

IVÁN FÓNAGY
(1920–2005)

LEITMOTIFS IN HIS ŒUVRE

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Abstract: The central motif of Iván Fónagy's "extra-vagant" linguistics—in terms of his own metaphor—was the idea of "languages within language": the issue of mapping the ontogenesis of language onto a particular language of the present. In other words: what is the consistent ontogenetic interpretation of a given fact of language? In his oeuvre, the inventively documented solution to that problem is the theory of "double encoding": the claim that, after being linguistically encoded, a linguistic expression goes through a second encoding phase during implementation in which it gets saturated by supplementary aspects of content. The latter are imprints of ancient gestures in language. On the other hand, the mechanism is also the source of the historical emergence of demotivated linguistic signs. The application of the principle not only makes it possible to resolve intricate problems in theoretical linguistics but also to explain remotivation in poetic language and to use it as a tool in stylistic analysis.

Keywords: phonetics, phonology, theory of communication, history of language, stylistics

Iván Fónagy began his university studies at the Faculty of Arts of Bolyai University in Kolozsvár in 1942; after an involuntary break, it was only in 1945 that he was able to carry on with his studies at the predecessor of today's Eötvös Loránd University where he graduated in 1948. By that time a number of his important papers had been published, on widely diverging topics (*A stílus zenéje: Zenei adalékok Novalis „Ofterdingen”-jéhez* [The music of style: Contributions to a musical analysis of "Of-terdingen" by Novalis], 1941–1942; *Wawiri. A primitív népek költészete* [Wawiri. The poetry of primitive peoples], 1942; *A mágia és a titkos*

tudományok története [Magic and the history of esotericism], 1943; *Adatok a magyar köznyelv újabbkori változásához* [Data on recent changes in Standard Hungarian], 1943). He continued his research work from 1948 onwards as a chief librarian of Fővárosi Könyvtár [Budapest Library], moving on in 1950 to the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences where he was appointed head of the Department of Phonetics in 1957. Between 1967 and 1970 he was a guest lecturer at Sorbonne, then from 1970 to retirement age he worked as *directeur des sciences* at Centre National des Recherches Scientifiques, Paris. Earlier on, he had lectured in Hungary, too, keeping up regular contacts with his homeland from abroad in later years. In 1990 he was elected honorary member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He died in Antony, near Paris, on 11 April 2005, on what is known as “Poetry Day” in Hungary.

1. It has some symbolic significance that he published a fully documented summary of his œuvre in 2001 (*Languages within language. An evolutive approach* [Foundations of semiotics Vol. 13. General editor: Achim Eschbach]. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 828 pp.), channelling his results and influence through, as it were, to the twenty-first century. However, the perspectives of his work are wide and deep not only in historical time (and the history of scholarship) but also in thematic choices, in the multiplying effect of results and consequences.

1.1. “Languages within language”. The monocentric universality of his work is expressed most faithfully by this figure of speech, chosen by himself, and referring to Valéry’s definition of poetry (“a separate language within language”). The far-reaching choice of topics, the manifold methodology, empirical material and system of inferences are all built on the same basic question: What is the formula and mapping of the ontogenesis of language in the given language of the present? In other words: What is the consistent ontogenetic interpretation of a given fact of language? (It is worth mentioning here that the extraordinary importance of this basic idea is reflected as early as in the 18th century in the historical thinking of English empiricists, e.g., in Locke’s apprehension when he wished to state a historical-causal connection between the meanings of *breath* and *soul* or *delegate* and [*the*] *angel*, generally tracing back referents of abstract terms to those originally rooted in sensual experience.)

Any conception can only find verification in being checked against reality. If it turns out that the actual process of communication is itself layered in the sense that it produces and transmits information through

several channels of—let us say—diverse historical depths, the weight of the issue of whether the linguistic system in its present state exhibits layers of diverse ages is multiplied. Hence, the necessary first step of exploration is predetermined. Making that step is indicated by the final movement of *Dallamfejtés* [The poem *Old age* by Milán Füst. Explorations in intonation] that also warrants the lasting value of Fónagy's oeuvre. Between the source of information and the channel, a “second encoding” phase, that of encoding “regularised contingencies”, has to be assumed. That encoding unit, called “distortion”, is primary or ancient from an evolutionary point of view. In it, elementary constituents not directly controlled by the mind are added to the message as its integral parts. They are expressed in a covert, indirect manner, in the *form* of the expression. And if this is so, it is indeed true that *form* is *content*: in particular, it is indirect content that nevertheless harbours what is primary or ancient.

