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Philosophy, linguistic analysis, and linguistics

I Introduction

In his essay about Chomsky's generative grammar Flach assesses the philosophically relevant doctrines of Chomsky's linguistic theory. Generally, Flach considers those doctrines as philosophically relevant that are amenable or at least directly connective to a philosophic discipline.[1] On the basis of his assessment, Flach declares the development of this theory a second linguistic turn in philosophy (LT2), stretching from the late 1950s through the 1960s.[2] This verdict Chomsky owes to his discussion of the reciprocal epistemological relation between linguistics and philosophy.[3]

Flach observes that LT1, in its varieties of ideal language philosophy (ILP), ordinary language philosophy (OLP) and the ontologic-hermeneutical doctrine of communication has scarcely produced an account of the problem of language, i.e. of the structure of language along with its systematic classification.[4] By contrast, LT2, with the generative grammar as its main asset, reveals this problemtheoretical deficit of LT1 in its quest for a philosophical theory of language which could serve as the philosophical foundation

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1 Flach, W. 1974: *Die generative linguistische Theorie und die Prinzipienlehre des Denkens*. In: Simon, J. (ed.), Aspekte und Probleme der Sprachphilosophie. Freiburg, 69-110, 92. Flach considers publications of Chomsky's from Chomsky, N. 1957: *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague , up till 1970 (Ibid., 78 fn. 21.) For a recent development of Chomsky's theory see below.
2 *Die generative … ,* 73.
3 Ibid., 24 fn. 12. Notice that Flach uses the word 'Wechselbeziehung', which captures, though not states explicitly, the asymmetry of this relation, linguistics being principiated by the principles that epistemology purports to establish.
4 Ibid., 70f., Bergmann, G. 1964: *Logic and reality*. Madison. Bergmann does not distinguish Flach's third variety, which, incidentally, equally is met with Flach's criticism, specifically for its abstract-theoretically oriented neotranscendentalism (*Die generative …*, 99 fn. 44.). For a similar scepticism as regards the transcendental potential of linguistic pragmatism see, Aschenberg, R. 1982, *Sprachanalyse und Transzendentalphilosophie*, Stuttgart, 1982, 29.

for linguistics.[5] However, for all its merits, Chomsky's theory, in particular its mentalistic conception of linguistic competence, is vulnerable to Flach's criticism.[6]

In this paper I will argue that Flach's observations show some interesting parallels with Strawson's position concerning LT1,2. This might seem surprising, given the apparent incommensurability of the approaches of both philosophers as is suggested by the differences in the vocabularies they employ, despite their obvious Kantianism. However, if Flach mentions Strawson, next to Quine[7], as an example of methodological criticism of generative linguistics Strawson's substantive philosophical position with respect to it is equally noteworthy.[8] For it is here that interesting parallels come to the fore.

After this introductory section this paper is organised as follows. In *section II* I will give an account of the relation between linguistics and philosophy as Flach sees it, albeit imperfectly, exemplified in Chomsky's linguistic theory. This account links up with Flach's model of the historicity [Geschichtlichkeit] of philosophy and the problematicity [Problemcharakter] of its topic [Gegenstand].[9] In *section III* I will trace the historical antecedents of LT1,2, viewed from a perpective of the philosophy of linguistic sciences and confront the model, outlined in section II, with this perspective. *Section IV* proposes a comparative analysis of Strawson's position concerning linguistic analysis as advocated in LT1,2 with reference to Flach's exposition of the concept of linguistic competence. In a *concluding section* I will state some generalisations derived form the comparative analysis (*section V*).

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5   *Die generative*, 72f.

6   Ibid., 102.

7   Quine signals e.g. an equivocity in Chomsky's interpretation of 'rule of grammar', having the connotations both of guiding and of fitting linguistic behaviour, the former as a matter of cause and effect, the latter as a matter of true description. (see Quine, W. V. 1970: *Methodological Reflections on Current Linguistic Theory*. Synthese, 21, 386–98, 386. It is questionable whether Chomsky's notion of grammar as an internalised system of rules (cf. *Die generative* …, 83) eludes Quine's dichotomy.

8   Die generative ... 92 fn. 38.

9   Flach, W. 1963: *Die Geschichtlichkeit der Philosophie und der Problemcharakter des philosophischen Gegenstandes*. Kant-Studien 54, 17–28.

II   Linguistics and philosophy

At the outset of his essay Flach states, referring to Plato and Aristotle, that the theme of language always also has been considered a philosophical theme.[10] The mere reference to Plato and Aristotle, though, underdetermines the way in which Flach conceives the epistemological relation between language and philosophy, let alone how this relation is exemplified in the connection of Chomsky's linguistic theory with the philosophical doctrine of the principles of thought.[11] The expression 'always also' [immer auch] in the abovecited statement implies nonetheless a distributive divison of language as a theme between philosophy and linguistics.

