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## Integrationist reflections on the place of dialogue in our communicational universe: laying the ghost of segregationism?

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# Integrationist reflections on the place of dialogue in our communicational universe: laying the ghost of segregationism?

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Roy Harris identifies the "main flaw" in J L Austin's account of language as a "failure to consider to what extent being able to 'do things with words' is parasitic on being able to do things without them". Harris's comment here serves as a springboard for a critical evaluation of communicational theories based around "talk-in-interaction" or dialogic principles. The primacy thereby given to linguistic interaction arguably entails a mystification of communication processes and the dis-integration of the social world into which our communicational experiences are intervowen. Consequently, the ghost of segregationism, in the shape of Harris's "fallacy of verbalism", continues to haunt, at times faintly, at times aggressively, the assumptions and methodologies of the approaches in question.

## 1. Introduction

As Linell (2009) demonstrates, "dialogical" approaches occupy substantial territory in the human sciences far beyond the claim of any ordinary notion of dialogue. "Dialogism", he argues, "is first and foremost a meta-theoretical framework for the human sciences", "a general epistemology and/or ontology for sociocultural (human) phenomena: semiosis, cognition, communication, discourse, consciousness, action in the world, i.e., for the social, cultural and human sciences and arts" (2009, 28). Under this capacious intellectual umbrella are a range of highly articulated systems of thinking, including Linell's own, the ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis tradition, and the "Theory of Dialogic Action Games" or "Mixed Game Model" ("MGM") of Edda Weigand.

An obvious question arises about the rationale for elevating dialogue, with its culture-specific ideological and metalinguistic (literary) baggage, to such theoretical and metaphysical heights within the human sciences (and neuroscience, cf Linell, 2009). Linell

acknowledges that in "dialogical theorising" "we adopt a more abstract interpretation of the term 'dialogue'" which does not "assign exclusive relevance to linguistic interaction" (2009, 28). "Nonetheless", he concedes, "the metaphor of dialogue, which is central to dialogism, has of course its source in precisely these more concrete forms of dialogue between human beings" (2009, 28). Consequently, we may "use talk-in-interaction as a model and a metaphor", though Linell warns against taking particular forms or genres of talk as "prime examples of 'dialogue' for theoretical purposes" (2009, 28), since these concrete instances "cannot be taken as generally valid models of human dialogue" (2009, 28). The question remains, however, as to why linguistic interaction should be taken at all, however abstractly, as a "model" or "metaphor" for communication more generally, let alone for the totality of human activity which Linell's approach embraces. The purpose of this paper, then, is to suggest some of the pitfalls which attend the dialogic démarche and, in particular, the consequences for our understanding of social life from "giving one form of discourse about society priority over any other" (Harris 1996, 32). Framing the study of communicational activity in a dialogistic metalanguage, I will argue, represents a version of the "fallacy of verbalism" (Harris 1996, 25), that is "the tacit but widespread assumption that signs in all forms of communication must somehow operate like words" (1996, 25).

## 2.  Conversation Analysis

In ("ethnomethodological") Conversation Analysis (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2004), we have a whole tradition of communicational research built from ways of examining language use ("talk-in-interaction") as a self-contained object of study. From an integrationist perspective (Harris 1996, 18), of course, the restriction in principle of analytical attention to "talk" and, consequently, to settings exclusively in which "talk" occurs, effects a de facto abstraction or segregation of language from communicational experience, whatever insights about the integrational proficiencies of conversational participants such study has brought.[1]

CA arose as a method of sociological, rather than linguistic, enquiry into lay methods of ordering and organizing everyday interactions. But there is something ironical in the critical stance taken by CA pioneers towards other sociological traditions. As Silverman (1998, 47) explains: "both Durkheim and Goffman take for granted some social 'reality' to

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[1] Cf Taylor and Cameron (1987); see also Schegloff (1992) for an acknowledgement, if not a response to, their critique.

which people respond (such as 'suicide') or describe a process (such as 'labelling') identified on the basis of tacit commonsense reasoning. Their common failing is, as Sacks puts it, that they work with 'undescribed categories'". "Sacks's problem", as Silverman puts it, "is to find a way to build a sociology that does better than this. In some way, sociology must free itself from the 'commonsense perspective' …employed in its use of 'undescribed categories'. For Sacks, the solution is to view such categories 'as features of social life which sociology must treat as subject matter' rather than as 'sociological resources'" (1998, 16).