1.2. The second part of the theory, indeed the phylogenetic Hückel's theorem of linguistics, is in perfect harmony with the foregoing. In the relationships among linguistic signs, in the totality of the language system, in the most generally formulable rules of language use, an exact analogy can be detected. With respect to the constant transformation of language, a two-stage process can be described:

“(a) In the first phase, the substance of speech—including the mimesis of the speech organs and syntactic expressive movements (the order of elements, the changes of that order)—that is not materially perceptible among the ideal circumstances of static synchrony becomes perceptible by way of a remotivation process. An articulatory detail or a syntactic movement (word order change) becomes expressive or ‘significant’. What counts as an error in present-day usage, a lexical or grammatical metaphor, discharges latent semantic energies and paves the way to taking up a quasi-preverbal connection with the external or internal world, making it possible to reinterpret phenomena that have so far been perceived through the filter of language. (b) In the second phase, language vividly and effectively reacts to intervention. It responds to remotivation by demotivation, such that the expressive deviation is turned into an arbitrary sign. Linguistic change, the cooperation between the prelingual and the lingual codes, revives the genesis of language. Remotivation recalls the distant origins, prelinguistic communication, whereas demotivation recapitulates the essential—demagicizing—period of the development of language.”

The policy is unbroken in expounding the operational details, too, given that inspirations are stable and constant throughout the oeuvre.

1.3. Iván Fónagy's basic experience of language seems to be primarily rooted in the essence of the Hegelian world view. In particular, he sees the linguistic sign not simply as something given in itself, a *Ding an sich* type *sema*, albeit obviously as part of a system, but rather as a carrier of its own history. Such historicity, however, is not restricted to the line of development between the original and the present state, in the spirit of the Neogrammarian School, but rather, its presence is or may be manifested in the actual utterance: in remotivations, in expressive stylistic devices of poetry, and so on. In addition, his œuvre reveals another initiatory determination. This is Freud's teaching and, in the more distant background, Jung's theory of the collective unconscious (*das kollektive Unbewusste*). Even if through a series of transmissions, these tenets have led Fónagy to the elaboration of his own theory of "double encoding" (see further below). The intersection of those two main lines of ideas is the origo of his analyses and interpretations, obviously in the full space of the author's disciplinary culture, as a centre and point of departure. The basic issue is this: how do we interpret, in this frame of reference, all that constitutes language? Iván Fónagy's methodological arsenal for deep-boring is extremely rich, ranging from conceptual analysis to experimental phonetics, speech acoustics, perception tests and statistical devices (such as Osgood's scale).

In his work, topics and problem solving steps often constitute a *catena* or chain structure in which the series of items accomplish themselves in a consistent conception of more or less close-knit texture. Relying here on the comprehensive magnum opus, *Languages within language* clearly illustrates this in the following manner.

1.3.1. The starting point is a historiographically distant one, a reconsideration of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign. The author intends to break up the lapidarity of the final conclusion of *Kratylos* by saying that the inventory of linguistic signs does not only include a substantial number of signs that are motivated in themselves to begin with (such as onomatopoetic items) but rather the whole set of linguistic signs can be seen as consisting of items that can be indexed as to the degree of motivatedness that goes with each. By way of justification, he also points out that their remotivation, if any, takes place roughly in the same manner across languages. He demonstrates this experimentally, primarily by showing that onomatopoetic lexical items are a lot closer to one another in phonetic/phonological terms even across genetically unrelated languages than items that are neutral in that respect. The (partial) motivation of

signs straightforwardly contributes to the depth of focus of the exploration of reality, for example by insertions of what is called by Elisabeth Uldall the attitudinal meaning, in linguistic utterances. An institutionalised source of that within the lexical inventory is the general property that reference to reality exhibits diverse degrees of accuracy itself. Put differently, our use of words is heterogeneous in terms of referential power because that ability, at least in part, is an inherent property of the word at hand. The rest of the job of making what one means more precise has to be performed by the context of use.

