An Ecology of Communication: An Acknowledgement of Gregory Bateson

James A. Anderson and Janet W. Colvin
University of Utah

Abstract: Written from a post-modern perspective, this article makes use of the concepts of obligation, subject position, line of action, discursive form, sentient agent, exchange, mediating technology, intentionality, improvisational performance, and communicative routines to produce an overarching theory of communication and its processes. The work of the article is to develop the linkages among these concepts and founds this analysis in ethnographic research. It concludes that the process of communication occurs inside a nexus of obligation from relational subject positions within some line of action regularly involving a discursive form. It is enacted by two or more sentient agents performing an exchange often utilizing a mediating technology under the intentionality of an improvisational performance of a pre-existing communicative routine.

1. Introduction

In his address to the nineteenth annual Korzybski memorial lecture, Gregory Bateson complemented his audience by noting, "there are people here who know every field of knowledge that I have touched on much better than I know it". But he went on to underscore the strength that he brought to every project adding, "I probably can face any one of you and say I have touched a field you have not touched" (1972: 454). From his father's heritage in early genetics, to his own work in cultural anthropology, cybernetics, and psychological pathology, Bateson was able to integrate an impressive number of perspectives in any given focus.

This paper will attempt a similar breadth without nearly the resources that Bateson could have brought to it and not likely the success that he would have

had, but attempt it nonetheless. In this writing, we are postmodern, reflexive, social philosophers who hope to develop a justification for the following conclusion: The process of communication occurs inside a *nexus of obligation* (Caputo 1993; Gilbert 1993a, 1993b) from *relational subject positions* (Law, Mol 1995), within some *line of action* (Abramson, Cutler, Kautz, Mendelson 1958), regularly involving a *discursive form* (Stewart 1991) enacted by two or more *sentient agents* (Popper, Eccles 1977) performing an *exchange* (Taylor, Van Every 2000) often utilizing *a mediating technology* (Aldrich, Herker 1977; Mahoney, Frost 1974) under the *intentionality* (Cunningham 1997; Shapiro 1997; Stoecker 2001) of an *improvisational performance* (McKenzie 2001) of an pre-existing *communicative routine* (Franks, Jewitt 2001; Buck, Vanlear 2002). In giving away our conclusion in the introduction, we are abandoning the twin conceits that we somehow discovered the conclusion at the end of a line of reasoning or that its supporting argument was somehow innocently constructed. Rather than a claim for fixing truth, this is an invitation to dialogue (Hawes 1999).

2. A Batesonian Foundation

Bateson provides a firm foundation upon which to build this argument. We make four connections: From his work in cultural anthropology and language we connect to his priority of culture and the necessity of the contextual frame. From his work in cybernetics we take the notions of restraints and difference to which we add the concepts of resistance (Anderson 1998; Anderson, Englehardt 2001) and similarity. From his semiotic analysis of play, we extend the idea of the language of action that organizes all those possible and suitable action sequences for translating an actor's aspirations into realizations (Abramson, Cutler, Kautz, Mendelson 1958) into the signs of what is being done. And from his global insight of the immanent mind (Bateson 1991; Keeney 1983), we build the argument of the obligated self (Caputo 1993). One last caveat, we are writing from a quite different cultural stance and contextual frame from Bateson's, so our connections are dialogic affinities rather than linear determinants.

3. A Development of Concepts

Our stated conclusion involves the development of a number of concepts: obligation, subject position, line of action, discursive form, sentient agent, exchange, mediating technology, intentionality, improvisational performance, and communicative routine (notice that communication itself is not one of the requirements, because, as a process, communication is a system holism that arises out of but is greater than the assemblage of its components). These are all, of course, already well-worked ideas, which simplifies the ontological requirement but

does not eliminate the task of creating the links so that they fit together. In our presentation, we will draw examples from four collections of ethnographic data (reported in part in Anderson 2000 and Anderson, Englehardt 2001): quotidian field notes (QF), resistance narratives (RN); narratives of relationships (NR) and episodes of the homeless (HE).[1]

3.1. Obligation

Our etymological dictionary traces the Latin origin of obligation to ligaments or the ties that bind. Obligation, here, is any accounting of the other (McNamee, Gergen 1999). This accounting is accomplished according to the cultural, "of-course-its-true" understandings that maintain the social relationships in which we each appear. The cultural polynomials of race, gender, ethnicity, class, age, memberships and the like are the visible expressions of these rules under which we are obliged to one another (Gilbert 1993a). Cultural rules are the structurations of extended social practice. I am obliged to recognize you as a man or a woman of a certain color, ethnicity, age, class, belonging to certain groups, just as you are obliged to me. It is expected that given our locations in this equation that we will enact our relationship accounting for these obligations in recognizable ways (McNamee, Gergen 1999).

That enactment is a semiotic not a consequent. A semiotic is a bounded element of significance (a potential for meaningfulness) that can be made meaningful within the frame of its significance (potential) in the particular. Our relational enactment can be affirmative, resistant, ironical, humorous, or any other meaningful turn that accounts for these obligations. But if it is to be recognizable—if it is to achieve coherence, it cannot be independent of those obligations—it cannot be outside its frame of significance. Our enactment will be necessarily implicated by these obligations and most often complicit with them.

The theoretical work that obligation accomplishes could have been taken up by any number of other formulations. The genetic imperative of ethnobiology, the cultural determinants of anthropology, the socialization and enculturation of cognitivism, the polar elements of cultural studies, the critical issues of Marxism and feminism, the politics of identity of race and ethnicity studies all speak to the same sort of prior orderings that obligation does.

---

1.   Quotidian field notes refers to the daily practice of the senior author to record everyday events as an urban ethnographer; the narratives of resistance collection, developed with the help of colleagues Karen Ashcraft and Leonard Hawes, is a set of forty long form interviews investigating ordinary acts of resistance; the narratives of relationship collection is a set of 141 long form interviews focusing on relationship stories; and the episodes of the homeless is the ethnographic portion of an interdisciplinary study on the cultural and social policy framing of homelessness.

Obligation, however, puts together five propositions that the others typically don't. First, it grounds the whole enterprise in local, material practices that maintain the structural elements of their enactment (eliminates much of ethnobiology and traditional anthropology). Second, it recognizes these practices as under the governance of both local agency—the ability to do otherwise—and global agentry—the continual representation of cultural location (contrary to much of cognitivism, Cavell 1985; Dagger 2000). Third, it constitutes these practices as improvisational and multi-dimensional rather than essentialized and monolithic (in converse to much of cultural studies). Fourth, it locates these practices ethically in the interrelationship of complicity and implication (obviates most critical issues). Finally, it supports a systems approach that holds the smallest unit of analysis to be the self-other relationship rather than the individual (denying a politics of identity).

