

## **The Return of the Repressed: Language, Responsibility and Freedom of Speech**

*Pre-Roundtable Workshop*

### **The Three Parameters of Communication in Roy Harris' Work: Critical Approaches**

16-18 January 2025

16 January: School of Advanced Study, University of London, Senate House (Room 264)

17-18 January: Middlesex University London, College Building (Rooms C207 and C219)

Online attendance (zoom):

Meeting ID: 931 7038 7139; Passcode: 010810

<https://mdx-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/93170387139?pwd=PhoOcYtz285cX1IPoNveL5wz6FYa3A.1>

#### **Workshop Program**

##### **16 January**

**13:00-13:30**

**Adrian Pablé (Lugano)**

**Introduction: Born into a human world of 'just' three parameters?**

**13:30-14:00**

**Peter E Jones (Sheffield)**

#### **Overcoming dichotomies in Harris's approach to the (macro-)social parameters of communication**

In this paper I focus on questionable dimensions of Roy Harris's (1996) 'macrosocial factors' of communication and engage with a number of criticisms of his approach, including Stetsenko and Sawyer's (2017) response to Harris's account of the relationship between self-communication and interpersonal communication. I suggest that Harris's 'macrosocial' category fails to do full justice to the sociality of communicational activity and consider the implications of such an evaluation for the integrationist project more generally.

**14:00-14:30**

**Dorthe Duncker (Copenhagen)**

**The only concept of a communicational infrastructure worth having**

The ultimate goal of integrational linguistics is to deepen our understanding of the nature of language and its role in our daily lives. To reach this goal, the linguist needs only to study how people manage to meet the demands of their everyday communicational tasks (Harris, 2003). In doing so, the linguist should derive analytical concepts from the participants' own first-order communicational experience (Harris, 2006). The linguist cannot theoretically devise any more appropriate concepts than those lay speakers already employ. Now the question is: how do the three parameters of the posited communicational infrastructure relate to the experience of lay participants? Or, as posed by Michael Toolan (2017: 81), "why only three [parameters]?; why as many as three?; and where exactly lies the – fixed? – boundary between, e.g. the macrosocial and the circumstantial?; etc." In this paper, I will discuss if and how the concepts of the three-parametric communicational infrastructure facilitate linguistic inquiry for the integrational linguist in practice.

References:

Harris, Roy. 2003. "On redefining linguistics." pp. 17-68 in *Rethinking Linguistics*, edited by Hayley G. Davis and Talbot J. Taylor. London: Routledge Curzon.

Harris, Roy. 2006. "Integrational linguistics and semiology." pp. 714-18 in *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*, edited by Keith Brown. Oxford: Elsevier.

Toolan, Michael. 2017. "Can integrational linguistics be integrated with (critical) discourse analysis?" pp. 79-95 in *Critical Humanist Perspectives. The Integrational Turn in Philosophy of Language and Communication*, edited by Adrian Pablé. London and New York: Routledge.

**14:30-15:00**

**Mark Stott (Sheffield)**

**Oft cited, seldom utilised: the usefulness (or otherwise) of Harris' parameters of communication for integrational analyses**

Harris (1993) wrote that for an analysis to be "adequate" it must make recourse to his three communicational parameters. Since Harris' early analysis (1984) of the textualization of milk cartons, however, while many integrationists have cited Harris on the topic, few have provided concrete demonstrations as to how the parameters might be put to work analytically. This talk explores some possible reasons why this might be the case.

**15:00-15:15**

**Break**

**15:15-15:45**

**Nick White (Portsmouth)**

**Task and Materials Design for Source Use in Student Academic Writing: An Integrational**

**Approach**

A defining feature of academic writing is in the conventional ways the writer (e.g. a student) demonstrates to their reader (e.g. an assessing tutor) explicit evidence of their interaction with the writings of others (i.e. the student's citation of sources used). However, those in the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) have long recognised that these conventions of source use pose a significant challenge for students, especially multilingual students (i.e. 'international students' in the context of UK Higher Education). Far from helping such students gain an understanding of this complex feature of academic writing, it will be suggested here that the instructional approaches typically found in EAP programmes may in fact be contributing to student confusion and that this is a consequence of the segregational (and therefore arguably also ethnocentric) model of communication underlying the tasks and materials used in class. The purpose of this paper is therefore to present an alternative which has attempted to apply an integrational model of communicational experience to the design of tasks and materials for addressing source use in student academic writing in UK Higher Education.