1.3.2. Fónagy's central and main thesis, the theory of "double encoding", is also related to exploring reality, in particular, to the information content of the linguistic utterance. The term itself originally means something else: a cooperation between image-bound (or more generally: perceptual) and verbal elements of consciousness, a claim that—to use Kristóf J. Nyíri's words—"has been present throughout the history of philosophy, from Plato to Wittgenstein". In the common knowledge of linguistics, however, it is Fónagy's interpretation that has become generally known. We cannot help thinking of what the author meant by this term: that is how much it is a real public property today. Therefore, we may rest content with just evoking the basic idea, using the modality of statements as an example. Any statement has—as Grice would put it—a 'natural' or 'non-natural' meaning ('meant N' or 'meant NN') component. Call this the notional component of meaning that is, therefore, encoded in the utterance. However, on its way to implementation, this component undergoes another encoding operation by way of which the linguistic form eventually uttered becomes a full-fledged utterance. That operation of expressing emotions or the speaker's attitude towards the entity or state of affairs included in the statement changes the utterance mimetically and/or articulatorily. This can be most immediately recognised in the use of emphatic forms. It is in that sense, thus, that speech is "doubly encoded".

1.3.3. The idea of "double encoding" is, in fact, an overall theoretical framework in which a place can be found for all systemic levels of language. How about syntax? Yes, the principle obviously appears to be at work there, too. A number of solutions or examples of poetic language exhibit instances where normal word order breaks down, the text undergoes expressive "syntactic gesturing" and is thereby given additional contents in some sense. This is based on Bally's dictum that behind each sentence of "disturbed" structure there is underlyingly another sen-

tence that is neutral or regular in its structure. It is in comparison to the latter that the actually uttered form counts as irregular. The initial structure may of course be regular in various ways, depending on whether the given language is subject prominent or topic prominent, for instance. The point is divergence itself, implying an opposition of *marked* vs. *unmarked*. The analysis of a multitude of poetic instances will then make clear what kinds of extra information it is for the sake of which the poet chooses to apply that second encoding or re-encoding. At the same time, in metric and rhymed poetry, there are additional strict constraints that further curb word order possibilities. However, even that fact can be seen as the transmission of additional mental contents, rather than the result of some kind of artificial struggle to keep up syllable counts, rhymes, or rhythmic patterns.

As far as interpretation is concerned, it is worth making the following point clear. We have no exact ideas (and especially not sufficiently reliable ones) as to the mental processes corresponding to syntactic structuring, as to “what happens in the soul,” as Baudouin de Courtenay would say. What is more, we do not even know what or of what kind the mental representations of the building blocks of syntax are represented in the brain. We can likewise only vaguely guess under what influences and via what stages the mechanisms of joining those building blocks up get as far as producing the finished sentence, apart from practical derivations running along the diverging lines of tree diagrams that follow from the Chomskyan generative hypothesis. Therefore, the foregoing are to be taken as meaning that the (assumed) underlying structures are just “figured to prop up” the sentences of a poetic text rather than constituting operational starting points for them. Contamination phenomena in the sphere of everyday speech, too, suggest that certain basic (underlying) structures may appear, even more than one at a time, in the magician’s shop out of which the surface structure eventually emerges. One thing is certain: the addressee must ferret out some kind of background that is an indispensable source of her aesthetic or simply intellectual pleasure. Iván Fónagy saw the deepest in that issue as well. It is not hard to discover that underneath his interpretation—*mutatis mutandis*—the same basic idea can be found as is the essence of generative grammar (to recall this in its ancient–original interpretation, as had also been meant by Fónagy, in the formulation of his intimate friend the general linguist and Iranist Zsigmond Telegdi):

“Generative grammar sees the structure of the concrete and actual sentence as a secondary or ‘surface structure’, deriving it from an abstract ‘deep structure’ that unambiguously expresses the composition of the sentence and thereby determines its semantic interpretation. [...] this [= surface structure] then serves as the basis of phonetic interpretation; thus, the rules of the semantic and phonological components do not refer to the same structure.”

1.4. All further topics that engaged Fónagy’s attention for some time, such as metaphor (see below), situation dependence, or the interpretation of historical dynamism, are organically intertwined in his view and analyses.

Certainly not the least important, indeed of unquestionable significance from the point of view of the whole œuvre, is the dimension of human demeanour. In his choice of topics, in the up-to-dateness of his attitude, Iván Fónagy accepted the continuity of Hungarian scholarly traditions: there is perhaps not a single writing of his a central component of which is not some phenomenon of the Hungarian language. (Among other things, he wrote the first comprehensive and detailed work on the issue of Hungarian intonation.)

2. The first results that Iván Fónagy included, in a more accomplished form, in the grand summary referred to above come from 1941. The date of his last self-reference—as far as I know—is 2001. This historical span does not only reflect the development of his life’s achievement but also that of the disciplines that have widened our knowledge between the starting point and the present in an organic progress—not the least significantly due to Fónagy’s own work.

