

**BAD THEORY, WRONG CONCLUSIONS:
M. HALLE ON SLAVIC ACCENTUATION**

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Twenty years ago (1983), I severely criticized Halle and Kiparsky's review (1981) of Garde's history of Slavic accentuation (1976). I concluded that Halle and Kiparsky's theoretical framework "rests upon an unwarranted limitation of the available evidence, obscures the chronological perspective, and yields results which are partly not new and partly incorrect. It is harmful because it does not give the facts their proper due and thereby blocks the road to empirical study, giving a free hand to unrestrained speculation" (1983: 40). As Halle has recently returned to the subject (2001), it may be interesting to see if there has been some progress in his thinking over the last two decades. In the following I shall try to avoid repeating what I have said in my earlier discussion.

Perhaps the most characteristic feature of Halle's work is his disregard of the earlier literature (with the exception of his own publications and MIT dissertations), as is already clear from the abstract on the first page of his article (2001: 791). He claims to propose that the development of post-accenting morphemes was a consequence of Dybo's law. This conclusion was in fact drawn and backed up in detail several decades earlier by Dybo himself (1968), six years after he published his law (1962). Halle claims that the West Slavic cognates of the post-accenting morphemes are exceptions to the otherwise pervasive vowel shortening process. In fact, acute and original pretonic long vowels were shortened before Dybo's law while distinctive length was preserved under the stress and in posttonic syllables (cf. Kortlandt 1975: 29-32). Halle rejects Garde's hypothesis that Dybo's law did not operate in West Slavic, an idea which he partly supported himself until recently. This hypothesis was shown to be false 25 years ago by the present author (1978: 76-80) on the basis of evidence which Halle ignores. He does not explain "a hitherto puzzling set of facts" but is simply unaware of the relevant data and the scholarly discussion of recent decades.

In his introduction (2001: 792), Halle claims that the rise of post-accentuation preceded the shortening of long vowels and that the latter preceded the loss of mobile stress in West Slavic. In fact, acute and original pretonic long vowels were shortened (my stage 13) and new long vowels arose in posttonic syllables (my stages 14 and 15) and under the stress (my stage 16) before the rise of post-

accentuation (my stage 17), after which new lengthenings and shortenings took place (stages 18-25 of Kortlandt 1975: xii).

Halle claims that until about 1975 “it was generally believed that stress is an ordinary phonetic feature that distinguishes words from each other” (2001: 793) whereas he sees the facts in a radically different light because “unlike nasality or voicing, stress is not a phonetic feature, but rather a reflex of foot structure” (2001: 797). In fact, the earlier view goes back to Chomsky and Halle, who “consider accent to be a distinctive feature similar to such distinctive features as voicing, nasality, etc. Just as we have voiced and unvoiced consonants, so also we have accented and unaccented vowels” (1956: 79). Other scholars have long recognized that this view is mistaken, most notably Kuznecov (1948). The matter was finally cleared up by Ebeling (1968), who coined the terms “inherent” and “configurational” feature for what Halle now calls, less appropriately, “phonetic feature” and “foot structure” (cf. also Panov 1961: 7). In other respects, too, Halle confuses the issues by changing the notation and the terminology so as to present findings of earlier scholars as his own. Thus, he designates Stang’s (1957) accent classes *a*, *b*, *c* by the capital letters A, B, C (2001: 795) and claims Dybo’s (1968) and Garde’s (1976) accentuation rules as his own “Basic Accentuation Principle” of a more recent date (2001: 796f.).

Halle assumes that the stress advancement processes known as Saussure’s law in Lithuanian and Dybo’s law in Slavic are distinct phonological developments (2001: 798). The fact that Saussure’s law did not operate in Slavic was actually proven in Stang’s classic monograph almost half a century ago (1957). The different chronologies of the two advancement processes were long ago specified in detail (cf. Kortlandt 1975 and 1977). Halle claims that “length is not a phonetic feature” (2001: 798) and thereby shows that he has not yet properly understood the essential difference between inherent and configurational features. Halle notes “an unfortunate terminological confusion in the literature”, stating that the distinction between ‘acute’ and ‘circumflex’ in Greek “is the exact opposite of the terminology employed in the literature on Balto-Slavic and in the present paper” (2001: 799⁶). He thereby adds to the confusion because the latter terminology goes back to Garde (1976) and is completely different from the one found in the earlier literature, including Stang (1957) and Dybo (1968).