Obligation provides other utilities besides providing separation from other epistemological communities. It provides a focus on the complex management of cultural understandings that local practices entail:

> We arrived at the door to the student union at the same time. She from the left; I from the right. The door was hinged on the right making it impossible for her to open unless she shouldered me, a large male, out of the way. I opened the door. I, for my part, could go through the door only by pushing her out of the way. She made the start of a move to pass through but then stopped staring at the open doorway. Finally with some exasperation I said, "it's only a door, not a political statement". She laughed in immediate relief and said, "thanks, I was just frozen there". (QF)

The circumstance of structure and physics created the stage for the enactment of gender within the organizational memberships of the academy. The woman would have had no trouble passing through the doorway had the Other been a woman also. Thanks and conversations would have readily ensued. But the Other was a male whose actions invoked masculine privilege and hung complicity on the threshold. What action would properly discharge her obligations to the Other as a person, to the Other as the masculine, to her intentions of movement, to herself as politicized to her immediate future as feminized (Nicholson 1999)? She stood frozen at the doorway.

Second, obligation helps to obtain a more complex understanding of subject position. Just as the old movies revealed the invisible man by wrapping him in bandages, so the shape and form of subject position are revealed in the ties of obligation. The woman in our narrative is acutely aware of the traditional subject position of woman. Even in her opposition—she will not be feminized—she is bound by its obligations to the point where momentarily she cannot act. Subject

position, then, can be thought of as an intersection of obligations that can impact every element in the presentation of the self.

Third, obligation is a system of potential rights and responsibilities, privileges and duties that is always present at some level and can be brought to the surface through the twin processes of evocation and invocation. Both processes call forth some more or less coherent operation of the system to direct the self in action. Evocation is external to the self and invocation is an act of the self. The key insight here is the movement from the potential to the operational. It is the insight that cultural studies misses when it devolves into standard, structural explanations of the force of society and culture. The movement from potential to operational—like the movement from significance to meaning—is a constitutive engagement that can be parsed from the action. We do not mean to imply a conscious, step by step enactment, though that is possible. More likely it is highly naturalized, well-practiced, muscle-memory sort of thing, but observable nonetheless.

Finally, obligation as a constituted enactment depends on the character of the enactment for its coherence and consequent force. This theoretical configuration maintains the global-local duality of immanence in the system and enactment at the site—a very Batesonian notion indeed (Bateson 1979). Enactment instantiates a set of actual values from the potential in an already-known but real time performance under the governance of the contingencies of who where, what, when and how and, therefore, always at risk of failure. Failure in this case is the failure to achieve or to maintain coherence or, as Bateson (1991) might say, the loss of context. The enactors know they are doing but no longer know what they are doing.

3.2. Subject Position

Subject position is the cultural and societal location of the self (Bateson 1979). The self is the acting agent that constitutes the potential of identity and subjectivity (Anderson, Englehardt 2001). This argument begins by giving up the security of transcendent individual—the essential self. There may be some metaphysical core in which we wish to believe, but it is not the basis for understanding the acting agent (Bhaba 1996; Grossberg 1996; Hall 1993). Certainly there are durable characteristics of identity, physiology, physiognomy, cognitive configuration, naturalized performances, and the like, but they are made meaningful in the performative presentation of the self (Butler 1997; Carbaugh 1996). The fullness of what I am, in any moment, is in what I am doing. The "doing," however, is not an invention of the doer who is only the agent—the occupier of the subject position—of that performance (Allen, Hardin 2001).

> I am at the keyboard, entirely alone, writing these words. I know what I am doing. I am writing field notes. What I write, how I write, where I began and when I will end, whether the notes are good and the session successful are all ordained in the subject position of the scientific writer. I will enact each keystroke as an agent of that position. (QF)

The presentation of the self is always from some subject position that is, once again, made visible in the performance (Torronen 2001). The self is the confluence of identity and subjectivity presented in some line of action. This formulation shows clear connections to symbolic interactionism's concepts of I (the active element) and me (the socially reflective element), but it is nonetheless very different as neither identity nor subjectivity acts; only the self acts. Both identity and subjectivity are social ideations; not material objects.

The theoretical import of this claim is made quite clear in the study of relationships. A reoccurring theme in the relational narratives that tell the stories of romance and intimacy is an event known as "The Talk". The talk is a high risk event when the relationship itself comes under scrutiny. It is, in our data set, initiated as often by men as by women. The talk works to define the "who" of the relational partners. Are we friends, dating partners (where sexual intimacy is a threshold event), fuck-buddies (sexually intimate without commitment), lovers (moving to live-ins), or marriage-tracked (not bound by intimacy per se but the move to engagement and the altar). The talk is a relocation of subject position; one cannot simply reinstate what was. Respondents when asked to describe their relationship will say "Well, we have had 'the talk'".

Relationships are not between individuals; they are between agents of subject positions—the Self/Other. What one can say or do, how one is to be understood in action and discourse, and the quality of the performance and its interpretation are encoded in terms of the subject position—that intersection of obligations—as improvisationally-enacted by the particular agents (Bauman, Briggs 1990). A friend, for example, may be able to successfully (defined by maintaining or advancing the rights and responsibilities of the friendship) tease another friend about sexuality, but this is not usually acceptable from a dating partner.