This division implies a distinction between philosophical doctrine and linguistic theory, each with its own, to use Katz's phrase, proto-theory of language.[12] This distinction can be projected on the model Flach construes to describe the topic-systematic connections between the conception of philosophy, of its history [Geschichte] and the theory [Historie] about this history. According to Flach, whereas philosophy shares with science that it generates knowledge from principles of (the things in) the world, it differs from science in that it is moreover knowledge of the principles of thought themselves and their principiating function. Consequently, the topic of philosophy is knowledge in the entire scope of its structural particularity [Bestimmtheit]. From this it follows that philosophy, as the steady and universal reflection on available knowledge is sceptical towards science as well as itself and its history. Therefore, answers to questions about the constitution of knowledge always have a provisional character and the topic of philosophy is intrinsically problematic. Accordingly, for philosophy, the reflection on its own history, i.e. *Historie* as mentioned above, is the explication of the development of self-consciousness of philosophy itself. The historical course of philosophy, therefore, is a steady interplay between systematicity

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10 *Die generative* ..., 69.

11 I render Flach's 'Denken' here as 'thought'. Notice that Dummett, in his understanding of the object of philosophy declares that "the goal of philosophy is the structure of *thought* [...] that the study of *thought* is to be sharply distinguished from the study of the psychological process of *thinking*; and [...] that the only proper method of analysing thought consists in the analysis of *language* [...]" (Dummett, M.A.E. 1978: *Can analytical philosophy be systematic and ought it to be?* in id. Truth and other Enigmas, London, 437–458, 458 (orig. emph.)

12 Katz, J.J. 1990. *The Metaphysics of Meaning*, Cambridge (Mass.), passim.

and the explication of this self-consciousness, in short, between system-thinking [Systemdenken] and problem-thinking [Problemdenken]. This interplay consists in the continuous systematization of philosophical knowledge in the totality of its insights, i.e. the necessary and encompassing implications of all factive and possible philosophical problems generated by the universal principle of reflection.[13]

These insights are, of course, also operative in Flach's essay, provided that it has an exclusive systematic approach.[14] Here Flach's focus is on the classification of Chomsky's justification of his linguistic theory within the overall problematic of the justification of knowledge.[15] Flach's discussion of the exemplification of the epistemological relation between linguistics and philosophy seizes upon Chomsky's conception of a grammar of a language. Being the linguistic objectivation [Objektion] of that language, i.e. its object-disclosing determination, Chomsky conceives grammar as a theory about the formation of the expressions of that language, i.e. of its structure, from the aspect of observation (through the aspect of description) to the aspect of explanation. As such, Flach considers the generative linguistic theory, which claims the adequacy of the grammar it establishes on the aspects of observation, description and explanation of linguistic facts[16] as a threefold justification of its linguistic objectivation. As such, it is a philosophical theory of language [Sprachtheorie] because its language-theoretical question involves a preliminary theory that warrants the coherent, i.e. scientific, establishment of the linguistic facts.[17] For Flach, the philosophical relevance of this theory is unquestionable when it is taken into account that philosophy is itself a doctrine of justification of knowledge.[18]

III   Linguistics, a perspective from the philosophy of linguistic sciences

Now from this model to the historical antecedents of LT1,2. In his account of the history of the analysis of natural language, Seuren observes a tension

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13   *Die Geschichtlichkeit* …, 17f., 20ff. I write 'topic' for '*Gegenstand*' to differentiate the philosophical from the scientific object of inquiry. (Cf. o.c., 19, 21.)
14   *Die generative* …, 74 fn. 14.
15   Ibid., 91.
16   Ibid, 76ff.
17   Ibid., 70ff., 73 fn. 9.
18   Ibid., 91.

between the logical-philosophical and the grammatical tradition in the analysis of natural language. The former is concerned with the logical structure of sentences. This tradition goes back to Aristotle. The grammatical tradition is rooted in the Alexandrinian practice of producing material for the instruction of Greek as a second language. The Alexandrinian grammarians supplemented the Aristotelian logical nomenclature of subject, predicate, verb, noun and sentence with linguistic categories like word classes, cases, verbal forms etc.[19]

Intertwined with these traditions the history of the analysis of natural language manifests an opposition of two basic methodological assumptions, namely formalism and ecologism. Formalists, in particular the Alexandrinian grammarians, use a preconceived (logical, mathematical etc.) analytic formalism which they approach instrumentalistically and assume language to fit. By contrast, ecologists, in particular the Stoic disciples of Aristotle, focus, as analytic philosophers of language, on the systematicity of language which they conceive, realistically, as fitting the λόγος. These methodological positions nowadays are reversed, linguistics manifesting a tendency towards ecologism, formal semantics to formalism.[20]

In Seuren's picture, the philosophical relevance of the analysis of natural language bears on the problem of truth. Aristotle's definition of truth[21] is the *locus classicus* in which this relevance is expressed insofar as this definition can be taken as defining truth in terms of a word-world correspondence, as Seuren does.[22] According to Seuren, the history of philosophy is marked by efforts to find out (i) how it can be specified what must be the case when a given statement is true; and (ii) in what consists the correpondence of true statements with what is the case.

