

ON THE SYNCHRONIC FALLACY

by
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Introductory Remarks – The General Horizon of this Paper

My reply to Faarlund is bound to contain an element of reflexivity.

The Synchronic Fallacy criticises, as well as problematises, some of the basic conditions on which Faarlund hinges his criticism: since *The Synchronic Fallacy* criticises modern (synchronic) linguistics for not having explicitized its fundamental assumptions, assumptions whose logical geography *The Synchronic Fallacy* shows to be moribund – my replies to Faarlund will often contain the question: what do you – as a proponent of the synchronic-generativist(?) tradition¹ – mean by this or that concept/term – in particular the **state-** (pp. 6, 7) and **systems** concepts and the oxymoron-like one, a **synchronic stage** (cf. Faarlund 1990:1)? And: where does this or that term/concept come from? I shall here state as a general summary of the critical part of *The Synchronic Fallacy* the conceptual horizon of my reply: *ever since its advent in 1901 (H.-G. Wiwel)/1914 (F. de Saussure) synchronism in its innumerable versions has been unable to meaningfully refer to anything outside its own practices, because the 'object(s)' of synchronic discourse(s) has/have always been and always will remain the synchronic linguist's own discourse – with the latter in an objectifying or objectified function (see Conclusion below). This is an instance of Linguisticism (The Synchronic Fallacy, p. 124), because the object of synchronism is not the pre-established, let alone pre-existing attendant on the synchronic viewer's gaze but the product of that gaze. Modern synchronism in general and generativism in particular have no privileged access to extra-discursive validity and to any natural, theory-independent point(s) of reference ('referent') – even Glossematics accepts this due to its explicit nominalist stance.*

In a similar vein I must here make do with calling attention to *The Synchronic Fallacy's* cognitive-epistemological criticism of modern synchronism, in particular that version of foundationalism, **Essentialism**, which dominates synchronic/generativist theorising. One might have hoped that with the virtual end of Glossematics and the publication of Zellig S. Harris's *Structural Linguistics* in the 1950s², the static essentialism of modern linguistics would have run

its course. However, in the very same decade static essentialism in the shape of the ontological dualism of the competence-performance couple gained a new lease of life with the advent of the transformational-generative paradigm, developing into the generativism of Latemodernism.³

These introductory words are meant to underline the fact that Faarlund ignores the theoretical objective of my essay: a constructive refutation of early- and latemodern synchronic linguistics – with its corollary that history is 'dependent on' synchronic theorising – through the demonstration of the possibility of constructing an (immanent) historical theory, the construction of a well-defined historical theory (*The Synchronic Fallacy*, Chapters 5 and 6). In no way shall I question Faarlund's reasons for focussing on few particular aspects of my essay, but his criticism is therefore bound to overlook the reasons for my criticism of modern synchronism, its essentialist pluriversionality, i.e. its many versions of (ontological) dualising theories.

Part 1. Sixteen Replies

1) Adhering to the dated metaphysics of synchronic essentialism, Faarlund misses the essence in my *langue-parole* discussion: first of all, the concept of *la langue* (Faarlund: a grammatical system) is questioned; Faarlund does not see that I question the priority – of whatever nature such priority may be – of *la langue* vis-à-vis *la parole* qua some kind of manifestation of a preestablished (systemslike or systemic) entity. The synchronic tradition has not proved that there is such an entity as *la langue*/the system/internalised grammar or that such noun phrases have an extra-discursive referent.⁴ Faarlund works within a modern version of Medieval Realism, seeing that he presupposes the object whose existence he/his tradition should have proved; I must quote in extenso; the underlined parts of the quote mark Faarlund's hypostatisation:

Men det er nettopp den teoretiske og metodiske fordel med det siste århundres dualisme i språkvitenskapen at man kan skille mellom det historieløse system, som er tilgjengelig for spedbarn og språkbrukere uten formell utdanning, og opphavet, som vi

lærer at kjenne kun gjennom bevisste studier. Ingen vil vel benekte at dette er to typer kunnskap, ... (p. 55, my emphasis).⁵

Use of the definite article does not in itself create an extra-discursive or extra-linguistic referent. That there might be two types of knowledge is not to be denied a priori – but the problem is that latemodern linguistics has not proved the existence of the former type of knowledge: where is the proof that knowledge (of an internalised grammar) exists and is – constitutes – a 'history-less' system? And if such knowledge really exists, it follows (a) that the respective speakers' knowledge *appears* as some kind of imperfect manifestation of it, and (b) that grammarians' versions are also imperfect attempts at explicitizing that knowledge. So my question is: 1) what is that which the (generative) grammarians' imperfect versions are versions of, and 2) what is it that the speakers' utterances (concrete language usage) are manifestations of? My answer to 2) is: a fictitious entity, a fable, couched in the diction of a dated *manifestatio*-metaphysics.

