offers a theory for the learning of lexis. The first words learnt by a beginner in a foreign language are acquired 'mechanically', either by repetition and mastery of their sounds as in the first stage of the synthetic method (see chapter two, 2.1.2) or perhaps because they are recognizable to the learner through his or her first language or through another foreign language; or alternatively because they bear some chance resemblance to the first language, as does Greek 'holos' to 'whole' (Practical Study, pp. 157 and 110). These words, or rather lexical items, are learnt as single units. For Sweet, once this core of items has been acquired mechanically, the associative process takes over:

these words are, as it were, centres round which other words crystallize, each new association leading to further associations, till at last the chief part of the elementary vocabulary forms a solid mass of associations each connected in various ways with others.

(Sweet, Practical Study, p. 157)

Instead of crystallisation, the more usual model now is that of the network or nexus of associations, found in the modern empirical research of psychology and applied linguistics; for instance, a study by Ott et al. uses this type of model and reaches the very Sweetian conclusion that language aptitude helps in the ability to form associations when learning vocabulary.⁸⁰ A similar approach by Henning argues that beginners in a foreign language tend to store words in their memory according to similarity of sound, as house and horse, whereas high-level learners store words according to meaning, as in horse and cow.⁸¹ Henning argues that learners should develop associations for words in the foreign language similar to those they have in their first language such as 'boy - girl' or 'table - chair'. This associative model for acquisition of lexis is illuminating in the context of early medieval culture and its use of associative, synthetic learning processes (see 3.1.7).

To ensure that the associations are acquired, Sweet recommends various 'axioms' or strategies for learner and

teacher. The first is 'present the most frequent and necessary elements first' (Practical Study, p. 104; 1884, p. 43), for the first associations are always the strongest and have the longest time to establish themselves. These should include natural combinations, and collocations (1884, p. 43)

To avoid inevitable cross-associations within the system, Sweet recommends that the teacher 'present like and like together' and then, when these similarities are well-established, 'contrast like with unlike until all sense of effort in the transition ceases'. Thus, in teaching German, 'der Band' ('volume, tome') and 'das Band' ('ribbon') are at first kept apart and taught in different contexts and only later contrasted (Practical Study, p. 105). In doing so, the teacher must make the associations 'as definite as possible' with full phonetic information on quantity and stress so that the learner will distinguish, for example, Latin labor ('work') from lâbor ('I slip'). Clearly, Sweet shared the medieval view of the paramount importance of establishing the phonological system in the mind of the learner as early as possible. Another way of ensuring definite associations is the use of familiar subject matter in the choice of study texts - it is better for the learners to have familiar descriptions of their own rather than the foreign country 'so that the resulting associations, though less directly useful, are more definite and distinct' (Practical Study, p. 175). Sweet evidently feels that it is more important first of all to establish the formal system of the language in the mind of the learner rather than impart information about the foreign culture or country, not an attitude that is shared today by most methodologists. It also explains why he mostly refrains from historical or antiquarian comment in his books on Anglo-Saxon - the primary aim is to acquire the language, and other studies follow later.

As well as definite, the associations should also be direct and concrete rather than indirect and abstract. For Sweet, learning a certain arbitrary order is indirect, and it is far better to learn that a given strong verb belongs to the 'choose-class' rather than to 'class II' or 'class 7' as the reference (rather than beginners') grammars by Sievers and Sweet list it respectively. Another example he gives is distinguishing the two

Mills not by any indirect description or elaborate mnemonic but by simply repeating: 'James Mill History of British India, John Stuart Mill System of Logic'. His comment on this is:

It is evident that the latter method would establish more direct associations, because the association of ideas would be helped by the sounds and organic formation of the words themselves. Such mechanical and external associations are of the greatest help in learning languages.

(Practical Study. p. 107-8)

Again, as we have seen, he stresses the phonetic basis to the psychological learning process - 'a psychological study of language without phonetics is an impossibility' (1884 paper, Collected Papers, p. 40).

In the sixth and final maxim, Sweet urges the avoidance of 'conflicting associations' and 'cross-associations', a principle he had already put forward in earlier writings. The classic negative example he gives for this is the grammar rule printed on the page with a list of exceptions but with few or no examples to illustrate the actual rule. The learner then has 'a stronger association with the irregular than the regular forms' (Practical Study. p. 108).

Sweet finishes the section on association with some remarks on memory. A small vocabulary is used for as long as possible so that different words, forms and constructions are repeated. The danger of repeating one construction at the expense of another is avoided by using a variety of texts (ibid. p. 109). To aid the memory, then, Sweet recommends the principle of economy - 'giving the learner only such material as he wants at the time or is likely to want within a short period'. Unlike the middle ages, Sweet rejects the methods of artificial memory, because all extraneous associations are to be avoided as superfluous (ibid. p. 110). Learning by heart, however, is encouraged, though only after the piece has been studied and analysed.

In all the above strategies of association, Sweet is concerned to stress that they are not actual prescriptions for the classroom, but maxims to follow as a guide to the learning process. As was discussed above, he is keen to provide a survey in his book of the range of language learning strategies and principles available (such as 'synthesis and analysis',

'connected texts', 'association', etc.) and their justifications in terms of current theory. It is the role of the individual learner or teacher to implement the general and special principles in each particular learning situation.

6.5 SYNTHESIS AND CONNECTED TEXTS

While the principle of association serves as a theoretical explanation for the paradigmatic combination and syntagmatic combination of individual words in the learning process, the related principle of synthesis attempts to deal with the larger units of spoken language, with their perception and assimilation. Behind Sweet's statements on the 'synthetic method' lies the assumption that synthetic observation followed by objective analysis and practice with phonetic texts leads, almost automatically, to grasping sentences as wholes. Especially in his early writings on this topic, there is little discussion of exactly how this takes place psychologically. What goes on in the mind of Alfred when he translates sentence by sentence is implied but not discussed fully (as I argued in 2.3 and 3.2. If the modern educated gentleman learns languages by eye, as a visual phenomenon, it is not explained exactly how the medieval scribe learns by ear. Or, more urgently, the question is: how does a modern person acquire a language synthetically? What processes take place in their minds? In the end, Sweet's attempts to answer such questions make use of concepts of Herbartian apperception developed by Wilhelm Viëtor in his emphasis on 'connected texts'. In Sweet's later discussion of synthesis, as we shall see, a brief, but reasonably coherent picture develops of the learning process behind the synthetic method.

In 'Special Principles of Method' (chapter ten of the Practical Study of Languages), published in 1899, Sweet treats these questions specifically under the heading 'Synthesis and Analysis' (pp. 97-9). The section begins with a statement wholly familiar to those acquainted with his earlier work:

Although language is made up of words, we do not speak in words, but in sentences. From a practical, as well as a scientific, point of view, the sentence is the unit of

language, not the word. From a purely phonetic point of view, words do not exist.

This is the fact of phonetic synthesis, the form of language, for which he gives examples such as English [telə] (for 'teller' or 'tell her') or French [lavidemo] (for 'la vie des mots' or 'l'avide et ?'... etc.), both of which cannot be divided into words until the meaning is known 'and even then we shall find that word-division postulates much thought and comparison of sentences one with another'.

Sweet then points out that as well as being contrasted to word-division, synthesis is equally opposed to 'mosaic-like' analytical methods (see quotation above), which can reach 'monstrous' proportions in teaching 'a good deal about the words, but nothing about the language itself, the sense of whose individuality is completely lost amid the chaos of conflicting associations' (1899, p. 98), a remark reminiscent of the preface to the Anglo-Saxon Reader of 1876. He now goes on to comment:

As already remarked, we speak in sentences. But we do not generally speak in detached sentences; we speak in concatenations of sentences.

(Practical Study, 1899, p. 99)

This is the principle of the 'complete connected text', which, as we saw in chapter two (2.1.8), Sweet may have taken from the German Reform movement, particularly Storm and Viëtor. It is the assimilation of a connected text which becomes the basic study technique in the Reform Method. Here is Sweet's reasoning:

The first requisite is that each text should form a connected whole, so as to establish as many associations as possible in the mind of the learner between each word and its context, and in order that each repetition of a word in the same text shall strengthen the learner's hold of it.

(Practical Study, p. 168)

Such a principle of connectedness and totality is the epitome of Sweet's synthetic method, for this is how the correct associations are established, which are then repeated until memorised.

It is clear from the histories of the Reform Movement for language teaching in Germany that Wilhelm Viëtor was the main

impetus.⁸² Studies show also that he was much influenced by Herbartian psychology of education,⁸³ and a brief comparison of typical lesson plans shows the link. Viëtor recommends close study of a text, with reading and repeating, question and answer, and learning by heart, all done orally at first.⁸⁴ Essentially this follows the formal steps of the Herbartian approach, outlined by the educationist Mulliner in 1898 as follows:⁸⁵

- (1) Clearness - analysis, i.e. preparation, to pave the way for apperception.
- synthesis, i.e. presentation of the material in small, logically connected sections, to each of which in succession the pupil should give his undivided attention.
- (2) Association - of the new facts with the old.
- (3) System - separation of the notional from the concrete, classifications, repetition and review.
- (4) Method - application to real life.

If we now compare Sweet's recommendations for self-instruction in Practical Study (1899, pp. 250-3), it will be seen that his method is an adaptation of this educational approach, which is revealed to be a slow, but progressive assimilation of small, whole units of material. Here is Mulliner's book on Herbart once again:

That which is to become a power in the pupil, and to be closely welded to his most cherished thoughts and feelings, must not pass hurriedly and unconnectedly before his soul like the images of a kaleidoscope; it must occupy him long and uninterruptedly.⁸⁶

It should be emphasised that Sweet's method of 'grasping sentences as wholes' is not necessarily the instant process which the words may initially evoke. Sweet recommends that each sentence be read over and over again 'till it can be repeated without looking at the book' after which there should be no need to learn a passage by heart (though this may be done if the student has a good memory). Sweet's other recommendations here include: intensive study of particles and syntax first, after which the vocabulary can be studied more extensively. As fluency increases, greater speed is permissible, but still some time should be spent each day on careful study, and the beginning of a new text should be studied particularly carefully.

For Sweet, learning is slow, despite being based on principles of association and combination; in fact, it is dangerous to proceed too quickly, for hurrying can produce 'a blurred mass of associations' while, on the other hand, too frequent repetition 'blunts the mind' (Practical Study. p. 253), a phenomenon which more recent work called 'satiation'.⁸⁷

Above all it is the intelligent use of reading strategies which characterizes the approach. The learner begins with a phonetic text, combined with an idiomatic translation in order to study its meaning. The text is then studied analytically 'till the learner understands the meaning and construction of every word'. In revising the same piece the day after, 'its sentences should be read over and studied more as wholes, analysis now being subordinated to synthesis'. The following is typical of the careful mental balancing of analysis and synthesis (akin to that of William James and G.F. Stout cited in 6.1.3 above) which Sweet was urging on his reader or practical student:

Especial judgement is necessary in setting the amount of time to be given to each day's work. Each extreme is equally hurtful. If the learner hurries over his piece of reading, he will himself feel that he has carried away only a blurred mass of associations which are soon forgotten. If, on the other hand, he studies too elaborately, sits too long over his work, and revises too often or at too frequent intervals, his powers of observation become blunted, and at last he feels that his reading makes hardly any impression on his mind, and that he gets nothing more out of it. He should, therefore, abstain from all attempts at exhaustive analysis, and content himself with acquiring as many new associations and new ideas as can be fixed in his mind by one or two repetitions, while at the same time he seizes every opportunity of confirming earlier associations. He must also remember that by the mere process of careful reading he is acquiring a number of unconscious associations, many of which he will be able to analyse consciously hereafter, while many he will not find analysed in any grammar, some of them, indeed, practically defying all analysis.

The above extract illustrates well some typical themes in Sweet's synthetic approach: careful attention; the deliberate impressing of forms on the mind; close observation of forms as they are; association, repetition and recall; unconscious assimilation and synthesis.