Seuren completes his history with an account of the Kantian crisis in epistemology, which he describes as the radical impossibility of ascertaining the veridicality of knowledge and the reality of the external world, stating that while Descartes first questioned these issues, this questioning culminated in Kant's transcendental project. And he stresses that for an accurate

19 Seuren, P. A. M. 1990: *Filosofie van de taalwetenschappen*. Leiden, 54, 56, 57f. Cf. Gamut, L.T.F. 1991: *Logic, Language, and Meaning*. Vol 1 *Introduction to Logic*, Chicago, 11ff.
20 *Filosofie*, 77 ff.
21 Aristotle, *Met.* 1011b26–29. Cf. *Filosofie* ..., 59ff.
22 O.c., 6of.

understanding of the analytic programme, and indeed modern philosophy, this crisis is something to be reckoned with.[23]

In view of Seuren's account, Flach's approach might be criticised for trying to fit instances of linguistic theorizing on his Procrustean bed of the theory of principles of thought. This approach would then poorly accommodate the tension between the logical-philosophical and grammatical traditions in the analysis of natural language along with its chiastic arrangements of ecologist and formalist assumptions.[24] Flach's use of Procrustean standards to assess the philosophical relevance of linguistics might, in this view, be illustrated by Flach's contention, on the one hand, that the problemtheoretical deficit of LT1 prohibits these standards to be derived from it, and his denying philosophical relevance to linguistic claims and tenants that are useful for an aproach of philosophical issues on the other.[25] Moreover, if Flach's standards of philosophical relevance are to discriminate between legitimate doctrines and claims and the reintroduction of similar doctrines as LT1 had sought to discard, the problemtheoretical deficit of LT1 does in effect for Flach not obviate its critical role in his discourse.[26] Finally, one could argue, if the issue of philosophical relevance, by its nature demands a non-linguistic philosophical point of view, as Flach contends[27], why does Flach not supplement his acceptance of Chomsky's rationalistic-nativistic conception of linguistic competence, despite its neglect to account for the subjectity of language [Subjektität der Sprache] with an evenhanded charitable reading of the assumptions of LT1, despite their problemtheoretical deficit?

From the notion of the intrinsic problematicity of language as a philosophical topic, as exposed in section 2 above, however, one could remove

23 O.c., 63f.
24 Facing this task allows one, as a side-effect, to canalize the semantic flux in which the vocabulary of linguistic analysis is immersed, e.g. 'logical form', 'grammatical form', 'logical grammar', 'philosophical grammar', etc. For an elucidation of this nomenclature, see *Logic* …, vol. 2 *Intensional Logic and Logical Grammar*, 214ff.
25 *Die generative ...,* 74, 75.
26 *Die generative* … 73f., 74 fn. 12. Since Flach does not specify the doctrines he has in mind it is not easy to say which role. Indirectly, however, the assumed critical role of LT1 in Flach's discourse would coroborate Rorty's assertion that "no one is able to think of any formulation" of traditional philosophical problems, which is immune to its sort of criticism. (Cf. Rorty, R. 1967: *Metaphilosophical Difficulties of Linguistic Philosophy*. In: The linguistic Turn; recent essays in philosophical method. Rorty, R. (ed.) Chicago. 1–41, 33f.)
27 *Die generative...*, 92f.

the sting of such criticism by deconstructing Seuren's rendering of the Kantian crisis in his history. Such a deconstruction involves a reflection on the history of the problem of language which allows this history to be transformed in a *Historie*. First of all, from an extra-linguistic point of view, arguably Seuren's reference to Aristotle's definition of truth is ambiguous between a semantic and a metaphysical or epistemological interpretation of this definition.[28]

Kant's interest in language generally seems to be confined to some of its anthropological aspects like the qualification of French as conversation-language and English as commercial language.[29] As regards semantics, Kant characterises language in the context of his exposition of our capacity to designate (*facultas signatrix*) as the designation of thoughts [Bezeichnung der Gedanke] and he calls thinking speaking with oneself.[30] While, on an epistemological reading of the definition of truth,[31] taking the explication of correspondence (Seuren's question (ii) above) for granted,[32] Kant asserts that a general criterion of truth, irrespective of its object, is unintelligible, since such a criterion would abstract from the content of the cognition, i.e. the relation to its object.[33] It would, therefore, determine the truth of cognitions merely with respect to their form. Consequently, in Kant's view, the logical specification of truth-criteria[34] (falling within the scope of Seuren's questions (i) above) determines the truth of cognitions only negatively, and therefore insufficiently. For the satisfaction of those criteria would not exclude that the cognition contradicts [widersprechen] its object.[35]

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28 Thus, for instance "[m]edieval authors who prefer a *semantic version* of the correspondence theory often use a peculiarly truncated formula to render Aristotle's definition: A (mental) sentence is true if and only if, as it signifies, so it is (*sicut significat, ita est*). This emphasizes the semantic relation of *signification* while remaining maximally elusive about what it is that is signified by a true sentence and de-emphasizing the correspondence relation (putting it into the little words "as" and "so")". David, M, 2009: *The Correspondence Theory of Truth*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2009/entries/truth-correspondence/>.

29 *Anthr.*, *AA* VII, 312.

30 *Anthr.*, *AA* VII, 192.

31 Namely, as the correspondence [Übereinstimmung] of the cognition [Erkenntnis] with its object [mit ihrem Gegenstande] (*KrV* B 82).

32 *KrV* B 82.

33 *KrV* B 83.

34 *KrV* B 84.

35 *KrV* B 84.

