Reintegrating the Analyst: Linguistic and Communicational Methodology in Integrationist Perspective

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Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
3. I certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged. I used AI at AITS 2 (AI for Shaping) of the Artificial Intelligence Transparency Scale (AITS) in a highly restricted manner. I acknowledge the use of ChatGPT as a tool suggesting ideas for the thesis title. In particular, the phrase ‘reintegrating the analyst’ arose through this collaborative process. AI was not used for any other purpose.
4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy, and ethics approval has been granted for all research studies in the thesis, as shown in the table below.

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Abstract

This thesis sets out to explore the analysis of rationality and communicative activity from the perspective of integrationism, a theory of communication developed by Roy Harris. Integrationism provides an alternative perspective on language and communication to those theories Harris identifies as segregational, i.e. those which assume the feasibility of analytically separating linguistic from non-linguistic activity. The thesis begins by interrogating and creatively developing a number of important integrational conceptions, in particular external integration and operational discriminations. This critical appraisal of the integrational literature takes into account recent work by integrationists and identifies a number of potentially productive parallels between integrationism and the work of Tim Ingold, plus current research in ecological psychology and Southern Theory. The next stage of the thesis employs these integrational conceptions in an analysis of my own creative communicative activity (signmaking). My own reflexive analysis is contrasted with a more traditional semiological analysis conducted by Louis Hébert. This leads to a number of provisional conclusions. One, that traditional analysis has often failed to take full-account of the semiological activity of the analyst and underappreciated analysis as a communicative process in its own right. Two, that there is no principled way to disambiguate the signmaking of the analyst and the signmaking of the participants being studied. Three, a reflexive analysis of my own signmaking reaffirms Harris' contention that integrationism is better thought of as a perspective on analytic activity, rather than a methodology for doing analysis. Four, an advantage of the integrational perspective is that it encompasses, and can provide an account of, the analyst's signmaking activity in a manner often left unattended in segregational perspectives. The focus is then to critically appraise in detail non-integrationist analyses of rationality (Steven Pinker) and communicative activity (Charles Goodwin and Alastair Pennycook). This in-depth consideration is found to provide strong support for the provisional conclusions arrived at earlier in the thesis.

Contents

For Danya: the bestest (particularly at Fortnite ;-)

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Introduction

When it comes to other people's signmaking, we can never be 'for sure', for we are not Saussure (paraphrasing David Bade, personal communication)

In this thesis I adopt (to a greater or lesser degree) Roy Harris' integrational perspective (e.g. 1996, 1998a) on communication, human activity, and analysis. I begin by looking at the integrational conception of the sign and some of the problems this may pose for analysis. My focus next moves on to critically appraising and developing a number of Harrisean and integrational concepts that may offer some solutions, ways of mitigating, or thinking about, these potential problems. I then apply these ideas by reflexively analysing my own signmaking activity and provisionally conclude that the integrational conception of sign, rather than presenting a barrier to analysis, can offer important insights into analytic communicative processes. In the remainder of the thesis I look in-depth at several examples of analytic treatment given to the semiological activity, and the rationality said to underlie that activity, of *other people* by non-integrationist scholars, using the integrational conceptions initially developed in this research. Here I conclude that the semiological activity of the analysts themselves goes underacknowledged, with the consequence that the purported findings of these analyses are misrepresented. Rather than provide an objective account of the signmaking of the participants, the analysts have instead transposed *their own* signmaking activity onto their subjects, thereby unwarrantedly imposing their own particular communicational perspective and ideology onto others.

Introducing and Positioning this Thesis

Harris' work is challenging on many fronts as it presents a radical departure from how language and communication have generally been conceived and studied in the Western academic tradition. One manifestation of this challenge is faced by the reader who is trying to grapple with Harris' writing. Not because the prose itself is dense, clumsy or obscure, quite to the contrary. In my own case at least, at first encounter Harris' work and the arguments he puts forward seem remarkably sensible and straightforward, while also speaking to personal experience in a manner rarely encountered when reading books on linguistics. The challenge to the reader arises, however, when trying to square what Harris writes with so much else that we have read and been told about language, languages, meaning, and communication. The challenge only deepens if we then try, as I have in the following chapters, to 'make integrationism our own', at least in the sense of trying to put Harris' and other integrationists' ideas into my own, *written*, words: what can seem so clear and simple at first encounter, or while engaging in communicative processes we might wish to term 'thinking to one's self', can quickly begin to seem much less so when we try to engage in the communicative processes involved in 'explaining to a friend' or 'writing an academic thesis'. Given this, one way of reading the chapters that follow could be to see them as an account of my personal reckoning with, and coming to terms with, the work of Harris (e.g. 1980, 1981, 1996, 1998a and 2009a) and that of the integrationists who have followed in his stead (e.g. Love 1990, Pablé and Hutton 2015, Jones 2017a, and Duncker 2019). This is one reason why, perhaps, the reader should not expect total consistency in what follows, which in a sense is an entirely subjective narration of my continuing

journey within the integrational intellectual landscape—with Harris as both guide and companion—and therefore includes, no doubt, many of the missteps and detours I have made along the way.

The work of Harris and other integrationists is also challenging in the sense of the sustained, deep, and insightful critique that it levels at the Western academic linguistic and philosophical tradition: from Aristotle to Chomsky, via Locke, Saussure and beyond, extending to those writing in the present day[1]. These scholars are representative, in their own respective ways, of what Harris (e.g. 1996) calls *segregationism*, a tradition that he identifies as seeing, one way or another, a division between 'the linguistic' and 'the non-linguistic'. Integrationism, Harris maintains, provides an alternative perspective to segregationism:

> "The segregationist and the integrationist between them propose two comprehensive and radically different theoretical perspectives for an inquiry into human communication. If there is a third perspective within the Western tradition, it has yet to be discovered." (Harris 1996: xi)

Because both integrational and segregational perspectives on communicative activity "spring from our lay experience of communication" (Harris 1996: x), we all have the creative power to adopt either viewpoint:

[1] One can pick up almost any integrationist text to find instances of critical engagement with Western linguists and philosophers working across the ages. Harris' earliest fully-fledged 'integrationist' books (1980, 1981) tackle head on, with a devastating critical salvo, some of the biggest names and most well-entrenched ideas in philosophy and linguistics. For examples of integrational critiques aimed at modern scholars see, for instance Nigel Love's (2004) critique of the conception of languages-as-codes found in Andy Clark's approach; Peter Jones' (2015) critique of Herbert H. Clark's notion of coordination; Jon Orman's (2018) critique of Edda Weigand's Mixed Game Model; Jones and Duncker's (2020) critique of Charle's Goodwin's Eurocentrism; or Adrian Pablé's (2020) critique of Peircean biosemiotics.

> "We are segregationists when we see communication processes as forcing us to choose among a pre-determined set of options. We are integrationists when we see communication processes as open-ended opportunities." (Harris 1996: x)

One important consequence of thinking about our communicative experience from either a segregational or an integrational perspective, is the ramifications regarding the typical 'objects of study' of linguistics and theories of communication. As Harris intimates in the passage above, from a segregational perspective, *words*, *sentences*, *languages*, *meanings* and *grammatical structure* (to take just a few examples from a potentially very long list[2]) *pre-exist*, in some form or another, the semiological activity (or *signmaking*) in which these 'items' are said to occur, be used, or instantiated. This leads to a curiously atemporal view of our communicative activity (Harris 1981 and 2003a): for while our 'non-linguistic' actions are seen as sequentially time-bound, the 'linguistic' part of the equation, i.e. the words and meanings we use in activity, are treated as though they *stand outside of time*, yet remain freely accessible across people and contexts. Words and meanings from a segregational perspective are (to a greater or lesser extent), viewed as *autonomous*, *intersubjective*, and *intercontextual*. In this sense, the segregational view of communication inevitably involves the *reification* of aspects of communicative *processes*, where the *products* of creative communicative activity come to be seen as necessary and enabling *precursors* to the activity in question.

[2] From an integrational perspective, the list is as long as the creativity and ingenuity of linguists, grammaticians, semiologists and communicational theorists allows, i.e. potentially endless. Each particular theory favours certain linguistic or communicational 'items' as a way of explaining and describing linguistic and communicational processes.

Conversely, Integrationism takes as axiomatic (e.g. Harris 1996, 1998a) that there is no principled dividing line between the linguistic and non-linguistic, and that any appearances to the contrary are a result of our own creative semiological activity in the here and now. From an integrational perspective, therefore, “always, we are dealing with an integrated continuum” (Harris 1996: 164). In other words, our experiential bedrock is of a time-bound *flowing* of activity, an integrated whole, *from which* our creative semiological proficiency enables us to abstract, discriminate and distinguish in ways that, while to some extent constrained by previous and ongoing semiological activity and experience (both our own and others), are always open-ended and never pre-determined. On this view, thinking in terms of *words*, *languages* and *meanings* is just one way of characterising, and making sense of, aspects of our communicative experience, they are not objects or phenomena that in any way stand apart or antecede a particular person engaging in a particular episode of communicational activity at a particular time. Communication is viewed as a case of a temporally-bound process of integrating past experience with present experience and anticipation of future experience (see, for example Pablé and Hutton 2015). Exploring and expanding on these ideas is a major concern throughout this thesis.

It should be stressed, however, that although in an important sense, segregationism and integrationism present the analyst with a ‘choice of perspective’, this choice is not a case of neutral, abstract relativism, one that absolves the analyst of responsibility. Aside from the ‘logical’ problems associated with segregationism, some of which were briefly described above (and the subject of much further discussion over the course of the thesis), there

is also a strong *ethical* dimension to the choice. By downgrading our creativity to that of 'users' rather than 'makers' (see Harris 1980), segregationism diminishes *us*, our self-image, and our relationship with the world we simultaneously inhabit and create.

Another important critique[3] Harris and other integrationists have made against the received wisdom of mainstream approaches to language and communication is that they are *surrogationalist*. Surrogationalism, perhaps still best described in Harris' (1980) *The Language Makers*, is the notion that words *stand for something else*. This idea comes in two, often mutually supporting, varieties. One is *psychocentrism*, where words stand in for concepts in the mind or brain. Another is *reocentrism*, where words stand for some thing or phenomena 'out there' in the world. A particularly early example of reocentrism is presented in the Bible's account of Adam naming the beasts in the field (Harris 1980), although reocentrism remains a cornerstone of Physics today; an important role of physicists is seen as giving names to objectively existing facets of physical reality[4] (Harris 1980 and 2005; see also Latour 1999). Stark examples of psychocentrism can be found throughout philosophy and linguistics from John

[3] Although not the particular tack taken here (at least not explicitly, though the arguments set forth in this introduction and throughout the thesis are heavily implicated with and implied by what follows in this footnote), in the integrationist literature a further challenge to mainstream thinking on language and communication is that it is in thrall to what Harris termed *the language myth* (1981). There are two, intertwined, "fallacies" associated with this myth. One is that communication is *telementational*, in that it involves encoding one's thoughts into a language commonly shared with one's interlocutor, who must then decode your words into similar (or identical) thoughts of their own for successful communication to occur. In turn, the telementational model relies on the idea that languages consist of a system of bi-planar signs with some core of fixed *form* and *meaning*, hence its epithet the *fixed-code* fallacy. The paradigmatic, and to-date still most clearly (or at least overtly) expressed, example of the language myth is Saussure's 'talking-heads' model of communication (1983), although integrationists have identified evidence of the language myth in operation in a wide variety of more recent work; see Nigel Love (1990) in particular, for a highly erudite and penetrating critique.

[4] Thus, surrogationalism comes with an in-built metaphysics, i.e. that *thing comes before word* (see Harris 1980 for discussion).

Locke (1999) to generativists such as Noam Chomsky (e.g. 1965) and Steven Pinker (e.g. 2013), and cognitive linguists and psychologists of all stripes[5], including Ray Jackendoff (e.g. 2002), Lawrence Barsalou (e.g. 1999), and Ronald Langacker (e.g. 2008). However, in an example of how the two sides of surrogationalism can be mutually supporting, the mental concepts or *representations* for which the words are said to stand in a psychocentric approach are very often seen (or implicitly assumed) to have a reocentric relationship to the outside world (see Stott 2018 for further discussion). From an integrational perspective, perhaps the principal problem of surrogationalism is that it ignores or omits the irradicable role of the signmaker: one thing cannot come to stand for, represent, or refer to another, without a person—via their own communicational creativity—making the connection between the two in the first place (see, for example, Harris 2009c: 47f).

The fallacy of surrogationalism can be shown with an example that will be returned to throughout this thesis for various purposes. Although perhaps something of a detour (albeit brief), the example is important because it succinctly illustrates an important throughline of the following chapters, namely that rationality and meaning (or, to put the latter in more integrational terms, *communicational value*) are *always rooted in activity*. The example is Wittgenstein's (2009: 6e) well-known vignette of a builder (A) and an assistant (B) engaged in a construction project involving four building materials: *blocks*, *beams*, *slabs* and *pillars*. (Wittgenstein's builders are also a common topic for discussion in Harris' work, see for example, 1980, 1988, 1998a, and 2009a). A is

[5] From an integrational perspective, given their psychocentrism, the differences between generative and cognitive linguistics are slight, despite the bitter academic disputes between the disciplines in the past.

building with these stones and B's job is to bring the appropriate stone to A "in the order in which A needs them" (Wittgenstein 2009: 6e). This is achieved by A calling out one of four words at the appropriate time, the four words being an exact match for the building materials—resulting in a language ('Constructionese' - see Harris 2009a) with a limited lexical inventory of just: 'block', 'pillar', 'slab' and 'beam'. On Harris' telling (1980: 42f), Wittgenstein wanted to demonstrate that, were we to only have access to a language based on reocentric principles, the result could only ever be a crude approximation of our actual experience of communication.

For Wittgenstein, this vignette works as a demonstration of a surrogational language in action; each of the lexical items in the builder's vocabulary *stands for* a particular building stone. The challenge that Wittgenstein sets the surrogationalist is that this particular language-game is "not everything that we call language" (2009: 6e); in much the same way that board-games are not the only kind of games people play. However, as Harris perceptively notes (1980: 79f), Wittgenstein misses something important in the activity of his own builders. Crucially, it is the builders' *activity* which establishes the "correlation between word and object" (Harris 1980: 80). As Harris writes, "mere regularity of spatio-temporal concomitance, as e.g., between thunder and lightning" is not sufficient to provide a connecting link between sound and object (1980: 80). If we ignore the functionality of language we create "a nonsense of a language based on relations totally irrelevant to its employment" (Harris 1980: 87).

Wittgenstein's builders are engaged in a building project with clear aims, hence "the builder's language is essentially a practical language", designed to assist in achieving the aim of building (Harris 1980: 84). "[Constructionese]

contains no idle or merely ancillary grammatical machinery of any kind. Everything is geared up to the fetching of building materials" (Harris 1980: 84). Thus, if we are to ask, 'what do the words *block*, *pillar*, *slab*, *beam* mean in Constructionese?' it is difficult to escape the idea that the notions of *wanting* and *fetching* will be necessary to include in any reply that is to be convincing (Harris 1980: 84f.). This leads us to an instrumental account of the builders' linguistic activity, where words are viewed as 'tools[6]' to 'get-stuff-done', rather than just "object-labels" (Harris 1980: 85). This instrumentality becomes irradicable as soon as "we allow that the word can be used to further some purposeful activity" (Harris 1980: 87; see also Davis 1999 and Jones 2011). The nub of Harris' critique of Wittgenstein is, therefore, that the vignette of builder and assistant attempts the impossible: "[t]he impossibility is to construct a model of what a language would be like if it consisted solely of names of things; that is to say, of words which functioned intrinsically as names of things, *as distinct from words which might be described, in a chosen metalanguage, as names of things* [emphasis added]" (Harris 1980: 87).

In its critique of segregationalism and surrogationalism and, importantly, in its provision of a thoroughgoing alternative perspective on language and communication, integrationism can be seen as being at the forefront of a broad movement in academia (one with building momentum and imperative) looking for alternatives to a predominant *representationalism*. This growing body of scholarship has begun to challenge the pervasive, Eurocentric, representationalist perspective, not just in linguistics but across a wide range of

[6] An instrumental perspective on language (see Harris 1980) still has problems from an integrational perspective, one reason being that seeing words as 'tools' is a paradigmatic example of reification.

disciplines, including: anthropology (e.g. Ingold 2007, 2022), psychology (e.g. van Dijk 2016, van den Herik 2019, Kiverstein and van Dijk 2021, Read 2024), philosophy (e.g. Bennet and Hacker 2003, Conrad 2020), geography (e.g. Laurier and Philo 2006, Anderson and Harrison 2010), science studies (e.g. Latour 1999, 2005), post-humanist and post-colonial research (e.g. Pennycook 2018, Santos 2018, Makoni, Verity and Kaiper-Marquez 2021), cognitive science (e.g. Maturana and Varela 1987, Hutto and Myin 2017) and the social sciences (e.g. Coleman and Ringrose 2013, MacLure 2013)[7].

In particular, Harris' work (e.g. 1980, 2009a and 2009b; see also, for example, Pablé 2019a and Stott 2024[8]) showing the cultural-dependency of language ideologies, has also brought integrationism into dialogue with scholars from around the world who are researching on and in the Global South. This dialogue was in evidence in the recent International Association for the Integrational Study of Language and Communication (IAISLC) conferences: *Integrationism and Philosophies of Language: Emerging Alternative Epistemologies in the Global North and the Global South* (2019 held at Penn State University) and *Integrationism and Language Ideologies* (Brazil 2020 [2021]). The need to find alternatives to representationalist approaches in linguistics and psychology has also led to exchanges between integrationists and Gibsonian psychologists, for example the (2023) conference: *Integrationism and*

[7] Despite sharing some common cause with integrationism, many of these projects remain vulnerable to integrational critique. In particular, the radical enactivism of Hutton and Myin, Latour's Actor-Network-Theory, and the Deleuzian inspired wing of the social sciences are probably overdue attention from integrationists. The felicities and tensions between integrationism and Gibsonian psychology have begun to be explored by Jones and Read (2023) and Pablé (2025c). Pablé (2025b) has also begun taking the post-humanists to task, in particular the work of Pennycook (Pablé 2025a). See also the **Chapter 5** for criticism of Pennycook's approach.

[8] An adapted version of **Chapter 4**, *Reintegrating Rationality* in this thesis.

Ecological approaches in dialogue: language, communication and direct perception, held in Sheffield (see Jones and Read 2023 for an extended discussion on the points of contact between Gibsonian psychology and integrational theory)[9].

Original Contribution

The original contribution that this thesis brings to integrationism and the related academic fields described in the preceding section can be summarised as follows:

1. Overall, the original contribution of this research lies in the creative development of the integrational perspective. This is carried out via a critical interrogation, exploration, and elaboration of key aspects of that perspective in dialogue with both recent integrationist thinking as well as other historical and contemporary approaches to language and communication, including the work of scholars from the Global South.
2. In particular, there is an extended elaboration of Harris's otherwise neglected conception of *operational discriminations*.

[9] An early plan for the research of this thesis proposed to look in much more depth at the commonalities and differences between integrationism and Gibsonian psychology. Ultimately, however, dealing with integrational theory proved sufficient in itself to fill the allotted timeframe for this research. Although, reference to recent work in Gibsonian psychology rarely appears other than in footnotes in this thesis, my attendance at these conferences has informed the work presented here more than the number of citations might suggest. In particular, it is hoped that this thesis might (albeit implicitly) point the way towards future research looking at the relationship between Harris' (2009a) *operational discriminations* and Gibson's (2015) *affordances*.

3. The thesis provides a detailed critical examination and development of Harris's approach to human social communicative activity, distinguished by an articulation of the notions of 'internal' and 'external' integration.
4. The research develops and clarifies the integrationist approach to rationality in an exploration of the rootedness of this approach in human activity. The research also critically appraises recent non-integrationist approaches to rationality and further illuminates how, in parallel with linguistic segregationalism, these accounts involve an unbridgeable gulf between so called 'rational thought' and situated activity.
5. There is a novel critical exploration of linguistic methodology, its assumptions and consequences in the work of both integrationists (e.g. Dorthe Duncker), and non-integrationist theorists (in particular, Alastair Pennycook and Charles Goodwin), in defence of Harris's objections to methodologies as generally understood, including the emphasis on 'empirical work'.
6. The thesis develops the integrationist perspective on the role of the linguistic and/or communicational 'analyst', in demonstrating the generally implicit communicational processes at work in linguistic and communication analysis. The research thereby brings to the forefront the role and agency of the analyst as creative signmaker.
7. The research illuminates our understanding of the implications of this 'reintegration' of analysts with their analyses, and highlights the consequences for linguistics as an academic discipline and, more broadly, calls for a greater appreciation of the intrinsic ethical dimensions that arise

through the application of particular communicational perspectives and methodologies onto the semiological activity of others.

An Overview of the Following Chapters

1 *The Integrational Sign and the Prospects of Analysis*: This chapter introduces the reader to the integrational conception of the sign. We then move on to look at some of the concerns previously raised in the literature (both by integrationists and those operating in other disciplines) over the consequences this conception may have on the prospects of conducting analysis, in particular the notion of analysing the semiological activity of other people. The problem is then given a more positive spin though a consideration of the role analysis (broadly conceived as any reflexive engagement with our own or other people's semiological activity) plays in our daily communicative lives. This leads to a discussion of existing integrational literature on the status of 'the anecdote' vis a vis 'methodological analysis', before arguing, along with (at least some) other integrationists, that there is no principled division between the two when we consider both as semiological activity in their own right. The chapter concludes with a critical appraisal of the work of Dorthe Ducker, perhaps the integrationist who has done most to tackle the 'problem of analysis' head-on.

2 *Integrational Analytic Conceptions and Perspectives*: This chapter looks at a number of integrational conceptions that may, on the face of it, look like potential 'analytic tools', but are, it is argued, better thought of as a narrowing and refining of the broader integrational perspective. These conceptions can provide insightful ways of looking at and thinking about communicative activity,

in particular the creative signmaking of the analyst. The conceptions considered include: the notion of integration itself, and the potential benefits various conceptions of the integrational sign may bring to thinking about communicative activity; communicational sequels and initiatives; Harris' three parameters of communication; operational discriminations; external and internal integration; the idea of 'frames of activity' or 'bubbles of communication'; additionally, we take into account the role our creative ability plays in generalising from one experience to another in lay and academic analysis; we also look at how integrationism may be helped in its analytic endeavours from non-integrationist sources, in particular through the work of Tim Ingold.

3 *Traffic lights: a Tentative Analysis*: This chapter makes a tentative foray into applying the integrational conceptions introduced in the previous chapter to an analysis of my own signmaking, in particular regard to my use of pedestrian crossings and traffic lights. In doing so, we develop and explore some of the possible further utility of these integrational conceptions. My own signmaker-centric approach is contrasted with a more traditional, highly abstracted, analysis of traffic lights as a dehumanised 'semiological system'.

4 *Reintegrating Rationality*[10]: This chapter takes an in-depth look at how rationality has traditionally been conceived and analysed in the Global North, highlighting some of the parallels between modern 'cognitive science' and Aristotelean conceptions of rationality. In particular, it is argued that an Aristotelean conception of rationality, as manifest in recent 'cognitive' approaches (particularly that of Steven Pinker), leaves a Rylean logical gulf

[10] An edited version of this chapter (Stott 2024) appears in Duncker and Pablé (2024).

between a highly ‘mentalistic’ rationality and practical activity. Following Harris, it is detailed how literacy, and a consequent scriptist and segregational conception of language, has informed our view of rationality, and continues to help sustain the Global North’s self-serving monopolisation of perspectives on human thought. This, it is argued, is effected via the imposition of a culturally-specific ideological perspective on rationality which is then recast as a human universal.

5 *Analytic Conundrums*: this chapter takes a deep dive into a critical appraisal of the analyses of communicative activity conducted by Charles Goodwin and Alastair Pennycook. Building on the research presented throughout the thesis to this point, it is illustrated how, despite any good intentions, these two scholars (and their colleagues)—in parallel with the proponents of a universal Aristotelean rationality introduced in the preceding chapter—attempt to analytically impose a Eurocentric ideology of communication as a universally applicable means of describing and accounting for the signmaking of others. By underappreciating the role their own signmaking plays in analysis, and the Eurocentric roots of their methodological approach, Goodwin and Pennycook mistake the products of their own analytic communicative activity as underlying semiological components of the activity in which their participants are engaged. This creates an illusory ‘analytic conundrum’ that revolves around the task of attempting to understand how the participants reassemble these semiological components. The conundrum is illusory, it is argued, because it goes unacknowledged that the ‘components’ (i.e. the ‘pieces of the puzzle’) arise through the analysts’ own creative analytic processes, rather than, as is supposed, being intersubjective communicational resources available to the participants.

The conclusion returns to the theme of the Harrisean conception of communicational experience as being, in the first place, an 'integrated continuum' and how operational discriminations (first introduced fully in **Chapter 2**) may provide a useful way to think about how we necessarily segment this continuum in the course of our daily communicative activity. Finally, some reflections are offered on the relationship between integrationism and methodology. Here it is argued that we should not be tempted into thinking of integrationism as a method for conducting analysis, and therefore resist attempts to assess its contribution to linguistics and communicational theory along lines for which it was never intended. Instead, it might be better to think of integrationism as a perspective on communicative activity, one that can encompass, and provide insight into, the creative semiological activity involved in all our analytic endeavours.

Chapter One: The Integrational Sign and the Prospects for Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter I first introduce the notion of the integrational sign and, by extension, integrational semiology. Adopting a *semiological* perspective offers a number of advantages over, say, a specifically *linguistic* perspective. Both, one way or another, involve meaning, but a specifically linguistic perspective is inherently segregationist, whereas a semiological perspective allows for a wholistic approach that can encompass all human meaning-making activity. Generally, however, within the integrationist literature there is an avoidance of talk of *meaning*, at least in a technical sense (though integrationists are highly unlikely to take issue with lay uses of the term). One reason for this is perhaps that the word 'meaning' is closely associated with the idea of *units* of meaning, and suggests some*thing* that can be separated, or has an independent existence from, the activity in which it arises. Harris (e.g. 1996) and other integrationists have traditionally preferred the terms *communicational value* or, most commonly, *signs.* In more orthodox, segregationist approaches, signs are usually seen as *presupposed* by communication, in that "signs and sign systems exist apart and prior to the communicational purposes to which they may or may not be put" (Harris 1996: 7). From an integrational perspective, however, "signs presuppose communication: they are its products, not its prerequisites [...] signs, in short, are not waiting to be 'used': they are created in and by the act of communication"

(Harris 1996: 7). In this manner, the integrational conception of the sign avoids the reification commonly seen in segregational approaches that show a "tendency to take a characteristic of an ongoing process for the source of that process" (van Dijk 2016: 994). However, although there will be much talk of 'signs' in this chapter and those that follow, this is more a reflection of the terminology adopted in the existing integrational literature. Personally, I prefer the term *signmaking* as a way of emphasising communication and meaning-making as ongoing process.

The chapter then takes the reader through some of the concerns that have been raised by integrationists over the prospects of conducting integrational analysis. The source of this hesitancy is largely due to the private and indeterminate nature of the integrational sign, which has perhaps prompted some integrationists to fear being "reduced to silence" (Toolan 2017: 80). However, I argue that analysis, in a lay sense, plays an integral and ubiquitous role in lay communication, and suggest that this may offer a way forward. The problem is not with the integrational conception of the sign per se, but rather that methodologically-driven analysis has been misconceived as offering a route to objectivity, whereas, from an ontological point of view, it is on the same footing as lay analysis. From this point of view, therefore, the 'status of the anecdote', as an account of personal communicative experience, perhaps differs little from methodologically-driven analysis in that both are, at root, simply different "modes of presentation" (cf. Pablé and Hutton 2015: 40)—alternative ways of reporting on a particular individual's (i.e. the analyst's) communicative activity. The chapter finishes with a case study (of sorts) of the analyses and the approach advocated by integrationist Dorthe Duncker (e.g. 2019). Here, I find that, any would-be

analyst has much to learn from her insights, particularly in her call to put the analyst's experience front and centre, and thereby eschew any notion of objectivity. However, perhaps her approach is a little conservative, in that it attempts to find a path for conducting 'integrational analysis' along lines that could be construed as too traditional, or comes a little too close to attempting to force integrationism into working as a methodology (a topic that will be taken up further in the **conclusion** of this thesis).

Introducing the Integrational Sign

Enquiry into signs, sign-making and integration quickly takes us to the basic underpinnings of integrational theory and, that being the case, it probably makes sense to start at the beginning. On beginnings, Harris has the following to say:

> "The integrationist elects to begin from the assumption that the mental life of the individual involves continuous engagement in a process of trying to make sense of present experience in the light of past experience and anticipated future experience. Communication, including language, is viewed as both product and resource of this constantly renewed process of integration." (Harris 1996: x)

Harris presents much in this passage that might call for elucidation. We are introduced to Harris' "integrationist" (as ever, preceded by the definite article), the notion of what Harris calls elsewhere (e.g. 2008, 2009c) "temporal integration", and the idea of communicative *products* and *resources*. All are pertinent to the present discussion and will be considered in turn. However, we will take the claim that the integrationist starts from the premise that the mental

life of individuals is in some way primary in the study of communication as our point of departure.

'The integrationist' is a rhetorical device used by Harris throughout his writing (e.g. 1996, 1998a). In this particular instance, however, the benefit of hindsight perhaps shows Harris' assertion about the concerns of the integrationist to be presumptive, as it is questionable whether all integrationists, including Harris himself, have begun, at all times, from the perspective of *individuals* (as opposed to *communities* of individuals) or their *mental* lives (as opposed to their *social and material* lives). It could equally be said of the *social* life of the individual that it "involves continuous engagement in a process of trying to make sense" of the present in relation to our past and projected future. Furthermore, if we are thinking about the *social* life of the individual, should *the* individual, and not *groups* of individuals, be our starting point at all?

Harris himself, just a few pages on from the above passage, could be seen to bring into question the prudence of starting with the individual:

> "The very presence of a living human being, biologically endowed with certain capacities and acting in a certain manner in a certain situation, cannot ultimately be explained without reference to prior communication. For *Homo sapiens*, unlike some other species, lives in social groups and reproduces by means of a mating process that in the natural course of events requires personal contact between two individuals, followed by a prolonged nurture of offspring by at least one of them. The dictum that we communicate in order to live applies no less to the community and to the race than to the individual." (Harris 1996: 31)

Integrationist scholar, Peter E. Jones, argues that, although much work in integrationism has placed a "clear emphasis or indeed exclusive focus on the

sign as private experience or interpretation" this forms only "one side of the semiological picture" (2022: 2183). From 'the other side', we get Jones' perspective:

> "[I]ntegration is fundamentally *connection* – connection of the individual person with the lifeworld – since signs are made in the integration of our activities with those of others and the world we inhabit and create together. Integrationism, therefore, is a semiology of human community, interdependence, and interconnection. While my sign-making is an irreducibly subjective experience, the signs I make are not a barrier between me and others or between me and the world I move in, work on or perceive: such signs are the ways in which our vital connections are experienced; this is what our connections to others *mean* to us – what they feel like, sound like, or look like […]. Integrationism, thus, is a semiology rooted in the most basic condition of our humanity – our sociality, our acting together, our being together." (2022: 2183)

These two perspectives on the integrational sign—on the one hand irreducibly personal and subjective, while on the other hand forming the connective tissue binding our social interaction—can be illustrated via an example taken from literature (in fact, just about any episode of communication could be used to demonstrate these two perspectives, but the following will serve our present purposes).

In Anthony Doerr's (2021) novel, *Cloud Cuckoo Land*, there is a scene set in fifteenth-century Constantinople where Anna, an inquisitive eight-year-old orphan, is running an errand to fetch wine for Kalaphates, the master of the embroidery house in which she is kept in servitude. Returning from the vintner's, she overhears a tutor, Licinius, reading aloud to a group of boys from a passage

in book VII of the Odyssey, where Ulysses stands “Fix’d in amaze before the royal gates” of the Palace of Alcinous. Anna, who has only ever seen two books throughout her short life (and then at a distance), is transfixed by the idea that the tutor’s “song” was somehow “inside” the pages from which he was reading. Anna, desperate to learn more, implores the tutor:

> “Will you teach me? I know some signs already; I know the one that’s like two pillars with a rod between, and the one that’s like a gallows, and the one that’s like an ox head upside down.”

Licinius, reluctant at first, is eventually swayed with the promise of some of the wine Anna has fetched for Kalaphates. Using a stick in the dirt, he writes:

> Ὠκεανός
>
> “Ôkeanus, Ocean, eldest son of Sky and Earth.” He draws a circle around it and pokes its center. “Here the known.” Then he pokes the outside. “Here the unknown. Now the wine.”
>
> She passes it to him and he drinks with both hands. She crouches on her heels. Ὠκεανός. Seven marks in the mud. And yet they contain the lonely traveler and the brass-walled palace with its golden watchdogs and the goddess with her mist?

Once having got over the speed with which Anna’s dalliance with literacy put her in thrall to a scriptist illusion (cf. Harris 2009a), the integrationist, in response to Anna’s query, must answer with a resounding *no*. The seven marks in the mud do not contain travellers, palaces or deities. *Anna is selling herself short*, for it is she who imbued the seven marks with meaning, she who *made* a sign of the inscription. (This, it might be said, is testament to the extent of our

creative semiological powers, which are such that it is easy to be swayed by the impression that the things *we make meaning of*, are actually *inherently meaningful*, or contain meanings waiting to be discovered.) The marks in the mud were not a sign of anything until Anna brought forth *her* imagination, drawing on *her* experience of stories, travellers, palaces and deities as she did so. In bringing these experiences to bear on that moment of looking, Anna can be said to be integrating her past with her present, and in the doing created the meaning she, from an integrational perspective, wrongly attributed to the inscription itself. This is not to say the inscription was irrelevant, far from it, at the very least we might say that the marks were a "component" (e.g. Harris 1998a: 54 and 93) of the integrationally achieved meaning making. But it is to say that the sign Anna made is not Licinius' sign, even as the artificer of those seven marks, for he, just like the rest of us, has no direct access to the meaning created in the course of Anna's sign-making, and must make the marks he inscribed *his own* as he integrates them into his communicative activity.

From the viewpoint of integrational semiology, although unique, there is nothing unusual or extraordinary about this episode in Anna's communicative life. Every engagement with others, the world and our own selves is an act of creation tailored to the situation, and not a case of selecting the 'best fit' from a preordained itinerary of possible choices. (By way of analogy, from the perspective of integrational semiology, we, as sign-makers, are the chefs, creating dishes to suit the occasion, not the restaurant customer choosing a meal from an à la carte menu drawn up at some time in the past.) The sign does not exist before its creation in the moment, nor does it outlast the communicative situation in which it was made. The life of a sign is fleeting—signs cannot be

packaged, to be used again, repurposed for a future communicative situation. “Signs, in short, are not waiting to be ‘used’: they are created in and by the act of communication” (Harris 1996: 7). As Harris writes (1996: 123), within integrational theory there is no autonomy of the sign. All meaning, every sign, ‘belongs’ to a person, situated in a particular time and place. It is this conception of the sign that grants integrational theory licence to give Anna her creative due:

> “By denying the autonomy of the sign, the integrationist is in effect ascribing to individuals powers of creativity which, according to the traditional Western view, human beings simply do not possess.” (Harris 1996: 123)

And yet, all of this is to take a rather one-sided view of what is going on between Anna, Licinius and his inscription. Anna is not operating in a vacuum; as we have already heard from Harris (1996: 31), her “very presence” as a “living human being” presupposes “prior communication” with other people. The experience Anna brings to bear involves experience of living and communicating with other people, including, crucially in this instance, listening to *their* stories of gods, travellers and palaces. Without such experience there could be no question of Anna making of Licinius’ inscription what she did, and in lieu of any prior communicative experience on Anna’s part, it is difficult (as a reader of Doerr’s story) to see how she could have made *anything* of the inscription at all.

Furthermore, despite Licinius not having direct access to Anna’s subjective meaning-making, and despite Licinius being initially ill-disposed towards Anna’s curiosity, the scene outlined above is one describing—in the spirit of Jones’ (2022) perspective on sign-making—a *connection* between two individuals, the kindling of what will become (in the confines of Doerr’s novel) a friendship between the pair. The reader is not told what Licinius made of the

inscription he wrote in the dirt, and, although, adhering to a Harrisian semiology, we must accept that the signs he makes will differ from Anna's signs, it would be perverse to conclude from this that Licinius should have no idea what his budding student might make of his communicative activity. Communication, never mind pedagogy, would be a strange (and rather Quixotic) enterprise indeed were that to be the case.

Integrationism and 'the Problem of Analysis'

Echoing the passage from Harris (1996: x) with which this discussion began, Pablé and Hutton suggest a similar starting point to the one proposed by Harris, with a slight change in focus. Rather than with the *mental* life of individuals, write Pablé and Hutton (2015: 18), "individual *experience* is where we should begin [emphasis added]". Pablé and Hutton are quite correct, in that we have no choice, as communicating individuals, but to begin with our own experience: "we cannot think our way out of our personal experience to find a neutral vantage point on language" (2015: 19). Pablé and Hutton are here echoing Harris on this point, who himself wrote:

> "The language-bound theorist, like the earth-bound Archimedes, has nowhere else to stand but where he does. He has ultimately no leverage to bring to bear on understanding language other than such leverage as can be exerted from the terra firma of his own linguistic experience." (Harris 1981: 204; cited in Pablé and Hutton 2015: 19)

On this front, we are all (including the communication analyst) in the same boat as the linguist. All communication involves bringing to bear our personal

experience on present circumstances: “[w]e adjust, assess, contextualize and recontextualize our experiences and practices in the light of the unfolding world around us” (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 19). The notion of *contextualization* raised here by Pablé and Hutton is important in integrational theory. Within Harris’ semiology, context is not something static, akin to a bucket, a backdrop, or a setting in which communication happens (Harris 1996: 146), but something, we, as individuals, *do*, and is not, therefore, something shared between interlocutors:

> “Context, for the integrationist, is always the product of contextualization, and each of us contextualizes in our own way, taking into account whatever factors seem to us to be relevant. The individual participants in any communication situation will each contextualize what happens differently.” (Harris 2009c: 71)

For Harris, contextualization and sign-making are so intimately connected as to be not “two independent elements but facets of the same creative activity” (1996: 164), or, in other words, “the act of contextualization and the establishment of the sign are one and the same” (2009c: 72). If, as Harris suggests, every contextualization is unique, a corollary of this is that the value of every sign is temporally bound to a particular person in a particular situation and is, therefore, *radically indeterminate* (e.g. Harris 2009c: 81; see also Love 1990).

What is relevant to one participant in a communicative episode may not tally with what is salient for their interlocutor, and, accordingly, the participants will contextualise their experiences differently, i.e. the signs they create will be different. However “overwhelmingly probable” one particular interpretation of a situation may seem, “alternative contextualizations are always possible” (Harris 2009c: 81). Indeed, this could be seen to understate the issue: if our

contextualization and sign-making activity is relative to *our* past experience, the value of any sign we create will also, by necessity, be unique to *us*.

It would seem, given what has been said so far, integrational semiology might be seen to present us with a ‘problem of analysis’: Harris’ view of the sign (and therefore meaning) as impermanent, a temporally and contextually-bound private phenomenon, its value radically indeterminate, inaccessible to even our closest associates (never mind the semiologist, operating at one (or several) remove(s) from the original communicative activity) has left some integrationists with a feeling of disquiet when it comes to the prospects of conducting analyses of concrete communicative activity. If the value of a sign is private and unique to the sign-maker, what is there left to say about another person’s sign-making? For some, the adoption of a particular methodology might be seen to offer a route to objective[11] analysis of communicative activity. However, there is a general suspicion within integrationism that methodologically-driven approaches to studying communication are too blinkered, leading to analytic ‘blind spots’—a position well-expressed by Pablé and Hutton (2015: 40) when they write:

> “The methodological mindset is reductionist, and any methodology of linguistic description is a systematic way of seeing and discovering, but, in virtue of its

[11] It does depend, however, on what it is we mean by 'objective’—or 'scientific’ for that matter. Integrational theory certainly does not preclude, for example, a person making a contextualised judgement that a particular analysis produced objective results, or that somebody was ‘doing science' on a particular occasion. The issue is what such claims amount to. Similarly with an integrational conception of ‘truth‘, which, along with ‘objectivity‘, is probably better thought of as a metalinguistic or metacommunicative value judgement (with all the indeterminacy that entails). What is precluded by an integrational perspective, are *reocentric* notions of truth and objectivity, where a 'true’ statement is seen as one that, somehow or another, ‘correctly maps onto reality', i.e. the statement has a determinate core meaning which ‘matches‘, or corresponds with, an objective 'fact' of the 'real world'. See the later section of **this chapter** *Decontextualisation and Interference* and **chapter 5** for further discussion of the integrational conception of *communicational facts*.

> framing of the ‘object of study’, it also represents a form of systematic ‘not-seeing’.”

One reason for this hesitancy concerning methodologically-driven approaches, is that the results of any analysis may, in the end, say more about the methods and predilections of the analyst than they do about the subjects being analysed (see **Chapter 5** for further discussion). A further concern is that many methodological approaches involve a decontextualisation of (aspects of) the communicative behaviour under analysis, and, in Harris’ words:

> “For the integrationist, all decontextualization distorts, and therefore the resultant linguistic descriptions and explanations, to the extent that they rely on decontextualized ‘data’, are automatically suspect. For they are no more than methodological artifacts of the oversimplifications from which they proceed.” (Harris 1998: 13)

(The discussion on *decontextualisation* and *distortion* is taken up again in the later section of this chapter: *Decontextualisation and Interference*.)

Given these concerns, there has been some trepidation expressed in the integrationist literature that attempts at analysis, despite any good intentions to heed the tenets of integrational semiology, would still involve, somewhere, decontextualisation and produce unwarranted analytic artefacts, leaving the resulting analysis open to the same kind of critique Harris has levelled at segregational approaches. Hutton suggests that Harris himself could well have been “haunted by the difficulty of the task he had set himself” (2016: 83) and that integrationism may have cornered itself into a “theoretical impasse” (2016: 84; see also Toolan 2017: 80; and for a non-integrationist, yet broadly sympathetic, take on this issue, see: Trask and Stockwell 2007: 120). Michael Toolan worries

that “the integrationist may *feel reduced to silence*, unable to speak about any communicative event lest the commentary turns out to be just another addition to modern linguistics’ heap of segregationalist misrepresentations [emphasis added]” (2017: 80).

Reasons for Optimism

Despite the problems to analysis that might seem to be presented by the integrational conception of the sign, there are reasons for optimism when it comes to assessing the prospects for conducting analyses that could remain in keeping with an integrational semiology.

“Everybody is a Linguist”, Ergo, Everybody is an Analyst

Integrationism has often been described as a “lay-oriented” approach to linguistic study (e.g. Harris 1981, 1998a and Pablé 2019b). One way to view integrationism’s lay-orientedness[12] is to see that the semiologists, linguists and communicative analysts of the world are in just the same boat as everyone else when it comes to making sense of people’s communicative activity. This sentiment is captured in Harris’ (1997: 237) dictum that “a linguistic theorist speaks with no greater authority and insight about language than a baker or bus-conductor”. This, however, cuts both ways, in the sense that “everybody is a

[12] For a much fuller discussion on integrationism’s lay-orientedness, and the different ways this may interpreted, see: Pablé (2019b).

linguist" (Harris 1998: 20; cited in: Pablé 2019b: 151). As Harris and Hutton observe:

> "For all human beings engage in analytic reflection about their own linguistic[13] experience and use words to describe it. This is a sine qua non of engagement in language as a mature member of society" (2007: 223, cited in Duncker 2019: 128)

Personal experience tells us that people, be they bakers, bus-conductors, police officers or politicians are far from silent, very much unafraid to speak out (at times at least[14]), when it comes to commenting on 'communicative events' and giving an opinion on the semiological activity of other people.

Jones (2007), drawing on experiences of mundane communicative activity, provides several imagined examples of laypeople critically engaging with the semiological activity of other people. Be it negotiating with neighbours over the proposed construction of a fence, arguing with one's offspring over the use of the family car, or attempting to persuade a mountaineering friend on the feasibility of our planned expedition to climb Mount Blanc, "we constantly find ourselves discussing, arguing, criticising, countering, ignoring, complaining about or trying to put a stop to communications which we do not want, like or agree with" (Jones 2007: 338). Or, in other words, 'everybody being a linguist' presupposes *everybody being an analyst*—i.e., critically engaging with what

[13] Personally, I feel a little unease with talk of 'linguistic experience' and 'engagement in language' due to its segregationist undertones. The point would perhaps be better made were we to talk of 'communicative experience' and 'engagement in communication', respectively. However, whatever the original intentions of Harris and Hutton, the observation is insightful and important for the argument being presented here.

[14] This is not to deny, of course, that there are many cases when people are 'afraid to speak out' due to any number of factors, be it fear of political persecution, coercion in various forms, negative reprisals at work, home or the school yard, and so on.

people say and do is an irradicable aspect of our daily communicative lives. Given this, it is not obvious why the integrationist, qua analyst, should be excluded, as a matter of principle, from speaking out on the communicative behaviour of other people.

Connections and Shared Experience

Despite the indeterminacy of the sign, we are not (at all times) at a loss as to what 'is going on', or what other people 'mean', what they might do, or what their opinion might be on a particular topic. As Pablé and Hutton (2015: 21) write: "The indeterminacy of the sign does not preclude participants sharing a strong sense that meanings have been satisfactorily arrived at". The *value* of the signs we make may—due to being based in, or relational to, personal experience—be seen as private phenomena, and therefore, in one sense, inaccessible to other people. However, as suggested by Jones' (2022) take on sign-making as *connection*, our personal experience does not arise ex nihilo. In a very concrete sense, we *share* the communicative episodes we make and partake in with our interlocutors. Such episodes often involve a material engagement between people—we hear what people say to us, feel their touch, see what they write and gesture. In other words, much sign-making behaviour is not opaque, it is manifest to our senses. Our *personal* experience includes, crucially, experiencing *other people's* sign-making activity, of living in communities with shared macrosocial practices—many of us read the same books, watch the same films, frequent the same institutions, use similar salutations to greet, welcome, give thanks and say farewell. More generally, humanity shares many of the same requirements for

living—we all have a need for food, shelter and some form of human contact and cooperation. As a species, our commonalities outweigh the differences.