In this chapter, I have considered the origins, background and gradual development of Sweet's 'synthesis' as applied to the

practical study of language, focussing on the principal features of the 'natural sentence', the 'association-group', and the 'connected text'. It should be recalled that Sweet maintained there was no 'royal road' to languages, and that he was keen to establish the general principles for the practical study of a language. In discussing synthesis in 1899, he wrote that 'as the division of sentences into words is an essential preliminary to grammatical study, the synthetic principle is as opposed to grammatical analysis as it is to the analysis of the sentence into words' (p. 97). In the long passage just quoted, the flexibility should be noted with regard to both the techniques employed and to the learner, which recalls Skehan's recent 'learner-centred' focus on different types of student, some oriented more to the analysability of language, others more 'expression-oriented' (see 1.1.2). Following Sweet's approach, sometimes the learner should impress forms on the mind mechanically, sometimes apply rules cognitively, sometimes analyse, sometimes synthesise; the method is not rigidly fixed. If, however, a Sweetian scheme were to be set down to summarise the synthetic principle, it would take the following form, though it must be said that these points are not always, or not necessarily, to be followed in the chronological sequence suggested by the numeration. To conclude this chapter, I suggest, in interpreting the corpus of Sweet's writing on the approach, that the synthetic principle includes:

- (1) grasping breath-groups as wholes (accompanied by idiomatic translation to give their meaning);
- (2) learning to speak by drilling the articulations, syllables, breath-groups, and natural sentences of the target language;
- (3) studying natural sentences in phonetic script;
- (4) learning to divide words and analyse grammatically;
- (5) connected texts and contexts;
- (6) observing the usual collocations and idioms of which the natural genius of the target language consists;
- (7) repetition, revision, and association;
- (8) returning to the synthetic and the unanalysable, the whole context - the ultimate goal of the method.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

SWEET'S PATHS TOWARDS THE PRACTICAL STUDY OF LANGUAGE.

7.1 THE DATING OF THE 'PRACTICAL STUDY'

Sweet's 'Practical Study of Language', in its initial version, is a product of the intellectual climate of the 1870's. As this study has shown, it was not published in its original form, except for the highly abridged version given as a paper to the Philological Society in 1884; in addition, chapter 21 and most probably chapters 9 and 10 of the book The Practical Study of Languages (1899) are printed almost verbatim from the earlier work. By comparison with these writings and various articles of 1870's it has been possible to reconstruct the basic themes of the original version.

Sweet's early writings point to a gradual development in the 1870's of his ideas on language acquisition. In these early explorations, he writes of 'grasping sentences as wholes', concludes that the medieval scribes wrote 'by ear', advocates a phonetic approach to the forms of languages, especially supposedly analytical languages like English, questions traditional concepts of inflection and word-division, lauds the merits of accurate 'observation' and highlights the importance of the spoken language. From 1876, and perhaps earlier, he begins to refer to the 'laws of association' and their relevance to the psychology of learning, and he emphasises the concept of synthesis in the production and perception of speech. 'Instead of a cumbrous analysis,' he writes in 1877, 'the learner will begin with the ultimate fact in language - the natural sentence'; this will be presented in a phonetic script in which the principles of stress-division and synthesis give a much more accurate representation of its spoken form. In addition, 'synthetic meaning study' will be practised: that is to say, vocabulary will be arranged like a thesaurus into sense-groups of the common

words and phrases of everyday life.

The 1877 version, had it been published, would probably have had a rather different emphasis to the book of 1899, despite the fact that its basic themes are taken up and expanded in the later version. To judge from Sweet's articles and books from 1870 to 1878, and from later writings which were probably composed in that period, a recurrent theme in the early writings, later given less weight, is the notion of the visual conception of language under which his contemporaries laboured. Sweet contrasts this with the oral attitudes to language in the middle ages - as revealed in the practice of the scribes in the numerous manuscripts he studied in this period, and perhaps also (though here Sweet is deliberately reticent) in some of the themes of the texts themselves. Thus Sweet's first version was concerned far more than the later version with the contrast between the 'synthetic' methods of language study in the middle ages and those of the Victorian period in which he lived. To make a convenient, rather than strictly accurate, distinction, one might say that while the later book of 1899 was a work of applied linguistics, the earlier treatise of 1877 may be regarded rather as a work of applied philology and - if the term is permissible - of 'applied Anglo-Saxon'.

7.2 CRITICISMS AND ASSESSMENTS

As I stated in my introduction, in most discussions of Sweet's theory of language learning, the main focus is on an evaluation of the 1899 Practical Study of Languages and an assessment of its relevance to the present. It has not been the main purpose of this thesis (in effect, a source-study) to give another evaluation of this kind. Attention has been directed at Sweet's early writings on language learning, and thus there is little point in criticising ideas which are still in embryonic form and undergo further refinement in Sweet's final expression of 1899 (the book usually seen as his applied linguistic legacy). Nevertheless, occasional passing comments and comparisons in this thesis have sought to criticise, compare or throw further light on Sweet's methods and proposed solutions to linguistic and

medieval questions, particularly those which are not developed later.

Various criticisms may be made of Sweet's early ideas. Firstly, it will be clear from the above account that Sweet's neo-Romanticism was both a help and a hindrance. It led perhaps to an over-emphasis on the spoken word, to an idealisation of the medieval scribe and his phonetic abilities, to a tendency to speculations on primitive man and language of doubtful application to synchronic concerns, and a subjective preference for nature descriptions in text-books. On this latter point, as we have seen, Sweet made concessions and qualifying remarks in the 1899 version. Secondly, Sweet's style of working, by reaction to prevailing attitudes, while fruitful in many ways, also had some drawbacks, for it led to over-reactions. The stress on the primacy of speech has less support today in the renewed interest in writing systems and grammatology; like some linguists of the early twentieth-century such as Bloomfield, Sweet was too ready to assume that writing was a secondary system of signs representing the spoken language, rather than an autonomous system in its own right. The question is, of course, far from settled in modern debate. Thirdly, Sweet's use of terminology must be scrutinised carefully since the terms have different connotations in different contexts. The difficulty was seen in chapter six in establishing the meaning of the term 'synthetic'; the problem is there also in the wide-ranging coverage of the word 'practical study' and the unclarity as to whether Sweet is writing on teaching or learning techniques. Fourthly, it is sometimes debatable whether the accusation of a 'visual conception of language' which Sweet levelled at his contemporaries did not sometimes backfire. Sweet's concern - sometimes an overriding concern - was to find a visual means of representing spoken language, in the end a task that is perhaps not quite practicable, and may even be self-defeating. As I discussed in chapter six, Sweet himself changed his mind over how to use phonetic script: he abandoned the synthetic 'stress-division' and 'satzphonetik' of the notation system in his Elementarbuch when he published his Primer of Spoken English; and in the Practical Study of 1899, the 'synthetic method' is only one among several eclectic general principles which can be

applied to the acquisition of a foreign language.

Despite these criticisms, there are also some successes: the interesting explorations which (as I have emphasised) Jakobson commented on. Of great significance is the year 1885, the date Wrenn regarded as the end of Sweet's career as an Anglo-Saxonist and also, it will be recalled, the year of publication of Sweet's Elementarbuch. If Sweet had ceased publication on the practical study of language at this point, his legacy to language teaching methodology would, I suggest, be rather different. The main teaching techniques would be seen to be oral drills and connected texts in synthetic script as in the Elementarbuch (an almost medieval approach), and the bias and ethos would lie on 'grasping sentences as wholes' and on a return to the 'oral conception of language' and 'synthetic methods' of the middle ages. In this respect, arguably, Sweet's early exploration of the 'Practical Study' differs drastically from the later book, and, as I argued in chapters two and five, recalls, as does the work of Prendergast, the theories of orality and literacy propounded by the school of McLuhan, Ong, and Goody. Moreover, Sweet's emphasis on the 'synthetic' acquisition of large chunks of connected, spoken text may initially owe more to King Alfred than it does to Herbart, Paul, and Viëtor. As the study of chapter three shows, there is scope for the application of Sweetian synthesis to the associative, orally based - though highly religious and meditative - approaches to the learning of Latin in the pre-twelfth-century monastic schools.

Here, then, is one way in which a study such as this might also be built on. One further prospect relates to Sweet's 'synthetic' notation system, the mainstay of the Elementarbuch, but no longer emphasised quite so radically in the later work. Following the Elementarbuch, it might be feasible for an applied linguistic research project to investigate the efficacy of Sweet's synthetic notation as a teaching device: as a technique which forces the learner to vocalise and attend to stress, intonation and juncture (as does the Vai script of Liberia) and thus aids the acquisition of the spoken language: such research, for instance on French people learning English or English native speakers learning French, might supplement the observations, already noted, on the value of this type of phonetic script as a

consciousness-raising device in the study of speech synthesis and related issues.

7.3 THE FOUNDATIONS OF SWEET'S IDEAS

Sweet claimed that the 1899 book was a wholly new work, and there is no cause to dispute this, for it was one of the first reliable guides, by a linguist, and based on the new and developing discipline of synchronic linguistics, to treat of the principles of language teaching in a systematic and scholarly way. Compared to the earlier work, the book has a different tone - there is less emphasis on the middle ages and, as Sweet planned but never succeeded in achieving in his earlier version, it has a far greater scope, dealing with a variety of different foreign languages and language-learning situations in order to establish a repertoire of principles to be applied as necessary rather than to be adhered to as rigid or one-sided methods. As such it has been hailed as a classic of applied linguistics. Whenever Sweet's work on language teaching is cited, it is usually from this book and several short studies and assessments of its influence and relevance now exist (see 1.1.2).

The focus of this thesis has been elsewhere, on the earliest writings of Sweet on the practical study of language, which have received little or no attention from historians of language teaching, the main reason being that Sweet's writings on language learning in the first half of his career are closely bound up with his work in phonetics, the history of English, and medieval studies, and are thus accessible only by an inter-disciplinary approach. A wide-ranging, definitive study of Sweet's Practical Study of 1899 is yet to be published, and there is vast scope for tracing Sweet's grammatical and 'applied linguistic' contributions to the debate on language teaching through the 1880's and 1890's (when the reform movement gained momentum) and beyond. Such a study will have to take into account the foundations which Sweet laid for his later book in his work of the 1870's. Here the present thesis can make its contribution.

Naturally enough, despite the thoroughgoing spirit of independence which dominated his work, Sweet did not develop his

ideas in a vacuum but lived and worked in a climate conducive to new explorations in language and education. It is almost symbolic that Sweet worked on the edition of the Pastoral Care, his first major work of scholarship, in the period 1870-1. A multitude of changes and developments began around this date. The Education Act ushered in a new era of rapidly increasing literacy, spelling reform was debated, and 'practical education' became the issue of the day; Darwin's Descent of Man was published and science education was furthered and developed; the Classical curriculum received a few hefty blows to its confidence, and there was a renewal of interest in establishing a consistent and accurate pronunciation of Latin and Greek; new areas of investigation were opened up; philology became more 'scientific', dialects were studied with greater precision; work began on the New English Dictionary; the Early English Text Society continued its tireless work of making known the original sources and literary texts of the Middle Ages, and Anglo-Saxon was studied with renewed energy after the lull of the 1860's.

Against this background we have Sweet, working independently, never part of one exclusive 'school' of thought, and open to influences from various quarters. These correspond to his wide and varied interests and can be enumerated more or less in the order in which he first encountered them. Top of the list must come Shelley, not because the bulk of Sweet's ideas are out-and-out Shellyan, but because a neo-Romantic colouring is discernible in Sweet's thinking: on the interrelatedness of language and thought, on the influence of the phenomena of nature on the genesis of language, on his attitude to medieval literature, and finally in his glorification of the primacy of the spoken word. The Romanticism is fuelled by the anthropological concerns of E.B. Tylor and others in which the concept of 'survivals' is used to explain features of modern language, literature and culture. This Romantic element is present also in philology, for instance in the work of Jacob Grimm on the origin of speech; Sweet studied Grimm closely in the 1860's and it was probably Grimm's Deutsche Grammatik that became the basis of his philological outlook.