Kant's project, by contrast, is concerned with the epistemic issue of establishing the conditions of the possibility that concepts relate to objects.[36] As Flach notices, with reference to *KrV* B 85, B 185, the logic of truth in Kant's sense is concerned with the conditions that warrant the relation of all possible cognitions with their objects.[37] Rather than instigating a crisis in epistemology, Kant, with his project, purports to solve the crisis by distancing himself from Cartesian representationism.[38] The Cartesian model of knowledge, which holds the mental representations for real, entails an empirical idealism. In this model, the reliability of the correspondence relation between the represented external object and the representing mental representation cannot be accounted for.

By the standards of Flach's model, Seuren's rendering of the Kantian crisis in epistemology illustrates that the philosophical relevance of linguistic analysis cannot exclusively be estimated in terms of its success in answering one or both questions that Seuren mentions as the ones with which it was occupied troughout its history. However, it seems fair to expect from a reflective philosophical point of view on language, that it somehow can accommodate the abovementioned tensions in its reception of LT1,2.

IV   *Linguistic analysis: Flach with Strawson*

After this recourse to Kant, it is now to be established how Flach and Strawson in their Kantian approaches accommodate the aforementioned tensions in their reception of LT1,2. For the very talk of LT1,2 to make sense it is required that the notion 'linguistic' turn is well distinguished from the perennial philosophical sensibility for the problem of language in some description, in particular as it is manifest in 20th century philosophy. In this respect I recall that Rorty, who is well aware of the extensibility of the con-

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36 „Ich frug mich nemlich selbst: auf welchem Grunde beruhet die Beziehung desienigen, was man in uns Vorstellung nennt, auf den Gegenstand?" *AA* X, 130.

37 Flach, W. 1994. *Grundzüge der Erkenntnislehre*. Würzburg, 236.

38 *KrV* A 490f./B 518f. Kant's conversation with Descartes underscores Aschenberg's assertion that Descartes's consciousness-theoretical point of departure for the construction of transcendental arguments to ground fundamental principles, or at least defend them against scepticism, is pivotal for Kant's consciousness-philosophically oriented transcendental philosophy. Descartes's influence stretches, according to Aschenberg, from Kant to Fichte and Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, up till Husserl, Sartre and Cramer. (O.c., 382.)

cept 'linguistic turn' to encompass a large segment of 20th century philo-sophy,[39] characterises 20th century philosophers who took a linguistic turn in a more restricted sense as being involved in a meta-philosophical struggle. Granted that the issue of this struggle was the proper method to approach perennial philosophical problems, Rorty is ready to characterise LT1 by a distinctive meta-philosophical feature. As such he singles out its methodo-logical nominalism. This is the assumption that if philosophical questions about "concepts, subsistent universals or 'natures' […] cannot be answered by empirical inquiry […] and can be answered in *some* way [it is] by answer-ing questions about the use of linguistic expressions, and in no other way".[40] In his assessment of linguistic philosophy, i.e. philosophy that has taken the linguistic turn, Rorty observes that in linguistic philosophy this assumption generally is not justified; however, he is at pains to argue that this assump-tion does not involve a substantive philosophical position. He conceives it as *"practical"* as it boils down to "a single plausible claim: that we should not ask questions unless we can offer critera for satisfactory answers to those questions"[41].

Flach's discontent with the track record of LT1 concerns what above is called its problemtheoretical deficit, i.e. its poor advancement in the field of the problem of language. He specifically decries its being satisfied with (i) the logical critique of language or the construction of artificial languages (ILP); (ii) the detailed description of the use of important concepts (abstract nouns) and the demonstration of the poor concord between their content and their linguistic expression (OLP). Finally, Flach denounces LT1's lapse into an ontologic-hermeneutic doctrine of speech-acts, which doctrine is concerned with the subjective-intersubjective conditions of the possibility of communication.[42]

Flach's depreciation of LT1 thus focuses on the elaboration of its pro-grammatic incentives. It must not affect the legitimacy of those incentives proper, in particular the adoption of methodological nominalism as the lead-

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39 As Rorty observes, the linguistic turn is common to all twentieth century philoso-phy, being distinctive primarily in its Quine-inspired scientism, and he names Heidegger, Gadamer, Habermas, Derrida, Ayer, Austin, and Wittgenstein in this re-spect. Rorty, R. 1999: *Analytic Philosophy and Transformative Philosophy*. Online <http://evans-experientialism.freewebspace.com/rorty02.htm >(21 May 2010).

40 *Metaphilosophical* …, 11 (orig. emph.).

41 Ibid., 5, 9, 14 (id.).

42 *Die generative* ..., 70f.

ing metaphilosophical assumption of its programme. As such Flach's observations confirm Rorty's attribution of methodological nominalism as LT1's distinctive feature, if not his appreciation of this feature as an asset to be welcomed. However, this attribution provokes a suspicion towards linguistic analysis as a proper philosophical method even without Flach's substantive criticism of the fruits of its employment. For, if such nominalism entails the absence of substantive philosophical claims its suitability to address the problems it is supposed to address can hardly be justified. As such, the metaphilosophical position some philosophers adopted when they took the linguistic turn might seem perplexing enough. The critical role, as signalled above, LT1 seems to play in Flach's discourse, however, permits to accept Flach's observation as signalling LT1's problemtheoretical deficit only if this methodological nominalism, which is instrumentalistic in nature, is deemed to coincide with unwarranted assumptions about language.

