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## H.J. POS (1898-1955) AND THE HISTORY OF LINGUISTICS <sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

If you were to ask a historiographer of linguistics: Who was Hendrik Josephus Pos? it is only nowadays, with a lot of new research going on, that you might receive an answer that does justice to the many-sided character of this Dutch scholar who was not only a well-known linguist and philosopher, but also a politically committed university professor and an inspiring teacher.<sup>2</sup> As it happens, the standard image of Pos given in books and papers devoted to the history of linguistics is somewhat one-dimensional: a Prague-oriented linguist, in whose writings phenomenology and structuralism have entered into a happy coalition. References to his work can be found in various studies before and [160] after World War II, for instance in papers by scholars such as Eugenio Coseriu (1921-2002), Roman Jakobson (1896-1982), Cornelis F.P. Stutterheim (1903-1991), and E.M. Uhlenbeck (1913-2003), to mention only a few names. I think, however, that in the recent linguistic literature Pos's work is not referred to very frequently.

The question that arises is whether, for an overall characterization of Pos as a linguist, we should not for once try another line of approach than phenomenology or structuralism. So, what I would like to do here is draw attention to a less well-known side of Pos's work: his activities in the field of the history of linguistics.

My paper, like a traditional Dutch sermon, is divided into three parts. First, I will give a brief overview of the life and times of Pos. Subsequently, attention will be given to the lectures on general linguistics he gave in the years 1924-1932, and, finally, the question will be put forward why Pos devoted so much time to the history of linguistics in his teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> Slightly revised version of a paper given at the 25th Linguistisches Kolloquium, Universität-Gesamthochschule Paderborn, 27.-29.9.1990. The original text was published in *Neue Fragen der Linguistik. Akten des 25. Linguistisches Kolloquiums, Paderborn 1990*. Hrsg. v. Elisabeth Feldbusch, Reiner Pogarell & Cornelia Weiss. Band 1: *Bestand und Entwicklung*. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1991, 55-63. A much enlarged Dutch version was published in *H.J. Pos (1898-1955), taalkundige en geëngageerd filosoof*. Ed. by Saskia Daalder & Jan Noordegraaf. Amsterdam: Huis aan de drie grachten 1990, 153-175.

<sup>2</sup> Important aspects of Pos as a linguist and a politically committed scholar are discussed in Daalder & Noordegraaf 1990. This book also contains an extensive bibliography (25 pages) of writings on Pos. For a first inventory of the more than 2800 letters to Pos which can be consulted in the Pos Archives at the University Library in Amsterdam, see Boon 1989. In 1994, Peter Derkx published a detailed and comprehensive study on Pos as a philosopher and humanist. This doctoral dissertation includes a discussion of Pos's viewpoints concerning the origin of language (233-246) and the relationship between language and thought (246-266).

## 2. Short biography of H.J. Pos

Having completed his studies in classical languages and literature at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam in 1920, Hendrik Josephus Pos studied linguistics and philosophy in Heidelberg under, among others, Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936), and in Freiburg im Breisgau under Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Having written his *Zur Logik der Sprachwissenschaft* he obtained his doctorate under Rickert in 1922. Following a year of study in Freiburg (1922-1923) he received another doctorate (cum laude) from the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam in 1923 for a thesis entitled *Kritische Studien über philologische Methode*. In 1923-1924 he studied in Paris under Meillet and Vendryes.

In October 1923 Pos was appointed professor of general linguistics and classical philology at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. In 1932, Pos moved from the Vrije Universiteit to the Gemeentelijke Universiteit ('Municipal University') of Amsterdam, where he had been appointed professor of Philosophy. This appointment marked Pos's break with Calvinism as well as his growing influence in Dutch intellectual and cultural life, an influence which continued into the postwar years. I think these events are interesting enough to tell about in more detail.