As I argued above, the next decisive event was Sweet's reading of the book Visible Speech (1867) and personal contact

with its author before the latter's emigration to America; this was closely followed by Sweet's discoveries in the work of A.J. Ellis. I take the encounter with Bell and Ellis as a turning point. The revolution of mind which it engendered was the sudden realization that it was possible, on Bell's system, to render accurately the segments of speech by a non-arbitrary 'organic' notation system that indicated their actual articulations by the speech organs. From now on, thought Sweet, the sounds of spoken language could be recorded and taught with precision and accuracy. Ellis's work probably pointed him towards his later emphasis on synthesis, but the major initial contribution was to Sweet's views on philology. Sweet now distinguished between 'antiquarian' philology, interested only in the written forms of language and their etymology, and 'living' philology, which attempted to make the 'observation of living languages the only sound foundation for the study of the old' (*Academy*, V, 1874, p. 68). Through the dominance of printing and its conventions, both the antiquarian philologist and the modern educated person have a visual conception of language. If foreign language teaching is to improve, it must first of all give the learner a phonetic awareness of his or her own language and instil a capacity for phonetic observation which will lead to better results.

Ellis, it may be safely assumed, pointed Sweet to early medieval manuscripts and led him to consider the attitude to language of the medieval scribe; this hypothetical 'scribe' became a further influence and consolidator of Sweet's approach. Sweet established, at times far too sweepingly for modern scholars, the general principle of what would now be called the 'phonemic' writing of the scribes. In his own words, the scribes 'tried to write as they spoke'. Furthermore, some even tried to adapt the phonemic alphabet to render even finer distinctions of sound: thus ne + wiste gives nyste etc. Through his close reading and editing of early Old English manuscripts, and finding support in Earle's notion of 'symphytisms', Sweet notes the way the scribe writes ('symbolic') form-words such as the definite article in combination with the stressed ('presentive') content-words such as the noun (e.g. 'ðæsmodes'). This leads directly to his speculations of 1876 on the agglutinative structure of modern English, his rejection of the traditional rigid definitions of

word-divisions and inflections, and his exploration of alternative ways of rendering spoken English in writing (for instance, 'dh gudmæn'). The problems Sweet discusses are still basic to linguistic discussion, and if Sweet's proposals are questionable, they at least raise awareness and are extremely useful in learning English as a foreign language. What is quite clear, and has not been observed hitherto, is the influence of the medieval scribe both on Sweet's phonetic texts for language study, and later, with his technique of 'stress-division', on the composition of his textbook for modern English, the Elementarbuch des gesprochenen Englisch of 1885.

As well as the medieval scribe, the medieval author may also have played a role in Sweet's thinking. Clearly, as we saw in chapter three, this is not a provable point, yet it is not wholly inconceivable for a medieval writer or thinker to influence a modern. Sweet certainly admired Ælfric's Colloquy, though without commenting on it at length, and perhaps knew Nasmith's and Cockayne's comments on the oral techniques of medieval instruction. Arguably, he may have looked at the themes of the medieval texts more closely than he was willing to admit. Alfred's Pastoral Care contains a plethora of formulaic expressions on the 'words of instruction' and the 'listeners' or 'hearers' which conceivably would have struck Sweet as significant, and a discussion of the process by which the oral instruction and pastoral advice is to be adapted to the individual members of the flock; in this work too the processes of thought, memory, and recall involved in teaching are discussed in the metaphorical prose of Gregory and Alfred. Sweet may have known the accounts of Alfred learning by listening, rumination, meditation, association, and memorising, and this was perhaps further grist to his mill in his notion of medieval 'grasping sentences as wholes'.

A further possible but unproven influence is the work of the former magistrate and administrator in India, Thomas Prendergast. Sweet mentions this 'mastery' method of teaching foreign languages, only to reject its long-winded variations on laborious, artificially constructed sentences. Nevertheless he concedes the 'sound principles' in the methods of writers like Prendergast and Nasmith, and it is not impossible that he also

read Prendergast's theory, based on practical experience and intuitions rather than rigorous linguistic method: this theory, published in 1864, discusses the primacy of speech, the visual conception of language in modern educated Europeans, the importance of the natural sentence, and the role of association in language learning, all characteristics of Sweet's later approach in the 1870's.

Prendergast's pedagogic ideas, whether or not they were known intimately to Sweet, were certainly discussed and debated by Quick and Ellis and other educators at the College of Preceptors in the early 1870's. At the same time, such thinking fits in with more general ideas on language which in this period were certainly gaining in popularity. The widely-read and influential Lectures on the Science of Language by Max Müller and the writings of Sayce and other philologists seemed to herald a re-discovery of the primacy of speech (though perhaps dreaded by such as Trench as an attack on culture and literature). Ideas on the resonant world of sound, the organic life of speech, the importance of dialects, the origin of language in phonetic roots, the importance of the logos - the vague and indefinite spoken utterance, which in the development of language led to the sentence as the unit of speech; all these notions are relevant to Sweet's thinking on the 'natural sentence' and his 'synthetic method' of language learning.

Müller's emphasis on the study of language as a science is also characteristic of Sweet. For Sweet, too, the imaginative element in science is - on occasions - expressly mentioned, and is otherwise implicit in aspects of his work, coloured also by the Romantic flavour of his thinking. In this respect, the force of T.H. Huxley's endeavours can be felt, particularly in the content and style of Sweet's text-books. In Huxley the man of science, evolutionist, anti-classicist, encyclopedist in attitude, populariser of science, keen to improve the lot of the common person, Sweet appears to have found a model for his own approach. In common to both is the 'Study of Nature', a concern for observation of the facts, and a pedagogic aim to 'lead his pupil to form a clear mental picture of the order which pervades the multiform and endlessly shifting phenomena of nature' (Huxley, Physiography, p. v). As we saw in chapter four, the

interest in nature is a key criterion for the selection of texts for Sweet's practical language textbooks and is linked to his ideas on 'synthetic meaning study' in which words and phrases are associated by meaning and arranged into sense-groups as in an improved version of Roget's thesaurus.

The principle of the 'natural laws of association' which lies behind such an arrangement is, as we have seen, a basic feature of much psychology of learning 'in the air' in this period. Sweet may have accessed it through Bell, Prendergast, Darwin, or Tylor, to name just a few who employ the word in its more specific sense as a psychological term. The preface to Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader bases a number of its recommendations to the learner on this principle, so at least as early as 1876, it had become a major part of his approach, coupled with the notion of the 'cross-association' to explain the common learning difficulty of confusions and conflicting connections between sound and script, or similar-sounding lexical forms. From about 1878, Sweet's thinking on this principle is deepened by his reading of Hermann Paul, who uses the principle to explain the continual formation in the mind of the language learner (native or foreign) of thousands of continually changing association-groups, both syntagmatic and paradigmatic; these groupings of words, phrases, sentences constantly shift by the mutual modification and transformation of what the educator Herbart called 'apperception' and others, such as Stout, term 'synthesis'.

In the work of Johan Storm, whom Sweet knew personally and with whom he co-operated in the late 1870's, and in the revolutionary efforts of the founder of the main language teaching reform movement in the 1880's, Wilhelm Viëtor, Herbartian educationist and author of the important Quousque Tandem pamphlet, Sweet appears to find, at the beginning of the 1880's, the confirmation of his earlier scattered comments and unpublished work on the practical study of language.

Both Storm and Viëtor concentrate on the spoken language, phonetics, and thinking in the language. What is perhaps new for Sweet, though this remains uncertain, is the term 'connected text' employed by both Storm and Viëtor, which Sweet now takes over. Further research into the background of the reform movement may perhaps throw light on when this term was first introduced

into nineteenth-century English pedagogy, though Sweet's claim that he had also employed the method earlier is perhaps to be accepted. Certainly the Herbartian ideas of synthesis and assimilation of large units of text are later expounded by Sweet in the Practical Study (1899). At the beginning of the 1880's, however, it may be a new emphasis in Sweet's work, though one which he could relate very easily to his techniques of 'stress-division', 'grasping sentences as wholes' and 'synthesis', which he had already developed from his work in phonetics and medieval studies. He could now feel more confident about revealing his own approach more fully, one which for various reasons I have chosen to call 'applied Anglo-Saxon'. At the beginning of the 1880's, then, as the reform movement begins to gain momentum, Sweet now publishes both his 1884 paper, as I stated above an abridged version of his 1877 treatise, and - to put his theory into practice - the Elementarbuch des gesprochenen Englisch, a unique product of his early career, never repeated thereafter, and an important and still highly relevant attempt to apply his synthetic methods and ideas to the practical study and teaching of a modern foreign language.

NOTES

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND SKETCH OF SWEET'S CAREER

- 1 Henry Sweet, King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care, two vols., Early English Text Society, original series, 45 and 50 (London: Trübner, 1871-2), I, p. xli.
- 2 Henry Sweet, The Practical Study of Languages (London: J.M. Dent, 1899, rpt London: OUP, 1964), p. 253.
- 3 Henry Sweet, 'Words, Logic, and Grammar', Transactions of the Philological Society (1875-6), 470-503, at 471, rpt in Collected Papers, ed. H.C. Wyld (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 1-33, at p. 3.
- 4 Henry Sweet, Handbook of Phonetics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1877).
- 5 Henry Sweet, Review of A.J. Ellis, On Early English Pronunciation, in The Academy, II (1871), 294-6 (p. 295).
- 6 Sweet, Pastoral Care, pp. xxxix-xli.
- 7 Sweet, Practical Study (1899/1964), p. ix.
- 8 A.P.R. Howatt, A History of English Language Teaching (Oxford: OUP, 1984). Roger T. Bell, An Introduction to Applied Linguistics (London: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd., 1981). S.G. Darian, 'Background of Modern Language Teaching: Sweet, Jespersen, Palmer', Modern Languages Journal, 53 (1969) 545-50. S.G. Darian, English as a Foreign Language: History, Development and Methods (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972). K.C. Diller, The Language Teaching Controversy (Rowley MA: Newbury House, 1978). M. Gilbert, 'The Origins of the Reform Movement in Modern Language Teaching in England', Durham Research Review, 4 (1953), 1-9, 5 (1954), 9-18, 6 (1955), 1-10. E. Roulet, Linguistic Theory, Linguistic Description, and Language Teaching (London: Longmans, 1972). T. Rülcker, Der Neusprachenunterricht an höheren Schulen: zur Geschichte und Kritik seiner Didaktik (Frankfurt/Main: Dieterweg, 1969). H.H. Stern, Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching (Oxford: OUP, 1983). R. Titone, Teaching Foreign Languages. An Historical Sketch (Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press, 1968). Daniel Véronique, 'Sweet et Palmer: des précurseurs de la linguistique appliquée à la didactique des langues?' Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure, 46 (1992), 173-90.
- 9 P. Skehan, Individual Differences in Second-Language Learning (London: Edward Arnold, 1987), p. 37. See also B. Spolsky, Conditions for Second Language Learning (Oxford: OUP, 1989).
- 10 R.H. Robins, 'Formal Divisions in Sundanese', Transactions of the Philological Society (1953), 109-42, at 112.

