

Finck, Franz Nikolaus, b. June 2, 1867, Krefeld, Germany, d. May 3 or 4, 1910, Berlin; general linguist.

Abandoning his military career after five years of active service, F., in addition to publishing poetry and a plea for a new ethics (1891), took up language studies at Munich, Paris, and Marburg, where he obtained a doctorate in 1895 and in the following year qualified as a *Privatdozent*. Joining the University of Berlin in 1903, still as a *Privatdozent*, he was appointed *Titularprofessor* in the Oriental Institute in 1907, responsible for the languages of the South Sea, and *Extraordinarius* for general linguistics in 1909. His life was cut short by a heart attack (or, as rumor had it, a duel) in the wake of a scandal over what was then considered moral conduct unbecoming an officer.

Although F. had been trained as an Indo-Europeanist, with his doctoral thesis devoted to Balto-Slavic accent and its evolution (1895) and with one of his subsequent specializations being in Armenian philology (his own *Zeitschrift für armenische Philologie* proved short-lived, appearing in only two volumes between 1901 and 1904), his real vocation was general linguistics. In program (as concisely expounded in [1905]) as well as in practice, he was one of the very few to continue a tradition that counted a W.v. → Humboldt among its pillars but lacked almost any academic infrastructure in Germany.

A versatile descriptive grammarian and lexicologist, F. edited grammars, some including dictionaries, of the Aran Island dialect of Irish (1899), of Eastern Armenian (1902), and of German and Armenian Romany (1903, 1907c), all based on fieldwork conducted during extended periods of travel prior to his appointment at Berlin. Several studies of particular syntactic topics, especially those having to do with relational clause structure, in Samoan, Greenlandic, and Georgian and other Caucasian languages (e.g. 1907a, b), attest to his expertise even further afield. Continuing the systematizing tradition, F. also embarked on historical-comparative explorations of a part of Africa (1808), of Polynesia (1909b), and indeed of the whole linguistic universe as then known (1909a). F.'s greatest ambition, however, was that of a theorist, and linguistic theory for him ultimately meant the explanation of the structural diversity of the languages of mankind.

F.'s frame of reference here was, on the one hand, Humboldtian typology, especially as lately developed in F. → Misteli's revision of H. → Steinthal's *Charakteristik der hauptsächlichsten Typen des Sprachbaues* (1860/93)

and, on the other hand, the comprehensive and idiosyncratic account of linguistic, cultural, and mental diversity and their interrelations offered by James Byrne (1820–97), an Irish cleric, in his *General Principles of the Structure of Language* (1885/92). While F.'s quest, often enshrouded in wild speculation and sometimes verging on the ludicrous (especially in his lectures on *Der deutsche Sprachbau als Ausdruck deutscher Weltanschauung*, 1899a), had initially been for distinctive structural traits that would correlate with, and supposedly be motivated by, ethnopsychological traits and especially racial temperaments, the emphasis in the last typological work which he was able to complete was, more soberly, on linguistic structures in their own right. In *Die Haupttypen des Sprachbaus* (1910), only about 150 pages long (the verbosity of a Humboldt or a Steinthal was not to his taste), F. presented 'characterologic' sketches of eight living languages which were intended to represent all major structural types that could be distinguished in his classificatory scheme, based on the mental operations of analysis and synthesis. In terminology partly reminiscent of Steinthal and Misteli's, the eight types are referred to as 'root-isolating', 'incorporating', 'juxtaposing' (*anreihend*), 'subordinating', 'stem-isolating', 'root-inflecting', 'stem-inflecting', and 'group-inflecting'; Mandarin Chinese, Greenlandic Eskimo, Subya (South Western Bantu), Turkish (Osmanli), Samoan, Egyptian Arabic, Modern Greek (Dhimotiki), and Georgian are chosen as their respective representatives, on account of their supposed typological purity. In respect of analysis, typological diversity was for F. a question of the extent to which the perceptual and cognitive complexes expressed by sentences were analytically fragmented, with words being regarded as the units expressing the fragments. The words of Greenlandic and Subya accordingly represented the opposite extremes of maximal and minimal semantic comprehensiveness, with those of Turkish, Georgian, Arabic, Mandarin (representing the ideal state), Greek, and Samoan being progressively fragmentary intermediates. As to synthesis, the differences here were ones of the extent to which the basic fragments were related to one another in their recombination, as manifested by overt connective forms (whose variety supplied F.'s preferred names for his eight types). F.'s most isolating specimens were Mandarin and, a little less so owing to lexical stem formatives, Samoan; Turkish, Greenlandic, and Subya were intermediate, intimating syntagmatic interrelatedness by relatively loosely-attached grammatic morphology; and the apogee of grammaticalized interrelating was reached

with Arabic, Greek, and Georgian, where inflections are tightly fused with roots, stems, and word-groups (i. e. phrases), respectively.

F., whose spirit lived on in his student, E. → Lewy, was once lauded as the greatest linguistic genius of all times, uniquely capable of penetrating to the inner structure of whatever language (Lohmann 1979: 50–51). Be this as it may, much of F.'s descriptive work has lasted (as is acknowledged e. g. in Katz 1974); his ideas about relational clause structure bear re-examination (cf. Plank 1979); and his characterological survey, apart from helping to perpetuate the fashions of overly global typologizing and of asserting correlations unsupported by rigorous induction, was instrumental in the recognition of *Suffixaufnahme*—as the agreement in case and perhaps number of a genitival attribute with its head was called in F.'s sketch of 'group-inflecting' Georgian (1910: 141)—as a potentially salient typological trait (cf. Plank 1995).

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tic typology and universal grammar: Some past and present viewpoints", in: id., ed., *Ergativity*, London, 3–36. Id. (1995): "Introducing Suffixaufnahme", in: id., ed., *Double Case: Agreement by Suffixaufnahme*, New York, 3–110. WAHRIG-BURFEIND, R. (1986a/b): "F. N. Fincks Konzeption der Sprachwiss.", *PzL* 34, 3–46 / 35, 39–53 (with a full biblio. of F.'s publ. writings, including reviews of them).

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