The irony lies in the fact that CA practitioners, from Sacks on, have naïvely and unreflectingly placed their own "undescribed categories" at the foundation of their analytical approach in the shape of their "commonsense perspective" on language itself. That is, they have taken for granted – in identifying, transcribing and interpreting "talk" – the social "reality" of language, signally failing to acknowledge, let alone scrutinise, their "ability" as "members of society" "to see things in common" (Silverman 1998, 47), linguistically speaking. CA, therefore, presents a communication model founded on the unexamined linguistic reflexivity of the linguistic analyst (Harris 1998, 25).[2] Such a model in itself is segregationist, Harris argues since "it presupposes that linguistic inquiry – and linguistic theory in general – can somehow be divorced from a consideration of the particular circumstances in which it arises and the conditions of linguistic reflexivity which make it possible" (1998, 26) - in effect a challenge to all approaches to language and dialogue.

Interestingly, CA proponents have rationalized their stand alone methodology by invoking macro-sociological analogies: "The turn-taking model begins from the idea that turns in conversation are resources which, like goods in in an economy, are distributed in systematic ways among speakers" (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2004, 47). But it would be a curious world indeed if turns actually were "goods" in this sense, that is, if they had "value" independently of their role in some ongoing communication process. There is, after all, no measurable cost of production to utterances and no scarcity to them. It might have occurred to scholars who take such an economic metaphor seriously that the first thing to explore is not the distribution of "turns-at-talk" in conversation but the distribution (absence as well as presence) of talk itself across contexts, activities (including conversation) and activity spheres (including the economy). Instead, as a discipline devoted to a supposed "economy" of talk-in-

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[2] For internal disagreements over reflexivity within the ethnomethodological camp, see Silverman (1998).

interaction, CA has in effect become a kind of "commonsense" linguistic sociology cut off from more general sociological enquiry.

Perhaps the "'most powerful device for relating utterances'" within the CA "economy" is the "adjacency relationship" (Sacks in Silverman 1998, 105-106) or "adjacency pair", pertaining to "questions and answers; greetings and return greetings; or invitations and acceptances/declinations" (Hutchby and Woofffitt 2004, 39). This "most powerful device", however, is neither a causal mechanism nor an expression of mental states but has, rather, a "normative character" (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2004, 42): "Adjacency pairs thus constitute a powerful normative framework for the assessment of interlocutors' actions and motives by producers of first parts" (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2004, 43). In invoking "norms", therefore, CA practitioners are appealing to "macrosocial factors", that is, factors relating to "practices established in the community or some group within the community" (Harris 1996, 26), a point which will be of particular significance when considering the dialogism of Linell and Weigand. However, the question of how such norms might come to be established appears to have a low priority in CA work.

As a second line of defence of their single minded focus on talk, CA scholars have elevated the status of talk itself to that of "a primordial site of sociality on the one hand and, on the other hand, one of the (largely presupposed) preconditions for, and achievements of, organized social life" (Schegloff 1992, 1296). Accordingly, CA is presented as "'[a] most remarkable inventive and productive account of how to study human sociality'" (Sacks in Silverman 1998, 196). Schegloff in particular has argued the relevance of CA methodology, with its attendant conception of "intersubjectivity", to other (non linguistic) social practices and processes (Schegloff 1992), the specific import being "that activities and their organization can be, and should be, studied locally (that is, in the environments of their natural occurrence) and through the detailed examination of the indigenous practices through which it is (or they are) composed" (1992, 1341). There is no reason to denigrate the fascinating, and important, studies of the situated, creative deployment of integrational proficiencies by participants in locally managed activity contexts (e.g, Drew and Heritage 1992). However, in 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.[3] Thus, in relation to his analysis of a particular ritual (the Anglican marriage ceremony in the UK), Harris observes:

> "The matters raised fall into two main categories, which might appropriately be called external integration and internal integration. Under the first head falls everything which relates to the ways in which this particular ritual is integrated with other macrosocial practices (through the various constraints which it imposes on and latitude which it allows the participants). Under the second head falls everything which relates to the ways in which various features of the ritual are integrated with one another so as to articulate a total procedure which makes sense" (1996, 88-89).

One key implication of Harris's distinction is that a study of the internal "sense" that the participants procedurally make of their local practice will not reveal the "sense" (the communicational value) that this local practice (and its ingredients) has in its relation to those external practices which it presupposes and to which it contributes, whether the participants are aware of this or not. In other words, the commonsense rationality and intelligibility (as it appears to the participants) internal to the local practice may contrast sharply with the unintelligibility – if not irrationality – of the practice itself taken in a wider context. 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. And, of course, much the same could be said of all aspects of our social life.

All in all, one might say, therefore, that the academic attention paid to talk-in-interaction in its own right within the CA tradition  – with all its undoubted insights – has two unfortunate consequences. Firstly, concentrating on talk is a way of not paying attention, and

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[3] Indeed, Harris refers to integrationism as "a study of the internal and external integration of communication processes" (1996,  90).

certainly not critical attention (cf. Jones 2017), to the wider social organization in which talk plays its part. Secondly, and conversely, the cost of spreading the application of the methodological procedures of CA to social activity more broadly may be the fragmentation of social order into the salami-sliced internally-integrated "local" activities which those procedures are designed to cope with.

