Discussion: integrationism, anti-humanism and the suprasubjective

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<u>Introduction</u>

The pressure to take at least partial or temporary residency on the high moral ground is quite considerable in our profession. One might cite standards and commitment to truth in research or provision of the best possible guidance for students as key humanist motivators. For those who have had a 'humanist' education or who clearly see the human virtues of learning, there is the temptation to intuitively applaud humanism and, certainly, it is difficult to renounce it *in toto*. To do so is to court suggestions that you are somehow 'against' humans, a nihilist or, worse, a pessimist. It is to be a debaser of all that is good and of value in either the human essence or, for the more philosophically circumspect, in human interaction. Very few state that they are against humanism and very many profess that they are definitely humanists of one sort or another. It is part and parcel of being nice, the bandwagon of positivity which may or may not complement academic considerations. Of course, in the arts, politics and social life, there have been movements in the last century or so that have putatively renounced humanism, often for greater or lesser rhetorical effect. The movement of this kind that influenced me in my formative years was punk rock – a strategic, but strongly felt, renunciation of the unholy alliance of the establishment in general, business in particular and the music business especially. As a subculture, it was particularly successful – irrespective of later outcomes - in challenging a tired socio-political consensus in the UK (and the West). It brought into serious question a set of unquestioned values – for example, regarding race, gender, sexuality, respectability, diversity and tolerance – that have been comprehensively co-opted since by social democratic governments. And it effectively outlawed 'progressive rock'. The other formative influence I should mention here is reading Althusser as an undergraduate. Despite the fact that Althusser's work was now open to question as the news broke that he had murdered his wife, his theoretical anti-humanism overturned everything I had considered to be common sense, even in the post-punk environment.

Such adolescent experiences of revelation are sometimes difficult to work through; so I have to admit that all these years later I remain suspicious of humanism and I am committed to an anti-humanist perspective. Obviously, that sounds very negative – defining oneself as being against something rather than for something. Moreover, in an environment where humanist positions are so entrenched that they are as taken-for-granted as fresh air, it may appear as though an 'anti' perspective has nothing to offer. Indeed, this seems to be very much the predicament of Roy Harris, certainly from his 1978 inaugural lecture onwards, as he persuasively and vigorously took apart the 'language myth'. Pitted against an academic establishment - and institutionalisation of linguistics especially - which was unlikely to see that there was any problem to consider since everything seemed to be working so well, the integrationist effort was always going to be an uphill struggle. By contrast, modern quasi-critical intellectual endeavours such as post-structuralism have met with immense success, largely because, for all their calls for new ways of thinking, they have been complicit with existing academic agendas and have simply acted as a Spring clean, allowing certain disciplines to stage a brief clear-out before proceeding with business as usual. An integrational semiology, on the other hand, may have entailed ripping up some things and starting again from scratch. A vivid analogy

might be the profession of burglary withstanding a spirited denunciation encompassing a critique of its methods, but completely missing the point of a more wholesale denunciation that called for burglars to immediately desist.

Having introduced this admittedly fairly slight kinship between Harris' Herculean exposure of the language myth and the challenge of anti-humanism, it is perhaps worth declaring some other interests which render my perspective at odds with humanism but not by any means opposed to positions espoused in the contributions to this volume. Firstly, I became aware of the integrationist endeavour early in my involvement in semiotics and I was struck by the stress on the role of the laity at a time when media and cultural studies had rediscovered the importance of studying audiences and reception. Secondly, an integrationist perspective entailed a challenge to the idea of fixed codes, an issue that was becoming crucial to semiotics' own self-reflexive vision. Thirdly, to be an integrationist was to be concerned with *communication* rather than *language* (see, especially, Harris 2003); thus, fourthly, as semiotics was beginning to realize, the main concern was semiosis rather than the individual sign. Fifthly, in an integrationist view the world could not be seen as 'constructed in discourse' as the 'linguistic turn' and semiology – but not the emerging semiotics – would have it. Sixthly, and following on, the human subject was agentive in the integrationist formulation; far from being the 'bearer' of structures or functions as structural Marxism had held, or determined by language, the human's agency was central to meaning-making. With the emergence of biosemiotics from the early 1990s onwards, adumbrating a vision of agency throughout nature, I saw the projects of integrationism and semiotics as allied. Some of this is reflected in the contribution to this book by Conrad (pp.   ) and certainly in Pablé and Hutton (2015). However, it is this alliance which also prevents me from immediately subscribing to a humanist evaluation of the integrational project. Hopefully, I can expand on this persuasively, with reference to the contributions to this volume, in the following points.