2) I shall not labour Faarlund's concrete representation (pp. 55-56) of my view of man's historical sense: nowhere do I say that a child of two years has some kind of preestablished sense of history or for that matter sense of his or her language's history; but I am saying that any human being has a historical sense, a sense without which he/she could not survive as a human being, could not obtain an empirically relevant sense of reality. So there is a difference between this mental faculty, which enables us to comprehend and create our existence, including our everyday languages, (through time), and the sense of the past that any child begins to develop from the moment she begins to learn her native language. Our historical sense is so inalienably connected with our respective everyday languages that neither can be separated from the other without impairment of our sense of reality. Faarlund should have related my view of man's historical sense to my theory of the two language universals, synonymy and polysemy.

Therefore Faarlund's rendition of my [telephone] – [phone] example (*The Synchronic Fallacy*, pp. 50-51) becomes tendentious: had he placed my exposition in the context of the following chapters he would have seen that my point is that when we speak we produce 'variants'⁶, *part* of whose meaning is contingent on their

origin,⁷ and for the child or any speaker to speak intelligibly he or she must be able to transcend the synchronicity of the spoken utterance and produce a structural phenomenon that is transsynchronic, and comprehension of such a transsynchronic phenomenon presupposes the dynamics of man's historical sense or sense of time. What I mean by this is abundantly clear from the following chapters.

3) Faarlund appropriately calls attention to the transcendence problem, stating and arguing from modernism's triviality: 'Man må skille mellem X og studiet af X.' (cf. the quote above: *to typer kunnskap*) (p. 57).⁸

But again Faarlund ignores what is at stake: *The Synchronic Fallacy* questions the unproblematised view of the relationship between theory/metalanguage and data/object-language that we see in modern linguistics; I cannot go into details here (see below), but I place this problem in a cognitive-epistemological context (following the Continental tradition of modern linguistics): is it possible to uphold the purported distinction (of empiricism and positivism) between theory and object when it comes to the historical domain? Here Faarlund's criticism backfires: isn't it the ultimate objective of generativism – in accordance with Plato-like ontological dualisms – to establish a merger between theory (knowledge) and object (ontology)? And if that object's nature is change, not staticness, then the metalanguage/the theory must be a historical – a transsynchronic and trans-static – one. I have presented an argument to the effect that modern linguistics has not substantiated its static view of language⁹, whereas I have presented an argument that demonstrates the historical nature of language. Nowhere – neither in mainstream structuralist nor generativist, functional/systemic schools – do we find an explicit argument that supports a static view of language.

4) This takes us on to what Faarlund calls trivial statements – statements that *The Synchronic Fallacy* thematises.

Faarlund's first triviality - synchronism's version of the transcendence problem

The Synchronic Fallacy asks the question: where does (part of) our knowledge come from? Where does the (synchronic) linguist get his

technical-theoretical terms or concepts from? Cutting my original argument short, I shall make do with the following: the everyday language has in itself *Erkenntniswert*. The everyday language provides knowledge of itself, being in a sense its own metalanguage. E.g., since nobody has seen (a) language change, and language change is an undeniable fact of any language, then knowledge of language change must come from our knowledge of our everyday languages. The question is then: how do we create a theory of language (change) that can 'represent' this – not necessarily internalised, but internal – knowledge, and how to create a theory of language that is also a theory of man's historical sense, if our historical sense is somehow coterminous with our language knowledge? When a child learns her native language, she also learns how to exist, how to acquire and apply an authentic sense of reality: this – what I have called **the existential function of language** – has by and large been disregarded by modernism's static conception of its 'object'.

Faarlund's second triviality – all languages change constantly

5) 'En påstand om at språk forandrer seg, og at dagens språktilstand er et resultat af forandring, er en triviell og uinteressant påstand som ikke behøver noen videre begrunnelse' (p. 57).¹⁰

Wrong and correct!

Modernism's postulate to the effect that all languages change is trivial and uninteresting; my aim is: to problematise that postulate and make it a theoretically interesting challenge. If we don't do that, historical linguistics and therefore linguistics will not transcend the present impasse that modernism has reached.