In system terms, subject position is a node in the network. The system enables it with certain capabilities, rights and privileges and constrains it with certain expectations, requirements and responsibilities. Individuals are both placed in and occupy subject positions. Subject positions can be evoked in reference to an individual (you are a white male and just don't get it) and invoked by the individual (I am a man and can do what I like). Human practice, of course, is quite different from systems theory. We often manipulate subject position to hold on to one set of privileges while seeking to gain another set of rights as this relational narrative suggests:

A prime example, I guess, would be one night I get this e-mail from a friend whose little sister is her friend. He says she and his sister were talking and he heard her say she hoped she wasn't leading me on through her e-mails. I'm like OK, fair enough, that is great now I know where I stand; and I know what is going on. So, that night I go to bed thinking everything is resolved. I am good; we can be friends; that is fantastic. Then the very next day, because we had this class together, the class ends we start to chatting and I say, "Well I'm going to go to the library. I have to study for a test". She's like well I'll go with you. I was like OK were friends; we'll go to the library. So we go and I study. We chat a little bit. It goes back and forth for little while nothing too intensive and then she says "I have to go". I'm like "well have a good day" and she leaves. This is about 11:30 in the morning. So about 1:00 I go to work I get on the computer and I check my e-mails and there is one from her and it is from between 11:30 and 1:00. It's like a three page e-mail; real in depth about how she can't be in a serious relationship right out; how so much is going on in her life; and I'm thinking where is this coming from? We aren't dating. We have been broken up for about two months now. I'm thinking come on, you can't do this to me again. And then it goes on to negate everything, saying, "I really like hanging out with you. I love being together and love your family and maybe we can hang out". She wants to keep me in Limbo. I feel like I was always being placed on a hook. (NR 69)

It seems clear that our respondent is uncertain as to how to interpret the e-mail from his Relational Other. A good part of that uncertainty is his own uncertainty about the subject position he occupies and that of his relational other as well. He has no secure standpoints on which to judge the qualities of the message or the conditions of interpretation. The "What is being said" and the "How do I understand it (the implications for action)" are both in doubt not because of the ambiguity of the words but because of the ambiguity of the character of the exchange.

3.3. Line of Action

One of the principal tenets of social action theory is that action is the sign of what is being done (Hodge, Kress 1988). Action is the proto-linguistic, the precursor of discursive forms. To use Winston Churchill's terms, well before we could "jaw, jaw" we had to recognize the indications of peace or war in the actions of those we met on the veldt. Even today, on a dark urban street, it is very important for you to know if I am walking to my own destination or moving to do you harm. You need to know the action.

Action is a syntactical arrangement of behavior that has a beginning, middle, and end (Bateson 1991; Sigman 1987). Like any processal form, coherence of action depends on the conditions of its attempted enactment and on the commit-ment and skills of the enactors. As a text, it carries its own intentions as to how

it is to be performed and read (Eco 1992). Action requires individuals located in performative roles (which may have subject or paradigmatic force) crafting presentational forms that are responsive to the intentions of the action sign (Goffman 1959; Schutz 1978). If I claim to be painting the house, there better be a house and some paint involved (unless of course, "I am taking a break").
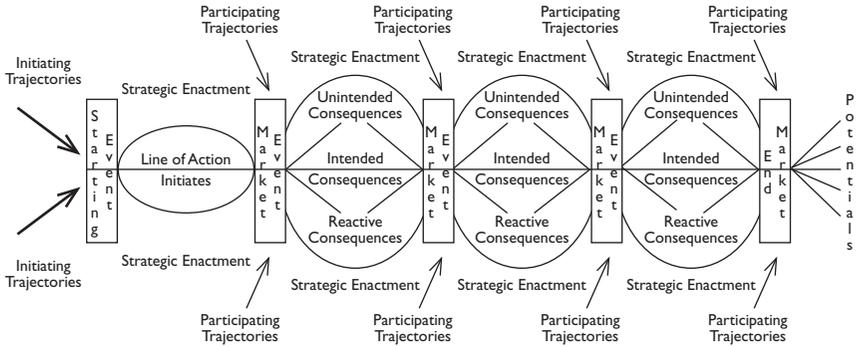

Figure 1: Diagram of a line of action involving two enactors

As Figure 1 suggests, a line of action is a real time performance that must account for the context of performance, the contingencies of performance over its duration, the consequences—intended, unintended and reactive—of its internal events, the competencies of the enactors, and their continued commitment to the action (Schoening, Anderson 1995). Its performance has to make sense. That sense-making establishes requirements for what is said and done, the role identity of the sayers and doers, and where and how the saying and doing gets done as well as the criteria of its success (Blumer 1969; Mead 1982).

That sense making also suggests that there are very few moments in which we are not in some line of action whether successfully enacting it or not. Those very few moments are not comfortable moments, according to our narratives, as people struggle to make sense of what is going on.

> It was ripping me apart because I didn't know exactly what happened. And for about a week I'd be thinking about the whole situation and get kind of crazy. So finally I called her up about a week later and said can we talk about this because I'm not really sure what exactly happened. (NR 69)

What happened, of course, was that he got dumped, but the action was so poorly executed (from the story told), so badly compromised, that quite a bit of additional work had to be done and even then the partner came back for more.

The normal ubiquity and sense-making requirements of action have powerful implications for the study of communication. Communication is not a line of action (but calling your mother is). Communicative routines occur within lines

of action. Action is often the prior understanding that sets the foundations for the content, conduct, and comprehension of the communicative process. It establishes, as Anderson and Englehardt (2001) note, the proper competence (the rights to and quality of action), modality (paradigmatic value), and effectiveness (necessity of recognition) of what is done.

There is a clear relationship between action and subject position as certain lines of action invoke certain subject positions and certain subject positions invoke certain lines of action. Your authors are permitted (and required) to lecture on topics in communication in the classroom, but not in our respective homes. The line of action that enables the lecture routine coheres in our classrooms but not in our homes. The action of the classroom invokes the instructional discursive form. That discursive form is rendered incompetent in the home because the line of action in which it appears requires certain role enactments and relationships that are granted easily in the classroom but refused by the home members.

3.4. Discursive Form

Discourse is usually defined as any extended language use. A discursive form is any extended language use that is recognized as belonging to a community of practitioners. Discourse forms are cultural forms which people can manipulate, negotiate, and recognize (Stewart 1991). Medical speech, judicial argument, valley talk, rap, academic writing are all discursive forms. Discursive forms entail particular vocabularies and sentence structures, conventionalized values and warrants, typified themes and narratives, normalized persons and enactments (paradigms and syntagms). It is these conventions, typifications, and normalizations that identify the discourse as a form (Burr 1995).

Normative processes are social processes that involve some level of member identity, supervision of discursive performance, and policing of boundaries. These activities can be quite extensive as in academic and judicial discourse or quite contingent as in local junior high slang. They do not happen, however, without actual persons doing the work (Van Dijk 1997). The evidence for the claim of a discursive form, then, is the evidence of this work.