Codes

Running through all the contributions to this volume is the insistence that signs are 'radically indeterminate' (see the first mention of it in the essay on 'Secular humanist discourses on rationality', by Pablé, above, pp.   ). Contemporary semiotics, in general, shares the same view. As it is a broad school, some parts of semiotics still cling to determinacy and, certainly in the 1960s, many were guilty of excessive credulity towards determinacy in communication – as Umberto Eco said shortly before his death, they had "pissed code" (Kull and Velmezova 2016). Orman, in this volume, notes the linguistic hypertrophy in the term 'fixed codes', against which integrationists have long railed. Thus,

> the 'fixed' part of that description is largely superfluous since the notion of an unfixed, i.e. indeterminate, code undermines the original theoretical purpose which the postulation of the code was designed to serve, namely the guaranteeing of intersubjectivity in linguistic communication (Orman pp.   ).

In pursuing the relation of an integrationist perspective to a humanist one, this is an important point because it deftly illustrates how the positing of an abstract code vitiates agency in favour of the system, in the manner of Saussure as well as Benveniste and Jakobson after him. Yet there is a wider picture to consider. I would

argue that the idea of code is an anthropomorphism based, historically, on pragmatic implementation of cryptography. In nature, there are some codes that apparently function by dint of determinacy: the immune code, the genetic code, the neural code and the metabolic code. However, even with these 'master' codes, their seeming determinacy is itself by no means unassailable, any more than it is with the 'verbal code' (Cobley 2016). Harris' insistence on 'communication' and its co-temporality deliberately took the focus of the argument away from 'language'. Similarly, as can be seen with the career of one of the key figures in the development of contemporary semiotics, Thomas A. Sebeok, it was the movement from linguistics to general sign study that finally dissolved 'code'. Originally adhering to Jakobson's insistence on distinctive features as the 'universal building blocks of language', Sebeok moved through animal communication studies to global semiotics, steadily loosening the definition and grip of coding (Cobley 2014). In his later writings Sebeok referred to a proliferation of 'cultural' and 'natural' codes, from those in specific film genres to those in the social world of cats. He also treated the term 'code' as a synonym for 'interpretant' (see, for example, 2001: 80 and 191 n. 13), the Peircean term for bringing forth a sign relationship and opening it up for further interpretation and further sign generation. It is understandable that, in the war against the language myth (in which we are involved), that Orman might take issue with this indeterminate version of code as developed by Sebeok; after all, the point is to re-introduce agency in the face of the ossification that sets in with the scientistic notion of code. Yet, might it not equally be the point to stress that agency interrupts the very conceptualization of code, rendering it a rule that everybody knows is to be broken? Certainly, Harris did not shrink from using 'communication', a concept which actually implies code success but which most people know also entails miscommunication and failure. In these instances, the faultiness of reified concepts offers somewhat of an opportunity for an agentive integrationist impetus.

The agentive aspect of all communication, even that involving supposedly fixed codes in the sphere of language, is what is emphasized in Warner's idea of "human semantic labour" as it is to be "distinguished from syntactic labour and machine computational processes, in contrast to the otherwise dominant assimilation of the human to the formal and to the machine in linguistics (Sperber and Wilson 1986) and cognitive science (Johnson-Laird 1988)" (see above, pp.   ). In his persuasive argument, Warner sees the possibility of a humanistic reassertion of semantic autonomy in the face of syntactic sovereignty. Certainly, in formulating the design features of language Hockett (1963), too, seemed to have a similar vision for semanticity. Yet, in considering semantic labour – in much the same way as one might embrace the paradox of an 'indeterminate code' – there is a need to return to the matter of whether semantics and syntactics (and the labour associated with them) can be separated. The only place where they can be so divorced is in linguistics under the yoke of the language myth. Moreover, if one is looking to extrapolate about wider issues from observing linguistic structure – in sum: *looking for* linguistic structure – as opposed to looking at how humans use communication or what language is for, then results are always going to be limited and self-perpetuating. Treating language in terms of the formal system which seems to organize its manifestations is of a piece with approaching it with an engineering model, argues Deacon (2016). From the perspective of the evolution of language, he observes that language and language abilities have evolved spontaneously; unsurprisingly, therefore, identifying linguistic units as the building blocks of language is misplaced. For Deacon, cognitive, semiotic and pragmatic structures generate linguistic units; elementary phonetic and

morphological elements of language are "late-stage developments" (2016: 4-5). He also makes this point with reference to brain development, demonstrating that cortical and language functions can only be understood in process terms, that the language function develops in a manner homologous to sensory and motor processing in general and, especially important, that the linguistic phrase is a semiotic, not linguistic, unit because it is lodged in a process involving the constraint of an index that enables symbolic reference. Segregationist linguistic theory starts from the symbol. What is crucial here is not just the embedding of 'linguistic units' in semiotic processes but the fact that the 'linguistic unit' - which is always a broader semiotic unit in any case - could never make reference if it was not bound to an indexical operation. That indexical operation, implying a communicative-interactive act rather than merely a symbolic one, locates the linguistic sign not just in pragmatics, but also in semiotics (and certainly not in syntactics). We will return to this semiotic bearing and its consequences for humanism, below.