It is against the solid ground—Harris' "terra firma" (1981: 204)—of our personal experience, that our expectations, interpretations and assumptions involving the behaviour of others is leveraged. We have no choice but to *generalise out from personal experience*. These generalisations do not necessarily (or even usually), involve some form of 'abstraction' or the creation of a 'mental construct', but *are done in practice*, be it building a fence, persuading someone to our point of view, or learning to play a musical instrument. Such generalisations will always and inevitably (due to the indeterminacy of the sign) be subject to correction, adjustment and revision; as Pablé and Hutton write: "Nothing is given in advance in communication". Our extrapolations from personal experience—whether we are negotiating with neighbours, celebrating at a family gathering, or attempting to conduct formal, academically sanctioned analyses—are, therefore, all we have to go on. This line of thinking has ramifications for the (ontological) 'status' of any analyses we might conduct. This is the topic of the next section.

Linguistic Facts, the Anecdote, and the Status of Analysis

Peter Stockwell, a non-integrationist scholar, writing on the prospects of conducting integrational analyses, came to the following conclusion:

> "While persuasive as an idealization, it is difficult to see what an integrationalist practical analysis would actually look like, since every analysis would need to be

> unique and unrepeatable, and this strikes at the heart of any claim of linguistics to be scientific, generalisable or replicable." (Trask and Stockwell 2007: 120)

Stockwell is quite correct when he writes that integrationism brings into doubt the scientific status of analyses. In fact, integrational semiology precludes any notion of analyses being *scientific* (at least if that equates to making definitive judgements regarding human meaning-making practices). Stockwell is also correct to claim that the results of integrational analyses would not be generalisable, if that term equates to making (reocentrically) 'objective' statements about communicative activity that hold 'true' across all instances, irrespective of time, location and the participants involved. Nor would most integrationists argue, I believe, against the idea that the results of analyses are not replicable, if we are to take that as entailing two *separate* analyses producing *identical* results[15].

Where Stockwell might be seen as mistaken, is in assuming (if that is the case here) that these are issues that pertain only to integrational analyses. These ontological issues are not confined to integrationism, the difference between integrationism and other approaches that claim scientific status, is that the former identifies, *and takes seriously*, the consequences of the fundamental radical indeterminacy at the heart of all communication processes (e.g. Harris 1981, 1996, 1997). The methodologically-driven approaches criticised by Pablé and Hutton (2015) that purport to be scientifically objective are only able to do so via a process of methodological abstraction, giving rise to the *illusion of scientific objectivity*. The illusion only holds, however, if we turn a blind eye to the

[15] On the question of repeatability, replicability, and *sameness*, it very much depends on how we are to understand repetition, which, from the perspective of integrational semiology, *is in the eye of the beholder* (e.g. Harris 1998a, Love 1990).

communicative processes and practices of the analysts themselves. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the very methods of abstraction and decontextualization that provide the cover of scientific respectability, distort the phenomena being studied, leaving the results of any such analysis "suspect" (Harris 1998a: 13) from the outset.

In contrast, when it comes to the communicational sphere, *facts*, following an integrational semiology, are not something that can be objectively and permanently established, but rather:

> "[L]inguistic facts are facts which the participants have to establish to their own satisfaction. And they may not always be in agreement with one another about such matter. They have no other basis for establishing these facts than their own communicational proficiency – that is to say, their own experience in whatever forms of integration are involved. This applies as much to language as to other forms of communication." (Harris 2010a: 209)

This goes not just for the participants of an episode of communication that is being subjected to analysis, but for the analyst too, who "is also always a participant in a communication process" (Duncker 2011: 541). Thus, the first hurdle for any 'facts' arising from the communication process constituting the analysis, is that they must first be established to the satisfaction of the analysts themselves. Further hurdles await, however, once those 'facts' are presented as *an analysis* and 'released' into the world (for example, as a journal article or conference presentation), whereupon the analysis will (hopefully) provide the impetus and grist for further communicative episodes in which any communicative 'facts' must be *reestablished* to the satisfaction (or otherwise) of the participants of *those* communicative episodes. Such is the lot of the

temporally-bound, “Sisyphean” (see: Hutton 2019: 69) communicator. We will return to this train of thought shortly, but first it will be useful to consider analysis in respect to the ‘anecdote’.

It is most germane to our present discussion that Harris himself did not see his integrational semiology as a barrier to analysis, going as far as to state that ‘‘any episode of linguistic communication can be analysed’’ (Harris 1993: 322, cited in Duncker 2011: 533). This optimism from Harris, however, comes with two provisos. Firstly, sufficient attention must be given to the communicational infrastructure[16] in which the communication takes place (Harris 1993: 322; see also Duncker 2011). Secondly, “if the analysis is to be adequate”, it must answer “to the actual experience of the participants” (Harris 1993: 322)[17]. With this statement I take Harris to mean that as analysts we must take communication itself (and not, as is usual in segregational approaches, ‘the language system’) as basic, and thereby “explain[…] everything else in the linguistic domain by reference to the requirements this [communicational infrastructure] imposes on human behaviour” (Harris 1998a: 14). This is because our first order experience of semiological activity is as a fully-integrated process, with no principled divide between linguistic and non-linguistic activity.

[16] By communicational infrastructure Harris is here referring to his three parameters of communication. These parameters are: the *biomechanical* which “relate to the mental and physical capacities of the human being”; the *circumstantial* which “relate to the specifics of particular situations” and the *macrosocial* which “relate to practices established in the community or some group within the community” (Harris 1996: 28). A discussion of Harris’ three parameters in light of their usefulness to analysis will be taken up in **Chapter 2**.

[17] This particular passage from Harris, and how best to understand it, has been a preoccupation of mine in the latter years of writing this thesis. It will be returned to throughout the following chapters (in particular, the final sections of **Chapter 1** and extensively in **Chapter 5**). Some ’final‘ thoughts (yet, as ever, provisional given the ‘Sisyphean‘ character of communication) are offered in the closing passages of the conclusion to the thesis.

Looked at from a slightly different angle, however, the appeal for analysis to be concomitant with "the actual experience of participants" (Harris 1993: 322) has interesting parallels with what Pablé and Hutton (2015) have to say on the role of the anecdote in the integrational approach to the study of communication. Comparing "the status of the anecdote"[18] (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 39) with the *status of analysis* from the perspective of integrational theory is instructive. "In using anecdotes", write Pablé and Hutton (2015: 40), "we are inviting readers to consider how the story matches up with their own experience". An example of the anecdote being put to good use in the integrational literature is provided by Nigel Love (2017), when recounting an occasion leaving the airport in Copenhagen. At the time, during a "real-life linguistic experience", Love (2017: 141) happened upon two signs positioned next to taxi ranks for "arriving travellers" bearing the following English translations:

DANISH ORDERED TAXIS

PLEASE QUEUE UP

Love goes on to suggest that the former is "ungrammatical", while the latter is "unidiomatic", although his main purpose in telling the anecdote is to highlight the integrated character of communicative experience, in particular, the inseparability of how we experience concrete episodes of communication and our "metalinguistic ideas about language" (2017: 141). Love's readers are thus 'invited' to compare *their own* experiences to *his*, in particular to think on (in a manner perhaps contrary to the teachings they may have often received in formal educational settings), the integrated character of their own communicational

[18] For the following I will be quoting, *in extenso*, from the section in Pablé and Hutton (2015: 39f) entitled *The Status of the Anecdote*.

activity, i.e. to attempt to make their own connections between Love's communicational experience and their own, and in so doing judge whether Love's experiences are sufficiently generalisable to the extent that they help Love's reader in some manner to make sense of, or gain insight into, their own communicative experiences.

The telling of anecdotes such as Love's is, in Pablé and Hutton's words, a "*mode of presentation* [emphasis added]" which "invites readers to consider whether they have had any similar experiences, and it offers them the authority to object and to refute the explanation that is offered, or any implied or explicit claims to typicality" (2015: 40). This passage highlights one similarity and one possible difference between the *anecdote* (as used in the integrational literature) and *analysis*. Both are modes of presenting the results of a form of analytic engagement with episodes of communication; the telling of an anecdote such as Love's presupposes an analysis of aspects of one's own communicative experience. A difference, however, is the extent to which analyses (as typically found in academic literature) offer the reader "the authority to object and to refute the explanation that is offered" (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 40). This depends on the reader: whereas anecdotes generally do not require specialist training to assess their veracity, analyses often come couched in particular metalanguages and, therefore, do require particular expertise to make informed judgements as to their worth. In both instances, the initial bar for acceptance that must be passed, be it of an analysis or anecdote, is that the telling tallies with experience, whether that is the mundane experience of daily communicative activity we might be called upon to recall in the case of the anecdote, or with the particularities of professional expertise (i.e. experience in the professional sphere, such as

familiarity with certain metalinguistic terms and notions of their ‘correct’ usage or application) in the case of analysis.

However, no matter how elaborate, no route to scientific objectivity is provided, whatever the metalanguage utilised for the purposes of analysis. On this front, the anecdote and analysis are on equal footing. While it might be objected, as Pablé and Hutton (2015: 40) write, “that the choice of anecdote, and the explanation that is offered, is liable to influence by the integrational assumptions of the observer”, the choice of which research questions and methodologies to pursue also involves subjective, value-laden, decision making: “After all, academic researchers always need a framework or set of questions to motivate their interest in what is going on around them” (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 40). Similarly, although the following was written with anecdotes in mind, we could, taking a perspective from integrational semiology, also say the same of analysis:

> “The reported anecdote does not come with a claim about scientific objectivity, and therefore it is completely open to debate and discussion by those who were not present in the original encounter. There is no attempt to stand outside the communicational stream as an expert empowered by a scientific methodology.” (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 40)

The analyst, when conducting analyses, is just as much engaged in a communicative process as when arguing with neighbours, in discussion with colleagues, or reading a book on a lazy Sunday afternoon. This has important ramifications when it comes to the status, not just of analysis, but of *generalisations* more broadly. As Pablé and Hutton (2015: 40) assert “general questions cannot be approached through a false or artificially induced

objectivity". This is just as much the case whether the generalizations arise through conducting methodologically-driven analysis as from the telling of anecdotes, as any generalizations do not stand outside the "communicational stream"—there are no generalisations, without somebody to make them in the first place—and are, therefore, inevitably subject to rebuttal, review and revision.

Further parallels can be seen between methodological, academic 'analysis' and 'the anecdote', when we consider them both in terms of practical semiological activity. Take, for example, an analyst who has recorded on video a communicative exchange in a local grocery store (concrete examples of this are presented in **Chapter 5**, in relation to Pennycook's (e.g. 2017) work). During the original exchange, only the shopkeeper and the customer were present (i.e. the participants), the analyst (at least in some cases), on the other hand, was not present, only the video camera(s) set up by them was 'in the room' at the time. The analyst, when they come to watch the video recording, is engaged in communicative activity of their own, but it is not *the same* episode of activity the participants were involved in: the time, place, people involved, and purpose for the engagement, are all different. In particular, the analyst is using a methodological perspective of their choosing to 'frame' the participants' activity, with the effect that certain aspects or features of the episode will become salient[19], while others drop by the wayside. However, the participants are also operating within, and *themselves working to create and maintain*, their own 'frame of activity' (cf. Goffman 1972, see **Chapter 2** for further discussion on 'frames' and 'external integration') which will create its own saliencies.

[19] It may be better to think in terms of the analyst's methodological activity as *creating* certain features (see Jones 2017a and chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of this idea).

The analyst will then need to engage in further episodes of communication when it comes time to write up their analysis for publication, discuss their findings with colleagues, or present a paper at a conference. Each stage of this 'chain' of communicational episodes—as anyone who has conducted research and attended academic conferences can attest—is "completely open to debate and discussion by those who were not present in the original encounter[s]" (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 40). In other words, at every juncture the 'communicational facts' (whatever they may amount to) can be contested, and will need to be continually reestablished, *through further communication*, by those with a vested (or even passing) interest to do so.

Harris has the following to say, regarding 'linguistic facts' and participants:

> "In short, whenever there are linguistic facts available, it is the participants who are in possession of them. If a linguist wishes to have access to these facts, there is no option but to try recover them from the participants." (2010a: 209)

However, if we were to add an intermediary stage in our example of the analyst studying activity in a local shop, one where the analyst returns to the customer and shopkeeper after the recording has taken place, with an interview questionnaire (say), ready to 'try and recover the facts from the participants', it remains unclear what exactly is 'being recovered' from the original episode. Following what Harris has said elsewhere on communicative facts (e.g. 1998a), including earlier in the passage from which this citation is taken (see above); a 'fact' cannot be extracted from one episode of communication to be inserted into the next. Even if the participants give their whole-hearted endorsement of the account presented by the analyst, this new 'interview' episode of communication involves the creation of a whole new set of facts, agreements and

disagreements. This is not to say that carrying out a participant questionnaire will have no bearing on the communication that follows. Perhaps the analyst updates their analysis accordingly (and it may well be the better for it), or the inclusion of a participant survey helps to sway a number of conference attendees to the analyst's point of view that, had it not been for this stage in the analytic process, would otherwise have remained sceptical.

In these terms, however, Love's anecdotal reporting of a "real-life linguistic experience" (2017: 141), discussed above, is not so different. He was reporting on an episode of communication where he was a participant, one that necessarily involved him framing the episode in a particular way. But then, so also was the analyst a participant when they engaged (via video recording) with the communicative activity going on in the local shop. There, the analyst was, ultimately, reporting on *their* episode of communication involving watching the video recording (although, the example still holds if the analyst had been there in-person when the shop exchange took place, just as it would had Love been reporting on an overhead conversation between two people at the airport). The analyst is, always, just as much a participant as was Love when the communicational episode he anecdotally reports on took place. Similarly, when Love writes up his anecdote for an academic paper, or presents his thoughts on the matter at a conference, the communicative processes involved, from the semiological perspective being presented here, are not so different in kind to the processes in which the 'methodologically-driven' analyst was involved, certainly not in terms of the ontological status of any 'facts' created along the way.

One common difference between anecdote and analysis, as previously mentioned, is the degree of specialised metalanguage we might expect to

encounter with each. It remains an open question (and is not one I would attempt to definitively answer myself), whether particular metalinguistic terms can enable us to make better analyses or generalisations regarding communicative activity. From an integrational perspective, metalanguage is just one further way of characterising aspects of our communicative experience, it holds no special ontological status, or ability to extract and isolate communicational facts, ready for later inspection. On the other hand, the use of specialised metalinguistic terms must, in some sense, involve 'building on' previous communicative activity and experience (our own and/or other people's). In turn, this, presumably, carries with it the possibility of enabling us to make finer distinctions and bring greater insights into our communicative experience. However, equally, it may also carry the danger of encouraging us to repeat and entrench past mistakes and 'bad habits'; just as with particular methodologies, metalinguistic terms may help bring some things into view, while blinding us to others. In the end, each analysis, whether methodological or anecdotal will have to be taken on a case-by-case basis and will always be subject to debate, (re)evaluation and revision.

Analysis: an Integrationist's Perspective

Duncker's critique of traditional analysis

Perhaps the scholar who has done most to face the challenges posed by analysis from an integrational perspective is Dorthe Duncker. The most in-depth and thorough treatment on the subject to-date is given in her book *The Reflexivity of Language and Linguistic Inquiry: Integrational Linguistics in Practice* (2019), in which Duncker suggests a possible way forward for researchers to conduct

analysis along integrational lines. In brief, Duncker's argument is that linguistic analysts, "instead of aiming at the futile and irrelevant goal of objectivity", should lay bare their own reflexive analytic processes to the reader, in effect presenting analyses "by way of a hermeneutic narrative" (2019: 201). It should be stressed that Duncker's aim is to *explore* "the possibilities for an applied integrational linguistics" (2019: 153) and that "the analysis is primarily intended to demonstrate the method at work" (2019: 171). Throughout this exploration, Duncker remains tentative on the question of whether these possibilities have been realised through her work:

> "Considering the integrational position on methodology and linguistic data, it is an open question whether the approach to linguistic inquiry I develop in this book is compatible with integrational principles, or whether it "turns out to be just another addition to modern linguistics' heap of segregationalist misrepresentations" (Toolan 2017: 80)." (2019: 203)

We will turn to consider Duncker's proposals in more detail shortly. Before doing so, however, it will be beneficial to look at the criticisms Duncker (2019) levels against more traditional ways of doing analysis, as these will not only help us understand Duncker's motivations for advocating the approach she does, but will also provide useful grounding from which to assess Charle's Goodwin's (e.g. 2018) and Alastair Pennycook's work which will be presented in **Chapter 5**, being centred, as it is, on the notions of *data* and *transcription*. In many respects, the use of transcription in analysis and the treatment of (and understanding of what constitutes) data encouraged by this practice, is a particularly salient target for integrational critique. In an illustrative (though particularly scathing) example, Harris (2010a: 44f) targets Pia Pichler's (2009) uncritical presentation of

transcription as ‘data’. (Although, as Harris points out, there is nothing particularly unusual about Pichler’s methods in this regard—the techniques utilised will be quite familiar to many students of linguistics. In summary fashion, Harris dismisses the notion that the transcription Pichler provides equates to anything we might want to call ‘data’:

> “What is offered to the reader in this extract as ‘data’ is nothing of the kind, but a mishmash of rather amateurish pseudo-phonetic transcriptions of a tape recording, mixed with standard orthography, presumably supplied by the linguist, not the participants. In other words, this is not ‘data’ at all, but at best a patchwork interpretation several times removed from the ‘conversation’ of which it purports to give an objective rendering.” (Harris 2010a: 44)

Harris’ first complaint regarding transcription-based methodological practice such as Pichler’s is that, rather than *answering to* (see Harris 1993: 322), it “*falsifies* the experience of the participants [emphasis added]” (2010a: 45). One reason for this is that the analyst must begin by reducing “the episode to what can be heard (insofar as it can be written down)” and omit the “circumstantial knowledge which makes it possible for the participants to understand what is being said” (2010a: 45). This is critical because this “circumstantial knowledge” comprises everything the participants ‘bring to the table’ in the engagement, necessarily including their past communicative experience, plus an “awareness of the identity of the others [and] what else is going on in the circumstances” (Harris 2010a: 45).

A second problem, and of even greater importance, writes Harris, is that this approach:

> "leads straight to misidentification of the object of inquiry. What comes up for examination is not the interaction of the participants (of whose relationships and concomitant non-verbal behaviour we are kept in complete ignorance) but the analyst's own assumptions about what is audibly relevant to understanding the episode. So-called linguistic 'data' of this kind are invariably manufactured by processes of selection, elimination, juxtaposition and interpretation which it suits the analyst to deploy." (2010a: 45)

In other words, as has already been argued earlier in this chapter, the analyses as presented could be better described as reports on the analysts' own reflexive engagement with the material 'traces' (such as video and audio recordings, see Duncker 2019) of the original episodes of communication. The introduction of video stills, descriptions of gestures and the like, as we will see in the work of Goodwin, Pennycook and colleagues, does little to remedy these concerns (see **Chapter 5**). They remain the products of the analysts' "processes of selection, elimination, juxtaposition and interpretation" and thereby more closely reflect their own communicational experience, rather than that of the participants.

Similarly for Duncker, and for reasons that echo Harris' concerns, "the data problem is doubly problematic" (2019: 121). Firstly, signs are private and fleeting, i.e. they are "unique events in the lives of particular historical individuals" with the consequence "that signs cannot be *collected* and hence cannot constitute linguistic data [emphasis original]" (2019: 121). The second problem Duncker identifies amounts to a further formulation of the idea that 'analysis is communication too', in that "when a written text is read or an audio/video recording is listened to/viewed, new signs are made by the participants in those situations", the participants in this case being the analysts themselves (2019:

121). The only signs the analyst has access to are of their own making—and not, therefore, those of the original communicative episode.

Given these concerns about data, Duncker concludes that the would-be linguistic analyst is left "with one of two options: either to abandon the ambition of empirical analysis, or to relocate the notion of linguistic data theoretically" (2019: 142). Bucking the trend of previous work in integrationism, Duncker writes that "nothing in principle seems to stand in the way of the second [option]" (2019: 142). This would require bringing data out of the *autoglottic space*[20] it is usually seen as inhabiting and instead recognising it as *sponsored*, i.e. as "the result of the analyst's interpretational effort" (2019: 142). This, it is probably fair to say, is Duncker's top-most priority when conducting analysis, i.e. that "the ideal goal for linguistics with respect to linguistic data is *interpretational transparency*, not objectivity [emphasis original]" (2019: 143). In order to achieve this goal, Duncker suggests that linguists draw lessons from their literary and philological colleagues. We can learn from the latter's insistence on the "requirement that all interference with and corrective actions imposed on the source materials are to be *documented* [emphasis original]", while taking inspiration from the former because "they have remained true to the interpretational nature of their trade without developing a fear of not being 'scientific' enough" (Duncker 2019: 144). This leads to Duncker's contention that analyses should take the form of a hermeneutic narrative as a way of acknowledging, and honestly facing up to, these inescapable circumstances of our communicational lives.

[20] This is a term introduced by Harris (e.g. 1989) to describe a situation when words, sentences, or any other texts or 'semiotic material' come to be treated as though they were *unsponsored*. Harris convincingly argues that this notion is a corollary of a highly literary culture. The idea is introduced more fully and explored further in **Chapters 4** and **5**.

A second priority of Duncker's is that 'analytic interference' be kept to a minimum. Although not a term Duncker specifically uses in this regard, this could be seen as leading to an analytic '*hierarchy*' "in terms of the degree of interference imposed on linguistic data" (2019: 146). On this scale "transcription represents the maximal degree of interference" (2019: 146), chiefly because it involves "transmodal translation from the aural to the visual domain" (2019: 138). Although also often involving transmodal translation, particularly in an academic context, in the middle of this scale sits the personal anecdote. Given this, it is not entirely clear why anecdote trumps transcription in this particular regard. Presumably, it has something to do with the (perfectly reasonable) assumption that the person recounting the *personal* anecdote was an original participant of the events in question and, perhaps more importantly, that the anecdote does not come with pretentions to objectivity. As Duncker writes "responsibility may be apparent as a matter of course with respect to the personal anecdote, [whereas] it should [whether or not it is in actuality MS] be stated explicitly in the case of the transcript" (2019: 145).

Duncker's ultimate target for empirical investigation is text-based *computer mediated communication* (CMC) in the form of internet chatroom discussions around the use of emoticons (2019: 154f). The reasons for this are at least two-fold. Firstly, this approach requires minimal analytic interference, such as transmodal translation, and so resides at the opposite end of the scale from transcription. In Duncker's terms, text-based CMC is particularly amenable to integrational analysis because not only does it *not* require *textualisation* (putting utterances into writing as with transcription, for example), neither does it involve (the less integrationally problematic, though still less than ideal in

Duncker's view) *retextualisation*. Retextualisation describes occasions when written text is reproduced as further written text but in a different format, an example of which would be a "handwritten letter being read and copied (rekeyed) from paper to a computer text file" (Duncker 2019: 153).

For Duncker, a second advantage of analysing text-based CMC is that this approach works towards another one of her goals, which is for "the inquiry to be as lay-oriented as possible" (2019: 160), in that "born textual materials afford investigation *in situ* in a way that is comparable with the perspective of the participants who made them" (2019: 154). Although the analysis of text-based CMC still involves, in Duncker's words, *decontextualisation*, this too is mitigated in that it echoes the experience of participants:

> "[E]ven when textual materials can be investigated without being moved from their original location, they are nevertheless *temporally* decontextualized when they are being read outside of the temporal confinements of their original communicational episode. This kind of decontextualization, however, comes much closer to the kind of recontextualization a reader experiences in the normal course of events upon multiple readings of the same text." (2019: 154)

Given these factors, text-based CMC is a best-fit regarding Duncker's ideal template for an initial test-case for integrationally-minded empirical[21] analysis, which she describes as follows:

> "[T]he kind of materials about language that seems to be the least theoretically problematic for a linguistic inquiry that aspires to conform to integrational

[21] The term *empirical* analysis is not one that I find particularly useful myself, and use the term here, with reservations, following Duncker's example in relation to her work. If 'empirical' is taken to indicate analysis involving some form of observation, it is difficult to imagine how it could be conducted otherwise. Cases where a useful distinction might be made between empirical and theoretical (or a priori) *research*, rather than *analysis*, are easier to envisage.

> principles is born textual materials, born digital, that require no retextualization. (2019: 154)

With these considerations in mind, Duncker's focus for "empirical" analysis has been to investigate "how most people construct and articulate their own linguistic experience" by paying attention when they talk about it, and by "asking what everyday metalinguistic vocabulary they use" (Harris 1990: 51, in Duncker 2019: 129) on Danish language online forums (2017a and 2019). This, remarks Duncker, provides "low-hanging analytic fruit" suitable to conduct "a non-introspective and yet lay-oriented integrational inquiry" (2019: 129). In one such study, Duncker (2017a) looks at how the term "creme fuss" (an alternative to *crème fraiche*) came to be "defined and treated as a linguistic unit" by the users (including Duncker herself) of an online forum sharing cooking recipes over a period of five years (2017a: 34). In a second study, Duncker (2019) takes a similar approach to how the use of emoticons (or smileys) in a Danish debate forum is negotiated and contested over a period of ten years.

Duncker is in *partial* agreement with the idea that "any methodology of linguistic description is a systematic way of seeing and discovering, but, in virtue of its framing of the 'object of study', it also represents a form of systematic 'not-seeing'" (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 40, in Duncker 2019: 181). However, in Duncker's opinion, this is only a problem when the analyst is "looking for something specific" (2019: 181). As a way of counteracting the potential of traditional methodological approaches to obscure as much as enlighten, Duncker envisages her "reasonably methodological" approach more as a "fishing expedition"; one that prioritises a capacity to capitalise on serendipity over any attempt at 'mechanical exhaustiveness' (2019: 181).

One such serendipitous ‘catch’ that came as “an unexpected bonus” was Duncker alighting on the terms “back slapping” and “back slapper” during her analysis of the discussions centred around the use of emoticons[22]. This was fortunate because it provided an opportunity to observe the forum users establish “a speech act category of their very own invention” (Duncker 2019: 171) and attempt to reduce the indeterminacy “regarding the word forms as well as their meaning” (2019: 188) thorough a process of conventionalisation. The to and fro of the participants’ debates and negotiations, argues Duncker, provides empirical support for some of the central theses of integrationism, in particular that “[t]he linguistic facts are the facts which the participants have to establish to their own satisfaction. And they may not always be in agreement with one another about such matters” (Harris 1998a: 145, in Duncker 2019: 190).

Decontextualisation and Interference

To reiterate, in regard to analysis Duncker (2019) argues that, first and foremost, our priority should be to lean into our reflexivity, rather than shy away from it-. In practice this means, from the outset, seeing analysis as a story of our experiential engagement (i.e. a hermeneutic narrative) with the material or

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[22] ‘Back slapping’ and ‘back slapper’ are terms associated with the use of the 👍 ‘thumbs up’ emoticon to express agreement with an earlier post. The term is generally seen as pejorative by a majority of the forum users, a sentiment we can see in the following posts presented by Duncker:

> Radia: Well, as I see it a back slapper is someone who supports a person, without arguing for it themselves.. hmm a bit difficult to explain. But someone who just agrees with others
>
> Yes back slapper is really negative as I see it. A back slapper always agrees with the strongest because it is the strongest. In that way the back slapper stays out of trouble, while trying to score some cheap points. In my world they are called, a bit derogatorily, a “b..licker” (2019: 185)

phenomena we are investigating. With this, I am in wholehearted agreement. We have no choice, as Duncker argues, but to conduct inquiry from the "inside": we cannot step "outside" of communication—"the *time track* of occurrences" (2019: 153, drawing on Firth 1964: 147)—and operate from some atemporal, neutral vantage point beyond personal experience. When this is forgotten, be it by linguists, anthropologists, or would-be analysts of human activity of any stripe, problems occur. The issue is not, however, that the resulting analyses are 'wrong' as such. It would miss the point, for example, to argue with a particular analyst[23] that they were incorrect to identify such and such as important semantic or linguistic components in a communicative exchange as, really, they should have been focusing on *these* things instead. Rather, the principal problem is that the analytic enterprise is entirely mischaracterised. Because we cannot put our own experience to one side, nor turn off our own communicative creativity, analytic inquiry—at least until the question of how to articulate a distinction between the analyst's procedures, methods and assumptions from the participants own communicative processes and experiences has been addressed—will be, in effect, an investigation into the *analyst's own communicative processes rather than those of the participants*.

Duncker's second priority, however, is perhaps a little more problematic. Duncker sees it as a requirement of analysis to "adopt the perspective of the communicating participants in the attempt to make the analysis resonate with

[23] See **Chapter 5** for concrete examples of this. For example, Pennycook (e.g. 2017 and 2023), whose methodological approach, it is assumed, enables the analyst to identify *important* aspects of an exchange *for the participants*, without providing any direct evidence of attempting to recover these 'facts' from the subjects of the study. Similarly with Goodwin (e.g. 2018), it would be counter-productive to try and counter his approach by disagreeing over *which* semantic components are "*laminated*" by the participants, or with his choice of metaphor for this process.

their actual experience" (Duncker 2019: 153). This, Duncker writes, can only be achieved by reducing the distortion caused by decontextualisation (see Harris 1998a: 13) to a minimum, i.e. to "to the lowest possible level of interference", while still "acknowledging that linguistic experience is personal and unique" (Duncker 2019: 153). As we have seen, in Duncker's view this is most easily achieved with materials that represent the lowest "levels of interference" (namely text-based CMC), as these "are likely to pose the fewest difficulties to the analysis" (2019: 154). However, it is quite possible that this concern is, in some respects, unnecessary.

Duncker (2019) takes very seriously Harris' charge that "all decontextualisation distorts" (1998a: 13) and can be seen to take great care in her attempt to forge a way of conducting analysis in such a way that decontextualisation and the resulting distortion are kept to a minimum. The problem is that while "it is perfectly possible to treat signs […] *as if* they were decontextualizable [emphasis added]" (Duncker 2019: 11), from the perspective of integrational semiology this is a logical impossibility. The reason being that "[s]ignification and contextualization are not two independent elements but facets of the same creative activity" (Harris 1996: 64). Therefore, concerns *not to* decontextualise seem misplaced since to do so is simply not possible. Problems only occur when this is forgotten, and given Duncker's careful consideration, this is highly unlikely to be an issue with her particular approach to analysis.

Distortion, however, *is inevitable*, no matter what approach we take to analysis. Thankfully though, given this inevitability, perhaps we need not see distortion as necessarily pejorative, or at least may do well to recharacterise this aspect of the analytic process. Thinking not in terms of *decontextualisation* but

rather in terms of *abstraction*, could be helpful in this regard. We could, if we wish, see the café waiter who, as in Jones' (2017a) example, "instrumentally abstracts" from the customer's *utterance* an *order* for two flat whites, as effecting a distortion of the utterance, but this does not seem a particularly helpful way of thinking about what is going on in the exchange. The waiter is abstracting from what was said as a means to move the interaction forward and initiate further productive communicational activity (hence Jones' term *instrumental* as modifier). This kind of instrumental abstraction, Jones (2017a) writes, is ubiquitous in our daily communication. For example:

> "[I]n taking what somebody has just said (and done) as a compliment, a lie, a question, a hesitation, a confession etc., we're operating an improvised instrumental abstraction over an indeterminately wide set of present and past behaviours or events. Reflexivity, then, is constructive and transformative, not 'descriptive' as such." (Jones 2017a: 14)

Integrational theorists do not take issue in principle with waiters writing down customers' orders, stenographers transcribing court proceedings, or journalists writing up an interview for a newspaper. The instrumental abstractions involved in these communicative processes need to be, and are in lay contexts, taken on a case-by-case basis. We may complain that we received lasagne having ordered carbonara, or that we were misconstrued in the interview as it was published, but the issue is not that our utterances were textualised per se. In this sense, the 'accuracy' or 'correctness' of our instrumental abstractions are not necessarily judged along a criterion of exact identity, but on *outcomes*. Whether those outcomes are successful or desirable is, like everything else in our communicational universe, a matter for personal and continual

contextualisation and reassessment. As Harris writes, “[t]here are no guarantees in advance. It is this open-endedness that integrationists recognize as a fundamental property of the communication process” (2010a: 209).

Analysis is not a sui generis mode of communication: analysts are in the same boat as the waiter and everybody else in this regard. If we take the purpose of analysis as to *describe* the original communicative activity, then the resulting description will inevitably be imperfect, and could perhaps be well-characterised as ‘a distortion’. If, however, reflexivity is best thought of as “constructive and transformative” rather than ‘descriptive’, as Jones says, and given that “linguistic reflexivity is a basic condition for linguistic inquiry” (Duncker 2019: 153), perhaps we are better assessing analysis along constructive and transformative lines. Just as with the waiter, in the course of their work, analysts can only hope to initiate further productive communicational activity (whether that further activity be personal reflection, a future research project, major institutional change, or anything in between) with the presentation of their analysis (likewise, whatever form that analysis may take: be it an academic article, a conference presentation, a conversation over coffee, an interpretive dance routine, or any other manifestation of the analyst’s communicative creativity). Whether the resulting ‘further communicational activity’ is productive, counter-productive, insightful or imbecilic cannot be guaranteed in advance and will always be (to some extent at least[24]) an open question that is ‘up for debate’.

[24] I would not, for example, personally want to argue with the notion that the debate whether the Earth is flat or (roughly) spherical has been laid to rest. There remain a few people, it would seem, who are still determined to see even this as an ‘open question’.

Duncker maintains that analysts are required “to adopt the perspective of the communicating participants in the attempt to make the analysis resonate with their actual experience” (2019: 153). However, whatever it is for an analysis to *resonate with* the experience of participants (cf. Harris’ (1993: 322) “analysis must answer to participants’ experience”), it cannot be a requirement to *preserve* or *replicate* that experience. One of Duncker’s aims is to explore and demonstrate the possibilities for integrational empirical analysis (2019: 153), therefore, the integrational function of her signmaking is necessarily different from her participants. We have the creative power to make our own distinctions and create our own categories when engaging in communicative activity. These distinctions and categories, or *operational discriminations*[25] (Harris 2009a), that we create in the course of our analytic communicative activity are not a problem to overcome, and may well lead to useful and insightful future communication—and we have to draw our lines somewhere—but the distinctions we make as analysts will never be the same as the distinctions of our participants. They cannot be, if I am (pace Pennycook 2017) analysing an interaction in a shop, my concern is not to find the correct fish to take home for the family dinner; nor is it my chief concern (pace Goodwin 2018), when analysing a conversation in a nursing home, to communicate with *my daughter* while I am suffering from aphasia.

[25] The notion of *operational discriminations* will be developed over the course of the remainder of this thesis.

Chapter Two: Integrationism's Analytic Toolkit

Introduction

We now move on to consider a range of existing "analytic tools" (Harris 2009c: 72) available to those who may wish to pursue the task of conducting integrational analyses. In some ways the term *analytic tools* could (and with good reason, perhaps) be seen as a provocative way of characterising the various integrational metacommunicative conceptions presented in this chapter, in particular because the notion feels so closely intertwined with methodologically-driven approaches to analysis (cf. Hébert 2020, a paradigmatic example of a segregationist, whose work is introduced in **Chapter 3**). Integrationists may well feel unease at the possibility that, once armed with such a 'toolkit', the temptation could be to:

> "solemnly and inevitably, to "reveal" a structure in the "data" that reflects, point by point, the "system" that is already tacitly incorporated in the methodological procedure" (Harris 1997: 304)

Were we to succumb to this temptation, it would probably be safe to say, whatever kind of analysis we were then doing, it would not be accurately characterised as 'doing' integrationism. However, the term, apart from providing a convenient shorthand for the following 'basket' of metacommunicative conceptions, and highlighting that integrationism is *hardly bereft of analytic 'means'*, also (hopefully) encourages us to keep this danger in mind, and think more deeply about what we are doing when using such metacommunicative

language to talk and write about communicational activity. Using the term ‘analytic tools’ could, therefore, alongside the adoption of an integrational perspective, act as a prophylactic against such temptations. At the end of the chapter we will return to this idea with a suggestion of an alternative way to conceptualise this ‘toolkit’.

This chapter is perhaps the most ‘technical’ in the thesis, at least in the sense of the extent to which it dives headlong ‘into the weeds’ of integrationism, and attempts to critically interrogate some of the core conceptions in the literature. The first three sections in particular, on the various notions of integration and different conceptions of the sign that have been presented in the integrationist literature, are reflective of my own struggles to ‘understand’ integrationism well enough that I was in a position to write the remainder of the thesis. Hopefully, showing my ‘working out’ in this manner may also help the reader who is new to integrationism to better appreciate what follows.

For those who are already highly-familiar with Harris’ work, the latter sections may be of particular interest, as here I have attempted to highlight and develop some themes in Harris’ writing that have so far gone underappreciated, namely *external integration* (1996) and *operational discriminations* (2009a), although Jones (e.g. 2018) has done valuable work on the former, without which the following would not have been possible. Operational discriminations, on the other hand, have so far passed completely under the radar, at least in print. This is perhaps surprising because they seem ripe with potential, partly as a way of thinking about the intimate connection between rationality and signmaking, and also as a useful way to think about the signmaking involved during analysis and consider differences between the communicational perspectives adopted by

analysts and those adopted by their subjects. Regarding operational discriminations, the aim in this chapter is to explicate what Harris has written on the topic (2009a and 2010b) and begin to explore some of the potential utility and problems they may bring. Operational discriminations, along with the other conceptions presented in this chapter, will be returned to throughout the remainder of the thesis, which also charts the development of my own thinking on these ideas.

Integrationist Conceptions of *Integration*

We are forever involved in an endeavour to effect and influence outcomes, “whether to make certain things happen, or stop them happening, speed them up, or facilitate or modify them” (Harris 2008: 111). From the perspective of integrationism, this influence and agency is achieved through integrating our activities with those of other people and the world around us. "In general terms”, writes Harris, “two or more activities may be said to be integrated when in combination they produce results which could not have been achieved by any of those single activities independently" (Harris 2009c: 69). However, quite how the activities involved in any particular episode of communication are to be numerated and delimited is not given in advance, and their individuation is, presumably, a subjective matter (i.e. a matter of interpretation and contextualisation). Just as when Harris says that “alternative contextualizations are always possible” (2009c: 81), however we may have proceeded on first analysis, there will always be another way to slice a communicative episode into

its constituent activities, depending on what our aims are in doing so in the first place.

Notwithstanding the potential difficulties involved in identifying the specific activities being integrated in any particular instance of communication, Harris writes that “[i]f the integrational conception of the sign is to serve as an analytic tool, it is important to distinguish the various types of integration in which it may feature”. What can be integrated, and the types of integration open to people, cannot be delimited in advance of the situations in which the integration takes place: “[t]he possible typologies of integration are as varied as the gamut of human activities” (Harris 2009c: 72). However, despite this, Harris offers what might be thought of as a heuristic for thinking about some of the “more obvious types” of integration in the form of the following inventory:

1. The integration of one individual’s activities with those of another individual or other individuals. This is *interpersonal integration*. (A holds out his hand on meeting B and B shakes it.)
2. The integration of an individual’s activities with objects and events in the physical world. This is *environmental integration*. (I take an umbrella with me because the weather looks unsettled.)
3. The integration of verbal and non-verbal communication, visual and oral communication, etc. This is *transmodal integration*. (Reading aloud from a book.)
4. The integration of the present with the past and the future. This is *temporal integration*. (Noting in your diary the appointment you made yesterday to meet someone next Tuesday.)

(Taken from: Harris 2009c: 72)

As a brief aside, despite Harris highlighting the *importance* of distinguishing various types of integration, it is interesting to note that these categories (to my knowledge) have not been taken up elsewhere in the integrationist literature to any large extent, including by Harris himself, beyond the relatively brief mention in the passages cited here (2008 and 2009c). The exception to this, one might argue, is temporal integration, although the treatment Harris gives the notion in the example above is rather crude compared to his discussions on the topic elsewhere (in particular 1996 and 1998a; see also Pablé and Hutton 2015 for a more sophisticated take). One issue is that it seems slightly erroneous to say that we integrate "the present with the past and the future" as we are not integrating *time* per se, but our present, past, and (anticipation of) future *experience*.

All the same, if we are intent on distinguishing different types of integration, it is safe to say that they can be *combined* in simultaneous activity. An example provided by Harris (2009c: 72) being two people coordinating their activity when moving an item of heavy furniture ('Lift on three! One, two, …'), where (at least[26]) environmental and interpersonal integration are combined. A number of points with relevance to analysis can be raised here. One is that in itemising types of integration, we are immediately forced into confronting the issue of *individuation* (see, for example: Harris 2012: 4f). For instance, it is not immediately obvious where environmental integration ends and interpersonal

[26] The example could be complicated further as there is also a case for saying that transmodal integration could be involved in this example, as the bodily movement of the two participants could be seen as complimentary to any verbal utterances produced.

integration begins, people are, after all, ‘objects’ in the environment. It would also seem that temporal integration has a role to play in *all* instances of integration, whatever the ‘type’. A second point concerns the ‘physicality’ of the examples of integration provided by Harris—holding out one’s hand for greeting, reading aloud from a book, picking up an umbrella before exiting the house, are all instances of sign-making behaviour that is *perceptible*, i.e. is not confined to an inner, unobservable “mental life” of the individual (cf. Harris 1996: x), and so is, potentially at least, open to empirical, analytic engagement.

Although the potential types of integration are innumerable, Harris argues that a “case can be made for saying that temporal integration is more fundamental than any other” (Harris 2009c: 73). This is because, explains Harris (2008: 111), relating our previous experience and anticipation of the future to the here-and-now is basic to our ability to operate as human beings. For a vivid, albeit fictitious, depiction of a life where this basic integrational proficiency is compromised, one can think of Christopher Nolan’s protagonist in the film *Memento*, Leonard Shelby, who, suffering from antegrade amnesia—and therefore, in lieu of an ability to draw from recent past experience—desperately attempts to integrate his experience of the situations in which he finds himself in the present with his past using photos and post-it-notes as hastily assembled aides memoire. In the case of our furniture removers, it is difficult to imagine how they might go about such a task without recourse to, among other things: their past experience of moving objects, of using verbal and visual cues to coordinate their own movement with other people, and of dealing with potential obstacles to movement such as doorways, staircases and other people’s feet. However, although Harris’ argument that temporal integration is involved in everything that

we do is persuasive, it is less clear that this necessarily takes priority, i.e. is somehow more fundamental than, the necessity to integrate our activities with the physical world around us, not least the people with whom we must coordinate our activities. Which seems more fundamental in any particular instance could be seen as a consequence of which perspective we are adopting. Taking temporal integration as the more fundamental, perhaps lends itself to a more mentalistic viewpoint, where the mental life of the individual is paramount, whereas adopting a more social, material perspective might lead us further towards taking interpersonal and environmental integration as the more basic (cf. the opening discussion in **Chapter 1** on 'where we should begin').

There is an intimate connection between the notion of temporal integration and the notion of generalising from one experience to another. Duncker (2011: 541), discussing the prospect of making generalisations about communicative behaviour from an integrational standpoint, writes that "reliance on evidence of particular episodes [of communication] complicates the task of answering *how* people cope with integrating past experience with present and anticipated future experience [emphasis original]". Although in the passages from which this citation is taken, Duncker only "touch[es] upon the question of generalisation" (2011: 534) it is proposed that this is the crux to any understanding of how (temporal) integration is achieved. This is because temporal integration involves "recogniz[ing] properties of the present situation in previously experienced situations and thus the ability to cognitively transcend situation boundaries diachronically" (Duncker 2011: 541). In other words, Duncker suggests that the problem of how (temporal) integration is achieved *is* the problem of generalising from one communicative episode to the next *in microcosm*.

Jones (2017a) makes a related point in regard to his notion of 'instrumental abstractions'. However, rather than think in terms of *generalisations*, Jones talks of *abstracting* from the integrated flow of communicative activity as a way of effecting, facilitating and influencing activity further 'down' the communicational continuum. Jones focuses on the (previously mentioned in **Chapter 1**) concrete example of a waiter extracting an *order* from a customer's *utterance.* However, as Jones suggests, the notion is widely applicable:

> "Similarly, in taking what somebody has just said (and done) as a compliment, a lie, a question, a hesitation, a confession etc., we're operating an improvised instrumental abstraction over an indeterminately wide set of present and past behaviours or events." (2017a: 14)

The idea of instrumental abstractions will be taken up again in **Chapter 3**.