- 11 Roman Jakobson, 'Sweet's Paths Towards Phonemics', In Memory of J.R. Firth, ed. C.E. Bazell, J.C. Catford, M.A.K. Halliday, and R.H. Robins (London: Longmans, 1966), pp. 242-54, at p. 250.
- 12 Eugenie J. Henderson (ed.), The Indispensable Foundation. A Selection from the Writings of Henry Sweet (London: OUP, 1971), p. ix.
- 13 Both Howatt, History, and Stern, Fundamental Concepts, fail to recognize the contributions of Old English philology and/or medieval thought to the development of Sweet's ideas.
- 14 R.H. Robins, A Short History of Linguistics, 3rd edition (London: Longman, 1979), pp. 153-4, 157-8.
- 15 Vivian Salmon, The Study of Language in Seventeenth Century England (Amsterdam: John Benjamin, 1979), pp. 3-31.
- 16 John Locke, Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1705), ed. James L. Axtell, (Cambridge: CUP, 1968), p. 273.
- 17 Ælfric, Colloquy, ed. G.N. Garmonsway (London: Methuen, 1939, rpt Exeter University Press, 1983).
- 18 Walter J. Ong, Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).
- 19 Henry Sweet, 'The Practical Study of Language', Transactions of the Philological Society (1882-4), 577-99, rpt in The Collected Papers of Henry Sweet, ed. H.C. Wyld (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 34-55. 'Spelling Reform and the Practical Study of Languages'. A paper read before the English Spelling Reform Association, Dec. 16, 1884 (London: Hilton & Co., 1885).
- 20 The passage from Sweet's Pastoral Care cited at the beginning of this chapter is quoted as an interesting footnote by the Anglo-Saxonist Janet Bately in her edition The Old English Orosius, Early English Text Society, supplementary series, 6 (London: OUP, 1980).
A recent editor of the Pastoral Care discusses Sweet's edition critically but does not comment on Sweet's conclusions about the style as an indicator of approaches to language study. See I. Carlson (ed.), The Pastoral Care Edited from British Museum MS Cotton Otho B. ii, part 1 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1975), pp. 21-2.
- 21 Michael Lapidge, 'The Study of Latin Texts in Late Anglo-Saxon England [1]. The Evidence of Latin Glosses', in Latin and the Vernacular Languages in Early Medieval Britain ed. Nicholas P. Brooks (Leicester University Press, 1982), pp. 99-140. Gernot R. Wieland, The Latin Glosses on Arator and Prudentius in Cambridge University Library MS Gg.5.35. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1983).

- 22 Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, Visible Song. Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse (Cambridge: CUP, 1990). Ong, Orality and Literacy, p. 115. Michael T. Clanchy, From Memory to Written Record. England 1066-1307 (London: Edward Arnold, 1979) p. 150, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 266-72.
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- 24 The five versions are: (1) The treatise of 1876, of which the chapter 'Mind-Training; Classical and Modern Languages' was published in Practical Study (1899), pp. 271-76. This book was reported in The Academy, XII (1877), 448. (2) The paper of March 15, 1878, a resumé of which is given in Henry Sweet, 'On English Philology and Phonology', Presidential Address to the Philological Society, May 17, 1878, in Collected Papers, p. 95. A report on the paper appeared in The Athenæum (March 23, 1878), 385-6. (3) The paper of 1884, see note 19. (4) The 1885 paper, see note 19. (5) The Practical Study (1899), see note 2.
- 25 Henry Cecil Wyld and Alois Brandl, 'Henry Sweet', Herrigs Archiv (Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen. Begründet von Ludwig Herrig), new series, cxxx (1913), 1-11. C.T. Onions, 'Henry Sweet (1845-1912)', in Dictionary of National Biography 1912-1921, ed. H.W.C. Davis and J.R.H. Weaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), pp. 519-20, at p. 519. C.L. Wrenn, 'Henry Sweet', Presidential Address to the Philological Society, Friday, 10th May, 1946, Transactions of the Philological Society (1946), 177-201, rpt in T.A. Sebeok (ed.) Portraits of Linguists: A Biographical Source Book for the History of Western Linguistics, 1746-1963 (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1966), pp. 512-32. M.K.C. MacMahon, 'Henry Sweet's Linguistic Scholarship: the German Connection', Anglistik, 5 (1994), 91-101.
- 26 Practical Study (1899), p. 20.
- 27 Dagmar Drüll, Heidelberger Gelehrtenlexikon 1803-1932 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 1986), pp. 118-9. In the two semesters when Sweet was matriculated at the university, Holtzmann lectured on Sanskrit, Germanic antiquities, history of German literature, German mythology, Old and Middle High German texts. For this information I am grateful to the archivists of the Ruprecht-Karls Universität Heidelberg.

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- 32 Howatt, History of English Language Teaching, pp. 186, 331.
- 33 Otto Jespersen, En Sprogmands Levned (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1938), p.40.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2: THE PRACTICAL STUDY OF LANGUAGE

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- 2 Henry Sweet, 'The Practical Study of Language', Transactions of the Philological Society 1882-84, 577-99, rpt in The Collected Papers of Henry Sweet, ed. Henry Cecil Wyld (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 34-55.
- 3 Henry Sweet, 'Presidential Address, at the Anniversary Meeting of the Philological Society, May 18, 1877', Transactions of the Philological Society, 1-16, rpt in Collected Papers, ed. Wyld, pp. 80-94. 'Words, Logic, and Grammar', Transactions of the Philological Society, 1875-6, 470-503, rpt in Collected Papers, pp. 1-33. Handbook of Phonetics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1877).
- 4 Johan Storm, Englische Philologie. Anleitung zum wissenschaftlichen Studium der englischen Sprache, I, Die lebende Sprache (Heilbronn: Gebr. Henninger, 1881).
- 5 Henry Sweet, Review of Storm, Englische Philologie, in Göttingsche gelehrte Anzeigen, Stück 44 (1881), 1398-1408.

- 6 Wilhelm Viëtor [pseudonym Quousque Tandem], Der Sprachunterricht muß umkehren! Ein Beitrag zur Überbürdungsfrage (Heilbronn: Henninger, 1882) tr. A.P.R. Howatt in his A History of English Language Teaching (Oxford: OUP, 1984), pp. 343-63.
- 7 Henry Sweet, 'The Practical Study of Language' (1884), in Collected Papers, p. 34.
- 8 Sweet, Pastoral Care, pp. xxxix-xli. See my Appendix I.
- 9 The unpublished paper on the practical study of language, no longer extant, is reported briefly in 'English and Germanic Philology', Address of the President to the Philological Society anniversary meeting, Friday, May 17, 1878, Transactions of the Philological Society (1877-9), 373-419, at p. 373 and in The Athenæum (March 23, 1878), 385-6. For the full text, see Appendix I.
- 10 Presidential Address, 1877, Collected Papers, p. 93.
- 11 Henry Sweet, 'On Danish Pronunciation', Transactions of the Philological Society (1873-4), 94-112, in Collected Papers, pp. 344-59. Henry Sweet, A History of English Sounds. From the Earliest Period. Including an Investigation of the General Laws of Sound Change, and Full Word Lists. Published for the English Dialect Society (London: Trübner, 1874/1879).
- 12 Henry Sweet, Anglo-Saxon Reader (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1876).
- 13 Henry Sweet, The Practical Study of Languages (London: J.M. Dent, 1899, rpt London: OUP, 1964 and 1972), p. 102.
- 14 Henry Sweet, review of E.A. Abbott and J.R. Seeley, English Lessons for the English People, in The Academy, II (October 1, 1871), 451.
- 15 Henry Sweet, Spelling Reform and the Practical Study of Language. A paper read before the English Spelling Reform Association, December 16, 1884 (London: Hilton & Co., 1885).
- 16 Henry Sweet, review of A.J. Ellis, On Early English Pronunciation, in The Academy, II (June 1, 1871), 294-6.
- 17 Henry Sweet, review of John Earle, Philology of the English Tongue, in The Academy, II (1871), 505-6.
- 18 J.R. Firth, Papers in Linguistics, 1934-1951 (London: OUP, 1957). See also Randolph Quirk, 'The Study of the Mother Tongue' (1961), rpt in The Linguist and the English Language (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), pp. 77-96. At p. 91, Quirk mentions R.G. Latham and Sweet as precursors of Firth in the development of the concept of the collocation.

- 19 A.J. Ellis, 'On the Acquisition of Languages', Educational Times (November 1, 1875), 175-82. A.H. Sayce, 'How to Learn a Language', Nature (May 29, 1879), 93-4.
- 20 Storm, Englische Philologie. Felix Franke, Die Praktische Spracherlernung auf Grund der Psychologie und der Physiologie dargestellt (Leipzig: O.R. Reisland, 1884). H. Klinghardt, review of Karl Kühn, Zur Methode des Französisch-Unterrichts, in Englische Studien, VII (1884), 491.
- 21 Paul Christophersen, 'Jespersen and Second-Language Learning', in A Linguistic Miscellany. Proceedings of the Otto Jespersen Symposium, April 29-30, 1993, Publications on English Themes, 20 (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 1994), pp 23-40, at p. 27.
- 22 Thomas Henry Huxley, 'Administrative Nihilism', Fortnightly Review (July-December 1871), 525-43, at 525. Henry Nettleship, 'The True Aim of Classical Education', The Quarterly Journal of Education (1872), 160-4, rpt The True Aim of Classical Education, (Harrow: Crosby & Clarke, 1872), at p. 3.
- 23 'The New School Boards', Quarterly Review (July and October, 1871), 263-300, at 264. As W.E. Forster, the architect of the Education Act, wrote in Hansard, February 17th, 1870: 'Upon the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity'; cited in Eric Midwinter (ed.), Nineteenth-Century Education (London: Longman, 1970), p. 93. The economic background, including the change from free trade to active protectionism, is treated in Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital 1845-75 (Scarborough Ont: New American Library, 1984) and Sidney Pollard, Britain's Prime and Britain's Decline: The British Economy 1870-1914 (New York: Edward Arnold, 1989).
- 24 'The New School Boards', p. 265.
- 25 Alexander J. Ellis, 'On Orthography in Relation to Etymology and Literature'. A Lecture at the College of Preceptors, November 1, 1877 (London: F. Hodgson & Son, 1878). See also the review of A. Sonnenschein and J.D. Meiklejohn, The English Method of Teaching to Read, in the Quarterly Review of Education (1871), 235, and G.C. Mast, 'The German Method of Teaching Writing and Reading', The Educational Times (1874-5), 219-23.
- 26 Spelling reform was discussed at two meetings of the Philological Society, November 4 and 18, 1870, and reported in The Athenæum (July-December, 1870), p. 630. By 1877, the London School Board was agitating for a Royal Commission on the issue; see The Academy (January-June, 1877), 96, 209, 230 etc. Concrete proposals for a reform were made in 1880 by the Philological Society, and various reports and letters on the issue appeared in The Academy that year.

- 27 Wilbur Samuel Howell, 'The British Elocutionary Movement', in his Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 145-226.
- 28 Henry Sweet, 'The Principles of Spelling Reform', appendix of A Handbook of Phonetics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1877), pp. 169-201.
- 29 The Academy, II (1870-71) contains numerous discussions of the 'Pronunciation of Latin', starting with H. Nettleship's review (81) of Corssen's Über Aussprache, and continuing with articles by Friedrich Max Müller (145-6, 565-8), H.A.J. Munro (184-7, 251-3), Edwin Palmer and the 'Oxford Circular' (187), D.B. Monro (188 and 208-9), H. Nettleship (253) and A.J. Ellis (230-2), most of the discussion being on the pronunciation of the consonants, especially <c> and <v>, while there was general agreement that the then practice of saying the vowels in an English (as opposed to Continental) way had to be stopped.
- 30 The joint scheme of pronunciation by Palmer and Munro was accepted by the Headmasters' Committee and Conference - see The Athenæum (October 19, 1872), 498, and the Quarterly Journal of Education (January, 1873), 34 and 77.
- 31 Presidential Address (1877), Collected Papers, p. 94. The same passage occurs in the paper of 1885, p. 13. The educationist R.H. Quick also compared language exercises - in fact the 'mastery sentences' of Prendergast - to 'five-finger exercises and arpeggios' on the piano, thus also stressing the view that language learning is the acquisition of a skill rather than a training of the mind. See R.H. Quick, 'On the Study of Language: Prendergast's Mastery System', Quarterly Journal of Education (1872-3), 64-9, at 66.
- 32 David Nasmith, The Practical Linguist. Being a System based Entirely upon Natural Principles of Learning to Speak, Read, and Write the German Language (London: David Nutt, 1870). See my appendix for extracts from this work. Nasmith's 'numerical value' system was approved of by Ellis, 'Acquisition', and by R.H. Quick in his 'On the Study of Language', Quarterly Journal of Education (1872-3), 3-8, at 8.
- 33 Thomas Prendergast, The Mastery of Languages, Or, The Art of Speaking Foreign Tongues Idiomatically (London: Richard Bentley, 1864).
- 34 John Stuart Blackie, On the Studying and Teaching of Languages, Two Lectures Delivered in the Marischal School of Aberdeen (Edinburgh: Sutherland and Knox, 1852), p. iii.
- 35 'Hamilton's Method of Teaching Languages', Edinburgh Review, xliv (1826), 47-69, at 69.

