Readings in Axiomatic Functionalism

II

Linguistica ONLINE

READINGS IN AXIOMATIC FUNCTIONALISM II

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FOREWORD

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Linguistica ONLINE brings another installment of *Readings in Axiomatic Functionalism* which is a collection of papers related to the approach known as Axiomatic Functionalism. The approach was originally developed in 1960s by Jan W. F. Mulder together with Sándor G. J. Hervey. It has since appealed to many linguists, works of some of which were already published in the previous *Readings*; this volume offers a few more.

The present issue could also be called *Postulates for Axiomatic Linguistics* because the Postulates are the topic of the first three papers of this volume. The Postulates form the theoretical basis of Axiomatic Functionalism. From one perspective, they are a network of definitions where most of the notions of the theory are defined. From another, they are an example of how a scientific (and not only linguistic) theory could be axiomatically and deductively formulated. Though I can be accused of bias in favor of the theory, I still think it is fair to say that this approach surpasses other theories in this respect because only a few of them have managed to delimit their theoretical side as clearly and precisely as Axiomatic Functionalism has.

The original Postulates for Axiomatic Functionalism were compiled by Jan Mulder and Sándor Hervey, though they have never been published as one full text. This issue of *Linguistica* ONLINE publishes their complete form for the first time. They have been edited by me and I have also written an introduction to it which, after having gradually added up on details, is published as a separate article, "Mulder and Hervey's Postulates for Axiomatic Functionalism".

Another version of the Postulates is published here, the one by James Dickins, but before we get to it, we have to do an excursion to the history and introduce the fourth article in this issue: "Free allomorphy or synonymy?" by Michael A. L. Lamb.

Every theory in order to be useful should be stable. However, it should also evolve and improve itself. It would be wrong to say that Axiomatic Functionalism has petrified in some form and has not been constantly developing and searching for self-improvement. Were we to go to extremes, we might say that there are as many Axiomatic Functionalisms as there are linguists working with this approach, because every one of them brings in new elements and modifications. This is after all true for any linguistic approach. However, we can still recognize two main streams of this approach. They have become known as Standard Axiomatic Functionalism and Extended Axiomatic Functionalism. There is not space here to explain the difference between them (this is in fact done in Dickins's paper published in this issue) but we can shed light on the historical background. We should return to 1960s to Oxford in England. Here Jan Mulder, the originator of the approach, met two people: Michael A. L. Lamb and Sándor G. J. Hervey. Both had a strong influence on Axiomatic Functionalism—that of Hervey became apparent the moment he defended, in

1970, his doctoral thesis presenting there a wholly new component of the theory: axiomatically formulated functional semantics. The influence of Lamb is hard to track in published writings because he has published a little during his academic career. Yet Mulder has acknowledged him on several occasions. And though on one such occasion he has mentioned that Lamb was often defending his views, they have not been in agreement on every point. But disagreement need not always lead to breakdown of a theory; instead, it could materialize itself in an alternative view opening new vistas and offering perhaps better solutions. This happened in 1980s when Lamb became dissatisfied with certain aspects of Axiomatic Functionalism and proposed new solutions to some problem. One of them is so-called free allomorphy—the idea that signs can have variants/allomorphs freely replaceable in any context. Mulder and Hervey have rejected this but Lamb has not agreed with it. He expresses his view in the paper "Free allomorphy or synonymy?" dating back to 1980s but never published until now. Lamb's views eventually transformed in a new theory, a modified or extended version of Axiomatic Functionalism: Extended Axiomatic Functionalism. As already mentioned, Lamb published a little but his thoughts are reflected in works of two of his students, Barry Heselwood and James Dickins. It is the latter to whom we owe for a detailed statement of the extended theory. And just as Standard Axiomatic Functionalism has its Postulates, so does Extended Axiomatic Functionalism whose Postulates are published here as well.

The last two papers of this issue turn around a book by Paul Rastall, *A Linguistic Philosophy of Language*, published in 2000. Jan Mulder wrote a comprehensive review of this book and he agreed with its publication in *Linguistica* ONLINE. Having read a review of his former teacher and mentor, Paul Rastall decided to defend himself and to write a response to it. This is not to say that Mulder's review was unfavorable, on the contrary, it is definitely positive, yet Rastall has felt that some points could be clarified. And discussion is a good way to progress. So *Linguistica* ONLINE provides him this opportunity.

Readings in Axiomatic Functionalism are hoped to promote a functionalist-structuralist approach called Axiomatic Functionalism. Its name may be a little uncommon and strange but its essence is not at all strange. Linguists can find this by themselves by getting acquainted with it. In order to facilitate this, a new web site has been launched:

http://www.phil.muni.cz/af/

We hope you'll enjoy it just as you'll enjoy this issue.

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