## 3. Per Linell's dialogism

Linell's dialogical approach is explicitly built around an "abstract" or metaphorical notion of dialogue: "one might say that dialogism uses talk-in-interaction (dialogue in a concrete sense…) as a model and metaphor (or metonymy) for human communication and cognition in general" (2009, 27). Furthermore, the reason given for taking talk as the starting point is that: "Talk (in interaction) is the primordial form of human communication" (2009, 27). In according such a "primordial" status to talk, Linell's dialogical approach has, as a consequence, significant common ground with CA, despite Linell's cogent criticisms of its scope and methodology (2009, 413-414).

What Linell's more abstract model carries over from the more concrete study of "talk-in-interaction"can be seen in his account of "what might constitute a 'minimal communicative interaction'" as consisting of "minimally three steps":

"If speaker A utters something and thereby indicates a targeted understanding, then B must indicate his understanding of this by some responsive action, typically another utterance, and then A has to show her reaction to B's response by yet another action (utterance)" (2009, 183).[4]

While the "adjacency pair" in CA has the ontological status of a social norm, for Linell the dialogical character of the minimal interaction appears to have a more fundamental ontological status:

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[4] Linell acknowledges that the "dialogical theory of the minimal interaction is of course not new", with precursors in the work of G H Mead and with affinities in the "two move" framework of Herb Clark and the CA notion of "adjacency pair" (Linell 2009, 183-183).

"A definitional point in dialogism is the assumption that human nature and human life are constituted in interrelations with 'the other', that is in other-orientation. Humans are always interdependent with others, although the degree and kinds of interdependencies will of course vary with individuals, cultures and situations" (2009, 13).

Furthermore, Linell appears to assume that this 'other-orientation' has an a priori status in human development:

"That human nature, its ontology, is dialogical has in fact been substantiated by several empirical findings. One is that infants indulge in interaction virtually from their first moments in life …; thus, dialogicality must be biologically endowed" (2009, 30).

Similarly: "An infant has a biologically endowed capacity for dialogue" (Linell 2005, 110). This "capacity for dialogue" is then extended to the entire communicational (and social) universe of human beings: "dialogicality is an attribute of human sense-making, that is, the dynamic processes, actions and practices in which meanings are contextually constituted in the interactions of human beings with others and environments" (Linell 2009, 30).

Despite many points of apparent convergence, then, Linell's conception displays what is a key problem from an integrationist standpoint, namely building a social norm or "macrosocial proficiency" – in the shape of an interactional schema derived from talk – into "human nature" itself. It is one thing to say that as individuals we could not survive without others (so that we are immediately dependent on their actions towards us) but arguably going a little too far to argue that such interdependencies presuppose "a biologically endowed capacity for dialogue" or "other-orientation". With such an argument, linguistic interaction (seen "abstractly") shapes not only our view of communication but our conception of sociality in general as ultimately dependent on the possession of such linguistic capacities as part of our "biological endowment".

## 4. Edda Weigand's "Mixed Game Model"

## 4.1. MGM and the "Dialogic Principle"

Like Linell's dialogical system, Edda Weigand's MGM begins by equating communication and dialogue: "As a consequence of the premise that human beings are goal-directed beings, communication means dialogic interaction" (Weigand 2010, 76). Similarly, the scope of dialogic principles in Weigand's hands are as sweeping for all things human as in Linell's, although the two approaches differ in many particulars (including on Linell's "other-orientation": Weigand 2010, 81). Thus, Weigand argues that it is "the ability to experience and negotiate meaning and understanding in dialogue which enables [human beings] to develop societies, institutions, complex cultural systems, or, in general, civilization" (2010, 272).

Unlike in Linell, however, the MGM presents a whole philosophy of linguistic communication, cast in dialogic metalanguage, tailored to fit an overt ideological agenda, namely E O Wilson's sociobiology (e.g., Weigand 2010, Chapter 2). A thorough critique of sociobiology is impossible here, although, like many scholars, I consider sociobiology (and its close relative, evolutionary psychology) to be a thoroughly implausible, pseudo-scientific enterprise (Rose, Lewontin and Kamin 1984; Smith 1996; Jones 2003). What is of interest and relevance, on the other hand, is the way in which sociobiologically influenced pronouncements on human nature and sociality are uncritically taken as base line premises for fundamental principles of human linguistic and communicational action. Such premises involve speculative claims about "genetic predispositions" (Weigand 2010, 68) underlying cultural behaviour, including "'learning rules' which are differently shaped in kind and intensity in different individuals", "some sort of ethics" and possibly "human beings' desire to find something that can provide everlasting meaning to their transitory lives" (2010, 68). Furthermore, these genetic roots of cultural behaviour entail "cultural universals" (2010, 55), as evolutionary psychologists claim: "Culture", as Weigand puts it, "can thus be grasped as part of inner human nature as well as of the external environment" (2010, 55). To see sociality and cultural activity in such terms means to place mental or intentional dispositions or states as causal factors in communicational activity and sociality more generally. Thus, as Weigand puts it, the "driving force of human action and behaviour results from human beings' nature as intentional goal-directed beings. It is their needs and desires, purposes and interests as social individuals which cause them to act and provide the key to their behaviour" (2010, 62).

