What are phi-features supposed to do, and where?

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Is there such a thing as <u>*the* representation of phi-features</u>, which transcends the divisions between morphology, syntax, and semantics? What is a theory of phi-features supposed to do, exactly? Generate paradigms? Generate typologies? Generate meanings? Account for syntactic generalizations?

In this talk, I will be arguing:

 (i) There is no such thing as a single, cross-modularly stable representation of phi-features;

 (ii) A look at other empirical domains reveals that there is absolutely no reason to expect such a thing to exist;

(iii) The representation of phi-features <u>in syntax</u> is supposed to account for syntactic generalizations; accordingly:
   - <u>in syntax</u>, *singular* ≡ the absence of NUMBER
   - <u>in syntax</u>, *3rd person* ≡ the absence of PERSON

   (i.e., the representation of NUMBER and PERSON in syntax is **privative**)

The arguments in support of **(iii)** will include the cross-linguistic typology of what I call *phi-neutralization*—what happens when phi-valuation has demonstrably failed—as well as the more familiar argument from the typology of omnivorous agreement effects.

A significant portion of the talk, however, will be devoted to establishing **(ii)**—that is, arguing that we should not expect there to be a single, uniform, cross-modular representation of phi-features. I will survey a variety of other empirical domains where the mappings between morphology, syntax, and semantics self-evidently fray apart. And I will argue that the expectation of a fully reliable mapping between syntax and morphology, between syntax and semantics, and, a fortiori, between morphology and semantics, reflects a category error. It elevates what is an indispensable **methodological heuristic** ("assume transparent mapping unless there is evidence to the contrary") to the status of **invariant grammatical principle** ("the mapping between two modules M and N is reliable and transparent"). I will argue that such an elevation is not only unjustified on theoretical grounds, but also, that we have plenty of evidence against it.