Turning to OLP, in particular Oxford analysis, of which movement Strawson commonly is considered one of the major protagonists,[43] it is OLP's ecological stance, as it is, for instance, highlighted by Seuren, that merits attention as one such unwarranted assumption about language. For sure, much of the criticism of LT1 hinges upon the notion that OLP suffers from an ecological bias. That Seuren takes this to be the case is apparent from how he interprets OLP's ecological stance. Seuren sees the 'analytical programme in philosophy', with Oxford analysis as its 20th century's continuation, largely as attempts to answer the first question with which linguistic analysis was preoccupied in the fallout from the Kantian crisis in epistemology.[44] As such OLP bears in his view the mark of this crisis by adopting as its basic idea that reality is accessible through language.

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43 Glock H.-J. 2008: *What is analytic philosophy?*, Cambridge, UK, 42.

44 Likewise, Seuren sees the model-theoretical programme, initiated by Frege in the 19th century, with formal semantics as its 20th century's development, as attempts to answer the second question, mentioned above. (*Filosofie*..., 61ff., 65ff. .) Flach considers generative semantics – which is an instance of the model-theoretical programme and therefore would on Seuren's counts be more formalistic in orientation – as on a par with Chomsky's standard theory (see *Die generative ...* , 76). Notice that Seuren's positioning of Frege is consonant with Flach's assessment, when he recalls that Frege's *Begriffsschrift* was intended as a methodical representation of the conceptual content of knowledge. (*Die generative*..., 70f. fn. 5.)

However this might obtain largely, Strawson's case seems more complicated.[45] For Strawson, conceding that "up to a point" linguistic analysis "is the best and indeed the only sure, way in philosophy" contends that "the discriminations we can make, and the connexions we can establish, in this way, are not general […] and not far-reaching enough to meet the full metaphysical demand for understanding".[46] This demand *is*, of course, in Strawson's view, met by the employment of connective analysis as his preferred method of analysis, with the construction of transcendental arguments to establish the sought-after connexions among metaphysical concepts as its trademark. In Strawson's descriptive metaphysics connective analysis is comparable with Kant's analytic of concepts insofar as its purpose is to separate grammatically permissible descriptions of a possible kind of experience from truly intelligible descriptions. By thus demarcating the domain of a limiting framework of necessary general features of experience, connective analysis is meant to establish a description of the actual structure of our thought about the world.[47]

The adoption of connective analysis, Strawson's equivalent for Kant's transcendental-logical analysis, involves a repudiation of linguistic analysis on a reductive or atomist model, viz. Quine's ontological reductionism, which Strawson sees as a defect of Quine's regimentation of ordinary concepts, and Moore's linguistic reductionism, which overlooks the (inter)dependency of concepts.[48] For this reason, Strawson's project departs from OLP (and ILP) with respect both to their methodological assumptions, and to the articulation of their problematic.[49] As such, his project transcends the scope of ordinary linguistic analysis by making an ascent

45 *Filosofie* …, 66. However, Glock argues that the epitheta 'ordinary language' and 'Oxford philosophy' were invented by the opponents of Oxford analytic philosophy, whereas [t]hey themselves preferred labels such as 'conceptual analysis' or 'linguistic philosophy' for they regarded philosophical problems as conceptual and concepts as embodied in language. (What is … , 42.)
46 Strawson, P. F. 1959: *Individuals*, London, 9f.
47 Id. 1966: *The Bounds of Sense*, London, 15, 9.
48 Id. 1985: *Analyse et Métaphysique*, Paris, 31f., 59, 43.
49 This issue is elaborated in the context of Rorty's appraisal of LT1 in Mom, K. 2009: *Philosophy and Language*. In: Language and World. Preproceedings of the 32nd International Wittgenstein Symposium. Volker A. Munz, Klaus Puhl, Joseph Wang (eds.), Kirchberg am Wechsel, 285–87.

from a description of linguistic usage[50] to descriptive metaphysics.[51] Descriptive metaphysics differs from linguistic analysis in scope and generality, insofar as it attempts to discover and exhibit the general structure of our conceptual apparatus.[52] On these counts, Strawson's project can at least be discharged from the objection that it suffers from the unwarranted ecological assumption that reality is accessible through language, even if Strawson holds it for necessary that the observation of our concepts in action is the only way to find out what they can and cannot do.[53]

Strawson's project of descriptive metaphysics is permeated with other assumptions however, of which it remains to be seen whether they are unwarranted in which case they would demonstrate the problemtheoretical deficit of this project. These assumptions pertain to what one might call Strawson's metaphysics of meaning. As such one could determine the metaphysical assumptions underlying the semantics of Strawson's logical theory, such as the central importance of the subject-predicate distinction, the role of particulars as objects of reference and the conceptual priority of particulars over universals.[54] By force of these assumptions the necessary (inter)-connections that warrant the significance, in Strawson's sense of intelligibility, of the conceptual scheme descriptive metaphysics is intended to describe obtain the modality of their a priori necessity. As such these assumptions warrant, for instance, the potential objectivity of referring expressions in a subject-predicate sentence, similarly as does the category substance in a judgement of the subject-predicate form in Kant.[55]

Turning now to LT2, Flach's assessment starts from his claim that linguistic competence, a key notion of Chomsky's theory, due to its linguistic-mentalistic designation, bears on the doctrine of the principles of thought. This doctrine posits thought as a principiating relation, namely thus, that

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50 Strawson, P.F. 1967: *Analysis, Science, and Metaphysics* (Translation of a paper, presented at the Royaumont Colloquium of 1961.) in: The linguistic Turn, 312–320, 313.