In similar vein:

> "The key to the subsystems is the central driving force for human action, i.e. purposes and needs… It is human beings' purposes, needs and desires in the world which call for structure. Consequently, the structure of the world is set up by human beings in their minds" (2010, 67).

Or again:

> "The game of life as a complex mixed game is based on human beings' abilities and needs, i.e. in the end on their basic mental states of belief and desire… Beliefs and desires are the basis not only for individual actions but as well for complex actions in human affairs" (2010, 232).

In accordance with such assumptions, Weigand endorses a Searlean mentalistic account of social organization which attributes the key role in the emergence of social institutions to communicational intentionality, as we see in her account of "effectively running an institution" (2010, 234ff)[5]: "According to Searle …, it is the capacity to make something symbolize which creates institutions".[6] It is in this context of mentalistic assumptions that Weigand sees language and dialogue more specifically as addressing "purposes and needs" (2010, 67).

Consequently, the particular place and role allotted to dialogic principles in Weigand's MGM follow from the sociobiologically inspired tendency to account for social behaviour in terms of beliefs, desires, interests or motivation, underpinned by cognitive predispositions of various kinds. Thus, Weigand claims that "the basic motivations for human action" are "self-assertion and respect for the other human being" (2010, 48), that people are "social individuals who act in their own interest but who need to respect the interests of the others" (2010, 62), or that "[h]uman beings as social individuals have a basic interest in being

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[5] For an integrationist perspective on Searle and intentionality, see Chapter 6 of Harris (2012).
[6] The lack of consideration of intentionality, indeed, was one of Searle's main objections to the CA approach to turn-taking: "The rule for turn-taking … doesn't even have the appearance of being a rule since it doesn't specify the relevant sort of intentional content that plays a causal role in the production of the behaviour" (Searle in Hutchby and Wooffit, 200, 50).

accepted by the community" (2010, 62), although "evolutionary considerations lead us to give priority to the self-interest of the individual" (2010, 61). These assumptions set the scene both for the general conception of dialogue which Weigand presents as well as the methodology of the MGM by which the concrete meanings of particular utterances (expressed in "speech acts") will be derived from an abstract characterization of dialogue function known as the "Dialogic Principle" (2010, 79ff). Though Weigand situates her approach to dialogic interaction within a broader treatment of "human action in general" (2010, 52), she is nevertheless committed to the irreducibly distinctive, and humanly fundamental, communicational character of language-as-action: "What is needed in order to grasp dialogic interaction is an action concept that is inherently connected with language itself. In a first attempt it can be understood as Austin's 'in-locution'" (2010, 76) (my emphasis). Such a language-based concept of action is necessary because we humans "do not live in a world of pre-established harmony, we live in different individual worlds which have to become related in dialogue in order to achieve an understanding over and above individual differences" (2010, 60). As she puts it: "From the outset human beings have to negotiate their positions with other fellow beings in dialogue" (2010, 48). We are, therefore, "epigenetically programmed as social beings who need dialogue for reasons of survival" (2010, 49). For Weigand, we are, as we were for Linell, "dialogic individuals" (2010, 59). And, once more, we note the theoretical trans-substantiation of dialogic principles from social norm to (hypothetical) flesh and blood (as "inner human nature").

At the same time, the socio(biological) rationale for dialogue requires that there be a specific communicational function to dialogic interaction, referred to by Weigand as "the general purpose of dialogue" (2010, 59), namely "coming to an understanding about something": "Dialogue means negotiating different positions and aims at coming to an understanding or agreement about these positions, be it in dialogic sequences of speech acts or in our minds" (2010, 59). As Weigand puts it elsewhere (2009: 509-510): "I consider 'coming to an understanding' or 'reaching a joint decision' to be the general purpose of any dialogic language use".

