The Janus-Faced Syntax of Old High German
Indo-European Legacy — Beginnings of Verb-Second
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This talk investigates the Janus-faced nature of the syntax of the oldest attested stage of the German language, i.e. of Old High German. It will be argued that Old High German syntax combined both archaic, 'backward-looking' features inherited from Indo-European and/or Proto-Germanic and the innovative, 'forward-looking' features of a beginning verb-second grammar. The main focus of the talk will be on the left sentence-periphery (cf. also Axel 2007).

The archaic features included residues of a non-conflated C-domain. The major exponents of this were a left-peripheral position for base-generated left-dislocated topics and unintegrated adverbial/relative clauses (cf. Kiparsy 1995 on Proto-Germanic), a system of sentence-typing particles and a prefinite position for personal pronouns.

One major innovative feature of Old High German syntax was that the precursor of the 'prefield' (Vorfeld) had already evolved, i.e. a position that was the target of both operator movement (wh-movement, topicalization and the fronting of focussed XPs) and of so-called 'Stylistic Fronting'. The latter term refers to the phenomenon that an XP had to be fronted even if there was no semantic/pragmatic trigger for that movement. This was an important step towards verb-second. Another important innovation was the development of generalized V-to-C movement.

The Janus-faced nature is visible '*in nuce*' in the syntax of empty elements. On the one hand the inventory of empty elements was larger than in the modern Germanic languages: there existed different types of zero complementizers as well as referential null subjects in 8th/9th century OHG. On the other hand the syntactic licensing conditions of (referential) null subjects were dependent on verb fronting, i.e. on an innovation of the emerging verb second grammar.

Axel, Katrin (2007): *Studies on Old High German Syntax: Left Sentence Periphery, Verb Placement and Verb Second*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Kiparsky, Paul (1995): Indo-European origins of Germanic Syntax. In: A. Battye & I. Roberts (eds), *Clause Structure and Language Change*, pp. 140-169. Oxford: Oxford Universiy Press.