Modernism's corollary postulate that a given language state is the result of change is equally uninteresting and trivial, contingent, however, on how it is substantiated. In the first place: *where* is a given language state to be 'found' – how has the synchronic linguist substantiated the empirical relevance of the technical term: *a language state*? How can the synchronic linguist convince anybody of the purported fact that one state is continued by another state when s/he cannot explicitize the confines of each such state? *When* do State 1 end and State 2 begin, where and how does State 2 break off from

State 1, how can State 1 and State 2 constitute an unbroken development, when State 1 is conceptually/empirically different from State 2, etc. etc.? Such questions – criticised by Faarlund on pp. 58-60 – are not to be dealt with lightheadedly, as Faarlund does: Faarlund's argument is precisely one long postulate, a postulate that reiterates our tradition's positivistic position. I shall counter as follows:

My question to Faarlund's empirical answer to the state-problem: what are the objective, i.e. empirically (= linguistically) relevant, criteria on which Faarlund divides the history of a language into periods – how many states/stages make up a period, say, from the early Runic language to modern Norwegian/Danish? I argue that periodisation is fictionalisation of history; a period has no objective correlate, hence we need no theory of the historical period. My argument is therefore for *une histoire événementielle*.

My answer to Faarlund's theoretical answer to the state problem – that the state is needed because it is from the state that we abstract a system that we can compare with another state's system – is simply a demonstration of the empirical and theoretical irrelevance of the state and systems concepts. So my appeal to the modernist tradition: prove what you postulate. Substantiate the empirical relevance of the static essentialism and with it the *manifestatio*-ontology of modern synchronic theorizing.

6) Faarlund's second part of this argument requires an exposition in its own right: My position is that the two relates of the transcendence relationship cannot be kept in watertight compartments. I am not saying – as Faarlund seems to generalise – that language/object and science/meta merge (Faarlund's two Xs), but that transcendence is a participative relationship; in my essay, I constantly remind my readers of the fact that knowledge of language stems from the object itself, but not all of our knowledge of language comes from the object itself. Hence we must distinguish between 'object' and 'meta' and Faarlund is right in saying that my theory requires a new research strategy, that is one which transcends the positivism and empiricism, if not naturalism, of modern (generative) synchronic linguistics. But Faarlund is wrong when he infers from my theory – 'change is not contingent on *stasis* in the form of a system or a state' – that it will then be 'impossible to describe a language state, a language state (språktilstand) being an existence modus for [any] everyday language.' Again Faarlund takes

for granted what he should prove, the existence of a language state; if the state is not empirically relevant, Faarlund's argument is invalid; secondly, Faarlund's argument is not valid for another reason: the primacy - logical and/or ontological - of change does not a priori exclude the possibility that a *stasis*-concept may find a role and place in the theory. My theory of history does accept - find a place for - the fact that there is a static-synchronic element in our everyday languages, whereas Faarlund does not (?cannot) come up with theoretical support for the trivial postulate that a state is a precondition for language - in any of its, according to Faarlund, innumerable existence modi (manifestations) (cf. 7) below). It is precisely such by now trivialised and therefore trivialising postulates that *The Synchronic Fallacy* problematises and criticises - for being unsubstantiated relics of Medieval Realism.

Faarlund's third and fourth trivialities

7) 'Det er nettopp muligheten for å abstrahere ut et bakenforliggende statisk system, en tilstand, som setter oss i stand til både å lære og bruke språket' (p. 58).¹¹

Now a system has become static and the state is the same as a system. I don't think that Faarlund means what he is saying here. Secondly, if Faarlund refers to the language-learner (the object language), then again his postulate needs substantiation: how does he know that acquisition and use of language require a static system?

8) 'I tillegg kommer da at det også bliver umulig å beskrive endring, dersom vi ikke kan beskrive endringens utgangspunkt og endepunkt. Dette vil Hansen antagelig være enig med meg i, men det er vanskelig å se at han har tatt dette problem innover sig på en seriøs måte' (p. 58).¹²

This is perhaps the gravest fallacy that modernism commits: the start-process-end conception of historical development is bound to lead to the fictionalisation of the existence of a language. Where do we find the start and the end of a change? Empirically, nobody has experienced – seen or heard – the start or end of a change/development. Theoretically, modern linguistics has not substantiated the

extra-discursive relevance of the two – three – concepts: 'the start of a change', 'the end of a change', and 'a change in progress/ongoing change'. Faarlund and the synchronic tradition land themselves in a predicament: how do the start, the end (and the process in between) cohere – empirically, ontologically or logically – with the concepts of the state, the static system: how many states are required of such a simple change as is illustrated by the development of OE *ham* into ME *hoomel hayme*? Thus I most certainly do not agree with Faarlund, since my theory of history and the argument behind it is one long refutation of the eschatological, static/systemic tripartite conception of change which synchronic linguistics with its two-state model has been operating with for the past 100 years. Lastly, this eschatological conception of change is the pure product of the linguist's gaze, belonging to the fictional class of terms where we also find *the period*.