**15:45-16:30**

**Plenary discussion**

Moderated by Adrian Pablé

After the workshop we will go for drinks and dinner (optional; self-funded)



**Roundtable Program**

**17 January**

**10:00-10:40**

**Adrian Pablé (Lugano)**

**The most valuable message about education ever given**

One goal of an academic education is to make critical thinkers of our students. But what exactly is 'critical' about critical thinking as construed in contemporary academic discourse? And how is the subject 'critical thinking' taught and with what purpose? What is the agenda behind the scripted discourses on disinformation and the need for students to become 'media literate'? And by doing so are we providing the students with the opportunity of developing their own potential as individual minds?

**10:40-11:20**

**Sinead Kwok (Hong Kong)**

**Am I Free to Speak (to You)? On the Freedom of Speech, or Semiotic Freedom**

The proposed paper looks into the quandary of freedom – the freedom of speech/expression in particular – which has been taunting law and philosophy. Said quandary consists in debates over the individual basis of freedom, of speech, and the question of separating speech from any other non-speech activities to make it a special right on its own. In Harrisian terms, this freedom-of-speech dilemma is then one that stems from a belief in “somatic particularity – the natural state of isolation of the individual” (Harris, 2002, p.15) and the conceptualization of this state as a condition to be overcome by a telementational model of speech-based communication. Freedom of speech, accordingly, becomes a special right to ‘content transfer’ that every individual is endowed with; while the absolute state of the freedom to speak (and hear) one’s mind comes in contradistinction with and is restrained by responsibility, which comes in the form of a semiotic code. A predicament thus arises as to how to preserve this supposedly pristine freedom of every single individual for the healthy circulation of individual truths and ideas.

Amidst rampant fights for everybody’s freedom of speech in present time, this paper revisits the semiotic basis for freedom and the ramifications of the segregation of speech from non-speech. Interacting with other thinkers and their musings – such as Buber’s deliberation on freedom as an awareness one gains upon entering relations (2013) and Camus’ (1961) definition of freedom as something made up principally of duties instead of privileges, the paper further explores the ‘relationalist’ potential of the integrationist notion of semiotic freedom (Hutton, 2019), which serves to cast a new light on the current understanding of our freedom of speech.

References

Buber, M. (2013). *I and Thou*. London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Camus, A. (1961). *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Harris, R. (2002). The Role of the Language Myth in the Western Cultural Tradition. In R. Harris (Ed.), *The Language Myth in Western Culture* (pp.1-24). Richmond: Curzon.

Hutton, C. (2019). *Integrationism and the Self: Reflections on the Legal Personhood of Animals*. London & New York: Routledge.

**11:20-12:00**

**Mary Coghill (Exeter)**

**Predicates and Predicatives: Logic and Semiotics**

We live in a world of online headlines. Hidden implications are imagined or inserted by the reader or listener of any truncated sentence. In this paper the subject, predicate and the predicative are explored with reference to Aristotle’s logic in his “De Interpretatione”; Jespersen’s usage of “Predicatives” in his book “Essentials of English Grammar”; and Deely’s enquiry into “The relation of logic to semiotics” *Semiotica*, vol. 35, no. 3-4, 1981, pp. 193-266. Examples will be provided by a powerpoint presentation. This paper discusses:

1. How can logic improve interpretation?
2. Is improvement required?
3. Is a new method of analysis required or better?

This speaker argues that knowledge of how the subject, predicate and predicative are used, enable a process of clearer analysis and their implications of headlines.

References:

Aristotle *Categories and De Interpretatione* Ed. J.L.Ackrill (1963) Oxford Oxford University Press

Deely, John "The relation of logic to semiotics" *Semiotica*, vol. 35, no. 3-4 (1981) pp. 193-266.  
<https://doi-org.uoelibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.1515/semi.1981.35.3-4.193>

Jespersen, Otto *Essentials of English Grammar* (2022) London Routledge [1933]

Joseph, H.W.B (2009) *An Introduction to Logic* Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, Delhi [1916]

**12:00-12:40**

**Kieran McGillicuddy (Southern France)**

**'Freedom of speech' is not the significant issue.**

The issue seems more one of rights to communicate, and official restraints on terminology, and access to the channels of communication.