The Vrije Universiteit Pos was attached to was not a state university, but was funded by a Society which was then based on strictly Calvinist, that is to say Reformed principles. It was a small and rather conservative world, as [161] could be expected in the Netherlands in the 1920s. In those years, a sharp conflict arose within the Dutch Reformed Churches about the interpretation of a certain passage in the first book of the Bible, namely the third chapter of Genesis, the story of the serpent in Paradise speaking to Eve. The question at the time was: ought one to believe that the "speaking of the serpent" had been a really observable event, or not? Pos and three other Vrije Universiteit scholars followed those who defended a less fundamentalist approach to the Bible, a less literal interpretation of this story. As a consequence, they came into conflict with the Board of Directors of the Vrije Universiteit, for the latter had to cope with a lot of vigorous protest from the Orthodox members of the Reformed Society, who supported a literal interpretation of the Bible. In brief, the Directors of the Vrije Universiteit eventually managed to reach a rather pragmatic solution and succeeded in pacifying the majority of the members of the Society. Pos, however, had experienced the whole discussion, which had been lingering on for some three years, as most unpleasant, and he was not sure any longer whether the Vrije Universiteit was the right place for him to work. Let me give one example of the opposition Pos was confronted with.

In January 1932, Dr Roelf Jan Dam (1896-1945), a classical scholar who was the Principal of the Gereformeerd Gymnasium at Kampen, sent a fifteen page 'bezwaarschrift' (gravamen) to the Board of Governors of the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. Dam's objections were directed against the philosophical and linguistic views and methods of his former fellow-student Pos. Studying four subsequent publications by Pos (1922, 1923, 1924 and 1926) very thoroughly, Dam, a strict Calvinist, became convinced that the views which Pos had put forward in these writings were not consistent with the Calvinistic principles as he himself understood them.

Although Dam had studied classical languages at the Vrije Universiteit, he had received his doctoral degree at the University of Utrecht in 1930. A few years before, however, in 1926, he had asked his former fellow-student Pos to act as the supervisor of the doctoral dissertation he wished to submit to the Faculty of Arts of the Vrije Universiteit, and Pos had agreed to that. In the dissertation Dam was preparing in the years 1926-28, he intended to scrutinize modern linguistic doctrines in order to find out to what extent they were consistent

with Calvinist thought. Starting from a literal interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, Dam was of the opinion that from 1816 onwards, linguistics had taken a "satanic course", and he did not hesitate to express this opinion in very clear terms. For example, in his chapter on the origin of language he based himself on the story as told in Genesis. From Dam's letters kept in the Pos Archives (Amsterdam) it becomes clear that the sober minded scholar H.J. Pos could not accept such a Bible based approach. An agreement could not be reached [161] in any way, and this meant a final split between the former fellow-students. Dam's Vrije Universiteit dissertation was not finished. He decided to write another dissertation on a different subject and to obtain a doctoral degree at Utrecht. The title of his Utrecht dissertation was *De analogia. Observationes in Varronem grammaticamque Romanorum* (1930). I think it can be established without any doubt that Dam was a qualified classical scholar, who could write excellent Latin.<sup>3</sup>

In order to safeguard the Vrije Universiteit, his alma mater, against Pos's un-Calvinistic and destructive teachings he asked the Governors for their opinion on the doctrine he had challenged, presenting to them an analysis of the epistemological and linguistic views held by Pos. Having confronted Pos's views with classical Reformed ideas in this field, Dam came to the conclusion that Pos's approach was not based at all upon Calvinist notions. Actually, it appears that in his scholarly work Pos, who at that time still belonged to the liberal wing of the Reformed Churches, in principle did not take into account religious presuppositions. However this may be, in a certain sense Dam's gravamen was too late: in June 1932, Pos left the Vrije Universiteit to become professor of Philosophy at the Gemeentelijke Universiteit of Amsterdam, without having replied to Dam's 'bezwaarschrift'.