9) Following Faarlund the nature of language change follows from the applied view of language – precisely: change being a product of the linguist's. As such the position of change in the study of language is dependent on which existence-mode (*eksistensform*, p. 60) the linguist regards as primary in itself and which one is primary from a scientific study of language. What are the criteria for the linguist's choice – and where do we find such criteria?

Faarlund's fifth triviality

10) With its ontological characterizations of, with its many different schools and theories of the same common object¹³, modern linguistics is a disintegrating discipline, bound to deal with only the *disiecta membra* of a unitary object and to divide what cannot be divided. Faarlund accepts this multiplicity. Therefore we see an unhappy tendency to compartmentalisation and the placing of people in little boxes. This makes it easier to criticise and to defend the tradition on the ground that the person in question 'confuses what should not be confused' (*in casu* two different 'ontologies'). For this to be valid criticism Faarlund should have shown that my (ontological) view of language creates inconsistencies. Faarlund does not do that. Faarlund does not see that I have demonstrated the fallacious nature of the tradition's categorical statements of this well-known structure: 'Language is ... a mental, a social, a formal entity',

so that the question of a predicate's primacy is irrelevant. One example: the postulate 'Language is a mental entity' says that there are more mental entities than language, that we can talk about certain mental phenomena that are not associated with or 'tainted' by language. It is one of the *The Synchronic Fallacy's* premisses that mind, language and 'thinking' cannot be separated. – Faarlund must prove they can. Be that as it may, the cognitive-epistemologically fundamental objection to such statements is that they say that linguists can look on language as a *spectaculum*, to be analysed in absolute distance of the 'objective, rational' analyst. Nobody can step outside (his) language. When it comes to such categorical statements I have proved that they must be regarded as corollaries of aitional relationships: language but not only if a mental fact, a social fact, a formal fact. This view creates unity out of the heterogeneity of modernism, it says that mental facts, social facts formal facts/entities are all sign-functional (see Collingwood 1964:174-177).

Faarlund's sixth triviality – the purported autonomy of synchronism

11) It is not I who create a problem, by 'stripping synchronism of its independent status as a descriptive discipline'.¹⁴ *The Synchronic Fallacy* presents an argument that demonstrates synchronism's postulate, and my question is: what rational underpinning can synchronism come up with to make the point of view empirically relevant? Not only does the eating of the pudding bear my criticism out, Faarlund's own words above about the many schools and theories are living proof of the close relationship between synchrony and fiction. Where do we find a cogent argument to the effect that the synchronic point of view is a well-defined, a well-argued-for scientific and empirically relevant position – an approach that transcends *institutionalised subjectivity*?

Faarlund's criticism of The Synchronic Fallacy's criticism of the langue-parole dualism.

12) Following the synchronic standard view of variants, two or more variants are variants of ('come from') a common invariant. Apparently, this is not so in generativism (pp. 63-64): 'Synkront har

ikke *passenger* og *passager* samme underliggende fonologiske form', says Faarlund (p. 62).

Corollary: all synchronic variants have different underlying forms? Unfortunately, Faarlund's position isn't clear, seeing that his criticism of my *atom-atomic* example is based on the empirically irrelevant concept of *abstract representation*, whose referent is not a word. Fair enough, because that's my point: neither the standard dualism's slant-forms nor underlying representations have empirical relevance (*The Synchronic Fallacy*, p. 124); but how does Faarlund make his two different underlying forms above agree with the abstract representation of the two other words (p. 63)? Or: are there also here two abstract representations? Faarlund misses my point: how does the generativist arrive at his or her *underlying forms* and/or *abstract representations*? Where do they come from? My argument is that such theorising is **Linguisticism**, the concepts coming from the generativist's own language/mind/thinking. What justifies the generativist's creation of a second reality in addition to empirical reality? And most importantly, what role do the entities of that realm play in the existence of a language?

13) The following comment by Faarlund illustrates clearly that Faarlund's criticism misses a significant point: my analyses of the linguistic tradition's key concepts are to be comprehended against the horizon of that tradition's own claims as well as the constructive part of *The Synchronic Fallacy*. My criticism of the concept of the synchronic/static phoneme, the epitome of modernism's static systems-thinking, is conducted against the horizon of its – by synchronic linguists – alleged role in language development, its empirical relevance – if 'underlying or abstract representations or forms' and other systems-like elements play no role in the existence of human language – why do we need them?

