

Preface

First of all, a word about what this book is, and what it is not. It is a historical account of some central ideas in modern linguistics—an account of the ideas and some of the events surrounding their development, debate, and disposition. The book is *not*, appearances to the contrary, the history of modern linguistics or of any other period. It is far too selective in its choice of topics to be thought of as *the* history of anything. If it is historical, it is because we feel that this is the only way to narrate the story and the best way to hear it as well.

It is a study of rupture and continuity in linguistics. The primary lesson that we draw from the work we have studied here is that in the realm of ideas, continuity is overwhelmingly the way things work, while in the realm of personal interactions, acknowledgments, and jealousies, the degree of rupture that our scholars have described is great. We might even say that it is *astonishing*, but there is nothing to be surprised at, really, if we listen to what historians of ideas and historians of science have been telling us. Our goal in this book is to make clear *how* this pattern of continuity and of rupture has come to be and to shed a bit of light on *why* it is. In the end, we think that this situation has some regrettable sides to it, and we have not shied away from drawing some normative conclusions as well. But by and large we have subscribed to the eternally optimistic philosophy that the truth will set us free and so have tried to keep the moralizing to a minimum. Not to avoid it completely, but to keep it to a minimum.

We will have occasions in this book to remind ourselves, as well as the readers, what intellectual continuity means and what it does not mean. When we find intellectual continuity in the development of a new idea, we do not mean that the new idea was easy to come by, or that it was not

novel, or that it was not a work of first-class originality. It is easy to misread a history such as ours in which the connections between new perspectives and older developments are emphasized. Continuity means that the new ideas were based on the present; it does not mean that this basis was trivial, or obvious, or less astonishing than anyone may have thought.

What *does* it mean, then? In our view, it is based on the notion (hardly controversial, in our day and age) that at any given moment, there are a range of ideas, opinions, and beliefs that comprise the current state of affairs. These ideas, these common beliefs, will vary with their degree of adhesion: some will be held by many, some by few. Some will have arisen recently, others will have been around for a long time. These ideas will not all be consistent with one another. (If they were, there would be no notion of controversy in a discipline.) These ideas form, in some respects, a large organic garden, or perhaps a zoo, in which change and variety is the principal constant. It is always the case that new creatures are descendants of other living organisms: new creatures do not come on the scene with no living, direct ancestors, or arise as the descendant of a long-extinct breed or race.

To put it slightly differently, when we look at the origin of *new ideas*, they are always the creative modification of several ideas that have been developed recently that no one has yet connected. There are three crucial elements in that: there is a connection that is made of several ideas; those ideas are current ideas of some recency; and this novel connection, once made, is developed and elaborated in a genuinely creative new way. That is the pattern that we find, over and over. And that is the pattern we will show our readers over the course of the growth and development of the mind sciences. Our view of intellectual history is thus both historical and variationist. It is historical in that we believe that there is no way to understand the ideas of a discipline at a particular moment in time without understanding the historical path which led the field from there to where it is today. It is variationist in that it explicitly denies the Kuhnian notion that a scientific discipline will subscribe to a core set of ideas which define a paradigm, a climate of opinion; a living discipline is a quiltwork of disagreements.

The discovery and the acknowledgment of continuity in the study of the mind in these fields is not an exercise in showing that for each idea traditionally attributed to one scholar, there was an earlier scholar who had pretty much said the same thing. That game is rarely of interest if it goes no further than that. The real lesson to be learned from studying the con-

tinuity of thought in this area is that all of these thinkers are engaging in a greater conversation, and that no single scholar is large enough to hold any single important idea: all of the ideas have developed over the course of generations of controversies in which people with different perspectives and prejudices have served and returned ideas in a great game.