The effects of that work cannot be included in a single Euclidean space. Instead, in order to present a fuller picture, we have to have recourse to the idea of Hilbert’s space as elaborated by János Neumann, with the following sub-spaces.

2.1. The first dimension is methodological mastery. Fónagy’s work in phonetics provided us with a new formulation of how to do phonetics, by way of a strictness of evaluation both in the sense of language and of linguistics. In 1958 when his *A hangsúlyról* [On stress] was published, Hungarian phonetics became a “strict” discipline (a science) due to the new methodological path he beat for that hereditarily problematic issue. In particular, this was the path of a complex approach in which hypotheses consistently remained in the territory of linguistics but they also integrated the extraneous procedures of experimental phonetics as well as

the groups of phenomena and parameters that he unearthed and provided with a specifically linguistic sense. Another, no less significant methodological innovation within the Hungarian literature was the enforcement of perceptual aspects. With listening tests, it became immediately possible, in judging this or that phenomenon under investigation, to objectify the researcher's conviction by attested and documented criteria of actual language use. The method later became more refined by the application of Osgoodian scalar evaluations, and then by using sound synthesis as an independent control for the investigation of the phenomena of speech; but by and large, the method was there as early as the early sixties. In the light of that innovation of the time, it is a mere curiosity that the author—as witnessed by a paper he published in 1962—was the first in the world to start a concrete investigation on “live” linguistic material in terms of the mathematical theory of communication.

2.2. The second dimension is that of interdisciplinary connections. As in the universe of human cognition, in Fónagy's scientific credo as well, that dimension is inseparable from the basic principles of methodology. The more universal and the more many-sidedly elucidated the issue is, the more places, times and shapes the same issue can be recognised in in something else. It goes without saying that Iván Fónagy, exploring elementary facts of communication, managed to document these simultaneously in child language, in everyday speech, occasionally in developmental directions of historical processes, and in poetic language, too. In the steady light of his complex methodology, those elementary factors recognised in various disguises unite history, psychology, linguistics in the strict sense, poetics, information theory: everything that is arranged at the time in those fields along human language until they become closely related again and cluster around a particular centre despite all differences in the way the questions are asked and in the methods that are used. As we know, the Archimedean point of that intricate web of relations is the metaphor and, indeed, one of the focal points of Iván Fónagy's research was the metaphor and the way *metapherein* works.

The current general view of metaphor is quite functionally-based and classificatory in nature, with definite reference in its categories to the order of structural constituents. These points are of course catered for in Fónagy's work as well. However, his initial question is different, and at least in a historical sense it is also more profound. Once we observe that typologically or genetically unrelated languages exhibit a fair amount of overlap in some of their designations and contain identical

(especially synesthetically-based) expressions, we have good reasons to assume that the inspiration for the given metaphor is not simply one's language or indeed one's own mental abilities but rather a more ancient layer that—using the metaphor of 'depth'—must be considered more elementary, earlier, and deeper. The concrete field of investigation is the special terminology of phonetics. The properties of "sounds" or segments are usually given metaphorical names from the earliest grammars to the present day. Thus, laterals are "mellow", palatal vowels are "clear", some fricatives are "hairy", others are "tense", and so on. It is easy to see that the source domains of these metaphors involve visual, tactile, and kinesic sensation and experience. Transfers thus unite all areas of perception. But do we really have to do with a universal facility?

Again, the justification for the answer lies in reality. A lengthier quotation is in order here (cf. *Languages within language*, 337–44), partly in order to show the way the strategy of exploration and the train of thoughts gradually unfolds in elaborating the topic, similarly to the way the main theme of a symphony is developed.

Up-beat: If these metaphors [i.e., the ones used in naive phonetic characterisations, see above] are based on real analogies between sound features, on the one hand, and visual or tactile percepts and concepts such as virility, for instance, on the other hand, such metaphorical terms would be comprehensible even for those who are unfamiliar with phonetic terminology.

Measure I: Some thirty years ago I chose a subject who could not be suspected influenced from Greek or Mongolian grammarians. I happened to ask my five-year-old daughter whether she felt the sound /i/ was 'blond'. She answered without hesitation but with some amazement: 'It's blond, of course, why do you ask, don't you know?'. Encouraged by the response, over the following days and weeks I tested with her nearly all the traditional phonetic metaphors I was aware of, with similar results.

