

Titel: BREV TIL: Eli Fischer-Jørgensen FRA: Stephen Anderson (1986-06-30)

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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Prof. Eli Fischer-Jørgensen
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Dear Eli,

I'm extremely embarrassed about the length of time it's taken me to answer your letter of last November, including a draft of your review of *Phonology in the Twentieth Century*. It came while I was teaching a course from the book, and thus thinking (or re-thinking) about the extent to which I'd said what I meant to. What better time to think about a potential review? But somehow, I didn't get the letter written right away, and that meant it went further and further down in my pile of things to do right way ...

Naturally, I am very pleased with your generous assessment of the book as a whole. You are quite right, of course, that it is aimed at an American audience which is by and large illiterate where the history of the field is concerned: I'm afraid that for most of the relevant specialists in this country, the facts rehearsed are not at all well-known. I hope the book will also be of use for European and other readers: if so, that will come from treating the facts that are familiar to them in terms of a different range of interpretive options.

On points of detail: you're quite right that, grossly, I mean "representation" and "rule" to stand for the description of units and relations, respectively. I realize that there's a certain amount of equivocation involved in using the same words for the views of so many people, but I don't think it's pernicious. Your point about my misleading ascription to Trubetzkoy of a view on representations based on a passage referring to *Lautvorstellungen* illustrates this, I think. My translation is admittedly an exaggeration: it comes from the fact that I translated from Cantineau's French rather than from Trubetzkoy's German, and Cantineau translates *Lautvorstellung* as *représentation phonique*. Still, though, the passage in question is fundamentally about the characterization of utterances in terms of a particular kind of image, and even though that's not the same as a particular transcription, it's still a matter of characterizing the units that make up an utterance rather than the relations among utterances. The level at which I intend REPRESENTATION to function as a technical term is considerably more abstract than just the matter of an explicit transcription system.

With respect to particular figures, a few comments. For Boas, it is of course particularly hard to pin down many theoretical issues, since his "theory" is almost entirely implicit. What I found most interesting was the number of tantalizing remarks that seem to imply a system of rules defined over the set of surface forms — to the virtual exclusion of any sort of more abstract representation. Since he was quite explicitly concerned with a system of transcription, there's no question that matters of representation figured heavily — but the underlying theory of where the regularities of a language reside, he seems to have felt that it's the relations between surface forms, not an underlying and more abstract reality that counts.

As for Hjelmslev, I tried to stress a dissonance I find in his writing between a belief that language is a system