Integrational Conceptions of *the Sign*

In the integrational literature it is possible to ascertain various different conceptions of the sign. One way to think about these differences is to see them in terms of how the relationship between the sign and integration is conceived. As previously mentioned, in his preface to *Signs, Language and Communication*, Harris (1996: x) talks of communication acting as "both product and resource" of integration. We also find a similar characterisation of the sign/integration relationship, where the sign is sometimes presented as the *means* through which integration is achieved, or, alternatively, as a *product* of integration. Perhaps

most common is the ‘means interpretation’ of the relationship. Examples abound, but two will serve our purposes here:

> “We should *not* start by taking for granted that signs are prerequisites of communication, but treat communication as including all processes in which human activities are contextually integrated by means of signs” (Harris 1996: 11)

> “Integrationists focus on the notion of *activity* as a fundamental lay concept when it comes to understanding human communication, and theorize communication processes as consisting of activities that are integrated by means of *contextualized signs* of all kinds.” (Pablé 2020: 131)

Less common, though still prevalent, is a focus on the sign as a product of integration, for example:

> “[W]hat can be proposed is a semiology that treats the sign as involving an integration of human activities, and its meaning as a circumstantial product of that integration.” (Harris 2009a: 161)

> “For integrationists the sign is not something that exists outside the context of use; the integration or contextualization is the creation of the sign.” (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 28)

A slightly different take on the product conception of the sign/integration relationship, is to see the sign as an assemblage of integrated ‘components’, with the sign as an integrated sum of constituent parts; those parts being a disparate collection of personal experience, the situated assessment of present circumstances, bodily activity, and a ‘taking into account’ of material phenomena:

> "[T]he sign is confused with its verbal component, and the vocal form of that component is mistaken for the sign itself. What made the utterance significant in the first place – its integration with other components of the situation – drops out of sight." (Harris 1998a: 54)

> "The integration of those components ["a web of beliefs and assumptions derived from previous experience, plus a personal assessment of the current circumstances and consequences"] is what confers the status of a sign on some particular object or event in the situation" (Harris 2009a: 172)

> "[I]n face to face communication vocalization is only one component in an integrated series of activities which include gesture, gaze, facial expression and bodily posture." (Harris 2010a: 22)

There is a difficulty in attempting to capture the notion of the sign as product *and* resource, one that comes to the forefront when we look a little closer at the above passages from Harris. If, as Harris is claiming, a component of integration involves "a personal assessment of the current circumstances", there seems to be a suggestion of circularity, in that, 'assessing one's present circumstances' is, one would assume, itself a sign-making activity. Critics might here accuse Harris of doing little better than Ryle's (2009: ch15) "intellectualists", who rely on "invoking flair to explain flair" (see **Chapter 4** for an extended discussion). It might be argued that Harris, similarly, is invoking integration to explain integration. However, a perhaps more useful way to think of Harris' account, is as an attempt to describe integration as an ongoing series of communicational processes that are "nested one within another" (cf. Harris 1996: 63). According to Harris, a nested relationship is just one of many of the possibilities when it comes to communicational processes:

> "All the types of relationship that may hold between processes in general may presumably hold also between communication processes: they may be sequential, simultaneous, independent, interdependent, nested one within another, etc." (Harris 1996: 63)

However, as Harris correctly identifies in terms of communicational processes generally, definitively demarcating—i.e. objectively individuating—processes of integration is no easy task:

> "The individuation of particular communicational processes—determining where one begins and another ends, what each includes and does not include, etc.—is every whit as problematic as the individuation of process in general." (1996: 63)

If anything, "problematic" seems to undersell the difficulties involved, if the aim is to produce an objective itinerary of communicative processes involved in a particular situation, i.e. arrive at a list that could be unanimously agreed upon by all and sundry, entirely unfeasible might be closer to the mark. Much the same could (and should) be said of the notion of 'integrated components'. Taking Harris' suggestions above as an example (gesture, gaze, facial expression, and bodily posture), it would seem an impossibility to say definitively that *this* belongs to the 'gesture component', and *that* the bodily 'posture component', *this* the 'gaze component' and *that* the 'facial expression' component. While our creative communicational proficiency certainly allows for people to identify components of (or abstract from) the "integrated continuum" (e.g. Harris 1996: 164; see also **Conclusion**) this itself requires signmaking activity (contextualisation) on the part of an individual. Likewise when we talk of 'activities' and 'actions',

demarcating where one begins and another ends is a judgement call that cannot be made in isolation from personal experience and present circumstances.

Does this mean, however, that we should jettison all talk of processes, components and activities from communicational theory? On the question of communicational processes, Harris argues not. Continuing on from the passage cited above discussing the problematic nature of individuating processes, Harris writes:

> "But only an intellectual masochist would on that account ban processes from theory and theoretical discourse. For the ban smacks too much of cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. Without processes, it is by no means clear what kind of universe we are left to inhabit. (Digestion, fertilisation and vinification—to mention only the most important casualties—would have to go immediately[27].)" (1996: 63)

We might do well to adopt a similar position with *components*, *activities* and, even, *signs* themselves. All could be taken as reifications—analytic products that arise from taking a particular perspective on human affairs. This may strike the reader as somewhat hypocritical given the criticisms levelled against reification in the integrationist literature (e.g. Jones 2017, and *throughout this thesis*). However, this need not necessarily be the case. Duncker (2011: 542) writes that:

[27] Harris' rhetoric is perhaps a little off-target here; the metalanguage around these processes might "have to go immediately", presumably, however, the plants and animals would go on reproducing whether we talk about it or not.

> "Decontextualization[28] is a basic analytic condition that applies to any investigation of past events, not only investigations into past communicational episodes, but into all aspects of the lives and affairs of human beings, studied in e.g. the research traditions of archaeology and history."

Although the Duncker's focus is on professional, academic analysis, the same could be said of the kind of lay-analysis discussed previously in relation to Jones (2007). As with Jones' (2017a) café waiter, who 'instrumentally abstracts' an order from the communicational stream, abstracting and recontextualising are an integral part of our communicational experience. Such abstractions and reifications only become irredeemably problematic when they come to be seen, not as the products of taking a certain viewpoint and undertaking a particular activity, but as underlying causal mechanisms that antecede the activity in question. (See van Dijk 2016, who draws on ideas from Dewey, for a clear and insightful elaboration of this pernicious habit in linguistics and philosophy.)

To take the integrational sign as a case in point, it is a central tenet of integrationism that signs do not pre-exist the situation in which they are created and so, on this front at least, the integrational sign does not fall prey to the same pitfall as we will see with Pinker's (1994 and 2021) treatment of the syllogism (see **Chapter 4**), or Goodwin and Pennycook's "semantic resources" (see **Chapter 5**). Nor, however, should we take the sign, integrational or otherwise, as some*thing* or some phenomenon that exists independently of a person adopting a particular view of communication. To do so, would be to fall prey to reocentric surrogationalist thinking. Rather, talk of signs, from an integrational

[28] The notion of decontextualisation is very possibly problematic, abstraction and recontextualisation may be more apt ways of expressing the sentiment. See **Chapter 1** (Decontextualisation and Interference) for discussion.

perspective, is *one way* of making sense of our communicational experiences and integrating those experiences with our communicational aims in the present (such as, for example, explaining integrational theory to oneself or a reader). The same could be said, mutatis mutandis, of components and activities, whether such talk actually does help us in making sense of our communicative experience and aid us in achieving our communicational aims, or merely obfuscates and distorts is, along with everything else in communicational domain, up for debate, and must be judged on a case-by-case basis.

Signs as links: a Case Study of Introspective Integrational Analysis

A further way to think about the integrational sign, and perhaps best embodying Jones' idea of signmaking as *connection*, is to envisage signs as *links in a chain of activity* (Jones 2011). Beginning with Harris' idea that signs are an "interface between different human activities" (Harris 2000: 69, cited in Jones 2011: 14), Jones goes on to write that:

> "From this point of view, it is only in our acting in and on the world that we create signs since signs are 'links in the chain of action' taking us from present to future on the basis of experience and circumstance. The semiotic significance or value of the sign itself, therefore, is inherently relational or transitional, i.e., it is relative to the unfolding activity, a transition from this point to the next." (2011: 14)

In light of the present discussion, this account of signs and sign-making has much to recommend. In particular, it provides a way to accentuate the notion of communicators as timebound agents, creatively making semiological 'products'

on the fly that can be then taken forward *as experience* to help meet the demands of a continually unfolding present.

In the paper from which the above citation is taken, Jones (2011) goes on to provide an example of a personal narrative that makes good use of the 'linkage' conception of the integrational sign. The narrative takes the form of an introspective analysis of learning to play the saxophone using fingering diagrams, and charts how his sign-making changes as a result of practice and experience. In the novice stages of his playing, Jones' main task is in coordinating the necessary finger movements with the notation of the diagram. This is, typically of a novice, rather inefficiently achieved through close visual scrutiny of both one's own fingers and the diagram itself. Jones highlights the idea that the very signhood of the diagram is contingent (in the early stages of learning to play) on the connections he creatively forges between the notation of the diagram, his own bodily movement, and the sounds ultimately produced using the instrument:

> "So it is important to note that the saxophone diagram is not a sign till I make it a sign. And more to the point it has neither the meaning of a sign nor the form of a sign until I give it the role of a link in this particular activity chain." (Jones 2011: 16)

As experience is gained through practice, it becomes less important to visually inspect the finger placement and more reliance is placed on the tactile feel of one's fingers in relation to the instrument:

> "*The feelings as I form the correct fingering and the feeling of the correct fingering itself are now also signs that guide me to the desired outcome*. I can

> feel where I'm going because I've felt what it's like to get there, and to be there, before. [emphasis original]" (Jones 2011: 16)

With his familiarity playing the instrument growing further, the importance of the diagram also begins to fall away until he "need only to glance at the diagram as a prompt to recreate the movement of the fingers" (Jones 2011: 16). Eventually the stage is reached where:

> "With my skilled and sensitised fingers and tuned ears I can read the instrument itself directly. It would now be quite counterproductive to even try to consult the diagram in adopting the fingering." (Jones 2011: 17)

Aside from highlighting Jones' 'linkage' conception of the sign as a potentially useful device for discussing and analysing activity, in the two sections that follow, I would also like to draw out two further points in relation to the narrative provided by Jones. One concerns whether, or the extent to which, such personal, self-reflexive accounts are generalisable to other activities, be they conducted by oneself or other people. A second is to show some of the similarities to Jones' writing and that of Tim Ingold (e.g. 2007 and 2015) with the purpose of suggesting that we should perhaps feel able to draw from a range of other non-representational approaches to studying human activity without necessarily being overly concerned about the intricacies of any differences in theoretical approach. This is in line with recent appeals in the integrational (and integrational-adjacent in the case of Siebers) literature for a greater "openness to other viewpoints or other approaches" (Siebers 2024: 188; see also: Duncker and Pablé 2024), thus eschewing a "negative nostalgia" (Hutton 2021: 65) for a time when integrationism's primary purpose might have been seen as to provide a critique of received wisdom in linguistics and communicational theory.

Generalising from Personal Experience

Having myself never learnt to play a musical instrument to any degree of proficiency, I do not feel in a position to comment directly on the extent to which Jones' personal account of learning to play the saxophone is generally applicable to individuals' experiences of so doing. Reading Jones' description, however, did put me in mind of learning to drive a car. Much to the annoyance of my driving instructor[29], in the early stages of learning to handle the vehicle, every time I felt it may be necessary to change gear, I had a tendency to take my eyes off of the road and look down at the physical position of the gear stick, in order to determine the correct gear to which I needed to change, up or down. Over time I was able to rid myself of this bad habit and all I would need to do would be to briefly touch the gear lever to be able to *feel* which gear the car was currently in, and hence, which gear I needed to change into. After accruing more driving experience, even this brief touch became unnecessary and a more general awareness of the speed of travel and a 'feel for the car', and the noises emanating from the engine, would provide sufficient environmental cues as to what course of action was required next.

In each case, be it visual inspection of the gear stick, a specific tactile awareness or a general, yet nuanced, 'feel' for the driving situation as a whole, involves sign-making on my part. Just as with Jones' saxophone playing, the transition from novice to 'expert' (it is an open question as to whether my driving should, even now, be characterised as such) can be broken down into stages in

[29] My instructor kept a cane by his side with which to rap my knuckles for such occasions!

regard to how my signmaking practices when driving have developed. It is possible to think of the changes in signmaking practices in terms of ‘components of integration’ (cf. Harris 1998a: 54 and 2010a: 22): the visual inspection ‘component’ gives way to a tactile ‘component’, which in turn is superseded by an aural ‘engine-noise component’. Each instance of signmaking helps “guide me to the desired outcome” (Jones 2011: 16)—i.e., aids me in making sure the car is in the correct gear—and so can readily be seen as a link in the ‘car-driving’ activity chain. The parallels with my ‘learning to drive experience’ and Jones’ ‘learning to play saxophone experience’ are clear. This would appear to provide at least one example where Jones’ description of his own sign-making journey is *generalisable* and demonstrate an instance where the notion of signs as links is *applicable*.

The notion that going through something ourselves leaves us better equipped to help others going through similar experiences is well entrenched in society. The idea underpins the ethos of many support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Macmillan Cancer Support. Trainee teachers of English as a foreign language undergoing the courses provided by Cambridge (CELTA) and Trinity College London (certTESOL) are required to spend time learning a new language, and reflect on the experiences of doing so, in the belief that it will make them better teachers due to obtaining an improved understanding and appreciation of the needs of their students. However, reflecting on our own experiences to better understand and help (or frustrate in some manner) other people is not limited to such particulars as pedagogy and support groups, it is a pervasive aspect of our communicational lives. Whether it is parents offering advice to their children, supporting a friend through grief, giving pointers to a

colleague on how to negotiate newly installed software, making a suggestion to fellow hikers as to the best route down from a hilltop in inclement weather, all involve drawing and generalising (or instrumentally abstracting) from our personal experience to better understand the experiences of, and integrate our activities with, others. This does not mean to say that 'having gone through something ourselves' our advice, suggestions and offered comfort will be gladly accepted or help anyone's situation, as, once again, "nothing is given in advance in communication" (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 43). That experience, does, however, provide a basis, an Archimedean "firm spot on which to stand" (Harris 1981: 204), from which to extrapolate out and appreciate the experiences of other people.

Drawing from Other (Non-representational) Approaches: the Idiom of the Wayfarer

Jones' description of learning to play the saxophone displays some interesting similarities to the ideas of Tim Ingold, whose work provides a counterpoint to integrational semiology more generally. As an example of the similarities, Jones' account of learning the saxophone provides an instance of Ingold's (2015: 47) characterization of the divide between novice and expert:

> "What distinguishes the expert from the novice, then, is not that the mind of the former is more richly furnished with content – as though with every increment of learning yet more representations were packed inside the head – but a greater sensitivity to cues in the environment and a greater capacity to respond to these cues with judgement and precision."

We can also see a likeness in Jones' analysis of his musical journey to Ingold's description of human activity as *wayfaring* (2007). In the idiom of the "wayfarer", we find our way through life along paths "previously travelled in the company of others, or in their footsteps, reconstructing the itinerary as one goes along" (Ingold 2007: 15). By way of example, the people of Antiquity and the Middle Ages approached the task of reading as wayfarers because they:

> "[D]id not interpret the writing on the page as the specification of a plot, already composed and complete in itself, but rather saw it as comprising a set of signposts, direction markers or stepping stones that enabled them to find their way about within the landscape of memory." (Ingold 2007: 15)

It does not take a huge leap of the imagination to see the signs created by Jones in the course of his learning as 'stepping stones', created on his path from novice to expert. And yet, despite these similarities in tone, Ingold pitches himself as a semiophobe, for whom signs "short-circuit life" (2022: 342). The crux of the matter is that, in his criticism of semiology, Ingold was envisaging signs that 'stand for' something else, i.e. Ingold's critique is pitched against surrogational, not integrational, conceptions of the sign[30]:

> "Semiosis, however, short-circuits life. For the relation of 'standing for', by which the sign-object serves as a surrogate for its absent referent, not only breaks the journey; it also calls up a destination even before the traveller has set out. Here, ends are never loose but already tied to beginnings, in a closed semiotic circuit." (Ingold 2022: 342)

[30] For a more in-depth recent discussion (from an integrational perspective) of Ingold's position regarding semiology see Pablé (2025c).

The case is quite to the contrary, however, in an integrational semiology, which provides a non-surrogational account of the sign:

> “From an integrational perspective, in many cases it would make no sense to ask ‘Of what is that a sign?’ A sign, for the integrationist, is not something that has to stand in a specific kind of relationship to something else in order to qualify as a sign.” (Harris 2009c: 66)

Far from short-circuiting life, in integrationism, “signs […] belong to intricate open-ended networks of communication" (Harris 2009a: 164), and, as discussed, can be viewed as connecting links, integrating complex flows of activity. Ingold (2007: 15) contrasts accounts of human activity in the idiom of *wayfaring* with those of *navigating*. The idiom of the navigator is conducted in the language of representation and surrogation, wherein we (in an attempt to set Ingold’s ideas to an integrational score) switch from one self-contained context to the next, relying on units of meaning minted in a depersonalised past to make sense of the situations in which we now find ourselves.

From this perspective, the similarities between Ingold’s work and integrationism are greater than the differences. Certainly the differences are not so great as between Ingold’s (2022) ‘semiophobes’ and ‘semiophiles’. Both bodies of work take an approach to human activity that avoids representationalist and dualistic thinking, instead attending to the flows and connections people make in the course of their activity. We might say, therefore, that both Ingold and integrationists are attempting to forge a way of thinking about and discussing human activity in the idiom of the wayfarer, as opposed to the navigator. Given this, it may be prudent for those of us attempting to provide integrational accounts of communicational activity to not restrict ourselves to only the analytic tools and

terms provided in Harris' own writing. Rather, it may be beneficial to take a more pragmatic approach, and feel able to draw from other approaches, such as Ingold's[31], that may help bolster accounts of activity (whether analytic or anecdotal) given from the particular perspective of integrational semiology. What is important, is the need to pay sufficient attention to the communicational processes involved in both the original communicative episode being subject to analysis and the communicational activity of the (lay or professional) analyst.

Operational Discriminations

Harris introduces the reader to operational discriminations (ODs) as follows:

> "It is difficult to see how either the literate mind or the numerate mind[32] would be in a position to function at all without having a grasp of certain basic distinctions that the operations of both rely on. Since so much controversy has surrounded the word concept, it may be as well to avoid it and speak here of 'operational discriminations' or ODs." (2009a: 125)

Whereas concepts, in cognitivist approaches in linguistics and psychology, are generally viewed as inner (i.e. mentalistic) representations of aspects of a world 'out there', Harris describes ODs as "necessary features of the semiology basic to all verbal communication systems" (2009a: 133), and so is not envisioning

[31] Some work being done in ecological psychology (from which Ingold (2022) also takes inspiration) could potentially be another such productive source of non-representational work conducted in the 'idiom of the wayfarer' (e.g. van Dijk 2016, 2021 and Read 2024).
[32] Despite the mereological terminology employed by Harris in this passage, it would seem a stretch to accuse Harris of falling prey to the "fallacy" identified by Bennet and Hacker (2003); given (for example) Harris' discussion of said fallacy in the preface to *Rationality and the Literate Mind*.

them as some variety of mental entity. Rather, we might think of ODs as the semiological requirements imposed on agents when engaging in a particular activity. Thus, ODs have more in common with the ecological psychologist's *affordances* (refs) than they do the cognitivist's *concepts*, in that they arise through active engagement in the world and do not pre-exist that active engagement[33].

Harris makes several bold claims regarding ODs that might seem, at first blush, to run counter to central tenets of integrationism (in particular, the radical indeterminacy of the sign – e.g. Harris 2009c: 80). One such claim is that by considering human activity from the angle of ODs it is possible to gain an "inside" perspective on the communicative activity of agents operating within a "system of communication" (Harris 2009a: 129) very different from our own. A second, related, claim is that:

> "[I]t is possible to state unambiguously the ODs required for any deliberate human activity, and there are no grounds for supposing that any forms of communication would turn out to be an exception to this." (Harris 2009a: 133)

With the introduction of ODs, therefore, Harris appears, tantalisingly, to offer (an outline of) a means to analytically investigate sign-making activity at the level of *basic semiological features*, i.e. the 'building blocks' on which sign-making

[33] This is certainly not to say that ODs are synonymous with affordances. One difference is that ecological psychology approaches human activity from the perspective of perception, while integrationism looks at activity from the angle of communication. Another important difference being that while an 'affordance approach' focuses on the *possibilities* (and dangers) brought forth in mutual person/world engagement, the OD approach focuses on what (semiological competency) is *required* of the actors involved in activity. A further difference is that Harris' approach is explicitly semiological, whereas ecological psychology's relationship to semiology is ambivalent (at best) (e.g. Ingold 2022). It should also be noted that how we should understand affordances is still being debated within ecological psychology (Jones and Read 2023: 6). The approaches to affordances taken by Ingold (e.g. 2022), van Dijk (e.g. 2021) and Read (e.g. 2024), for example, perhaps provide the most useful and interesting conception of Gibsonian affordances from an integrational perspective.

activity is based. In other words, it would seem, following Harris' claim, that he saw the possibility—via taking a particular analytic approach to concrete episodes of communicative activity—of producing an itinerary of the semiological distinctions that the agents involved must necessarily make in the course of engaging in the activity in question.

ODs and Wittgenstein's Builders

In his explanation of how he suggests we should think about ODs, Harris (2009a: 125f.) borrows heavily from Wittgenstein's vignette (presented in *Philosophical Investigations* – see also **Introduction**) where builder A and assistant B are engaged in a construction project involving four classes of building stones: blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. A is building with these materials and B's task is to bring to A the appropriate items "in the order in which A needs them" (Wittgenstein 2009: 6e). This is achieved by A calling out one of four words at the appropriate time, the four words being an exact match for the building materials, resulting in a language with just the four lexical items: 'block', 'pillar', 'slab' and 'beam'. We are invited by Wittgenstein to conceive of these four words "as a complete primitive language" (2009: 6e), a language Harris proposes we call *Constructionese* (2009a: 126).

Keeping in mind the notion of ODs as semiological features of communication systems, Wittgenstein's language game between builder and assistant serves Harris' explication well, being, as it is, an extremely simple communication system, shorn of many of the complexities found in real-life situations. Even so, Harris states, "[i]t seems clear that A and B, as thinking

creatures, do need quite a number of ODs of some kind, and that these are indispensable to the successful execution of the building programme" (2009a: 127). Harris then proceeds to identify a number of ODs involved in the builders' construction task. These ODs, as explicated by Harris, might be described in terms of three groups: *proto-numerical* (2009a: 127f), *classificatory* (2009a: 127f) and *temporal* (2009a: 128f). In turn, these can be thought of as examples of two semiological archetypes, *static* and *dynamic* which, respectively, perform the semiological functions of *classifying* and *initiating* (Harris 2009a: 129).

Proto-numerical ODs

An important concern for Harris in depicting the builders' project in terms of ODs is to describe the "internal semantics and semiological structure of Constructionese *as seen from the viewpoint of the builder and his assistant* [emphasis original]" (2009a: 126). Given this motivation, it would be a mistake to ascribe to the construction workers a command of numbers, i.e. this would be to go beyond the scope of the *only* language available to them—Constructionese—which, ex hypothesi, has no "counting words" (Harris 2009a: 127); hence, Harris' stipulation that the ODs in play are *proto*-numerical. For example, A and B need to "understand that—as we might put it from an outsider's perspective—what they are engaged in is 'a two-person job'" (Harris 2009a: 127). It becomes difficult at this stage (as indicated by Harris' "groping" (2009a: 127) to find suitable terms) to describe quite what it is that the builders need to discriminate without straying away from *their* viewpoint and into our *own*. Given Harris' stipulation, notions such as duality—"an explicitly numerical concept" (2009a: 127)—are

impermissible. However, it is clear that in order to successfully complete the building task, A and B must appreciate that their roles are *different yet complementary*. In Harris' words, they must recognise "the bi-partition of roles and the non-identity, non-interchangeability, of the activities which they must perform" (Harris 2009a: 127).

Proto-numerical ODs also come into play during B's fetching of the building materials. Considering that "B has to pass him [A] the stones and to do so *in the order in which A needs them* [emphasis added]" (Wittgenstein 2009: 6e), "it will not do for B to fetch two slabs when A calls 'Slab!', since at that point in the proceedings A does not need *another* slab [emphasis original]" (Harris 2009a: 128). Nor would A be pleased to see B return without any slab at all. Therefore, we have a situation requiring the ability to discriminate between "'at-least-one-slab' and 'no-slab'" (Harris 2009a: 128). The hyphens in these terms are further evidence of the difficulty involved in keeping to the builders' viewpoint, for "*as soon as they are removed* full-blown numerical concepts sneak in ('one', 'more than one') [emphasis original]" (Harris 2009a: 128). In a similar vein, Harris (taking inspiration from Schmandt-Besserat's distinction between *concrete* and *abstract* counting) also notes that we should be "careful not to attribute to A and B discriminations of a higher order of abstraction than are strictly needed in Constructionese" (2009a: 128). This is because the expressions 'more-than-one-*something*' or 'at-least-one-*something'* evidence a greater degree of abstraction than do the expressions 'more-than-one-pillar' or 'at-least-one-slab'.

Classificatory ODs

A and B must be able to distinguish the four building materials used in the construction project, therefore the builder and assistant each require “four classificatory ODs” corresponding to the physical objects *block*, *pillar*, *slab* and *beam* (Harris 2009a: 127). Similarly, A and B "will also need four classificatory ODs corresponding to the word-forms in their language” (Harris 2009a: 127). In both cases, whether we are dealing with word-forms or building materials, Harris stresses that the particular criteria used by A and B for making the discriminations is not the issue under question. All that is important, is that *somehow* the agents involved are able to make the distinctions that are necessary for the successful completion of the activity being undertaken:

> “*How* they draw the mental-cum-perceptual discriminations between types of object does not matter. What matters is that in practice B always brings the kind of object that A called for, regardless of whether they are using criteria of size, shape, weight, colour, or any other differentiae. … [In the case of word-forms] the same proviso applies. The way these word-forms are differentiated does not have to be the ‘same’. B needs only auditory criteria, since he never speaks. A needs both auditory and articulatory criteria, since he has to utter the words. All that matters for communicational purposes is that neither of them ever confuses, say, the call ‘Block!’ with the call ‘Beam!’, or the call ‘Pillar!’ with the call ‘Slab!’. [emphasis original]” (2009a: 127)

Temporal ODs

Classificatory ODs can only take us so far in understanding the internal semantics of Constructionese. This is because—as Harris wrote in a much

earlier discussion of Wittgenstein's builders—"the builder's language in the end does not consist just of names" (1980: 84) but is, rather:

> "essentially a practical language, a language for getting things done. […] Everything is geared to the fetching of building materials. So much so that if we were asked to say what, for instance, *block* means in this language, there is a strong temptation to reply […] that it indicates that the builder wants his assistant to fetch him a block." (Harris 1980: 84-5)

Through his own verbal activity, A hopes to elicit changes in B's behaviour that will help him 'get the job done'. In turn, B's 'reply' to A's call consists in the fetching of the appropriate building material. "This 'you-then-me' aspect of the communicational process" (Harris 2009a: 129) sets up a temporal sequence in the activity of the builder and assistant that both must grasp if the system is to not "break down" (Harris 2009a: 129). In Particular, B must recognise that when A calls for a certain building material, he "wants it brought *now* in the sequence of operations [emphasis original]" (Harris 2009a: 129). 'Now' presupposes a before and after, therefore setting up a tri-partite "segmentation of the temporal continuum" (Harris 2009a: 129). While these temporal 'segments' are denumerable from our 'outside' perspective, that cannot be the case for the innumerate builder and assistant. Instead of 'keeping count', A and B have to rely solely on discriminating the '*my*' segments from the '*your*' segments of the building operation. Though leaving the exact nature of the ODs involved unelucidated, this back and forth could, Harris suggests, potentially be expressed in terms of an "OD structure" that describes what A and B must—as a minimum—comprehend of the ongoing sequence of call-and-fetch couplets for work to continue:

> "It is the succession of these A-B correspondences one after another that structures the concatenation of the communicative process. A and B have to grasp *that* OD structure for their collaborative work to proceed at all. B, for instance, does not 'save up' a sequence of calls from A and then fetch those items all in one journey [emphasis original]." (2009a: 129)

Static and Dynamic ODs

Temporal ODs can be thought of as *initiators* of further activity, in that "every time the builder utters a word, that utterance has to function as an instruction to *do something* [emphasis original]" (Harris 2009a: 129). All four words of Constructionese share this same *dynamic* semiological function, which:

> "anchors the ODs to the here-and-now, alerting the assistant to the need for immediate action. It allocates the utterance (e.g. 'Slab!') to a place in a temporal sequence, in which the *next* place has to be occupied by B going off to fetch a slab. [emphasis original]" (Harris 2009a: 129)

What the instruction is telling the assistant to do depends on *which* of the words of Constructionese is uttered by the builder (Harris 2009a: 129). This introduces a second semiological function which the words of Constructionese must perform which is that of *static classifier* and tells the assistant what exactly is expected of him by the builder. This talk of separating these two semiological functions (*dynamic initiators* and *static classifiers*) is only possible with the appropriate metalanguage, i.e. from our own 'external' perspective. From the perspective of the builder and assistant:

> "those two functions *are indistinguishable*. What accomplishes one automatically accomplishes the other. There is *no way* of separating out the dynamic semiological function from the classifying function. [emphasis original]" (Harris 2009a: 129)

This, Harris tells us, is what makes Constructionese a "'primitive'" semiological system: "[t]here is no way of separating out the dynamic semiological function from the classifying function" (2009a: 129), i.e. Constructionese does not provide the metalinguistic apparatus for the builders to be able to discriminate between the classifying and initiating functions of the words to their only language.

External and internal Integration

Harris' OD-centred analytic treatment (2009a and 2010b[34]) of Wittgenstein's builders' language-game is an example of what Harris calls *internal* analysis (2010b: 252), in the sense that we are invited to consider the communicative situation in which the builder and his assistant find themselves *in isolation*, i.e. as *complete*, in and of itself, with no external factors impinging on the builders' particular bubble of communicative activity. This notion of communicative activity happening in isolation, as Harris points out (2010b), is fraught with problems. To zoom in on *the internal*, at the expense of *the external*, requires the adoption of a particularly blinkered perspective, one that ignores considerations such as how the builders came to learn constructionese in the

[34] The 2010b source is largely identical to the 'Interlude' chapter in (2009a) *Rationality and the Literate Mind*. However, the slightly later publication, intended for an audience of Wittgensteinian scholars, has extended passages on the notion of Constructionese as a *complete* language, which are of particular relevance to the present discussion.

first place (Harris 2010b: 253) and what purposes the building project might serve wider society. The result is a picture of communication that has neither past nor future, and is, therefore, "outside history […] destined to remain forever the same, endlessly recycling the same set of utterances and activities" (Harris 2010b: 248; see also: Hutton 2009).

Harris raises the question of whether it is even possible to imagine such a scenario—a linguistic curio, perfectly complete, untethered to the social fabric—suggesting that "we deceive ourselves in supposing immediately that we can imagine it" (2010b: 244). Perhaps it is correct to say, with Harris, that imagining the situation Wittgenstein describes for his builders necessarily involves self-deception. What is clear, however, is that whatever we are imagining has little resemblance to anything we might encounter in real-life. Rather, we are envisaging an artificially simplified form of communication, an *abstraction*, one that might pejoratively be termed a "Mickey Mouse model" (cf. Harris 2009a: 133), and, therefore, indicative of a methodological technique employed by "some theorists"—one lambasted by Harris for failing to meet its putative goal of "throw[ing] light on the more profound workings of [real-life MS] human communication" (2009a: 133).

In these passages under discussion, Harris is drawing from Saussure's "famous distinction between 'internal' and 'external' analysis", where:

> "The internal analysis of a game involves 'everything concerning the system and its rules' (Course p.43). External analysis covers all the rest, everything to do with the geographical distribution of the game, where and when it is played, and by whom, its relations with other games, and so on." (Harris 2010b: 252)

It is not surprising, therefore, that this exclusive focus on the *internal* creates an artificial abstraction not unsimilar to "Saussure's conception of a synchronic état de langue" (Harris 2010b: 253). The benefit of adopting such a perspective is that doing so makes it possible for Harris to claim a purchase on the "semantics and semiological structure of Constructionese *as seen from the viewpoint of the builder and his assistant* [emphasis original]" (2010b: 253). However, any insight into the first-person perspective of the builders' communicational universe is at once both *enabled* and *compromised* in the very act of stipulating the boundaries of said universe.

Perplexingly, given that these are issues put forth by Harris himself, such concerns raise doubts over the broader applicability of Harris' ODs to real-life communicative situations, i.e. whether an OD analytic approach can be effectively applied to communication that is not ahistorical and shorn of most real-world complexity. Nonetheless, Harris is unequivocal in his assertion that ODs are not only "necessary features of the semiology basic to all verbal communication systems, of whatever level of complexity" but also that it is possible "to state unambiguously the ODs required for any deliberate human activity" (2009a: 133). However, by limiting his discussion on ODs to Wittgenstein's artificial scenario, with all external factors segregated from analytic consideration, Harris leaves these claims untested, and the question of the possibility of applying an OD analysis to the real world remains open. This open question is one to which we shall return in **Chapter 3**, before doing so, however, we consider two further items in the integrationist's toolkit—internal/external *integration* and, in the following section, communicational

frames—in order to assess their potential usefulness in broadening the scope of analysis beyond the merely local.

The notion of internal and external *integration* (as opposed to *analysis*) was initially introduced by Harris in *Signs, Language and Communication* (1996). An *internal analysis* is concerned only with what is *internally integrated* by the participants involved in the communicative process in question. However, as intimated above, this only tells part of the story. Though Harris himself never developed it beyond an initial premise, the idea of internal and external integration was originally forwarded during a discussion on communication and ritual (1996: 80f). Here, Harris provides a description of what he considers to be the salient aspects (from the perspective of integrational semiology) of a traditional Church of England wedding based on the *solemnization of matrimony* in the *Book of Common Prayer*. The observations made by Harris focus on the communicational infrastructure of wedding ceremonies, with a particular focus on his three communicational factors: biomechanical, circumstantial, and macrosocial (e.g. Harris 1998a: 29).

Among these observations is a description of the macrosocial practice of publishing the banns of marriage during Morning or Evening Service in the church where the wedding is to take place for three consecutive weeks prior to the day of the ceremony. This alone (one small aspect of the 'wedding process'), presents us with a "communicational structure with an integrational 'depth' of at least four layers of presupposition" (Harris 1996: 81). Following Harris' description, this presuppositional structure can be summarised as follows:

- The marriage ceremony (going ahead) presupposes:

- The banns having been published for three consecutive weeks prior to the wedding ceremony, which presupposes:
- The wedding couple having approached the curate, who agreed to call the banns during morning or evening service, which presupposes:
- The existence of the macrosocial practice of holding morning or evening services

The fact that the marriage ceremony "is locked into other macrosocial practices" in this manner (among many others) is, writes Harris, "of major theoretical importance" (1996: 81). Harris suggests (1996: 88) that one way to approach this theoretically important aspect of communication is to think in terms of *internal* and *external* integration. External integration, in Harris' telling, "relates to the ways in which this particular ritual is integrated with other macrosocial practices" (Harris 1996: 89) outside of the communicational episode in which the ritual itself takes place. In contrast, internal integration—sticking with wedding ceremonies for the moment—covers "the ways in which various features of the ritual are integrated with one another so as to articulate a total procedure which makes sense". For an example of internal integration, we can think of the 'journey' the ring takes during a typical Church of England wedding ceremony—from ring-bearer, to groom, to bride—and the ways the roles and activities of each participant are integrated (often in macrosocially prescribed ways) by the various actors to form a cohesive chain, where "a subsequent event complements a previous event which anticipated it" (Harris 1996: 89).

Although Harris confined his (rather preliminary) discussion of internal and external integration to an analysis of public *ritual*, with a particular focus on the

integration of extrinsic macrosocial factors, the distinction has the potential for broader applicability. Jones (2018), for example, utilises the terms in his criticism of aspects of the methodology applied in certain dialogic approaches to communication, such as *conversation analysis* and Edda Weigand's *mixed game model*. Jones objects to the localism of such approaches in a critique that has informed the concerns raised here over the use of Wittgenstein's builders' vignette as a model for the study of ''real' communication. The resemblance between criticisms is immediately apparent:

> "[I]n this exclusive focus on *local* activities as self-contained arenas for interactionally managed "intersubjectivity" (Schegloff 1992) or professional "transparency" (Goodwin 1996), there is a danger that each such activity becomes a kind of communicational "objet trouvé", that is, a game cut loose – segregated - from its connections to wider social life. For the integrationist, this methodological focus on the local is at best one-sided since it requires that analytic attention is directed solely to what Harris (1996) refers to as "internal" as opposed to "external" integrational considerations. [emphasis original]" (Jones 2018: 122)

Jones presents the reader with an illustration of a nurse's "getting ready for work routine" (2018: 133). This wordless example provides an effective critique to both the localism and verbalism of some dialogic methodologies, while simultaneously demonstrating that the internal/external distinction can be deployed beyond Harris' (1996) specific focus on *macrosocial* factors in *ritualistic* communicational activity. The nurse's spate of activity involves getting dressed in suitable attire, preparing a packed lunch, and making sure change is available for the bus ride. This episode of communication, or, in Jones' words "*bubble* of

communicationally organized activity [emphasis added]" (2018: 134), will have its own patterns of *internal* integration, but, "however smoothly, deliberately, intelligibly and reliably designed" (Jones 2018: 135) those may be, it is only when considering how it is *externally* integrated, or, following Jones, "integrationally bound", with subsequent and complementary bubbles of activity (such as getting the bus, going about the wards, eating the previously prepared sandwiches) that we can begin to appreciate in any depth the 'meaning' of the activity in the initial getting-ready-for-work bubble (Jones 2018).

In the case of a nurse getting ready for work, we can begin to appreciate how anticipated future episodes of communication might constrain, or impinge upon, creative, communicational activity in the present. Time pressures and the availability of catering facilities may constrain choices concerning lunch preparations, just as institutional rules and job requirements can impinge on our choice of attire. Although, to some extent at least, whatever constraints might be placed upon us there are (nearly) always, at a minimum, avenues available to us for non-compliance and passive resistance, we (almost) never truly have carte blanche in our communicational activity. As Jones writes:

> "While individuals therefore always exercise some creative freedom of action, they do so within limits set by the necessity (voluntarily assumed or coerced) to "aim" their current communicational encounter towards an outcome or end product which others can "fit" into the opening leading to the next bubble in the chain of complementation, and so on." (2018: 135)

Freedom comes in degrees. Jones' nurse, for example, has a relative amount of latitude in his or her creative activity compared to some. Take, for instance, the Shenzhen factory workers toiling on an Apple production line under

a “brutal labor regime” (Smith 2016; cited in: Jones 2018: 135) to whom Jones turns for his second example. Here, Smith’s research paints a picture of a workplace where the patterns of integrated communicative activity result in circumstances (bubbles of communicative activity) “in which human needs, purposes and aspirations may be ruthlessly chewed up and spat out” (Jones 2018: 134). Two of Smith’s respondents, in an example highlighted by Jones, describe working circumstances that would seem to leave relatively little room for personal communicational creativity or volition in terms of how their own labours are coordinated and made to fit within the wider patterns of integration necessary for the successful manufacture of Apple’s products:

> “On an assembly line in the Shenzhen Longhua plant, a worker described her work to precise seconds: ‘I take a motherboard from the line, scan the logo, put it in an antistatic-electricity bag, stick on a label, and place it on the line. Each of these tasks takes two seconds. Every ten seconds I finish five tasks’.” (Ngai and Chan 2012 in Smith 2016, 24, cited by Jones 2018: 135).

In this account we can see how Ngai and Chan's activity (or, perhaps better, the circumstances in which that activity takes place) is being moulded by others to achieve a particular outcome, and how the ultimate aims of these ‘others’ (such as, say, producing a high-end gadget at a competitive price point) shapes the circumstances in which localised communicative activity takes place. As Jones writes:

> “The final outcome of the processual chain thereby moulds the circumstances and parameters within which communicational creativity (not to mention livelihood, lifestyle and personal identity) may be displayed or enacted.” (2018: 135)

Perhaps less immediately apparent is that, when we broaden our perspective beyond the factory and its overseers, managers, architects and CEOs, we find patterns of communicative processes so complex and large in scope that it becomes far from clear that *anybody* is in 'charge of the whole operation'. As Harris writes (1996: 30), within linguistics sound change provides an example par excellence of this type of phenomena, as only "certain aspects of it ever enter into ordinary individuals' experience of language, even though their own speech behaviour is instrumental in bringing such changes about". Returning to our example of the Shenzhen factory workers, the forces that determine what price point makes a phone competitive in the present global market, where in the world can provide an adequately trained workforce that can be recruited at a cost that will keep shareholders happy, and what wages will need to be paid to prevent a workers' revolt, are beyond the first-hand experience, never mind purview or control, of any individual, or even group of individuals. In Jones' words:

> "We may, for instance, easily manage the internal sense-making required of us in ordering and paying for a meal in a café (Jones 2017) while the question as to why the goods and services on offer have this particular monetary value – indeed why they have any monetary value at all – may remain an unexamined mystery which can only be addressed through understanding patterns and flows of external integration which are beyond our individual experience altogether." (Jones 2018: 123)

And taking up a similar point later:

> In such a fashion are whole spheres of activity "reverse engineered" or back projected from their empirical outcomes in a process which does not at all

> depend on an overseeing authority or collective intentionality but results from the unplanned (and unexamined) confluence and collision of streams of communication processes […]. Much if not everything we do is subject to such circumstantial "binding" without us knowing it, or at least knowing why it's happening." (Jones 2018: 135)

These passages from Jones are reminiscent of the short paper *I, Pencil: My Family Tree*, originally published in 1958 by Leonard E. Read. In this text, Read makes the argument that, despite appearances to the contrary, the humble pencil is far from being as simple as it may first seem. The gist of Read's case being that the range of materials, skills, and practices that go into pencil production is such that it is beyond the ability and remit of any one person to account for. Although not a phrase used by Read himself, the principal reason for this, from an integrational perspective, is the (in practice interminable) presuppositional structure of the activities necessary to produce a manufactured artifact such as a pencil. A pencil presupposes a *pencil factory*, which presupposes *materials* for *its* production, which presuppose a *road-system* for *their* transportation, which presupposes some form *of training programme* to produce *road-builders*, and so on … forever. The following excerpts give a flavour of Read's argument:

> "Simple? Yet, not a single person on the face of this earth knows how to make me."
>
> "Actually, millions of human beings have had a hand in my creation, no one of whom even knows more than a very few of the others."
>
> "Consider the millwork in San Leandro. The cedar logs are cut into small, pencil-length slats less than one-fourth of an inch in thickness. […] The slats are waxed

> and kiln dried again. How many skills went into the making of the tint and the kilns, into supplying the heat, the light and power, the belts, motors, and all the other things a mill requires? Sweepers in the mill among my ancestors? Yes, and included are the men who poured the concrete for the dam of a Pacific Gas & Electric Company hydroplant which supplies the mill's power!"
>
> "My "lead" itself—it contains no lead at all—is complex. The graphite is mined in Ceylon. Consider these miners and those who make their many tools and the makers of the paper sacks in which the graphite is shipped and those who make the string that ties the sacks and those who put them aboard ships and those who make the ships. Even the lighthouse keepers along the way assisted in my birth—and the harbor pilots."

We can read Read's text as a polemic[35] against an exclusive focus on the local, or as a warning of the hubristic futility of any attempt to account for human activity *in toto*. In this, we can also see a parallel between Read's account of *pencil production* and Harris' account of *signmaking* (and, by extension, the rationality that consists in that signmaking). Signmaking and pencil production are analogous in the sense that both are the products of creative activity and both are the (however fleeting in the case of signs) culmination of an unfathomably *complex web* (cf. Harris 2009a: 172) of patterns of integration that constitute the communicative processes that led to their production. Read's argument is that it is beyond human ken to fully appreciate, never mind fully

[35] A more orthodox reading would perhaps be to see Read's text as a neoliberal tract, one that makes the (in the opinion of the present author) non sequitur move to say that the complexity of (say) pencil production is reason to reduce taxes for the wealthy and place hard limits on corporate regulation. I would like to take this opportunity to distance myself from Read's conclusions, while recognising the insight of his initial observations. In fact, the argument being made here would have, in all likelihood, been seen by Read as anathema to his broader position.

understand (whatever that might entail), all that goes towards the making of a pencil.

In a foreshadowing of the upcoming chapter (**4**), *Reintegrating Rationality*, this provides a vivid and concrete, analogous instance of why, on Harris' view (2009a: 172), determining the "'ultimate' source" of rationality, i.e. of definitively stating why somebody did the thing the way they did, is an impossibility only the very "obstinate" would attempt:

> "The past is a web so complex that almost certainly it would be beyond both your memory and your powers of analysis to present it in full, let alone demonstrate that that was what provided the 'rational' justification for what you did." (Harris 2009a: 172)

We can also see in this yet further affirmation of the need, if we are to begin to appreciate the rationality involved in activity, to look to external factors and attempt to follow the integrating threads beyond particular, local, bubbles of communicative activity. Because, although the 'ultimate' source of rationality (or pencil production for that matter) may be forever out of reach, what is certain is that by limiting analytical focus to isolated episodes of communication will only ever provide a partial and distorted picture of the communicational processes involved.