- 36 John Locke, Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1705), ed. James L. Axtell, The Educational Writings of John Locke (Cambridge: CUP, 1968), p. 268.
- 37 Thomas Cox, Hints to Tutors (1846), rpt Hints on Classical Tuition (London: Wertheim, Macintosh, and Hunt, 1863).
- 38 Sidney R. Smith, review of R.L. Edgeworth, Essays on Professional Education (London, 1809), Edinburgh Review, XV, (1810), 40-53, at 45.
- 39 J.R. Seeley, Classical Studies as an Introduction to the Moral Sciences (London: Bell and Daldy, 1864), p. 9.
- 40 Rev. Lewis Campbell, The Study of Greek: An Inaugural Lecture (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1863), p. 6.
- 41 John Conington, 'The Academical Study of Latin. Inaugural Lecture, December 2, 1854', in Miscellaneous Writings, ed. J.A. Symonds, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, & Co., 1872), I, 198-228, at p. 225.
- 42 H.A.J. Munro, review of Miscellaneous Writings of John Conington, in The Academy, III, (1872), 296. Munro cites with approval Conington's 'The Academical Study of Latin' and comments: 'The whole of this essay is well worth pondering at this present time'.
- 43 Quoted in Seeley, Classical Studies, pp. 5-6.
- 44 T.H. Huxley, 'On a Piece of Chalk. A Lecture to Working Men, given at the British Association, Norwich, 1868', originally printed in Macmillan's Magazine, rpt in his Lay Sermons, Addresses and Reviews (London: Macmillan & Co., 1870), pp. 176-7.
- 45 Peter Faulkner, '"The Paths of Virtue and Early English": F.J. Furnivall and Victorian Medievalism', in John Simons (ed.), From Medieval to Medievalism (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 144-58.
- 46 John Earle, A Book for the Beginner in Anglo-Saxon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1877), p. vii.
- 47 Henry Sweet, 'Mind-Training', chapter from his unpublished treatise of 1876, printed in his Practical Study of Languages, (1899), pp. 271-6, at p. 274.
- 48 A.P.R. Howatt, A History of English Language Teaching (Oxford: OUP, 1984), p. 131.
- 49 Sweet, Practical Study of Languages (1899), p. 108.
- 50 Franz Ahn, Nouvelle méthode pratique et facile pour apprendre la langue allemande (Liège: H. Dessain, 1846).

- 51 H.G. Ollendorff, Nouvelle méthode pour apprendre à lire, à écrire, et à parler une langue en six mois appliquée à l'allemand (Frankfurt am Main: Charles Jugel, 1835/1847).
- 52 R.H. Quick, 'On the Study of Language: Prendergast's Mastery System', Quarterly Journal of Education (1872-3), 64-9.
- 53 Quick, 'Prendergast's Mastery System', 66.
- 54 R.H. Quick, 'The First Steps in Teaching a Language', Educational Times (1874-5), 279-82, at 282.
- 55 C.F. Kroeh, 'Methods of Teaching Modern Languages', Transactions and Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America, III (1887), 169-85.
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- 57 Russell Martineau, 'A REPORT on "The Common Sense of English Orthography"; A guide to the Spelling of Doubtful and Difficult Words by E. Jones', Transactions of the Philological Society (1867), 315-25, at 324.
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NOTES TO CHAPTER 4: NATURE AND THE TEXTBOOK

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NOTES TO CHAPTER 5:

CROSS-ASSOCIATIONS AND THE VISUAL CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE

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FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 6: SWEET'S SYNTHETIC METHOD

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

EXTRACTS FROM THE EARLY WRITINGS OF SWEET ON 'PRACTICAL' ISSUES

The extracts from early articles by Sweet are reproduced here to give larger contexts to the passages already given in the main part of the thesis. The juxtaposition and comparison of these little-known passages from The Academy, the EETS, and TPS in the 1870's are revealing, for they demonstrate that, while working out the basic methods of historical and comparative philology and phonology in his early career, Sweet was also developing an approach to language learning based on similar principles. This approach is outlined in the closing remarks of the Presidential Address to the Philological Society of 1877 and in the two reports from The Academy and The Athenæum (extracts 7, 8 and 9). The development of these ideas is seen in the reviews of Ellis and Earle (extracts 1, 2 and 3), the introduction to the Pastoral Care edition (extract no. 4), a review of German grammars of English (no. 5) and 'General Alphabetics' - taken from the early version, first published in 1874, of the History of English Sounds (no. 6).

1 ANONYMOUS REVIEW of A.J. Ellis, On Early English Pronunciation, in The Athenæum, 2223, June 4, 1870, 737-8.

The following extract gives the first part of Sweet's (anonymous) review article of Ellis's work on the history of English pronunciation. The views expressed, and indeed some of the phrases themselves, are highly typical and strongly reminiscent of Sweet's approach in other articles from his early career. Note for instance, the reference to Grimm, the attack on philologists for preferring letters to sounds, the comparisons with modern French and German, the phrase 'educated Englishman of the nineteenth century', the 'time-travel' speculation on how a text would sound when read to someone of a different period, etc.

Although the invention of alphabetic writing has alone made the scientific study of language possible, by affording a basis of comparison, independent of the lapse of time, yet it has in some respects exercised an injurious influence on the progress of philology. Language is a collection of articulate sounds. Written language is a collection of visible symbols representing sounds of the living language, which sounds either alone or as part of a sound group, are associated with certain ideas. After long practice in the use of these symbols we are able to dispense altogether with the intermediate sound associations: the written word suggests the idea directly by sight alone. This tendency is further strengthened by the study of dead languages, which forms such an essential part of the philologist's training; so that at last the natural association between sound and letter is entirely inverted. The symbols not the sounds, are tacitly assumed to constitute the language; and the study of the sounds, of which the letters are at best clumsy and imperfect representations, is considered as something quite subordinate and immaterial. Hence the scientific (historical and comparative) study of language has detached itself more and more from the consideration of sounds, their formation and changes. What Grimm calls Lautlehre ought in truth to be called Buchstabenlehre. His laws of change and correspondence apply not to sounds, but to their symbols. This would matter little if the symbols afforded an adequate or tolerably adequate idea of the sounds they profess to represent. But we know well that this is not the case: not only are the sounds greatly in excess of the symbols, but the symbols are themselves ambiguous, the sounds with which they are associated varying greatly in different periods and localities. Thus the ideas of 'meus' and 'domus' are expressed in English and German by the same spoken word, yet the comparative grammarian tells us that English i and ou in such words as mine and house are changed in German to ei and au. The same grammarian tells us that the Anglo-Saxon i of min remains unchanged in English while the u of house becomes ou. If asked whether the spoken English word mine suggests to an Anglo-Saxon the idea of 'meus', or indeed any idea at all, the comparative grammarian would probably have to confess, firstly, that he had never considered the question at all, and secondly, that he did not deem it of the slightest importance, being merely a question of 'pronunciation'. The principles of Mr. Ellis's investigations are directly opposed to all this. With him, a word is made up, not of letters, but of sounds, and the study of graphic forms is carried on solely with a view to elucidate the sounds. By a most ingenious arrangement and modification of the ordinary Roman letters he has contrived a system of representing all known sounds and shades of pronunciation with the utmost precision and delicacy. He is thus enabled entirely to throw off the

trammels of a traditional and inaccurate orthography, and write each word exactly as is sounded in the living language. Thus, pronouncing a, e, i, o, u as in Italian, y and ö as the German û and ô, æ as in the English hand, Mr. Ellis would simply write the English and German words for 'meus' and 'domus' in 'palæotypic' notation (main and haus), altogether disregarding the graphic distinction. Vice versâ, the English and German words for 'manus' would be written (hænd) and (hand), disregarding the graphic identity. If, then, the same letter represents two distinct sounds in English and German, the analogous question naturally suggests itself, may not the radical vowel symbols of hand, mine and house have been associated with different sounds in the pronunciation of Chaucer, Shakspeare [sic], and even Milton? May not Milton's pronunciation have been different from Shakspeare's - Shakspeare's from Chaucer's? In short, may not the fixedness of English orthography during the last few centuries be an entirely insufficient and delusive criterion for determining the pronunciation? These are the problems Mr. Ellis has solved in the volumes before us. He has collected a mass of evidence for every stage of the language, from the sixteenth century to the present day; treatises on English pronunciation for the use of foreigners, English accounts of foreign sounds, phonetic transcriptions, analyses of the formation of speech sounds, - everything that bears directly or indirectly on the question of pronunciation. The result is, that the modern English pronunciation of the vowels, and to a certain extent of the consonants, is as different from the Chaucerian and Shakspearean as it is from French and German; so that if Shakspeare were to hear one of his plays read by an educated Englishman of the nineteenth-century, he would hardly recognize his own language, and many of the commonest words and phrases would be quite unintelligible to him. As an illustration, we subjoin the Spenserian (as being a little more antiquated than the Shakspearean) pronunciation of a few words, the spelling in parentheses giving the palæotypic (long vowels are doubled): - hand (Hand), tale (taal), way (waai), saw (sau), mine (mein), now (nou), muse (myyz), night (nikht = German nicht).

2 Henry Sweet, Review of A.J. Ellis, On Early English Pronunciation, in The Academy, June 1, 1871, p. 294-5.

Along with its sister review in The Athenæum, this article is Sweet's first attempt to tackle such problems as the relation of speech and orthography, the recording of the 'living' spoken language with a more efficient notation; for the first time here,

Sweet expresses his belief that the medieval scribes approached these tasks far more phonetically than did his typographically-biassed contemporaries.

The want of a definite system of notation is acknowledged to be the greatest obstacle to an intelligible discussion of speech-sounds, their formation and changes. Two methods of remedying the evil have been proposed, which may be distinguished as the traditional and the physiological. The former has, for reasons of convenience, been adopted by Mr. Ellis. In his 'Palæotype' the ordinary letters, either singly or combined, are used to express definite and fixed sounds, shades of difference being denoted by the use of italics and capitals, and other modifications. [...]

Without some such system as this, comparative or historical phonetics are impossible. What basis of comparison does the combination ch afford, which suggests to Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, and Italians, such distinct sounds as (tsh, sh, kh, k)? Thus far the value of palæotype is unquestionable: for those who are acquainted with the key-words, a system is provided equally available for learning the sounds of others, and recording their own. This necessity for employing key-words is, however, a radical defect of the system, as the key-words are not always generally known, nor is their pronunciation always uniform. On the other hand, in a physiological alphabet such as the 'Visible Speech' of Mr. Bell, the traditional letters are rejected, and a regular system of symbolising the physiological formation of each sound is employed; the reader only has to follow the directions given by the shape of the letter itself, and he will accurately reproduce the sound, even if it be one he has never heard before. Mr. Ellis has therefore done well in adding a tabular comparison of his and Mr. Bell's symbols, so that the pronunciation of his letters can be acquired independently of key words.

Mr. Ellis then proceeds to the discussion of the general laws of sound-change, the most important of which are: changes take place not by insensible degrees, but per saltum, in passing from one generation to another; and a series of sounds acquired in childhood and youth, remain fixed in the individual during the remainder of his life. The influence of these two laws on the actual history of a language is, however, liable to considerable modification by social, literary, and political circumstances. The same influences affect the orthography also. When writing is an art practised by the few, and literature is handed down orally, the scribes are hardly influenced at all by orthographic traditions. In highly-civilised communities again, where writing is universal, and literature is represented almost entirely by printed

books, the visible symbol of the word gradually acquires an independent value, and it suggests an idea without any reference to the sound it originally represented. [...]

The general result of the investigation of Chaucer's sounds is the important law that the scribe always intended his orthography to indicate his own pronunciation, so that every variation of spelling generally indicates a variation of sound. This law is of great importance in the investigation of the Early English Period, through which Mr. Ellis ascends gradually to the Anglo-Saxon.

Direct evidence of the pronunciation of many of the Anglo-Saxon vowels is furnished by an old MS. of the Septuagint in Anglo-Saxon letters, not a mere transliteration of the original, but evidently intended to represent the Byzantine pronunciation, which nearly resembled the modern Romaic.

[...]