      For the moment, let us consider further the matter of determinacy versus radical indeterminacy, as well as code versus interpretation. In contemporary semiotics, Peirce is held to be the exemplar of an interpretative rather than code-based semiotics. Yet, Jones (above, pp.   ) refers to Peirce as the progenitor of the type-token distinction, a variant of coding that is discussed by Hutton and runs through the entirety of Harris (1996). In the latter, Harris (1996: 10) notes that the type-token distinction can be employed in a number of different ways and he refers to its origin in Peirce's discussion of the work of a typesetter. Peirce (5.437) writes,

> There will ordinarily be about twenty *the*'s on a page, and of course they count as twenty words. In another sense of the word "word," however, there is but one word "the" in the English language; and it is impossible that this word should lie visibly on a page or be heard in any voice, for the reason that it is not a Single thing or Single event. It does not exist; it only determines things that do exist. Such a definitely significant Form, I propose to term a *Type*. A Single event which happens once and whose identity is limited to that one happening or a Single object or thing which is in some single place at any one instant of time, such event or thing being significant only as occurring just when and where it does, such as this or that word on a single line of a single page of a single copy of a book, I will venture to call a *Token*.

Apart from establishing the type-token distinction, this passage demonstrates two things. The first is that you should be careful when choosing examples: Peirce shifts from an arena of purely quantitative measures (typesetting) to a qualitative domain of meaning, thus setting himself up for admonishment by commentators who recognize this a century of linguistics later. The second is partly contained in the first – that is, different rules apply in the qualitative domain from the quantitative realm of scientism. This is part of the point that Harris seeks to make and he does it very competently, of course. However, what Harris and others overlook is that Peirce (4.537) also introduces a third term in the next sentence

> An indefinite significant character such as a tone of voice can neither be called a Type nor a Token. I propose to call such a Sign a *Tone*; In order that a Type may be used, it has to be embodied in a Token which shall be a sign of the Type, and thereby of the object the Type signifies.

Arguably, an integrationist would not disagree with this sentence as a whole and certainly not before the word "which" occurs. A *Tone* appears at first glance to be the kind of reification that is proposed in pragmatics; yet, clearly, it is more in the manner of 'indefinite significance' of the kind that characterizes the communicative acts of the laity as emphasized in integrationism.

We will return to this matter, below, but the binary version is certainly how the type-token distinction on its own seems to work in segregational linguistics and, in this context, Jones is right to remind us of Hutton's observation that the abstract linguistic system is necessarily 'independent of context' or 'decontextualized' (1990: 141). However – and this is of importance when we consider the relation of an integrationist approach and humanism – the distinction is not to be dismissed as further evidence of the deleterious effects of the reification of code, nor should we abandon the ambition to maintain context in its rightful place within communication. Used in linguistics, the type-token distinction either proceeds from an *a priori* idealisation of the type which draws on tokens for support; alternatively, it observes an accumulation of tokens in order to theorize an ideal type. More broadly applied, however, the distinction can be treated in a subtly different fashion. For example, Sebeok (1979a: 42) writes of the human propensity to classify, a much neglected activity in evolutionary accounts because the tokens of this propensity are usually taken on their own terms. So, in biology, reading the tokens as evidence of a type can reveal important insights – for example, biological function in seemingly unimportant recurring activities. In linguistics, reading the tokens as evidence of a type completely fails to account for the efficacy of the tokens in themselves and their independence – as is the case of so much communication – of an idealized structure. Much communication shares this characteristic with linguistic semiosis; yet, in an evolutionary frame, the relation between the recursive tendency of language, the infinite number of exchanges which might give rise to meaning and the relatively limited repertoires of various forms of communication from which it has, in part, evolved (e.g. gesture), needs to be considered. Moreover, any contention that context can be other than central, or actually posterior, to communicative acts must be misguided. Sebeok (1991: 30) states that context "refers to the organism's cognizance of conditions and manner of appropriate and effective use of messages", adding, that it

> includes the whole range of the animal's cognitive systems (that is, 'mind'), messages flowing parallel, as well as the memory of prior messages that have been processed or experience and, no doubt, the anticipation of future messages expected to be brought into play.

Couching the matter in this way, with context at the very forefront of organisms' (not just humans') communication, suggests that decontextualization is the toxic gift of the language myth. It also suggests to me that 'humanizing' the communication process, stressing the individuality of every communicative transaction, is not necessarily the best way to promote context or an integrationist perspective on it. We will return to this point. For now, Hayes' argument in this respect seems to warrant amplification. His comments on 'linguistic governance' (pp.   ) clearly implicate the language myth. Indeed, the restrictive legislation, speech codes, 'no platform policies' and censorship to which he alludes, along with the "citizen-as-victim", have a long history, going back as far as the so-called 'War of the Words' (Dunant 1994) that installed political correctness in the public consciousness. That the matters arising from this conjuncture

have become particularly urgent is evidenced by the arguably even more stupid excesses of 'post-truth' politics that have voted the UK out of the European Union and voted Donald Trump into the Presidency. It is tempting to jerk the knee and join Hayes (pp.   ) in clinging to free speech and academic freedom as absolutes and, certainly, there could be some political mileage in doing this. Ultimately, however, the battle against the language myth entails recognition that free speech and academic freedom can also be reified and idealized.