We noted just above that at the level of personal interaction among scholars, the continuity of ideas seems to vanish, and instead we find all sorts of conflicts, of alliances, and of branding. The people whose work we study are, when all is said and done, just people, with all the baggage that they bring with them.¹

It is both helpful and healthy to redouble our efforts to focus on the real intellectual substance in this story, but we have found that we are interested in both sides—both the idea side and the personal and institutional side of the story. Perhaps the most interesting part of the second side of the story is a phenomenon that we find ourselves up against throughout the story: a moment when a leading thinker decides that essentially all the work that has preceded him is no longer worth reading or taking seriously. This stratagem (for what else can we call it?) comes up on quite a few occasions, and there are quite a few more who adopt what the Voegelins once called an *eclipsing stance*. We are fascinated by the double fact that so many feel called to adopt that stance, and that it seems to work so often, for so long. In some instances, this stance is adopted explicitly, with a statement that what has preceded can be safely jettisoned, while in other cases, the message is passed on implicitly, by failing to state the obvious.

The reader is likely to have noticed already that in the pages that follow, there are many dates, places, and events. But do not be fooled by this: that is not what the book is really about. The dates and the events are there to allow us to reflect on questions with real intellectual depth, on hypotheses and the arguments developed for them, on the ways in which questions and positions may remain or return despite differences in their formulation. We care deeply about the ways in which we find conceptual continuity across the work of thinkers who were themselves not aware of the continuity. We care equally about the flip side of this coin: the ways in which change and rupture can emerge from underneath the cover of loyalty and common community.

What this means, in practical terms, is that we undertake a synchronic dialogue with the great writers of the past, and so we discuss their hypotheses and their arguments *not* as if they were archeological ruins but as if

their hypotheses were *alive*, and as if they were colleagues whose offices were next door. It might take a bit of effort to see how their perspectives bear on our own questions, but that is a challenge that we always face in the real world. The point is that to unearth the continuities and the ruptures and to construct an internal history, what we must do is to engage in a dialogue which allows us to actually feel the agreements and disagreements as if they were ours today.

Our interest in rupture and continuity has led us to take more seriously certain aspects of external history as well. There are three kinds of external forces that play a major role in this story. The first is political, and in this book, the most striking case is the rise of Nazism in Central Europe during the 1930s and 1940s, a world historical fact that led to a major exodus of intellectuals out of Europe at critical moments of our story. From a larger perspective, that movement of scholars from Europe to the United States is part of a bigger picture which began when the United States was younger and not so rich, a time when the natural place for would-be American scholars to go for higher education was Western Europe. The present book is the first of two volumes telling a single story, and we will focus in this book on the events that brought the mind sciences up to World War II. It will be followed by a second volume that treats the three decades that followed the outbreak of the war.

The second kind of external force is quite simply death: a scholar's work stops abruptly at the time of his death, and if death does not stop his or her influence, it changes the character of that influence mightily. While ideas can survive the death of the people who championed them, people have no such longevity; their direct and personal influence vanishes with their death.

The third kind of force is the way in which economic resources are allotted in the creation of jobs, which in turn lead academics to leave some institutions and go to some others. We will see occasions when money that came from the Rockefeller Foundation (to take only one example) made it possible for European academics to leave their homes and avoid almost certain death, and also made it possible for academics to be invited to leave one university and come with all their students to another one. There are—not always, but often—stories that are of interest to us about why an academic institution decides it wants to hire significantly in an area, such as linguistics, psychology, or philosophy, and when that has a significant impact on the story here, we have every reason to look further into what those reasons were.

As we explore these questions, we are aware that we remain linguists, and we are deeply interested in the ideas themselves; we are not dependent on secondary sources to help us understand what is at stake. It is our strong belief, made more certain throughout the process of writing this book, that a deep account of a discipline cannot be neutral, cannot be so external that it rests on nothing but objective facts. If it is to deal both with ideas and with people, if it is to examine both the ideas that formed the people and the people who brought the ideas to life, then the histories of our disciplines must be internal histories which are capable of understanding the nature of the debates, the arguments, and the stakes. An internal history is not always a history as it was lived by the actors, each with his or her own particular point of view; in fact, it rarely is, and it may be the history that is constructed by partisans who attempt to put down their particular positions in order to reconstruct the underlying dynamics that are at play in the world of a given scientific domain at a particular time. It is less a history of events and more a history of ideas, a history whose primary aim is to bring to light the forces that act upon the growth and development of a discipline. These can include the strengths and the weaknesses of the actors themselves, the arguments and ideas both within the discipline and outside of it, as well as prestige, legitimacy, the strength of the orthodox, and the enthusiasm of the Young Turks—in short, everything that is at play in a disciplinary field and that makes it what it is.