At any rate, as one can establish a connection between Dam's *unvollendete* and his writing both against Pos (1932) and against those who proposed a reform of the spelling of the Dutch language in the 1930s (cf. Noordegraaf 1992), it might be concluded that the work done by Dam when preparing his first dissertation served as an excellent training for his gravamen against H.J. Pos. Moreover, Dam's study is interesting because of the fact that, as far as I know, it is the very first paper in which Pos's early linguistic publications are analysed as a coherent body of texts from one fixed and critical point of view.

In the 1930s Pos developed more and more into a politically committed left-wing scholar under the influence of the well-known Dutch communist historian Jan M. Romein (1893-1962), with whom he was on friendly terms. In 1935 Romein was refused an award of the Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde, the respectable Leiden Literary Society, because of his communist connections. A few years later, in 1939, Romein was appointed professor of [163] History at the Gemeentelijke Universiteit of Amsterdam. As was to be expected, Romein's appointment did not pass off entirely smoothly, but it was firmly supported by Pos.

In 1936, Pos even wrote a foreword in a brochure in which the author, a liberal protestant minister, presented a highly positive, but completely uncritical sketch of the situation of the

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<sup>3</sup> On being asked, Dr Raimund Pfister, the experienced classical scholar from München, commented in a letter of 12 March 1993 on Dam's heavy Latin prose style. "Dam war wohl einer von den letzten in den Niederlanden, die ein so kunstvoll stilisiertes Latein schreiben konnten und wollten, wie es im 19. Jh. üblich war. Die Holländer hatten ja an der Universität Leiden etwa in Ruhnken und Wytttenbach große Vorbilder... [Dam] wollte [...] in voller Absicht nicht der Bequemlichkeit des Lesers entgegenkommen. Er konnte wohl auch besser Latein schreiben als Pos [...]".

day in the Soviet- Union. In the same year, Pos became the chairman of the so-called 'Comité van Waakzaamheid', the well-known Committee of Vigilance of anti-national-socialist intellectuals, a broadly based committee which had been founded to fight fascist ideas. In this manner, he became involved in the political discussion which was going on in pre-war Holland concerning the question what attitude to take towards fascism. One could say that in the 1930s Pos became a prominent public figure in Dutch intellectual circles. For the sake of completeness I should add that by then Pos had indeed broken with his Calvinist past. Later he was to become a member of the Humanist Society. As far as I know, Pos never joined one of the Dutch political parties.

In October 1940 Pos was taken hostage by the German authorities. In all he spent three years in Buchenwald and several other camps. In 1943 he was released for reasons of health. In the years after the Second World War he maintained his left-wing position, which caused a lot of confusion about his ideas, even among his best friends, and he was accused of being a 'fellow-traveller'. His publications of that time have a somewhat pessimistic tenor, which might have had something to do with his deteriorating health. He died in 1955.

### 3. Pos on the history of linguistics

Now I would like to turn to the work Pos did in the field of the history of linguistics. For various reasons, most pre-war Dutch linguists have never shown themselves interested in the older linguists. Pos, however, is a notable exception.

When browsing through Pos's bibliography, included in the second volume (1958) of his selected works, the *Keur uit de verspreide geschriften*, one must conclude that the number of publications which are exclusively devoted to the history of linguistics, is rather limited. Confining myself to the years 1924-1932 - but it might not even be necessary to make that restriction -, then I can only mention one paper, one article and a few reviews. In the proceedings of the twelfth conference of Dutch philologists we find a paper on the famous grammarian J.C. Scaliger (1927a). It is concluded with the observation that a proper evaluation of Scaliger's importance for the development of grammar [164] will become possible only "when the history of linguistics is studied methodically". Two years later, Pos published a paper on the history of the artificial languages (1929a), partly occasioned by the activities in this field of the Danish linguist Otto Jespersen (1860-1943). Pos himself did not take sides in the then fashionable debate on artificial languages. "I am not competent enough to be an adherent, and I am not receptive enough to current opinions to be an adversary", he remarked. It gave him satisfaction to watch the constructors of artificial languages – "such wise architects" – "when they are making their calculations" (1929a: 102). In addition, we find two book reviews (1929b, 1931).