The rest of the second part is taken up by summaries of the results scattered through the preceding pages, each letter and each sound being briefly traced through the whole of its history, and some general remarks on the relations of orthography and pronunciation. Mr. Ellis remarks on the possibility of combining the historical and phonetic principle in one alphabet, and the desirability of such a system. It is needless to give the details of the system he has contrived for this purpose, as he has since superseded it by a less clumsy one, called 'Glossic', which he proposes to use not only in writing English dialects, but also for general purposes, alongside of the ordinary orthography. We cannot, however, agree with Mr. Ellis in his estimate of the value of these modifications of the current alphabet. In the first place, from a purely scientific point of view, the real difficulty the philologist has to face in studying the English, or any other living dialects, is not so much the want of a system of sound-notation available for those who write down the dialects from the mouth of the people, but the utter want, not only of phonetic training but even of any sense of the necessity of accuracy and intelligibility in distinguishing and recording sounds among dialectologists themselves. Until there are a few more really competent dialectologists, the phonetic tools supplied by Ellis seem likely to rust away from want of work, or else to be blunted by unskilful [sic] hands. There are other objections founded on the nature of the systems themselves, which tell against their successful use by the most skilled phoneticians: even Palæotype, the most perfect of them, is not, strictly speaking, a phonetic system, for its symbols are either traditional, borrowed from the current alphabet, such as (k) and (p), which letters are quite as unambiguous in the ordinary orthography as

in palæotype, or arbitrary, as (c), (x), which convey no idea to any but Mr. Ellis himself and those who may happen to know his keywords and pronounce them in the same way.

Similar objections apply to a general use of glossic. If used by people ignorant of phonetics, it would soon be regarded as a purely orthographic scheme, which people would acquire without regarding their own varieties of pronunciation: the system would then become fixed, so that a constant succession of patchings would be necessary every two or three generations to keep up its phonetic character. The result of using the the old and the new spelling concurrently would probably be an endless confusion between the two systems, which would be mixed together at random, and a final return to the old orthography.

We have little doubt that the real alphabet of the future is Mr. Bell's 'Visible Speech'; it has all the good qualities of Palæotype and Glossic without any of their insufferable drawbacks; could be learnt by an ordinary child in a few weeks; is self-interpreting, independent of key-words, and of universal applicability. The only advantage Palæotype has over it at present is the want of means for printing it - a difficulty which is merely a temporary one, and could soon be remedied. That something must be done soon by way of orthographic reform is certain, or as Franklin said, 'our writing will become the same with the Chinese as to the difficulty of learning and using it'.

[...]

To appreciate fully the value of Mr. Ellis's investigations we have only to imagine ourselves, after being accustomed to read French and German in complete ignorance of their real pronunciation, discovering their living sounds, and gradually applying them in reading. What the result would be is also the result of Mr. Ellis's determination of Chaucer's and Shakespere's pronunciation: the language of these poets is no longer dead, it lives, and has an individuality of its own.

3 Henry Sweet, 'Earle's Philology of the English Tongue', The Academy, II, 1871, 505-6.

Sweet's discussion of Earle's idea of 'symphytism' shows clearly that Sweet was already developing his idea of synthesis, partly under the influence of Anglo-Saxon scribal practice. Some of his remarks here on inflection and word-division, prefigure, in a less sophisticated way, the discussions and explorations of five years later in his paper 'Words, Logic, and Grammar'.

The attempt to familiarise English readers with the results of scientific philology is always an arduous one, but its difficulties are greatly increased when, as in this work, it is based on English itself - a language of whose history and structure most English people are entirely ignorant. It is true that the want of grammatical and critical knowledge is to a certain extent - though very imperfectly - compensated by the training involved in the study of Greek and Latin, but the ignorance of the earlier stages of the language and of the cognate dialects is a serious bar to a thorough treatment of the subject. The chief aim of a popular work like this must therefore naturally be to excite interest and stimulate to further study, rather than attempt anything like a complete analysis of the history and structure of our language.

These requirements we think the Philology of the English Tongue likely to fulfil. [sic] Every page of the work attests to Mr. Earle's thorough knowledge of English in all its stages and of the living Teutonic languages. Of his critical knowledge of Anglo-Saxon, he has already given proof in his edition of the Chronicle. The plan and execution of the work will be best seen from an analysis of its contents.

[...]

In the following chapters, which treat of the parts of speech, inflections and the distinction between 'presentive' and 'symbolic' words, commonly distinguished as predicative and demonstrative, the difference between English and an inflectional language such as Latin, is clearly and forcibly stated, but we think Mr. Earle has hardly gone deep enough into the subject, and has consequently exaggerated the importance of the distinction. The history of inflections in the original Aryan language may be summed up under two periods: (1) in which the relations of words in a sentence were expressed by a rigorous and unvarying system of collocation, as in Chinese and modern English; (2) in which a general attrition of the unemphatic words took place. The leading feature of the old Aryan collocation was to place the emphatic (presentive) word before the symbolic one.

The result of the uniform postposition of the symbolic element in Greek and Latin is that we unconsciously assume that all 'flexion' must come at the end of a word, and consequently, when exactly the same phenomenon takes place, only in præ- instead of post-position of the symbolic element, we consider it as something quite distinct from 'flexion'. Yet this is all the difference between Latin and English: Latin says love-I, English, I-love. There is no reason why we should not write ilove in one word; the voice runs straight on without any pause, just as in amo, which, if I love is correct, ought to be written am o. The fact is that the whole question of word-division requires to

be re-investigated systematically. One result of such an investigation would probably be to modify our views on the subject of 'inflection' very considerably. What ground there is for distinguishing such forms as wenestu for wenest bu with their post-position, non-accentuation, and modification of the symbolic word, from the Latin putas, it is difficult to see, even from Mr. Ellis's point of view. Yet he classes them under 'symphytisms' as something quite different from the 'inflectional' putas. To argue that these phenomena are not real inflections because they happen to have developed themselves 1000 AC instead of 1000 BC is rather arbitrary and unscientific.

The peculiarities of the various parts of speech are handled in separate chapters; the history of the inflections, the distinction between weak and strong forms, & c., are traced, and many words are discussed at length, and their changes of meaning explained. This part of the work shows Mr. Earle in his best light: his critical knowledge of our language, and his keen observation of its living peculiarities, make these chapters peculiarly attractive.

[...]

The work concludes with a chapter on prosody. Here, again, Mr. Earle's foundations are shaky: he confuses stress with tone, or, to go to the root of the matter, fails to distinguish between the size and rapidity of sound-vibrations. Practically the chapter is a treatise on accent in the former sense, interspersed with remarks on alliteration, metre, euphony, and other kindred subjects.

4 Henry Sweet, King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care. Concluding remarks from introduction, pp. xxxix-xli.

Sweet's concluding remarks to his introduction to the Pastoral Care look at the oral style of the Alfredian prose and make suggestions about how it reflects the 'natural utterance' and even the 'whole-sentence' language learning approach of the translators (see discussion and interpretation of Sweet's implied argument in 2.3).

I will conclude this sketch of the peculiarities of Alfred's English with some general syntactical and stilistic remarks.

In tracing the development of O.E. prose, the interesting question arises,

how far must the influence of Latin models be taken into consideration? In other words, can the numerous translations of Latin works, especially the translations of Alfred, be regarded as faithful representations of the natural utterance of the translators? There seem to be strong reasons for answering this question in the affirmative, with certain limitations. In the first place, we must remember that the O.E. writers did not learn the art of prose composition from Latin models: they had a native historical prose, which shows a gradual elaboration and improvement quite independent of Latin or any other foreign influence. This is proved by an examination of the historical pieces inserted into the Chronicle. The first of these, the account of the death of Cynewulf and Cyneheard is composed in the abrupt, disconnected style of oral conversation: it shows prose composition in its rudest and most primitive form, and bears a striking resemblance to the earliest Icelandic prose [FOOTNOTE: such, for instance, as pieces inserted in the *Sæmundar Edda*]. In the detailed narratives of Alfred's campaigns and sea-fights the style assumes a different aspect: without losing the force and simplicity of the earlier pieces, it becomes refined and polished to a high degree, and yet shows no trace of foreign influence. Accordingly, in the *Orosius*, the only translation of Alfred's which from the similarity of its subject matter admits of a direct comparison, we find almost exactly the same language and style as in the contemporary historical pieces of the Chronicle. In the *Bede*, where the ecclesiastical prevails over the purely historical, the general style is less national, less idiomatic than in the *Orosius*, and in purely theological works, such as the *Pastoral*, the influence of the Latin original reaches its height. Yet even here there seems to be no attempt to engraft the Latin idioms on the English version: the foreign influence is only indirect, chiefly showing itself in the occasional clumsiness that results from the difficulty of expressing and defining abstract ideas in a language unused to theological and metaphysical subtleties.

There is evident difficulty in connecting the clauses of a long argument, arising from the paratactic nature of O.E. syntax, and consequent scarcity of particles and freedom in their use. Hence the monotonous repetition of such words as ðonne and forðam in the most varied senses: 'ðonne bið swiðe sweotol ðatte him ðonne losað beforan Gode his ryhtwisnes, ðonne he ðurh his agene geornfulnesse gesyngað unniedenga, ðonne bið swiðe sweotul, ðæt he ðæt good na ne dyde ðær he hit for ðam ege dorste forlatan' (265.10). As in all early languages, the tendency to correlation is strongly developed, as shown in the frequent use of ðonne - ðonne, forðam - forðam, suelc - suelc etc. in the same sentence, where in modern E. the idea would be expressed only once. Hence also

pleonasms and repetitions of all kinds abound, especially with the personal pronouns: 'se oferspræcea wer ne wierð he nafre geryht ne gelæred on ðisse worlde' (279.21). The modal and auxiliary verbs are often introduced in a very loose manner, as in the following sentences: 'forbar ðæt he ne dorste ofslean' (199.2); '[hiel hie nafre bilwitlice willað monian' (145.1) where the Latin has simply admonet; so also wile toweorpan (169.7) corresponds to the present destruit. In these and similar instances the willan gives no sense of futurity: it is entirely otiose, as much so as the knáttu in the 'knáttu ðll ginnungavé brinna' of the Haustlóng, and the kunde in Wolfram's 'mit zuht si kunden wider gên, zuo den êrsten vieren stên' (Parz. 234.1 Lachm.). Past tenses, especially the pluperfect, are often strengthened by a pleonastic ær as in this passage: 'ðæt hit sceal suiðe hrædlice afeallan of ðære weamodnesse ðe hit ær onahæfen was' (297.20), where the Latin has simply erexerant.

Another result of the difficulty in reproducing the sense of the original is the use of anacoluthons, which are very frequent in the Pastoral: 'Ælfred cyning hateð gretan ... & ðe cyðan hate' (3.1), 'ond symble ymb ðæt ðe hine tueode, ðonne orn he eft innto ðam temple' (103.4). Compare also 99.17, 101.15, 107.20.

The evidence afforded by a direct comparison of the translation with the original is of a similar character. Compared with the other works of Alfred the Pastoral is a very close rendering - no original matter is introduced, nor are sentences expanded into long paragraphs as in the Boethius; yet, according to modern notions, each section of Alfred's is a paraphrase rather than a translation of the corresponding piece of Latin. The rendering of the simplest passages is often attended with wide deviations from the words of the original, which are transposed, omitted and expanded, even when it would have been easier to have followed the original literally. It is evident that the sole object of the translator was to reproduce the sense of the original in such a way as to be intelligible to an unlearned Englishman of the ninth century. The anxiety to bring out the meaning of the Latin as vividly as possible is strikingly shown in the frequent rendering of a single word by two English ones of practically identical or similar meaning; thus 'per dolorem purgant' is rendered, 'ðurh sar ond ðurh sorge geclænsiað ond geeaðmedað' (34.4) and 'servi' in the Heading of XXIX. becomes 'ða ðegnas ond eac ða ðeowas'. In those days, when grammars and dictionaries were hardly known or used, Latin was studied much more as a living language than it is now; sentences were grasped as wholes, without the minute analysis of modern scholarship, and were consequently translated as wholes.