While this claim about a so-called "general purpose of dialogue" is contentious enough, where Weigand goes from there takes us to a whole new level of problematic. In effect, a bland and vaguely useful, though partial, generalization about specific episodes or strategies of linguistic interaction becomes a putative foundational matrix or generative

principle of communicational activity, or indeed, human sociality, more generally. The idea is that the abstract, intentional communicational function of dialogue (the "general purpose") progressively sheds (or differentiates itself into) more concrete types or cases of dialogic interaction, creating a whole "speech act taxonomy":

> "We act and react in the action game because we want to 'come to an understanding'. This general concept of the purpose or interactive claim allows us to derive different ways of coming to an understanding by differentiating the purpose" (2010, 141).

In this way, the "individual action functions can be derived from this overall purpose of dialogue" (2010. 82). Futhermore, this entire perspective on the "general purpose" of dialogue along with its progressive differentiation is conceived in terms of the idealistic, a priori mentalism that is supposedly warranted by sociobiological "consilience":

> "This issue of a dialogic speech act taxonomy is, in principle, an issue of the criteria which allow us to move from basic dialogic claims to more specialized ones. In order to achieve a consistent typology these criteria must be functional criteria and must be rooted in the human mind. It turns out that the various speech act types, in the end, draw on two different basic claims, namely a claim to truth and a claim to volition. These basic action claims rest on the basic mental states of belief and desire (Fodor 1987: x). What has always been postulated and searched for, the connection between mind and language, is thus established by correlating basic mental states with basic speech act claims" (2010, 83).

Overall, then, it would be difficult to imagine an approach to communication that was more antithetical to integrationism. The MGM begins from a theoretician's ideologically motivated abstraction from language use - "coming to an understanding" – and proceeds to derive the concrete linguistic world (of "speech acts") from that abstraction via a speculative process worthy of the 19th century idealist heirs to the Hegelian tradition who attempted to derive the apple and the pear from "fruit in general".[7]

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[7] (Cf K Marx and F Engels, The Holy Family, 1845, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/holy-family/ch05.htm).

## 4.2 Edda Weigand's MGM in integrationist perspective

For integrationism, the fundamental problems of the MGM flow from the attempt to build a general communicational theory, and a perspective on human nature and sociality to match, from "an action concept that is inherently connected with language itself" (Weigand 2010, 76). By contrast, integrationism starts from the following fact about our communicational experience: "If we wish to communicate with others, by whatever means, we have to find ways of integrating (albeit partially and temporarily) our activities with theirs and theirs with ours" (Harris 1996, 14). At root, then, the MGM appears to represent a version of "the fallacy of verbalism" (Harris 1996, 25), that is, the assumption that the communicational infrastructure of individual and collective life (not to mention human nature itself) must be linguistically defined or conceived. At the heart of this fallacy, in Harris's view, is "a failure to grasp that language must first conform to the basic order of our communicational universe before words can in any way contribute to articulating it, or assist us in dealing with what lies beyond it" (1996, 25). Hence Harris's brusque assessment of J L Austin's contribution to linguistic theory. "The main flaw" with the work, according to Harris, "is Austin's failure to consider to what extent being able to 'do things with words' is parasitic on being able to do things without them". He goes on: "Doing things without words is what we need to understand first, before there is any chance of understanding what makes it possible to do things with words as well' (Harris 2013).

Furthermore, Harris argues elsewhere that the treatment Austin provides of "doing things with words" is too narrowly focussed on particular uses of language:

"Too hasty an acceptance of Austin's celebrated distinction between 'performative' and 'constative' might mislead the unwary into supposing that we are only doing things with words when we make apologies, promises, or perform some similar speech act of a more or less ritualized kind that has a recognized metalinguistic designation. But this is not the integrationist's interpretation. Doing things with words involves integrating them into a communication process" (Harris 1998, 91).

Accordingly, Harris does not begin from any stipulations about the means, meanings, forms, intentions or functions of communication nor from any assumptions about hypothetical predispositions for negotiation or intentionality or about basic mental states of

belief or desire. The starting point, rather, is where our communicational experience must in fact begin, namely in the integration of activities – between people and between people and their surrounding world – in which communicational means and values are created. It is only through this integration of the activities of real people in real circumstances that the communication processes necessary to their individual and collective survival, and whatever physical and mental habits and capacities these require, are built and progressed:

> "The particular forms which that integration may take will vary from case to case. An integrational approach does not presume to delimit in advance the scope of human communication, which history shows to be constantly open to innovation and development. Nor does it assume that there is any such thing as integrational proficiency or 'communicative competence' per se, i.e. a general ability which is variously applied in particular instances" (1996, 12).