Communicational Initiatives and Sequels

Harris introduced (1996) another set of metacommunicative terms that have relevance to the idea of external integration: communicational *initiatives*

and *sequels*[36]. Harris (1996: 63) introduces the terms with an example of a person looking out of the window to check the look of the weather before going outside (a communicational initiative) and, upon seeing "clouds looming up from the west", decides to take an umbrella with them (a communicational sequel). Harris elaborates with a description of a greengrocer laying out his wares on a stall and "in so doing both indicates that he is in business and invites you to purchase what you see":

> "In this very simple type of case, the activities integrated are (i) visual exhibition of item *x* by participant A, and (ii) visual inspection of item *x* by participant B. We may call (i) the communicational *initiative* and (ii) the communicational *sequel*. Many communicational processes have a basic bi-partite structure of this type." (1996: 65)

The sequel is seen as "complimenting" (Harris 1996: 70) the initiative in some manner. The connection between communicational initiatives and sequels and external integration is recognised by Jones (2018) in relation to his discussion of the nurse's activity introduced in the example above. As well as seeing the nurses' 'getting ready for work routine' as *integrationally bound* with their subsequent activity later in the day, we could also characterise, say, preparing lunch at home (the initiative) and eating the lunch at work (the sequel),

[36] Harris also introduced two sub-categories of communicative sequels, that of *enactive* and *assimilative* sequels, although for present purposes we can probably disregard any differences between the two. Roughly speaking an *enactive sequel* is a communicational move where B responds to A's *communicational initiative* "by doing whatever was requested" whereas in the case of an *assimilative sequel* "B simply notes the information" (Harris 1996: 72). Harris himself expresses some dissatisfaction with the distinction, in part because it becomes highly difficult to draw a clear distinction between the two, for example:

> "The term enactive is not altogether satisfactory, inasmuch as it leans on the very vague notion of 'doing something'. And it will be obvious from the foregoing examples that assimilative sequels also involve doing something (listening, scrutinizing, paying attention, etc.)." (1996: 73)

as an “integration of two sequences of activity, the second of which complements the first” (Harris 1996: 71, in Jones 2018: 132).

Although communicational initiatives and sequels have come under some criticism from an integrational perspective (Toolan 2017 and, possibly, Hutton 2016, though see Pablé 2019b for a rejoinder), as they might be seen as an attempt to *decontextualise* aspects of communicative processes. However, this need not be the case, for while we are, certainly, abstracting and *recontextualising* aspects of a communicative process when we talk of initiatives and sequels, the terms can also help us appreciate the ongoing, temporal and *connected* nature of communication, and could thus be seen to dovetail nicely with the conception of *signs as links* and talk of activity in the *idiom of the wayfarer*. This is particularly so if we keep in mind that communicational processes are very often best viewed as “nested one within another” (cf. Harris 1996: 63), so that a *sequel* can also, from a slightly different perspective, be seen as an initiative for further communication down the line (and vice versa).

Frames of Activity

In a footnote, Jones (2017a: fn6) suggests that “the distinction between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ integration” could be productively compared to Erving’s “idea of moves within and between activity frames”. In turn, Goffman’s activity *frames* (1972) are not too dissimilar to Jones’ (2018) *bubbles* of communicative activity. One possible advantage that *frames* might offer over *bubbles*, is the idea, advanced by Goffman (1972, cited in: Jones 2017a), that communicational frames operate more like porous *screens* with the power to both transform and

obscure (make *transparent* in Jones' terms) that what passes through them. Games (such as chequers and chess) provide an archetypal example of situated activity systems (Goffman 1972, Jones 2017a) which frame, or give a particular *sense* to (see: Jones 2017a: 11), the materials and actions involved in the communicative happenings going on within a particular frame. For example, in a pinch, *shirt buttons* can 'become' *pawns* in a game of chess, and the *touch of a ball* in a game of soccer can, in particular circumstances, 'become' an *offside infringement*.

One relevance that this idea of communicational frames has to internal and external integration is that what becomes transparent, once having passed through the screen of a particular frame of activity, are what Goffman (1972: 27) calls "externally grounded matters". For example:

> "When the boss comes to dinner and is treated 'the same as any other guest', the matter that is shown no consideration, whether automatically or carefully, is one that requires us to move from the employee's house to the business establishment for its full realization. When a man does not give way to preoccupation with his child ill at home but participates fully in the spirit of a golf game with his cronies, it is again an externally grounded matter that is being kept from the field of attention." (Goffman 1972: 27)

Returning to the case of Ngai and Chan working in the Shenzhen factory, we can see that, similarly to the case of the boss who is invited to dinner, aspects of their lives are obscured—made transparent—in the factory production line on which they work. We cannot begin to understand why they are there in the factory, doing what they are doing, without thinking about these 'externally grounded matters'. As a result, Ngai and Chan's wants and desires, many of their

social bonds and connections, even much of their volition and creativity is deliberately obscured (or, perhaps better, systematically *reined in*) to further goals which are not (necessarily) their own[37]. Deliberately, because this situation does not happen by chance. It has been designed to be this way. Not by impersonal forces (though possibly these 'forces' are unknown to Ngai and Chan), but, rather, *individuals* operating within their own communicational frames—individuals ranging from the factory overseer to whoever might be the current CEO of Apple. It is not difficult to imagine, that to the (unscrupulous) factory owner, *who* is on the production line is transparent (i.e. irrelevant), all that matters is that it is some-*body* (be it composed of carbon, silicon or aluminium) who can reliably complete the same five tasks every five seconds. (That being said, if we follow the external connections further, we quickly reach a point where the complexity involved means that individual contributions become difficult to discern, 'impersonal' *market forces* being a paradigm example. However, even these 'impersonal forces' ultimately arise from individuals acting in concrete situations.)

A second relevance communicational frames have in regard to external integration, therefore, is that we are forced into thinking about the external semiological work that goes into the creation of communicational frames. In the case of the factory production line, much of this work involves putting in place conditions that reliably create situations where *new cases are made into old*

[37] Here there are further echoes of Read's account of pencil production:
"Neither the worker in the oil field nor the chemist nor the digger of graphite or clay nor any who mans or makes the ships or trains or trucks nor the one who runs the machine that does the knurling on my bit of metal nor the president of the company performs his singular task *because he wants me*. […] Indeed, there are some among this vast multitude who never saw a pencil nor would they know how to use one. *Their motivation is other than me*. [emphasis added]".

cases[38]. Thus the prevailing conditions of the production line mean that in any ten-hour shift, a worker at the Longhua plant could be expected to deal with six-thousand each of *labels*, *motherboards*, *logos* and *antistatic bags*, of which any differences, for the purposes of this particular communicational frame, are made transparent. This would not necessarily always be the case in other communicational frames in which the items might be involved; for example, further up or down the production line, the serial numbers on the motherboards may become salient markers of their 'difference'. Perhaps more disconcertingly, in such communicational frames the people (qua *individuals*) working in the factory come to be 'transparent', easily replaced with a 'new' (same as the old) employee and thus having their "human needs, purposes and aspirations […] ruthlessly chewed up and spat out" (Jones 2018: 136).

These notions of external and internal integration and frames, in particular how they relate to analytic activity from a semiological perspective, will be returned to throughout the remainder of the thesis, in particular **Chapters 3** and **5** and **Conclusion**.

Harris' Three Parameters of Communication

In what might be his most ambitious attempt to lay down generalisations that hold across all episodes of communication, Harris writes (1998a: 29) that "[f]or the integrationist, the possibilities and the limits of human communication,

[38] cf. Harris' discussion of this phrase (1996: 257) in relation to *court hearings* —who, in turn, is drawing from Baker and Hacker's work (1984) on *rules*.

both in general and in any given instance, are governed by three kinds of factor[39]":

(i) biomechanical

(ii) macrosocial

(iii) circumstantial

In a nutshell, biomechanical factors "relate to the physical and mental capacities of human beings", while macrosocial factors "relate to practices established in the community or some group within the community", and circumstantial factors "relate to the specifics of particular situations" (e.g. Harris 1996: 28, 1998a: 29, 2009c: 75). In combination, these three factors are sufficient, writes Harris, "to identify any human enterprise whatsoever" (1996: 28), not only from the perspective of communication, "but on all forms of human behaviour" (Harris 1984: 280); thus suggesting that the specifics of any human activity can be adequately distinguished solely by reference to these three categories.

However, despite Harris' claims of ubiquitous applicability for his three factors, integrationists, although making frequent reference to the categories (e.g. Pablé and Hutton 2015; Duncker 2017b and 2019; Pablé 2019b) have not to date appeared overly eager to put them to use in their own work. Toolan (2017: 81), picking up on this omission, has the "impression [...] that this three-way categorisation has been of limited help to integrationally minded studies so far". It is certainly true that instances where the factors have been utilised are few, although exceptions can be found, such as in Harris' (1984) analysis of the textual choices made in the design of milk cartons for sale in supermarkets, and

[39] In earlier writings Harris preferred the term 'factor', later preferring the term 'parameter'. The two terms are used synonymously throughout this section.

Ducker's (2017b) exploration of *the notion of an integrated system* in which talk of *the macrosocial* features prominently in the discussion.

Toolan (2017: 81) provides a rather negative appraisal of Harris' three factors, focusing on the questions "why only three?" and "where *exactly* lies the – fixed? - boundary between [emphasis original]" the three? However, neither criticism, although for different reasons, cuts through with the force probably intended. The question of "why only three?" only gains critical purchase if we are offered a further possible candidate for inclusion. While reconceptualising Harris' tri-partite distinction into some other configuration would seem perfectly feasible (even if how the lines could be redrawn in any recategorization is not immediately obvious), Harris' scheme does appear to 'cover all bases'—in the sense that it is sufficiently all-encompassing to capture any semiologically relevant feature of our communicational lives. Also writing in response to Toolan's critical comments, Pablé (2019b: 153) provides a more upbeat view, stating: "all I know is I cannot really detect any fault with the three factors", and similarly suggests that it would be necessary "to add other parameters or eliminate one (or merge two) in order to probe further into these questions" and only if such changes demonstrated theoretical improvements should they be considered warranted.

Concern over where the boundaries may lie, although not misplaced, does seem misguided (given integrational semiology) if that equates to judging Harris' categorisation a failure due to any inherent ambiguity regarding into which of the three categories any particular communicative feature may fall. For Pablé, the notion of fixed categories is ruled out from the onset due to the circumstantial indeterminacy of the terms used to establish the categories: "in order to establish the boundaries one needs to know exactly what these terms mean, and what

they mean, in turn, depends on the activities they integrate within a broader programme of activities one is engaged in" (2019b: 152). We might also take a broader view, and remind ourselves that, within integrational semiology, indeterminacy is the one (necessary) constant in all aspects of communication, and, therefore, fixed, determinate categories can be seen as neither feasible nor desirable.

It would seem prudent, however, to be wary of a system of categorisation that purports to account for anything and everything under the sun that human beings may undertake. Claiming that a framework is general enough to be applicable across *all* contexts amounts to a claim of context-independence, surely a sign that we are dealing with the products of *decontextualization*. And has Harris not warned us of this particular bogeyman on numerous occasions, and of the distortions that necessarily ensue when it raises its ugly head? At this juncture we might do well to consider the work of A. R. Louch, and his critical appraisal of the tendency for making theoretical generalisations in the social sciences.

Jon Orman, in a paper aiming to bring renewed attention to Louch's work, convincingly argues that Louch's thinking "bears striking similarities to that of iconoclast linguistic theorist Roy Harris" (2018b: 324). The resemblance is clear in passages such as the following:

> "Explanation of human action is context-bound. This should not be surprising. Human conduct is a response to an incalculable variety of situations. What is important is *the variety, the detail*, not the general features which afford grounds for the statement of laws. [emphasis added]" (Louch 1966: 207; see Orman 2018b: 323 for further comment)

Given this stress on the importance of the *detail of* and *variety between* particular situations, for Louch "the appropriate mode of explanation is unavoidably *ad hoc* and irredeemably context-bound without any necessary implications beyond the individual case" (Orman 2018b: 216). The nub of Louch's argument against making generalisations concerning human activity is that: "For men [sic] and situations represent a variety and a changing variety, which *makes the application of general laws trivial or false* [emphasis added]" (Louch 1966: 208). An example given by Louch that is cited by Orman involves a student lighting and beginning to smoke a cigarette in his office:

> "It would not occur to me to accompany this set of observations of his actions with further comments designed to explain what he did. If I had to do so, I should appeal to his reaching for a cigarette as indicating a desire to smoke, and the rest of his actions as contributing to the same end. It would not occur to me or to my interlocutors to offer or demand general laws from which this action can be shown to follow, or regularities of which the connexion of this action and its motive would be an instance." (Louch 1966: 1; cited in Orman 2018b: 216)

Expanding on Louch's initial example, Orman continues:

> "A further example offered by Louch is his observation that it would be irrelevant and superfluous to explain the fact of his cooking his dinner via an appeal to the generalisation that men generally seek out nourishment when hungry. Any number of similarly mundane examples could be called upon to illustrate this quite simple point. For instance, in what sense does the observation that humans generally seek to conserve energy explain why I take the train to work instead of cycling or getting up at 5 am, swimming across Victoria Harbour and walking the remaining distance? Equally, what are we to make of the fact that there are plenty who eschew public transport and make their way to the office under their

own steam? The generalisation is therefore either trivial or false when applied to the case." (2018b: 216)

As regards Harris' three factors, Louch's critique of generalisations could be seen to hit home were we to find, upon attempting to apply his theoretical apparatus to particular cases of communication, that the categories are so vague as to not reveal anything new or interesting about the communicative situation, or, that any particular categorisation using Harris' framework is open to alternative interpretations that are convincing or numerous enough to leave us none the wiser over the communicative situation in question. There is certainly cause for concern here. For example, in the (aforementioned) discussion focusing on the Church of England marriage ceremony, Harris writes (1996: 82) that before the ordination of women, there was a "sex-based *biomechanical* constraint on participating in this communication process as the officiating priest [emphasis added]". However, this "biomechanical constraint" was, at the time, *macrosocially* imposed[40], and so it remains, on the face of it at least, ambiguous as to whether we are dealing with a macrosocial or biomechanical factor. Further ambiguity is not hard to come across. For example, if I do not have enough money to engage in an activity I would otherwise like to, is this a macrosocial or circumstantial factor[41]? We can take a macrosocial perspective and see my lack of funds as caused by political factors such as the government's austerity programme and the fact that my profession has been perennially underpaid.

[40] Of course, Harris (1996: 82) was well-aware of this: "for it [biomechanical constraint] is presupposed indirectly via the macrosocial proficiency involved in being a Church of England minister (only males being traditionally eligible for ordination). Elsewhere (1996: 43), Harris discusses in some depth the presuppositional relationships holding between the factors, and this may go some way to resolving the issues of ambiguity raised here, however, the ambiguity between categories still warrants critical attention.
[41] Thanks goes to Peter Jones for this example.

Alternatively, we may adopt a circumstantial perspective, and see my inability to afford a trip to the cinema as a result of having recently booked a family holiday to the Algarve.

Both the previous examples concern the macrosocial, which, of the three factors, has been labelled “the most problematic philosophically for the integrationist” (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 30). Pablé (2019b: 152) hints that he may give some countenance to the idea that the ‘boundary question’ between categories is particularly apposite when posed in regard to the macrosocial, and perhaps less so in regard to the biomechanical which, in some senses “can be separated from the circumstantial […] so it might be claimed that there is a ‘fixed boundary’ between the two parameters insofar as biomechanical phenomena can be investigated separately”.

However, this too is highly doubtful. As a final example: I am in a nightclub playing loud music and cannot hear what my interlocutor is saying to me. This may seem to be a clear example of a circumstantial factor impinging on my ability to communicate. However, I also know that friends of mine at the same nightclub have relatively little difficulty hearing each other over the noise, and, furthermore, that I have no problem conducting a conversation in my living room with the television on in the background. It would seem, therefore, that there are biomechanical factors in play that only become relevant in particular circumstances—a situation that integrational semiology, with its focus on the particulars of specific communicative situations, is well-disposed to account for. The question then becomes, therefore, one of asking what additional insight is provided by considering the situation through the lens of Harris’ three factors? The practical issue at hand is not difficult to diagnose: my hearing has

deteriorated (evidently more so than some of my friends) to a point where I now find it difficult to converse when the ambient noise is at the kind of level one might expect to experience in a loud nightclub, but not, fortunately, to the extent that the background noise of a television causes me much bother. There is no puzzle here, that is, until we begin the attempt to make the real-life events fit into Harris' framework, whereupon we are faced with ambiguity and, potentially, omission and distortion. The danger for analysis is that, via the application of such a general framework, we are running the risk of imposing a self-inflicted problem that adds little or nothing to our understanding of the activity requiring illumination.

One way to 'test out' this danger is to consider an analysis that makes use of the three factors conducted by Harris some forty years ago on the topic of the semiological and textual choices involved in the marketing of milk for sale on supermarket shelves (1984). It might be telling that it is necessary to go quite so far back in the integrational literature to find a fully-fledged analysis using these categories. Whether this is because there are too many flaws in the framework, or is more a reflection of the difficulties involved in their application, however, remains an open question. Open too, is the question of whether, as Harris stated at the time, "such an analysis will provide, in effect, a systematic account of the communicational relevance of the various features of the text, and their relations to the object in question" (1984: 280).

With his analysis, Harris aims to identify "certain fairly stringent constraints along the three scales[42] [factors] we are considering" (1984: 280). On Harris' telling, in the case of the textual choices involved in producing milk cartons, these constraints boil down to two main decisions to be made. One, "on the macrosocial scale" (1984: 281) centres on which language to choose for the type on the cartons, "a consumer-oriented choice" (1984: 281), as potential customers need to know, first and foremost, what it is they are buying, meaning that "the textualization is directly related on the macrosocial scale to the economic and marketing structures of the society in question" (1984: 281).

A second set of decisions focuses on the size of type on the milk cartons. These decisions involve biomechanical and circumstantial considerations. Simply put, in regard to the biomechanical, the text needs to be big enough for a person to read. The fact that most consumer products stocked on supermarket shelves display print of different sizes relates to the browsing habits of customers, who must first identify what the product is, often from a distance "while walking by the object" (1984: 281) in the supermarket aisle. This calls for text of sufficient size to be easily read (or at least *recognised*[43] as designating a particular product) from a particular distance, whilst on the move. This Harris calls the "identificational function" (1984: 281) of the text. Once having identified the product as 'an item of interest', the customer might require further information "such as how much it costs, what quantity the carton contains, how long it will keep, and so on" (1984: 282). This text, serving what Harris calls the

[42] Harris' terminology changed over the years. In this early paper Harris uses the term "scales" for his three categories, only later opting for the term "factors" which was then favoured throughout the majority of his work. Later (2009b), Harris adopts the term "parameters".
[43] Cf. Harris' comments on the *identification* of a particular passage from the Koran inscribed on the Taj Mahal below.

“amplificational function”, will typically be smaller, “presuppos[ing] that one is holding the object steady in one's hand; that is to say at a distance from eye to object of twelve or eighteen inches” (1984: 281).

In the analysis given by Harris there is little recognition of any ambiguity regarding which of the factors is constraining the particular choices made. On the contrary, Harris is quite happy to firmly allocate each of the facets of the communicational process under analysis to a particular factor. For example, in regard to the identificational and amplificational functions, Harris states: “The point to note there is that there is no macrosocial or biomechanical distinction involved between the two functions: we are dealing here with purely integrational[44] [circumstantial] matters” (1984: 281). However, this seems to run counter to one of the questions, asked by Harris, to which the two functions are designed to help provide an answer, namely:

> “How does a member of late 20th-century European civilization set about the task of finding out which of the various cartons, bottles, tins and packets he [sic] might be confronted with contain the contents he is interested in?” (1984: 282)

In other words, we are dealing with the shopping *habits* of a particular *group* of people, and what are *group habits*, but an example par excellence of a macrosocial factor in communicational processes? Moreover, the categorisations are muddied further still when we consider that:

[44]In his 1984 paper, Harris calls what was to become the *circumstantial* factor the *integrational scale/factor*. Harris thinking behind the change was that it is “preferable to call the third scale ‘circumstantial’ and reserve ‘integrational’ as a general term to designate this approach as a whole” (Taken from a footnote to a reissue of the 1984 paper in *Integrational Linguistics: a First reader* (Harris and Wolf 1998: 234fn).

> "The total design of the carton as communication will depend on the interplay of a variety of considerations, which will in turn *depend on how the particular product is marketed*. [emphasis added]" (1984: 282)

This is as clear a statement as one could wish for that marketing-related (i.e. *macrosocial*) factors infuse the decision-making process involved in the textualization of milk cartons and that, therefore, the categorisation employed is not as clear-cut as Harris' analysis would suggest.

Furthermore, the observations that the text on a commercial product need be big enough to read, and in a language understandable to intended buyers, while no doubt important, are hardly likely to be news to product designers, whatever their familiarity with Harris' terminology. There is a temptation, therefore, to see Harris' analysis as falling prey to Louch's critique of triviality regarding (over-)generalisations, with the two observations chiming uncomfortably closely with the "irrelevant and superfluous […] appeal to the generalisation that men generally seek out nourishment when hungry" to explain why a person is "cooking his dinner" (Orman 2018b: 216; citing Louch 1966: 1), and the banal "observation that humans generally seek to conserve energy" as an explanation as to why someone might "take the train to work instead of cycling or getting up at 5 am, swimming across Victoria Harbour and walking the remaining distance" (Orman 2018b: 216).

Although the approach outlined by Harris here (1984) certainly has the merit of not treating the text on the milk carton as a 'semantic enclave', i.e. as "an 'autonomous' entity", amenable to independent study (Harris 1984: 284), it perhaps remains unclear at this stage quite what Harris' analysis gains with the introduction of the three factors in relation to milk cartons. However, Harris, in

“re-emphasizing that the scalar [factoral] distinctions we are drawing are quite general ones” (1984: 283), extends his factoral analysis to the Taj Mahal, and there finds a number of parallels with the textualization of milk cartons. These similarities include the observation that macrosocial factors constrain the choice of which language to use for the text, not only on milk cartons, but on the Taj Mahal, also:

> “Shah Jahan had no option but to have his texts in Arabic, given the political and religious structures prevailing in seventeenth-century Agra. The choice of any other language would have been tantamount to a declaration of unorthodoxy of a very serious kind.” (1984: 283)

On the biomechanical and circumstantial scales, analogously with milk cartons, the relation between legibility and viewing distance was used to advantage by Shah Jahan’s designers: “as the visitor approaches the front of the mausoleum, the eye cannot at first distinguish bands of script from bands of abstract floral patterns […] allow[ing] both to be used decoratively” (1984: 283). It is only when the

> “the visitor draws closer, however, [that] he begins to see that some of those bands are not merely decorative. From the garden below the main platform on which the mausoleum stands he already begins to identify the principal text which frames the central porch. The word 'identify' is important, for here we move from biomechanical to integrational [circumstantial] considerations. The visitor is manifestly intended to *identify* the text, rather than to *read* it. Its sheer length, calligraphic complexity and disposition pose severe problems for the eye of a reader, whereas casual scanning by the eye of a visitor thoroughly familiar with the Koran will suffice to identify the well known passage in question. [emphasis original]” (Harris 1984: 283)

We can see the similarities between the experiences of the visitor to the Taj Mahal and those of the shopper looking to buy milk who first recognises the 'milk aisle', before drawing closer and identifying a particular brand or type of milk and then making a final selection, when the milk is in hand, based, say, on expiry date. An approach that adopts a perspective that can encompass milk cartons and mausoleums and potentially provide insight into the semiological experiences involving both is worthy of further exploration. This, however, raises the question of *whose perspective it is that is being adopted?* in the doing so.

Integrationism has been described as a lay-orientated approach to communication (e.g. Harris 1981, 1998a and Pablé 2019b). One manifestation of this lay-orientedness is that integrationism can be "envisaged as a semiologically focussed hermeneutics [and] as such it shares in common with all hermeneutic approaches a concern to explain human actions and reactions primarily by reference to the relevance they have for the participants themselves" (Harris 1984: 280, see also: Duncker 2019, for further discussion of this passage and elaboration on the advantages of viewing integrationism as an example of a hermeneutic approach. See also **Chapter 1**). In other words, integrationism is concerned with understanding communicative situations from the perspective of the agents involved in those situations.

On Harris' view, appreciating the role played by the three factors in communicative situations is essential to any analysis if it is to stay 'true' to the perspective of the participants:

> "The integrational assumption is that any episode of linguistic communication can be analysed in terms of these three sets of factors, and must be if the analysis is to be adequate, in the sense of answering to the actual experience of

> the participants. An analysis which fails to do this fails to capture the phenomenon, because the integration of these various sets of factors is precisely what constitutes the phenomenon." (Harris 1993: 322)

On the face of it, claiming such a strong connection between "the actual experience of the participants" and "these three sets of factors" might be seen as overstating the case. Terms such as *macrosocial* and *biomechanical* are generally the preserve of specialists of various kinds, be they social scientists, semiologists or orthotists, and are seldom heard on the high streets and in the living rooms of English-speaking linguistic communities. However, we can perhaps make more sense of Harris' claim—as in appreciating how the factors relate to personal experience—if we follow Harris in thinking of the factors as *constraints*:

> "The assumption is that communication involves activity of some kind by the participants, and this activity - like any other - is constrained in various ways by factors of three different kinds. They are: what the human being is physiologically equipped to do [biomechanical], what the human being is collectively conditioned to do [macrosocial], and what the human being is individually aiming to do in given circumstances [circumstantial]." (Harris 1984: 280)

Having the three factors rephrased in this manner—as the physiological, social and circumstantial possibilities and limits of activity—may make it easier to appreciate how they bear on personal experience. However, whether or not Harris' parameters can provide insight that avoids the pitfalls identified by Louch of triviality and falsity, seeing activity in terms of Harris' three parameters still requires a particular analytically-minded framing of communicative activity that

could be seen to take us away from the first-hand experience of the milk-shoppers and mausoleum-visitors.

Tools, or a Narrowing of Perspective?

Whether or not, signs, parameters, internal and external integration, communicational initiatives and sequels, and operational discriminations are well-described as integrational analytic tools, is an open-question. I would maintain, however, that they do provide novel and insightful ways to think about communicational processes and experience in a way that avoids segregationalism and surrogationalism, in a spirit akin to Ingold's (2007) call to see ourselves as *wayfarers*, rather than *navigators*. It would be a mistake though to see the aim of this chapter as to incubate a nascent integrational *methodology*. Referring to the 'temptation' with which this chapter began, i.e. the potential urge to *impose* a methodologically-derived *structure* onto creative communicative processes, Harris writes the following:

> "It is precisely because I do not wish to make the same kind of mistake that, as an integrational theorist, I stop short of supplying anything that could be construed as an integrational methodology." (Harris 1997: 304)

I would follow Harris' example, and suggest that these 'tools' are perhaps best not seen as such, certainly not if that equates to viewing them as *methodological* tools. We could, rather, see them as a *narrowing* or *focusing* of the broader integrational perspective, a manner of looking at, thinking and talking about, communicational experience from an angle that might reveal things that

would otherwise remain neglected, or under-examined, particularly, it might be said, in many quarters of academia.

Chapter Three: Traffic Lights: a Tentative Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter we will 'stretch the legs' of the integrationally-minded 'analytic tools' introduced in the **Chapter 2** by way of a discussion of traffic lights and various kinds of pedestrian crossings. This will take us on a what is perhaps a slightly meandering journey but one that is hopefully worthwhile all the same, as it will help set the direction for the following two chapters, and provide an opportunity for further explication and exploration of some of the ideas raised in the **Chapter 2**. There will be a particular focus on *operational discriminations* (ODs) (Harris 2009a) and *external integration* (Harris 1996), via a 'tentative analysis' of traffic lights and pedestrian crossings. Following Duncker (2019 and **Chapter 1**), this is conducted in the spirit of an attempt to provide a *hermeneutic narrative*, and is as much a reflexive commentary on the attempt at analysing traffic lights as it is 'an analysis' in and of itself. Traffic lights have been chosen, in part, for this purpose *because* of their mundanity and their very simplicity (though quite how simple, once integrated into broader patterns of communicative activity, remains to be seen). There would, however, seem to be broad agreement on this 'simplicity'. Harris, for example, writes that traffic lights provide "a simple and familiar example of communication" (1998a: 139), while segregationist semiotician[45], Louis Hébert, states that "traffic signals are an

[45] For the purposes of the present discussion any distinction between *semiotics* and *semiotician* or *semiology* and *semiologist* is of little concern, the pertinent factor being whether the approach to the study of signs and signmaking is *segregational* or *integrational*.

example of a simple semiotic system" (2020: 274) (although he does go on to add that the system is "far more complex than it seems").

The chapter has been written in a critical spirit; it is certainly not intended as a prescription for how analyses, even those drawing on integrational ideas, *should* be carried out. Rather, the aim is to explore the feasibility and usefulness of applying integrational ideas to the analysis of (imaginary/hypothetical) communicative scenarios and ('real-life') concrete communicative episodes from a primarily first-person viewpoint. This is a personal perspective, in that my starting point will be reflecting on my own experience; necessarily so, because *where else could we begin?* (Harris 1981: 204, see **Chapter 1**). However, it should be noted, the first-person perspective necessarily involves adopting various third-person perspectives along the way—whether lying in bed plotting our next course of action, or crossing the road on a busy street, we are attempting to integrate our activity with the activity of *other people*. In effect, this means I will be analysing my own (experience of) signmaking. This is in contrast to some of the analyses we will see in **Chapters 4** and **5**, but it seems reasonable to suspect that some of the difficulties encountered analysing one's own signmaking might be applicable to attempts at analysing other people's.

Given Hébert's thoroughgoing segregational approach to semiology, the doubts raised over the term 'analytic tools' in **Chapter 2** are perhaps given greater credence when considering his book title: *An introduction to applied semiotics: tools for text and image analysis* (2020). Hébert's semiotic toolkit has been assembled from the work of an array of segregational theorists including Jakobson, Peirce and Saussure and contains items such as *homologation*, *ontological and veridictory dialogics*, and *semic analysis* as well as more familiar

tools of the trade of the semiotician such as: *transmitting*, *receiving*, *redundancy*, *signifiers* and *signifieds*. Hébert's work is thus generally of little interest to integrationism beyond serving as an example of how the study and analysis of signs and signmaking is presently being taught in certain higher educational institutions. However, although antithetical to integrationism, the purpose here is not to critique in nitpick fashion the particulars of Hébert's analysis per se[46]. Rather, the purpose of drawing attention to Hébert's work is, one, to alert us to the potentially segregationist character of the notion of applying 'analytic tools' to episodes of communicative processes in action (or in his case 'semiotic systems'). Secondly, to provide an example of a segregationist analysis of traffic lights, which is usefully—for our purposes at least—included in the final chapter of Hébert's (2020) book. This will serve as a comparison, or yardstick, to the tentative analysis that follows.

During a discussion examining "what happens when fixed-code communication of [a] publicly institutionalized kind breaks down" (1996: 247), Harris writes that for "the integrationist […] [t]he issue is simply whether *the traffic signals still integrate the motorists' activities* in the same way as before

[46] Although in many respects preposterous from an integrational perspective, it would be unfair and possibly misleading to single out Hébert's work, in part because it is so indicative of mainstream approaches to communication analysis. Also, and perhaps more importantly, Hébert's book is primarily intended to help students learn an array of terms and methodologies that will help them obtain particular qualifications. I have no reason to believe that the book is not entirely successful in this regard, particularly if the reviews to be found on the Routledge webpage advertising it for sale are anything to go by. For example, Jacques Fontanille tells us that: "He offers thus a textbook, which is reliable and precise, eclectic and consistent, for all students and teachers who seek firm and proven methods for the analysis of textual and visual works". While Thomas F. Broden writes: "Succinct and lucid presentations accompanied by numerous examples, practical tips, and diagrams render it eminently accessible to students". Although the idea that such a book may be an ideal guide to the budding semiotician whose main concern is passing exams and gaining qualifications, is *not itself unproblematic*, it would feel unwarranted to lay all these problems at Hébert's door. This is not to say, however, that we should always be so generous to those semioticians and linguists who have aims beyond simply passing exams at an undergraduate level.

[emphasis added]" (1996: 249). This may be true enough from a certain perspective, but it is not quite what I am aiming for here. Harris' statement could be seen as a product of adopting a viewpoint that is not that of a *road-user* exactly, rather one that might be thought of as a '*road-planner* perspective'. Although a more nuanced take could be to say that Harris is developing a 'communicational process perspective', one that attempts to integrate first- and third-person perspectives in an analytic manner that brings communicational processes into view as a social phenomenon. This communicational-process-perspective certainly has its place in linguistic and communicative analyses, and might be a fitting description for the one I will try and adopt for the upcoming discussion on external integration. At other times, our main focus will be on the perspective of *road users*, rather than *road planners*. With either perspective, our starting point will be that integration (in a semiological sense) is something *people* do, not *machine*s, and therefore, that it is *motorists* and *pedestrians* integrating traffic lights into *their* activity, not the other way around. However, first we turn to consider Hébert's segregational account of traffic lights as a semiotic system.

A Rather Pedestrian Analysis (only without the Pedestrians)

The stated purpose of Hébert's traffic light analysis is to "illustrate some concepts of general semiotics" (2020: 273). What follows is intended to provide a summary of the analysis and give a flavour of what strikes Hébert as particularly salient about traffic lights, when considered as a semiotic system.

Then, as the title of this section suggests, some preliminary attention will be given to what Hébert might have missed in his analysis.

Hébert's analysis of traffic lights begins by telling us that "[t]he three main signifiers for traffic signals are colors: green, yellow and red" and that each of these colours is associated with "one signified that is distinct from the signifieds for the other colors: 'go' for green, 'prepare to stop' for yellow, and 'stop' for red" (2020: 275). The stark contrast between these colours (in the sense that they are not, for example, all different shades of the *same* colour) provides a *safety margin*, although not, we are warned, in the sense of *road safety*, but rather so that the danger of *misinterpreting* the signs is reduced[47] (2020: 275). In addition, this system has, Hébert writes, *redundancy* because the coloured lights are arranged in a particular spatial configuration (typically: red-top, yellow-middle, green-bottom). The purpose of which is to:

> "counteract what is called **noise** in information theory, meaning that which impedes or could impede in **transmitting** or correctly **interpreting** (**receiving**) the message that was produced during the act of **sending**. [boldface original]" (2020: 275)

Having gone from Saussure to information theory, Hebert's whistlestop tour of segregational semiotics continues via Peirce and his triadic classification of signs:

[47] It might seem puzzling why Hébert feels the need to make this distinction, as it is not obvious why the issue of 'misinterpreting' a red signal is entirely separate from issues concerning road safety. Of course, an integrationist response would be to say this kind of non sequitur is inevitable once the 'semiotic system' has been so thoroughly segregated from actual real-life communication.

> "A traffic signal, for instance, is primarily a symbol, but may also serve as an index for an invisible intersection coming up." (2020: 277)

Before returning to Saussurean concepts of arbitrariness:

> "While not necessarily the case in "other cultures", "Our traffic signals are obviously somewhat motivated, since there is a general correlation (or more accurately, a homology) established in our culture between red/green and 'harmful'/'beneficial'. […] This general correlation itself is nevertheless arbitrary, however we may rationalize it." (2020: 276)

And concluding with a deeper dive into Saussurean metalanguage[48]:

> "Traffic signals have only one **paradigm**, composed of only three signs. They function with a **syntagm** that necessarily has three temporal and three spatial positions. At each position in time, only one sign is actualized. At each position in space (left, middle and right, if horizontal) only one sign, and always the same sign, is actualized. Undoubtedly for reasons of safety and cost, the option of using one bulb that changes color is not encouraged (although there are pedestrian signals in which the signs "walk" and "don't walk" are located in exactly the same place). Out of all the possible combinations, only one is permitted: "green light" → "yellow light" → "red light" →, and so on. [boldface original]" (2020: 277)

It is perhaps not surprising, given the preponderance of Saussure in these passages, that the motorists and pedestrians who might make use of the traffic lights under analysis are all but totally absent. (Though it may be argued that certain biomechanical capacities of road users are briefly considered.) Certainly,

[48] At no point in the chapter from which these passages are taken does Hébert show a desire to interrogate the compatibility of the Saussurean and Peircean perspectives and their respective, and quite distinct, metalanguages.

however, just as with Saussure's (1983) "disembodied heads" (e.g. Harris 1987) model of communication, there is no consideration of *people*—as flesh-and-blood *individuals*—involved in Hébert's analysis. While the kind of communicative enterprise conducted by Hébert on display here may well-serve his students when it comes to passing end-of-term undergraduate exams, it will surely do nothing to help them better understand their personal communicative experience, nor the roles that signs may play in their daily lives, and even less their personal capacity for creative engagement with the world at large.

What perhaps is surprising, however, is that Hébert's analysis (2020) provides a very partial account (even by the standards of his limited aims), and could, therefore, be seen as rather un-Saussurean in this respect. The problem being that Hébert's description of traffic lights only paints half a picture of the semiological system involved, as there is no such thing as 'one' set of lights as he describes it. There are always (at least) *two* integrated systems in operation at the same time—as one set of drivers are shown a green light, another set of drivers are shown a red light. This oversight could be a product of Hébert's approach to analysis. In the creation of Hébert's analytic framing of 'the system', certain 'things'—namely, the *motorists*, *pedestrians*, and the *creative signmaking of the analyst*—drop away from consideration altogether or, become *transparent* (cf. Jones 2017a, see also **Chapter 2**). The segregational methods and metalanguage utilised in Hébert's analysis engender this separation of the object of analysis from communicative activity on all fronts: both the activity of the 'users' of the 'semiological system' and the semiological activity of the analyst that is presupposed by the creation of the 'object-of-study-as-semiotic-system' in the first place.

Traffic Lights and External Integration

Recurring Situations, and Constraints

Hébert's approach leaves a lot to be desired. There is simply no room for questions such as: *Who is the person using the traffic lights?; Where are they going?*; *Are they in a rush?*; *Is the road busy with other motorists?*; *Are we in a locale where we can trust that the lights are functioning properly and that other drivers will stop on a red?* and *How did we arrive (assuming we have) at a communicative process that is so regulated and orderly?* Even were we to introduce a person into Hébert's analysis, by treating the lights as a closed system, we would still end up with a highly partial and impoverished view of the interconnectedness of our social lives and how they are integrated with broader patterns of activity. As Jones writes (in relation to the nurse's daily routine we encountered in **Chapter 2**), we can:

> "see that it would harm our overall view of the communicational organization of social life if we examined the local "getting ready for work" bubble – however smoothly, deliberately, intelligibly and reliably designed it may be "in itself" - separately from and independently of the externally integrated activities and processes which it both presupposes and prepares and serves." (2018: 135)

Looking at the following passage from Harris on traffic lights, on the other hand, we can see that he takes a more outward looking perspective.

> "The traffic-lights code is designed to deal with one recurrent type of communication situation, and only one. It is recurrent because it is *made* to recur. [emphasis original]" (Harris 1998a: 140)

Notwithstanding its passive construction, Harris' statement entails the question of *who* made the communication situation recur and thus encourages us, from the outset, to look beyond only what is happening at the traffic intersection and think about how an orderly, recurring, communicative situation was achieved in the first place. This focus on traffic lights as a *recurring* communication situation is of particular interest, given the usual emphasis integrationists place on the *indeterminacy* of communicational processes.

We can think of this as a push and pull between the open-ended freedom allowed for by our integrational proficiency and communicational creativity, and the constraints put on this freedom that arise out of the interconnectedness of our social lives. These constraints come in infinite variety—from a (relatively) self-imposed[49] 'watching our language around the kids', to oppressive governmental efforts to silence dissent. Traffic lights might provide an avenue to towards beginning to think about some of the ways 'external forces' (benign, malign and everything in between) work to constrain our signmaking.

In another discussion of Harris' on the topic of traffic lights Harris (1996) contrasts Garfinkel's phrase '*for another first time*' with Baker and Hacker's notion of '*making future cases into old cases*'. This can be seen as another way to think about the tension between constraints on signmaking and creative freedom. Harris emphasises, however, that no matter the constraints in place, communication is always a matter of an individual's contextualisation:

> "It is up to a point right to say that the function of the traffic lights is to convert future cases of motorists' behaviour at the intersection into old cases. But it is

[49] Though still macrosocially influenced.

> also right to say that every vehicle that approaches the lights on each particular occasion does so 'for another first time'. Each driver has to judge, given the time of day, the weather, the traffic conditions, etc. how to interpret the code in terms of constructing an enactive sequel to the signal showing *at that moment*. [emphasis original]" (1996: 257)

Elsewhere, in another passage relevant to this discussion, Harris contrasts "traffic-lights communication and speech communication in English", writing that:

> "[T]he major difference [...] is that the former is *based on* a fixed-code whereas the latter is not. […] The traffic lights work on the basis of a small, fixed number of signals, and a very restricted inventory of possible 'messages'. [emphasis added]" (1998a: 140)

Although it may only be traffic lights that are "based on a fixed-code", there are still similarities with "speech communication in English". These parallels can be seen in terms of the *communicative activity required* to produce safe and orderly traffic flows at junctions, and the (semiological) *work required to maintain the notion of* a national language[50]. A great deal of effort goes into 'fixing' English (in terms of both attempting to 'improve' and *maintain* a status quo). This work includes, though is certainly not limited to, the admonitions directed towards children by caregivers for 'incorrect' speech (cf. children being taught to cross the road and use pedestrian crossings); the years of many a young person's life spent learning English in schools (cf. being taught to drive); the compiling of dictionaries and thesauri (cf. drawing up a highway code and traffic laws); and

[50] Integrationist Nigel Love argues that *how* 'the idea of languages as distinct entities' *arises*, should be a more prominent field of inquiry in linguistics (and certainly prioritised over the study of languages as 'fixed systems'): "the processes whereby 'languages' in that sense come to have whatever existence they do have must themselves be the product of reflection on language: that is, of linguistics in a broader sense" (1990: 114).

the blue and red squiggly lines that plague many a Microsoft Word document (cf. the implementation of traffic laws and regulations, and the enforcement of them by police and other authority figures).

This is not to argue for a 'fixed-code' perspective on English, quite the opposite; the point is to stress the open-ended nature of *all* signmaking activity, even when with dealing with something as seemingly regimented as traffic lights or a 'national language'. In **Chapter 2**, the idea of *components of integration* was raised, despite some of the shortcomings of this perspective raised there, if we think of traffic lights as a 'component' of our signmaking it can perhaps help us to see that although the 'traffic light code' may be 'fixed'[51], once the 'fixed-code component' is incorporated (i.e. integrated) into an *individual's* communicative activity, the signmaking is entirely open-ended.

By adopting an external, 'communicational-process' perspective, we can begin to understand how the traffic light bubble of communicative activity is "made to recur" (Harris 1998a: 140) as a consequence of the deliberate and directed efforts of *people*. Harris suggests that the "integrational relations between communication processes can be mapped by determining what presupposes what" (1996: 43). Although Read's (1958) account of pencil production (see **Chapter 2**) illustrates how it would be an impossible task to map out the nested presuppositional relationships in anything like totality[52], giving due

[51] Fixed via the prior and ongoing communicational efforts of a large number of people that includes the motorists themselves abiding by the macrosocial practices associated with traffic lights.

[52] Harris (1996: 44) writes that to "specify the relevant general priorities of presupposition is to construct a general theory of our communicational universe". Harris then offers ten propositions that provide an outline of such a theory. Although useful as a way of demonstrating the interconnected and highly complex nature of communicational processes, an attempt to plot out all the presuppositional relationships involved in, say, traffic flows at junctions involving traffic lights would quickly become unwieldly and will not be attempted here (further reasons for not doing so are implied in the latter half of this chapter). The closest Harris came to doing so in

to the semiological activity that the orderliness of traffic flow at junctions presupposes allows us to appreciate how it fits into “the general shape of our communicational universe” (Harris 1996: 44).

Traffic Lights, Frames, and Communicational Sequels

Goffman observes that “it is only on the road that the roles of motorist and pedestrian take on full meaning” (1972: 26). Similarly, we might say that *red lights* (for example) only take on their full ‘traffic-light-sense’ when ‘framed’ in a particular way (a framing that is the product of the communicative activity outlined in the previous section). Goffman uses the term “sense” in relation to *frames*, such as in the case of games, which, “place a “frame” around a spate of immediate events, determining the type of “sense” that will be accorded everything within the frame” (Goffman 1972: 20, cited in Jones 2017a: 10, see also **Chapter 2**). One way to put Goffman’s ideas of ‘senses’ and ‘frames’ into a more integrational context, is to think in terms of communicational *sequels* and *initiatives* (Harris 1996: 63; see **Chapter 2**). For example, the ‘sense’ of a red light flashing on an electronic device (a communicational initiative in these terms) might, once integrated into a person’s activity, equate to a communicational sequel such as plugging it into a socket to charge. Whereas, in the case of a large flashing light on a wall of a public building, we may expect a

any detail was for the ‘wedding ritual’ (1996: 80f) discussed in **Chapter 2**. Read’s (1958) description of pencil manufacture can be seen as an attempt to demonstrate that the complexity of such presuppositional relationships are such, that it is beyond any single person’s ability to account for (cf. Harris discussion on the ‘ultimate’ source of rationality in 2009a, see **Chapter 4**).

communicational sequel along the lines of vacating the building in a timely manner:

> "[T]hose who evacuate a building on hearing the fire alarm *are producing the appropriately integrated sequel*, even if it subsequently turns out to have been a false alarm. [emphasis added]" (1996: 99)

In this passage, Harris introduces the notion of an *appropriate* communicational sequel, which could be useful for our discussion on communicational *constraints*. We might say, therefore, that in a traffic-light-frame the driver is likely, or supposed to, react to the red light in terms of constructing a communicational sequel of a particular, i.e. appropriate, sort; by beginning to slow down and stop their vehicle, for example. One way of viewing the efforts to produce a "recurrent type of communication situation" (Harris 1998a: 140) at the level of signmaking, is as an attempt to 'encourage' (by whatever means) the appropriate communicational sequels:

> "If I ignore the red traffic light and drive straight across the intersection I do so not only at the risk of causing an accident but also at the risk of ending up in court and facing a fine or a driving suspension or worse. For here the law lays down what enactive sequel is expected of me in this type of communication situation." (Harris 1996: 247)

In the case of traffic lights, this coercion from law-makers and enforcers may be broadly welcomed for the sake of safety and efficiency (although whether any particular constraint is seen as a positive will, ultimately, be in the eye of the beholder). However, this will not always be the case. The world over, personal

and impersonal[53] forces work to constrain and restrict our signmaking in any number of ways (with varying degrees of success), whether or not these forces are within our purview or beyond our ken (see **Chapter 2**). From a parent banning their child from using social media, the implementation of codes of conduct at work, governmental bans of 'dangerous' books, to the deliberate starvation of sections of the civilian population, all presuppose communicational processes that work to 'frame' communicative activity in order to give it a particular 'sense' and constrain (or expand) the range of what 'communicative sequels' are 'expected' or considered 'appropriate'. If we recall Ngai and Chan toiling in the Shenzhen Longhua plant (Jones 2018; see **Chapter 2**), for example, we can see that the creation and maintenance of a communicational situation (or frame)—one that demands the 'completion of five tasks every ten seconds'—does not come from nowhere. Rather, Ngai and Chan's work-place situation is created by the efforts (some concerted, others unwitting) of people whose own communicational initiatives leave workers such as them with a very impoverished range of 'appropriate sequels' open to them indeed.

