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- 27 Rudolf Hildebrandt, *Cartesianische Linguistik. Eine Analyse der Sprach-
auffassung Noam Chomskys.* [Cartesian Linguistics. An Analysis of Noam
Chomsky's View of Language.] Dissertation, Bonn (Prof. W.-D. Lange).
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Thoughts from generative transformational grammar have today spread to all areas of linguistics. Noam Chomsky's undermining of the positivistic understanding of linguistics created room for a new discussion of the fundamentals of linguistics. An important result of this discussion is the rediscovered awareness that the study of language should be seen in connection with investigations into the nature of the human mind. Noam Chomsky's examination of the rationalist view of language, in particular that of the 17th century, has made a decisive contribution towards this new awareness.

To Noam Chomsky the generative transformational grammar continues the "tradition" of Cartesian linguistics. This appraisal raises the question as to the extent to which one can speak of common ground as regards methodology and content between the historical rationalistic view of language and generative transformational grammar. However, to answer this question is not enough. Further investigation is required as to why Chomsky's approach stresses certain aspects of Cartesianism. Reasons for false interpretations might be found in the general theoretical conception that contemporary linguistics has of itself. Thus the problem is to draw conclusions from Chomsky's view of the history of the philosophy of language for the methodological evaluation of his own linguistic conception.

In this inquiry reference is made to Chomsky's publications up to 1975. First and foremost they are compared with the statements made by René Descartes on language. They are also compared with the *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* by Arnauld and Lancelot and finally with the *Logique de Port-Royal*. Secondary literature on the rôle of linguistics in the field between the natural sciences and the humanities is referred to where necessary.

The problem is approached in the following way: first of all the rôle of language in Descartes' statements and Chomsky's reception of this view are analysed. In a second step the concept of competence is examined with reference to the *Grammaire* and the *Logique de Port-Royal* within the generative theory of language. A third step deals with the acquisition of competence, more particularly with the status of innate language universals in a hypothetic-deductive explanatory model.

This study comes to a surprising conclusion. The methodological nature of the generative language theory contradicts Chomsky's conception of scientific

investigation which, like the generally accepted conception of science, takes its bearings from the natural sciences.

In spite of his justifiable criticism of the system of concepts and the inductive procedure of behaviourism, Chomsky, too, is subject to this conception of scientific investigation inasmuch as he requires empirical confirmation for the construction of scientific theory in general and of linguistic theory in particular.

Nevertheless, the present study comes to the conclusion that Chomsky's outline of a generative language theory cannot be accepted as part of a linguistics which is conceived "empirically" in this way.

Thus Chomsky's conception of scientific investigation becomes the basis for a twofold criticism:—

It is ascertained that on the basis of his conception of scientific investigation Chomsky misinterprets 'Cartesian linguistics'. The misinterpretation consists in Chomsky assuming that there is a methodological agreement between the generative language and 'Cartesian linguistics' as regards the concept of explanation. According to Chomsky the concept of explanation is in both cases hypothetic-deductive.

The hypothetic-deductive conception of the generative language theory is criticized by demonstrating its true axiomatic-deductive nature. Behind Chomsky's misinterpretation of the agreement is concealed the true agreement between the generative language theory and 'Cartesian linguistics'. Both represent self-contained axiomatic-deductive explanatory models which are completely unempirical.

The paradoxical situation is that on the basis of a criticism of Chomsky's appeal to Cartesianism the author comes to the conclusion that Chomsky's linguistic conception is far more consistently Cartesian than it claims to be itself.