51 O.c, 318.

52 O.c., 318, 320.

53 O.c., 319.

54 See Haack, S. 1979: *Descriptive and Revisionary Metaphysics*, Philosophical Perspectives 35, 361–371, 362.

55 *KrV* B 129. See for an elaboration of this point Mom, K. 2008: *A Wittgensteinian Answer to Strawson's Descriptive Metaphysics*, in Alexander Hieke & Hannes Leitgeb, ed., Papers of the 31st International Wittgenstein Symposium, Kirchberg am Wechsel, 232–235.

thought is principle of itself as what it is; thought as that what it is is thus principiated by thought; thought as warrant for thought as that what it is as principiated thought is the principiating relation. The standards for assessing the legitimacy of the generative linguistic theory generally, and of the doctrine of linguistic competence in particular are taken from this doctrine.[56] On the basis of this doctrine, linguistic competence is connected with the subjectivity [Subjektivität] of language. This is because language is an integral factor of thought *qua* thought of a subject.[57] Chomsky's conception of linguistic competence, however its linguistic-mentalistic designation entails an ontological commitment, fails to capture this moment of subjectivity, as it conceives linguistic competence on a rationalist-nativist model.[58]

Flach's provisional endorsement of LT2 is paralleled in Strawson. Strawson too recognizes the relevance of Chomsky's theory, stating that its idea of a universal grammar "cannot be without interest for philosophers". This relevance is also provisional, due to the explanatory inadequacy concerning the possession of linguistic competence. In particular, Chomsky's grammar fails to provide a semantic principle by which lexical items are assigned to grammatical categories and types of meaning-elements are connected to potentialities of grammatical role. It is, therefore, not a perspicuous grammar.[59]

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56 *Die generative...,* 90ff.

57 Ibid., 100.

58 Curiously, Chomsky seems to regard the projection of linguistic competence on this model precisely as marking the philosophical relevance of his theory. (*Die generative …*, 93 fn. 39.) Notice, though, that the historical accuracy of Chomsky's reference to Descartes as the originator of the idea of innate linguistic competence (and universal grammar) is not uncontroversial. *Contra* Chomsky it is argued that Locke's (and hence, empiricism's) influence on the emergence of the idea of a universal grammar is more obvious. (Cf. Aarsleff, H. 1970: *The History of Linguistics and Professor Chomsky*. In: Language 46, 570–85.) This objection, in turn, does not exclude the advancement of alternative rationalist interpretations. Searle, for instance, equally contests Chomsky's appeal to Descartes, stating that for Descartes, concepts are innate, whereas language is arbitrary and acquired. Searle favours a historical analogy with Leibniz, who compared the way innate ideas are in us with the way a statue is prefigured in a block of marble. (Searle, J. R. 1972: *Chomsky's Revolution in Linguistics*. The New York Review of Books, 18, 1–19, 12.)

59 Strawson, P.F. 1969: *Grammar and Philosophy*. In: Strawson, P.F. 1971: Logico-Linguistic Papers, London, 130–149, 133 ff. One might call a perspicuous grammar a transcendental grammar in Kant's sense. Cf. "Würden wir die transscendentalen Begriffe so [i.e. a priori principles of sensibility and of intellectual human cognition, from which other concepts can subsequently be deduced] zergliedern; so wäre dies eine transscendentale Grammatik, die den Grund der menschlichen Sprache enthält;

Along these lines, a substantive objection to the view Strawson imputes to
the formal semanticists[60], mentioning Chomsky in particular[61], that syntactic
and semantic rules determine the meanings of the sentences of a language
by means of determining their truth-conditions is Strawson's claim that –
assuming the inseparability of the analysis of saying something true or false
from a reference to belief-expression – a philosophical elucidation of the
concept of meaning requires an essential connection to the concept of
communication-intention.[62] In a similar vein and as an affirmation of his
ecological stance towards language, Strawson poses a contrast between the
explanatory capacity of a general semantico-syntactical theory which directly
applies to the surface structure of sentences, and a theory which appeals to
an underlying structure, differing from the superficial grammatical form of
sentences. The burden of proof of the justifiability of this appeal rests with
the later theory.[63] Strawson's dissatisfaction with generative grammar incites
him to advocate Research in Non-Empirical Linguistics, which aims at pro-
viding explanatory foundations for grammar and thus fills the explanatory
gaps that empirical linguistics had failed to fill.

From Strawson's approach of meaning in terms of belief-expression,
communication-intention and cognate terms one might gather the impres-
sion that his version of linguistic analysis is focused on the pragmatics of
speaker-hearer relations. As such Strawson's version of linguistic analysis,
however it is presented as conceptual analysis, might seem vulnerable to the
objection that it is, far from being suitable to determine the bounds of
sense, confined to aspects of linguistic performance in the pragmatic con-
text of a communication-situation and for that reason cannot capture the
generative capacity of linguistic competence, let alone account for its subjec-
tive aspect. In a similar vein, Flach blames analytical performance-theoretical

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z.B. wie das praesens, perfectum, plusquamperfectum in unserm Verstande liegt, was
adverbia sind u.s.w.". (*Met. Pölitz, AA* XXVIII, 77f.)