There may be a temptation to treat traffic lights an example par excellence of a fixed-code in practice, an assumption Hébert's (2020) analysis leaves unexamined. However, an integrational perspective shows that they are anything but, at least once integrated into broader communicational processes. We can also begin to appreciate that any fixity, or orderliness, involved in communicational processes requires considerable semiological work to put in place and maintain; something which drops completely out of view in Hébert's 'semiotic-system perspective'. This has only been a very preliminary foray into

[53] Though still arising from the *signmaking of individuals*, see **Chapter 2**.

how we might think about the attempts to constrain our signmaking in terms of limiting the 'appropriate' communicational sequels available to us (for good and bad). However, by thinking about how episodes of communication are "made to recur" from a *process-perspective*, we at least end up with a more holistic picture, one where 'fixed-codes' and 'orderliness' are *created* and *maintained*, through signmaking, rather than arising ex nihilo out of the ether.

Traffic Lights and Operational Discriminations

When I first started thinking about Harris' operational discriminations, one passage in particular caught my attention and has puzzled me since:

> "[I]t is *possible to state unambiguously the ODs required for any deliberate human activity*, and there are no grounds for supposing that any forms of communication would turn out to be an exception to this. [emphasis added]" (2009a: 133)

While it might be relatively straightforward in the case of highly abstracted, hypothetical, and 'closed off' communicative situations such as that of Wittgenstein's (2009) builders, it seems far from obvious that it is possible to unambiguously state anything, with certainty, when it comes to *actual* people acting in *actual* communicative situations. 'Real-life' signmaking is just too complex, 'messy', and unpredictable—i.e. *indeterminate*—to say anything about it with the level of confidence that Harris seems to be suggesting in the passage above.

We saw in **Chapter 2** how Harris (2009a) proposes an itinerary of ODs he takes to be necessary for Wittgenstein's builders to be able to cooperatively

engage in their particular construction activity. On the face of it, there appears to be a number of parallels between the ODs involved in the builders' activity as presented by Harris, and Hébert's (2020) account of traffic lights as a semiological system. In turn, Hébert's analysis has some similarities with the presentation of traffic lights in the learning materials provided for new drivers by the UK Government (see **Fig. 1**). These seeming correspondences prompted the following attempt to consider what the equivalent 'OD structure' might look like for traffic lights, as a way of interrogating Harris' claims regarding the feasibility of "unambiguously stating the ODs required for any deliberate human activity". The first step towards doing this was to create my own 'traffic light frame' (cf. Goffman 1972; see also **Chapter 2**), or vignette, which I modelled on **Fig. 1**, below. Having done this, it is a relatively simple matter to begin concocting a similar list of ODs that might be required to successfully negotiate 'traffic-light-activity', along similar lines as Harris does for Wittgenstein's builders.

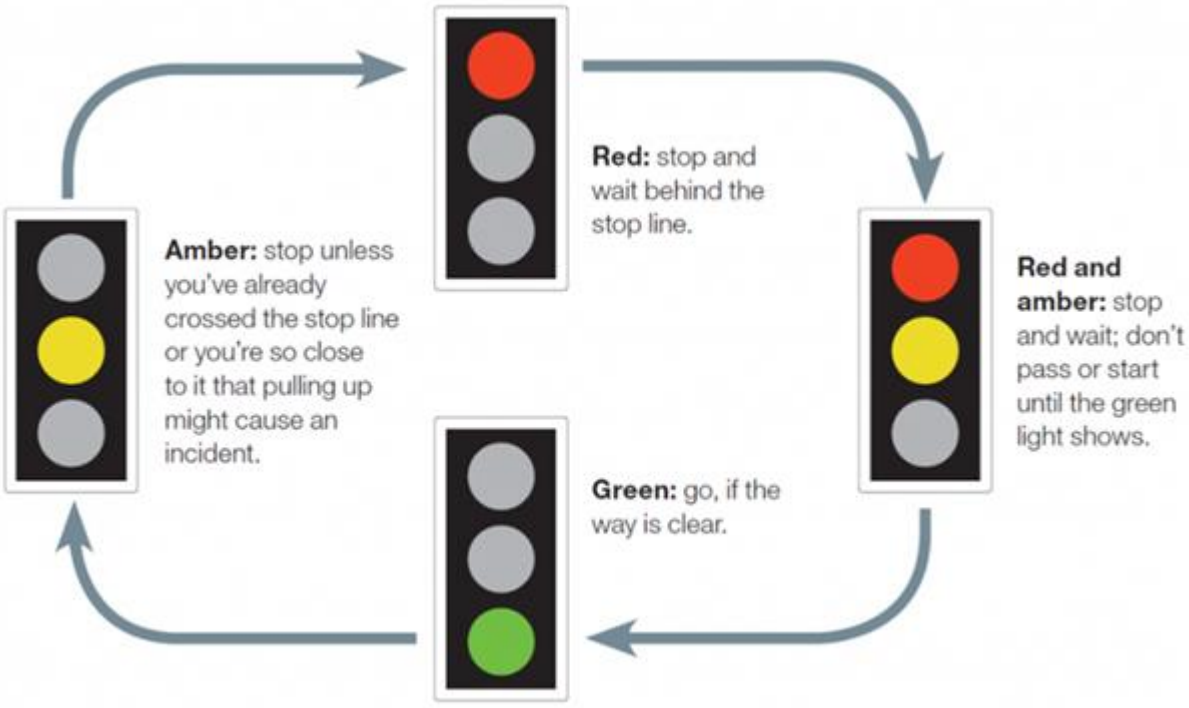

Fig. 1 a typical traffic light sequence in the UK (theorytest.org.uk)

As shown in **Fig. 1** above, there are four traffic light *states* that are relevant to our hypothetical driver. Harris writes that, in the case of the builder and assistant, "*how* they draw the mental-cum-perceptual discriminations between types of object does not matter [emphasis original]" (2009a: 127). The builder's assistant might discriminate *blocks* from *slabs* according to "criteria of size, shape, weight, colour, or any other differentiae" (Harris 2009a: 127). Similarly, the driver might, for example, discriminate one state from another according to colour, or alternatively, go by the spatial configuration of the lights: top, top-middle, bottom, and middle (this would seem to have some notable parallels with Hébert's comments on *redundancy*, cited above).

Either way, just as the builders had to discriminate between four building materials, the driver has to distinguish between four traffic light signals. This calls for four *classificatory* ODs corresponding to the four states (green, amber, red, red/amber, back to green) shown in **Fig. 1**. We find another similar correspondence between builder and driver, in that, just as the assistant needs to know that when the builder calls for a particular block "he wants it brought *now* in the sequence of operations [emphasis original]" (Harris 2009a: 129), so must the driver understand that a change in the state of the traffic lights calls for the need to do *something* in the immediate present. *Or does it*? When we reflect on *actual* experience of dealing with traffic lights, we may soon realise that this is not always the case. When approaching a set of lights from a suitable distance, a change from red to green, for example, may indicate that we are free to *continue as were*. For the moment, however, we will leave these doubts to one side (though return to them shortly).

We might say, therefore, that traffic lights combine the same two *semiological archetypes* as do the words of constructionese: *static* and *dynamic*, which function semiologically as *classifiers* and *initiators*, respectively. Harris (2009a: 129) describes the case with the builders thus:

> "[E]very time the builder utters a word, that utterance has to function as an instruction to his assistant to do something: but what the assistant is being required to do depends on which of the words is uttered. The dynamic function anchors the ODs to the here-and-now, alerting the assistant to the need for immediate action."

Prima facie, this translates neatly to the traffic light scenario. The lights change, indicating a need for action on the part of the driver (i.e. dynamic archetype initiating an *unspecified* action), with which action to take, i.e. whether to slow down and stop or accelerate and go, etc., depending on the current traffic light state (i.e. static archetype classifying the *type* of action required). However, it may be relevant to note, that in many cases it will be the *change* in state of the lights that functions as the *initiator*, while the *state* itself will function as the *classifier*. We could say something similar of the builder, who goes from *silence* to (some kind of) verbal *noise*.

There is a temporal segmentation of the builders' activity that arises from the back and forth of the builders' activity. This, Harris expresses as a sequence of "A-B correspondences [calling for blocks/fetching blocks MS] one after another that structures the concatenation of the communication process. A and B have to grasp *that* OD structure for their collaborative work to proceed at all [emphasis original]" (2009a: 129). Once again, we find something akin to this in the case of drivers and traffic lights, which too have an 'I go, then you go' character about

them. One difference between a driver at a set of traffic lights and the builders, is that in the former case some of the coordination—presumably for the sake of efficiency and safety—is mediated by the traffic lights themselves. In a sense, therefore, some of the semiological work is offloaded[54] on to the lights, so we might be led to believe that in the case of the driver, they *do not*, necessarily, have to "grasp *that* OD structure for their collaborative work to proceed".

However, it certainly would not do any harm were the drivers involved to have at least begun to 'grasp' this. If we consider again **Fig. 1**, we may note the '*if*' and '*unless*' clauses in the text, which should give us pause for thought. *Red* does not always equate to *stop*, and *green* most definitely does not *always* mean we should *go*[55]. It is at this juncture that the possibility of unambiguously stating the ODs involved in negotiating a set of traffic lights while driving, appears to breakdown. Arguably, it might be possible to keep adding to the tally of ODs potentially necessary for dealing with traffic lights that correspond to the 'if' and 'unless' clauses in **Fig. 1** in *a closed-world vignette* such as Wittgenstein provides for his builders, or the one I have created thus far for our traffic lights. However, as soon as we take our 'OD analysis' outside of this abstracted enclosure, there is such an instant profusion of potential 'if and unless clauses'—i.e. we enter into a world of communicational *radical indeterminacy* (see Love 1990)—that it surely becomes impossible to unambiguously state anything with absolute certainty[56].

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[54] I am not entirely happy with this turn of phrase *offloaded*. The suggestion is certainly not that the traffic lights do some of our signmaking for us. It may be more accurate to say that traffic lights 'lessen the semiological load' in some manner. This notion perhaps raises more questions than it answers, thereby pointing to possible further avenues of research. The work of Jones (e.g. 2011), would be a good starting point for such an inquiry.

[55] This is a vital aspect of negotiating traffic lights, as any experienced driver presumably knows, and yet is totally unaccounted for in Hébert's (2020) analysis.

[56] For the record, I remain puzzled by Harris' statement with which this section began and welcome any attempts to shed further light on the matter.

At this stage, it is not clear (at least to me) that attempting to map out an ever-expanding list of ODs for this particular “deliberate human activity” would take us much further in understanding the traffic flow at a particular set of lights, or the communicational experience of the individuals involved. It begins to feel that, by attempting to apply ODs as an integrationally-minded analytic *tool* in the manner I have up to now, I seem to be falling into the trap, identified by Harris, of proceeding, “solemnly and inevitably, to "reveal" a structure in the "data" that reflects, point by point, the "system" that is already tacitly incorporated in [my own] methodological procedure” (1997: 304). Another way of putting this, is that the approach that I have taken up to now with traffic lights in relation to ODs is too methodically-driven and falls down, in part at least, because it is represents an attempt to adapt Harris’ work into a *methodology*—a purpose for which it was never intended (Harris 1997: 304).

This bears comparison with Harris’ (1996: 44) tentative proposal for a general theory of our communicational universe, raised in the previous section. While serving a useful rhetorical function of pointing towards the interconnected complexities of signmaking and communicational processes, it would seem as unfeasible to map out the presuppositional relations in full as it would be to state all the ODs involved in a particular activity. Furthermore, attempting to do so comes uncomfortably close to trying to impose an order that only arises through the application of a very particular “methodological procedure”. Furthermore, this kind of analytic approach only causes us to stray from “answering to the actual experience of the participants” (see Harris 1993: 322; and **Chapter 1**).

This line of thought raises two questions that I will attempt to address. One is that if we do want to ‘answer to experience’, how might we best go about this?

A second is whether we can put Harris' conception of ODs to better use. Thankfully, if we look at what Harris writes about ODs in passages other to those cited above (2009a), we can find useful guidance regarding both of these questions. In terms of the second question, I have come to think that it is better to understand Harris conception of ODs in *rhetorical*, rather than *methodological*, terms. In the case of Wittgenstein's builders, Harris wanted to show, through his use of his 'OD metalanguage', how *rationality and activity are fully integrated* (2009a). This is an idea that will be discussed in depth in Chapter 4 and has important ramifications for the topics of Chapter 5. We will return to this idea in the final section of this chapter as a way of foreshadowing and setting up those discussions to come.

Another rhetorical use that Harris puts ODs to, as we see in his discussion of Wittgenstein's builders, is as a way of demonstrating how different activities necessarily "set up" (2009a: 134) particular requirements to make certain distinctions (the builders, to successfully carry out their activity, need to know their blocks from their slabs, for example). This, using Harris' terminology, involves "operationally discriminating" (2009a) the "integrated continuum" (Harris 1996: 164) that forms the bedrock of our experience (see **Introduction** and **Conclusion**). In turn, this has implications regarding the feasibility of "adopt[ing] the perspective of the communicating participants in the attempt to make the analysis resonate with their actual experience" (Duncker 2019: 153). This is the topic we turn to next.

ODs, Experience, and Analysis

The following passages, though taken out of context, are presented here to provide an example of Harris' use of ODs as a rhetorical device:

> "The circuitous route taken in the preceding chapters now brings me back to the key question of how the advent of writing, and more particularly the entrenchment of writing and reading as habitual practices, eventually effected profound changes in the way (literate) human beings think. *The answer I propose is: by setting up new operational discriminations in human behaviour*.
>
> [...]
>
> The literate brain *deals with new ODs by adapting its existing neuronal circuitry*. The literate mind deals with them by attributing a new dimension to 'words'. The scribe deals with them by learning to integrate the manual practices of making marks on a surface with the oral practices of speech." (2009a: 134)
>
> "At this stage in Bloomfield's argument, however, something odd begins to emerge. As evidence for the parallel between English and Menomini, Bloomfield introduces some phonetic transcriptions of Menomini utterances. Now since the Menomini are preliterate innocents, uncorrupted by writing, it is relevant to ask what these transcriptions represent. The only answer available seem to be that they represent what a literate investigator, i.e. Bloomfield (who admits honestly that he has only a 'slight' acquaintance with the language), hears a non-literate informant as 'saying'. But *ex hypothesi* this *cannot* be what the informant hears, since the informant is not hearing speech through the grid of categories imposed by a writing system. In other words, Bloomfield is just as committed as anyone to the scriptist assumption that writing can 'handle actual utterances'. *He is in*

fact confusing his own ODs with those of the informant. That confusion is itself a clear illustration of how literacy has affected Bloomfield's thinking." (2009: 138)

"*the ODs required for listing written words* do not depend on the availability of speech" (2009a: 140)

[emphasis added throughout these examples]

We can also see in these passages from Harris an attempt to express differences in individuals' signmaking in terms of ODs; in the sense that different communicative activity involves "setting up" different ODs, which will in turn also be effected by personal communicational experience, as per his critique of Bloomfield above.

For instance, given the OD analysis of traffic lights presented above, we can see that, whatever the specifics of the ODs themselves, there would, presumably, be a good deal of 'crossover' between some of the ODs involved in the activity of two *motorists* approaching a traffic light junction from opposite directions (despite any differences in terms of the fact that, at any particular moment, the lights show green for one and red for the other). Whereas, on the other hand, there would be less 'crossover' between the ODs involved for a *motorist* and a *pedestrian*, as their communicative experience and the activities they are involved in are quite different. When it comes to the differences between the ODs set up by the analyst's activity and the ODs involved in the activity of their participants, we could expect an even greater disparity. The passage above criticising Bloomfield's approach to analysis is of particular relevance on this front, as there, Harris (2009a: 138) seems to be making a similar point regarding Bloomfield and his informants. In particular, Harris draws attention to the idea that Bloomfield is making the mistake of assuming his own ODs to be the same

as those of his subjects. We can perhaps best illustrate this with a personal example.

If I recall my experiences of using a 'typical' pedestrian crossing, it is a fairly simple process to break this experience down into several stages, or activities, 'linked' (see **Chapter 2**) by my signmaking efforts as I cross the road. I can imagine (or, perhaps better, *remember*) approaching a road that I intend to cross and making a sign involving the button positioned for pedestrians to press in order to initiate the wait for the *green man* (cf. Harris' discussion of *doorbells*, 2009a: 171). The appearance of said green man (the perception of which is in turn further integrated into new signmaking) leads to a further stage of activity, i.e. walking across the road. We can thus see the chain of action as breaking down into successive stages, each initiated, linked, and propelled, by signmaking activity: 1) recognition that we are at a pedestrian crossing; 2) pressing 'the button'; 3) waiting for the green man; 4) crossing the road[57].

However, it should be noted that, although this particular *highly-abstracted* description of the communicative process as four distinct activities may come (to me at least) rather readily *as I am sitting in my armchair*, it is neither neutral nor natural. To see the 'crossing the road activity' which, at the level of unmediated experience, is in fact an *unbroken* stream of activity (i.e. the 'integrated continuum' described in the **Introduction**) as a sequence of distinct stages in this manner requires the adoption of a particular 'analytic' perspective. Alternatively, following Harris' example in the passages above, we could say that

[57] This can be seen as providing an example of what Harris has called *internal integration* (1996: 89, see also the description of the *journey of the ring* during a wedding ceremony from **Chapter 2**). Both, similarly, "relate[…] to the ways in which various features of the ritual [or communication processes more generally MS] are integrated with one another so as to articulate a total procedure which makes sense" (Harris 1996: 89).

my ‘analytic activity’ requires the setting up of particular ODs (enabling me to discriminate one stage from another), and these ODs cannot be the same as the ODs set up by the ‘crossing the road activity’ being recalled. If, for no other reason, than that they are each completely different communicational endeavours, each requiring me to make different semiological distinctions. In actuality, my ‘four stage analysis’ of using a pedestrian crossing is better described as an account, or description, of my signmaking *while recalling and abstracting from*, in an ‘analytic manner’, my experiences using pedestrian crossings, than it is a description of my actual experience crossing roads at junctions.

The issue is compounded by the fact that the four-stage description given above bears little resemblance to my typical experience of crossing roads using pelican crossings. In this sense, the analytically-abstracted account *does not answer to my experience* (cf. Harris 1993: 322), nor could it be said to involve adopting the same perspective as I did when crossing the road (cf. Duncker 2019: 153). For instance, on my daily walk to university I generally make use of six pelican crossings (those involving buttons and red and green men as described above) and one zebra crossing (with just the black and white lines painted on the road and continually flashing yellow lights on poles to alert drivers and pedestrians to the presence of a crossing). It is only with respect to one of those crossings that I would feel comfortable to say that the above description of four sequential ‘activity stages’ amounts to an even vaguely accurate approximation of my signmaking activity and experience.

I do not (usually or necessarily) experience any two of these crossings, or even the same crossing on different days, as a recurrence of the ‘same’ event

(though I am, evidently, perfectly capable of generalising from my experience and seeing them as such for certain purposes). This being said, my previous experience using the crossings is not an irrelevance either. As Duncker writes:

> "In one sense, all communicative events are new and all episodes are unique. In another sense, this 'newness' is qualified by the reflexive accumulation of our first-order experience and how we manage to integrate the here-and-now into our past experience by being able to tell the difference between something familiar and something not previously encountered." (2017a: 33)

before continuing with a citation from Harris:

> "In the crudest terms, this is the distinction between 'old' and 'new'. That distinction permeates every aspect of our experience and our understanding of the world we inhabit. It is the basis for the temporal integration of the sign." (Harris 1996: 259, cited in: Duncker 2017a: 33)

What makes (aspects of) a 'new' experience seem 'old', is our ability to bring past experience to bear on the present, or, alternatively, to generalise from our experience of the present to our past experience. Another way to think of this is as a 'carrying forward' of aspects of communicative experience to facilitate further communication, in the sense of Jones' *instrumental abstractions* (2017a; see also **Chapter 2**). For instance, at one of the crossings on my way to university I know that *irrespective of whether a green man is showing*, if cars have not yet reached the road junction just a little down the road, I will be safe to cross. However, at another crossing on my journey, I know it pays to double—and possibly triple—check that car and bus drivers coming up and down the road are *actually* going to stop, *never mind whether the green man is already on display*. Thus, instrumentally abstracting from my previous experience can save

me a little time in the first case, however, were I to ‘over-generalise’ in other situations, the results could potentially be deadly. Furthermore, it should be noted, these two situations as described here are never *fixed*, being always subject to change. For example, when I am walking with my son in the first (relatively safe) case, I would always wait for the green man, no matter if I might consider it ‘safe’ to cross in other circumstances. I might say, therefore, that I do not trust his ability to generalise ‘safely’ from what little experience he has of crossing roads. Another way of putting this could be to say that he has not yet developed the ability to (or, perhaps more precisely, is not trusted by me to) *operationally discriminate* between occasions when it is, and is not, necessary to wait for the presence of a green man (his experience differs from mine, hence the ODs involved in our activity are different).

The semiological activity involved in *producing* (or reading) these more *anecdotal* (see **Chapter 1**) accounts of my experiences using pedestrian crossing, does no more to *replicate* the original semiological activity of crossing the road, any more than did my attempt to impose ‘stages’ of signmaking on the communicative process. In that sense, it may be accurate to describe it as a ‘distortion’ of the original activity (see **Chapter 1**). However, while I cannot be said to be meeting Duncker’s (2019: 153) aim of “adopt[ing] the perspective of the communicating participants [i.e. my own]” (in that my ‘analytic’ perspective cannot be the same as my ‘crossing the road’ perspective), my anecdotal account, at least to some extent, “*resonates* with [my] actual experience [emphasis added]” (cf. Duncker 2019: 153). In this way, my reflexive analytic engagement with my experience might be better described, as argued in

Chapter 1, as “constructive and transformative” (see Jones 2017a: 14), rather than ‘distortive’.

Traffic Lights, Analysis and Anecdotes

Anecdotal accounts, by embracing the constructive and transformative nature of reflexivity, at least have a better chance of resonating with actual experience than does Hébert’s (2020) analysis of traffic lights, with which we began this chapter. In taking Hébert’s analytic approach, the result is to impose a methodologically-derived semiotic structure that simply was not there prior to his analytic efforts. Without an analytic perspective that can take into account his own reflexivity, this imposition, in effect, replaces the semiological activity of road-users and analyst alike with an abstract semiotic-structure that has very little to do with communicational experience. As a way of thinking about what Hébert’s approach misses, we can contrast his analysis with an anecdotal account of my own experiences at a particular set of traffic lights I encounter on the daily ‘school run’.

There is a three-way junction that I pass through nearly every day at different times, from different directions. My experience using this junction is never quite the same from one day to the next, nor do I recall ever thinking of it as an ‘isolated bubble of activity’ (before embarking on this analytic exercise, that is). I am always ‘en route’, travelling *from* somewhere while *on my way* to somewhere else. What is salient to me, what is ‘on my mind’, on any particular occasion, varies considerably. Though I can *upon reflection*, if called on to do so, discern a number of patterns in my experience. Most of these have a lot to do

with where I am going, and very little to do with the lights as a ‘semiotic system’. In the morning, while on the school run, how we are ‘doing for time’ seems to be a frequent part of my signmaking. I often check the clock when we are getting close to the junction (I know that if it is before 8.10 am, we are ‘making good time’). In a sense, I could be said to be incorporating the lights as a ‘component’ of my signmaking and making them into a ‘visual reminder’ to do something (i.e. check the clock - cf. Harris’ (2009c: 76) account of incorporating a tree into his signmaking as an ‘sign’ that he needs to turn left at the next junction). Though whether it is the lights themselves, the local buildings, the line of cars, or some other factor, or a combination of these things, that prompts this, I could not really say[58]. Coming in the other direction, at the end of the school day, time is less pressing and I am more likely to be thinking about groceries, for example, if we have enough milk to last till tomorrow (and whether the necessity to go to the shop outweighs the negative of listening to my son complaining about doing so). I may be asking my son how school was today, or why Eminem is suddenly playing on the stereo yet again, and not the Sunny War album I am sure I was listening to a minute ago.

While all this is going on I am continually attempting to tailor my actions—accelerating, decelerating, turning on indicators, arguing over music—with other people and my physical environment. The traffic lights (as a material object) are certainly a factor in all this, but they *do not mean anything until I make them mean something*, to *me*, by integrating them into my activity. And it is rarely as simple as ‘green means go’ (cf. Hébert 2020: 275). Sometimes my cue to go is

[58] Cf. Harris’ (2009a: 127) statement regarding ODs and Wittgenstein’s builders ”*How* they draw the mental-cum-perceptual discriminations between types of object does not matter [emphasis original]”.

the car in front of me starting to move, not the green light at all, on other occasions I can see a green light but I decide to give way to oncoming traffic anyway to avoid causing a 'log jam' ahead. I continually have to 'assess the situation'[59], instrumentally abstracting from previous experience: *with this many drivers ahead of me, will I get through this time round?; Is that pedestrian going to make a dash for it just as the lights change in my favour;* or (a particularly common occurrence), *is that impatient-looking driver coming from the opposite direction, who has been stuck while waiting for other drivers to be able to make a right turn, going to proceed despite the fact that the light for them has just turned red?*

I can, by reflexively engaging with my experience, recount this ever fluxing, whirl of activity in any number of ways. I could talk about how I am *operationally discriminating* between (say) considerate and impatient drivers, or how the position of other cars, traffic laws and my wish not to hit a pedestrian *constrain* my signmaking. Alternatively, I could try and make sense of my experiences in terms of *external integration* in an attempt to better understand how this 'traffic light situation' came about; or how my ever-increasing experience negotiating this junction improves my integrationally proficiency to be able to *instrumentally abstract* from that communicative experience, in order to produce more finely-tuned communicational initiatives and sequels, and so better deal with, and influence, what is going on around me.

However, by recounting in some way (whatever the metalanguage utilised) the original, driving, activity, I am not somehow imposing an order or a

[59] I.e., integrate present experience with previous experience and expectation of future experience (see **Chapter 1** on *temporal integration*).

structure onto that, *earlier*, activity. It is a reificatory illusion to think that the products of my subsequent descriptive signmaking activity are in some way necessary precursors to the driving activity, as Hébert (2020) seems to think is the case with his semiotic system. My reflexive engagement with, and attempts to categorise, my experience, may help me understand or provide me with insight into previous activity, but it can only ever be *creative and constructive*, a way of *moving communication forward*, and does not provide a means to backwardly project the communicational products of my signmaking *now*, as a way of determining an underlying semiological structure of my communicative activity *then*.

This is an important theme of **Chapter 5**, where we will look at a number of, at least on the face of it, more sophisticated approaches to analysing semiological activity than we have seen in the case of Hébert (2020). However, as we shall see, these approaches share some of the same fundamental problems as does Hébert's textbook account. The problems are compounded by the fact that, unlike my 'tentative analysis' in this chapter, the approaches examined in **Chapter 5** (e.g. Goodwin 2018 and Pennycook 2017), attempt to analyse the communicative activity of other people rather than the analysts' own signmaking. We will also encounter some similar problems in **Chapter 4**, though this time looking through the lens of *rationality*. As a precursor to that discussion, we will end this chapter by briefly reflecting on what Harris has to say in regard to ODs and rationality.

ODs, Traffic Lights, and Rationality

Harris (2009a) develops a radically different conception of rationality to the one offered in more traditional, what he calls “Aristotelean”, approaches. This points to the other rhetorical purpose to which Harris puts ODs, namely, to show how Wittgenstein’s builders, despite their paucity of ‘verbal machinery’, can still be understood to be engaged in rational activity. This is because the rationality of the builders’ actions lies, not in their (in)ability to provide verbal justification for what they are doing, but in their ability to integrate—through signmaking—their activity with each other and their material environment: the “rationality of what A and B are doing *consists in* the reciprocal integration of their activities by means of signs [emphasis original]” and “these signs are based solely on operational discriminations” (Harris 2009a: 132). Following Harris, in relation to the topic of this chapter, rationality does not reside in the traffic lights, or a dehumanised semiological system, but can be seen in the coordinated, integrated, and creative activity of the people—drivers, passengers and pedestrians—who may (or may not) integrate the traffic lights into that activity.

In other words, Harris wants to show that rationality and activity are (at the level of semiological experience) *fully integrated*. As we will see in **Chapter 4**, attempts to separate the two, along familiar lines as seen with the segregation of ‘the linguistic’ from ‘the non-linguistic', not only creates an unbridgeable gulf between rationality and communicative experience, but helps perpetuate a rationality hierarchy, one that has been harnessed and weaponised to further historical and ongoing colonial impulses against marginalised groups the world over (e.g. Harris 2009a and Santos 2018). Considering this integrated

relationship between rationality and semiological activity also helps draw out some parallels between the analyses of both we will encounter in **Chapters 4** and **5**, respectively. Although in the latter the focus switches from rationality to semiological activity, the accounts given of each are based in a linguistic and communicational ideology with the same Eurocentric roots, and, as Harris (2009a) shows, going from rationality to activity, is hardly any change at all.

Chapter Four: Reintegrating Rationality[60]

Introduction

In this chapter Roy Harris' conception of rationality (2009a) is contrasted with that of Steven Pinker (2021) and, to a lesser extent, Alexander Luria (1978) as examples of what Harris calls "Aristotelean rationality" (e.g. 2009a: 131). This will take us on a tour of what various scholars have said regarding the 'ultimate source of rationality' and the connections between the answers provided to this question and views on language and meaning. We will see that a segregational approach to language engenders similarly segregational ideas about rationality, and consider some of the problems that this creates. One particular problem is that the separation of rationality from communicative activity creates an unbridgeable gap that closely corresponds to the question begging distinction between *knowing-that* and *knowing-how* identified and interrogated by Gilbert Ryle (2009). A second problem—well-illustrated in Harris' work (2009a)—is how claims to a universal, logocentric, 'Aristotelean' rationality, have helped sustain the Global North's self-serving monopolisation of perspectives on human thought, providing a yardstick against which people of the Global South have been judged and found wanting. The discussion on the Eurocentricity of the ideological underpinnings to the segregational conceptions of language and rationality in this chapter will lay useful groundwork for **Chapter 5**, where we will see some (uncomfortable perhaps) parallels with the approaches of Charles Goodwin (e.g. 2018) and Alastair Pennycook (e.g. 2017).

[60] An edited version of this chapter appears in *Signs in activities: New directions for integrational linguistics* (2024), edited by Dorthe Duncker and Adrian Pablé.

Throughout his work, Harris mounts a sustained critique of segregational approaches to language, arguing that linguistics should be unshackled from "the intellectual prejudices which have been built into academic linguistic orthodoxy" and reintegrated "within a broader study of human communicative abilities" (1997: 233). In *Rationality and the Literate Mind* (2009a), Harris argues that in parallel with the segregation of language from the 'non-linguistic' domain, rationality has been removed "from the everyday activities of human beings dealing as best they can with everyday situations" (2009a: 152). Evidence of this claim is not hard to come by, as will be shown shortly in the case of Steven Pinker's work, but is perhaps best encapsulated by Pinker's ideological ally and sometime collaborator, Ray Jackendoff, who states:

> "I'd guess that very little of our lives, and even very little of what's *important* in our lives, is based on rationality [emphasis original]." (2012: 217)

It is against a background of the "gradual, progressive dehumanization of reason" (2009a: 152) that Harris advocates for an integrational semiology, because "adopting a different conception of meaning, makes it possible to propose an alternative approach to human reason" (2009a: 170), and this is just what is needed in order "to restore the links between 'logical relations' and 'social relations'" (2009a: 156).

The discussion that follows on the segregation of rationality from our daily lives is where this thesis most closely interweaves with some of the themes raised in recent (2019 and 2021) conferences of the I*nternational Association for the Integrational Study of Language and Communication*, which have seen the beginning of an exchange of ideas between scholars working within the integrational and Southern Theory paradigms (see **Introduction**). In particular,

the conception of rationality advanced by Pinker can be seen to aid and abet the cultural and epistemological hegemony of the Global North; a topic which has been of interest to practitioners of Southern Theory (e.g. Santos 2018). This raises the question as to whether, or to what extent, an integrational conception of rationality might prove useful to Southern Theorists. On this matter I suggest tentative reasons for optimism that stem from the two disciplines' concern with the tailor-made creativity of communicative practices. Harris (2009a) advances a conception of rationality based in activity rather than abstract verbal formulae that echoes Boaventura de Sousa Santos' notion of "artisanal practices" (2018). It is for this reason that *Rationality and the Literate Mind* could be of particular interest to those working within Southern Theory.

Steven Pinker's was chosen as a target for critique in this chapter because his work generally (e.g. 1994, 2007, 2013), and his conception of rationality specifically (2021), provide a useful foil for integrationism (see Stott 2018 for an extended discussion). Besides the influence he commands in both academic and lay arenas[61], Pinker provides an apposite example of a contemporary (yet still showing its Aristotelean roots) discourse on rationality. Pinker's theory of meaning, *conceptual semantics* (e.g. 2013), arising from an endeavour to incorporate a semantic component into Chomsky's generative linguistics, is an example par excellence of a psychocentric approach to language. The common ground between Pinker's psychocentrically surrogational linguistics and his

[61] In this sense, Pinker represents quite a different target to Hébert (2020) from **Chapter 3**. Pinker is sufficiently well-known, and respected (though perhaps less-so in academic linguistic circles) that he is sometimes seen as the 'go-to authority' on matters regarding language and its relationship to cognition. I was reminded of this listening to the 22 September 2025 episode of Sean Carroll's popular podcast: *Mindscape: Science, Society, Philosophy, Culture, Arts and Ideas*. Throughout the episode, the usually interrogative Carroll seemed more than happy to take Pinker's well-rehearsed patter as an authoritative account of settled wisdom.

conception of rationality is made stark in his discussion on how syllogistic inferences are made via innate mental mechanisms (1994, 2021). Psychocentric surrogationalism is a paradigm case of a segregational approach to language, and, as we will find, rationality as described by Pinker suffers from a similar problem. The problem being, once language and rationality have undergone this segregation, how can it be *reintegrated* with social activity?

Harris' *Rationality and the Literate Mind*: Initial Premises

Harris (2009a) begins by setting out two theses, though the intellectual roots of both can be traced back much further in his writing (e.g. 1980, 1989). While developing the two strands of his argument, Harris revisits the claims of those anthropologists (e.g. Lévy-Bruhl, Boas, Lévi-Strauss and Hallpike) who posit a divide between 'primitive' and 'modern' minds. In recent decades, this hierarchical conception of the human mind, has, quite rightly, been called into question (e.g. Renfrew 1994, 2007 – see Harris 2009a for a critical discussion). However, Harris argues, anthropologists such as Lévy-Bruhl, while wrong to draw the line where they do (i.e. between primitive and modern), and mistaken in making any claims to superiority over 'less developed' cultures, were not wrong to highlight differences in thinking between peoples. Rather, the mistake of anthropologists such as these, Harris (2009a) maintains, was a failure to recognise two points. First, that the invention of writing, in particular the institution of literate practices in society, proved to be a watershed moment, creating a 'before' and 'after' in terms of how people think about language, and by extension therefore, how we conceive of our place in "society and nature" (see Harris 1980:

54). Second, is a failure to recognise the prejudices brought about by their own literacy, and the effects this had upon on their theorising and the judgements they made concerning other people's mental habits.

In support of this argument, Harris draws on findings in neuroscience to buttress his long-held assertion that "all new intellectual tools restructure thought" (1989). Examples given by Harris of intellectual tools which have changed how we think include: the abacus, camera, and alphabet (1989: 103). Perhaps none, however, have had such profound effects on thought as writing itself (1989). Due to advances in neuroscience (Carr-West 2008, Greenfield 2008, and Wolf 2008; cited in Harris 2009a), Harris writes, "[i]t is nowadays taken for granted that one of the most important features of the human brain is its 'plasticity' or 'malleability'" (2009a: xi). Even more pertinently, findings in neuroscience suggest that "[l]earning to read changes the visual cortex of the brain" (Wolf 2008: 147, cited in Harris 2009a: 77). Therefore, Harris continues:

> "it seems highly likely that when our ancestors first developed writing systems, they were indeed developing the brain in ways unknown to preliterate humanity […] For present purposes what emerges as important is that, neurophysiologically, the literate brain is different from the preliterate brain." (2009a: 77)

Considering the ramifications of this neuroscientific research on the mind and brain, Harris writes:

> Even in the absence of any precise cartography mapping brain processes on to mental processes, it would be odd to claim that those with literate brains do not have literate minds, or that there is no correlation at all between the two." (2009a: 78)

Before concluding:

> “If even this much is admitted as the contribution of neuroscience, there is no ground for dismissing out of hand the thesis that literate and preliterate communities tend to produce typically different mental habits.” (2009a: 78)

This brings us to one of two theses advanced by Harris (2009a): that highly literate people do not think about language in the same way as illiterate people. The second thesis is that how we think about language effects how we think about rationality: “conceptions of human rationality vary according to the view of language adopted” (Harris 2009a: xiv). Combining the two theses results in Harris’ overarching argument, which is that the dominant conception of rationality found in western academic discourse is, fundamentally, a product of a literate culture.

The Ultimate Source of Rationality

The syllogism has often been held to be “the paradigm case of rational thought” (Harris 2009a: 85). For this reason, perhaps, enquiry into the ultimate source of rationality and the question of what guarantees an inference from premises to conclusion in the syllogism have often been treated as one and the same by those who, in Harris’ words, "mistook [Aristotle’s work on the syllogism] for an analysis of human rationality, an organon necessary for the development of all branches of knowledge” (2009a: 107). Alexander Luria (1979: 75) wrote that inferring from premise to conclusion “seems so obvious that many psychologists were inclined to regard the drawing of such a logical conclusion as

a basic property of human consciousness". This approach is still alive and well in the theorising of Steven Pinker (e.g. 1994, 2021), who sees rationality as a biologically determined process. Harris (2009a), however, asks whether such inferences *are* so obvious, after all. For example, Aristotle, when faced with the question of what guarantees that the conclusion of a syllogism necessarily follows from its premises, on Harris' telling, had a choice of three options for where he might locate the 'ultimate guarantee'.

The first two options might be summarised as reocentric and psychocentric (see **Introduction**). The third option combines the other two in mutual support. On the reocentric version, the syllogism mirrors aspects of the universe, i.e. "how the world is", through representing particular relationships that hold in the real world, e.g. "the relationship between Socrates and the rest of humanity, or the relationship between men and animals" (Harris 2009a: 85). A particular problem with this approach if it is to underwrite the syllogism, is that it amounts to an a priori declaration that the same correlations hold between words and aspects of reality for all people (see Locke 1706: IV. Xvii.1, cited in Harris 2009a: 106), and the same facts of the matter apply in all circumstances, i.e. it is, in effect, "a claim to omnipotence" (Harris 2009a: 85).

The psychocentric option amounts to the claim that "the guarantee resides in the way the human mind works" (Harris 2009a: 85). This, however, would not suffice for Aristotle, as the validity of the syllogism would be subject to the same limitations and possibilities for error as is human thinking (Harris 2009a: 85). Similarly, it might have seemed desirable to locate the guarantee in human intuition (as we will find in the case of Pinker's work); however, if intuition is seen as fallible we are again faced with the unsatisfactory possibility that syllogistic

conclusions reflect “nothing more than the limitations of human thinking” (2009a: 85). Whereas, if we take intuition to be infallible “there would be no need for logicians, and Aristotle’s logical analyses would be pointless” (2009a: 85).

The infallibility issue is a little different for Pinker than it was for Aristotle, but no less pertinent. For the modern psychocentrist, rather than being pointless, the value in Aristotle’s logical analyses is that they reveal the workings of cognitive structure, i.e. they are seen not as tools to improve thinking, but investigations into *how* we think. The problem with infallibility, on the other hand, which is inherent to Pinker’s mechanistic description of the mental processes underlying rationality, is that there is little room for manoeuvre when it comes to explaining *why* people behave, on occasion at least, *irrationally*. This is an issue to which we shall return shortly.

The third alternative Harris identifies—the one opted for by Aristotle himself—involves “looking to language for the missing guarantee” (2009a: 85). This might be thought of as the ‘language myth’ (e.g. Harris 1981, see Introduction) option, and comes with at least a whiff of ‘wanting to have it both ways’ in how it combines elements of reocentrism and psychocentrism in mutual support. On Aristotle’s view, the external world is objectively the same for all people, who in turn have the same mental impressions of the world. In this picture, communication consists of encoding these mental impressions into a language (e.g. Greek) made invariant and determinate through convention (i.e. "Aristotle’s [particular version of the] *language myth*” - see Harris 2009a: 79f).

However, for those adhering to an integrational semiology, a fourth option is available, which amounts to abandoning “the futile search for ‘ultimate’

reasons" (Harris 2009a: 173) and accepting the rather heretical idea that "we all make our own logic as we go along" (2009a: 174). This, however, is the inevitable conclusion if "[t]he rationality of your actions in the here-and-now resides in the local coherence of your sign-making" (Harris 2009a: 173). In order to begin to tease out some of the differences in these conceptions of rationality in more detail we next consider the 'riddle of inference'.

The Tortoise and Achilles

In Lewis Carroll's (1895) *What the Tortoise said to Achilles* the tortoise presents Achilles with the "beautiful First Proposition of Euclid":

> A) Things that are equal to the same are equal to each other
>
> B) The two sides of this Triangle are things equal to the same
>
> Z) The two sides to this Triangle are equal to each other

Having presented Achilles with this syllogism, the tortoise declares that, despite accepting premises A and B as true, it nevertheless refuses the conclusion, Z. The tortoise then goads the Grecian warrior into attempting to force the sceptical shell-dweller, via the power of logic, and logic alone, to accept the conclusion of the syllogism. This Achilles dutifully attempts, under the guidance of the tortoise, by inserting additional premises in between the initial two premises and conclusion (along the pattern of the hypothetical: if A and B (and C and D, ad infinitum) are true, Z must be true). It soon becomes apparent that despite the ever-increasing chain of premises, there will always be—analogously to the situation in which our two protagonists find themselves in Zeno's paradox—the need for one further hypothetical before the tortoise willingly arrives at the

conclusion. It is at this juncture, well before offering any solution to the riddle, that the narrator of the fable abandons the “happy pair”, making the excuse of having “pressing business at the bank”.

It would seem that the tortoise is forcing Achilles into running a fool’s errand. As Peter Winch (2008: 53) writes, in being sceptical the tortoise is not “being extra cautious” but, rather, “display[ing] a misunderstanding of what inference is”. For Winch, *inference*, which is, “at the heart of logic” (2008: 53 – see also Harris 2009a: 84) is not something which can “be represented as a logical formula”. On this point there seems to be general agreement between scholars of very different stripes. Gilbert Ryle (2009: 227) argues that it is a mistake to believe that “knowing how to reason” is “analysable into the knowledge or supposal of some propositions”. Similarly, Steven Pinker (2021: 27) pithily exclaims, “strictly speaking I cannot even justify or rationalize reason”. Roy Harris’ (2009a: 175) corresponding version is: “*The syllogism itself does not explain what is logical about the syllogism* [emphasis original]”. However, the question remains, as asked by Harris (2009a: 85), of what it is then—if not the formal logic of the syllogism—that “guarantees that the conclusion does invariably ‘follow from’ the premises”.

On Harris' view, the very question is unanswerable in the general, because judgements as to what is rational or otherwise—as with all human endeavours in the communicational sphere—are *situationally bound*: “[t]he rationality of your actions in the here-and-now resides in the local coherence of your sign-making" (Harris 2009a: 173). Therefore, “[t]he ‘ultimate’ source—if anyone is obstinate enough to pursue the question that far—will turn out to be a web of beliefs and assumptions derived from previous experience, plus a

personal assessment of the current circumstances and consequences" (Harris 2009a: 172). For those adhering to an integrational semiology this amounts to abandoning "the futile search for 'ultimate' reasons" (Harris 2009a: 173) and accepting the rather heretical idea that "we all make our own logic as we go along" (2009a: 174).

For Pinker, however, the structure of the syllogism is a reflection of the structure of the cognitive apparatus in which rationality is constituted, and, although not spelled out in these terms by Pinker, the power of the Aristotelian syllogism arises from the fact that it mirrors our innate cognitive structure. The conclusion follows from the premises *because* our cognitive structure is set up to automatically infer the correct conclusion if inputted with premises that conform to syllogistic structure.

Rationality, Biology and Creepy Machines

Pinker's (2021: 28) answer to the question of what guarantees that the conclusion follows from the premises in a syllogism is simply put:

> "[R]easoning with logical rules at some point must simply be executed by a mechanism that is hardwired into the machine or brain and runs because that's how the circuitry works, not because it consults a rule telling it what to do."

This is of a piece with what Pinker wrote previously in The Language Instinct (1994). Borrowing heavily from Alan Turing's (1950) seminal paper *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, Pinker (1994: 73f) provides a detailed description of how he envisages rationality to work as a biological mechanism

‘executing’ mental operations. Central to Pinker’s vision are the concepts *representation* (1994: 73) and *processor* (1994: 75). A representation is “a physical object whose parts and arrangement correspond piece for piece to some set of ideas or facts” (1994: 73). In the case of *mental* representations, the physical medium is constituted by configurations of neurons. Following Pinker’s example (1994: 77), the proposition *Socrates is a man* comprises three mental representations: one “for the individual that the proposition is about” (*Socrates*), a second “to represent the logical relationship in the proposition” (*is a*), and a third “to represent the class or type that the individual is being categorized as” (*man*).

