

Titel: notes, [uldall] 003-0100

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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Our first principle, from which the others can be derived, is that a description should be self-consistent, exhaustive, and as simple as possible. Its three parts are in certain dependence so that ^{operational} exhaustiveness is subordinate to self-consistency and simplicity to exhaustiveness. Philosophically, however, simplicity is the form et origo: self-consistency is a form of simplicity in the sense that contradiction implies more than one set of basic ideas, and so is exhaustiveness in the sense that any remainder may contain and conceal contradiction.

This principle applies on two separate and distinct levels, to some extent with conflicting results, because the term "description" is ambivalent, referring both to a particular description of a particular material object and to the general descriptive apparatus, the algebra itself. A description of a particular object is exhaustive ^{if} it has been carried through ^{within the scope of the material} until there is no remainder, i.e. until the whole of the object has been reduced to a structure of the kind envisaged; it is simple if it describes the object as consisting of as few final resultants as possible while remaining self-consistent and exhaustive, and if its procedure consists of the smallest number of operations consistent with the smallest number of final resultants. The final resultants are a kind of ^{we mark the ultimate limits of the scope of the material} insurmountable remainder; their ^{by definition} determinate functions are known, and serve to define their positions there, but being as they are ^{irreducible} unanalyzable, nothing can be known of their internal structure, and the principle of thoroughness demands that they should be reduced to the smallest possible number. The algebra is a general description from which all particular descriptions, actual or potential, must be deducible. The ultimate test of its exhaustiveness must be by induction from all the particular descriptions deduced from it, but in the measure that it is truly general, this induction can never be complete, and as the particular descriptions presuppose the algebra, which must therefore be constructed in advance, its exhaustiveness can be estimated only as a probability. The same applies to its simplicity, which must ultimately be tested inductively, by the simplicity of the particular descriptions deduced from it. It follows from this that it will always be possible to simplify any algebra at the expense of its scope; and that ~~from~~ from any ~~two~~ algebra thus reduced a limited number of particular descriptions can be deduced which are individually simpler than the corresponding particular descriptions deducible from a more general algebra. In other words, any ^{one} ~~of~~ material, e.g. any ^{one} language, can be described in a ^{particular} very simple way if the descriptive apparatus, the algebra, is designed only for ^{description; may be less simple.} that specific purpose; if it is desired to give uniform descriptions of more than one material, e.g. of more than one language, the descriptive apparatus, and hence each