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Similarly, Harris's position diverges from the MGM as regards the motivations and driving forces of communicational activity. For Weigand, dialogue is needed because "[w]e do not live in a world of pre-established harmony, we live in different individual worlds which have to become related in dialogue in order to achieve an understanding over and above individual differences" (2010, 60). On this view, communicational order – and social and cultural organization in general – result from a general impulse to "come to an understanding" which is then differentiated according to circumstance and goal. For Harris, on the other hand, "we are born into a world which has a certain communicational infrastructure already in place. It is this infrastructure which allows us to participate straight away in communication with others" (1996, 24). He goes on: "Exactly how this communicational infrastructure is organized we do not grasp until much later. But its existence predetermines the range of communicational possibilities available to us both initially and for the rest of our lives. This range of possibilities structures our communicational universe" (1996, 24) though it is "an expanding universe, both for the individual and for the human race" (1996, 24). Harris explains that "this infrastructure comprises factors of just three kinds - "biomechanical", "macrosocial" and "circumstantial" (1996, 28) - and that the "integration that is typically required in human communication depends on the possibility of coordinating sequences of activity involving factors of all three kinds" (1996, 28).

The communicational infrastructure is "already in place" not as a ready made system of signs, meanings or common values, nor as an abstract, impersonal structure to which the individual newcomer must succomb. It exists, rather, in the very personal shape of the concrete life activities of one's immediate community, in their myriad interwoven and intersecting communication processes which enable the continuity of personhood and socially organized activity and from which novel processes can be creatively spun – in conformity with the "basic order" - to accommodate any newcomer's needs and to "fit" the newcomer's own developing forms of behaviour and sensitivity into lines of action which, at first, they can have no knowledge or awareness of. There is no sense, then, in attributing some naturally "dialogic" state or predisposition to the new born child; it is surely enough simply to say that the child's survival presupposes the existence of a community that can provide for his or her needs.

Consequently, just as "communication in any form will impose on the participants requirements of a biomechanical, macrosocial and circumstantial nature and to organize their participation in such a way that these requirements do not conflict", then "[l]anguage as a mode of communication is no more exempt from these requirements than any other mode of communication" (Harris 1998, 30). And precisely for that reason there can be no integrationist theory of dialogue (or "talk-in-interaction") as such. Any communication process involving an episode of interaction in speech, for example, requires a time-bound integration of the participants' bodily (biomechanical) activities of listening and speaking relative to the concrete circumstances of the interacting participants (their proximity, bodily orientation, other business going on, etc) and both presupposes – and develops – particular macrosocial proficiencies on the basis of repeated interactional experiences, including those proficiencies relating to the "norms" for conversational interaction. Studies of children's development as communicators (e.g. Cowley 2007) show a substantial history of engagement in communication processes on the basis of earlier episodes of physical coordination and emotional attunement within which vocalizations identifiable as "language" (if at first only to the carers) play an increasingly important role in forms of interpersonal coordination and integration. But linguistic interaction in whatever modality always both presupposes and re-produces the basic communicational "order" of integrational patterning on which the communicational infrastructure is built. And this is an inescapable fact about our communicational existence, whatever the goals or aims we might be pursuing in our

communicational engagements, including the kind of negotiation of different positions that might result in "coming to an understanding":

> "It is not simply that engagement in communication tends as a consequence to integrate in various ways the lives of those who participate in it (as, for example, industrialization tends to promote a common urban way of life). Communication not only promotes but requires a systematic and complementary integration of the participants' activities, both physical and mental" (Harris 1996, 13-14).

Furthermore the shape and dynamic of the local communication processes into which a child is inducted themselves connect with and engage an expanding circle of integrated patterns of activity and organization within the community and society at large which local participants may not, indeed may never, grasp and certainly have not intentionally brought about. In this way, the integration of communication processes, along with the unintended consequences of such integration, result in a communicational universe subject to constraints, imperatives and requirements which conflict dramatically – often murderously – with the needs, desires and purposes of its human agents. That is why for the integrationist, the starting point for any critical investigation of communicational activity must be the concrete communication process itself rather than abstract human "needs", "purposes", "mental states" or communicational functions supposedly expressed therein.

Similarly, the integrationist's perspective is not that verbal discourse can be understood as deriving its specific content and meaning by differentiation of a mythical abstraction in the form of a general and primordial dialogical function ("coming to an agreement"). On the contrary, we inhabit a communicational universe organized not by dialogic principles but by the active construction of communication processes in which and around which dialogical interaction itself (if and when it occurs) must be anchored. Furthermore, the inter-linkage and coherence of particular integrational alignments and sequences is not established in the mind but established in practice through the actions themselves.

The term "communication process" in Harris, therefore, involves a much broader notion than dialogical or even "interactionist" approaches generally allow as it relates to all occasions in which activities are semiotically integrated between people or between people

and the world in which they act. Practical action and communication cannot, therefore, constitute separate "action principles" as in Weigand (2010). Similarly, communicationally organized collective practical activity, as is involved in real time team effort (at work, in sport, in musical performance etc), and which Weigand deems outside the scope of her "Dialogic Principle" (2010, 80), represents an absolutely fundamental type of communication process.