The normative character of discourse means that the enactment of a discursive form has to be done with authority (the right to use the form and the quality of its performance), in a voice (the modality and cultural location of the use) and achieved significance (the necessity of interpretation). Because discursive forms involve rights of use, cultural locations of use, performance quality, and rules of interpretation, they necessarily are systemically connected to both subject positions and action lines. Discursive forms require the

appearance of a proper subject in writer and reader, speaker and listener as well as the performance of an appropriate communicative routine that is sensible within some line of action.

Systemic relations are interactional; the causal linkages depend on where one starts the analysis. Starting at discourse, enactment of a form positions both the speaker and listener in the membership requirements of the form which in turn positions them in their cultural location. The enactment is not locally invented but vested in social constraints at global and regional levels. The local performance of the communicative routine is improvisational, contingent upon the here and now, resources and competencies, and made sensible within some larger action line.

> Some of the most difficult communicative moments for me to negotiate are those involving a dinner or party setting where I am asked to give my professional reflection on something. It often starts with a line like, "You study this stuff, what do you think about kids and TV"? My initial reaction is irritation on being called into a professorial location when I am busy being clever and cute. My usual response is to turn it back to the questioner, "Oh, most kids handle it Ok, don't you think"? But occasionally I'll get trapped by a reply like, Well, my kids are fine with it, but not all kids. Some people's kids have lots of trouble. Those people can't handle TV. I should walk away, but I can't resist one more attack on that middle-class project. It usually ends poorly. (QF)

Just as we asked the question, is there behavior without action, we can ask the question if there is language use without discourse. These are both empirical questions that deserve careful, systematic answers that will not be forthcoming here. But on the face of it, there appears to be little speech and writing that is not recognizable as a form, and, as we shall argue, a discursive form can evoke a line of action. From graffiti to the novel, from greetings to the funeral oration, the text is constrained to a set of expectations that are developed, supervised, and maintained by social processes. The clarity and elasticity of those restraints would seem to vary widely across forms. Some highly ritualized forms seem fractured by any deviation; others appear recognizable across wide variation. There is a lot of cultural writing on discursive forms, but little empirical work.

3.5. Sentient Agent

This theoretical term imposes two ontological requirements: sentience and agency. Both terms work the interplay of the global and the local, the social and the individual. Our workings of both offer a rejection of methodological individualism, Enlightenment arguments, and much of the prevailing cognitivist thought. We start with sentience.

3.5.1 Sentience

The importance of this term may be more in what it denies rather than what it advances. The first purpose is to limit communication to those natural and artificial systems that respond to sensory transactions and interpret them in action—our definition of sentience. Animals (including humans), plants, computers devices, anything that can modify a condition in response to a sensation would be considered sentient under this definition. We describe sentience in four parts: sensation (the recognition of difference from similarity), semiosis (the ability of the sign), the semiotic system (the web of significance), and interpretation (embedding the sign in action).

Sensation involves the reading of difference-from-similarity across appropriate fields of energy (light, sound, chemical, pressure). The extensive literature on sensation shows we attend to angles, edges, boundaries, intensities, range, movement—any figure of change in the ground of similarity. Sensation can involve an external or internal change. Thinking a sentence, for an internal example, creates a trace that can be addressed in a subsequent action of thinking.

We turn to Bateson's concept of the immanent mind to help us develop the next part of the argument concerning sentience. Bateson (1979) starts his discussion by pointing to Lamarck's revision of Pope's great chain of being that started with the immanent mind and reached to the least of creatures. While acknowledging the Lamarckian error of behavioral transmission of genetic properties, Bateson credits Lamarck with the insight of autopoetic evolution that has thus far resulted in the mind as we know it. We do not start with mind; it appears in its material form at some finite moment.

What the material mind gives us is certain cognitive abilities the most important of which is semiosis. Semiosis is the ability of the sign to have something stand for something else. Without semiosis, sentience is merely the present. A thermocouple deforms according to its current temperature. It "knows" only its present state. But if that present state can stand for some previous state, we have the past, and if it stands for some future state, we have the future.

Semiosis builds on sensation's two abilities: the recognition of similarity and difference. Difference creates both the boundaries and the elements of an ideational object. Similarity is good continuation, to use gestalt terminology. At the higher perceptual levels, difference gives rise to deeper understandings of complexity, but if there is only difference, then semiosis is merely a progression of unique conditions that can form no pattern. It is the ground of similarity on which the figure of difference can truly play. As Sesame Street has taught us, "one of these things is not like the others", requires the similarity of the "others" before the difference of the "one" can be seen.

Semiosis is a huge evolutionary advance. It makes possible the semiotic systems of action and language but it does not provide either of them. Semiotic systems are necessarily a social invention. A semiotic system could not have been invented until two or more people recognized the same relationship between sign and interpretation in one another. Rather, a semiotic system had to be a cybernetic invention (Maturana and Varela 1987).

The advancement of the system, however, depends on the deliberate manipulation of the sign/interpretation relationship through mutual supervision of semiosis within the system. As members of a language community, we agree that *this ideation* means *that ideation* and we work to enforce that agreement. (There are, of course no material objects in any semiotic process only ideational constructs of objects.) The social invention of action and language as semiotic systems of significance is a factorial advance of semiosis. It fully colonizes semiosis and takes it over. The conclusion is that mind, as we know it, is a combination of material ability and social practice. The material ability entails the physical processes of cognition. The social practice is encoded in the semiotic systems of a culture and its societies (Gergen 1994; Shotter 1993).

In the study of communication, social practice is far more important than material ability, just as the hitter is nearly always more important than the bat, albeit itself essential, to understand the play of the game. Even in the era of high cognitivism in which he wrote, Bateson was approaching some of the same conclusions in his argument for the "immanent mind". In considering the immanent mind he writes:

> The word "objective" becomes, of course, quite quietly obsolete; and at the same time the word "subjective," which normally confines "you" within your skin, disappears as well. . . . There is a combining or marriage between an objectivity that is passive to the outside world and a creative subjectivity, neither pure solipsism nor its opposite. (1991: 222-223).

This claim expresses the social constructionist position that cognition is the product of a mind operating across the cultural pathways provided by our joint enactment of mindfulness. A mind is both enabled by our mind and works within the limits of the jointly enacted mind. Our mind advances only when a mind makes a contribution that is entered into the jointly enacted mind.