The other key component in the mental executions underlying rationality, the processor, is, likewise, a further configuration of neurons. Similarly to Turing’s (1950: 437) “executive unit”, Pinker’s processor has a limited number of predetermined operations he terms “reflexes” (1994: 75). Pinker stresses (1994: 75) the “stupid” nature of the processor, assuring the reader that any concerns of regressive homunculi are misplaced. These reflexes, therefore, operate blindly, along strictly pre-ordained parameters, through a process of scanning, cutting and pasting reminiscent of the mundane activity of editing word processed documents. Hence the name “sensor-copier-creeper machine” coined by Pinker for his processor. From the mental representations for the two propositions *Socrates is a man* and *Every man is mortal* the processor arrives at the conclusion (or produces a third set of mental representations equating to) *Socrates is mortal* via four moves, or reflexes. The blind scanning, creeping, cutting and pasting of the processor, in a nutshell, *is* rationality in practice on

Pinker's view and is, therefore, what guarantees that the conclusion does indeed follow from the premises in a syllogism.

Pinker on Irrationality

This description of innate mechanisms might reasonably lead one to suspect that Pinker has painted himself into a corner apropos accounting for *irrational* actions. Given the picture of rationality painted by Pinker, to behave irrationally must involve somehow, and for some reason, acting against our biologically determined instincts. What is clear, is that nowhere in Pinker's body of work are we provided with a corresponding mentalistic (i.e. 'cognitive science') account of irrationality; rather, the explanations are social in nature.

In his discussion of the causes of irrationality, Pinker begins by dismissing "three popular explanations", which are, on his account, not wrong, but "too glib to be satisfying" (2021: 154). The first of these is that humans are generally bad at critical thinking, dealing with statistics and grounding their beliefs in evidence (2021: 155). These are common concerns of a meliorist, as opposed to Panglossian, approach to rationality (see Stanovich 2011 for discussion). A second "popular" explanation set aside by Pinker is social media and its adverse effects on society (2021: 155). The third includes any explanations which "just attribute one irrationality to another", examples of which include accounting for irrationality via claims that people's "false beliefs" given them comfort or help them make sense of the world (Pinker 2021: 155). Nor will it do, on Pinker's opinion, "to write off humans as hopelessly irrational". Instead:

> “To understand popular delusions and the madness of crowds, we have to examine cognitive faculties that work well in some environments and for some purposes but that go awry when applied at scale, in novel circumstances, or in the service of other goals.” (Pinker 2021: 155)

The key to understanding the “rampant irrationality” of ‘delusional crowds’, Pinker explains, is to understand that when Bertrand Russell declared “[i]t is undesirable to believe a proposition when there is no ground whatsoever for supposing it is true”, he was not expressing a “truism but a revolutionary manifesto” (2021: 159). This is because, on Pinker’s telling, Russell’s maxim is a luxury, one only available to “technologically advanced” societies (Pinker 2021: 160), due to an expanded "reality mindset"[62]. Rather, “the natural human way of believing” (Pinker 2021: 160), is to succumb to “motivated reasoning” (2021: 155) and “myside bias” (2021: 156). The former can be glossed as “resisting a chain of reasoning” because the conclusion is undesirable (2021: 155), the latter as an over-readiness to believe things (such as politicised statements in the media) that suit existing prejudices (2021: 157).

However, Pinker asks, “Why doesn’t reality push back and inhibit people from believing absurdities or from rewarding those who assert and share them?” (2021: 159). The answer, we are told, *is that people often do not really believe what they profess to believe* (2021: 159). Although not an argument of Pinker's supported by evidence or research—such as personal accounts from the ‘misbelievers’ in question—Pinker does provide a variety of examples to support

[62] The reality mindset, Pinker explains, is what "keeps gas in the car, money in the bank and the kids clothed and fed". This is to be contrasted with the "mythological mindset", the function of which is to "construct a social reality that binds the tribe or sect and gives it a moral purpose" (2021: 159).

this assertion. For instance, it cannot be that “9/11 truthers” *really* believe that they live under a brutalist, oppressive regime, else they would not be so public and vociferous in their criticisms of the government (2021: 159). Nor would Christians be so blasé about the fate of nonbelievers if they *really* believed in eternal damnation (2021: 160), and subscribers to the Pizzagate conspiracy theory would certainly not merely be leaving one-star reviews on Google if they *really* thought the Comet Ping Pong pizzeria was the base of operations for a Hillary Clinton-led child sex trafficking ring (2021: 159).

Whatever one makes of Pinker’s explanations for irrationality, it is obvious that they are of a different order to the explanation for rationality; one being biological, one social. This in itself is a problem because it remains unclear how Pinker’s ‘syllogistic mental executions’ are brought to bear on everyday activities and decision-making. This is a symptom of a segregated conception of rationality, and remarkably similar to a problem identified by Gilbert Ryle in the first half of the twentieth century.

Ryle, Reification and First-order Rationality

In the first chapter of his 2021 book, *Rationality*, Pinker is at pains to highlight the universal aspect of his take on rationality through a discussion of the foraging and hunting practices of the Kalahari San. The San are introduced as an example of “one of the world’s oldest peoples” whose hunter-gathering lifestyle, up until recently, “offers a glimpse of the ways in which humans spent most of their existence” (Pinker 2021: 10). It seems safe to assume that, at least

in part, Pinker chooses the San because they provide an example of a group of people who have had little, if any, direct experience with literacy, let alone western formal logic. Despite this, we are informed, the San use “categories to make syllogistic deductions” along the lines of:

> “kudu and eland can be run down in the dry season because they tire easily in loose sand. It’s the dry season and the animal that left these tracks is a kudu; therefore, this animal can be run down.” (Pinker 2021: 10)

This process, we are told, is enabled by an “*intuitive* grasp of logic, critical thinking, statistical reasoning, causal inference, and game theory [emphasis added]”. The appeal to intuition is very much in line with Pinker’s description of the occult activities of the mental processor discussed above. However, by taking these steps and invoking intuition Pinker leaves himself open to criticism raised by Ryle in the latter's discussion of the distinction between knowing-that and knowing-how.

In his seminal paper *Knowing How and Knowing That*, Ryle (2009: Chapter 15) elucidates the “distinction which is quite familiar to all of us between knowing that something is the case and knowing how to do things” (2009: 225). However, while unproblematic in lay terms, on Ryle’s reading the same cannot be said for the treatment given to the distinction in philosophy. In particular, Ryle takes aim at those philosophers whom he pejoratively terms *intellectualists*. The intellectualists under fire posit a hard distinction (and order of priority) between thinking and doing, with intelligence viewed as properly residing in the former and only tangentially expressed in the latter (only that is, if it is preceded by ‘intelligent thought’). Thus for Ryle, in the prevailing doctrine of the time “intelligence equates with the contemplation of propositions and is exhausted in

this contemplation" while "doing things is never itself an exercise of intelligence, but is, at best, a process introduced and somehow steered by some ulterior act of theorising", which, in turn, is not "a sort of doing, as if 'internal doing' contained some contradiction" (2009: 222).

Ryle's central argument against this conception is that in firmly discriminating between internal exercises in intelligence and any resulting deeds we quickly run into vicious regress. One problem arises because the gap between theorising and activity is unbridgeable in a very similar manner as the gulf between considering propositions and making an inference we saw in the case of Carrol's fable of the tortoise and Achilles (see Ryle 2009: 227). The move from 'knowing' a set of facts to *applying* those facts intelligently in practical activity cannot be achieved through the acquisition of a further set of facts. There comes a need, therefore, "to postulate [a] Janus-headed go-between faculty, which shall be both amenable to theory and influential over practice". However, as Ryle persuasively argues, any such faculty faces exactly the same problem, at one remove, as was set up with the original separation of thought and activity (Ryle 2009: 223f).

The second aspect of the regress becomes apparent when we recognise that 'thinking things through' can itself be done intelligently or stupidly. Using chess playing as an example, Ryle shows how 'knowing' the full gamut of chess rules, strategies and maxims, in the sense of having memorised them, is insufficient to make somebody a proficient player. To illustrate this point, Ryle (2009: 225f) uses an example of "stupid" and "clever" chess players, beginning with the question: "what truths does the clever chess-player know which would be news to his stupid opponent?". We can easily imagine, continues Ryle, a

clever player “generously imparting” to a stupid opponent a catalogue of chess tactics and strategies till “he could think of no more to tell him”. However, even were the stupid player to memorise every chess maxim available and be able to recite them verbatim on demand, this would not necessarily ‘raise their game’ to any significant degree without being able “*intelligently to apply the maxims* [emphasis added]” (Ryle 2009: 226). This is because the stupid player, even one who has memorised several chess handbooks, “would be unlikely to tell himself the appropriate maxim at the moment when it was needed” and even if he were to alight on an appropriate maxim at an appropriate time “might not see that it was the appropriate maxim or if he did, he might not see how to apply it” (Ryle 2009: 226).

Any approach, therefore, which attempts to account for a ‘flair’ for chess playing via prior knowledge of ‘chess maxims’ leaves unexplained the ‘flair’ required in the appropriate *application* of said maxims, leading to circularity. As pithily put by Ryle:

> “They have tried to explain, e.g., practical flair by reference to an intellectual process which, unfortunately for their theory, again requires flair.” (2009: 230)

The bottom line being:

> “[I]t requires intelligence not only to discover truths, but also to apply them, and knowing how to apply truths cannot, without setting up an infinite process, be reduced to knowledge of some extra bridge-truths.” (2009: 226)

We avoid the regress when we recognise that:

> “Intelligently to do something (whether internally or externally) is not to do two things, one ‘in our heads’ and the other perhaps in the outside world; it is to do

> one thing in a certain manner. It is somewhat like dancing gracefully, which differs from St. Vitus' dance, not by its incorporation of any extra motions (internal or external) but by the way in which the motions are executed. There need be no more moves in a job efficiently performed than in one inefficiently performed, though it is patent that they are performed in very different ways. Nor need a tidy room contain an extra article of furniture to be the real nominee of the adjective 'tidy'." (2009: 224)

Ryle goes further than claiming that knowing-that cannot be a prerequisite to knowing-how, stating that in fact the reverse is the case: "knowing-that presupposes knowing-how" (2009: 234). The argument rests on a simple premise: "to know a truth, I must have discovered or established it. But discovering and establishing are intelligent operations, requiring rules of method, checks, tests, criteria, etc." (2009: 234). On this view, therefore, a scientist "is primarily a knower-how and only secondarily a knower-that. He couldn't discover any particular truths unless he knew how to discover. He could know how to discover, without making this or that particular discovery." (Ryle 2009: 235).

On the one hand it may seem as though Pinker manages to avoid the kinds of regress described above through envisaging the mental processes anterior to practical action as innate and unconscious *mental executions*—as revealed though the description of the San's intuitive grasp of logic. Pinker's theory, however, just as Ryle explains in the case of *flair* above, leaves unexplained how the mental operations constituting rationality come to be applied in real-life scenarios without involving another 'level' of rational thought. Nor will talk of metal executions do for Ryle (2009: 227), who explicitly dismisses those theories that attempt to mitigate the regress by positing "that the intelligent

reasoner who has not been taught logic knows the logicians' formulae 'implicitly' but not 'explicitly'". One issue is that such a move is akin to leaping from frying pan to fire, in that, the main effect is to replace occult activities with occult substances—which in Pinker's case are the unobserved neuronal structures governing rationality.

When considering how, precisely, Ryle's criticisms come to bear on Pinker's theory of rationality, the following extract, though in need of some unpacking, is instructive:

> "What is the use of such formulae [viz. "the principles, rules, criteria or reasons which govern the resultant intelligent actions" (p229)] if the acknowledgement of them is not a condition of knowing how to act but a derivative product of theorising about the nerves of such knowledge? The answer is simple. They are useful pedagogically, namely, in lessons to those who are still learning how to act. They belong to manuals for novices." (2009: 231)

The citation is taken from a passage discussing Mrs Beeton, Izaak Walton and Aristotle. Unusual bedfellows, perhaps, but all, on Ryle's telling, managed to "extract principles" from their own successful endeavours in their respective fields of cooking, fishing and reasoning (2009: 231). These 'extractions' are not presupposed by the activities themselves; Mrs Beeton's recipes are not a precondition to being a good cook. Rather, such explicit principles are the "derivative products of theorising", or, in other words, they arise from Mrs Beeton's, Mr Walton's and Aristotle's own reflexive engagement with the activities in question. In drawing our attention to the similarities between Aristotle's work and, say, that of Mrs Beeton, Ryle highlights the pedagogical nature of devices such as the syllogism and points to the absurdity of the

assumption that syllogistic inference is foundational to human consciousness. Nobody is making similar claims about Mrs Beeton's cookbooks.

The pedagogical underpinning of the syllogism is given further weight when we consider what might have been Aristotle's own motivations in developing his work on the syllogism. Harris (2009a) argues that a chief concern of Aristotle's when developing his work on logic, and in particular the syllogism, was to provide a firm footing from which to proceed in rational debate. The work of D. J. Allan is used by Harris in support of this view:

> "There are signs that he [Aristotle] treated the study of reasoning as being primarily 'of a practical nature, being undertaken in the hope of learning how to reason efficiently and prevail over opponents in debate'." (Harris 2009a: 80, citing Allan 1952: 125)

Elsewhere, Allan explicitly draws attention to the pedagogical nature of Aristotle's work on the syllogism:

> "Aristotle's inquiry, in any case, clearly arose at a time when regular debates on a set theme, which had grown out of the informal Socratic dialogue, were a normal part of the student's education; and it was his original intention to provide a handbook for this form of debate. When he embarked on his analysis of the syllogism, it was still with this aim in view …" (1970: 99)

If Harris and Allan's assessment of Aristotle's motivation is correct, then Pinker's syllogism has little in common with that of Aristotle; one being a tool for productive debate, the other a basic feature of human cognition.

These two views of the syllogism, which might be thought of, respectively, as *instrumental* and *foundational*, chime closely with what Jones (2017a) terms

instrumental and formal abstraction and with van Dijk's (2016: 994) description of reification. Van Dijk, drawing from Anthony Giddens and Tim Ingold, writes: "reification turns a characteristic of an ongoing process into the pre-existing source of that process", thus neatly encapsulating Ryle's identification of the mistake committed by the "intellectualists" when positing that knowing-how presupposes knowing-that.

Jones (2017a) differentiates between *instrumental* and *formal* abstractions, the former being necessary and ubiquitous features of our communicative lives. In the example of instrumental abstraction provided by Jones, a waiter, in writing down a customer's request, 'extracts' the relevant features from the 'ordering' part of a communicative episode so as to facilitate subsequent communication—in this case, informing the chef what food to next prepare in the kitchen. Similarly, Mrs Beeton's cookbooks, Mr Walton's guide to angling, and Aristotle's syllogism (when limited to a pedagogical function) can be seen as 'instrumental abstractions'. Formal abstractions, on the other hand, are tools of the trade for the descriptive linguist (among others, cognitive scientists being another pertinent example). Here, the linguist's reflexive, methodologically-driven activity produces the abstractions we call (linguistic) rules, words and sentences. At this stage, the linguist's activity is not so fundamentally different to the waiter's, in that both are reflexively engaging with their own communicative experience, and, furthermore, the linguist's 'findings' (*creations* from an integrational standpoint) may be 'carried forward' into further instances of communication— to facilitate future academic debate, for example. However, problems arise when these abstractions are reflected back onto the original process and come to be seen as prerequisites for the first-order activity

itself, just as van Dijk describes in the case of reification. This move can only lead to an understanding of the processes under initial consideration that is coloured—i.e. *distorted*—by the analyst's own methodological approach.

In his discussion of the abstracting and reifying tendencies present in much of linguistic scholarship, Jones (2017a) pinpoints a particular aspect of the potential distortion that is pertinent to both Pinker and Ryle's intellectualists. That is, the abstractions and reifications are designed to fit a specific 'frame' (taking inspiration from Goffman, 1974) of activity or orientation through which, in Jones' case, linguistic activity is not *described*, instead a particular, and particularly narrow, conception of language is *created* (2017a: 15). Something similar appears to be happening in the case of rationality with Pinker and Ryle's intellectualists. In the restricted, reified picture of the intellectualists, so much of human intelligence is left unaccounted for, not least the intelligence exhibited in the successful application of past experience to whatever novel tasks are presently being undertaken. The result is the side-lining of what might be thought of as *first-order rationality*, leaving us with a culturally inflected residue where priority is given to "agents being able to give [verbal] reasons for what they do", to the detriment of elucidating (rather than "tacitly presuppos[ing]") the more fundamental ability to coordinate one's activities with others and our environment (Harris 2009a: 131).

Scriptism, Syllogism and Universality

Both Aristotle and Pinker require a certain universality in their respective discussions on rationality. The requirements are not the same, however, and the

difference splits along the same lines as how the syllogism is viewed by both, discussed above. Aristotle, in attempting to secure the philosopher's pre-eminence over the sophists, required a solid bedrock from which debate could be conducted—one that would not degenerate into "logomachical wrangling" (Harris 2009a: 82). Aristotle needs the syllogism to exhibit "universal connexions between its propositional components" (Harris 2009a: 166). Pinker too requires a universality: both generative linguistic theory (e.g. Pinker 2013) and evolutionary psychology (e.g. Pinker 2002) are premised on ideas of human cognitive 'sameness'; all people alive today, including those living in western modernity, have the same universal grammar and thought processes as our most remote human ancestors. However, this universality is brought into question when we consider the effects the advent of literacy has had on conceptions of rationality in Western philosophy.

In *Rationality and the Literate Mind* Harris explores how the advent of literacy came to affect how language is viewed by literates compared to those unfamiliar with writing practices (2009a: ivx). Describing Harris' investigation in these terms, however, underplays quite how radical is the thesis he is advancing. This is because our conception of language subsumes our ideas surrounding other grand concepts such as *democracy* or *justice*. Which, in turn, is because our views on language are intimately connected to an "intricate complex of views about how certain verbal activities stand in relation to other human activities, and hence, ultimately, *about man's* [sic] *place in society and nature* [emphasis added]" (Harris 1980: 54). Harris' thesis is not only that literacy changes how we think about language, but that it "restructures thought" itself (1989 and 2009a). The key to understanding how this occurs "lies in seeing how writing facilitates a

variety of forms of *autoglottic inquiry* [emphasis added]" (1989: 103). Autoglottic inquiry becomes possible once literacy has "pris[ed] open the gap between utterance and sentence" (1989: 104), a gap Harris terms *autoglottic space*. In other words, writing makes possible a study of language *as though it were unsponsored*, through "facilitating the cognitive feat of decontextualising words and sentences" (Orman 2017: 397). One effect of which is that it becomes all too easy to treat the veracity of 'words on the page' as arising not from an individual's say-so, but from what the words mean 'in and of themselves'.

Autoglotticism is a facet of a broader set of changes in attitudes to language heralded by literacy, namely *scriptism*, which was originally defined by Harris (1980: 6) as: "the assumption that writing is a more ideal form of linguistic representation than speech". Scriptism, however, manifests in many different forms. Scriptist metaphors abound, non more so than the idea that scientific inquiry involves 'reading the book of nature' (Harris 2009a: 12). Other popular scriptist metaphors involve picturing the brain/mind as a surface suitable for bearing text and thought as synonymous with writing. Turing was clearly in thrall to such metaphorical thinking:

> "Presumably the child-brain is something like a note-book as one buys it from the stationers. Rather little mechanism, and lots of blank sheets. (Mechanism and writing are from our point of view almost synonymous.)" (Turing 1950: 456)

In turn, Pinker picks up Turing's baton and runs with it:

> "By looking at how a Turing machine works, we can get a grasp of what it would mean for a human mind to think in mentalese as opposed to English." (1994: 73)
>
> […]

> “If one gives the device as much paper as it needs, Turing showed, the machine can do anything that any computer can do.” (1994: 77)

Aside from facilitating the emergence of autoglottic space and the conflation of writing and thinking, another aspect of scriptist thinking involves the prestige that writing comes to have over spoken discourse, i.e., “the mastery of writing” comes to be seen as superior “as an intellectual achievement, over the mere command of fluent speech” (Harris 2009a: 11). This is perhaps hardly surprising given the intellectual history of literacy and the centuries-long exclusivity of written culture to “privileged sections of society” (Harris 2009a: 12). We need only consider, as Harris illustrates, the practice of signing a document with an ‘X’, as opposed to inscribing one’s name, to see how scriptist prejudices can come into play. For, "as soon as signing with a cross is seen as betraying the *inability* to write one’s own name, and this is regarded as a social or intellectual deficit, we are already in a scriptist society [emphasis original]” (Harris 2009a: 12). Scriptist attitudes engender a hierarchy where literate practices sit above spoken practices, all too often leading to a cultural chauvinism where non-literacy comes to be seen as a mark of intellectual inferiority.

These scriptist prejudices and decontextualising tendencies come together in the case of the syllogism, which sits unabashed in the autoglottic space created by literacy (Harris 1989: 104, see also Harris 2009a). Those who fail to see the syllogism as an interconnected series of unsponsored, decontextualised *premises* and *conclusions*, as opposed to *utterances* said by a particular person at a particular place in space and time are seen to demonstrate a deficiency in logical thinking, revealing a more primitive rationality (Harris 2009a). This brings into question any claims to universality made by Pinker. In

placing syllogistic inference at the heart of his theory of rationality, Pinker displays an implicit ethnocentricity. This ethnocentricity manifests in a blindness to how his conception of rationality has been affected by his own literate worldview and in the failure to appreciate that viewing language as inhabiting an autoglottic space is not a human universal but arises as a product of literate culture.

The ethnocentricity lurking behind the elevation of syllogistic reasoning to the exalted heights found in Pinker's work is brought out from the shadows by some of those inhabitants of the hamlets and nomad camps of Uzbekistan and Khirgizia who were enlisted by Luria into his research programme on cultural differences in thinking during the 1930's. Luria's research aimed to turn insights from Vygotskyan psychology towards comparing the "intellectual activity in different cultures" in order to reveal "important information about the origin and organizations of man's intellectual functioning" (1979: 58).

Luria classified his respondents into five groups determined by stages in literacy development. The groups ranged from those "living in remote villages who were illiterate and who were not involved in any modern social activities" to "students admitted to teachers' school after two or three years of study" whose "educational qualifications, however, were still fairly low" (Luria 1979: 61f). Luria's subjects were asked to complete a number of tasks once an initial interview process had been completed, before undertaking a debriefing session where the respondents were given the opportunity to elucidate their reasoning in making the choices they did. (It would also appear that Luria's team of researchers did not miss this opportunity to instruct the 'illiterates' in the error of their ways when their answers did not tally with those of Moscow-educated

psychologists.) Some tasks involved choosing the ‘odd one out’ from a set of four pictures of mundane items, while in other tasks the respondents were asked to supply an answer to ‘syllogistic questions’.

Rather than Luria’s own interpretation of the results from his research programme (see also, Harris 2009a: 37f), what is of interest for present purposes—and raises further doubt concerning Pinker’s claims to a universal, biological rationality mechanism—are Luria’s respondents’ own comments and reflections on the tasks they were being asked to do in the course of Luria’s enquiry. In particular, what is striking in reading Luria’s work is the resistance among the less literate respondents to accept the researchers’ syllogisms as unsponsored propositions, and to treat the items in the odd-one-out tasks as ‘decontextualised’ objects, *uncoupled* from the roles they play in daily life. From Luria’s writing we can see that such refusals could be strongly expressed and give no indication of willingness to be swayed once the ‘correct’ answers have been ‘revealed’:

> “When we tried to suggest another way to group the objects based on abstract principles, they generally rejected it, insisting that such an arrangement did not reflect the intrinsic relations among the objects and that a person who had adopted such a grouping was "stupid”.” (1979: 69)

For example, when Rakmat, an “illiterate peasant”, was shown pictures of a saw, hammer, ratchet and log he declared:

> "They're all alike … I think all of them have to be here. See, if you're going to saw, you need a saw, and if you have to split something, you need a hatchet. So they're all needed here." (Luria 1979: 69)

When pressed by the researchers, who explained to Rakmat that another, more literate, respondent had said the log was different because there was an umbrella term to describe the other three items, Rakmat was quick to bring the conversation around to more practical matters:

> "Probably he's got a lot of firewood, but if we'll be left without firewood, we won't be able to do anything."
>
> "True, but a hammer, a saw, and a hatchet are all tools?"
>
> "Yes, but even if we have tools, we still need wood. Otherwise, we can't build anything." (1979: 70)

Undaunted, Luria's researcher presents Rakmat with another collection of pictures, this time of a bird, rifle, bullet and dagger. Having initially identified the bird as not belonging in the set, Rakmat corrects himself, describing a hunting scenario involving all the items in question. Perturbed yet persistent, the researchers present Rakmat with a third set including a glass, saucepan, spectacles and bottle, once again explaining that another person had said one object did not belong. After some initial doubt, Rakmat remains adamant:

> "Probably that kind of thinking runs in his blood. But I say they all belong here. You can't cook in the glass, you have to fill it. For cooking, you need a saucepan, and to see better, you need the spectacles. We need all four of these things, that's why they were put here." (1979: 71)

Rakmat's responses to Luria's groups of objects demonstrate an unwillingness to view pictures of everyday objects as decontextualised (i.e. disconnected and functionless) entities. Other respondent's reactions to syllogistic phrases show a particular resistance to treating utterances as unsponsored propositions, which are, in turn, unanchored to personal experience.

For example (Luria 1979: 78), a “37-year-old villager”, having been presented with the syllogistic couplet *Cotton can grow only where it is hot and dry*. *In England it is cold and damp* is asked whether cotton will grow in England. The subject initially responded with “I've only been in the Kashgar country. I don't know beyond that”. The conversation continues:

> "But on the basis of what I said to you, can cotton grow there?"
>
> "If the land is good, cotton will grow there, but if it is damp and poor, it won't grow. If it's like the Kashgar country, it will grow there too. If the soil is loose, it can grow there too, of course." (The syllogism was then repeated.)
>
> "What can you conclude from my words?"
>
> "If it's cold there, it won't grow. If the soil is loose and good, it will."
>
> "But what do my words suggest?"
>
> "Well, we Moslems, we Kashgars, we're ignorant people; we've never been anywhere, so we don't know if it's hot or cold there."

Pressing on, the researcher asks the syllogistic question:

> “In the far north, where there is snow, all bears are white. Novaya Zemlya is in the far north, and there is always snow there. What color are the bears there?"

The villager’s response to this line of inquiry follows a now familiar pattern, with the informant insisting that a lack of personal experience precludes them from giving an answer to the question (Luria 1979: 78f):

> "I don't know. I've seen a black bear; I've never seen any others ... Each locality has its own animals: if it's white, they will be white; if it's yellow, they will be yellow."
>
> "But what kind of bears are there in Novaya Zemlya?"
>
> "We always speak only of what we see; we don't talk about what we haven't seen."

"But what do my words imply?"

"Well, it's like this: our tsar isn't like yours, and yours isn't like ours. Your words can be answered only by someone who was there, and if a person wasn't there, he can't say anything on the basis of your words."

"But on the basis of my words, 'in the north, where there is always snow, the bears are white,' can you gather what kind of bears there are in Novaya Zemlya?"

"If a man was sixty or eighty and had seen a white bear and had told about it, he could be believed, but I've never seen one and hence I can't say. That's my last word. Those who saw can tell, and those who didn't see can't say anything!"

In the above exchange the informant stresses their own ignorance as the reason for being unable to express an opinion on the colour of bears of various geographical regions. In his review of Luria's research, Harris (2009a: 38f) highlights the questioner's repeated use of the phrase *my words*. An unusual choice, perhaps, when it is clear that the respondent is being asked to consider the words in an abstract, hypothetical sense, i.e. the 'correct' way to interpret the psychologists' syllogisms is to approach them as inhabiting literacy's *autoglottic space*. They are not words describing the interviewer's personal experience and Luria makes no mention of any corroborating evidence supporting claims to particular ursine colourations, nor at any point do the interviewers claim they personally have seen white bears in the far north. As Harris writes:

> "Seen from the subject's point of view, the situation is the following. Someone you do not know comes along and makes some unverified statements about bears in the far north. You are then asked 'What colour are the bears there?' Whether or not you can see what the interrogator 'wants' you to say, or is trying to trick you into saying, the only sensible answer is that you don't know if you haven't actually been there. The sole 'evidence' you have been presented with consists of the interrogator's unconfirmed say-so. Why trust that?" (2009a: 38)

Segregated and Ethnocentric: Rationality as Yardstick

Rakmat and ‘the-37-year-old-villager’ show that not everyone is willing to play the psychologists’ syllogistic games. What, however, of Pinker’s claims that they are, biologically speaking at least, *reasoning* syllogistically, after all? Both respondents' objections to the interviewers’ lines of enquiry certainly have an air of the logical and rational (as conventionally understood) about them. We might even, as Harris suggests we could (2009a: 38), present the objections in syllogistic form:

> *Only those who speak of what they know can be believed*
>
> *The interviewers do not speak of what they know*
>
> *Therefore, the interviewers are not to be believed*

Does this mean, therefore, that Luria’s informants were, after all, reasoning syllogistically, as Pinker’s discussion of the San would suggest? There are a number of problems with this proposal.

The fact that we can carry out such meta-linguistic/cognitive manoeuvres is not evidence of any particular underlying structure of the mental operations of illiterates. The above syllogism is a product of my own communicative activity—itself steeped in literacy—and provides no reason to believe that the syllogistic form had anything to do with Luria’s informants’ cognitive processes, whatever they might be. A similar view was expressed over three hundred years ago by John Locke:

> “Tell a country gentle-woman that the wind is south-west, and the weather lowering, and like to rain, and she will easily understand it is not safe for her to go abroad thin clad in such a day, after a fever: she clearly sees the probable

> connexion of all these, viz. south-west wind, and clouds, rain, wetting, taking cold, relapse, and danger of death, without tying them together in those artificial and cumbersome fetters of several syllogisms, that clog and hinder the mind, which proceeds from one part to another quicker and clearer without them." (Locke 1706: IV.xvii.4 cited in Harris 2009a: 106)

Retrojecting syllogistic reasoning onto the thought processes of others as an explanatory mechanism for rational activity is analogous to stuffing a pillow into a box then assuming its nature was cuboid all along. It also involves an unwarranted elevation of the syllogism far beyond its original pedagogical purposes. It is unwarranted because the syllogism—just as is the case with Mrs Beeton's cookbooks—presupposes a reflexive engagement with communicative activities that has been shaped by an intimate familiarity with highly literate culture. This alone should be sufficient to preclude any notions of universality concerning the syllogism.

Furthermore, such retrojection of the syllogism onto mental processes as a means of explaining the prior origins of present-day activity is a paradigm case of reification, inviting the same criticisms Ryle aims at the 'intellectualists'. Even were we to allow such culturally specific artefacts as human 'cognitive' universals, we would remain trapped in Ryle's vicious circle of invoking flair to explain flair. In Ryle's case, the circularity of the intellectualists' position involved attempting to explain a flair for chess playing via the 'knowing' of chess maxims while leaving unexplained the flair required in applying the right maxim at the right time. We find a similar situation with Pinker's syllogistically inferring San hunters. It will always be possible to shoehorn a particular interpretation of their decision-making processes when hunting kudu into syllogistic form, just as it was

with Luria's interviewees. Any student of Pinker's theory, however, is left non-the-wiser as to how a San hunter knows when and where to apply the appropriate hunting syllogism. We are never told how it is known that these particular tracks are made by kudu, or that it is the dry season. Again, it would be a relatively trivial matter to concoct further syllogisms relating to identifying kudu tracks and climatic seasons; to follow this route, however, would be to make precisely the same mistake as Carroll's sceptical tortoise. This brings us back to the 'riddle of inference', which, on Pinker's telling, is solved by the positing of mental 'rationality' executions. However, in light of Ryle's argument it becomes clear that Pinker's story leaves much to be desired; principally, it does not explain how we are able to bring our genetic endowments to bear on real life scenarios in the here-and-now. This is the point at which Pinker's rationality is most obviously segregated from the needs and demands of daily social activity.

On the Pinkerian (viz. evolutionary psychology, see Pinker 2002) view, there is, putatively, no rationality 'hierarchy' amongst humankind; we all have primitive minds: people reading newspapers and posting on TikTok today have exactly the same minds as those who crossed the Bearing Strait in search of large game millennia ago. Rationality is universal and monolithic: "Rationality is disinterested. It is the same for everyone everywhere, with a direction and momentum of its own" (Pinker 2021: 155). Pinker's mechanistic picture of rationality attempts to obviate the question of *whose* rationality is under discussion—there is only one rationality to be had. However, the scriptist heritage of Pinker's rationality belies the ideal. Furthermore, particular passages in Pinker's writing reveal that there is something disingenuous about the claim to rationality being universal in the first place. For example:

> “The arc of knowledge is a long one, and it bends toward rationality. We should not lose sight of how much rationality is out there. Few people in developed countries today believe in werewolves, animal sacrifice, bloodletting, miasmas, the divine right of leaders, or omens in eclipses and comets, though all were mainstream in centuries past.” (Pinker 2021: 163)

Rationality may be universal but it is not universally, or evenly, put into practice. Rather, it clumps, and it just so happens to clump within the depressingly familiar boundaries of the bastions of Northern modernity. Pinker’s *few people in developed countries* gives the game away, for, when all is said and done, the rationality under question is the preserve of modern, educated people of the Global North, i.e. “we children of the enlightenment” (Pinker 2021: 160). In other words, people who think like Pinker. To care whether what we believe is true or false, "to conquer the universe of belief and push mythology to the margins" on Pinker’s view, is the preserve of “we” WEIRDs, i.e. those who are “Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic” (Pinker 2021: 160). In this light, Pinker’s discussion of the San takes an unpleasant (and unsubstantiated) chauvinistic turn, revealing an inability or unwillingness to ascribe rationality to ways of thinking and acting in the world that might differ from his own. This is rationality as yardstick, a measuring device against which people who think differently from Pinker’s WEIRDS will always be found wanting.

Concluding Remarks

Whatever the aims of Pinker's work, it would seem to propagate, rather than mitigate, the epistemological hegemony of the Global North. Does the work

of Oxford scholar Roy Harris, himself a product of the intellectual traditions and institutions of the Global North, fare any better? Might integrational theory provide a conception of rationality that is useful to those working within Southern Theory, or is it simply staking out new territories for what Santos (2018) has called the North's "cognitive empire"? I would like to end the present discussion by highlighting two interrelated grounds for optimism on this matter[63].

One reason concerns the radicalism of Harris' thought. Although Noam Chomsky's generative project could be seen as the antithesis to work done in integrationism and Southern Theory, it might be thought that when writing on *politics*, Chomsky is, prima facie, much more closely aligned with the sympathies and ideologies of Southern Theory. However, on Santos' view, this is not necessarily the case because Chomsky (still wearing his political hat) does not sufficiently interrogate or challenge the epistemological foundations underpinning Eurocentric ideals and conceptions of rationality:

> "Habermas and Chomsky, in spite of what separates them, sit comfortably upon the epistemological foundations of Eurocentric modernity and are solely concerned with confronting it with the need to live up to its proclaimed values, ideas, and conceptions of rationality. For both of them, the global North, as a culture, contains within itself the building blocks for the construction of a better, freer, more just society worldwide. […] In the case of Chomsky, nothing is wrong with the Eurocentric values, ideals, and modes of rationality." (Santos 2018: 244)

The same cannot be said of Harris, for whom integrationism represents not merely an alternative theory of communication but a "rival epistemology" in stark and mutually exclusive opposition to the segregationist thinking dominant

[63] See also Pablé (2019a) for further discussion on this topic.

in the Western academy (Harris 1996: 124f). Rationality and the Literate Mind challenges the epistemological roots of what he terms "Aristotelian rationality" (of which Pinker provides one current example) and proposes an alternative, an integrational rationality which "consists in the ability to partake meaningfully in […] co-ordinated activity" (2009a: 131) and has the capacity to encompass multiple rationalities (2009a: 160). This is in keeping with integrational theory more generally, which is rooted, not in reified abstractions, but in activity and practical experience:

> "[T]he strategies and assumptions people bring to bear on the communicational tasks of daily activity, tasks they are obliged to deal with by whatever means they can, are all an integrational linguistics needs to study in order to advance our understanding of what language is and the part it plays in our lives." (Harris 2003b: 52)

This leads us to a second reason for optimism. Integrationism's concern with the bespoke creativity of everyday practical activity strikes a deep chord with the anti-universalism in the work of Santos (2018: 35), who conceives of Southern methodologies as "crafts and craftsmanship" (2018: 306n15), drawing inspiration from "artisanal practices", which he characterises as follows:

> "The artisan does not work with standardized models; the artisan never produces two pieces exactly alike. The logic of artisanal construction is not mechanical; it is, rather, repetition as creation." (Santos 2018: 35)

In turn, this passage chimes closely with integrationism's focus on the open-ended creativity expressed in the strategies and marshalling of resources by people in their daily communicative activity. For Harris, rationality is "a product of the sign-making that supports it" (2009a: 160), which, in turn, is based in what

Harris terms operational discriminations (2009a: 126ff, see Chapters 2 and 3). “Needed as much by preliterate as by literate communities” (Harris 2009a: 133), operational discriminations are the semiological features that form the basis to all our signmaking activity (2009a: 132), and can be thought of as the specific semiological requirements imposed by circumstances on agents involved in particular instances of “deliberate human activity” (Harris 2009a: 133). With the notion of operational discriminations, Harris suggests a way to think about rationality that is thoroughly non-representationalist, does not privilege the communicative, cognitive or epistemological assumptions of the Global North, and, being based in practical activity, has the potential to reintegrate rationality, “to restore the links between ‘logical relations’ and ‘social relations’” (Harris 2009a: 156). This might well be a goal of interest to integrationists and Southern Theorists alike.

One way of understanding Pinker’s (2021) analysis of the (as he sees it) rationality underpinning the San’s hunting practices, and Luria’s (1979) analysis of the “mental activity” of his Kyrgyz and Uzbeki subjects, is to see their work as a continuation of the fallacy Harris (2009a: 138) accuses Bloomfield of committing (i.e. mistaking his respondents’ operational discriminations for those of his own) that was raised in **Chapter 3**. This will be useful to bear in mind as we turn to **Chapter 5** and conduct a critical exploration of Goodwin (e.g. 2018) and Pennycook’s (e.g. 2017) analyses of communicative activity, as we can see a similar lack of desire to interrogate one’s own reflexive analytic engagement with the communicative activity of others in their work also.

Chapter Five: Analytic Conundrums

Introduction

In what follows I attempt to bring together many of the insights garnered over the previous chapters to critically appraise the analytic work of Charles Goodwin, Alastair Pennycook and some of their colleagues. Whereas Louis Hébert and Steven Pinker, whom we encountered in **Chapters 3** and **4** respectively, might be seen as 'strawmen'[64] from an integrational perspective, in that their approaches are so unabashedly segregational, I do not think the same can be said of Goodwin or Pennycook[65], at least going by outward appearances (and are, therefore, an attempt to 'steelman' the arguments presented in this thesis). For example, Donald Favareau, in the introduction to a festschrift in Goodwin's honour describes his work in the following terms:

> "Chuck Goodwin's investigations moved toward a more holistic view of interaction, incorporating the material environment, spaces temporally and/ or spatially disconnected from the one where the current interaction ensues, and perceptive and cognitive phenomena, such as vision, into his analysis.
>
> Even more importantly and originally, his dynamic view on linguistic, embodied, and material resources has been shown to hold not only for co-present

[64] Though, I would maintain, worthwhile targets for critique all the same, for the reasons expressed in the chapters where their work is covered. In the case of Hébert, his segregational approach to analysis is representative of how semiotics is currently taught in many university settings. Pinker, on the other hand, outside of academia is possibly the best-known cognitive psychologist going, particularly in regard to his popularity in the 'well-informed lay person' book market, and as an outspoken 'public intellectual'.

[65] Both are also considered leaders in their fields, linguistic anthropology, and posthumanist applied linguistics, respectively.

> interaction, i.e., within the situated *hic et nunc* of talk as it emerges moment-by-moment, but also for historically linked chains of actions across contexts, generations, historical moments and even across species." (2018: 11)

Given this description, the casual reader may be led to think that Goodwin's work shares much in common with, and has similar aims to, the integrational perspective advocated for over the previous chapters. However, on closer examination, this proves not to be the case. Goodwin's (e.g. 2018) approach assumes a separation of *semiological material* from *semiological activity*, in that people's communicational environments are seen as populated by various semiological resources that pre-exist their creative communicational activity.

Similarly with Pennycook, who has engaged with Harris' work, at times approvingly (e.g. 2018: 51), others critically (e.g. 2018: 112[66]), and who also takes what might be considered a 'holistic' approach to language and communication (e.g. 2023). However, in another parallel with Goodwin, Pennycook's (e.g. 2017) posthumanist methodology posits assemblages of semiotic material that is considered 'semiotic' *prior to, or independently of, human communicative activity*. The common mistake both scholars make, from an integrational perspective, and the overriding theme of this chapter, is to neglect their own creative signmaking activity in their respective analyses, with the result that the missing element—i.e. their own creative role in the analytic process—is transposed onto the participants in Goodwin's case, and the environment (or the "assemblage", e.g. 2017) in Pennycook's case.

[66] It might be pointed out that the critical engagement with Harris' work in these passages concerns an area of Harris thinking (in regard to communication and *perception*) that has received sceptical treatment from those more firmly aligned with integrationism (e.g. Jones and Read 2023).

The chapter begins with a continuation of the discussion on perspectives began in **Chapter 3** and how this relates to the notion of *communicational* or *analytic conundrums*. We then move on to consider Goodwin's work with particular attention to his notion of lamination and the Eurocentrism of his work. Next, we turn to look at Pennycook's research through the lens of competing notions of complexity, communicational facts and the notion of the 'expert view'.

Analytic Perspectives and Conundrums

Third-person perspectives do not come in a one-size-fits-all. In **Chapter 3** we thought about traffic lights from what could be thought of as 'road-user' and 'road-planner' viewpoints, and saw how both involve different elements of first- and third-person perspectives. One way to think about the differences between one third-person perspective and another is in terms of the degrees of *abstraction* and *concreteness* involved.

Returning for a moment to an example of driving a car (though we should probably expect to find analogous features in many examples of communication we could think up or remember), there is a concreteness to how I am thinking about the other road users. I certainly do not want to hurt a pedestrian by driving into them, and I am concerned with what they are doing at the moment and what they might do in the immediate future. There is a degree of abstraction to my thinking also, however. My engagement with these people only goes so far, they are *fellow* road users to be sure, but our interaction is likely to be fleeting, I do not know, nor particularly care, where they have been or where they are going, beyond their immediate activity in our momentarily shared 'traffic light frame'.

Jones (2017b), in a discussion on “the abstract and the concrete”, highlights a passage from Goffman (1975: 248 in Jones: 2017b: 191) written on a similar topic. Goffman uses the example of two people deciding whether to play chess or checkers. To this couple—"the players”—which game is decided upon is of upmost importance, “quite different dramas will unfold”, depending on which game they choose to play. This is in contrast, writes Goffman, to “a stranger or employer or a janitor or policeman” who might come across the pair. For these, more disinterested parties, “it will usually be quite sufficient to know that the men are playing a boardgame”, with which game being specifically played being superfluous to requirements. Often, however, real-life perspectives may not always fit quite so neatly into the *player* or *nonplayer* role. In the waiting at a traffic light example above, it is probably fair to say that I am not as invested in the intricacies of what the other road users are up to as I might be my chess opponent, but I am perhaps more of ‘a player’ than the busy janitor, for whom the two people engaged in a chess game are merely ‘objects’ getting in the way and so hindering the task of sweeping the floor. I am at least involved in the same “’frame’ or ‘activity system’” (Jones 2017b: 191, drawing still from Goffman’s work and terminology – see **Chapter 2**) as the other drivers in a way the janitor and the chess players are not.

To further illustrate how third-person perspectives may vary, we can think of a scenario in a café. For reasons that will become apparent shortly, for this scenario we will take inspiration from the concocted examples of Ray Jackendoff (1990) and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980). Jackendoff (1990: 242) has one waitress saying to another “*The ham sandwich over in the corner wants some more coffee*” (in the case of Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 35) we are left

unsure who was supposed to say, if anybody, their equivalent linguistic tidbit: "*The ham sandwich is waiting for his check*"). Jackendoff's waitresses—in terms of the third-person perspectives they might adopt in regard to one another—are perhaps close to Goffman's two chess players, operating in the same 'café frame' (rather than a 'chess frame'), possibly well-known to one another and, hopefully, successfully integrating their respective activities towards the efficient running of the café establishment. In this sense we might say their perspective towards each other leans towards the concrete, over the abstract (cf. Jones 2017b: 191).

As we begin to pan out from the two waiters, we arrive at the customer, i.e. the 'ham sandwich' in the corner. The customer, assuming they are aware of the exchange between the waiters at all, will have a different third-person perspective on events than those working in the café. Their perspective on the exchange would, presumably, be more 'janitor like', than that of the waiters who were talking to one another. The customer, however, is still more of a 'player' in the exchange (perhaps, for example, being put out slightly at being called 'a ham sandwich'), than, say, the area manager of the café who was not present on this particular day. While theirs is unlikely to be a disinterested view, it could (depending on the manager) begin to move away from the concrete perspective of close-working colleagues, towards a concern with more abstract qualities such as the waiters' 'reliability', 'personal initiative' and 'disposition towards customers'. More abstract still, could be the third-person perspective of the CEO of the café chain, to whom the waiters become less people qua individuals, and more numbers in flow charts and spreadsheets concerning payroll, profits, employer National Insurance contributions and the like.