Setting aside its ideological framing, however, let us examine in more detail the distinctive "action principle" at work in the MGM. In contrast with Linell's three-move "minimal communicative interaction", Weigand prefers a two-move framework (like the CA adjacency pair). Thus, "The Dialogic Principle proper" (2010, 79) "provides a definition of dialogue as a sequence of action and reaction… Dialogue is therefore constituted by the interactive purpose of coming to an understanding which is based on the sequence of action and reaction" (2010, 82).

She elaborates:

> "Action and reaction are not two actions of the same type which are arbitrarily connected and only formally distinguished by their position in the sequence. They are functionally different types of action, initiative and reactive, which are internally connected by their very action function" (2010: 80).

And in further clarification:

> "Yet what is precisely the functional difference between action and reaction? To my mind, an initiative act makes a dialogic claim and the reactive act fulfils this very claim. 'Fulfilling' not only means giving a positive answer. In a very general sense, it means going into the initiative claim which can also be done by a negative reply or by an utterance that does not take a position but postpones the decision. What is crucial is the internal functional relationship between action and reaction that is created by the very claim itself which is on the one hand, made and, on the other, fulfilled" (2010, 81).

Elsewhere, she notes: "The integration of components does not come about by the addition of parts; integration means the interaction of components which are interconnected from the very beginning" (2009, 131). This interconnectedness in turn implies an intention to communicate on the part of initiator and a recognition and fulfilment of that intention in response:

"In a model of dialogic interaction, texts or words represent communicative means which are intentionally used by speakers. If they are used without intention, for instance, out of absent-mindedness, they cannot in any way be considered as actors or as communicative means" (2009, 131).

In a nutshell, then, we have an intentional model of communicational transmission in the Dialogic Principle, one subjected to critical examination in Harris (1996). However, in the description of the interdependent dialogic functions of action and reaction there appears to be a surprising parallel with Harris's own description of integrational functions: communication minimally depends on an "integration of two sequences of activity, the second of which complements the first" (Harris 1996: 71). More specifically, the "complementation" involved in integration may be thought of in terms of a circumstantially relevant relationship between communicational initiative and communicational sequel, where complementation "requires that the second contribute to that sequence of events which the first is interpreted as projecting" (1996, 70).

Closer inspection, though, reveals a key contrast. For Weigand, the "internal functional relationship" between action and reaction is "created by the very claim itself which is on the one hand, made and, on the other fulfilled", these functional components being "interconnected from the very beginning" by the intrinsic intentionality of the dialogic process. Harris, by contrast, sets no such requirements as to intentional "fulfilment" or reciprocity in the process: 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" (1996, 70). Thus, the "communicational sequel" does not "fulfill" but "complements" the "communicational initiative" in the sense that it contributes "to that sequence of events which the first is interpreted as projecting" (1996, 70). Note, firstly, that we are dealing with "a sequence of events" rather than a speech act (or "first pair part" in CA). Secondly, a question arises as to who is doing the "projecting". For Weigand, the

initiator of the dialogic interaction projects a "claim" which the respondent must "fulfil". For Harris, on the other hand, the relevant projection is done by the author of the sequel. The "communicational initiative" may therefore be an action (or event) performed or merely happening with, in principle, any or no communicational intent whatsoever, the "sequel" being an action which in effect makes a "coherent sequence" (in some line of action of the respondent) out of the integration of the two. As Harris puts it: "Integration ... is the bringing together of diverse elements or activities into a coherent synthesis" (2009, 163).

Furthermore, this treatment extends to "cases where no other person is involved", in which case "the communication process often consists in constructing an integrated sequel to an observation of our own" (Harris 1996, 63). Harris takes Robinson Crusoe's "reaction to finding the footprint" (of Friday) on the beach to illustrate the integrational "complementation" involved in this particular communication process:

"It does not occur to the castaway to consider whether this is an intentional or a non-intentional sign, and indeed in the circumstances that does not matter. What matters is that he now knows that someone else is – or has been – on the island" (1996, 48).

There can be no general grounds or criteria in principle, therefore, for determining (or stipulating) what may count as integrational complementation (as a sequel) in concrete communicational episodes since, as Harris puts it, "circumstances alter cases" (1996, 69). In other words, what counts as complementation in the context of interpersonal interaction will depend on the nature of the communication process which the participants are jointly creating (cooperatively or uncooperatively) -  whether singing in harmony, swapping improvised choruses in a jazz combo, passing water buckets along a line, paying for a meal, following a map, holding open a door, or having a conversation.