Det lar seg sikkert gjøre å bedrive historisk språkvitenskap uten et fonembegrep; det gjorde språkvitenskapsmenn til langt ut i det nittende århundre, og i visse miljøer til langt ut i det tyvende. Men av Hansen venter vi jo at han skal presentere noe nytt og bringe språkvitenskapen et stykke fremover. Det går imidlertid ikke klart frem av avhandlingen hva han vil sette i stedet for et fonembegrep (p. 62).¹⁵

If the concept of the phoneme and all that it represents synchronically – including *abstract representations, underlying forms* – is (are) empirically relevant – if it/they have any extra-discursive referent – then the linguists Faarlund has in mind must have missed an essential point in their empirical studies; or they must have presupposed it as an existential condition, as human beings exist irrespectively of their knowledge of (the law of) gravity. Either is absurd. This quote unambiguously reveals how Faarlund's select criticism of *The Synchronic Fallacy* misleads him.

14) *The Synchronic Fallacy*'s chapters 5 and 6 implement my theory of language whose premisses have been defined in partly the *Prologue*, partly in chapters 1, 2 and 4, and this sign-functional (semiotic) theory explains the fact of language 'change' without resorting to purely linguistically motivated 'emic' entities. And my answer is: the transsynchronic developmental series replaces the 'phoneme' and its corollary the A>B-two-state model. I have demonstrated the possibility of constructing a language theory of the period – in its autonomous *Eigenart*.

15) *The Synchronic Fallacy* presents an argument against modernism's uncritical acceptance of such synchronic trivialities /fallacies as mentioned above, thereby demonstrating the fictional element in modern linguistics. To repeat: it would be interesting to see the generativist's, the universalist's, the synchronic linguist's response to the question: why is modern linguistics not a fictional discipline? What makes it scientific (= 'wissenschaftlich')? What makes the linguistic community a scientific community? It is such a justifying metadiscussion that *The Synchronic Fallacy* has introduced into linguistics (see Lyotard 1979) – a type of metadiscussion that has been flourishing in literature and history for the past 30 years.

16) Faarlund concludes this part of his opposition by stating axiomatically: 'Det kommuniserende mennesket er ikke språkvitenskapens objekt, og slett ikke "human existence"' (p. 64).¹⁶ What, then, is the object of linguistics? When one reads the linguistic treatises written in the last 100 years, one cannot but doubt the existence of such a common object! If there is such an object, then Faarlund and the (type of) school he represents should both demonstrate how man/mind and language can be separated and

what such an object (means) is ('kommunikasjonsmiddelet', p. 64, emphasis in original), where it is found – outside the narratives of synchronic linguists. Faarlund does not criticise my view of historical existence as **sign-functional**, semiotic processes in which the speaker is a necessary player through connotative relationships. So it is more than a desideratum that linguistics introduces an anthropology – a view of man – that transcends the ideal speaker/hearer, man as an imperfect language-user, and man as a language-learning creature.

Part 2. Den vitenskapelige diskurs of The Synchronic Fallacy

The second part of Faarlund's opposition (pp. 64-67) deals with 'the scientific discourse'.

Here Faarlund proves my point above: the fictional and disintegrating state of linguistics, in addition to committing the **synchronic-essentialist fallacy**: 'generative grammar', says Faarlund, 'is found in many different variants, so that criticism of one variant does not necessarily apply to generativism in general (*generativ grammatik generelt*)' (p. 67, my translation). Let's apply the dualism's notation:

a) [one generative variant]

different from

[another generative variant]

both being versions of /generativism in general/ – or does each of the variants have its own underlying representation?

What is it that the variants are variants of – where do we find an exposition/a narrative of generativism in general – where do we find that which the complex sign *generativism in general* refers to? In a Platonic realm beyond the grasp of human beings – in a fictional universe?¹⁷ Secondly, Faarlund's view of the scientific process is strange: how come that the falsification of a variant narrative – '[a] is false' – does not falsify the foundation/essence of that variant – hence '/generativism in general/ is false'? Is generativism such a totalitarian paradigm that it is either 'the' necessary condition for all its historical variants (cf. Faarlund's *de seneste utformninger* 'the latest

versions', p. 64), or beyond and above normal falsificationist criteria (*modus tollens*)? Paradoxically, Faarlund's line of reasoning corroborates my view of the historical nature of science, observing the processes constituting what I call **The Critico-Philological Method** (*The Synchronic Fallacy*, p. 133).

Faarlund criticises me for not dealing with the 'latest' and 'most recent' versions of *the* Generativist Paradigm. Why should I – for that matter anybody? Being what they are, historical products (accidents) as are all the previous versions of the Paradigm, they are bound to become yesterday's (dated) knowledge. Faarlund is a believer in scientific progress – the latest being the best, truest, most accurate description of linguistic reality (the child's I-Language), hence being the closest representation of generativism in general, and with this we are back to square one: what is the denotatum of the complex sign *generativism in general*?