We then come to the linguists and their third-person perspectives on events. Shortly, we will be turning our attention to examples where linguists and anthropologists observe mundane, real-life communicative activity (either directly, or more commonly, video recordings of episodes of communication). In the case of Jackendoff, Lakoff and Johnson, the events are more likely invented, their perspective on the café scene, however, is still instructive. For present purposes, therefore, we can give them the benefit of the doubt and imagine that at one time they did overhear the reported exchange, while perched in a corner of the café opposite the 'ham sandwich' in question. The third-person perspective of this trio of linguists, in regard to the waiters' communicative activity, takes abstraction in yet another, and rather extreme it might be added, direction.

The linguists are not players in the café 'game', rather, they are playing a very different language game, one often termed *linguistic analysis*[67]. In the type of linguistic analysis carried out by Jackendoff, Lakoff and Johnson, *who* said *The ham sandwich is waiting for his check*, and *why*, *where*, or *when* it was said, or *what* purpose it served in the ensuing activity, are complete irrelevances. This extremely abstract third-person perspective arises due to the linguists' highly reflexive, and *creative*, framing of the original activity in question (see Jones 2017a). With the creation of this particular kind of linguistic-analysis-frame, the

[67] Harris (1998a: 24f) makes an insightful observation that is highly relevant to this discussion (and the chapter more generally), when he compares *tennis commentary* and *linguistic analysis*. Both the sports commentator and the linguist rely on previous experience to be able to do their job: "the first requirement for being a good commentator is a thorough knowledge of how to play tennis" (1998a: 25), and no linguistic analysis would get off the ground were the analysts unable to integrate the activity being studied with some degree of relevant previous communicative experience. "The great difference between tennis commentary and linguistic commentary" however is that while the tennis commentator is not required to play tennis the linguistic analyst is required to "engage in linguistic activity" (1998a: 25). This, as we shall see in the case of Goodwin and Pennycook, all too often goes underappreciated in communication analysis.

participants and *their* communicative activity become transparent, instead making way for highly abstract *linguistic conundrums* (cf. Jones' (2017a) *formal abstractions*) that have nothing to do with the first-person experience of the original actors: these conundrums are of the linguists' own making[68]—a reflection on their own interpretation of events. Events which are more often than not delivered at one or several removes from the original activity via video, audio recording and/or written transcription in the form of linguistic 'data'. The linguists' analysis, therefore, is perhaps better thought of as *a report on their own communicational engagement with the episode in question*, or, more likely, video, audio and written "traces" (see Duncker 2017a) of the original activity. *This* engagement, in turn, constitutes its own episode of communicational activity, i.e. involves its own temporally-bound integration of activities, and so is subject to the same radical indeterminacy as all other communication (see Harris 1998a: 25). However, this is all too often forgotten by the linguists conducting analyses, and so there is a danger that *their* analytic communicational activity becomes transparent, along with the communicational activity of the original participants. It is only once the all too inconvenient activity of the analysts themselves has been jettisoned from the analytic frame, that we are led to believe in the possibility of a neutral, objective, third-person perspective.

However, it should be borne in mind that these abstractions, be they the linguist's sentences and conundrums, the numbers in the CEO's flow charts or the ideal employee characteristics the manager is on the lookout for, do not arise

[68] In the case of Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 36), the conundrum becomes how to disambiguate the referential functions of metonymy and metaphor; whereas in the case of Jackendoff, the conundrum concerns how to design a "rule of construal" where "ham sandwich, serves not as head but as an argument of a modifier" (1990: 242).

ex nihilo. They are products of particular viewpoints and rooted in a long history of prior semiological activity. In the case of the linguists' abstractions, if we trace these roots back, we are led, similarly as we were with rationality, to ideas about language that go back at least as far as Aristotle and the advent of highly literate societies. In doing so, we can begin to see their Eurocentric heritage and connections to perspectives on language that only arise once a particular view of the written word is taken to be the defining archetype of semiological signs more generally (see Harris 2009a and **Chapter 4**).

All Analysis is Itself Communicative Activity: Goodwin and Pennycook

As we take a close look at the analytic methodologies of Charles Goodwin (e.g. 2018) and Alastair Pennycook (e.g. 2017, 2023), there will be a particular focus on their methodological practices *as communicative activity in its own right*. This, it would appear, is an aspect of their approach to studying communicative activity that is, at the very least, underappreciated. The assumed third-person perspectives adopted by Goodwin and Pennycook are, arguably, less abstract than that of Jackendoff, Lakoff and Johnson. These perspectives can, however, still be seen to create their own *communicational conundrums* that have little to do with the activity of the participants with which they communicatively engage with in the course of conducting their analyses.

Both Goodwin (2018) and Pennycook (2023) can be said to take *multimodal* approaches to the study of communication and activity. While it might be thought that multimodal analyses of communication such as theirs deserve

some credit for broadening the scope of inquiry beyond the 'purely linguistic', it would be a mistake to assume that this provides a satisfactory response to the charge of segregationism (e.g. Harris 1996; see also Jones and Duncker 2021: 71, who raise a similar point in relation to Goodwin). The introduction, *alongside language*, of further *semiotic resources* whether they be *gesture*, *environmental structure*, or *prosody*, such as we find in Goodwin (2018), no less presupposes an *initial* segregation of *the linguistic* from *the non-linguistic* than do those approaches that purport to limit their focus to linguistic matters only. Rather, the particular divisions of communicative activity envisioned by Goodwin and Pennycook are a product of their own particular framing of, or communicational engagement with, (the recording of) the activity in question. In other words, both Goodwin and Pennycook *break up the activity being analysed into parts of their own making*. The *communicational conundrum* then becomes a question of asking how these parts are put back, or form, together into a cohesive, meaningful whole[69]. In the case of Goodwin it is proposed that this is done by the participants of the activity under analysis by a process of *lamination* (2018). For Pennycook (2017), who takes a posthumanist approach, the participants themselves come to be seen as lacking agency and it is the parts themselves that somehow come together to form *semiotic assemblages*. What goes largely unacknowledged in both kinds of account is that all this breaking up and putting back together is much more a reflection of the communicative activity and framing of the analysts themselves, than it is of the participants' communicative activity or experience. Another way of thinking about this is in terms of Harris'

[69] Cf. Harris (1998a 144): "The distortion the integrationist protests against is a distortion which arises not from observation, but, on the contrary, from one kind of interpretation, which involves treating an integrated whole as if it could be taken apart like a machine in order to isolate the ultimate constituents". See **Conclusion** for further discussion on this passage.

(2009) *operational discriminations* (ODs), in the sense that the analyst makes the unwarranted assumption that the respective ODs are the same for both analyst and participant, never mind that they are engaged in very different communicative activities (see **Chapter 3**). This is a point to which we will return throughout the following chapter.

Charles Goodwin: Putting the Pieces Together

Lamination

Goodwin, in his book *Co-operative Action* (2018), provides many examples of activity that has been broken down into "constituent parts" (2018: 109)—parts sometimes referred to as "semiotic fields" or "materials", and on other occasions as "semantic resources". The notion that *action* is built from *parts* is fundamental to Goodwin's view of humanity generally:

> "The ability to construct action by joining different kinds of materials with complementary properties into a package where each can elaborate the others (linguistic structure and prosody, gesture, phenomena in the world, etc.) is central to the omnivorous combinatorial power of human action." (2018: 13)

Arising from this perspective on human activity, a major focus of Goodwin's research comes to involve looking at how his participants are able to *build* action and meaning out of these semantic resources.

Many of Goodwin's analyses draw on the impressive communicative abilities of aphasia sufferer *Chil*; these will serve as an initial example of how the notion of *lamination* is used in his work. Chil was left with only "a three-word

vocabulary: *Yes*, *No*, and *And*", after a "blood clot that formed in the left hemisphere" of his brain (2018: 59). Despite "Chil's catastrophically impoverished digital resources" (2018: 109), Goodwin writes, "he remained for the rest of his life a powerful actor and indeed speaker, someone who could not only engage in rapid face-to-face interaction, but also carry on conversations on the phone" (2018: 59). Goodwin sees this communicative competence as being achieved through Chil's ability to marshal a variety of semiotic resources:

> "Though able to speak only three words Chil in fact possessed a range of other semiotic resources that were crucial to his ability to build meaning and action with others." (2018: 60)

Chil has, by Goodwin's tally, in addition to his "limited lexicon", *five* semiotic resources available to him. These resources can be broadly categorised as: *what others say*, *prosody*, *emotion*, *gesture*, and *the social and material environment* (2018: 60f)". Particularly important for Chil, is prosody:

> "Chil's rich prosody is a most important component of his combinatorial resources, and contributes to his ability to build action by combining different kinds of signs into meaningful wholes." (Goodwin 2018: 109)

Lamination is the name Goodwin gives to this process of building meaningful action out of this range of resources:

> "Rather than being constituted within a single, coherent semiotic medium, such as language, action can be built by rapidly joining together unlike materials with complementary properties, a process that will be called lamination." (2018: 105)

An important aspect of lamination in Goodwin's account of communication involves building on, in the sense of over-layering, the talk of others. In other

words, ‘what other people say’ becomes a publicly available resource to be used as a building block for the construction of further communicative activity. Goodwin often uses diagrams such as the following to illustrate this:

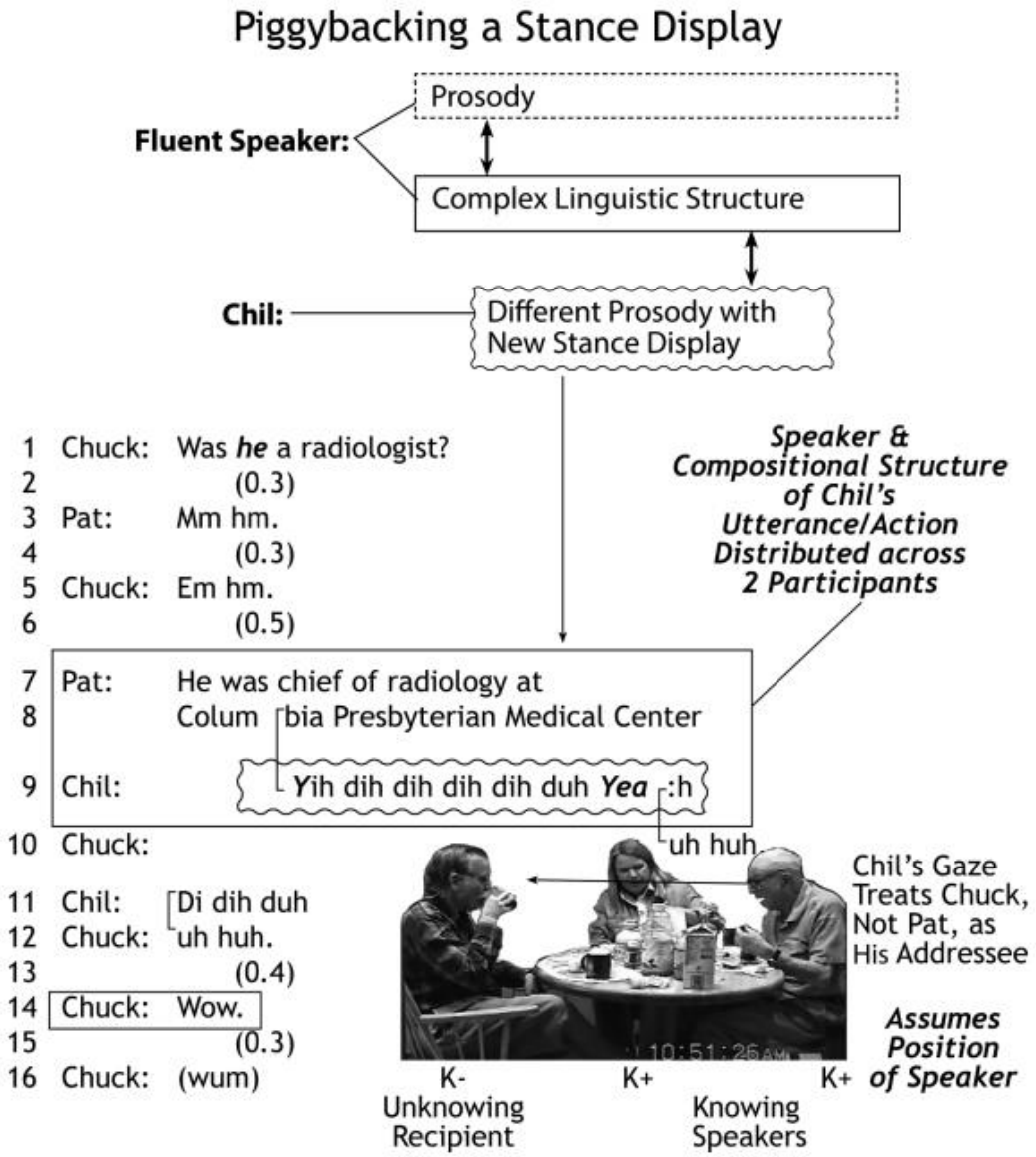

Figure 9.1 Chil builds an action by attaching his prosody to rich language structure created by someone else.

(Taken from: Goodwin 2018: 125)

In the episode of communication being studied in this particular instance, Chil is visited by his son Chuck and daughter Pat. The trio are discussing a radiologist friend of Chil and Pat’s, someone who is relatively unfamiliar to Chuck

(hence his designation as “unknowing recipient”). Goodwin’s focus is the way in which—as he construes it—Chil lays his own *prosodically* sophisticated vocalisations over Pat’s *lexically* rich utterance:

> “Chil overlaps what Pat is saying with a string of syllables containing an extended prosodic contour. This enables him to display a strong evaluative stance to what Pat is saying. In essence he relaminates Pat’s utterance by replacing her prosody with his own, while retaining, and using for his own purposes, the rich lexicon and grammatical structure that she has constructed.” (2018: 124)

Using his own prosody on top of Pat’s words allows Chil to say something “that Pat does not, while using the content of her talk to do this” (2018: 126). Chil is thus able to “laminate a unique stance display on this common linguistic structure” and therefore “acts as an independent speaker in his own right, rather than as someone who is merely affiliating with what Pat is doing” (2018: 126).

Analytic Boundaries

Lamination is by no means a communicational process that is unique to Chil’s communicational experiences, or his particular communicative competencies, but is seen as a universal aspect of human activity. As a further example, lamination is an important aspect in Goodwin’s account of communication between a group of archaeologists engaged in fieldwork. Here, Goodwin similarly identifies “gesture”, “material structure in the environment” and “speaker’s talk” as distinct elements of the “action complex” that their communicative cooperation builds:

> “The dirt under Ann’s finger is indispensable to the action complex being built here. The finger indicates relevant graphic structure in the dirt, while that structure provides organization for the precise location, shape, and trajectory of the gesture. Each mutually elaborates the other, and both are further elaborated by the talk that accompanies the gesture. Ann’s gesturing hand is but part of a multimodal complex that not only includes the speaker’s talk, but extends beyond the body to encompass material structure in the environment.” (2018: 231)

One of Goodwin’s purposes in drawing attention to the activity of the archaeologists is to show the possibility, and necessity, of moving beyond the usual strictures of traditional analysis where “an invisible *analytic boundary* is frequently drawn at the skin of the participants [emphasis added]” (2018: 230). To this end, in the passage above Goodwin illustrates to his readers how this analytic boundary is too limiting: gesture and the physical environment need to be considered together because both are resources used by human cognition and action. Goodwin puts it thus:

> “Human cognition and action are unique in the way in which they use as resources both the details of language and physical and cultural environments that have been shaped by human action on a historical timescale.” (Goodwin 2018: 230)

In some respects Goodwin’s more comprehensive efforts should be lauded as an improvement on many traditional approaches to studying human activity, i.e. those that stop “at the skin of the participants”. However, although broader in scope, Goodwin would seem to be failing to acknowledge his own transparent (to him, it would seem) analytic boundaries, no matter the degree to

which his analyses may transgress those boundaries. Perhaps first and foremost is the boundary Goodwin places between cognition and action in the passage cited above (and thus possibly falling prey to Ryle's (2009) critique of the analytic distinction between *knowing-how* and *knowing-that*; see **chapter 4** for discussion). However, so too are Goodwin's categories of semantic resources, be they grammatical structure, lexicon, gesture or prosody. All are the product of Goodwin's own third-person analytic perspective on the activity of his participants. The argument is not to say, necessarily, that these terms are not sometimes useful ways of talking about and making sense of our communicational experience. Rather, the point is to question the usefulness of Goodwin's focus on examining how his participants put the pieces together in communicative activity, if those pieces are a reflection of Goodwin's own communicational experience with the episodes of communication and not those of his participants.

This, it would seem, is a widespread problem. Goodwin's work generally, and in particular his notion of lamination, has been influential on a number of scholars studying human activity and communication (see, for example, Favareau's (2018) edited collection of "*Essays in Honour of Charles Goodwin*"). One such example is provided by the work of Philipsen and Trasmundi (2020), which utilises the notion of lamination to explain the interaction between a psychoanalyst and her patient, with a particular focus on the use of gesture between the participant dyad. Philipsen and Trasmundi summarise Goodwin's concept of lamination as follows:

> "In, among others, Charles Goodwin's work, it has been the subject of intense scrutiny how our voices, bodies and hands are coordinated in interaction. Thus,

> intertwined, semiotic resources become – with his term – laminated in one whole-bodied activity, when at the same time they provide multiple, rich and complex meaning potentials and cognitive affordances to us in situated interaction (Goodwin, 2018).” (2020: 3)

Echoing Goodwin, Philipsen and Trasmundi (2020) see activity as consisting of parts. Likewise, the job of stitching these parts back together comes to be seen as the responsibility of the analysts’ participants:

> “In the first part of this dialogue, she utters “yes but I am in control of it (.) I know what I’m doing” while speaking fast and sustaining the point towards her own chest. Here the patient expresses a confident and determined self-perception, however, this is laminated with a fast paced and hectic manner of speaking.” (Philipsen and Trasmundi 2020: 9)

However, these parts, as with Goodwin, are products of the analysts’ own *analytic boundaries* (compare with *ODs*, below). While making a distinction between ‘determined self-perception’ and ‘a fast paced and hectic manner of speaking’ is not necessarily ‘wrong’ per se, it is a distinction that reflects Philipsen and Trasmundi’s experience of communicatively engaging with the video recordings of the psychoanalytic therapy session. We are not presented with evidence that these distinctions are recognised by the participants themselves. In other words, they are analytic distinctions of the analysts’ own making. Assuming it is the participants’ task is to knit these parts together involves transposing *the analysts’ communicative activity* onto *the participants*, making transparent the former and inevitably distorting (cf. Harris 1998a: 144) the latter.

Products of a Literate Mind: Where do Goodwin's Categories Come From?

This is not the first time Charles Goodwin's work has been subjected to an integrational critique. Jones and Duncker, in their paper: *A clash of linguistic philosophies? Charles Goodwin's 'co-operative action' in integrationist perspective*, take Goodwin to task for attempting to build a universal theory of human activity using a methodology based in a "Eurocentric meta-linguistic framework" (2021: 67). When such a methodology is combined with "a model of communication founded on the unexamined linguistic reflexivity of the linguistic analyst" the result is "circularity" (Jones and Duncker 2021: 80). In other words, when *our own analytic perspective is not taken into account* and we then go looking for particular meta-linguistic or meta-communicative 'items' corresponding to the analytic distinctions our particular approach puts into place, *we will find them*. Their 'discovery' can then be taken as vindication of our particular methodological approach.

In his response to the "disciplinary fragmentation" that Harris' charge of segregationism criticises (see Jones and Duncker 2021: 67), Goodwin fails to realise that the fragmentation was a product of a particular conception of language all along—a conception that Goodwin's approach tacitly (if not, explicitly) endorses. This view of language is one that is distinctly literate and Eurocentric (Harris 1989 and 2009a; see also **Chapter 4**). Jones and Duncker summarise this point succinctly when they write that:

> "Goodwin's linguistic case for his conception of 'co-operative action' is based on the claim that participants' linguistic acts deploy pre-existing, intersubjectively

> real, structural characteristics and regularities which are 'on display' and, therefore, representable in transcribed form." (2021: 74)

This highlights the scriptism of Goodwin's approach to communication, and his implicit reliance on the notion of the *autoglottic space* (Harris 1989, see also **Chapter 4**). In our previous discussion on rationality in **Chapter 4**, we saw that some linguists and philosophers treat the premises of the syllogism as unsponsored—not the product of any particular person's communicative activity, i.e. as inhabiting the autoglottic space. Goodwin's third-person perspective does not, on the face of it, seem to go to quite this degree of abstraction—*Chil's* resources are not unsponsored in the sense that, in the example above for instance, he is using *Pat's words*. And yet, once Pat's words come to be seen as publicly available *semiotic material* we are moving towards the autoglottic space and the idea of unsponsored meaning.

This move is perhaps more obviously apparent in the case of Goodwin's notion of "semiotic structure in the environment" (e.g. 2018: 171, the dirt under the archaeologist's nails described above provides such an example). The idea that our communicative environment is inhabited by a whole range of 'materials' that have intersubjective semiotic value *independently of any particular individual's communicational activity* is certainly central to Goodwin's model of human communication and activity. In this vein, Jones and Duncker criticise Goodwin's conception of linguistic structure as intersubjectively available to analysts and participants:

> "Linguistic structure, *it is assumed*, is 'out there' – objectively observable and, therefore, *equally accessible both to the participants and to the linguistic analyst*

> who can identify and record the very units deployed. [emphasis added]" (Jones and Duncker 2021:10)

However, there are strong enough parallels between Goodwin's notion of 'non-linguistic' semiotic materials (such as structure in the environment), and a concept of the writing that takes individual words-on-the-page as packages of intersubjectively available semiotic content, to raise suspicions that the former is parasitic on the latter.

Multimodal approaches, if used alongside traditional linguistic methodologies, risk simply extending one problematic ideology concerning words to further 'semiotic resources'. Trasmundi and Philipsen provide a particular stark example of this in the case of gesture. As we can see in the following passages, Philipsen and Trasmundi use classificatory systems of classifying gesture forms from Müller and Kendon. The analysis then involves abstracting particular 'gesture forms' from the general flow of their participants' activity and assigning to these 'forms' particular functions, along the lines of 'requesting' and 'offering', or else more elaborate meanings such as, in the following, "shielding herself slightly from the 'voice inside' her that says she is not in control":

> "Interestingly, this right hand gesture is very different from the left hand precision grip that the therapist just produced. This gesture belongs to the Open Hand Supine family (Kendon, 2004) or Palm Up Open Hand gestures (Müller, 2004, 2017) which is concerned with 'offering', 'showing' or 'requesting'. According to Müller the Palm Up Open Hand gesture "presents an abstract discursive object as an inspectable one – an object, which is concrete, manipulable, and visible –

and it invites participants to take on a shared perspective on this object" (Müller, 2004; cited in Müller, Bressem, & Ladewig, 2013, p. 720)." (2020: 13)

"The first part of the gesture complex is performed similar to a Vertical Palm gesture of the Open Hand Prone family (Kendon, 2004) that is often used as denoting actions of creating a barrier against something or pushing something away. However, in this case, the gesture is performed towards the back, rather than in front of the speaker. With this gesture, the patient is indicating the location of and possibly also shielding herself slightly from the 'voice inside' her that says she is not in control." (2020: 14)

Repeating the scriptist ideology of verbal communication by adding a fixed-gesture-code on top of *talk*, does not alleviate the segregationism in play, nor seem to take us closer to the participants' experience. Similarly, breaking up 'talk' into various sub-categories such as 'prosody' and 'lexicon' does not seem to bring us any nearer. Asta Cekaite, who also borrows heavily from Goodwin, tells us that "interactants laminate talk, prosody, voice quality, body-spatial formations, as well as touch as a specific sensory – bidirectional – modality" (2018: 37). However, what exactly is left of 'talk', once prosody, voice quality, lexicon and grammatical structure have been abstracted, is never quite spelled out for the reader.

The assumption of intersubjectivity can perhaps be seen as one consequence of an under-examined view of interpretation. Again, this is particularly pertinent in Philipsen and Trasmundi's analysis, where there is much discussion of the participants mutually constructing interpretations (with the underlying presupposition that the interpretations themselves are *publicly accessible*). The following is a typical example:

> "As a result, the patient is not only the addressee for this part of the therapist's initial interpretation; rather, as a whole, it is deeply co-participated and co-authored." (2020: 15)

There is less talk, however, of the role interpretation plays in the analysis of Trasmundi and Philipsen.

While from the perspective of integrational semiology *perceptible activity* is open to interpretation (so it is unproblematic in and of itself to talk of interpreting a person's *gestures*), signmaking (or the valeur—the meaning of—the signs produced) is not. I may interpret your 'body language' as *defensive* for example, just as I may interpret 'what you say' as an *insult* or a *compliment*. I cannot, however, interpret the meanings you make of my or your own activity because interpretation involves signmaking and we cannot interpret somebody's *signs*, which are private: the meaning I make when I integrate my activities with yours will not be identical to the meaning you make when you integrate your activities with mine. The idea that interpretation can be publicly available or intersubjective is therefore mistaken, if interpretation is equated with 'mutually arriving at meaning'. Such a view, in relation to the participants, is explicitly stated by Philipsen and Trasmundi:

> "By building on semiotic substrates provided by the other, the participants were able to collaboratively compose a publicly available, shared interpretation of part of the patient's problems." (2020: 22)

What goes unacknowledged is how this view of interpretation informs the underlying conception of what analysis involves and ultimately licenses the assumption that the participants' gestures have (to some extent at least) fixed meanings that are available to 'cross-over' from the participants' episode of

communication into the communicative activity of the analysts and be equally available to all parties.

The Transparency of the Analytic Perspective

For Jones and Duncker, Goodwin's own analytic perspective makes these intersubjective semiotic units or materials invisible:

> "However, the ways in which the 'professional gaze' of the linguistic analyst makes 'transparent' (Goodwin, 2018: 398; cf. Jones, 2016) a menagerie of 'units', 'patterns' and 'structures' within the 'material' under description are not addressed by (remain 'invisible') to Goodwin." (2021: 75)

They are quite correct to point out that the "professional gaze" goes under-reported in Goodwin's work. However, in light of the present discussion we might want to think of what is going on in Goodwin's analyses a little differently. What is transparent in Goodwin's analyses is not the *units* but his *professional gaze*. Rather than making the units *transparent*, it is Goodwin's analytic perspective that *brings them into focus*. Or, drawing from Jones' (2017a) paper discussing *instrumentality and reflexivity*, rather than bringing them into focus, it might be more accurate to say that the perspective adopted by Goodwin *creates* the units in question. Goodwin's analytic approach provides an example of where "the rules of the analytical game create a 'frame' of equivalence criteria in which '(a) language' of units and rules takes on reality as a well-defined object of study" (2017a: 15, see also **Chapter 2**).

The idea that the analytic perspective creates the units to be analysed is a reformulation of what Harris has described as "the twentieth century's most

important lesson in linguistic theory" (1997: 240). This lesson was provided by Saussure over one hundred years ago:

> "Other sciences are provided with objects of study given in advance, which are then examined from different points of view. Nothing like that is the case in linguistics. […] The object is not given in advance of the viewpoint: far from it. Rather, one might say *it is the viewpoint adopted which creates the object*. Furthermore, there is nothing to tell us in advance whether one of these ways of looking at it is prior to or superior to any of the others. [emphasis added]" (Saussure 1983: 8)

In taking his meta-communicative distinctions as "mere classifications of linguistic facts already given *a priori*" (Harris 1997: 241), Goodwin would seem to join the long line of linguists who have "either ignored it [Saussure's lesson] or else failed to grasp how radical its implications were" (Harris 1997: 240).

There are, however, some indications in Goodwin's writing that does seem to go some way to addressing, implicitly at least, this "most important lesson" of Saussure's. Up to now we have seen examples of discussions where lamination is viewed as a communicative proficiency of the participants under analysis. On other occasions, though far less frequently, Goodwin discusses lamination as a *metaphor* for how people build action that is useful for the *presentation* of his analytic research:

> "Individual actions thus provide an elementary form of human social organization in that they are built through the distributed work of multiple actors. To present this as clearly as possible *I will use the metaphor of lamination*. [emphasis added]" (Goodwin 2020: 122)

In particular:

> "Using the notion of lamination to *organize the display of data*, as many of the figures used here do, allows us to move beyond a mere record of the words spoken. [emphasis added]" (Goodwin 2020: 123)

Here we begin to see evidence that Goodwin recognises that the lamination "metaphor" is a product of a particular analytic technique, rather than a reflection of *his participants* first-person experience; this insight, however, goes underappreciated elsewhere in his writing.

Given his multimodal approach, Goodwin needs to present his work in a way that goes beyond only transcription somehow (see Harris 2010a: 43f, Duncker 2019 and **Chapter 1** for discussion on some of the problems of transcription). This requires Goodwin to break down *his* communicative experience of engaging with the various recordings he uses for his analyses into a format suitable for presentation on the pages of academic books and journals. The result is reification, in that this leads to a situation where the products of Goodwin's own activity are seen as prerequisites to the activity being studied. In the course of this back-projection (see van Dijk 2016 and **Chapters 3 and 4** for discussion on the notion of reification as 'back-projection'), Goodwin transposes his own semiological activity on to his participants and gives them the job of putting back together the parts that he created during his own semiological engagement with the recordings of their communicational activity.

In all this, we see further evidence of Goodwin's Eurocentric approach and 'literate mind' (Harris 2009) at work. In Goodwin's figure 9.1 shown above, we find an example of what Harris calls the "conceptualization of time on the analogy of space" (Harris, 2003a: 173 cited in Jones and Duncker 2020: 10)". In other words, Goodwin reformulates dynamic, temporally-situated communicational

processes into a static spatial configuration only afforded by the advent of particular, highly literate, cultural practices (see Harris 2009a). No doubt Goodwin has good cause to do this, for reasons to do with standard academic practices and the need to disseminate his work. However, this becomes highly problematic if the mode of presentation of research comes to so thoroughly influence our conception of not only the first-person communicative experience of the participants themselves, but humanity more generally. Thus, the first-person experience of the participants is lost in the analytic process; perhaps an inevitable consequence of failing to fully-acknowledge that analysis, like all communication, is a 'first-person' endeavour and talk of the 'third-person perspective' is only one way of helping us understand our first-person communicative experience.

Analysis and Operational Discriminations

Another way of expressing the idea that Goodwin transposes his own semiotic activity onto his participants is to say that he is confusing his own ODs with theirs. This is the accusation (first seen in **Chapter 3**, repeated below for convenience and emphasis) that Harris lays at Bloomfield's feet in regard to the latter's analysis of the parallels between notions of 'correctness' among speakers of English and Menomini:

> "At this stage in Bloomfield's argument, however, something odd begins to emerge. As evidence for the parallel between English and Menomini, Bloomfield introduces some phonetic transcriptions of Menomini utterances. Now since the Menomini are preliterate innocents, uncorrupted by writing, it is relevant to ask

> what these transcriptions represent. The only answer available seem to be that they represent what a literate investigator, i.e. Bloomfield (who admits honestly that he has only a 'slight' acquaintance with the language), hears a non-literate informant as 'saying'. But *ex hypothesi* this *cannot* be what the informant hears, since the informant is not hearing speech through the grid of categories imposed by a writing system. In other words, Bloomfield is just as committed as anyone to the scriptist assumption that writing can 'handle actual utterances'. *He is in fact confusing his own ODs with those of the informant*. That confusion is itself a clear illustration of how literacy has affected Bloomfield's thinking. [emphasis added]" (2009a: 138)

The analogy between what Bloomfield is doing in his analysis and Goodwin in his is not exact. In particular, we can assume that Chil and his family and the archaeologists that Goodwin studies are, unlike the Menomini, highly literate. However, it would seem to be a mistake to assume that it follows from this that Goodwin's participants are experiencing their own activity "through the grid of categories imposed" (in this case) by Goodwin, as these relate to the ODs that Goodwin's own semiological activity sets up in the course of his analyses.

Analyses, as communicative processes, such as those we have seen from Goodwin, involve making distinctions that relate to the metacommunicative categories that arise from the particular methodological perspectives adopted. Distinguishing one thing from another requires the *setting up of ODs* (see Harris 2009a: 134). The ODs involved in a particular activity do not antecede the activity in question. In other words, the analyst's ODs are particular to *the analyst's* communicative activity, not the activity of the participants—*their activity* will require its own distinctions and, therefore, the setting up of *their own ODs* particular to the activities *they* are engaged in. Following this, we can see the

analyses of Goodwin, and those using similar methodologies, as resulting in a situation where the analysts come to assume that the ODs involved in their participants' activity are identical to the ODs required for their own, quite distinct, *analytic* activity. This is a point we will return to in more detail when we again consider Harris' three communicational parameters, this time in light of Pennycook's SEMIOSIS framework.

Alastair Pennycook: Communicational Facts and Complexity

Spatial Repertoires and Assemblages

Similarly to Goodwin, Pennycook (e.g. 2017 and 2023) sees the communicational environment as populated with semiotic resources of various kinds. The resources available in any particular place are collectively known as the *spatial repertoire* (Pennycook and Otsuji 2014). The communicational conundrum for Pennycook comes to involve attempting to understand how "people, semiotic resources and objects meet at particular moments and places" in the form of *semiotic assemblages* (2017: 280). We can immediately see from Pennycook's choice of phrasing an important difference between his work and Goodwin's—i.e. people and things are given equal footing in regard to the agency they have in this coming together. Whereas in Goodwin's analyses the interest is in how *people* laminate a disparate array of semiotic resources, the focus of Pennycook's work moves away from the participants' signmaking activity, and instead aims to "provide a way of thinking about how agency, cognition and language can all be understood as distributed beyond any supposed human centre" (Pennycook 2017: 278). Despite this contrast,

however, Pennycook unfortunately differs little from Goodwin in terms of displaying an underappreciation that analysis is itself a communicative process and, consequently, fails to fully-acknowledge the role his own communicational creativity plays in the framing and understanding of the activity he sets out to analyse.

Pennycook has also recently been criticised from an integrational perspective, this time by Adrian Pablé (2025a). In many respects Pennycook uses a similar methodology to Goodwin, in particular one that relies heavily on transcription, thus leaving his approach vulnerable to many of the same criticisms already levelled at Goodwin above. This, however, is not the tack Pablé chooses to take, rather, directing his critical comments "at their philosophy of language, i.e. the very fact that there is an attempt to capture the complex sign-making activities through observation and recordings" (2025a: 229). Pablé takes issue with the idea that the first-person experience of other people engaged in communicative activity is accessible to third-party analysis, arguing that:

> "an ethnographic understanding of language overlooks the primacy and irreducibility of individual sign-making activities, handing the facts over to the linguistic experts." (2025a: 236)

Pablé's critique informs the following discussion of Pennycook's work, in particular, we will return in some depth to the idea that any attempt to capture signmaking activity via observation is fundamentally misguided. For now though, we will turn to consider Pennycook's methodological approach by looking at some examples from his analyses.

The Expert View

Pennycook (often with his regular co-author Emi Otsuji) has spent well over a decade (2023) studying multilingual interactions occurring in various locales "looking at local language practices as people get by metrolinguistically, shaping and remaking the linguistic landscapes of restaurants, cafés, kitchens, market places, construction sites, shops and small businesses" (Pennycook and Otsuji 2014: 168). The following transcription, adapted from "data"[70] arising from an interaction in a "Bangladeshi-owned corner shop in Sydney" (2017: 271), provides an example of a typical component of Pennycook's presentation of his analyses:

Excerpt 1 (SO: Shop owner, : CU1 Customer ; CU2 Customer)

English: plain, Bangla: *Italic*, Arabic: **bold**

(1) SO *Aa. … .shokto hoie gese* (the fish is stuck. Hard) [to a female customer already in the shop MS] [trying to dig out the fish packet from the freezer – a lot of noise of packets and ice]

Another customer enters

(2) CU2: **Assalamualaikum** [greeting SO]

(3) SO: **alaikum-assalam** [to the customer].

(4) CU1: *Usse Usse*, Have you got *usse*? Like, what is it for English? What is it called?

(5) SO: This one vegetable?

(6) CU1: Yea, it's a sort of vegetables.

(7) SO: *Usta*?

(8) CU1: *Usta Usta*.

(9) SO: Yea yea this one have.

(10) CU1: *Amnar ase*? (do you have?)

(11) SO: oh, Bangladeshi *vai* (Bangladeshi Bro)?

[70] The notion that communicational activity provides 'data' suitable for analysis is highly problematic from an integrational point of view - see, for example, Harris (2010: 43f), Duncker (2019) and **Chapter 1**.

(12) CU1: Aaa?

(13) SO: ha.

(14) CU1: You are from Bangladesh?

(15) SO: yea.

(16) CU1: oh … *Amake usta den* (can you give me some usta) [to shop assistant]

(Taken from Pennycook 2017: 272)

From an integrational perspective, there are a number of points relevant to the present discussion that we might wish to raise considering Pennycook's use of transcriptions such as the above and the conclusions he draws from them (see also **Chapter 1** for further discussion). One particularly salient issue is the confidence with which Pennycook feels able to declare what is *important* in the exchange. For instance:

> "One focus is on the various combinations of linguistic and non-linguistic resources that play a role here: the conversation over the freezer in Bangla as they try to prise the fish from the bottom: *shokto hoie gese* (the fish is stuck); the standard greetings among many Muslims: **Assalamualaikum alaikum-assalam**. *Also important is the absence of such a greeting from the new customer*, as well as his mixture of Bangla terms and English (in many ways a default language for Sydney and among different communities but not necessarily in a suburb such as Lakemba): *Usse Usse*, Have you got *usse*?. The negotiation of resources is important too, as the customer opens with his spoken varietal term for the vegetable, *usse*, asks how to say it in English with an accompanying hand gesture, and is then redirected towards the more standard Bangla term *usta*. [emphasis added]" (Pennycook 2017: 272)

Examples of these kinds of claims are not uncommon in Pennycook's analyses. The following provides a selection of instances of such declarations over a number of analyses:

1. "**Important** too are the bitter melon (they were in boxes outside the shop which the new customer did not see on his way in)." (Pennycook 2017: 274)
2. "The quiet flipping back and forth of the handle of the basket is an **important** part of the interaction." (Pennycook 2023: 601)
3. "Smell and touch are an **important** aspect of the shopping experience in corner stores." (Pennycook 2023: 608)
4. "there is also a 'branding' effect (with the symbolic capital of French playing an **important** role) on the restaurant floor" (Pennycook and Otsuji 2014: 169)
5. "This mundane act of pointing to a banal object is part of a process of identification that is realised in part verbally […] but is enabled by the presence of the 500 söm note that plays an **important** role as a distributed component of their assembled identities." (Pennycook and Otsuji 2022: 72)
6. "As the phone is passed back across the counter (itself an **important** part of multiple assemblages), it carries a range of meanings" (Otsuji and Pennycook 2021: 65)

[boldface added throughout]

(We might say that 3 and 6 above are *general* statements, the others are *specific* in the terms outlined below.)

The point to make here is not that Pennycook and Otsuji are necessarily wrong to say this or that was an important part of the communicative episode

being analysed from the perspective of the participants[71]. Rather, the pertinent question is, *how do they know?* The various actions, or 'semantic resources', may, or may not, have been important to somebody involved in the communicative activity in question. We simply do not know, and beyond Pennycook stating that such and such was important in a particular case, in none of the above examples is the reader provided with any further justification for these claims. In other words, the above statements are *assertions* of Pennycook's (and sometimes Otsuji's) *opinion on the matter*, from *their* particular analytic third-person perspective on communicative activity that they are often engaging with at one or several removes.

Let us consider Pennycook's claim that the 'new customer' mentioned in the above transcription not saying 'Assalamualaikum alaikum-assalam', is important. We are not told, why this was important, or to whom it was important. Despite this, however, and even though it is not a greeting I recall ever having offered myself, were I asked to proffer an explanation as to why or to whom it was important, I would not be at a total loss of words to do so. The reason for this is because I would be able to draw upon my (whatever I took to be) relevant communicative experience, however limited that may be. Pennycook, I am more than happy to concede, no doubt has a far greater wealth of relevant experience to bring to bear than do I, were the questions put to him. This experience, however, does not give him privileged access to the 'facts of the matter' from the perspective of those directly involved in the communicative episodes that he

[71] There is perhaps a degree of ambiguity in some of the above examples as to whether the importance is related to the participants' experience, or is relative to the aims of the analysis. If the latter, the assertions may then be justified, but this only raises the question of what we actually learn from the analysis about the communication episode itself. At any rate, any ambiguity only suggests the need for more consideration of the matter from Pennycook.

analyses. Both Harris (e.g. 1998a) and Pablé (2025a) offer useful guidance on this topic, as does ethnomethodologist Anthony Wootton (1975), and to whom we shall turn first.

Pennycook writes, as we saw above, that Assalamualaikum alaikum-assalam is “the standard greetings among many Muslims” and that “the absence of such a greeting from the new customer” is important. The former is a *general* statement, the latter is *specific* to a particular communicative event that happened (or, rather, did not happen) in the past. Even if we assume the feasibility of making such general statements in an ‘expert’ (rather than lay) capacity, and further assume the veracity of this particular case, it does not follow that the *lack* of such a greeting is necessarily of importance generally, even less so that it was of importance in *this* particular instance.

There are parallels here with a situation described by Wootton in a discussion of David Sudnow’s 1965 paper on ‘normal crimes’. Sudnow’s argument, Wootton writes, is that:

> “decisions concerning the type of plea a client makes depend heavily on the PD [Public Defender] and DA’s [District Attorney] conception of whether the case is typical of its class – whether it a normal burglary or child molestation, for example. If the case is typical of its class, a typical form of reduced plea will be entered on behalf of the client, although it has to be negotiated with the client beforehand by the PD.” (Wootton 1975: 15)

Wootton goes on to consider a transcript, originally presented by Sudnow, of such a negotiation between a PD and their client. At a certain point in the conversation the PD interrupts the client “when he had enough information to confirm his sense of the case’s typicality and construct a typifying portrayal of the

present defendant" (Sudnow 1965: 269, in Wootton 1975: 16). Wootton's complaint in regard to Sudnow's analysis of the situation, particularly "given that we do not have a direct statement from the PD himself about this matter" (1975: 16), is that, in a nutshell, *other interpretations are always available*. Wootton goes onto provide two such possible formulations that "might well suggest themselves as alternatives to the one provided by Sudnow" (1975: 17). One revolves around the idea that the PD had already decided that a guilty plea was the way forward as long as the client was "reasonable enough to go along with the decision". Another possibility, according to Wootton, could be that, perhaps due to time constraints or the competence of the PD, the assessment was simply handled in "a trivial, perfunctory manner" without much concern for classifying the client or the circumstances of the alleged offence at all.

It does not help Sudnow's case that his formulation may be "the most adequate on the grounds that from his knowledge of what regularly happens in this context seems, on the basis of his experience, the most likely interpretation" (Wootton 1975: 17). Wootton provides two reasons for this. Firstly, because there is a danger of circularity in an argument that follows along the lines of: this interpretation is the most likely because of a wider pattern of behaviour, a pattern for which this example provides evidence. Secondly, and more importantly, writes Wootton, "even if we grant that a wider pattern exists […] it can always be made problematic whether, *in this instance*, that notion is being employed [emphasis original]" (Wootton 1975: 17).

Pennycook's analyses are vulnerable to Wootton's critique on both counts. The argument that the omission of a particular greeting is important because the offer of such a greeting constitutes 'normal behaviour' skirts

tautology at best (cf. Wootton 1975: 17). Also, further possible interpretations abound, not least that perhaps the shop owner was too busily engaged “trying to dig out the fish packet from the freezer” (Pennycook 2017: 272) to notice; or did notice, yet cared not a whit. Similarly with the other examples from Pennycook’s work above. Take the ‘basket flipping’ cited above, for instance. Pennycook elaborates in the following way:

> “There is a level of frustration that this long search for the right kind of dried fish is taking so long […]. The shop assistant puts one leg on the stool behind the counter and fiddles with the handle of the basket sitting on the counter between them. The quiet flipping back and forth of the handle of the basket is an important part of the interaction.” (2023: 601)

We might take from this that, in Pennycook’s opinion, ‘fiddling’ is a typical activity for someone who is frustrated, and the scene described constitutes an example of such behaviour. With this, not only do we see Pennycook foisting his interpretation of events onto his participants but, again, all of Wootton’s concerns are warranted here. Nor is the reader given any assurance that the interpretation of events provided describe the ‘facts of the matter’, beyond taking on trust Pennycook’s expertise on such things.

Communicational Facts: an Integrational View

Although Wootton’s insights are helpful and pertinent to our present discussion, he does not go far enough from an integrational perspective. There remains, in Wootton’s work, an implicit notion that there are objective, general ‘facts of the matter’ pertaining to particular episodes of communication, even if

we can never be sure—at least without asking those involved (cf. Wootton 1975: 16)—what those facts are. The issue from an integrational perspective has already been intimated above in the discussion on interpretation, but warrants a little further consideration.