5 Henry Sweet, 'German Grammars of English', The Academy, V, January 17, 1874, p. 68. A review of Koch, Englische Grammatik (Cassel: Wigand, 1865-8), and Maetzner, Englische Grammatik (Berlin: Weidmann, 1873).

In this article, Sweet attacks contemporary philologists for their typographic and antiquarian prejudices, and, developing the ideas of the review of Ellis, suggests that a study of the actual spoken English language would reveal a very different grammatical structure to that usually assigned to it. At the same time, by employing phonetic methods, a much clearer picture of the history of the language would be revealed.

That the historical method of studying philology should have been applied to English is nothing very remarkable; it is, indeed, rather to be wondered that the turn of English should have come so late, but it is a strange phenomenon that the scientific study of English should, till within the last few years, have been entirely engrossed by Germans. It is not enough to say that the two works before us are incomparably the best English grammars that have ever been produced; they are, rather, the only English grammars that exist, - that is, if we understand by grammar anything more than an empirical introduction to the abstruse technicalities of the Eton Latin Grammar. It is true that we have now an historical grammar of our own -- The Outlines of English Accidence, by Dr. Richard Morris; but in point of fulness (sic), accuracy, and method, this work will not stand any comparison with its German rivals.

The two works of Koch and Matzner, different as they are in plan and execution, yet agree in exhibiting in a striking manner the best qualities of German philological work - laborious accuracy and thoroughness. These cardinal virtues of the philologist are unfortunately still rare in branches of linguistic research as pursued in England, and are rarest of all in that department of philology which is concerned with the historical development of the English language. In spite of the great and praiseworthy energy now displayed in organising societies and printing texts from the MSS., the standard of work is lamentably low, or rather there is no standard at all. Many students of English really seem to regard the history of their native language as a playground where ignorance and incompetence may disport themselves at will. A man who would shrink from the responsibility of preparing a school edition of a third-rate Latin poet thinks nothing of offering himself to the committee of one of our societies as editor of an unpublished text bristling

with all kind of difficulties, his own knowledge of the subject being nothing, or next to nothing.

And yet, the study of English - the most complex in origin and highly developed of all languages - postulates an exceptionally wide and systematic preparatory training. No language, for instance, affords so clear a proof of the necessity of uniformly applying the simple principle that before theorising on the origin of words or the connection of two words in different languages, these words must be traced back to their oldest ascertainable forms. This principle is so self-evident that when thus broadly stated it sounds like a truism; and yet we see that a popular etymological dictionary, every page of which violates this fundamental principle of etymology, has not only found a publisher, but has actually reached a second edition! It is the consistent application of this simple principle which constitutes the main strength of German philology; which, in short, allows it to take rank as a science.

A one-sided application of the historical method is, however, almost as injurious to true philology as the superficiality of the English school. The historical method is apt to degenerate into antiquarianism. By antiquarianism we understand an admiration for what is old, simply because it is old, often accompanied by a corresponding contempt for the new. Now this is the besetting sin of modern German philology, and, as a natural consequence, of scientific philology generally. The first and most obvious result of this philological antiquarianism is the neglect of living languages. One has only to glance through such a work as Grimm's Deutsche Grammatik to see how cursory and superficial is the treatment of the modern as distinguished from the old Teutonic languages. In the short comparative grammar of Heyne (Laut- und Flexionslehre) the modern languages are omitted altogether!

This one-sidedness reacts injuriously on the study of the dead languages themselves. The antiquarian philologist, having the written symbols constantly before his eyes, gradually comes to abstract them entirely from the sounds they stand for, and at last regards them as the language: any attempt to discover the real language represented by these symbols is looked on by him with supreme contempt, as a mere question of 'pronunciation'. Thus, if asked what a word is, such a philologist will have to confess that he has never considered the question; and, if the Socratic method is rigorously applied to him, will end with defining a word as 'a group of type marks separated from other groups by spacing'. If a spoken sentence from some African language is submitted to him with a request to point out the word-divisions, he will ask to see the sentence written down; and then, if told that the language has no alphabet and has never been committed to writing, will have to confess that he is utterly ignorant of

the real nature of a word. Other grammatical terms, such as 'inflection', are used by philologists in the same unintelligent way, and the result is that the real relations of languages, especially of ancient to modern languages, have been utterly misunderstood.

English, especially, has suffered from this one-sidedness. After studying English from the purely antiquarian point of view, and observing the gradual loss of the old forms till nothing is left but such wrecks as the s of the third person singular of the verb, the philologist is apt to re-echo without hesitation such statements as that 'English has no inflections', or that 'English has no grammar, properly so called'. If, on the other hand, he begins by ridding himself of all antiquarian prejudices, and sets to work to write down the living language exactly as he hears it, writing only one word where he hears only one, and disregarding the traditions of the printing office, he will come to the conclusion that 'English is a language of great inflexional complexity', that it is a 'symmetrically developed agglutinative language' and will finally refuse to consider it an Aryan language at all and insist on classing it with the Turanian languages.

We thus see that the claims of German philology to the title of science are but partially established. It is, at most, an empirical and one-sided science, and will remain so until the imperative necessity of a thorough training in the observation of the living languages as the only sound foundation for the study of the old, is generally recognised. Now that phonetics, which are in fact the science of linguistic observation, have begun to be studied seriously, both in England and - although to a lesser extent - in Germany, we may hope to see a really scientific structure erected on the broad basis of an impartial study of ancient and modern languages.

These reflections were mainly suggested by reading over the chapters on Phonology in the books under review. [...]

6 'General Alphabetics', from Henry Sweet, History of English Sounds, 1874/1879, p. 19, TPS, 1873-74, p. 479.

Here Sweet writes of the 'visual conception of language' among his contemporaries, and contrasts it with the oral conception of the medieval period; evidently a return to the older

view would further the progress of philology and improve the acquisition of foreign languages.

Although it would be possible to carry on the present investigation on a purely comparative basis - confining our attention exclusively to the living languages - such a process would prove tedious and difficult, if pursued without any help from the historical method, many of whose deductions are perfectly well established: to ignore these would be perverse pedantry. But the historical method must be based on a study of the graphic forms in which the older languages are preserved, and especially of their relation to the sounds they represent. It is quite useless to attempt to draw deductions from the spelling of a language till we know on what principles that spelling was formed. We have only to look at living languages to see how greatly the value of the spelling of each language varies. In English and French the spelling is almost worthless as a guide to the actual language; in German and Spanish the correspondence between sound and symbol is infinitely closer, and in some languages, such as Finnish and Hungarian, it is almost perfect - as far as the radical defects of the Roman alphabet allow.

With these facts before us, it is clearly unreasonable to assume, as many philologists have done, that the same divergence between orthography and pronunciation which characterizes Modern English prevailed also in the earlier periods, and consequently that no reliable deductions can be drawn from the graphic forms. I feel confident that every one who has patience enough to follow me to the end of the present discussion will be convinced of the very opposite. Putting aside the actual evidence altogether, it is quite clear that the wretched attempts at writing the sounds of our dialects made by educated men of the present day cannot be taken as standards from which to infer a similar result a thousand years ago.

An educated man in the nineteenth century is one who has been taught to associate groups of type-marks with certain ideas: his conception of language is visual, not oral. The same system is applied to other languages as well as English, so that we have the curious phenomenon of people studying French and German for twenty years, and yet being unable to understand a single sentence of the spoken languages; also of Latin verses made and measured by eye, like a piece of carpentry, by men who would be unable to comprehend the metre of a single line of their own compositions, if read out in the manner of the ancients. The study of Egyptian hieroglyphics affords almost as good a phonetic training as this.

Before the invention of printing the case was very different. The Roman alphabet was a purely phonetic instrument, the value of each symbol being learned by ear, and consequently the sounds of the scribe being also written by ear. The scarcity of books, the want of communication between literary men, and the number of literary dialects - all these causes made the adoption of a rigid, unchanging orthography a simple impossibility. It must not, of course, be imagined that there were no orthographic traditions, but it may be safely said that their influence was next to none at all. The only result of greater literary cultivation in early times is to introduce a certain roughness and carelessness in distinguishing shades of sound: we shall see hereafter that sounds which were kept distinct in the thirteenth-century spelling were confused in the time of Chaucer, although it is quite certain that they were still distinguished in speech. But such defects, although inconvenient to the investigator, do not lead him utterly astray, like the retention of a letter long after the corresponding sound has changed or been lost, which is so often the case in orthographies fixed on a traditional basis.

Early scribes not only had the advantage of a rational phonetic tradition - not a tradition of a fixed spelling for each word but of a small number of letters associated each with one sound; but, what is equally important, the mere practical application of this alphabet forced them to observe and analyse the sounds they wrote down, in short, they were trained to habits of phonetic observation. [...]

7 Presidential Address, 1877, TPS, 1877-9, 15-16.

As I discussed above, there is no complete extant published version of Sweet's first Practical Study of Language. This and the following accounts, however, describe it briefly:

Another application of our philology of the future will be a thorough reform of the practical study of language.

Instead of a cumbrous analysis, the learner will begin with what is really the ultimate fact in language - the natural sentence,¹ which will of course be presented in a purely phonetic form. Half the difficulty of learning languages is really purely external. Half the time spent in learning French is wasted in the attempt to unravel the mysteries of its non-phonetic spelling, and half the time spent over Sanskrit is wasted over its cumbrous alphabet and the monstrous pedantry of its grammars. In those happy days there will be no dictionaries

used in teaching. There will, instead, be a carefully graduated series of vocabularies of words arranged, not alphabetically, but in sense-groups, as in Roget's 'Thesaurus', with full examples, the most elementary of these works containing about three thousand of the commonest words, as embodied in the most natural and idiomatic sentences. When the student has carefully studied such a book from beginning to end for a year, he will probably have a better practical command of the language than is now attainable in ten years. Not till the student has acquired a thorough mastery of language will he be allowed to study the literature. The present practice of making the classics of a language the vehicle of elementary linguistic instruction is a most detestable one, and deserves the severest condemnation. What should we say of a music-master who gave his pupils a sonata of Beethoven to learn the notes on, instead of beginning with scales? Yet this is precisely our present system of teaching languages.

FOOTNOTE 1: The well-known systems of Arnold, Ollendorff, Ahn, Prendergast, & C., are all based on the fallacy that words, like the nine digits in arithmetic, can be combined into sentences ad libitum by the help of a few general rules. I learned Greek on this system at school, and one of the sentences I met with has stamped itself indelibly on my memory. It is this 'The philosopher pulled the lower jaw of the hen'. There are sound principles scattered through these various systems, but taken as wholes they all - including the latest one of Nasmyth [sic] - break down utterly: we may learn our Ollendorff or Nasmyth, but the language itself still remains to be learnt.

8 Report on a meeting of the Philological Society, March 15, 1878, in The Athenæum, March 23, 1878, 385-6:

Part of a paper by Mr. H. Sweet 'On the Practical Study of Language' was read by Mr. Nicol.

After noting the essentially irrational nature of languages, the learning of which consequently involves the laborious formulation of a large number of arbitrary connexions between ideas and sounds, Mr. Sweet criticized the present method of study, and insisted on the importance of one based on the natural laws of association. The real distinction between grammar and dictionary - that the former deals with general facts and the latter with special ones - was pointed out, and explanations given of the unpractical character of the books in use, in retaining obsolete and rare words worse than useless to the beginner, while omitting the common phrases of nineteenth-century life.

Attention was drawn to the fact that words cannot be dealt with like the digits of arithmetic, but that of many combinations only a few are used, so that a command of the language can be attained only by the learner being familiarised with those actually occurring. Some amusing specimens were given of the results of the practice of beginning the study of foreign languages with the literary instead of with the conversational dialect; and the fallacy of the historical method, in subordinating a harmonious knowledge of the language as it is to that of its archaic features, was dwelt upon.

9. The Academy (November 10, 1877, p. 448) reported on the draft of the book as follows:

The other work [in preparation] treats of the Practical Study of Language. It consists of a criticism of the present system from a phonetic and logical point of view, followed by a sketch of a rational system based on the general laws of association, in which various modifications of the present grammatical system are advocated, together with the abandonment of dictionaries in the teaching of languages and the substitution of a methodical study of word-meanings. Other collateral subjects are treated of, among which may be mentioned the comparative value of ancient and modern languages for training the mind.