Our mind is not a "group mind" (a la Le Bon) or "group think". It is the larger narrative from which our sentences flow (Bruner 1990) and the archetypal events by which understand our own action (Goldberg 1995). It is the enacted set of resources and requirements of interpretation. Interpretation is the end game of sentience. Sentience begins in sensation and is completed in interpretation. We have defined interpretation as the sign embedded in action. It is the

consequences of the sign. Interpretation both originates in social practice in the signs to which one attends and concludes in social practice in the signs of what is being done. There certainly are internal states and physical processes which we must acknowledge but none of them is the conclusion.

It is the insertion of the sign into action that distinguishes the sentient from the merely sensing (Cavell 1985). Interpretation, then, is a dynamic process whose outcome is dependent upon the action context in which it occurs. There is no neutral state of interpretation; it is always embedded in the action's demand for its own coherence. We might consider this a rejection of local innocence or objectivity. All interpretation is political, and all politics are local.

3.5.2 Agency

In this term we work a dualism of choice and constraint. The choice comes in a rejection of strict determinism and a granting of immanence (undetermined choice) to the individual. The constraint comes in the recognition that any exercise of agency occurs within the social processes that exercise represents. Our agency is coded in the domain of agencies. We both enact our agency and are enacted by the agencies we represent (Fukuyama 1995). We are the agent of action and the agent for action (Anderson 1992; Anderson 1996; Anderson and Englehardt 2001; Anderson and Meyer 1987; Giddens 1991).

The agency of choice is a prerequisite for the cybernetics of an open system. If we think of the individual as a node in a system of mindfulness, agency is the means by which innovation is introduced. Without agency, a system of understanding would soon begin to repeat itself, go stagnant, and die. The individual is the gateway for innovation, but the system must enact it. Knowledge is a public process (and, for post-modernists, one that is not secured in any means of self-correction). Innovation at one point in a system is of no value if it remains only at that point. It remains, if you will, private knowledge. It becomes public knowledge, and therefore useful, not by its veridical force but by the action of the system upon it.

The agency of representation is both the domain and the level of authentication in which the innovation may publicly occur. What one can do or say is constrained by the agency represented at the moment of doing or saying. Ungoverned behavior and vocalizations are the hallmarks of craziness. In the service of sanity, we do and say from some subject position in the performance of some line of action that confers the rights and responsibilities of competent acting and speaking. For example, if one is to innovate as a scientist, one must act in accordance with the regulated domain of science and be legitimated in the position of the scientist.

> Carol and I are taking our ease in a Dublin pub, she a Guinness glass and I a pint. It had been a day of active conventioneering, and we are still talking social policy. We are joined at the table by what turns out to be a Boswell and Johnson pair. Boswell introduces his Johnson as one of the most brilliant of men. "He really is," he implored. "He fills these notebooks with idea after idea". He showed me a set of notebooks written in some form of coded mirror writing. The DaVinci notebooks pop into my head. He was a postman, according to his description and an autodidact of great range, according to mine. He demonstrated his code, writing effortlessly in his notebook. Of course, it could have been anything for all I knew. I blurted out my own understanding. "This code is your ticket, isn't it? You know no one will take you seriously now. You want to be discovered after you are dead". He blushed furiously, but nodded his assent. (QF)

Merely being brilliant is not enough. One also has to be authorized; something the postman could not obtain. But if an authorized agent of the intellectual class discovered his notebooks; interest piqued by the elegant code, the ideas might be given their voice.

3.5.3 Sentience and Agency: A Summary

This section has first attempted to develop a formulation of sentience that undermines objectivist notions of the real. Yes, there are primitive moments, but most of our life is spent bracketed between semiotic systems that fix our sensory environment and supply the conclusions we can draw. Each individual is a node in that social system of understanding implicated by its processing and complicit in the process.

It is the immanence of agency that rescues us from a life in the matrix and grants us the rights of innovation and resistance. But it is the representation of the agencies that create the domains of action that set the boundaries of the rights of innovation and resistance and provide the consequences of their acts.

3.6. An Exchange

The exchange is the unique communicative element in this theory about communication. If there is no exchange, there is no communication. This requirement saves the concept of communication from its death as everything, because if it is everything then it is nothing—it provides no difference to which we can attend. Not everything that is meaningful is an act of communication. It is the meaning-making under the governance of the exchange (which itself is not an exchange of meaning) that is the unique province of communication.

Why does good theory have to create this limitation? The reasoning for the demand goes as follows: The sign is not independent of the sentient. The sign is a creation of semiosis, a cognitive ability of the sentient. The creation of social systems of the disciplined sign does not eliminate the free play space in which

the sentient one can read signs of its own making (certainly, one of the sources of innovation). The sentient one can resist the dominant text and write his/her own. We can corset this ability to create one's own signs with all sorts of cultural and social limitations, but it remains nonetheless. The alternative is some form of strict determinism, that agency denies.

As a sentient one, the individual can extract patterns from a scene as a text and enact its interpretation in a seamless performance of the move from sensation to action. The scene, in this case, is not a communicant offering an exchange, but a resource exploited for interpretation. In the great "one cannot not communicate" debate, we want to separate the agent of the text from the agent of the interpretation, at least in time if not in body, and place them both under some common governance. There are some juicy problems that this requirement raises: Are industrial texts (like this one) communicative objects or, as they are activated by the reader at the point of reception, are they primarily resources for interpretation? We believe the answer lies in the governances and their enforcement of the exchange.

We draw our notion of an exchange from the work of Taylor and Van Every (2000) and perhaps extend it by some small part. For their large part, Taylor and Van Every create a synthesis from Searles's speech act theory, Gremias's (1987) semiotics and the work of construction grammarians (Brugmann 1988; Fillmore, Kay, and O'Connor 1988; Goldberg 1995; Lakoff 1987; and Lambrecht 1994).

From the former group, Taylor and Van Every (82-84) extract the claim that for a sentence to be competent, it must correspond to the construction of a ditransitive exchange that transforms both the agents and the object. In the ditransitive exchange, the agents are transformed into a state of co-orientation and the ideational object is transformed into a shared image of the world—moved from the undeclared to the declared (constative), moved into a new state from what was/is to what is/will be (conative), or moved into an effected creation from non-existence to existence (performative). The first level of communicative exchange, then, is in internal requirements of competence and coherence. An ungoverned aggregate of signs or symbols is incoherent until recognized as an ungoverned aggregate or read into some other constructive form.