Pablé, in a discussion of Pennycook's (2023) paper *Toward the total semiotic fact*, drawing from Harris, nicely summarises an integrationist position on 'facts':

> "Roy Harris (2009b: 46) argued against the idea that there are independent linguistic facts at all, claiming that "there are as many linguistic facts as there are different contextualizations of linguistic signs by particular speakers and hearers in particular communication situations". For Harris, the 'linguistic facts' are established when situations arise in which the lay participants feel the need to monitor the communicational process, and hence, using the metalinguistic resources at their disposal, they may ask the others "to repeat, to clarify, to explain, to amplify, to agree or disagree, and so on" (Harris 1998: 145) until the 'facts' are established to the participants' satisfaction. In other words, it is the participants who are in possession of the linguistic facts, and the linguist who wishes to have access to them has "no option but to try to recover them from the participants." (2025a: 230)

However, it might be worth emphasising for the purposes of the present discussion, that 'facts' cannot be 'carried over' from one communicative episode to the next. Communicational facts, from an integrational perspective, are indeterminate and transient. An agreement made in one moment does not bound the participants for ever more. However stringently it may be drafted, a peace treaty between warring nations, say, can still be broken. Human rights provide

another example, gains made on this front in previous decades do not entitle the citizens of the present day to rest on their laurels and expect their hard-won rights to continue to go unchallenged for eternity. The same goes for the minutiae of daily communication. We may try, as Harris suggests, to try and recover the facts from the participants. However, were I to ask the shop owner of Pennycook's (2023: 601) example, 'How were you feeling when fiddling with the basket?' (never mind, 'Were you feeling frustrated at the time, and was the fiddling an outward expression of that frustration?') any agreement we may feel we reach on the issue would, ultimately, pertain to facts of this, new, communicative episode. Nor does 'agreement' equate to sharing of the same 'fact'. We necessarily contextualise things our own way. However much concord there may be between us, my facts are mine, yours are your own.

While this is not to say that such kinds of exercise might not serve valuable purposes at times. (Particularly those occasions where the aim of the endeavour does not pertain to conducting 'linguistic research', one might add. Attempting to better understand what your friend or colleague 'really meant' when they upset you yesterday, over coffee today, can certainly have its merits, for example.) It is to say, however, that the very inquiry as to what the participant felt the facts of the matter were at the time, itself carries the distinct possibility of 'changing the situation', in the sense that in light of the question the participant may well contextualise past events differently than they otherwise would have done, or did at the time. From the perspective of integrational semiology, the activities being integrated and the integrational function of the signmaking involved in the exchange, cannot but be different from the activities being integrated by the

participants in the original episode[72]. Likewise in terms of the ODs involved in each situation. The very idea, therefore, that the 'facts' of previous communication, such as what was important and to whom, can be identified in any kind of determinate manner, as Pennycook seems to assume, is misguided at best. They certainly cannot be declared by fiat, simply by virtue of experience or expertise.

Analytic Complexity

One of Pennycook's (2023) aims is to account, as much as possible, for the "total semiotic fact" of the episodes of communication he studies for his analyses. While Pennycook acknowledges "this search for the total linguistic fact will always be a chimerical goal" (2023: 595) he goes on to suggest that "such attempts can nonetheless be useful since they […] allow us to reflect on the reasons why we may or may not want borders around what we hope to include" before asking "Why not bodies, things, emotions, and place?" (2023: 609). For Pennycook, drawing heavily from the work of Jan Blommaert, the way to get as close as possible to the total semiotic fact is by "insisting on complexity" (2023: 595). In practice this means that "we have to account for the multiplicity of factors that come together around people and place: "These dense and complex objects are the 'stuff' of the study of language in society" ([Blommaert] 2017: 59)" (Pennycook 2023: 596). In other words, Pennycook seems to be suggesting that there is a certain amount of linguistic (or semiotic[73]) 'stuff' involved in a particular interaction that, taken together, constitutes the 'total fact' of the communicative

[72] This, of course, is simply an integrational take on William Lobov's (1973) *observer paradox*.
[73] The two can seem, on occasion, to be used interchangeably in Pennycook (2023).

situation. Therefore, if we were able to cast our analytic ‘net’ wide enough, if not in actuality, in principle at least, we would, even as outsiders to that interaction, be able to provide a complete account for the activity in question.

Evidently, this entails a view of communicational facts that contrasts sharply with the views expressed in the previous section. By extension, we can also reasonably expect to find that this leads to very different conceptions of complexity. Pablé, who has already begun to identify some of these differences, describes Pennycook’s view on complexity as follows:

> “Indeed, the total semiotic fact as construed in ethnographic explorations of complexity does not amount to the single sign-makers’ communicational experiences here-and-now added together: the ‘total communicative context’ (Zhu, Otsuij & Pennycook 2017: 390) is not simply the sum of all individuals, each with their “self-contained competencies that they bring to an interaction” (ibid.) – semiotic complexity is a matter of how the available resources (e.g. language, artefacts, objects, gesture, smells, touch) come together (or ‘meet’) in particular ways and at particular moments.” (Pablé 2025a: 228)

We will consider some of these differences in more detail shortly, but sticking with Pennycook for the moment, we can see his idea of communicational complexity as analogous with the internal workings of a well-made watch. Communication is complex because it involves many different components that, once they have come together—working in unison in the form of assemblages—become “happenings” that are “greater than the sum of their parts” (Tsing 2015: 23, in Pennycook 2023: 610). Also analogously to watches, the facts and complexity of communicative activity are, at least to an analyst with the right tools, open to inspection.

As we saw with Goodwin, the result of this conception of facts and complexity is that the analytic conundrum Pennycook is faced with involves identifying the semantic parts and investigating how they come together:

> "Our task within a sociolinguistics of complexity is not to downplay the importance of linguistic resources but rather to understand how they are intertwined with a broader set of semiotic resources." (Pennycook 2023: 603)

To help with this task, Pennycook has devised a methodological 'net' that, he hopes, can capture as many of these linguistic and semiotic resources as possible and bring to light the relations between them. To this end, Pennycook has reorientated (2023: 597ff) Hymes' (1974) SPEAKING methodological framework towards one "that responds to the recent broadening of sociolinguistics toward a wider semiotics" (2023: 609), this time using the acronym SEMIOSIS:

> "The acronym SEMIOSIS points to the complexity of what is at play, comprising social relations, emotional and affective domains, multilingual practices, iterative activity, objects and assemblages, spatial repertoires, interactivity, and sensory relations." (2023: 595)

This approach to studying communication is an "extension to [Hymes'] way of thinking", one that sees it as possible to analytically identify the "different components of an interaction" (Pennycook 2023: 598). However, in a direct parallel with Goodwin, what is missing is acknowledgement of the role Pennycook's own communicative creativity plays in the analysis and, correspondingly, a failure to take on board Saussure's insight that it is the viewpoint adopted that creates the object. Without these considerations, the categories Pennycook imposes on his participants' communicative activity come

to be seen as objective and universal, rather than as analytic constructs that may, or may not, help us to think about communicative activity in a new light. Pennycook, therefore, does no better than Bloomfield's treatment of the Menomini in terms of imposing his own ODs onto his participants and (particularly given his posthumanist focus) their surroundings. There is no reason to believe that the shop keepers and customers of a particular store in Tokyo (or anywhere else) are experiencing their activity "through the grid of categories imposed by" (Harris 2009a: 138), in this instance, Pennycook's SEMIOSIS methodological framework.

Integrational Complexity and the Three Parameters

The closest Harris comes to Pennycook's SEMIOSIS framework is with his three parameters of communication. In light of the present discussion, it is interesting to compare how an integrational conception of complexity and the three communicational parameters stand up in the face of similar arguments. We will begin with complexity, on which Pablé writes:

> "[T]he integrationist acknowledges complexity on the basis of personal linguistic experience, not by studying it qua disinterested researcher as it manifests itself in so-called 'social' activity. […] human beings manage complex interactive tasks *precisely because* their semiological abilities qua individuals are astoundingly complex, and not because the complexity emerges once the observer applies the right research tools to the social contexts under scrutiny. [emphasis original]" (2025a: 229)

We might want to add to this by pointing out that complexity is, ultimately, 'in the eye of the beholder'. For example, we have already seen how the communicational processes involved in pencil production are unfathomably complex; however, using a pencil is not necessarily a complex task for the person wielding it. Similarly with shopping, whether or not, *pace* Pennycook (2023, see Pablé 2025a for further critique), we find ourselves in a 'multilingual environment'. While working in Russia, despite having little competency in the local language(s), I did not generally find my trip to the nearby shops a particularly onerous or complex task, and would usually return home with whatever I set off to buy. Conversely, trying to find specific varieties of salted and dried fish for a Russian friend, while in my hometown in the UK, only ever resulted in frustration and failure, though even then, 'complex' is perhaps not the first adjective that would come to mind were I asked to describe my experiences.

In a relevant though slightly different vein, activity that a novice might describe as complex, could be seen as relatively simple for the expert. I am reminded of my time learning to snowboard. On the first day of my tuition, merely turning from left to right felt like (and was taught to me as such) a complex, multi-stage process that involved me thinking carefully about the position of my feet, the centre of gravity of my body and the angle of the edge of the board. After a couple of days practice, however, I was able to achieve the same effect by, what came to feel like, simply leaning from side to side. Personally, I find this kind of experience to be not unusual, instead being a typical factor in the learning of many (if not all) new activities, be it driving a car, rock climbing, or cooking a new recipe. Pennycook, though only as a passing afterthought, himself offers a warning against assuming complexity:

> “There is also the danger of seeking ever more complex models to describe what at heart may be quite simple.” (2023: 609)

However, in a manner not at all too different from Goodwin and Pennycook’s semantic resources, we can always find complexity if we look for it. We can always ask, for example, why *these* products in *this* shop at *this* particular price point and, just as Read (1958) did with his inquiry into pencil production, quickly find ourselves emersed in a complex web of intricately linked communicational processes. So too, we might ask questions concerning the people involved in a particular communicative episode, such as who they are, what are their personal histories and why they are communicating in the first place. The end point of these inquiries, inevitably, and analogously with the pursuit for the ultimate source of rationality (see **Chapter 4**), is a complexity such that it is beyond any single person’s ability to grasp in anything like totality, even were such things open to inspection along these lines in the first place. Furthermore, all these inquiries require the adoption of particular third-person perspectives that will serve particular purposes depending, in large part, on who is doing the inquiring and why, but can never lead to objective, impartial, ‘facts of the matter’. To “insist on complexity”, as does Pennycook (2023: 595), therefore, may serve the purposes of his particular brand of analysis, but does not necessarily bring us any closer to the first-person experience of the people involved in the original activity.

We may say something similar about the complexity Pablé finds in our communicational abilities. Undoubtedly, as soon as we begin to think about the communicational, or integrational, proficiencies required to manage the interactive tasks of daily life, we are met with complexity. However, thinking along

these lines also requires the adoption of particular perspectives, whether first-person in respect to our own activity, or third-person in regard to the activity of others. The difference between the views espoused by Pablé and Pennycook is, perhaps, that the latter *imposes* particular categories and communicational challenges of the analyst's own making onto the participants, while the former, more modestly, encourages us to extrapolate from personal experience to try and understand what the experience of others may involve. This view leaves entirely open the possibility of using our communicational creativity to imagine what it might be like to 'walk in another person's shoes', but closes the door on any notion of describing with any certainty or exactitude, never mind *stipulating*, what the experience of others may entail.

These considerations raise interesting questions concerning Harris' (e.g. 1996) biomechanical, circumstantial and macrosocial parameters of communication. As we have seen before (see **Chapter 2**, for example), Harris is insistent that for any analysis to adequately answer "to the actual experience of the participants" it must be conducted in terms of these three parameters:

> "The integrational assumption is that any episode of linguistic communication can be analysed in terms of these three sets of factors, and must be if the analysis is to be adequate, in the sense of answering to the actual experience of the participants. An analysis which fails to do this fails to capture the phenomenon, because *the integration of these various sets of factors is precisely what constitutes the phenomenon*. [emphasis added]" (1993: 322)

Unfortunately, Harris does not elaborate further in the passages from which the above is taken what, exactly, 'answering to the experience of participants' entails in this regard (though see **Chapter 3** and **Conclusion** for

possible interpretations). However, some indication of what this may demand of the analyst is given when Harris writes that languages (such as English, French or German) are “metalinguistic distinctions [… with] which lay members of a linguistic community construe their own linguistic experience” and should be therefore treated (and are from an integrational perspective, see for example, Love 1990) as “explicanda” rather than “theoretical postulates”, as has traditionally been the case in linguistics (Harris 1990: 49). Similarly with investigations into dialects, rather starting with the assumption of their existence, and then proceeding to identify them:

> “What would be required, rather, is an investigation of what speakers recognize in the flux of linguistic variation in which they live as being "dialectal". In other words, the macrosocial diversity in a linguistic community would be investigated as a function of the communicational significance attached to the perception - or non-perception - of variations by the members of the community themselves.” (Harris 1997: 308)

There does appear, however, to be a slightly uncomfortable parallel between Goodwin’s assertion that his participants are “laminating” analytically stipulated “semantic resources”, and Harris’ assertion that his participants are integrating factors that, as Pablé states, are “the result of examining his own experience” (2025d). This being said, while it is difficult to see Goodwin or Pennycook’s semantic resources as anything other than reificatory abstractions arising from their own analytic communicative processes, it may be possible, as Harris writes elsewhere, to see his three parameters as a starting point for inquiry, one that can help to “conveniently distinguish between three different scales” that bear on “the everyday integrational mechanisms by means of which

the reality of the linguistic sign as a fact of life is established" (1990: 50). All the same, it would probably be prudent for any analyst setting off in this direction to be alert to the possible distortions that will inevitably occur when we begin to impose our own ODs onto our participants.

In light of this, however, it perhaps should be highlighted that Harris explicitly states that he has "no wish" to lay down "mechanical application procedures" for linguistic or communicational analysis, or, in other words, integrationism should not be construed as a *methodology* (1997: 304, see also **Chapter 3** and **Conclusion**). The reason for this takes us to the heart of the present discussion: the results of a 'methodological' analysis ultimately tells us much more about the creative communicative activity of the analyst than it does that of the participants[74]. Activity viewed through a methodological lens will inevitably be seen in terms dictated by the categories imposed by the methodology in question; the end product of which can only be circularity. Harris makes a similar point when he writes:

> "What happens when theorists take it upon themselves to supply a methodology is that the resultant analyses proceed, solemnly and inevitably, to "reveal" a structure in the "data" that reflects, point by point, the "system" that is already tacitly incorporated in the methodological procedure." (Harris 1997: 304)

Therefore, rather than a methodology, Harris urges, his integrationist enterprise should be seen as an attempt at "opening up, on a viable theoretical basis, new initiatives in language studies" (1997: 304). Pablé suggests that what integrationists do "is to consider how we can apply respectively [for example] a

[74] Cf. Harris (1990: 51) when he writes: "Grammatical formalizations reveal more about the grammarian than about the language which the grammarian claims to be formalizing."

macrosocial and a circumstantial view to an episode under scrutiny" (2025d). This chimes with Harris' (2006: 13) take on communication itself as being a perspective "from which certain kinds of sequence can be understood"[75], in this sense, therefore, Harris' parameters could be seen as a way of describing, in finer detail, some of the various viewpoints we may adopt on activity 'within' a broader communicational perspective.

Integrational semiology offers an approach to communication that gives humanity its full creative due, one that does not force us "to choose among a pre-determined set of options" (Harris 1996: xi). However, with this creative power comes responsibility, which includes putting on us the onus to not (unwittingly or otherwise) foist our ODs, or interpretation of events, onto our participants. One reason for this being that when we do, it is all too easy to fall into a reificatory trap where the products of our communicative activity come to be seen as necessary prerequisites to the activity with which we are analytically engaging. Furthermore, when we do not attend to the external factors that shape our creativity, we risk the danger of failing to appreciate the effects these influences may have on the ODs we set up during analysis (as Harris (2009a: 138) accuses Bloomfield of doing). Particularly salient examples of this have been seen in the work of Steven Pinker, regarding his conception of rationality, and the categories imposed on the activity of others by Pennycook and Goodwin. All arise out of a particular literate tradition and a perspective on language that goes hand-in-hand with scriptist attitudes. The result of such scriptist ideologies is a mystification of language and communication, along with a downgrading of our powers of

[75] To my knowledge, Harris never put forward alternatives to communication as a perspective on activity. Perception, along the lines offered by Gibsonian psychologists (e.g. Gibson 2015) could be one such contender.

creativity. Together, an unexamined scriptism and reification are perhaps the biggest pitfalls awaiting analysts who fail to take into account their own communicational creativity. One particularly unfortunate consequence of this, whether intended or not, is chauvinism. Whether it is in the form of a belief that we know what is 'really' rational, or what is 'actually' important in the activity of others, or what the 'semantic components' were involved in an interaction, all can be taken as a manifestation of a chauvinistic attitude that amounts to an assertion that the 'analyst knows best'. This can only work to perpetuate the cultural and epistemological hegemony of the Global North, providing another example (no matter how unwitting or well-intentioned) of "the false universality at the root of the multi-faceted epistemicide committed by modern science" (Santos 2018: 108). Rather, it would be better to follow Santos and see that "[t]he point is not to search for completeness or universality but rather to strive for a higher consciousness of incompleteness and pluriversality" (2018: 275).

Conclusion: Reintegrating the Analyst

Operational Discriminations: Segmenting the Integrated Continuum

From an integrational perspective, by beginning with the assumption that human activity is an amalgamation of components, Goodwin (e.g. 2018) and Pennycook (e.g. 2017) have got things back to front. From the outset, "always, we are dealing with an integrated continuum" (Harris 1996: 164, in Jones 2011: 13). Therefore, writes Jones:

> "Let us refrain altogether from thinking of activity as a composite, as an aggregation of independent parts, as a product or derivative of the joint contributions of 'language', 'cognition', 'non verbal behaviour' and other tendentious abstractions. Instead, let us take it as the primary phenomenon in the sense of the basic, fundamental life experience that we need to start from in our understanding of the differentiated character of human behaviour rather than a result that we arrive at." (2011: 13)

In putting the cart before the horse in this manner, analysts such as Pennycook and Goodwin neglect their own semiological activity and the role they play in creating the categories, distinctions, and abstractions that are the products of their analytic endeavours. Confusing explananda for explanantia in this way inevitably results in a distortion of the experience of the participants' activity under analysis. Harris writes that, "[w]hat we typically experience in face-to-face communication is the temporal development of a single integrated continuum" (1996: 105), though there is no principled reason why this cannot be

extended to cover all manner of communicative activity, including self-communication (see Harris 1996: 167f). Perhaps this is how we can best understand Harris' opinion that analyses can only be "adequate" if they succeed in "answering to the actual experience of the participants" (1993: 322), in the sense that it points to the need to recognise that our experiential bedrock is of an "integrated whole" (see Harris 1998a: 144 below), and it is only through creative semiological activity (whether that of the analysts or their participants) that we begin to break down the integrated continuum into parts. Perhaps this terminology is still problematic, however, as we must resist the temptation to then see our abstractions as *constituent* parts of the activity under scrutiny and instead keep in mind that they are the *products*, or better still *links* (see Jones 2011 and **Chapter 1**), that we necessarily create in our ongoing signmaking activity.

I wrote earlier (**Chapter 1**, see also **Chapter 3**), in reference to Duncker's (2019) concerns to keep distortion to a minimum when conducting analyses, that in many, if not most, cases, it is perhaps better to see the reflexive engagement involved in analysis (lay and academic) not as distortive but, rather, as "constructive and transformative" (see Jones 2017a: 14). Or, in other words, that this 'distortion' should not be seen as something to be avoided or minimised, but as an inevitable and essential aspect of communication. However, the kind of distortion brought about by viewing activity "as an aggregation of independent parts" perhaps should be seen as an exception to this. As Harris warns:

> "The linguist can observe communication without necessarily interfering with it. But to observe it *qua* communication necessarily involves making some interpretation of it. The distortion the integrationist protests against is a distortion

> which arises not from observation, but, on the contrary, from one kind of interpretation, which involves treating an integrated whole as if it could be taken apart like a machine in order to isolate the ultimate constituents." (1998a: 144)

One reason for this, as stressed over the previous chapters (in particular **Chapters 3**, **4** and **5**), is that when analysts neglect to take into account their own semiological activity, not only does it misrepresent the integrated character of communicational experience, it leads to a false impression of objectivity because the analyst's abstractions are taken to be discoveries of pre-existing phenomena rather than the creative products of signmaking activity, i.e. the analyst's *instrumental abstractions* become *reifications* (see Jones 2017a). Thus, the analyst's interpretations come to be seen as a case of identifying natural, objective, or at least intersubjective, semiological 'components' and 'resources', which, in turn, can equate to an unjustified chauvinistic imposition of one particular communicational perspective or ideology onto the creative communicational practices of other people.

Harris' (2009a) operational discriminations (ODs) provide us with a way to think about, and give due to, how we segment and categorise the integrational continuum in the course of our signmaking activity. By way of example we can return to Harris' (2009a: 125f) description of Wittgenstein's builder ('A') and assistant ('B') (see **Chapters 2** and **3**). Both, writes Harris, "need to grasp that each of them has a role that is complementary to the other's, but separate from it. They have to understand that […] what they are engaged in is 'a two-person job'" (2009a 127). This cooperation requires what Harris calls "temporal correlation" (2009a: 128):

> "When A calls 'Block!' he is not only saying—in our terms—that he wants an item of a certain kind, but that he wants it brought now in the sequence of operations. It is a call for immediate action on B's part. B 'replies' by going to fetch a block. This 'you-then-me' aspect of the communicational process requires ODs which set up a segmentation of the temporal continuum into potentially denumerable parts. The temporal segment that is identified as 'now' at any given point needs to be distinguished from immediately preceding and immediately following segments. So, […] there must be at least three such segments (the current one, the preceding one and the following one)." (2009a: 129)

In the *artificial* scenario (see **Chapter 2** for further comment) of Wittgenstein's builders, as described by Harris, these temporal segments are presented as cleanly delineated by the builder's calls for blocks, slabs, pillars and beams, and the assistant's fetching of the corresponding materials. The *instrumentality* of both the builder's and assistant's actions (instrumental in that they are designed to bring about, shape and facilitate further activity) gives rise to a relatively simple "succession of A-B correspondences" (Harris 2009a: 129) (i.e., the "'you-then-me' aspect of the communicational process"). However, even in such a simply confected model as Wittgenstein's builders' activity, this segmentation, although easy enough to 'see', does not pertain to an *objectively given structure* in the activity itself. Rather, the particular segmentation relates, in the first place, to how Wittgenstein's builders themselves *operationally discriminate* according to the demands of the construction programme and for which their communicational proficiency allows. In other words, these segments fall along the discriminations creatively made by the actors involved. However, while the segmentation Harris identifies builds on the signmaking of the (hypothetical) builders, it is, ultimately, of his own making, created to suit his own

communicational needs. How activity is segmented is not given in advance, as the distinctions we make (i.e. the ODs our communicative activity sets up) are always relative to the signmaking activity we are engaged in and our communicational abilities, or alternatively, our *integrational proficiency* (e.g. Harris 1996: 12).

This being said, however, an exceedingly wide range of activities can certainly feel like they are segmented in advance. Football matches come in two halves, well-run board meetings proceed along an itemised agenda, and the individual segments of the school day are (or used to be at least) marked by the sounding of the bell. In a discussion about the *internal integration* involved in "a traditional Church of England wedding" (see **Chapter 2** for further discussion on internal and external integration), Harris writes that:

> "The internal integration of the ritual, it is evident, breaks down into sequences in which either (i) a subsequent event complements a previous event which anticipated it, or else (ii) two or more events are treated as reciprocally complementary by means of their ritual synchronization." (1996: 89)

However, while the *internal* wedding sequence might well be "evident", it is only so because of the extensive signmaking efforts (pertaining to *external* integration) of a large number of people both presently and historically, and the complex integration of external macrosocial factors that work to constrain the internal integration ongoing during the ritual itself. Mutatis mutandis, the same can be said of pencil production (Read 1958), Apple assembly lines (Jones 2018), and our behaviour at traffic lights (see **Chapters 2** and **3** respectively for discussion on all these matters). Likewise for football matches and school days, though even then it is, ultimately, down to the players and pupils, by means of

their signmaking, to discriminate where one event ends and another begins according to circumstances and their personal needs and experience.

Similarly for analysts, we might well look for, find, and subsequently interpret, all manner of 'constituent parts' of communication, be they prosody, emotion, gesture, voice quality, lexicon, grammatical structure, or any other example of 'semiotic resources' for which our reflexivity allows (cf. Goodwin 2018, see also Cekaite 2018 and **Chapter 5**). However, as Harris writes:

> "[W]e do not interpret the words separately from the looks, or the looks separately from the gestures, but each in terms of the other two, and all three in relation to the circumstances
>
> [...]
>
> Physiologically, the sign behaviour of the participants may include a number of quite different activities; but to treat the signs for that reason as units belonging theoretically to several quite separate inventories is immediately to misrepresent the communicational experience itself. For what matters is not the physiological differences involved but, on the contrary, the fact that such differences are overridden by the integrated structure of the continuum.
>
> It is not that we are somehow oblivious to the physiological differences, any more than a pianist is oblivious to which hand plays which notes. But the point is that it would be absurd to take 'notes played by the left hand' and 'notes played by the right hand' as fundamentally separate categories for the analysis of piano music; or rather, anyone who did so would be confusing piano music with piano playing." (1996: 105)

To this we might add that distinguishing between piano music and piano playing is itself an *operational discrimination*, and therefore relates to the

communicational requirements and integrational proficiency of the person making the distinction. We can look at 'the same' episode of communication from any number of different perspectives depending on our aims in considering the event in the first place. We are, evidently, quite capable of thinking about communicative activity from the perspective of physiology—i.e. along the biomechanical parameter (see **Chapter 2**)—just as we can look at communication from the perspective of Harris' macrosocial or circumstantial parameters. So too can we readily identify words, grammatical structure and gestures in much of our communication. However, as always, the making of these distinctions and abstractions entails semiological activity on the part of the signmaker/analyst, and this is a case of utilising the analyst's own communicational creativity to adopt a perspective from which particular 'objects of study' (cf. Saussure 1983: 8 – see **Chapter 5**) are created.

Jones (2009) makes a point highly relevant to this discussion in regard to a research project he carried out that involved filming volunteers while they worked cooperatively to solve a practical task. In his account of the volunteers' activity, Jones writes:

> "During one of the sessions, one student, Sarah, suddenly came up with a cunning plan which I wrote down as follows:
>
> > 'if you've got that – that's like a thing you've got to get – and there's two people – one person at either end with the string – hold that a minute – *so if like that* – I mean you could just – one person there cross over there – that person cross over there – over the top of the yoghurt pot and hold it tight together and then you lift it like that'" (2009: 173)

The *incoherence* of Sarah's utterance, once her speech has been abstracted from the integrated continuum, highlights the impossibility of understanding her suggestion "without seeing what Sarah is doing [...] and without some sense of what the group are up to". As Jones writes:

> "It was coherent for me only as an integral part of the practical demonstration of the technique she had thought of. It was coherent because her speech and bodily movements with string and bottle were [...] integrated into this singular communicative act of demonstrating." (2009: 174)

In abstracting from the integrated activity of the group of volunteers, and transcribing Sarah's utterance in this manner, Jones presents his readers with his "own creative interpretation of what is going on" (2009: 174). However, "the very act of transcribing, by definition, forces us to *make a separation* [emphasis added]" (Jones 2009: 174) that was not there in the original activity in the first place. Likewise when the analyst presents their audience with 'a look', 'a gesture' or 'a macrosocial factor' for inspection and contemplation. The (academic) process of analysis, with its reliance on presenting findings in journals, books and projector slides, leaves the analyst with no choice but to segment, or operationally discriminate, the activity being studied in a way that differs from the first-order experience of the original actors. However, in this regard, academic analysis is not so different from the instrumental abstractions we all make in the run of our daily lives: my experience cannot be the same as my interlocutor's, we all "make our own creative interpretation of what is going on". Problems only arise when we allow ourselves to be bamboozled into thinking that the separations were there all along.

Something similar can be said of analytic conundrums (see **Chapter 5**). A further effect of eliding the semiological activity of the analyst is that the communicational conundrums that arise out of the analyst's own signmaking come to be seen properties of the signmaking activity of the participants, i.e. the conundrums are treated as though they were inherent in the original activity and as simply waiting to be solved by the curious analyst onlooker. However, conundrums are created in the active engagement of the analyst through their adoption (or creation) of a particular perspective. Nor does the perspective that creates the conundrum arise ex nihilo, but from the activity of a particular signmaker operating in a cultural milieu. Or, to put it in a way more in keeping with the terms of this thesis, the internal integration involved in analytic activity is, like football matches, wedding ceremonies, and all other human activity, both constrained and enabled by the way it is externally integrated with prior and ongoing signmaking activity beyond the immediate analytic frame, or communication bubble, created by the analyst themselves.

Coda: An Integrational Perspective on Analysis

As part of the process of writing this thesis, I conducted my own small-scale study[76] involving recording on video people engaged in communicative activity. To this end, I asked pairs of participants—all friends and family members—to build three simple Lego models together (simple in the sense that each model consisted of only around fifteen Lego bricks), while I recorded them doing so. In order to encourage verbal communication between the pairs of

[76] Ethics reference approval number: ER51057923

participants, I asked that only one person have access to the instruction booklet, while the other handle and construct the Lego bricks. This meant that the 'instructor' would need to describe the Lego pieces in some fashion and explain how they should be put together, while the 'builder' did their best to create the model as per the instruction booklet. At an earlier stage of the PhD process my intention had been to conduct an analysis of the participants' communicative activity while building the Lego models, though perhaps a more apt description would be to say that I intended to write about their activity from an integrational perspective using some of the ideas that have been developed over these chapters, such as operational discriminations, internal and external integration and Harris' communicational parameters. My plan was to then subject my attempt at such an analysis to a critique along similar lines to the arguments I levelled against Goodwin and Pennycook in the hope that doing so may point a way forward for an integrational approach in terms of conducting analysis of concrete episodes of communication. While I think that this kind of exercise may still be of some worth, ultimately, I decided against doing so. Thinking about the reasons for my reticence to conduct an integrational analysis in this manner, however, provides a good starting point for a summary discussion on where integrationism sits in relation to analysis, in light of what has been written in this thesis.

Integrationism as perspective, not methodology

While there is no doubt that analysis, as conceived in the Lego study just outlined, could be used to demonstrate the integrated character of

communication (as the example of from Jones in regard to Sarah's suggestion above shows), it is not a necessary, or only, means of doing this. Using examples borne from our ability to reflect on personal communicative experience, can be just as, if not more, effective. In other words, the *anecdote* (see **Chapters 1** and **3**) will do in lieu of more formal analysis (whatever that may amount to); although it should be stressed that, from an integrational perspective, there are no hard and fast distinction between anecdote and analysis, both being ways of characterising reflexive signmaking activity. Furthermore, acceptance of a more anecdotal approach brings with it the advantage of leaving the analyst and their interpretation of the communicative activity in question front and centre, thereby avoiding the misguided notion that the analyst can, through methodological shenanigans, remove themselves from proceedings and thus gain an objective, or 'scientific', perspective on events.

However, it is probably safe to say that integrationism does not rule anything out in advance in regard to analysis (or, for that matter, anything else in the communicational domain). All analysis must, and will, be judged in terms of the extent to which it is able to meet its intended aims. Perhaps the one thing we can be sure of is that the aims of any analysis, and the best means of achieving them, along with how the results should be interpreted, will always be contested; such is the transient provisionality of communicational facts (see **Chapters 1** and **5**). This being said, my personal feeling is that there is no point in doing analysis for analysis' sake. At least not if that equates to trying to discover, with scientific pretentions, what is 'really' going on 'beneath the surface' of communicative activity. So too would it seem a mistake to labour under the impression that analysis is capable of proving one particular theory of communication correct.

Our capacity for communicational creativity is quite sufficient to ensure that we will almost always have the ingenuity to find whatever it is we set out to look for (be it units of meaning, grammatical structure or semantic components of any other description).

Perhaps the principle reason for my reticence in conducting a 'Lego analysis' and corresponding critique as originally envisioned, however, is that integrationism *is not a methodology*, and was never intended by Harris to be such:

> "What happens when theorists take it upon themselves to supply a methodology is that the resultant analyses proceed, solemnly and inevitably, to "reveal" a structure in the "data" that reflects, point by point, the "system" that is already tacitly incorporated in the methodological procedure.
>
> […]
>
> It is precisely because I do not wish to make the same kind of mistake that, as an integrational theorist, I stop short of supplying anything that could be construed as an integrational methodology." (1997: 304)

The notion of applying integrational analytic tools in an analysis could be seen as bringing us back to the problem, identified by Ryle (2009, see **Chapter 4**), of attempting to distinguish between knowing-that and knowing-how. The difference between, say, Pinker's (2021) attempt to explain the thinking of the San, and the application of analytic tools on to communicative activity, however, is that in the former the 'unbridgeable gulf' is situated between 'mental structure' and action, whereas in the latter it lies between analyst's activity and participant's activity (though in these terms Pinker is guilty on both counts). In the following

passage Harris makes a similar point which well-captures the spirit of the approach advocated in this thesis:

> "At present, the notion of an integrated system has to be taken very much on trust, for we are far from understanding what kind of systematization is involved. But, vaguely formulated as it is, this conviction clearly inspires much current work in many different areas of communication studies. [...] *The task of the integrational theorist is not to add to the growing research dossier on these matters, but to address the question of spelling out coherent general principles on which a conviction about the integrational character of human communication could rest*. Part of the task will consist in avoiding the conceptual banana skins which are inevitably strewn in the path of this endeavour. (Among them are two notions dear to many writers on communication: 'choice' and 'intention'). [emphasis added]" (1996: 17)

Given this, it would seem ill-advised to judge, or explore the potential of, integrationism in terms of its feasibility or applicability for conducting analysis. Following Harris' comments, perhaps it is more helpful to see integrationism, not as a guide for doing analysis in a particular way, but as a perspective from which we can better understand our communicational lives, including the signmaking involved in any activity we might deem to come under the banner *analytic*.

It is highly probable that there are an indefinite number of ways to conduct analysis that would be in keeping with integrationist principles, but doing so would not be a case of applying an integrational methodology *per se*. Similarly, while we might be comfortable in describing particular methodologies as *segregationist*, segregationism *per se*, is not a methodology in and of itself.

Rather, both integrationism and segregationism are perhaps better thought of as perspectives we can take on communicative activity. As Harris writes:

> "The segregationist and the integrationist between them propose two comprehensive and radically different theoretical perspectives for an inquiry into human communication. If there is a third perspective within the Western tradition, it has yet to be discovered." (1996: xi)

One important advantage that the integrational perspective has over the segregational perspective, is that the former provides a viewpoint that *can encompass the creative signmaking activity of the analyst*. I.e., integrationism provides a way of thinking and talking about what it is we are doing when we are doing analysis, without omitting the analysts themselves. Duncker (e.g. 2019, see **Chapters 1** and **3**) suggests that analysis should take the form of a "hermeneutic narrative" and with this I am in broad agreement. However, given the arguments being advanced in this thesis, perhaps it would be more accurate to say that, rather than *should*, analysis *can only ever be* a 'hermeneutic narrative', in that it will always say more about the communicative activity and experience of the analyst than it can the signmaking of the participants. The issue at stake is whether or not this goes recognised by the analyst, and if it does not, the question becomes one of asking how it can but fail to shed new light on our communicational lives. Acknowledgement of the ineluctable influence of the analyst's own experience and perspective on analytic activity is, perhaps, where the watershed lies between those analyses that are, and are not, in keeping with integrationist principles.

It has been argued (e.g. Harris and Hutton 2007, Jones 2007 and Duncker 2019, see **Chapter 1**), that there is no principled dividing line between 'academic'

or ‘methodological’ analysis, and the ‘lay’ reflexive analysis that is such an integral part of all our communicative practices. Following this, the integrational perspectives developed in this thesis are applicable to our communicational activity more broadly. We have seen examples of this wide-ranging applicability over the course of the preceding chapters: from pointing to the need to reconsider how we think about rationality (see **Chapter 4**); to adopting a wayfarer perspective (cf. Ingold 2007) on our signmaking when learning new skills such as playing the saxophone (Jones 2011) and driving a car (see **Chapter 1**), our signmaking at traffic lights and pedestrian crossings (see **Chapter 3**), and how external factors constrain and enable our internal signmaking in a variety of communicational processes (see **Chapters 2** and **3**).

One (further) ramification of this broader applicability is that an integrational perspective is useful for helping us to think more clearly about the role our creative signmaking plays in all our academic pursuits—particularly, though not limited to, the humanities and social sciences—whether overtly analytic or not. (Harris’ “supercategory” books, can be seen as an exploration of the ramifications of the integrational perspective on Art (2003), History (2004), and Science (2005), for example.) Communication is central to (or itself, one extremely broad perspective on, – see Harris 2006: 13) everything that we do. Therefore, it would perhaps be sensible to envisage integrationism less as a self-contained academic discipline, one that merely provides a means to force a particular interpretation on episodes of communication, and more as a route to a greater self-understanding of how we make sense of, and bring forth, the world we inhabit from a communicational perspective. Harris says something similar when he writes:

> “If an integrational linguistics is worth pursuing, it is as a pragmatics of self-understanding and a basis for lay linguistic therapy rather than as part of a university curriculum. For simply to elaborate a new metalanguage and give it academic employment in lectures and learned periodicals would, in the end, be to occupy no more than an "insular possession".” (Harris 1997: 310)

In practice this could equate to, at a minimum, encouraging an awareness and appreciation of the integrational perspective on communication across academia, and seeing the prospect of an alternative to the representationalist ideology that pervades academic discourse in the Global North.

Following this we can come to see Peter Stockwell’s misgivings regarding integrationism in a new light. When he writes: "While persuasive as an idealization, it is difficult to see what an integrationalist practical analysis would actually look like” (Trask and Stockwell 2007: 120, see **Chapter 1** for an initial discussion), Stockwell is perhaps thinking too conservatively, mired in a view that a theory of communication can only prove its worth through conducting “practical analysis” (whatever that may entail). Such an opinion is tantamount to conceding ground to the traditional, yet misguided, representationalist approaches of the past, rather than having the courage and optimism to forge new ground with fresh thinking.

To embark on such a journey of beginning to adopt a fresh perspective on our lives from the perspective of communication, we could do much worse than ponder, and take seriously, the choice between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ integrationism that David Bade sets before us:

> “I think we can indeed find a shibboleth amongst those interested in Harris, but that will be a political rather than a linguistic matter. For those who want to remain

> within the world of science-since-Galileo, that world in which Laplace boasted that knowing the whole of it at any precise moment would provide a knowledge of the entire past and future of the universe (Big Data is Big Brother), Harris's insistence upon the indeterminacy of meaning is unacceptable: there must be determinacy all the way down. [...] Integrationism takes as its premise a radical indeterminism, the freedom of nature and the responsibility of nature's inhabitants for the world that they make together. That is to say that hard or soft integrationism depends on your politics: whether it is an indeterminate universe, with freedom and responsibility all the way up and all the way down; or a universe of scientific law and mathematical order, which we, by discovering those laws, may control as foolishly as Scientists or Führers, if not as wisely as Gods. On this issue, I am as hard as can be, in love with a world over which I would not rule even if I could. The world should not be remade in the image of my desires." (Pablé et al. 2022: 7163)

I for one, also have no wish to remake the world "in the image of my desires". Perhaps the extent to which recognising the fundamental creativity of the human experience is a political choice is an open question, and an unanswerable one at that. I do, however, feel confident in saying that the integrational perspective is the only vantage point that I know of which does not run counter to my personal communicative experience, and does justice to the creative freedom that lies at the heart of that experience.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Thinking Rationally about Representations:
LEGO BUILDING STUDY

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Please will you take part in a study about cooperative communicative activity.
In particular the study looks at:
1) how representational images (in this case those seen in Lego instructions) are incorporated into our daily lives, and
2) how we creatively develop communicational strategies in novel situations to deal with the demands the completion of a particular task put upon us (in this case building Lego models in slightly unusual circumstances – see below).

Questions I anticipate you may have prior to consenting to participating in this study:

1. **Why have you asked me to take part?** From a theoretical standpoint, who exactly takes part in the study is not of critical importance (though it is perhaps better if you are not a trained linguist – for they come with a lot of heavy baggage). From an ethical standpoint this means that the participants in the study should ideally not be considered vulnerable. For expediency, I have chosen to recruit friends and family to the study. For better or worse, you fall into these categories.

2. **Do I have to take part?** Absolutely not. It is up to you to decide if you want to take part. A copy of the information provided here is yours to keep, along with the consent form if you do decide to take part. You can still decide to withdraw at any time up to two weeks after the data collection session you were personally involved has been completed. No reason need be given for withdrawal. You can also decide not to answer any particular question you are asked (this applies particularly to the interview section of the study).

3. **What will I be required to do?** You will be tasked with working collaboratively with a partner to build three Lego models. Your partner will be somebody previously known to you and someone with whom you feel comfortable working (i.e. a spouse, partner, friend or relative). Within each pair, one person (A), will have access to the Lego instruction manual while the other person, (B), will be the one actually making the Lego models. A is not allowed to touch any of the Lego bricks and B is not allowed to look at the instruction manual, so both of you must work collaboratively together to be able to construct the three models. Other than these two restrictions any communicational strategies are permissible: physical gestures, questions, commands, requests and any other techniques you can think of are all fine. This stage of the study **will be filmed** and I may want to use **stills**

containing your image from the video recording in my PhD thesis and future academic work (e.g. conference slides or journal papers). **Only consent to participating in this study if you are okay with this**. If you consent to have your image used but would rather have your face obscured in the image, I will be happy to do this. If this is the case, please tick the appropriate box on the consent form. Once the Lego models have been completed I will want to ask the pair of you a few questions about your experience of the Lego building activity. These questions will focus on any difficulties you might have had and the strategies you developed to overcome them. I may also ask you about any previous experience you have had with Lego. The questions will not get more personal than that. **These interviews will be recorded on an audio device** (not visual as with the Lego construction). **I will want to transcribe passages of your dialogue from both the interview and Lego building activity**. However, your name will not be used in the study (a pseudonym will be used instead) and anything you say during the study that might identify you (e.g. personal address, names, job title etc.) will be omitted from the transcriptions.

4. **Where will this take place?** The plan is for me to come to your house, though my house can be used if that is preferrable.

5. **How often will I have to take part, and for how long?** Your role in the study will be to participate in a single session: build three Lego models and talk about it afterward. This should be completed within an hour.

6. **Are there any possible risks or disadvantaged in taking part**. I don't anticipate any particular risks or disadvantages to taking part. Though we all know how painful stepping on Lego bricks in bare feet can be, so we should take care to keep the area where we are doing the study clean and tidy. I am also asking you to give up your time and realise this is no small ask, so will attempt to be as quick and efficient as I can be.

7. **What are the possible benefits of taking part?** While there are no major benefits to you taking part, if you are interested in learning more about the theoretical underpinnings of the study I will be more than happy to oblige.

8. **When will I have the opportunity to discuss my participation?** You can ask me any further questions you wish now (in person or via email). During the interview phase of the session you will also be given the opportunity to ask me any questions you so wish. I will remain available to answer any further queries or to discuss how I have used these sessions in my academic work for at least the duration of the remainder of my PhD course.

9. **Will anyone be able to connect me with what is recorded and reported?** As previously mentioned, all potentially identifying information will be removed from the transcripts and pseudonyms will be used in place of real names. However, **if your image is used in the PhD thesis or future academic work of mine this will make it possible to connect you with the study**. This could be the case even if your face is obscured in the image. **Please do not consent to participate in the study if you are not alright with this**. However, no sensitive information will be included in the study.

10. **Who will be responsible for all of the information when this study is over**? I will remain responsible for the information generated in the data collection sessions when the study is over.

11. **Who will have access to it?** Myself (Mark Stott), and my supervisory team, Peter Jones and Karen Grainger.

12. **What will happen to the information when this study is over?** During the course of my PhD the data will be stored on the SHU Research Store. Upon completion of my PhD the data will be transferred to the SHU Research data Archive.

13. **How will you use what you find out?** The results of the study will be used in the main body of my PhD thesis in the form of academic analysis and discussion, transcriptions and still video images. The results may also be used in conference presentations and future academic publications.

14. **How long is the whole study likely to last?** Your participation will be completed in one session. It is hoped that all the sessions will be completed over a two-week period. The analysis and writing up of the study should be completed over the next calendar year.

15. **How can I find out about the results of the study?** You are free to contact me by email at any point until completion of my PhD if you would like to discuss the results from the study or how those results have been incorporated into my academic work.

If you have any further questions at this stage, before giving your consent to take part in the study, please do not hesitate to ask!

The Legal stuff:

The University undertakes research as part of its function for the community under its legal status. Data protection allows us to use personal data for research with appropriate safeguards in place under the legal basis of **public tasks that are in the public interest.** A full statement of your rights can be found at: www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research. However, all University research is reviewed to ensure that participants are treated appropriately and their rights respected. This study was approved by UREC with Converis number ER51057923. Further information can be found at: www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/ethics-and-integrity

Details of who to contact if you have any concerns or if adverse effects occur after the study are given below.

Researcher Details:

Mark Stott, telephone: [Left blank for appendix] email: [Left blank for appendix]

You should contact the Data Protection Officer if:	**You should contact the Head of Research Ethics (Dr Mayur Ranchordas) if:**
• you have a query about how your data is used by the University • you would like to report a data security breach (e.g. if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately) • you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data DPO@shu.ac.uk	• you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated ethicssupport@shu.ac.uk

Postal address: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WBT
Telephone: 0114 225 5555

Appendix 2

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (example)

Thinking Rationally about Representations: Lego Construction Study

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

	YES	**NO**
1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.		
2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.		
3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher.		
4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet.		
5. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.		
6. I consent to stills of my image, taken from the video recording (details of which are outlined in the Information Sheet) made during the study being used in the PhD thesis and future academic publications.		
7. I do not require my face to be obscured in the eventuality that a video still with my image is used for academic research purposes.		
8. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (with the exception of still images taken from video recordings in 6 above and as outlined in the Information Sheet), to be used for any other research purposes.		

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Contact details:
_____

_____
_____

Researcher's Name (Printed): _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Researcher's contact details:
(Name, address, contact number of investigator)

Please keep your copy of the consent form and the information sheet together.