It is clear that these linguistic-historiographical pieces occupy only a minor place in the body of his publications. However, we know from other sources that Pos was well-informed about this field of research. In his lectures on general linguistics the history of linguistics is discussed at length, as one may conclude when studying the full set of the unpublished lecture notes which can be found in the Pos Archives in the University Library of Amsterdam (cf. Boon 1989). I think we should be aware of the fact that there is without any doubt a considerable discrepancy between what can be found in these notebooks and what in fact was discussed during the lectures. For the dimension of the *viva vox* is not without importance, especially in this case, for Pos was indeed an excellent *orator didacticus*, and a gifted speaker. The following remarks, then, are based on the six notebooks which formed the basis of the lectures given by Pos in 1924-1932.

In successive years Pos presented a chronological overview of the history of linguistics, from the Greek and the Roman grammarians (notebook I, 1924-25) through the Middle Ages (notebook II, 1925-27) up to his own time. The majority of names and trends can be found in standard reference works. Subjects unknown to the relatively informed scholar of 1990, are not introduced by Pos. He does not lose himself in an encyclopedic summing-up of names and dates, preferring to treat - sometimes very extensively - a number of representative subjects. What is interesting are the choices he made. For reasons of space I must confine myself here to a few selected glosses.<sup>4</sup>

It is not surprising that Pos, a classicist by education, starts with the subjects he was very familiar with, the Graeco-Roman grammatical tradition. One should notice in this connection that in the first notebook Pos did pay attention to non-European traditions such as Arabic and Hebrew grammar, but that he did not take into consideration the heritage of ancient India, the famous treatises on Sanskrit such as the works of Panini (fl. 5th century BCE), an often-quoted [165] example of early empirical study of language. The achievements of the Sanskrit grammarians, however, only come up when the nineteenth-century Sanskrit scholar and comparatist Franz Bopp (1791-1867) is discussed (notebook IV). In this approach, which was quite common, Indian grammar falls within the scope of Western linguistics as late as the end of the eighteenth century.

In notebooks III (1927-29) and IV (1929-30) we find a discussion of eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century linguistics, respectively. In November 1929, for instance, he discussed the achievements of the the Dutch eighteenth-century Schola Hemsterhusiana (cf. Noordegraaf 1990: 157, 174), one of the first scholars to do so seriously, comparing its working method with that of Franz Bopp (1791-1867). It interesting to see that a few years later, in 1935, Pos's former fellow-student, Roelf Jan Dam, presented a well-balanced analysis of Hemsterhuis's views on language. Dam examined, among other things, how the analogy concept of classical Antiquity had been renewed by the distinguished Dutch Graecist Tiberius Hemsterhuis (1685-1766). I assume that Dam's paper on the Hemsterhusian version of analogy was a spin-off of the thesis he had been writing in the 1920s, but which he chose not to finish.

Pos's fifth notebook (1930-32) is not devoted to really historical topics. The discussion of *Le Langage* (1921) by Joseph Vendryes (1875-1960), serves as a starting point for the discussion of a number of linguistic problems. Nor can the content of the course 1931-32 be characterized as merely historical. Hermann Paul's (1846-1921) *Prinzipien* (1880, 1920<sup>5</sup>) and Wilhelm Wundt's (1832-1920) *Die Sprache* (1900, 1912<sup>3</sup>) are discussed at length.

The sixth notebook (1927-28) is of a somewhat different character. It contains notes and instructions ("everyone tells what he thinks about the definition of syntax"), sometimes in the form of questions for students ("what grammar do you have?") about problems concerning syntax and the parts of speech. For the first subject John Ries's (1857-1933) *Was ist Syntax?* (1927<sup>2</sup>) served as a point of departure, for the second one the book *Lingua* of 1903, the "universal grammar" by the Dutch classical scholar and general linguist Jan Marius Hoogvliet (1860-1924) served as such.