60 See Strawson, P.F. 1969: *Meaning and Truth*, in: Logico-linguistic papers, London,
171–189, 171.

61 O.c., 172. Chomsky is mentioned in company with Frege and the earlier Wittgens-
tein; as their antagonists, the theorists of communication-intention, Strawson
mentions Grice, Austin and the later Wittgenstein.

62 *Meaning and Truth*, 189.

63 Strawson, P.F. 1974: *On Understanding the Structure of One's language*, in: Freedom
and Resentment, and other essays, London, 198–207, 202.

theories of truth among which the one Strawson advances, for not elucidating the concept of truth in its constitutive context.[64]

Objections along these lines could be taken to have textual support in Strawson. Thus, for example, Strawson argues that the necessity in stating facts about things, persons or events of performing a referring or identifying task and an attributive or descriptive or classificatory or ascriptive task does not require a transcendental explanation but can be accounted for by elucidating the meaning of "stating a fact". This elucidation, moreover, is achieved in the grammar of the conventional singular sentence. For the functional, linguistic division of labour between the identifying and attributive tasks can be assigned to separable expressions ordinary speech offers us.[65] Existential assertions, for instance, are implied by the use of uniquely referring expressions.[66]

Strawson's declaration of the dispensability of a transcendental explanation for the performance of linguistic tasks and his corollary confidence in the elucidatory potential of an analysis of expressions on the level of their superficial grammatical form, in a way, corroborates objections to the effect that Strawson's linguistic analysis fails to elucidate the concept of meaning in its constitutive context. As such this might impair the credibility of Strawson's own objections, on behalf of the kind of linguistic analysis he champions, of the explanatory insufficiency of empirical linguistics. This issue pertains to the architecture of Strawson's project, in particular as regards the relation between its metaphysical and linguistic dimensions. It indicates, perhaps, a tension between the logical and ecological tendencies of Strawson's project. Strawson's return to a Humean naturalism[67] could, in this picture, by some be taken as an affirmation that the transcendental tendencies in his project always have been questionable; others could hold this return for an natural reaction to the detranscendentalization[68] of the critique of language, in the sense of a shift of focus from transcendental theorizing, i.e. the quest for constitutive principles of metaphysics, to the conceptual clarification of scientific theories. The systematic solution of this issue seems to require a

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64 *Grundzüge* ..., 239f., 240 fn. 230.

65 Strawson, P. F. 1950: *On Referring*, *Mind* 59 (233), 320–344, 335f.

66 O.c., 343.

67 Cf. Strawson, P.F. 1983 *Skepticism and naturalism: some varieties.*, New-York, 1985, 2f.

68 As does Niquet. (See Niquet, M. 1991*: Transzendentale Argumente. Kant, Strawson und die Aporetik der Detranszendentalisierung*, Frankfurt am Main, 463ff.)

method of analysis which is suitable to mediate between "attempts to show the natural foundations of our logical, conceptual apparatus in the way things happen in the world, and in our own natures"[69] and attempts "to gain a sufficient conception of language" in recognition of the contingency of thought.[70]

If, for the desired systematic solution to be feasible a reflection on the history of philosophy is required which comprises a reflection on the relation between philosophy and linguistics and if such reflection should recognize the dynamics of scientific development at all, it should in particular inquire whether in a reappraisal of the philosophical relevance of linguistics Strawson's return to Hume could team up with Chomsky's recent biolinguistic turn. A point of departure for such an inquiry could be found in Chomsky's assertions that linguists who have taken the biolinguistic turn tend to study language as a part of the world; interpret linguistic competence in terms of innate computational abilities; and use grammatical categories mainly for taxonomic purposes.[71] The biolinguistic turn could thus result in a further articulation of the differences of the Chomskian concept of mind from that of Descartes.[72] Incidentally, reappraisals of the Cartesian concept of mind are not unfamiliar to Oxford analysis.[73]

V   Concluding remarks

To conclude, the comparative assessment of Flach's and Strawson's exchange with LT1,2 has revealed some interesting parallels. Both philosophers criticise LT1 for its exclusively instrumental tendency and provisionally endorse the philosophical relevance of LT2 for its substantive philosophical import. Strawson's position *vis-à-vis* LT1,2 manifests a continuity in

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69 *Analysis, Science, and Metaphysics*, 317.
70 *Die generative* .., 100, 100 fn. 45.
71 Chomsky, N. 2002: *Language and the Mind Revisited-The Biolinguistic Turn*; *Language and the Mind Revisited-Language and the Rest of the World*, lectures presented at UC Berkeley on March 19 and 20, 2002. Online:
    <http://www.grad.berkeley.edu/lectures/event.php?id=126&lecturer=288>;
    <http://www.grad.berkeley.edu/lectures/event.php?id=127&lecturer=288>(31 May 2010).
72 In the sense that the former does not entail a mind-body dichotomy (cf. *Die generative* ..., 94, 102.
73 See Ryle, G. 1949: *The Concept of Mind*, London.

perspective. If one could characterize Strawson's position concerning LT1 as a movement from the parochial muddling through the use of linguistic expressions as instances of linguistic performance towards descriptive metaphysics, his position concerning LT2 manifests a move towards a priori linguistics. Throughout, this position is motivated by Strawson's ecologism about language and his repudiation of excessive formalism. His anti-instrumentalism as regards linguistic analysis equally pertains to instrumentalism in linguistics as well as in mathematical logic, in the sense of these disciplines "providing the tools for the final solutions of some central philosophic problems", as Katz[74] in the 1960s and Ayer in the 1930s proclaimed.[75]

It can now be noticed that LT2 has by Strawson's lights not provided the philosophical foundations for a linguistic theory LT1 had failed to provide, on two counts; first, because LT1 had not intended to provide these foundations, and second, because LT2 has failed to provide a perspicuous grammar. The way Strawson troughout his career has shaped his linguistic interests confirms, on the other hand, Flach's contention that LT1 had to be followed by LT2.