Orman presents a startling, but cogent, vision of the politics of indeterminacy which recognizes the collusion of determinacy, linguistics and, especially, scientism (see also Orman 2016). It is interesting, too – and not at all incorrect - that he should recognize in 'sociolinguistics', especially, within linguistics, a particular nub of reaction. This has obviously struck Toolan (above) too. Of course, for those outside the debate about the language myth (read: nearly all other linguists), sociolinguistics might seem to be like the People's Front of Judea. Yet, in the frame of scientism, Orman (above, pp.   ) quite reasonably suggests that it is time to

> drop the pretence that orthodox linguistics has anything meaningful to contribute to the understanding of human communication and instead come to the view that linguistics is instead primarily a severe *hindrance* to that endeavour. This would require a fundamental rethinking of sociolinguistics in terms of both theory and method, a development which seems unlikely to happen any time soon.

This is not unlike the sum – although for somewhat different reasons - of the conclusions to be drawn from Deacon (2016), cited earlier, that the study of plerematic and cinematic patterning with an engineer's eye is likely to cloud, rather than clear, our vision of what language is. However, while I can agree with Orman (pp.   ) that scientism – as a mechanicist perspective, driven by machine metaphors with no sense of the richness of agency – is a key driver in segregationalism, I am less sure that it is an anti-humanism rather than *dehumanized*. Certainly, the philosophical penchant for determinacy in linguistics is of a piece with its institutionalization. Harris (2001) was particularly alert about this issue, noting the scientism that beset linguistics from its inception not long ago. When Orman observes that sociolinguistics not only failed to reject orthodox linguistics but actively sought compromise and alliance with it, there can be little argument. It should be added as a reminder that the alliance is founded on the determinacy of the linguistic sign and the development of a methodology that not only reiterates that but also serves to perpetuate the discipline as a whole. Without promising to find determinate answers, how else can researchers in a field repeatedly convince the funding bodies? Indeed, one of the most successful branches of sociolinguistics in recent years has been Critical Discourse Analysis (upper case is now institutionalized) which is one component of numerous successful grant applications in the humanities.

Yet, there is another political ally of segregation and determinacy whose penumbra is just about visible in this book and, for that reason, should promote wariness. The idea that the world is 'constructed in discourse' has already had a relatively long history and has been closely associated with the segregationist project of Saussure. Cemented in the much-vaunted 'linguistic turn' (Rorty 1967), the idea spread through the human sciences and was sustained by post-structuralism with its central belief that the only truth lay in the deployment of discourse in specific power configurations. Put like this, one can see how the Harrisian insistence on context, lay

speakers and communication may seem synonymous with post-structuralist relativism. Indeed, there is a flavour of this in the introduction to the present volume. Pablé (pp.   ) quotes Sartre, for whom "there is no other universe except the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity" adding "that the latter position comes close to a Harrisian position on 'reality'; in other words, there is no other view for humans than a *human view*, and this, for Harris, on biomechanical grounds". These biomechanical grounds are crucial in distinguishing between the idea of 'construction in discourse' and an *Umwelt*. Pablé does not use the latter term here, but does with some considerable accomplishment, and not in passing, in Pablé and Hutton (2015). The point, here, is twofold: an *Umwelt* entails a world constructed by/for a species i.e. it is a species-specific phenomenon, not just human; that world is facilitated not by a means of communication but by a sensorium, one which – in the case of the human – allows extreme variegation and is not based solely on verbality. A "*human view*" (which can never be merely a view, based on one sensory modality) might imply that 'humanism' is appropriate, but such a humanism comes with impediments since it is based on a very partial view, on a par with that of post-structuralism, of what constitutes the human.

　　We need to be careful, too, regarding the assertion of 'mind' involved in this humanism. Having a mind and knowing that there are other minds with whom one can 'engage' in communication (Harris 2013 quoted in Pablé, above pp.   ) veers perilously close to the idea of the unitary, self-identical and autonomous mind of liberal individualism and absolute relativism. The political co-ordinates of this are, of course, problematic; but, above all, we know that it is untenable, much like the absolute relativism that is heard in first year undergraduate seminars when some participants will repeatedly resolve an issue by stating "It's just a matter of what the individual thinks". If the speech of the laity is to be taken seriously, along with the minds of people, then dialogue has to be conceived as something other than an individual project. As Petrilli and Ponzio put it (1998: 28) "dialogue is not the result of an initiative we decide to take, but rather it is imposed, something to which one is subjected. Dialogue is not the result of opening towards the other, but of the impossibility of closing". This is not a matter of positing an intersubjective basis for language so that the indeterminacy of linguistic signs can be instituted. Rather, it is the matter of give and take that sustains the laity in its quotidian use of signs. In their contribution to this volume, Makoni and Severo suggest a similar process at the level of society, with reference to the juridical principle of *Ubuntu* based on a communal perspective. The equivalent in the UK is the 'common law', dating from the Anglo-Saxon period, where cases are decided according to precedents set in previous cases. I am insufficiently acquainted with specific recurrent instances of political and ethical implementation of *Ubuntu*, but while Makoni and Severoni's description gives the impression that it necessitates case-by-case dealings, it would seem that there must be reliance on precedents, in some form, much like the Anglo-Saxon common law. Put another way, integrationists cannot afford to disregard the possibility that there are structural effects in social life.