Halle still maintains that long vowels of Indo-European origin have acute intonation (2001: 801). It was shown long ago that this view is mistaken (cf. especially Kortlandt 1985). Halle’s suggestion that Saussure’s law “was introduced at a time when the language had short vowels in place of the long vowels with circumflex intonation” (2001: 802) cannot be correct for chronological reasons (cf. Kortlandt 1977). He refers to Collinge (1985) for the term “Dybo’s law”, which was actually introduced by Ebeling (1967) and justified in detail by the present author (1983: 34-36), as he could have learned from Collinge (1985: 32).

Halle's reconstruction of the Common Slavic vowel system (2001: 803) has long been obsolete (cf. Kortlandt 1979). Halle thinks that in Serbo-Croatian, long stem vowels are shortened in class A but preserved in classes B and C (2001: 804). In fact, long vowels of class C stems were shortened in polysyllabic word forms (cf. Stang 1957: 41, Kortlandt 1975: 33 and 1983: 39). Halle mistakenly lists the word for 'spider' under class B (2001: 804, 806, 807¹⁵) while it belongs to class A because it has neo-circumflex in Slovene and initial stress in Serbo-Croatian and Bulgarian and preserves posttonic length in Polish, Czech and Slovak (cf. Stang 1957: 29, 45, Jaksche 1965: 28, Jurišić 1973: 150, Kortlandt 1975: 30 and 1983: 33). He erroneously dates Dybo's law before the shortening of acute long vowels and misleads his readers by alleging that I attempt to treat the shortening in polysyllabic word forms in the same way as the latter process (2001: 805¹⁵). In fact, I have been quite explicit in dating the shortening of acute long vowels before and the shortening in polysyllabic word forms after Dybo's law (cf. stages 13, 17, 21 of Kortlandt 1975: xii). Note that Halle does not account for the shortening of the root vowel in Slovak *vinár* 'wine-grower' (rather than "wine merchant", Halle 2001: 806), as opposed to *vino* 'wine'. Contrary to Halle's statement (2001: 806), Slovak shortening does not treat polysyllabic stems of classes A and C alike. As in Czech and Polish, original posttonic length was as a rule preserved in class A (which shows neo-circumflex in Slovene) and eliminated by analogy in class C (which does not, cf. Stang 1957: 45, Jaksche 1965: 28, 70, Kortlandt 1975: 30 and 1983: 33). The short vowel of Slovak *jastrab* 'hawk' (A) for *-áb* was evidently taken from *jarab* 'partridge' (C), as is clear from the Slovene evidence, while conversely long *-áb* was generalized in their Czech cognates.

Halle thinks that in Czech, acute long vowels were not shortened in monosyllabic stems (2001: 807). In fact, these vowels were shortened in Common Slavic and their reflexes were lengthened under certain conditions in Czech and Upper Sorbian at a more recent stage (cf. Kortlandt 1975: 19 and 1978: 84). Halle's suggestion that Dybo's law affected all monosyllabic stems in Czech and all accented vowels in Upper Sorbian (2001: 808) is a typical consequence of his disregard for the facts, which "blocks the road to empirical study, giving a free hand to unrestrained speculation", as I put it earlier (1983: 40). His conclusion that the distribution of vowel quantity in West Slavic shows that these languages were subject to Dybo's law (2001: 809) is a result of his theoretical framework and therefore circular. His account of the data is all wrong, and he should have known it. There has been no progress in his thinking over the past twenty years.

It remains a mystery how Halle's article has been accepted for publication in a major journal.

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