Measure II: In the course of somewhat more systematic tests made with 25 Hungarian children under school age, 20 grammar-school-children, and 50 adults with no knowledge of linguistics, it appeared that other children, and even adults, were no less intuitive than my daughter, and they had quite similar intuitions [...].

Measure III: The metaphorical judgements of French children [...] or students [...], of Italian children [...], or of American, German, Danish, Russian, Polish, Bulgarian, Moldavian, Lithuanian, Japanese or Vietnamese students do not differ in essence from the reactions of Hungarian children and adults [...].

Measure IV: In fact, these experiments show convincingly that the assignment of such metaphors as *thin*, *small*, *tense*, *bright*, *hard*, *quick*, *forceful*, *aggressive*, and *masculine* to vowels or consonants is in general language-

independent; though in certain cases lexical associations may interfere with phonetic intuition. Thus for instance /i/ turned out to be *bitter* for American students, *sweet* for Hungarians [...]. There can be little doubt that American students were influenced by the /i/ of *bitter*.

Measure V: There is good agreement between the tests carried out by Eli Fischer-Jørgensen with Danish students and those run with Hungarian, French, and English subjects, even in the case of negative results that were obtained on the basis of a more recent metaphorical terminology proposed by Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle [...]. It turned out that terms corresponding to the traditional terminology (acute vs. grave, moist vs. dry, round vs. flat) were correctly interpreted; the metaphor 'diffuse' vs. 'compact', however, relying on the concentric (compact) vs. centrifugal (diffuse) distribution of acoustic energy in sound spectra, was assigned indifferently to close and open vowels and to /p/, /t/, or /k/; we were also able to observe a regularity not predicted by the theory of distinctive features: the term *compact* was associated with plosives, and *diffuse* with vowel sounds.

Measure VI: Metaphorical terms can be based in principle either on acoustic (auditory) or on physiological (articulatory, muscular, kinesic) sensations. How can we decide which of the two factors is to be considered the source of phonetic metaphors, since there is no way of filtering out acoustic or kinesic sensations? In fact, nature does provide this kind of filtering. Children deaf from birth are deprived of auditory experience, blind children necessarily miss the visual aspect of speech activity.

If the responses of deaf and normal children coincide, we could infer that the metaphors are based on sensations accompanying sound production (proprioceptive, tactile, motor sensations).

This does happen in the majority of cases [...]. This clearly indicates that we have to look for some analogy between e.g., *moisture* and the articulation of palatal consonants. In fact, the contact area of tongue and palate, i.e., of two necessarily moist organs, is significantly greater for palatal than for plain (non-palatal) plosives [...].

Deaf children, like children with normal hearing, declare in complete agreement that *k* and rolled, apical [r] are *harder* than *l*. It is highly probable that muscular expenditure is greater for [r] than for [l], though there is no experimental proof to confirm this impression. We know at the same time that muscular contraction goes with a hardening of the muscles involved. This could account for the kinaesthetic judgement of hardness of [r], and also of voiceless stops [...] that are declared *hard* by West European as well as Arab and Hungarian grammarians.

Measure VII: How can we explain the association between /u/ and sadness on the level of articulation? The semantic interpretation of /u/ is nevertheless widespread. Effi Briest, Fontane's heroine, considers /u/ the vowel of mourning (*Trauervokal*). We might be tempted to attribute this reputation to the dark vowel colour of /u/. Luckily, X-ray sound pictures of Hungarian and French emotive speech offer some indication. It appears that in joy all vowels are shifted forward, and all vowels are pulled backward

in simulating sadness [...]. The /u/ as the extreme back vowel could quite well represent the backward movement induced by sorrow.

Measure VIII: The answers of deaf children may correspond to those of normals but be somewhat less consistent. In this case, it is likely that the metaphor is essentially based on kinaesthetic sensations but is supported by auditory experiences as well.

Measure IX: In view of the highly significant correlation between brightness and the /i/ vowel even in the case of deaf children [...], we cannot claim that front vowels are associated with brightness because they ‘sound brighter’. We have to recognise the existence of an analogy between vowel articulation and the sensation of brightness and darkness. If we take literally the term ‘sound gesture’, following Jespersen, Paget, and other phoneticians [...], we may bring up by way of argument the contrasting tongue positions of /i/ and /u/. In pronouncing /i/ the tongue seems to point upward and outward, i.e., toward light; in pronouncing /u/ the tongue retracts and seems to point backward toward the ‘dark recesses’ of the pharyngeal cavity. Walpurga von Raffler-Engel [...] noticed that her eight-month child, when pointing toward a desired object, generally produced an [i]-like sound.