　　In respect of this point, possibly the most important statement in this volume, is Toolan's powerful reminder (pp.   , above) that integrationist theory should not assume that

> questions of inequality in health and wealth have nothing to do with semiology in theory or in practice: even the deprived and excluded have language. I would beg to differ, and would suggest that acute practical 'non-linguistic'

inequalities can constrain and even suppress a person's powers of self-expressive, creative language.

Toolan points to a serious problem: that the laity may be repeatedly deprived of expressive power and unable to contribute to a 'consensus' on meaning or a good deal else. One argument about the current wave of populist politics in the West is that it partly represents the sound of the disenfranchised voice, a vote attracted by the less hidebound figures in contemporary politics who say the things that have been prohibited in the conjuncture that Hayes so vividly identifies. Whatever is the case in recent Western politics, an integrationist perspective cannot rely on the 'cult of humanity' that Sartre (quoted by Pablé in the Introduction, above, pp.   ) derided, the Hollywood-sustained power of the individual or the myth of the informed electorate. Instead, a more qualified formulation of the laity and the agent in communication is needed.

The laity and agency

In two bold contributions to this volume, both Hutton and Duncker grasp the nettle of the self. Hutton, in particular, focuses on "bedrock concepts", a term for "those concepts not easily decomposable into more elementary elements, such as *self*, *person*, *consciousness*, *meaning*, *animal*" (pp.   ). Effectively, he is talking about 'universals': a concept that, in the wake of post-structuralism and post-colonialism has undergone prohibitions. Despite these prohibitions, it is clear that much academic discourse in the humanities and social science has tended to invoke universals, often either side-stepping their status as universals or being blissfully unaware of it. Indeed, bedrock concepts are beginning to escape some of the prohibitions imposed on them. Contemporary semiotics, certainly, now puts in a central position certain universals such as '*Umwelt*'. Clearly, too, folk versions of universals are preferable to those cognitivist constructions which Harris (2008) found to be a much more pernicious form of guesswork about the mind than that performed by the laity. Orman (2016) makes a similar point regarding folk metalinguistic discourse and folk psychology; arguably, Hutto's work (2006, 2007, 2008) in opposition to 'Theory of Mind' demonstrates some of the same kind of observations. So, when Hutton states that "Integrationism draws on a notion of the self as possessing a mind which cannot be deconstructed into modules" (pp.   ), it is difficult to disagree. Yet, he adds (pp.   ) that

> Integrationism draws on an essentially Christian or Judeo-Christian philosophical anthropology in its understanding of the self, which its emphasis on communication as a moral activity and on agency and individual responsibility in communication. Integration without this autonomous self is compatible with a systems theory; integration is after all performed by babies, animals, plants, by any life system, or by any system at all, including financial systems, transport systems, communication systems, and legal systems (Pablé and Hutton 2015). The 'integrated mind' (Harris 2008: 109) must belong to an autonomous self.

Hutton is aware of some of the problems in what he pronounces on behalf of the idea of an autonomous self. He sees the possibility of integrationism as a form of humanism in its "rejection of systems theory and its affirmation of human agency,

individual autonomy and the self-sufficiency and self-authenticating nature of lay linguistic practice and lay meta-linguistic insight" (pp.   ). Yet this is a 'bedrock dilemma' sanctioning some forms of definitional thinking and conceptual reification (with regard to the self) and yet critiqueing and rejecting others (everything to do with the language myth and cognobabble) (pp.   ).