Taylor and Van Every (2000) go on to propose a second level of exchange that they call diagentive. In our extension of Taylor and Van Every, the diagentive exchange involves two agents (not necessarily individuals). One is the agent (the effector and the representative) of an intentional bid for sense-making; the other is the agent (the effector and the representative of intentionally accepting that bid). Notice that the focus here is entirely on the bid. It has nothing to do with any sense made. The significance of any sign is its *call* for meaning.

The agents of this exchange, in a simple form, can be two individuals located in their respective subject position enacting some line of action which calls for some communicative routine: they are man and woman, enacting the singles bar; father and son, enacting filial relations; supervisor and subordinate, enacting the organization; stranger and stranger, managing space. But the agents can also be the prior narratives, the syntagms of action, the system of mindfulness, cultural myths, the binomials of social opposition in which no particular individual is responsible but all are both implicated and complicit. In our discussion of innovation, for example, the individual (located and acting) makes a bid for new knowledge that must be accepted within our system of understanding. And, in interpretation an individual attempts to insert the sign in on-going action, which must maintain its coherence for that interpretation to succeed.

Action has its similar constructive frameworks in which the competent line of action must be hung. But unlike language, the traces of those frameworks remain visible even in the absence of performance. Those framework traces of action are in the constructed environments and devices that are the means of competence. Going to work, for example, entails a transformation from one state (not at work) to another (at work). For this to happen truthfully (epistemically as opposed to some other modality) there has to be, at least, a shift in attention (as in "I am going to stop daydreaming and start working") but more likely a shift in physical location. It is the ordinary physical requirements of action—the body meaningfully in the world-that create the traces of these frameworks. Going to work implies places of not work and of work—home and office—and the means to travel between them—trails, sidewalks, roads, bicycles, buses, automobiles, bike racks, bus stops, parking. All of this stuff that enters into action permits us to declare what is, effect a change of position or state, or to constitute what currently does not exist, to use the language of constructive semantics.

Action has its diagentive exchange as well. The bid to go to work means the acceptance of the worker. The line of action is incoherent and incompetent if one has been fired. In other circumstances it might be unconventional or open to dismissal:

> The intersection is just east—towards town—of both the north and south exits of the freeway. It is a busy intersection of three lanes in all directions. I am watching a man working the southwest corner. He is dressed in a variation of what I've come to recognize as the homeless uniform. As the signal light stops the east bound traffic, he puts on a reasonably competent act juggling three old tennis balls. He is athletic, behind the back tosses, through the legs; it's a good work out. Some folks seem to appreciate the effort. They roll down the passenger-side window and pass what looks like dollar bills. It's time for me to move

on. I cross with the light and greet him with, "how's it going". "Hey, business is good", he replies. (HE 303)

The question that this episode raises is whether we, the domiciled, would grant his bid of work. This is not a trivial issue as it certainly affects how we view the homeless — addicted broken lives or savvy, streetwise survivors — and connects to all sorts of regulations concerning benefits, fees, and taxes. In the latter case, given small business regulation, it may be much better for him if we do not.

The semiotic systems of action and language form a relationship between the world and the meaning-maker—the user of the system—to declare what is, effect change, or to bring into existence the ideational objects of our socially created reality. The transference from significance to meaning is the exchange between the agents of the systems—the bid for and acceptance of the call for sense-making. Together, these exchanges constitute the boundaries of communication.

3.7. Mediating Technology

Using the terminology of "mediating technology" runs the risk of masking the levels of mediation that occur across all communicative forms. There is, of course the mediation introduced by the semiotic systems of action and language, the mediation of the action line, the discursive form and the communicative routine itself. In fact, from our perspective, there is no "unmediated" form of communication (Anderson and Meyer 1988). The concept of mediation develops out of theoretical efforts to separate a unique entity called the "message"—a conceptualization that was aided by the information exchange model of Shannon and Weaver (1949). Theoretically, the message has been the identifiable constellation of signs and symbols, the production of which was intentionally motivated and the consequences of which was the source of validation for the effort. The medium, then, became the mode of delivery, except that face-to-face or interpersonal communication has been held as the unmediated or "natural" form.

Marshall McLuhan's (1989) popularization of Harold Innis's (1951) scholarly work on the inseparability of medium and message has led mostly to studies on the effect of the medium according to its interactive character (temperature) rather than a careful examination of what general semanticists would call the "initial error," (separating the inseparable)". Coming from the other direction "media effects" studies have focused on the message or content of selected media (mostly television) as if the focal content could only be presented in that selection. So violence on television is considered epidemiologically significant but violence in the school yard, sports field, family home, girl and boyhood conversations are not.

But clearly messages do get constructed to obtain certain results and they are delivered through different technologies. Consider this thought experiment: Partner A has a message for Partner B, "Would you stop at the store and pick up a gallon of milk, please". In our controlled experiment, this message is delivered to relationally equal and highly experienced partner pairs through face-to-face, telephone conversation, voice mail, email, and a note attached to the windshield of the car. The milk gets delivered 50 percent of the time. Would we have a theoretically sound basis for predicting which technology would be most (or least) successful based on the technology alone, without introducing any other condition? Most of our explanations, we believe, could not be limited to simple technology but would necessarily entail the character of the relationship or the technological practices of the partners or the subject positions held within the action of shopping.

The force of technology, we would argue, is not on the *message* (there is no message independent of mediation) but upon the *text* and upon the enactors of the communicative event through the disciplines of practice that the technology imposes (Connell 1980; Hall 1978). To arrive at the latter conclusion (we offer some hints to the difference between text and message, below) we first take a symbolic interactionist position that the message does not reside within the content or within the medium or within the combination. These are impossible distinctions. The message resides in the relationship between the interactants and the focal point of their co-orientation. This, of course, is a restatement of Newcomb's (1953) A-B-X logic (see Figure 2)
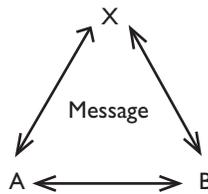

Figure 2: Newcomb's co-orientation model

The value of the co-orientation model is that it allows us to see that the message is not the text, but is rather the field of interpretation as embedded in the relationship. In this manner we have a theoretically sound basis for the delivery of the milk.

The model also allows us to interrogate the conditions under which messages are formed given different textual production processes. In face-to-face conversations, for example, the interactive elements are all present, active, and mutually supervised. The interactants jointly craft the text (listening is a part of conversing). In the email form, the X to A/B interactions are asynchronous and out of reach of immediate joint supervision. Further, the A to B interaction

is a virtual one, accounted for by A at the time of production and by B at the time of reception. The effective message, in this case, appears when B walks in the door with or without the milk.