We have naturally chosen particular incidents, schools, scholars, and coalitions in our discussions, and the fact that we have left a movement or a scholar out of our discussion does not mean that we think they are less worthy, important, or influential than those we have discussed. We have little discussion of Sigmund Freud in psychology, or of J. R. Firth in linguistics, and nothing to say about Kierkegaard or Bergson in philosophy. We talk more about Bloomfield than we do about Sapir, a fact that in no way reflects a view on their relative importance. We do not discuss Reichenbach's ideas of time and tense, which have had a great impact on current semantics. We barely mention sociology, anthropology, and economics. In all these cases, we were sorely tempted to include discussions. But we have done our best to maintain a tight coherence of the discussion that is to follow, and to do that, we have had to embrace the fact that an omission from our account should never be interpreted as a tacit message that whatever is left out is of less importance.

The particular story that we focus on in this book involves one part of the field of linguistics as we saw it when we embarked on our careers

in linguistics some 40 years ago. Our own experiences begin roughly where the story leaves off, although we know (or knew) personally many of the principals whose careers extended into the 1970s and beyond. We have great admiration for all of the linguists we describe in this book (for some a bit more than for others, but that is only natural). Some of them are our teachers, and some our friends or professional colleagues, although of course many died before we were born, and those we only know through their writings. A large number of the people we discuss have set to paper their views about where their work comes from, or where the work of others comes from, and in quite a few cases, we aim to show that they are mistaken—sadly mistaken, if you will.

Our intention in this book is to help the reader better understand where our current beliefs in linguistics come from, and how they have been justified. We do not mean by this to criticize or dismiss any particular theory or framework, except insofar as a theory may have been offered to the public with an inaccurate pedigree. But each theory offers an answer to a set of questions which are more often implicit than explicit, and a historical perspective is sometimes the best, if not the only, way to come to understand what those questions are.

Both of us began our studies in linguistics in graduate school around the same time. We were drawn into the field because of the appeal of the questions and methods being explored and developed in generative grammar. If Chomsky had not come onto the scene when he did, it is highly unlikely that we would be here writing about linguistics. We, like so many of our generation, were inspired by the nature of the questions that generative grammar allowed us to explore. So just in case it is not clear, let us say it up front: we consider all of the thinkers and scholars that we write about in this book to be heroes. They are humans, but heroes nonetheless, and there are none of whom it cannot be said that they left the field better for having been there.

One reader of this book, a friend and participant from time to time in this book's story, was not happy by the occasional observation on our part that seemed to be suggesting that we were taking sides in a particular confrontation: at one point, we used the word "strident" to characterize a particular linguist's prose. We've left the word in; we have done our very best to remain sympathetic to all sides in these disagreements, which does not mean that we cannot call a sentence "strident" in tone when it is. As for our position, we are reminded of a statement almost certainly apocryphally attributed to John Lennon: we gave up being fans when we became professionals.

Needless to say, we have our own views on a number of subjects that we will discuss in this book, and we would not be unhappy if, as the result of reading it, some of our readers become convinced of our views. Still, that is not our primary aim, which is rather to show that among the great questions and ideas that have been central to the mind sciences over the last several centuries, there is more than one way to look at things. No matter how convinced you are of whatever you are convinced of, there is a good case to be made for other points of view. Progress generally comes from finding a new synthesis that brings together older ideas that seemed—but only *seemed*—to be in conflict.