Ultimately, Hutton concludes that integrationism, as a humanistic project with a socio-political role is undercut by its radical indeterminacy. As a result of this reminder of the need to inculcate a first-person point of view, integrationism would be, he says "primarily therapeutic", constantly haunted by the "paradoxes of reification and de-reification" (pp.   ). The reasoning is compelling; however, it is possible that there is an escape from this dilemma by way of some of the insights offered in allied fields, even those for which the language myth is a central sustaining ethos. When Hutton notes that the autonomous self which seems implicit in integrationism is Judeo-Christian in character, he is not wrong. Coming into being fully formed, like a ghost in the machine or like a soul moving from one plane to the next in order to settle episodes of communication, such a view of the self envisions no past, either ontogenetically or phylogenetically. Although there is a massive challenge (despite major progress – see Deacon 2012) in accounting for where language might have come from, given that it is such leap away from anything in the world of non-human animals, one of the benefits of biosemiotics in relation to language is that it requires us to consider ontogenetic and phylogenetic development and learning. However much human subjects are *in media res* with respect to signification, certain capacities must have had a history. Communication, particularly as it became embedded in language, does not appear suddenly: in the human child, it develops in stages; in the human species, it has gone through successive phases. Likewise with the self: biosemiotics finds the rudiments of the self at the level of the cell - in *immunological* and *semiotic* modes in which the immunological self operates in a 'semiotic' fashion while the semiotic self operates in the most complex and potentially unanticipated ways predicated on a biological impetus (see Sebeok 1979b, 1989, 1992, 1998 and Cobley 2016: 45-59). The point here is that a self that settles communicative interactions did not come from nowhere. Through evolution and individual development, it came from incarnations where its autonomy was always impaired, never full. It could be said that the autonomous self always bears the scars of its fractured upbringing. As such, it may demonstrate tendencies towards determinacy even while possessing a degree of autonomy that might make it a convincing agent in the communication sphere.

Harris (2008), has convincingly undermined much institutionalized and canonical thinking about cognition, pointing especially to the hygiene it imposes on vocabulary to maintain some of its undefendable premises. However, it should not be forgotten that behind some of this vocabulary there is also fierce debate, particularly regarding whether the mind is made up of modules or whether it operates according to more holistic principles. Perhaps it is unrealistic for integrationism to pursue the ideal of the autonomous self and an auto-substantiating mind in light of the fact that minds and selves have not always been the same. If I believe this is the case, does it mean that I cannot be a fellow traveller of integrationism or, worse, does it mean that the only way to be an integrationist is to subscribe to the humanist mythology of the unified self? I tend to think not, and the basis for this view is to be found in the contributions to this volume. In short, it is the idea that what is at stake is not absolute autonomy, but agency – or, rather, that some segregational perspectives have banished agency and that fact does not give license to assume that integrationism

entails absolute agency. After all, 'communication', at its very root as a concept (leaving aside etymology, which proves very little), involves communing even whilst feeling individuality. Duncker writes (pp.   ):

> The individual person is capable of seeing themselves in a bigger whole. The individual is an exception as well as an element in the ensemble of other persons and the relations existing between them. If integrational linguists are willing to acknowledge the bigger whole as an open system based on dynamic interaction, and to investigate the ensemble of communicating participants into which language is complexly integrated, together with their interrelatedness, I suggest that it will be possible to develop a different and philosophically less problematic understanding of the macrosocial category. Linguistic processes are unthinkable without presuming their embeddedness in the social matrix, and this means that these processes are also embedded in a larger complex based on the simple fact that persons have relations to other persons. This social relatedness is inevitable from the very beginning, since nobody enters this world unrelated to at least one other person. We are born in this way, and to the day we die we are caught up in a web of personal relations. In a very concrete sense our life depends on this relatedness as part of our integrational proficiency. "If we manage the integrational task successfully, we live. If not, we die" (Harris 1998: 29).

Effectively, this is a re-statement of the earlier observation, citing Petrilli and Ponzio, on the non-liberal conception of *dialogue*. Agency does not occur in a space occupied by just one communicator.

Shifting the focus from autonomy to agency would seem also to significantly alter the putative relationship of integrationism and humanis. It is not that being an agent becomes no more than a disappointing mid-most target, so much as it becomes a feature of semiotic freedom with a surprisingly long reach beyond the species and within a species' semioses. Agency across the biosphere has been severely underestimated. Hoffmeyer gives the example of "when a bacterium 'chooses' to swim upstream in a gradient of nourishment rather than tumbling around waiting for the nutrients to reach it" (2010: 34), noting a "talent for anticipation" which would have started a tendency to systems with more and more semiotic freedom of this kind. Another way of phrasing this configuration is "*interpretance*", a capacity that is of obvious interest to the integrationist but is used by Hoffmeyer to refer to the capacity of a cell, organism, species to distinguish parameters in its surroundings or its own interior and use them in regard to significance. The point of semiotic freedom – continuity of interpretance from lower to higher organisms – is its potential contribution to understanding such cultural preoccupations as adaptability, interpersonal relations, subjectivity, art, the good life, value and ethics, unsettling all those who would bluffly draw a line between humans and the rest of nature. Semiotic freedom is also, of course, at the centre of *Umwelten*. The equation of semiotic freedom and agency seems to be integral to the arguments in the essays by Thibault and Bade in this volume. Indeed, Bade offers a clue to what might be the most profitable result of the consideration of integrationism and humanism when he writes (pp.   ),

> We live in the world with others moment by moment, as best we may, constrained as we all are by our physical capacities and limits, our social

situation, and the circumstances that pertain to any lived moment in time. A prejudice that insists upon finding a rigidly and exhaustively knowable mechanical world behind our lived experience of the world must begin by denying the validity of our own experience. To reject that prejudice, in science as in life, is to attempt to understand a world that we may love or fear, but within which we must needs live together and over which we refuse to seek to exercise complete power. To reject that prejudice is also to come to understand machines better as the products of human activity motivated and guided by human desires, fantasies, fears and ignorance.