Throughout his lectures Pos payed serious attention to the various representatives of what is called general grammar. This is a rather striking feature of his approach, for we know that

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<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed overview of the contents of the notebooks I would like to refer the interested reader to Noordegraaf 1990b, and Derkx 1994: 521-524.

most of Pos's colleagues, at least in the Netherlands, did not pay much attention to the tradition of general grammar, as I have pointed out elsewhere (cf. Noordegraaf 1990a). From the notes it becomes clear that Pos went *ad fontes* and that he personally had studied most of the French, German, English and Dutch sources he discussed. For instance, after [166] having devoted in the 1929-30 curriculum, a full semester to historical comparative grammar in the nineteenth century, Pos turned to general grammar in the next semester. Among other things, he then turned against the dictum by Theodor Benfey (1809-1881) in his *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* of 1869 that in the course of the nineteenth century all philosophy in linguistics had evaporated under the increasing pressure of the empirical study of language. "The nineteenth century is surely more complicated than that it can be characterized in only one feature", Pos noted. Even in the Golden Age of historical linguistics general grammar continued to produce all kinds of different works. In other words, Pos emphasized the continuity of general grammar. For example, Karl Ferdinand Becker's (1775-1849) *Organism der Sprache* (1827<sup>1</sup>), which is considered to be the German counterpart to the work of the Dutch linguist and philosopher Johannes Kinker (1764-1845), can be linked up with the mediaeval *grammatica speculativa* via Port-Royal.

According to Pos, nineteenth-century general grammar reached its pinnacle in Humboldt. In spring 1930, using the somewhat obscure analysis by Alfred Tonnellé (1831-1858) of 1859, written in French (cf. Kaltz 1983), Pos discussed Humboldt's *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues* (1836), a book he had already referred to in his inaugural address of 1924. In his lectures he notes, among other things, that it was Humboldt, together with Herder, who contrasted the so-called *organic* approach with the older rationalistic conceptions of language. In this connection Pos goes into the *langue-parole* distinction made by Saussure. In the *Cours* it is claimed that:

ces deux objets sont étroitement liés et se supposent l'un l'autre: la langue est nécessaire pour que la parole soit intelligible et produise tous ses effets; mais celle-ci est nécessaire pour que la langue s'établisse [...] Il y a donc interdépendance de la langue et de la parole; celle-là est à la fois l'instrument et le produit de celle-ci. (Saussure 1974: 37)

However, Saussure goes on to note that "tout cela ne les empêche pas d'être deux choses absolument distinctes" (1974: 37-38). Comment by Pos: one gets the impression, "that here Humboldt's views are taken over and that the addition, that language and speech are two, does not bring much news, as in fact they are not treated separately, but at certain points go together". Elsewhere Pos (1934: 479) speaks about "[I]a distinction entre le système de la langue et l'activité de la parole, établie par Humboldt et de Saussure". This might be one of the considerations that have formed the reason for the note we find in notebook III: "Line Humboldt-Herder continues up to De Saussure-Bally-Sechehaye".

One cannot say, however, that Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours* in the lecture notes which are available to us takes pride of place. In the notes for the [167] 1928-29 colloquium on general linguistics Saussure is just characterized by the key word "static method". In the notes in the same notebook for the course 1927-28 we find under the heading "School of Geneva": "The founder is *Ferdinand de Saussure* † 1912 (sic); edition of *Cours de linguistique générale*, 1922<sup>2</sup>". Attention is drawn to the distinction between the synchronic and diachronic method and between *langue* and *parole*. After two more quotations from the *Cours* Pos goes on to discuss the work of the Genevan linguist Charles Bally (1865-1947), Saussure's successor, and of the work of Bally's younger colleague Albert Sechehaye (1870-



1946). He does not get round to dealing with Saussure in his 1931-1932 course. What seems to be Pos's view at the end of the 1920s is Saussure as "founder of the School of Geneva", not as the founding father of a new linguistic paradigm, the *Cours* not as a revolutionary work. This observation neatly fits in with what has been remarked by the Dutch linguist E.M. Uhlenbeck about the reception of Saussure in the Netherlands:

in the late 1920s de Saussure and Sapir were fairly widely known in Holland, but only very few - even of the leading linguists - suspected that one day these two scholars would belong to that small and illustrious group which is recognized as having put their stamp on the development of their science in the present century (Uhlenbeck 1977: 489).