Descriptive analysis with connective analysis as its method, as they are concerned with the necessary concepts for any truly intelligible conception of experience is a continuation of Kant's project of a transcendental analytic. Strawson's distinction between grammatically permissible and truly intelligible conception of experience echoes Kant's distinction between the use of the categories in mere thinking and their restrictive empirical use. By this token descriptive metaphysics can, at least in aspiration, count as a transformation of the core of the classical Kantian project. The Kantianism in both Flach's and Strawson's projects can serve as a basis for speculation about the prospects of their transformations of Kant on contemporary philosophizing.[76] Without going into the issue whether Strawson can be taken as a Kant interpretation in the first place, let alone into the intricacies of the

74 Ironically, in the context of my argument, Flach dubs Katz the most decided advocate of the idea that linguistics could dissolve the deficits with which LT1 struggled. (*Die generative…*, 75 fn. 15.)

75 Cf. Moravcsik, J. M. E. 1967: *Linguistic Theory and the Philosophy of Language*. In: Foundations of Language, 3, 209–33, 209. Cfr. Katz, J. J. 1966: *Philosophy of Language*. New York; Ayer, A. 1974 (¹1936): *Language, Truth, and Logic*. Harmondsworth, 176 ff. Cf. Katz, J. J. 1965: *The Relevance of Linguistics to Philosophy*. *Journal of Philosophy*, 62, 590–602.

76 Cf. Krijnen, Chr. 2004 *Werner Flach: Die Idee der Transzendentalphilosophie*. Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung, 58 (1), 149–154, 154.

accuracy of rivalling Kant interpretations,[77] it is obvious that the parallels in their approach of philosophy, linguistic analysis and linguistics do not involve an agreement with respect to the Kantianisms Flach and Strawson advocate. This is apparent from Flach's objection against Strawson's construal of transcendental apperception as the consciousness of myself as a person.[78] The issues whether descriptive metaphysics problemtheoretically falls behind its illustrious predecessor or not, and whether connective analysis methodologically falls behind reflexive analysis[79] are to be decided by an inquiry into the soundness of the transcendental arguments Kant and Strawson construe, in particular to demonstrate the supreme principle of transcendental knowledge,[80] namely that the categories as conditions of the

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77 Flach, W. 2002: *Die Idee der Transzendentalphilosophie: Immanuel Kant,* 117. Edel regrets that Flach's exchange with concurring Kant-interpretations remains only scarce and anonymous, with the result that an adequate grasp and appreciation of Flach's position demands a thorough mastery of the Kant-literature. In this respect, Edel mentions Flach's position as regards transcendental logical self-consciousness mentioned below. (See Edel, G. 2002: *Werner Flach: Die Idee der Transzendentalphilosophie*. In: Öffentlichkeit als Bühne: Kontaminationen, Heidelberg 2003, 256–260. Online <http://www.iablis.de/iablis_t/2003/edelr.html>(21 May 2010)).

78 It can be recalled, though, that, as Rorty notices, Strawson provides two separate arguments for the claim that the possession of the concept of a physical object is a necessary condition for the possession of the concept of experience. One is the argument to the effect that the minimum requirement for transcendental apperception is that "some […] of the concepts under which particular items are recognized as falling should be such that the experiences themselves contain the basis for certain allied distinctions […] namely of a subjective component *within* a judgement of experience [an is/seems-distinction], and *between* the subjective order […] of a series of such experiences […] and the objective order of the items of which they are experiences […]" (*The Bounds...*, 101). The other is the argument that the possession of the concept of a person is a necessary condition for the possession of the concept of experience (*Individuals*, Ch. 3). Rorty states that the latter argument is (re)introduced in *The Bounds of Sense,* 102–106 "in terms of the distinction between empirical and transcendental self-consciousness" . More important in the context of Flach's objection, however, is Rorty's assertion that the former argument does not exclude that one can grasp the concept of experience even without possessing the concept of a person. (Rorty, R. 1970: *Strawson's Objectivity Argument,* The Review of Metaphysics, 212 fn. 5.)

79 See for 'reflexive analysis' *Grundzüge* ..., 53ff.

80 *KrV* A 111. In a somewhat detranscendentalized allusion to this principle Rorty characterises the transcendental deduction of the categories along with Strawson's reconstruction of it, sc. the objectivity argument, as "the argument that the possibility of experience somehow involves the possibility of experience of objects" (*Strawson's objectivity argument*, 207).

possibility of experience also are the conditions of the possibility of the ob-
jects of experience.[81]