Any objection to the effect that the principle of integrational complementarity dissolves the social world into a chaos of independent and unharmonized behaviours of separate individuals fails to note the implications of Harris's characterization of the communicational infrastructure both in terms of the relationship between "internal" and "external" integration of communication processes noted above and, more specifically, the crucial role of circumstantial factors in "anchor[ing] the contextualization of communication" (1996,  30). In that light, the close communicational coordination and synchronization of

interpersonal activities in teams or en masse can be understood firstly as a function of the concrete relations of interdependence between individual people but secondly as a function of the restrictions imposed on their communicational creativity, on their freedom of movement and action generally, by circumstantial factors - whether physical in the broadest sense, financial, moral etc - over which they may have little say or control.

## 4.3 Dialogic interaction and "integrational binding"

Against these general integrationist considerations, the "Dialogic Principle" of the MGM might simply be seen as an extrapolation from common patterns of integrational complementation one might describe as instances of "integrational binding". Such patterns inevitably arise with the development of macrosocial proficiencies over sequences of communicational episodes as a result of which, subject to circumstance, integrational complementations or sequels can be reliably projected from mutually recognisable prior initiating moves, as in the familiar "adjacency pair" format.

Such cases appear to demonstrate an unexceptional and ubiquitous ability on the part of cooperating interlocutors to understand and "fulfill" their respective communicational intentions, something that is often (as in the MGM) considered to be a distinctive feature of linguistic interaction. Consider, however, daily routines which do not involve words at all. Consider the nurse who, before leaving for work, puts his or her uniform on, packs lunch, pockets money, puts shoes on, etc. i.e. enacts a daily "getting ready for work" communication process, a whole "internally integrated" and locally intelligible "bubble" of communicationally organized activity. At the same time, of course, this activity itself only has the meaning it does as a (back) projection of the nurse's subsequent lines of action in which the objects or processes assembled or executed in the preparatory bubble will be variously deployed or called on during the working day (at the bus stop, on the ward, in the canteen). The activity of eating lunch, for example, will ultimately complement the lunch making "initiative" as its "enactive sequel"; conversely, lunch will be made carefully and deliberately – with focussed intent – to enable the subsequent "complementary" act of consumption. In this way, through repeated practice, the projected sequel impacts back through the whole communication process which it complements, thereby "binding" the design and construction of the communicative initiative ever more tightly into the projected sequence of integrational complementation.

From this simple case a number of implications follow. Firstly, the "inner functional relationship" of the Dialogic Principle can be seen as merely an instance of broader patterns of (non verbal) integrational complementation. Secondly, we 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. And thirdly, while the "getting ready for work" case speaks strongly of the role of intention, of deliberate preparation, in the "binding" of communication processes through productive sequences of action, other cases show more clearly that the locally intelligible design of an internally integrated "bubble" can come together without any specific intent at all due to the way in which the criterial properties or specifications of integrational sequels can work back, due to countless independent and ad hoc adjustments, to foist on participants the circumstantial conditions in which their initiating actions must be performed. Smith, for example, examines how a "brutal labor regime" for Shenzhen workers ensues as "part of the hidden price for Apple's super profits and Western consumers' access to the latest high-tech gadgets" (2016, 23):

> "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 anti-static-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).

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. 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. 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 in which human needs, purposes and aspirations may be ruthlessly chewed up and spat out. Much if not everything we do is subject to such circumstantial "binding" without us knowing it, or at least knowing why it's happening.

## 5. Conclusion

I have attempted to show that approaches to communication in general which give ontological or methodological primacy to linguistic interaction – seen now "concretely" as "talk", now "abstractly" as "dialogic principle" – appear to carry the twin risks of mystification of communication proficiencies, rooted at least in part in an unexamined linguistic reflexivity, and of the dis-integration of the social world into which our communicational experiences and actions are inseparably intervowen. In this connection, Harris's cautionary words on the subject of general theories of communication are worth noting:

> "Models which have been designed with certain specific cases and comparisons in mind (to which a tacit priority is thus accorded in dealing with other cases) may perhaps have a limited validity (i.e.in dealing just with such cases as provided the prototype). But their application across the entire gamut of human communication invariably becomes problematic" (1996, 6).

Our communicational experiences in local settings or activities are in effect experiences of connecting to and contributing to the (re-)creation of a wider communicational infrastructure through which we are sustained (and sometimes destroyed). To begin from, or indeed to stop at, the boundaries of such meaningful communicational experience - in the shape of active "sense-making" (Linell), "intersubjectivity" (Schegloff), local "intelligibility" and "transparency" (Goodwin), or "coming to an understanding" (Weigand) - is therefore to take the risk of obscuring or fragmenting the communicational universe which we inhabit, to which we contribute and which we may also wish to change. Consequently, the ghost of segregationism, in the shape of Harris's "fallacy of verbalism", continues to haunt, at times faintly, at times aggressively, the assumptions and methodologies of the approaches in question.

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