Nevertheless, contradictory communication is happening; largely video footage, live, and wide-spreading, but also personal communication from trusted sources.

Credibility is at issue for our institutions, reliant on largely 'verbal' and 'distanced' information and repetitions, and seen to be ignoring realities and law, with consequent loss of credibility.

Contrasting information is reaching different sectors of the society, with, generally speaking, the young receiving different information from different sources than the old, and receiving it more and more quickly.

The producers of 'content', the writers and comedians and artists, are responding to what they see as credible information, and challenging the mainstream in effects. More mainstream producers of content are resorting more to shouting, repetition, and threats.

As analysts of communication, we don't seem to have the tools to understand the flow of discourse, the conflict of discourses, the speed of communication of false information, the impact of silences and forced silences, the failure to correct false information, the materiality rather than semioticity of the communication and understandings, and the material consequences (threats and violence) deployed to defend the control of the status quo.

**12:40-14:00**

**Lunch (self-funded)**

**14:00-14:40**

**Dennis Hayes (Buckingham)**

**Censorship on Campus: The Banned List and the 'Secret University'**

Academics For Academic Freedom (AFAF) was launched in December 2006. The sole focus at that time was a 'Statement of Academic Freedom' written by Dennis Hayes and Roy Harris. Beyond that initial launch AFAF expanded its work across universities, writing and researching on free speech and academic freedom, as well as taking up case work. AFAF has also produced for almost two decades a very influential 'Banned List' of academics and others who had been non-platformed, or threatened with disciplinary action or dismissal, because of what they said or argued. Those who appear on this list, and those that do not because of the policies of universities that require confidentiality, expose the chilling experience of trying to express yourself freely in universities in the UK and Ireland today. The examples on this list show that free speech is not allowed in the very institutions that should foster it.

**14:40-15:20**

**Ruyu Yan (Hong Kong)**

**Translingual ethics, co-temporal responsibility, and integrational semiology**

In this paper, I will present an ethics of communication that has been observed by and discussed in translingual scholarship. At the core of such translingual ethics is the notion of co-temporal responsibility. Affording the notion of co-temporal responsibility, integrational semiological principles help illuminate the translingual ethics.

**15:20-16:00**

**Paul Cobley (London)**

**Can we speak freely about universals?**

One of the *bêtes noires* of Roy Harris was academic (over)specialization, a species – he found – of academic protectionism. Although Harris also found the appeal to general reified categories under the yoke of the 'language myth' even more deleterious, he may have been appalled at prohibitions on the kind of universals sometimes invoked in communication and co-temporality. This short presentation will refer to Susan Neiman's (2023) reclaiming of left universals from the condemnatory clutches of so-called woke politics and, since the Middlesex Roundtable is rooted in biosemiotics and philosophy of communication as well as integrationism, the possibility to consider – free from reductionism and scientism - biological dimensions to human semiosis embedded in nature.

**16:00-16:15**

**Break**

**16:15-17:15**

**Roundtable Discussion**

**Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech**

**Insights from Language and Communication Studies**

*It is absolutely essential that the learned community at the university also contain a faculty that is independent of the government's command with regard to its teachings; one that, having no commands to give, is free to evaluate everything, and concerns itself with the interests of the sciences, that is, with truth: one in which reason is authorized to speak out publicly. For without a faculty of this kind, the truth would not come to light (and this would be to the government's own detriment); but reason is by its nature free and admits of no command to hold something as true (Kant, Conflict of the Faculties, 1794)*

**17:15**

**Drinks and dinner (self-funded, optional)**

**18 January**

**09:00-09:40**

**Dorthe Duncker (Copenhagen)**

**"Knowledge is damn well not an opinion!"\***

In this paper, I will discuss how an integrational linguist might respond to the key question of repression within freedom in contemporary public communication. This question involves two mutually dependent aspects: the room for the free expression of ideas and the forms of communication against which these ideas are assessed and articulated. While freedom, including freedom of speech, boils down to a matter of rights and responsibilities (Harris, 1990), the (dis)regard for the values of scientific inquiry concerns the forms of knowledge recognized and valued by society (Harris, 2009), in casu, the self-organized epistemic network in which the communicating participants are (more or less) semiologically trapped. Hence, the well-functioning of any communicative environment becomes a matter of how capable the participants are at balancing the rights they have obtained against the responsibilities that come with them, and how the forms of communication they practice accommodate their semiological scope for manoeuvring as knowing agents.