Finally, the A-B-X model allows us to better understand the industrially-produced text. Anderson and Meyer (1988) have argued that the relationship between the media industries and its audiences is an *economic* rather than semiotic one. Neither industry nor audience is under any mutual obligation of sense-making. This argument does not mean that interpretations must be different, just that there can be no presumption of similarity. As Newcomb has said, "Each listener, each reader, each viewer brings a . . . complexity to the reception of communication, brings a range of contexts in which the 'word' is received and made part of the receiver's world" (1984: 40). A modification of the A-B-X model shows us why (see Figure 3).
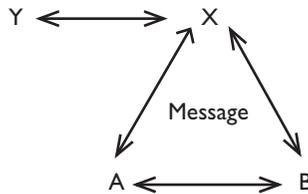
Y ⟷ X

Message

A ⟷ B

Figure 3: The text as produced independently of the co-orientation

Figure 3 shows that there is no linkage between the producing agent and the diagentive exchange in which the message will appear. The textual object is anonymous in its appearance, significant in its potential and meaningfully activated (Fiske 1987) in the A-B-X relationship. But, certainly, one might protest, there is a relationship between the audience and the producer. We would agree, but then quickly point out that an audience as an entity doesn't exist. It has to be produced through measurement and given voice through market practices (Allor 1988). The relationship might look like Figure 4.
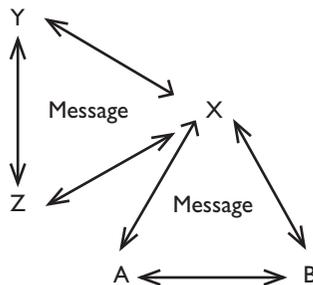
Y

Message   X

Z   Message

A ⟷ B

Figure 4: The industrial text as object in the
independent co-orientations of production and reception

In Figure 4, Y is the agent of production and Z the virtual agent of reception that produces the diagentive exchange under which textual practices are made sensible (the message). This condition of separate domains of message production circulating around a common textual object is acutely familiar to anyone who writes professionally for scholarship or the classroom.

The A-B-X model encourages us to conclude that we will not find transcendental message characteristics attributable to technology. Technology contributes to the text. It enables and disables textual characteristics (Fiske and Hartley 1978). Technology distributes symbolic resources and makes them widely available (Jensen 1991). Technology even provides the domain of a communicative exchange (Newcomb 1984). But, technology does not produce the message.

3.8. Intentionality

Intentionality, as we use it, incorporates Husserl's (1913/1970) intentionality of consciousness, Greimas's (1987) intentionality of interpretation, Eco's (1976, 1992) intentionality of form and Weber's (1903/1991) intentionality of action. Intentionality of this phenomenological sort is the foundation of constructionism. Human life, as a condition of its jointly enacted mindfulness, occurs in an intentional world not a natural one. As Stoecker (2001) asserts, intentional attitudes are not private but are distributed. In this way, the natural world is encoded in our mindfulness prior to our engagement of it. Things in the world are not smooth, soft, gritty, hard, large, small of themselves, but are so because they provide the resources of similarity and difference by which we attribute those properties to them. Intentionality is raised because the attributed properties are not determined by or independently affixed to the resources. Consciousness is directed to the world. And in fact the resources themselves may be radically in doubt. It is through the force of intention that things become as they are. We respond to these intentional attributes not to brute materiality. None of this repeals any law of physics. It merely says that physics is a way of understanding the world.

The moral is that you are not free to encounter the world directly. You may encounter it differently from others but the others have provided for that difference. You are not free to construct any sentence you like. You may speak gibberish, but gibberish is not a sentence. You are not free to interpret signs in an undisciplined manner. There is no interpretation that cannot be shared. You are not free not to act. You must act and it will be significant even in its complete incoherence. You are not a prisoner of an intentionality—there is not a single, overarching epistemic community—but you are a product of intention. The things we say and do are provided for; they already, always are. However, we improvise and even innovate within the a priori narratives of action and discourse.

3.9. Improvisational Performance

An unfortunate legacy of early behaviorism has been a stubborn naivete about the constructed character of behavior. The early writings about trial and error behavior (e.g., Watson 1924/1967) seem to ignore that trials come from repertoire and errors from the researcher. The general movement of science from physics to behaviorism to structuralism has been to separate behavior from social practice. It has been the work of social action theorists from Weber (1903/1947) to Wittgenstein (1958, 1980), to Schutz (1978) to Goffman (1959) to Giddens (1984) (see Schoening and Anderson 1995 for a review) to persistently call for the understanding of action as a semiotic system.

A performance is an action event that occurs under the contingencies of real time produced by real enactors of varying skill levels attempting to coherently and competently enact behavior that is meaningful within a nexus of obligation from a subject position location inserted in an action line. A performance encodes this multi-layering of intentionality. Performances succeed, fail, reproduce, mutate, represent, innovate, reference, confirm, confuse in the management of the terms of their enactment.

Performances are the expression of the banal, the ordinary, the quotidian. They are "taking out the garbage," "driving to work" "being a soccer mom". They are the baseline from which the theatre and the novel arise (Carlson 1996). They are the enactments of our understanding of what is being done. Performances invoke the environments and devices of their enactment. If asked to "take out the garbage" in a new friend's house (it could happen as a secret test of domesticity), your keyboardist would rise and go the cabinet under the sink. The garbage may not be there but the behavior would be instantly recognizable as responsive to the request.

A performance is an enactment of an actional form.[2] It carries with it the intentionality of both the enactment (what has to be done) and of the category (what is being done). Together they explain what has to be done to do what is being done. It is this intentionality that both solves the problem of doing and

---

2. One may question whether performance as used here is the same as "performance" in performance studies. The answer seems to be that it depends on the performance studies scholar. For Richard Schechner, (2002) the answer is probably not; for Jon McKenzie (2001) probably so. McKenzie suggests that performance studies views a performance as one that crosses a threshold of heightened characteristics and significance (p. 50), but then goes on to analyze such things as performance management. For us, performance is behavior under the governance of an action routine. The evidence of a performance is that it is recognizable metonymically. One can look into a classroom and see a "lecture," "the taking of a test," a enactment of "discussion" without having to observe the whole event. One might consider, then, that performance writ here is the living ground for the figures of performance studies.

limits the agency of the enactor doing it. It is also this intentionality that allows us to understand the performance as being a performance of something. It is to that something that we now turn.