Faarlund's criticism of my criticism of the synchronic-static (e.g., generativist) project misses two essential points. The issue is how does the learning child internalise the correct grammar of the modern English word *a tent - two tents*. Faarlund states that 'there is a difference between the input that 'the baby can listen to', a plural form of *tents* without [-t-], and the internalised grammar that the child construes on the basis of many types of input, e.g., the singular form /tent/, and a number of regular plural formations like *cats* and *cakes*', and Faarlund jumps to this unmediated inference: 'The child is therefore capable of analysing input-forms, not merely of repeating them' (p. 67, my translations).

Three things, logically different, are involved here: 1) the mediating mental processes are in great demand: how does Faarlund /the language-learning child know that the plural is to be /tents/ and not /tens/, the singular /tent/, not /ten/? How does Faarlund know that a *t* has been left out in the plural, and a *t* not inserted in the singular? 2) I am concerned with the empirical relationship between the so-called synchronic variants *tents*, *tens*, and *tent*, not their eventual codification as stylistic variants, just as my repeated use of the two variants *telephone* and *phone* illustrates the historical theory that permits us to say that *telephone* is older than ('is the origin of') *phone*, while their possible codification in English falls outside the scope of the advanced historical theory.¹⁸ 3) I am concerned with the criteria that permit, rather make Faarlund and proponents of the synchronic paradigm claim that *tens* and *tents*,

telephone and *phone* are variants of the same 'words', with the reasons why synchronic linguists claim that *atomic* is a derivational form, *atom* a base-form, why the synchronic tradition calls the plural forms *cats*, *cakes* 'regular'? 4) The last line in the quote above about the inferential capability of the child demonstrates the circularity of this generativist reasoning: what is the correct internalised grammar in this case? It is the grammar that reflects the forms of the written language – it is the grammar that the child internalises.

Faarlund refers this type of reasoning to what generativists call 'Plato's Problem' (cf. Chomsky 1986): I've always been curious to know where in Plato's dialogues we can see that Plato was surprised to realise that man knows so much as he actually does despite poor, imperfect and faulty, empirical stimuli, and where the subjective terms *so much*, *so little*, *poor*, etc. are defined?

Part 3. Fremstillingsform – the style of The Synchronic Fallacy

For linguists steeped in the traditional terminology of 20th-century modernism, a terminology inherited through an almost unbroken tradition from the earliest grammarians in Ancient Athens and Rome (cf. Hjelmslev 1963:11-12), hence in the static language of space of our Western Civilisation – linguists who have not liberated themselves from, in Hermann Paul's words, the tyranny, *i.e.* Realism, of his or her everyday language, it must be difficult to grasp the meaning of a dynamic terminology, the language of time. Faarlund criticises my system of definitions, embodying my theory of language and history (of time and 'change'), for not being 'defined understandably' (*definert på en forståelig måde*; p. 67). That type of criticism is irrelevant: my definitions observe traditional criteria for the construction of a well-defined theory, based on an explicit system of definitions, with as few indefinables (primitives) as possible, and any reader can see what they refer to if s/he applies them to the data – the developmental series – of the essay. It goes without saying that they are inapplicable in a static, non-dynamic conception of our constantly 'changing' everyday languages.

2) The epitome of Faarlund's troubles with coming to grips with my theory can be seen from his remarks on my use of the word *Eigennatur*: Faarlund has a confused view of the transcendence

problem – one of the basic themes of *The Synchronic Fallacy*, because – not unlike other modernists and generativists – he has not made up his mind as to the nature of this issue: of course, Faarlund's criticism exhibits nominalist views, but the type of theory-formation that he seems to be following is the (Anglo-American) type that has dominated modern linguistics since the mid-1950s in sharp contrast to the stringency of the tradition (Nominalism) that ended with Zellig S. Harris in the US and in Continental Europe with Glossematics (see Hjelmslev 1963:13-14).

It is abundantly clear from the essay what a phenomenon's *Eigennatur*, an undefinable,¹⁹ means: it means that 1) the data of a theory cannot be regarded as contingent, accidental, non-necessary, potential, mere raw-material, 2) data has a meaning of its own that does not come from the applied theory, 3) all knowledge does not come from a theory, hence 4) a strictly Nominalist theory has a reckoning with the writing of fiction, the nominalist with the author.

Following *The Synchronic Fallacy*, the transcendence problem is only a problem when it is not considered in its full participative nature: science is not an either-or trade: nominalism, Realism or naive realism. My view of the scientific process steers a middle course between Realism and nominalism: to anybody working with human – social, historical – matter, existence, his or her everyday language is bound to enunciate existence postulates, create reality – not all of reality (cf Hjelmslev 1963:3-4, 8, 15-19).