\*) Anja C. Andersen, Professor of Astrophysics and Professor for the Public Understanding of Science, UCPH

Harris, Roy. 1990. "On freedom of speech." Pp. 153-61 in *Ideologies of Language*, edited by John E. Joseph and Talbot J. Taylor. London and New York: Routledge.

Harris, Roy. 2009. *After Epistemology*. Gamlingay: Bright Pen.

**09:40-10:20**

**Yasmin Gasimova (Liverpool)**

**Fascism and Paranoia in the Market of Information**

My paper aims to bring together psychoanalysis, political theory and media studies to show how conspiracy media are expressions of paranoia that, in their attempts to resolve the contradictions present in liberalism, necessarily reproduce fascist ideology. Alternative political cultures and neoliberal media structures are posing increasingly greater challenges to the ideological authority of liberal institutions, exposing media users to the contradictions inherent in liberal democracy. Paranoia in the Lacanian structure is characterised by the radical rejection of the authoritative signifier, substituting this authority with some other, usually malevolent, omnipotent authority via a delusion. In substituting this authority, the newly formed reality retains investment in the signifiers of the old symbolic order but is infused with new meaning. Fascism has been argued to be an ideology that attempts to purify the contradictions of liberal democracy, by either privileging the popular will over the rights of the individual or privileging the rights of the individual over the popular will. In my paper I draw on existing Lacanian analysis of fascism as containing a paranoid structure where, in confrontation with its failures, radically rejects the traditional authority of liberalism, resulting in the substitution of authority with some imagined corruptive obstruction (such as a Jewish cabal). As such, it is an ideology that distorts and gives new meaning to the discourse of liberal democracy. I will then link this argument to contemporary conspiracy theory media, demonstrating its paranoid character and how it reproduces the ideology of fascism in its attempts to reconcile the failures of liberalism by imagining some corruptive obstruction.

**10:20-11:00**

**Nick White (Portsmouth)**

**Institutions, Individuals, and Integrationism: The limits of a human-centred theory of communication?**

The aim of this proposal will be to: (i) briefly outline an aspect of state institutions I speculate may be largely responsible for “the increasing polarisation [and] intolerance” the industrialised West is witnessing; (ii) to raise the question of whether or not and to what extent Integrationism, as a human-centred theory of communication, is able to adequately address institutional problems. For if on the one hand Integrationism does indeed argue that “individuals and societies should not be tempted to delegate their moral and cultural responsibility to a class of self-appointed experts on language” (Pablé and Hutton, 2015, p. 41, emphasis added), and if on the other, the biomechanical capacities of the human brain limit to a “figure of 150 ... the maximum number of individuals with whom we can have a genuinely social relationship” (Dunbar, 2004, p. 77), then there appear to be grounds for questioning even the possibility that Integrationism is capable of developing “institutions and practices” that could guide the creation of “well-functioning, sustainable and responsible communicative environments”.

References

Dunbar, R. 2004. *Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language*. 2nd edition. London: Faber & Faber.

Pablé, A. and Hutton, C. 2015. *Signs, Meaning, and Experience: Integrational approaches to*

**11:00-11:20**

**Break**

**11:20-12:00**

**Susanne Kass (Prague)**

**Code-Duality and Embodied Forms of Free Speech**

Several of Extinction Rebellion's protest actions draw on tactics of street performance to draw attention to the urgency of extinction as a political issue and express grief and mourning in the public sphere. These actions often use non-verbal symbolism, movement and gesture, forms of expression which do not rely on spoken or written language to deliver a clear and strong message. This form of free speech will be explored through the biosemiotic concept of code-duality developed by Jesper Hoffmeyer and Claus Emmeche, which considers the role of analogue and digital codes in life processes. If free speech is most often considered through the lens of the digital, or linguistic code, how do the analogue forms of expression used by XR, which are dynamic and use the body as a message, contribute to the concept of free speech? Additionally, how might restrictions on gathering and protesting in public space threaten such non-verbal forms of free speech?