#### **4. The History of Linguistics: "Zum welchem Ende?"**

So far my remarks on the contents of the notebooks. Finally, I would like to discuss the question why Pos when giving his courses on general linguistics devoted so much time to its past. At any rate, at least in the Netherlands such an approach was rather unique, for at other Dutch universities Paul's *Prinzipien* or introductions to historical-comparative grammar were used as textbooks. As it happens, there never was keen interest in the history of linguistics among the Interbellum generation of linguists. And it seems to me that Pos had the same feeling. Several statements point to this: "A correct assessment of Scaliger's significance for the development of grammar will only become possible when the history of linguistics will be studied methodically", he remarked in 1927 (1927a: 41). And a few years later he spoke about the history of linguistics as having been neglected up to that time (1931: 41).

So, what is, according to Pos, the relevance of the history of linguistics for contemporary linguistics? Or, as Brekle (1985: 1) once put it: "Zum welchem Ende studiert man Sprachwissenschaftsgeschichte?". In his lectures Pos made [168] an attempt to delineate the development of Western linguistic thought, from the discussions by the Greeks to contemporary linguistics. However, it never was his ultimate aim to provide his students with a full-scale overview of the history of linguistics. In his valedictory lecture as a professor of General Linguistics and Philosophy of Language at the University of Groningen Pieter A. Verburg (1905-1989), a former student of Pos's at the Vrije Universiteit,<sup>5</sup> pointed out that his teacher followed a dual method in his lectures:

On the one hand, he developed thetically his own theoretical understanding of the essence — or, as it was called then: the idea of language. At the same time, he discussed critically and historically concepts of other linguists in the past and present. The two methods were intimately linked. Design and development of his own theory gained depth and perspective by simultaneous confrontation with other basic models and, conversely, this historical research in turn borrowed - so

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<sup>5</sup> As I have pointed out at an earlier occasion (Noordegraaf 1991: 156n), Verburg actually made use of Pos's lecture notes when preparing his doctoral dissertation *Taal en Functionaliteit* ('Language and its Functions'). See, for instance, Verburg 1952: 146n, 164n. So, it does not surprise that Derkx (1994: 49) considered Pos's lectures to contain the germs of Verburg's doctoral dissertation.

as to be critical -, the essential criteria from his own theoretical principles, or more specifically: principles of linguistic philosophy (Verburg 1975: 3).

To my mind, the first outlines of this approach are already discernible in Pos's *Zur Logik der Sprachwissenschaft* of 1922. In the "Einleitung" of this Heidelberg dissertation, Pos enters the field of the history of linguistics for the first time, presenting "einen kurzen Überblick [...] über die bisherige Entwicklung der Sprachwissenschaft" (cf. Pos 1922: 12-16). He considers the Graeco-Roman grammatical and philosophical tradition to be real "Sprachwissenschaft", thereby explicitly (1922: 14) denying Paul's dictum "Sprachwissenschaft ist gleich Sprachgeschichte". However, Pos criticizes both the classical grammarians and the Neogrammarians for their "Einseitigkeit". The ancient grammarians were right in putting forward "das Problem Sprache", but they did not have the right methods. The Neogrammarians did use the right methods, but their conceptions of language and of the human mind were wrong and contestable. As Pos noted:

[...] es ist ungeheuer lohnend, die Keime der modernen Betrachtungsweise in so primitiven Schriften wie der des Dionysios Thrax u.a. wiederzufinden. [...] auch die Antike (muss) bei der Beschäftigung mit sprachlichen Fragen schon wesentlich auf dieselben Grundbegriffe und Anschauungsweisen gekommen sein wie wir (Pos 1922: 15).

