

Titel: BREV TIL: Eli Fischer-Jørgensen FRA: Charles Ernest Bazell (1957-11-08)

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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8-11-57

Dear Dr. Fischer-Jorgensen, Many thanks for your note.

Of course zero cannot enter into specific oppositions, but neither can a feature! Specific oppositions are between marked and unmarked terms, and the feature or mark itself cannot significantly be called marked or unmarked. (To ask which it is, is just the same as the schoolboy's blunder of asking whether atoms are liquid or solid).

It is an elementary logical howler to say with Jakobson that the absence of a trait is the opposite of its presence (like saying that a white man is the opposite of a black man). It is of course true that the absence of a value may (from another standpoint) be regarded as an opposite value. But the two standpoints cannot be taken simultaneously. -- In any case, what is called an opposition on the phonemic level (2 terms having resp. lacking a feature) is senseless below this level. A binary privative opposition between minimal features is a contradiction in terms. -- I agreed with all your remarks on K.T.'s work, though it holds promise of better in the future, since the nonsense is almost all glossematic while the divergences are usually intelligent.

Sincerely C.B. Lyell

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