**12:00-12:40**

**Chris Barnham (Cheltenham)**

**Communication: From Representations to Mediation?**

The communication model that has been dominant in Western Society for the last two hundred years is breaking down. Our conventional view of human knowledge involves the mind creating representations of the world and communication, in turn, entails the activity of conveying these mental representations to others.

The question, however, is this: what is involved in the formation of these mental 'constructions'? In the 20th century, a view developed that suggested that the individual is free to construct the world as they wish; he/she can make their own representations of reality because everything is ultimately subjective. It is a short step from this position to one that advocates 'alternative facts' and 'fake news'...

But are individuals actually free to make their own constructions of the world? This short paper will argue that we have never been able to do this. In the scientific model, reality itself has always played a central part in the construction process and there are other models (such as Peirce's) that insist that our constructions of reality are made in partnership with it.

This paper will suggest that this important sense of partnership with reality has been lost. Reality is a construction, but it is a joint enterprise, and the outcome is a mediated and synthetic entity that we call the 'world'. This is the conclusion of Peirce in his espousal of 'objective idealism', but it also finds modern expression in Latour's 'quasi objects'.

**12:40-14:00**

**Lunch (self-funded)**

**14:00-14:40**

**Johan Siebers (London)**

**Fact and Frame: Towards a rhetoric of the factual**

Facts seem to be the connectors between what is the case and the judgement or recognition that it is the case. They are Janus-faced in the sense that, on one side, they are reality itself (Wittgenstein: “the world is the totality of facts”) and on the other they are the established, verbalised record or account of the world: amid the welter of events, the “facts” are what has been established as truthfully obtaining. There is a clear parallel between facts and (true) propositions. The latter face links facts to frames of perception and interpretation, outside of which it seems difficult to give much definitive sense to the notion. In recent years we have seen the term “alternative facts” come up in public discourse, a term which seems to indicate that one person may highlight certain facts as significant, while someone else, who maintains a different frame or perspective, would point at other facts as the important ones in a specific context. Overall, the appeal to facts has perhaps never been so shaky and indeed it has led many thinkers to either deflate the notion altogether or to develop highly relativistic conceptions of it, in which facts have no existence outside the frames that conjure them up.

But language loses its function when the connection to reality, which is not symmetrical, is given up or relativized to mere data as its reference. Perhaps the illusionary tendencies in Large Language Models shows this. We seem to need a realist philosophy of language that gives us a more rounded, appreciative understanding of the use and function of the appeal to the facts. Such a philosophy would be a rhetoric of the factual. Without it, freedom of speech will lose its meaning.

**14:40-15:20**

**Mark Stott (Sheffield)**

**External integration and constraints: how do extrinsic factors curtail our creativity in a radically indeterminate communicational universe?**

David Bade (2021) said that in an indeterminate universe "it's freedom and responsibility all the way up and all the down". This seems to well-capture a central tenet of the integrational approach to the study of communication. And yet, creative communicative freedom often seems to come in degrees. We are not, from a communicational perspective, free to do however we wish at all times, at least not if we want our communication to achieve the desired results and hope to avoid a variety of negative consequences and sanctions. In this talk I make a tentative suggestion that Harris' notion of internal and external integration (1996) may provide a way of thinking about communicational constraints in a radically indeterminate universe.

**15:20-16:00**

**Peter E Jones (Sheffield)**

**The first casualties? Israel's killing of journalists in its war on Palestine**

Israel's ongoing annihilation of the Palestinian people is the most amply documented genocide in history, its blatant, explicit and manifold violations of international law thoroughly evidenced and argued in the judgements and measures of the world's highest legal bodies, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. And yet Israel continues to act with impunity, aided, abetted and defended by the Western powers and their media organisations and platforms. One important aspect of Israeli strategy is the assassination of independent journalists reporting from Palestine and Lebanon, with Palestinian journalists a particular target, killings which receive little if any publicity in mainstream media and no public outcry. This paper considers the role these killings play in the wider propaganda war waged by Israel and Western client media and the implications for those genuinely concerned with freedom and responsibility in communicational matters

**16:00-16:30**

**Closing plenary of the 7<sup>th</sup> Roundtable**

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