Pos's basic assumption is, - and I think this is a crucial passage -: [169]

Die Grenzen und Möglichkeiten, innerhalb deren sich die Grundauffassungen eines theoretisch erfassten Gegenstandes infolge der Struktur desselben bewegen müssen, sind immer ziemlich beschränkt. Nur so ist auch eine Geschichte als Werdegang einer Wissenschaft im Sinne methodischer Vertiefung berechtigt und denkbar (Pos 1922: 15).

In other words, Pos is of the opinion that given the object of language there exists only a limited number of basic positions. The history of linguistics, then, can be reconstructed systematically as an ongoing dialogue between these positions. To this dialogue Plato's *Kratylos* and the works of Dionysius Thrax are as relevant as the works of Paul and Wundt, for instance. Thus, according to Pos the writings of linguists from the past should be used for reflection on current issues in linguistic theory. Let me give one example. In his review of Otto Funke's (1885-1973) observations about the *Hermes* (1751) of the eighteenth-century linguist James Harris (1709-1780), Pos (1929b) remarked that Funke not only offers historical notes, but also makes various remarks with respect to the significance of Harris's views for contemporary linguistics. Using his extensive knowledge of ancient and modern linguistics Harris built a doctrine of the parts of speech which in many respects is not in accordance with grammatical tradition. I do not think we can view Pos's interest in Harris as detached from his own preoccupation in the years 1925-1935 with the problem of the parts of speech. Harris combines the eighteenth-century universal-grammar trend with the trend to do justice to the empirical variety of languages, Pos says, and I think that Pos considered this unity of counterparts to be indispensable.

Note that, until recently, studies on Pos's work from the first half of the 1920s were rather scarce, whereas his programmatic 'structuralist' publications from the late 1930s have been attracting much more attention from international linguistic scholarship. I would like to

suggest that Pos's anti-Neogrammarian stance in the early 1920s may be linked up with a certain affiliation with Wilhelm von Humboldt, whose works he considered to be the pinnacle in nineteenth-century general linguistics.<sup>6</sup> See on this point also the analysis given in Daalder 1992. [170]

## 5. Some final remarks

*It is worthwhile to retrace the course that our ideas concerning some subject have travelled. It teaches us to see how a fairly narrow view prepares the way for a broad perspective and makes it possible. It makes us realize that our best and most recent conception of things did not just appear out of the blue, and gives us a panoramic view of our full development until the present.*

H.J. Pos (1926: 15)

I have only been able here to give a very rough outline of Pos's position with respect to the history of linguistics. However, I venture to say that it is unfortunate that his activities in the field of the history of linguistics have remained underexposed for nearly sixty years, for to my mind Pos's approach to the history of linguistics is an interesting and stimulating one.

Relatively free from the influence of the Neogrammarians, the classical scholar, general linguist and philosopher Hendrik J. Pos did not share the views of a great number of his contemporaries, who saw the history of linguistics more or less as a report on the ultimate attainment of the right insights. For Pos, studying the history of linguistics was a quest for the presuppositions of linguistic science. I do not know for sure whether Pos wanted the history of linguistics to be solely subservient to the discipline, but it is assigned a function comparable to that of the history of science for the natural scientist. All in all, I think one could argue that Pos saw our linguistic past as an integrated part of linguistics itself. To him, the history of linguistics was no curiosity gallery. As Pos himself once put it: "After all, the study of what came into being and the construction of what comes into being are rather intimately linked up" (1929a: 102). I think that the history of linguistics has sometimes been used for less important purposes. [171]

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<sup>6</sup> I agree with A.M. Hagen's assesment, given in his inaugural address *De waardering van taalverschillen* (Nijmegen 1983, p. 7), that Pos's view on Von Humboldt is rather different from the one presented by Noam Chomsky in *Cartesian Linguistics* (1966).

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