Faarlund's final critical remarks apply to my definitions of the well-worn concepts of 'to develop into' and 'to come (develop) from'. To a linguist who takes for granted what indeed should be thematised, it is obvious that the concepts of change and to develop pose no problems, neither do 'to exist through time' and 'man's sense of history or time'. To cut another long story short: I have demonstrated that such historico-dynamic terms represent cognitive processes that enable us to grasp reality, to exist as human beings: we do not see change, we grasp change, we so apply our mental faculties (language) to our reality (existence) that we can survive in that reality for at least some length of time; we so create through the **existential function of language** a kind of reality that is so amenable to our faculties and capabilities that man exists not exclusively at the mercy of the 'blind' forces of physical/animal/biological nature.

Obviously, my theory testifies to the structurally complex nature of in particular language 'change' and in general to man's historical

existence. Synchronic, static, point-in-time oriented descriptions of a historical phenomenon such as human language, couched in the predominantly spatial metaphors of the synchronic tradition's nomenclature – be it *subject, verb, predicate, object, noun phrase, verb phrase*, etc. – can only approach the tip of that iceberg which is called human language, never come to grips with it. Contemporary writers of fiction – Jeanette Winterson (*Art Objects*) and Michael Crichton (*Timeline*) – have realised this.

My introduction of a new, well-defined dynamic terminology into the study of language is a necessary first step in the direction of liberating linguistics from the shackles²⁰ of a type of terminology that carries with it dated metaphysics, old-fashioned views of reality. Whether the attempt is successful is as such immaterial, my purpose having been to demonstrate the poverty of synchronic nomenclatures when it comes to man's dynamic *capacitas linguae* and to demonstrate the realistic possibility of creating a dynamic nomenclature that is faithful to that faculty and what comes from it.

Conclusion. Three additional comments

1) Faarlund finds it difficult to follow my argument explaining the traditional A>B-process (*The Synchronic Fallacy*, pp. 135-139), exemplified by OE *a: (ham 'home') > Southumbrian o: (hoome) /Northumbrian a: (hayme)*. My argument demonstrates that the historical processes A>B (and A>A) are not simple, unidirectional dependency relations in which a) A so develops into B or A that the successor/'daughter' presupposes the predecessor/'mother' (B(A) unilaterally, and b) the concepts 'to develop into' and 'to come from' are not symmetrical, mirror-processes. Firstly, the 'change' process is structural, a process in which the present developing into the (next) present so becomes a part of the present, which, in turn, both continues part of 'its' present and makes the previous present the past. Secondly, the past is a structurally acquired and created property. From 1) and 2) it follows – thirdly – that our knowledge of something coming from something else is dependent on the process of something developing into something else: man's knowledge of himself as existing – 'developing into' – is empirically and psychologically more immediate than his knowledge of himself as having a past – 'coming from'. The synchronic consequences are these: man's

grasp – conception of – himself as existing in a certain place at a certain (point in) time appears from – depends on – a complex mental process, which is necessarily structural and transsynchronic. To put this in deliberately simplifying diction: when we look on something as a point-in-time existing phenomenon (the tip of the iceberg), we understand its synchronicity because we are able to comprehend its transsynchronic 'historicity' through the mentally complex cognitive category of 'to develop into, to exist'. From this it follows that 'change' is not an empirically sensuous phenomenon or process, but a cognitive category that enables man to read coherence into his existence as 'development into and from'. In other words, *The Synchronic Fallacy* with its language theory reverses completely the traditional view of change as rule-breaking, something eruptive, destructive, as something that creates breaks ('revolutions'): change – a transsynchronic category – creates coherence, thereby making reality amenable to man's mind.

2) Faarlund's view of the scientific process implies a notion of progress; but progress in linguistics should not be dealt with lightly: a) progress presupposes a static and unitary object against which scientific statements can be verified or tested. – Is the object of generativism/synchronism the same in 2001 as it was in 1971? Is the internalised grammars of, say, English speaking children/people the same in 2001 as they were in 1901? Or: b) progress presupposes that a 2001-theory of language is better than both another 2001-theory of language and a 1951-theory of language?

It would be more than interesting if this double theme – meta-discussion²¹ – could become a target for linguistic reasoning. *The Synchronic Fallacy* has demonstrated that Modernism's synchronisation of history is not cogent; that an immanent theory of history is possible.

3) *The Synchronic Fallacy* has thematised as well as questioned the trivialities of modern synchronic linguistics, asked a number of questions, doubted the appropriateness of some of modernism's key concepts, and in accordance with the **Critico-Philological Method** I have provided analyses and answers, and argued for my claims.