This book is itself also the product of a debate, or a dialectic in the etymological sense of the term. It grew out of the pleasure that we found in discussion, in agreement and in disagreement, in the enjoyment of confronting ideas and arguments. Writing this book has been a project that began a decade ago, and the decision to write this book came only after years of extended discussions between us. It is the result of the agreements and disagreements shared by two linguists from two different continents, who grew up in two intellectual traditions and different material cultures, but who both share a great pleasure in debate, in arguing, and in encouraging controversy as a form of dialogue. We know full well that this is something that we learned from our teachers. Morris Halle, who advised one of us and greatly influenced the other, expressed what we feel: “Convince me,” he would say. “Argue with me!”²

We have been sensitive to the extreme gender bias that leaps out at us as we tell this story. There are women who play important roles in the developments that we discuss, but there are not enough. In the early work on the mathematics of computation, there is Ada Lovelace, and in the story of the exodus of the psychologists from Central Europe to the United States, there is Charlotte Bühler, and there are a few more, such as Margaret Mead. But the academic world has not had a long history of encouraging and supporting women who sought a career at a research university. In our professional lifetime, we have seen the gender balance in linguistics come to parity or near it, but the same cannot be said for some of the other academic disciplines that we explore.

Our friends have warned us that this will not be an easy book to read. There are parts that are a bit dramatic, and there might even be some humor, but there are more parts that are difficult. Despite the tone, we do not offer a simplification of the issues. The reader who does not already have at least a smattering of knowledge of linguistics, philosophy, and

psychology is going to be introduced to quite a number of unfamiliar characters and ideas. The reader who *does* have some knowledge of these fields is likely to have his assumptions challenged. We think, on the whole, that these issues have not been treated very well in the literature, and it has taken us decades to get to the point where we have been able to see some of these things.

It is often said that there are two ways to read the older literature in one's discipline: one either tries to force the earlier vocabulary into today's categories, translating as best one can into today's terminology, or else one tries to put oneself in the earlier mind-set, and read yesterday's articles from the point of view of a contemporary who was reading it for the first time. Over the course of writing this book, we have come to realize that for our purposes, *both* of these perspectives are necessary, and we do our best to help the reader come to grips with an older literature in both of these ways.

For that reason, we have made a special effort to include more snippets from writers than are typically found in studies of this sort, for the simple reason that the readers deserve to get a bit of a feel for themselves of how an earlier thinker chose to frame his thoughts and make his case.

Notes and Comments

Unless otherwise indicated, all the translations from French and German are our own. Russian names that occur have required a transliteration in English, and in some cases we have simply adopted the common transliterations that have been used, and when there is no common usage to fall back on, we have used a transliteration that makes the most sense, given familiar English orthography. We write Shpet, therefore, rather than Chpet or Špet, and Karchevsky rather than Karcevskij.

We have many people to thank for their help in the course of writing this book. There have been moments when we realized that just about anyone we have ever had a conversation with about linguistics has likely influenced this book in one way or another. Among those whose observations came at particularly important moments, we think of Farrell Ackerman, Daniel Andler, Robert Barsky, Hans Basbøll, Gabriel Bergounioux, Jackson Bierfeldt, Diane Brentari, Noam Chomsky, Katya Chvany, Jacques Durand, Pierre Encrevé, Lila Gleitman, Morris Halle, Chas Hockett, Fred Householder, Geoff Huck, Simon Jacobs, Bill Labov,

Chantal Lyche, Geoff Pullum, Robert Richards, Jason Riggle, Haj Ross, Jerry Sadock, Gillian Sankoff, Patrick Sériot, David Stampe, Guri Bordial Steien, and Atanas Tchobanov.

John Goldsmith wishes to express his gratitude to the University of Chicago, which has always been an ideal place for the kind of discussions that have gone into the writing of this book and whose deans have been generous over the last few years with helping him to find the time needed to work on this book. Bernard Laks expresses his gratitude to the Institut universitaire de France and the Université de Paris Nanterre for their support. The University of Vienna and the University of Chicago kindly provided funds to support a seminar organized by Elissa Pustka at the University of Vienna on April 6, 2017, which provided valuable feedback for us.

We both want to thank our wives, Jessie Pinkham and Claudie Laks, for their indulgence and support in this project, and we're especially delighted that Claudie's work could serve as the basis for the cover of this book.