In contrast to a vision of autonomy and unity, this statement maintains a focus on what Bade and Harris (as well as the phenomenological tradition and second-order cybernetics) refer to as "first-order experience". While systems-orientated approaches have tended to bracket first-order or first-person experience, liberal-humanist bourgeois thought has made it the default position, rendering it thoroughly natural and banishing collectivity except as an entity over which the individual can have dominion. In opposition to bourgeois thought, which at all times has effortlessly, promulgated individualism (as the common sense of ideology) while constituting subordinate classes in society collectively, there has been a poor record of appreciating and claiming first-person experience. Perhaps this might be the best job that an integrationist perspective could perform: rather than recapitulating humanism in the face of the systematisers, it could release first-person experience from the constraints of that enforced collectivization whose alibi is the promotion of individualism. To put it another way, recognizing the extent and effects of agency in semiosis will produce more far-reaching results than falling back on the myth of a fully autonomous individual. Somewhat cynically, perhaps, the British actor David Jason once said that marriage was like diving into a lake when you only wanted a drink of water. Integrationism seeks the life-giving properties of water; it would not wish to drown.

Suprasubjectivity

Having posed these tentative counter-arguments to a marriage between integrationism and humanism, one further issue should be clarified. This concerns the status of the sign (linguistic or otherwise). Are the foregoing arguments predicated on a view of the sign as determinate and determining, fixed co-ordinates which shape and delimit subjectivity as the systematisers and post-structuralists would have it? Or do they promote the idea that the sign is indeterminate and, in the final analysis, always fully interpretable and susceptible to the will of the subject? Toolan (pp.   ) addresses the same issue, keeping an open mind, but plumping for human sense-making as grounds for doubting that "signs can, in principle and before their emergence on a particular occasion (such as the making of integrated sense of a paragraph of writing about humanist linguistics contemporaneously with attending to the Tarantella song), be measured and recorded". Without taking any issue with Toolan's point, I would seek to address the question – in the frame of discussing humanism, in light of what has gone before in this volume and in this 'Discussion' – with reference to the *suprasubjective*.

As has been seen, Peirce's famous type/token distinction, as anyone who knew his obsession with triadism must have guessed, is only two thirds of the story of his

categorization in this instance. The three sides of this distinction call for 'interpretance', particularly with the neglected *Tone* weighing in as heavily contextual. Indeed, it is generally understood that sign study in recent decades has moved from a 'code semiotics' to an 'interpretation' semiotics. Part of this understanding is based on the growing emphasis not just on the flow of sign to sign (semiosis) but on the sign's constitution as a *relation* rather than just a configuration of parts. A sign is not simply a matter of two parts with a relation to a particular terminus. What has been forgotten, for the most part, in the history of sign study, is that semiosis inheres in the sign relation itself rather than in its components' reaching of the terminus. The American philosopher, John Deely, drawing on the late Latins and Peirce, has been central to the recovery of this memory. The title of a 2002 paper by Deely, 'Intersubjectivity is not enough', perhaps, sums up the relevance for integrationists of the point being made here. For integrationists, intersubjectivity is an inevitable part of communication and dialogue (as has been seen) but as a part of the theoretical armoury on signification it only serves to guarantee the indeterminacy of the sign. It renders the sign user/maker merely as "being-in-between" (Deely 2002) sign and terminus. Yet, this is not Deely's objection to the insufficiency of intersubjectivity as a theoretical concept. For him "over and aboveness" is the most important feature, the distinctive being, of relation, also according to Aristotle. Deely writes,

> Relations, however [. . .] are not in the substances that are related. Relations are over and above subjectivity *tout court*. Relations, if they are anywhere in *ens reale*, are between individuals, and 'between' is not a subjective mode of 'in', as '*in se*' and '*in alio*' are subjective modes of 'in': what is in between two subjectivities is in neither of the subjectivities. It is over and above them, suprasubjective, if you like, or, more precisely and restrictively in Aristotle's limited categorial sense (limited, that is, to the order of *ens reale* within το δv), intersubjective (2009: 22-3)

Relations, to be intersubjective, must obtain between or among existing subjects, while relations of existing subjects to non-existent objects, although suprasubjective, fail to be intersubjective (although they can become so in discourse).

A typical Deely example (2017) distinguishes between intersubjective and suprasubjective relations:

> We are supposed to meet for dinner; you show up and I don't (or vice-versa), and you are annoyed until you find out that I died on the way to the dinner. At my moment of death, at the moment I ceased to have a material subjectivity encounterable in space and time, the relation between us went from being intersubjective as well as suprasubjective to being only suprasubjective; yet under both sets of circumstances I (or you) as the objective terminus of the dinner engagement remained suprasubjective (if not intersubjective!) as a constant influencing the behavior of the one still living in whom the relation retained a subjective foundation as a cognitive state provenating the relation as suprasubjectively terminating at an 'other'.

