

Titel: II. General Theory, [Uldall] 002-0040

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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4.1. When, under given conditions, a form is in relation with one or more substantials, either direct or through one or more of its derivatives, the form is said to be manifested under those conditions, and the substantials are said to be manifestation(s) of the form; under all other conditions the form, when present, is said to be latent.

A form is said to be realized within a given material when it can be manifested within that material. A form is said to be virtual within a given material when it cannot be manifested within that material.

When an American small boy says "she sure talks loud" and his teacher corrects him by saying "ly", it is clear that this "ly", for all that it "occurs alone", is not complete in itself: it is the manifested part of a chain the rest of whose forms are latent. Probably nobody would quarrel with such an interpretation in this particular case, but the issue is not always so clear. The difficulty is to find a criterion for deciding when to regard a chain as complete in itself, fully manifested, and when to postulate the presence of latent forms.

We have already had occasion to observe cases in which functives occurring "alone" are identical with functives occurring as part of a larger chain: in "when he came, I went" we concluded that the principal clause was equivalent to the whole sentence, because it was identical with other "I went"s occurring without a subordinate clause. We classified the orientation of the relation as a determination, because we took it for granted that the subordinate clause could not similarly occur without a primary clause. But functives identical with determinants do occur "alone": you hear people say "if only I had a hundred pounds" without going on to say what they would do in such a contingency. It is clear that if we treated functives of this kind in the same way as we have treated "I went" our scheme of orientation at the level of clauses would be wrecked, and the example of "ly" shows that orientation would be equally hopeless at later stages of the analysis. To give up orientation would be to leave oneself with no means of structural differentiation at all, and so it would appear that it is necessary to recognise latent forms, to contextualize the "incomplete" funtitive or, as Hjelmslev calls it, to catalyse it, in the same way that an archaeologist will construct a bowl round a fragment of pottery rather than invent a theory that the ancients used such irregular pieces for some purpose.

On the other hand, if you once start adding to the material under observation, where are you to stop? If a primary is equivalent to a whole junction, should one then, when a primary occurs alone, catalyse in a whole string of adjectives? It is easy enough to make a rule that catalysis should only be resorted to when the manifested funtitive is a determinant or an interdependent, but the circle leads back on itself, because we cannot know anything about orientations except through the study of occurrences. There are other possibilities: one might decide to catalyse when the "sprachgef" of a native registers incompleteness; this is, in fact, what has always been done so far, but such feelings are very uncertain and often extremely difficult to ascertain, and, besides, what would one do if two natives disagreed, as might well happen? Again, one might introduce a statistical condition such that that one of the terminals of a relation which occurred most often outside that relation, should be deemed to be the determinate, but that would go very much against the methodological grain and would introduce an intolerable element of uncertainty.