In these postmodern times such a project should be welcomed and in harmony with the times, but to the modern mind, 'who knows what he knows, and knows what he does not know', the less self-

assured mind of a proponent of a questioning philosophy must be playing quite a different language-game, for the simple reason that he does not take for granted the validity of the rules of the dominant Paradigm, taking those 'rules' on a ride beyond the sanctuary of the Paradigm. Plato's Problem was that he had to co-think his own historical existence: how can a historical person reach the ideality of an ahistorical realm?

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Notes

1. I do not want to put Faarlund in a certain paradigm-box, but since he chooses to become a defender of the generativist paradigm in this discussion, I shall not distinguish between Faarlund and generativists.
2. It is not inappropriate to mention Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies* as an attack on the dominant version of Essentialism in our Western Civilisation. See also Gellner 1964.
3. It is from the late nineteenfifties, which saw the coming of the ideal speaker/hearer, that I date the beginning of latemodernism in linguistics.
4. So when Faarlund says that 'the grammatical system, la langue, is a product of the former use of the system, "la parole", being each new generation's input' (p. 54), he is perpetuating the dated metaphysics that I am criticizing.
5. 'But it is precisely the last century's linguistic theoretical and methodological advantage that [linguists] can distinguish between the history-less system, to which language-learning infants and language users without any formal education have access, and the result which [linguists] learn to know through conscious studies.' (My translation).
6. Thus synonymy is a precondition for speech, hence a language universal. Faarlund does not consider my theory of polysemy and synonymy in chapter 4.3. and 4.4.
7. The interesting point here is *origin*. A synchronic linguist following the essentialist tradition would say that the origin of any utterance is its systemic/*langue*-correlate.
8. 'We must distinguish between (keep) the object X and the study of that X (separate).'
9. This is not a question of either-or: on the contrary, the historical theory of *The Synchronic Fallacy* consists of a union of static and dynamic concepts.
10. 'a postulate to the effect that languages change, and that today's language state is a result of change, is a trivial and uninteresting postulate that requires no special justification.'
11. 'It is precisely the possibility of abstracting an "underlying" static system, a state, which enables [man] both to learn and use language.'
12. '... it will be impossible to describe change, unless we can describe the change's start and end. I assume that Hansen will agree, but it is difficult to see that he has treated this problem in a serious way.'
13. Faarlund p. 59 'Innen våre dagers ulike lingvistiske skoleretninger og teorier.' ('Within today's various schools and theories.')
14. To put it unproblematically, synchronic description yields shortened knowledge of its object, by only scraping the surface of the tip of the iceberg. Secondly, synchronism has always been labouring under the task of how to rationally delimit its object – what are the spatio-temporal limits of a given synchronic state, synchronic system?
15. 'It may be possible to do historical linguistics without a phonemic concept; linguists did so far into the nineteenth century, and in certain linguistic quarters into the twentieth century. But we expect that Hansen will present something new and make linguistic science progress. However, it is not quite clear what he will replace the phonemic concept with' (p. 62).
16. 'Communicating man, let alone human existence are not the objects of linguistic science.' – Language change without a speaker is a contradiction in terms.
17. As Faarlund puts it himself (p. 65): generativist theorising is merely *en abstrakt modellering av språkevenen, eller den internaliserte grammatik* ('the construction of an abstract model of man's language faculty, or internalised grammar'). Generativism does not pretend that its descriptions are anything but 'idealisations and generalisations'.
18. To put it differently – and as a question to Faarlund: How does Faarlund (1990:2) know that some Nordic dialects exhibit an 'unbroken line of attested linguistic material from the second century AD up until the present'? What immanent historical (or synchronic) theory enables a person to claim that, say, the Latin of Caesar is older than (an ancestor of) modern French, or that Old English *fæder* is older than, the origin of, etc., Present-Day English *father*?

19. Reality cannot be defined. – As Hans Reichenbach (1966:20), following the Socratean tradition of the function of definitions, put it in 1947: *We can build a submarine, not define it.*
20. Givón's interesting historical overview of the history of linguistics (1995:chapter 1) is very telling in this respect seeing that his argument and whole exposition fall within the limits set by those traditional concepts that have dominated and permeated most domains of knowledge/science from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. In a word, Givón demonstrates that the pros and cons of different, indeed, conflicting, linguistic theories do not transcend the spatio-static thinking of our Western Civilisation.
21. I have tried to reintroduce the scientific metadiscourse into linguistics, a type of discourse that Glossematics only touched briefly, but which (re)appeared on the American Continent in the early nineteenseventies in sociological, historical and literary quarters to spread to Europe. See Jean-Francois Lyotard *La condition postmoderne*, where I have borrowed my use of *language games* from.

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