APPENDIX II

EXTRACTS FROM PRENDERGAST

Thomas Prendergast's The Mastery of Languages (1864) seems to foreshadow Sweet in the emphasis on the spoken language, beginning with the naturalized colloquial sentence before analysis into words, the use of association theory, and the repudiation of the visual, typographic bias of Victorian education and its over-reliance on mental training.

The source of all our blundering over foreign languages is the mistaken notion that the attainment of the colloquial power depends more upon reasoning

processes, than upon effects of the memory. That pursuit cannot be a very intellectual one, in which people of the humblest capacity succeed.

Children learn their first sentences without reasoning about the words. They know what meaning the whole sentence conveys, but they do not understand each particular word, nor do they know one part of speech from another. [p. 29]

[...]

Our power of recollecting sentiments or incidents is intellectual because we interweave them among our experiences, and then we are able, by the association of ideas, to retrace, recall, and contemplate them. In this manner anything, though not everything is recalled.

But foreign words, being merely strange sounds, without any natural or obvious significance, cannot be retraced and recalled by efforts of the intellect, because they are not associated in the memory with any of our feelings, habits, or ideas, and we cannot reproduce them by conjuring up other times, scenes, persons, or events. The impressions we receive from them are not durable, and they can only be made so by being frequently renewed. [pp. 30-31]

[...]

Thus far in respect to words, regarded as mere sounds. We now have to deal with them as representative signs, and to consider how we may best contrive to establish so complete an amalgamation of sound with the thing signified, that the words will come spontaneously to the lips when we want to give utterance to the ideas which they convey. Here again, let us observe the course of nature, indicated in the restrictive and reiterative method adopted by children. They enlarge their acquisitions by repeating, at short intervals, all the sentences they have learned; and they gradually enlarge their narrow sphere of conversation by interchanges and transpositions of words. [pp. 33-34]

[...]

The words of a foreign tongue which we commit to memory are prisoners of war, incessantly trying to escape, and it requires great vigilance to detain them, for unless our attention be continually directed towards them, and unless we muster them frequently, they steal away into the forest and disperse. But when they are bound together in sentences, the same degree of watchfulness is not required, because they escape with difficulty, and a whole gang of them may easily be traced and recaptured at once.

When a word has escaped from the memory we often find that no intellectual exertion can recal [sic] it. But the lost word, when not wanted, will sometimes return unbidden, without any assignable cause, or any traceable connection of thought. Our inability to command the use of it in the moment of need, arises solely from the want of habituation.

[...]

The fact is, that any word, however insignificant, with which it has ever been used in juxtaposition, may recal [sic] the wanderer, either by an accidental association of ideas, or by a faint recollection - an echo, as it were, of the rhythm of the original expression. [pp. 34-35]

[...]

No doubt the memory is refreshed by every look at the book, and the next effort to recall the words, if made very soon afterwards, will be facilitated thereby. But every instance in which we actually make use of a word, or of a phrase, in the daily practice of oral composition, produces an impression on the memory far more efficacious and enduring, than that which results from recognizing it in a book, from seeking for it cursorily in a dictionary, from writing it down, from hearing others use it, or from all these combined.

To their non-observation of the principle, we ascribe the failures which occur among men of education and even among those who have a taste for this pursuit. To their assiduous attention to it, we trace the universal success of children. To their partial adoption thereof we attribute the success of couriers, missionaries, and of other travellers dealing with unwritten languages, but especially of those who, under some pressure of circumstances, limit themselves to the acquisition, and to the daily employment of a few colloquial sentences for some one definite purpose.

These learn a very few words, but they learn them practically and perfectly. But the number of words which hard-reading men learn, unpractically and imperfectly, is so great that the memory is evidently a sieve through which unconnected words escape, while it retains those that cohere in sentences learned by rote.

But words may be said to have a threefold nature; for, in the eyes of educated men, the sound and meaning are inseparably connected with the symbols that represent them to the eye. But this ideal inseparability is a source of infinite difficulty and confusion, from which the uneducated are exempt. Hence it happens that many servants, who do not attempt to read or write, excel their masters in picking up continental languages during a short tour. [pp. 36-37]

[...]

It is difficult enough to learn a short sentence every day, and to fix the meaning of each word, the principle of the constructions, and the order of the words, in the memory, so that we can employ them all as perfectly as if they belonged to our own tongue. But the difficulty is greatly increased by undertaking at the same time to learn a set of strange symbols, or to train ourselves to employ familiar letters in an unusual manner. The latter suggest

to the mind other sounds and other meanings, which ought not to be remembered. But we have not that control over the memory which enables us to dismiss anything from it at will. Much less can ~~we~~ we discard things of which we are constantly reminded by seeing them before our eyes. When the spelling of a word suggests a variety of different sounds, uncertainty ensues, and a difficulty is gratuitously created which may be avoided by merely learning the sound, unwritten.

When we have to attach new sounds to familiar letters we become involved in a harassing struggle against habits formed in early life. While the memory is being exerted to the utmost of its power, or, as usually happens, strained far beyond its power, in learning new sounds and new combinations of words, that unnecessary and irrational conflict ought to be avoided. This caution relates especially to those who are learning English or French. On the same principle, French and English people having been trained to a very eccentric orthography, should never look into a foreign book, printed in the Roman character, until they have some facility in speaking the new language with an intelligible pronunciation.

Beginners ought to abjure the notion that words are mere combinations of certain letters to which they owe their origin, and that reading is the first step to be taken. Letters are not the elements of language but the rudiments of writing, with which millions of our fellow men in all parts of the world are still unacquainted. [pp. 39-40]

[...]

Whatever its origin may have been, each language appears before us now, as an opus operatum, a highly-finished piece of mosaic, which children do not pull to pieces, though the learned do. Every learner is set to work reconstruct the language de novo, with all its defects and anomalies included and he naturally imbibes the notion that it is impossible for anyone to become possessed of it, unless he goes through that course. He is compelled to re-originate it for himself, as if all the labour, and expense of all his precursors were of no avail, except to prove to him that he must follow the track of those philosophical barbarians, whose footsteps have been effaced by the trappings of a thousand generations. [pp. 126-7]

Verbs and nouns are unduly exalted by teachers. They are supposed to be the most useful parts of speech, because they can do a little duty unsupported. But when deprived of any of its members, speech halts and staggers like a drunken man. Grammarians, in dissecting a language, necessarily treat each part of speech separately; but that is no reason why we should not learn sentences of a good length coherently, and analyse them afterwards. [p. 127]

[...]

When [the student] learns a foreign sentence by rote, he intercepts those trains of thought which involuntarily spring from the habit of analysing every word, of comparing it with all those which resemble it, either in sound or spelling, whether in his own or other languages; and of pondering over genders, numbers, persons, cases, tenses, declensions, conjunctions, etymology, syntax and prosody. Such excursions of thought are not merely useless but positively obstructive, because they employ the imagination and the reasoning powers, when they are not required; they crowd the memory with fanciful associations, which only produce confusion and perplexity; and they divert the attention from the pronunciation, to fix it on the spelling and the etymology. [p. 135]

[...]

When we learn our first lessons, we are apt to think that if we remember the spelling of the words, and can write them correctly, we have, at all events, retained the substantial part; and that the correct sounds and tone may be attended to afterwards. Sounds may be deemed immaterial and insubstantial when compared with letters, which are rendered palpable objects by means of paper and ink; but the words of a living language are nothing but sounds. Sounds are the substance; and the letters, or symbols, are their shadows. Beginners are very apt to lose the substance by snatching at the shadow. [p. 148]

APPENDIX III

EXTRACTS FROM NASMITH

Extracts from 'Introduction and Explanation of the System', in David Nasmith, The Practical Linguist, 2 vols. (London: David Nutt, 1870), I, pp. v, and vi-viii.

Nasmith's language text-books received some attention in the early 1870's, and Sweet singles them out for a brief comment in 1877. If he looked at them when they were first published in 1870, he may have drawn on the ideas of this preface, which briefly discusses the teaching of 'living' Latin in the middle ages and the disadvantages of the 'inanimate' book.

This work, the result of many years' meditation upon the study of foreign languages, is offered by its Author to the public with entire confidence in the soundness and importance of the principles upon which it is based.

Any attempt to facilitate the study of foreign languages is justified by the fact that the existing systems, whatever be their merits in particular cases, are nevertheless essentially unsatisfactory. It is indeed impossible to reflect upon certain incontrovertible facts without becoming convinced that the authors of the various systems extant have, to a large extent, failed to make the acquisition of a language, by the means of books, that which it is by nature - an easy and agreeable undertaking. [...]

The reason of this defect in our present most approved system, which, to distinguish it from others, may be termed the classical method, appears to the Author to be susceptible of explanation by reference to the mode in which our present system of teaching languages was developed. In the middle ages when Latin was the common medium of communication among literary Europeans, it was practically a living language, and men and women spoke it fluently and wrote it correctly and with ease. How was it taught? Certainly not as at present. It was taught much as the mother then taught, and now teaches her children English. It is not too much to say that from the moment printing enabled and induced the master to delegate a part of his work to the inanimate book, he began to neglect his duty; for though he placed in the hand of his pupil an instrument which, as an auxiliary and supplement to the right discharge of his own functions, was of the greatest value, yet not being a real equivalent, he imposed upon the learner a task which time has abundantly proved was in itself sufficient to prevent his ever mastering the language. What, indeed, could be more absurd than to give an infant an English grammar, and to tell him to learn his language? Nature will not suffer her laws to be violated with impunity, and in this instance she has punished us, as it were, by striking the teacher speechless, and has left us - so far at least as the classics are concerned - dumb teachers of the dumb.

What, then, is it, that secures to the non-user of books his advantage? The answer is, that it is neither science nor art, but simple obedience to the dictates of nature. The name of the object most necessary to the learner is first sought by him; the form of expression which conveys his most frequent want is first acquired, and the words, forms, and modes of expression are mastered by and ranked with him, unconsciously it may be, but, nevertheless, actually, in the order of their NUMERICAL VALUE to him. Certain words and expressions he uses daily and hourly. They form part of his every utterance; and

as his wants increase, and his ideas expand, so does he extend and use his stock of words and phrases.

Great as is the superiority of the system followed by those who simply obey the dictates of nature, it has obviously within itself serious imperfections which entail much necessary labour, necessitate considerable loss of time, and in all cases make the learner solely reliant upon memory and example, in as much as it leaves him without the aid of principle and science.

Nature's student sits as the suppliant by the wayside, he receives what he can get, he has to take from whomsoever he may be who is disposed to give, and in one respect he is worse off than the beggar, for he lacks the knowledge which would enable him to reject the impure. His ear is constantly assailed by a torrent of sounds which he cannot comprehend, his mind is bewildered by a flood of words which he cannot retain, yet he waits and watches, and at length he notices that the sounds are different, that some of them are often repeated, and with these he grows familiar; still he watches, and he finds that of these some refer to the things he knows and wants, and he tries if he can make the sound, and if the sound that he can make tells others what he wants.

In this way, by a slow and tedious process, he picks out of the confused mass of words those he requires, as, and when, he requires them. The individual word, the phrase, the entire sentence, are alike to him; he regards each as a sound, simple or complex, which expresses a given want; he knows that it has done so before, he believes that it will do so again, and that is all he knows about it; by degrees his stock of sounds increases, and in the course of time he speaks as others speak, but he understands not how or why. Cases and conjunctions, concords and governments, are mysteries which never troubled him. Had his words and sentences been collected for him and arranged in the order he wanted them, he would have accomplished what he has, in infinitely less time. Had he been shown the principles upon which most of his labour proceeded and depended, he would have avoided much of it, and would have had the satisfaction of being able to test others and to justify himself. He has been obedient to nature, though destitute of science, and has fared better than those who relied upon a science which ignored the suggestions of nature.

The Practical Linguist is an attempt to follow nature as closely as possible. It is an endeavour to reduce to a science the suggestions of our instincts, in order to secure and retain the advantages of the one, while it supplements those of the other.

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