This scenario seems to indicate a somewhat different definition of signhood from that which persists in the opposition of determinate and indeterminate. Indeed, one could say that the scenario here constitutes a workable proposal for the radical

indeterminacy referenced by contributors to this book. That is, the sign – or semiosis – on the one hand, consists not in an 'objectivist', determinate entity that is sustained by intersubjectivity, but in a thoroughly malleable *relation* that is indeterminate in respect of its terminus except insofar as it is understood by agents within the relation. On the other hand, the sign is *suprasubjective* in that its force – like that of fictions and the law – endures even when one or more of the subjects is removed.

So, there is a sense in which the sign, including the linguistic one, existing as a relation, is undoubtedly 'indeterminate' in that the relation in which it subsists is dependent on the negotiation of the speakers. Yet, also, that relation is suprasubjective and so, "unchanged in its positive being as relation (i.e., in its existence as irreducibly suprasubjective), will be real under one set of circumstances and fictional under another set of circumstances" (Deely 2017). If the sign is suprasubjective, consisting in its unification of three elements (representamen, object, interpretant), then the unity or autonomy of the self engaging in semiosis is neither here nor there – the sign remains "over and above" such a posited subject. This observation indicates the sign's status apart from the subject, but it is not to conclude that the sign is indeterminate. The sign is still determined by the agency of the subject, as in the settling of the relation of our meeting for a dinner date; but the suprasubjectivity of that sign relation is such that the sign is not nullified when our putative autonomy is shown to be illusory by the affliction of sudden death. As with the lower organisms whose agency is engaged in semiosis, each such engagement is an exercise of semiotic freedom. However, this is a long way from the kind of autonomy proposed by humanism – not just because such organisms are lower forms than humans, a high form characterized by a sophisticated *Umwelt*, but because of the suprasubjectivity of the sign relation. Put another way, first-person experience is no guarantee of dominion over the sign, even the variegated experience of the speaker.

Conclusion

The contemplation of 'bedrock concepts' that the contributions to this volume have afforded has been extremely fruitful. It has amounted, as I have suggested, to a grasping of the nettle on the part of integrationism. Given that "the self is the bedrock concept for integrationism" (Hutton pp.   ), this volume is timely and crucial. The idea of 'humanism' that seems commensurate with the speaker's agency cried out for interrogation. Such interrogation is an indication of the rude health of the integrationist perspective since the uncertainties and criticisms around what humanism may entail in this context by no means erode the broad project of integration. Indeed, the importance of first-person experience in communication has been underlined.

For my part, I consider the paraphernalia of humanism to be a problem. The themes of autonomy and unity characterizing the humanist project as a whole seem to be theological in character - as Hutton suggests - as well as Munchausen-like in their lack of foundations. Moreover, they have had a long history in ideology, not just in promoting the bourgeois mindset *per se*, but also fixing liberal-humanism as common sense, even in some brands of critique such as Marxism. As long ago as 1963, Althusser warned against the "inflation of the themes of Marxist or socialist 'Humanism' as an ideological phenomenon" (1969: 219-48). It was not so much that Althusser was condemning ideology, so much as he was concerned with the way in which ideology – in which humanism was firmly embedded - threatened rigorous thinking. The situation which this edited collection addresses might be analogous. The

first-person, agentive proposition that is key to integrationism leads us towards a position on the self and the mind that may seem inevitable even while it is unsound. Scientism, as Orman (2016) attests, with its de-humanized principles, pushes integrationism in the general direction of humanism. Yet not all science is the same – biosemiotics, for example, while currently marginal within the scientific establishment, demonstrates that scientific endeavour can have an interpretative disposition at its heart. The same can be said for some areas of cognitive science and philosophy of mind. The recovery of agency and communication in the integrational imperative might yet be ample in ameliorating some of the parlous consequences of the language myth.

   Of course, in the meantime, integrationist scholars face challenges in the contemporary global academy. Alongside research that credulously uses codes or relies wholeheartedly on the language myth, it is difficult to gain ground in writing convincing 'methodology' sections in applications for grants. So, as Toolan suggests, it might be time for integrationism to consider what can be taken (having already ascertained what can be rejected) from the examples of our bedmates. After the period of punk and post-punk, I cannot remember how long it was before I went back and started to listen to progressive rock again. Certainly, that happened a little before prog became acceptable once more. Moreover, I had not anticipated that prog would become *more than* acceptable, with a firm cross-generational international following and even a high profile awards ceremony (http://teamrock.com/feature/2016-09-23/prog-awards-2016-the-winners-in-full). Among some outcomes that were admittedly less desirable, punk contributed not to suppressing prog but to forcing it to co-exist in a much more diverse popular musical landscape in the decades that ensued. My contention in this discussion is that integrationism harbouring a critical perspective on humanism might perform an analogous task, challenging the bloated sovereignty of the language myth without being forced into interminable reaction.

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