Measure X: How can we interpret such a seemingly paradoxical case, where the results of deaf children correspond to those of normals, but are more consistent? The vowel /i/ was felt to be ‘harder’ by 51.8% of the children with normal hearing, by 85% of deaf children, and by 60% of blind children. It is likely that proprioception dominates, and the deaf subjects are essentially reacting to the tension inherent in the lingual and labial articulation of /i/. At the same time the judgement of normals might be diverted by the image of big, strong animals generally emitting dark, *u*-like sounds. This is still more evident whether the answers of deaf children are internally consistent but at odds with the answers of normal subjects. In the case of strength judgements, children with normal hearing felt the *u*-sound to be stronger (72%), on the basis of acoustic stimuli evoking the voice of adult males and big animals; /i/, on the contrary, is felt to be stronger by deaf children (70%) on the basis of proprioception.

Measure XI: Finally, we must consider cases where acoustic associations predominate and articulation plays hardly any role in the genesis of metaphors. This should be reflected in almost random distribution of the answers of deaf children. This has in fact never happened in the course of our experiments. The tests we were able to carry out are based, however, on a small sample of metaphors, so it would be a sweeping generalisation to pretend that such metaphors do not exist. We have cogent reasons to suppose that metaphorical terms such as *Lautstärke* ‘loudness’ [lit. ‘sound force’], *strong* syllable, the *male* and *female* vowels of Mongolian and Hungarian grammar, and *sharp*, *acute* vowels are essentially based on acoustic sensations. *Lautstärke* equates physical force with loud voice. *Female* sounds correspond to the vowel colour of female voices, back vowels to male voices. *Sharp*, *acute* sounds (such as *s* and /i/) are closest to the acoustic threshold of pain.

Coda: We have considered so far two possible sources of metaphorical judgements: articulation and its acoustic product. We have neglected its social aspect and its functioning as an alternative source of metaphorical terms. In some cases the phonological aspect, i.e., the linguistic behaviour of speech sounds, seems to have played an essential role. It is responsible, according to a misogynistic French grammarian of the sixteenth century [= Dolet, 1540], for the metaphorical designation *e-feminin* of the unstable /ə/ sound: “[...] c’est é vulgairement appelé femenin, est aussi facheux a gouverner qu’une femme [...]” “[...] this é, commonly called feminine, is as difficult and embarrassing to command as women are [...]’.”

3. Within the context of science, his own person and life history was something he did not care for at all. Once he told me he worked with the anonymity of a medieval monk. Yet, with respect to his person, two little things can be mentioned here. He showed the same amount of respect to his students as they did to him. Having grown up under his tuition, the present author and his colleagues involuntarily teach with the same interactive strategy as Professor Fónagy used to. (By the way, that title was awarded to him by both Sorbonne and Szeged University, an honour to those two universities just as much as to him.) One of his laudators, György Szépe wrote that “his basic tone was a hardly concealed melancholy”. Indeed, the most he allowed himself was a certain mild irony, and I do not know of a single case when he harmed or hurt anybody, even though he was tramping the bushy fields of scholarly life for quite a long time.

In sum, Iván Fónagy’s linguistics—similarly to that of John Lotz—was indeed “extra-vagant” in the deep etymological sense of that word. He was not a stiff structuralist, he was not a Chomskyan, he did not restrict himself to interpretations of Fillmore’s case grammar; he glanced beyond classical and more recent attempts at linguistic relativism, he avoided low-flying classificatory pressures of stylistic discussions sold by the dozen, and he would never dream of sinking into unimaginatively technicizing and unsupported descriptive devices of, say, autosegmental phonology. On the other hand, he was able to absorb the utilizable yields of all these and more, and to apply them as useful hand tools in his own workshop. That was the pledge of his work never becoming a *solus ipse* episode within the Hungarian and international history of scholarship. When he closed his scholarly activities, he could say his linguistics was, as Husserl once said, “rigorous science, earnest, rigorous, nay apodictically rigorous science—the dream has been dreamt through”.

4. What the discipline and the neighbouring disciplines have inherited from him is a unitary, rich, renaissance-flavoured œuvre. If we have to select, as is fashionable today, some of his most important publications, we can pick those that have been referred to the most frequently. The list would then contain the following items, in addition to *Languages within language*, the grand compendium of his life's work.

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