Diagrams/Figures

The multicolored schemas we have included should be used with care. Each presents a number of actors in our story, in boxes that are color coded to roughly indicate what discipline the actors were involved in. Their placement in the schema is determined in part objectively: their height in the schema is a direct reflection of the year of their birth (we have shifted a few people up or down in interests of visual clarity). We have greatly simplified things by indicating relationships between various pairs of these people with colored lines, indicating roughly four relationships. One relationship is between colleagues, people who knew each other and influenced each other's work. The second relationship is one of important intellectual influence without personal influence or contact. The third is the most important, in a sense, represented in blue; it is the relationship between a mentor or dissertation advisor and the young scholar being advised. In the cases we look at here, there are a good number of secondary relations of just this sort, where a senior scholar plays a mentoring relationship of someone who was not officially his student (such as Sapir and Whorf), and we have indicated this with a dashed blue line. Finally, in a few cases, we wish to emphasize the hostile relationship between two

scholars, and we have chosen to indicate these relationships in red. Bear in mind that restricting relationships to just these four kinds has led to some strange designations: for example, the relationship between Edward Sapir and Margaret Mead is represented with the color that indicates “colleagues,” which is not a very good description, but it is better than any of the other choices. In some cases, we describe in the text a group of people who all influenced each other a good deal, but we have not made our figures more cluttered to include all of those pairwise connections. We have included a few mixed categories, notably “philosopher-psychologist,” but that did not really help, because it is hardly a meaningful question to ask whether Brentano should be classified as a philosopher or as a philosopher-psychologist. Therefore, the reader should use the colors provided as a roadmap, but they cannot be relied upon in cases where the boundaries are blurred.

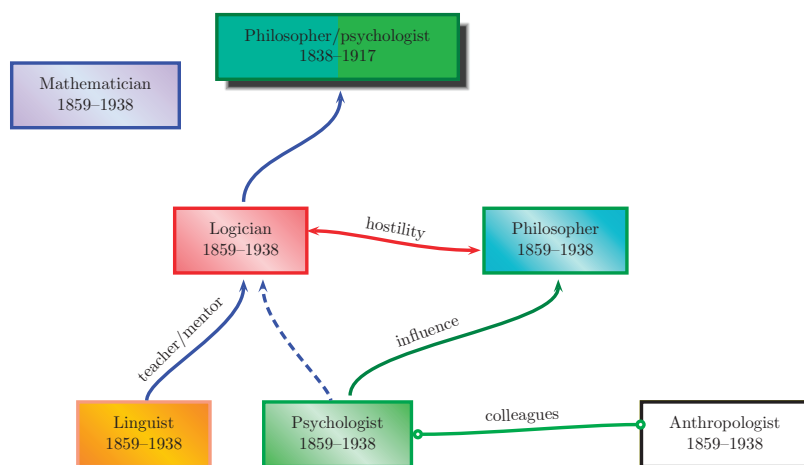


FIGURE 0.1. Sample schema. There are some guidelines needed to understand our figures. The information contained here is intended to serve as a visual reminder of who is who, and what they did. In all cases, a simplification is needed to do this, and the reader must bear in mind that the categorization here is in every instance a simplification of what we describe in the text. The decisions we have made here are simply what seems to us the most helpful and the least inaccurate. The vertical position is determined by date of birth—strictly, in most cases, with a very small amount of adjustment made for clarity. The colors of the individual boxes reflects the disciplines of the actors, but in most cases, some real simplification was needed. Quite a number of people are assigned to two categories, with two colors. The colors of the arrows connecting the boxes correspond to four kinds of relations: mentor (or teacher), colleague, influence, hostility. In many cases, it is hard to determine the relative importance of various teachers, and (as elsewhere) our choices represent an interpretation on our parts.

In order to help the reader organize the characters visually, we have included a number of ovals or rectangles of various sizes, usually with a label, such as “Prague Linguistic Circle.” We caution the reader not to take these indications as claims about membership in the organizations or as some sort of Venn diagram that includes or excludes members. They are there purely to help the reader remember who is who, and should be thought of as pointers to the text, where more information is noted. In particular, the reader should not interpret our depictions as signifying something about the relationship between a school, a circle, or anything else. To repeat: the information presented in the diagrams is in most regards highly subjective, and on different days, we ourselves would make different choices in a few cases as to which color to use or whom to place inside a colored box.