3.10. Communicative Routine

We begin by dividing the two terms, taking up the second first.

3.10.1 Routine

The routine is prior to the performance. It is the set of rules, analogies, and history of prior coherent performances by which we solve the daily problems of being in the world. The concept of the routine focuses our analysis of action in the same way that the sentence focuses our analysis of language. Because they are both competent elements in a semiotic system, the question of what is a routine and its determinants is answerable in the same way that the question of what is a sentence and its determinants is answerable (and with about the same success). Social action theorists lag far behind linguists in this effort.

The argument for the existence of the routine—a competence of action—would seem compelling. Any move away from viewing behavior as mere muscle spasm; any inclusion of intention requires the routine. Without a semiotic system of action, any intention to act is entirely private which means that every action is uniquely recognizable only by the enactor. That is false on the face of it. We obviously produce coordinated behavior under an overarching intention that makes sense of our joint activity (Barley 1983). The routine is not a memorized unit or a burgeoning set of scripts any more than sentence production is a set of preformed exemplars. As a semiotic system, action has a grammar and syntax that connects acts into routines and routines into lines of action (Blumer 1969). We are born into a system of action just as we are born into a system of language. We do not each invent our action or find it in the physics of movement (Parsons 1978). Clearly the systematic evidence is there to be found, but we are not able to show it yet.

3.10.2 Communicative

By definition every routine, code or condition, is interpretable in that it is a sign of what is being done. It may be that every routine is also communicative (enters into a ditransitive, diagentive exchange) just as it may be that every sentence is communicative (but that may also be a conceit we grant authors who write to fill up a page or speakers who fill the air with sound). Frankly, the question is not very interesting nor does a positive answer preclude the expressly communicative routine. The issues of intra-personal communication aside, there would appear to be some utility for theory to preserve the distinction between action

that intends to communicate and is, therefore, enacted toward communicative goals and action that has no communicative intention. As communication scholars, if every routine is communicative (a proposition different from the issue if every routine signifies), then we are responsible for all action. That's not a responsibility we wish to undertake. One may not be able to "not communicate", especially if communication is interpreted as behavior, but one can certainly not be communicative.

Consequently, we follow Searle's lead in claiming that there are communicative routines that would comfortably engage speech act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969, 1985), Bakhtin's (1981) dialogic imagination, the construction grammarians, de Certeau's (1984) everyday practice, Turner's (1969) ritual, Pollock's (1995) ethnographic performance, Scott's (1990) acts of resistance, Butler's (1997) performative, and Conquergood's (2002) artistry, analysis, and activism. We theorize a class of routines called communicative that have identifiable boundaries and accomplish certain exchange goals that are beyond the instrumentality of the behaviors performed. So, a communicative routine is not "writing a letter". It is the underlying accomplishments that such routines as "writing a letter" intends.

To consider those accomplishments, we can certainly start with the constantives, conatives, and declaratives of speech acts. The tantalizing view here is that each of these forms of language use has to occur within some line of action. One cannot just speak. That being the case: What are the actional priors that provide the basis by which the presentation of the form is justified? It is an exciting answer (at least to us) but very incomplete. A communicative routine, nonetheless, is one that both produces and enables the work of reality construction in the formation of the self in the world and the self/other constructs of the subject (Galaty 1983). These constructs of the self/other are the manifestations of the self that beckon the other into a program of mutual exchange (Geok-lim Lim, 1990).

4. Implications and Conclusions

We can now restate the obvious conclusion: The process of communication occurs inside a nexus of obligation, from relational subject positions, within some line of action, regularly involving a discursive form, enacted by two or more sentient agents, performing an exchange, often utilizing a mediating technology, under the intentionality of an improvisational performance of a pre-existing communicative routine.

In viewing communication inside a nexus of obligation, we begin to understand the way in which local practices occur and how they are managed. Obligation gives meaning and context to the communicative events that are taking

place between agents. The concept of joint commitment becomes a fundamental social concept which establishes attendant responsibilities and duties as well as entitlements and privileges. With such an understanding of exchanges between social agents that are based on the social norms of obligation and reciprocity, we see that obligation, as a constituted enactment, to have any sort of consequent force, must depend on the character of that enactment for its coherence and meaning. Without context and obligation, we are left with no understanding of subject position or presentation of self within any communicative event.

The process of communication occurs from some relational subject position. We assert that in viewing the self as an acting agent, we give up the notion of the essentialized individual, considering instead that the individual is made meaningful in the performative presentation of the self. In that performance, the self is made visible. This assertion connects to Bateson who writes, "in my epistemology, the concept of self, along with all arbitrary boundaries which delimit systems or parts of systems, is to be regarded as a trait of the local culture" (1991: 202).

Subject positions are relational categories that obtain their situational meaning in relation to other possible subject positions and discourses. Those subject positions are determined not just by interactional factors but also by the context and content of the communication itself. Communication does not involve one essentialist self exchanging information with another essentialist self. It involves context, relationships, obligation, and subject positions operating within a system of boundaries that define the exchange.

Communication occurs within some line of action. A line of action must account for the context of the performance, any contingencies that might occur within the duration of that performance, as well as any consequences which might occur as a result of that performance. When a line of action is enabled, a particular subset of actions becomes possible and suitable as a result. At the same time, other lines of action become closed to the actor. What constitutes a line of action varies not only with objectives but also with the actors and the resources available to them. Action locates actors within those performative roles and forms that become responsive to the intentions of the action sign. Communicative routines occur with lines of action. Communication takes place within a communicative routine which is part of a line of action where roles and intentions become manifest.

Communication often involves a discursive form, which people can manipulate, negotiate, and recognize as forms. These discursive forms, because of their ability to function as part of a social stock of knowledge and to allow individuals to "define" themselves, are systematically connected to subject positions as well as action lines. In this connection, agents contingently position themselves in

their cultural location and in the communicative routine. In this positioning, the discursive form is (or is not) recognized and negotiated as legitimate expression which spells out the context of exchange between agents and enables both to define the meaning of that exchange and to make sense of the social action occurring. Each individual, regardless of agency, is both implicated and complicit in this interchange.

Technology provides a domain of enactment—of the self, of agency, of texts. Technology enables or disables the self, agency, or the text; it does not produce the message. Rather, the diagentive exchange is what bids for and accepts the call for the sense-making that produces the message as a field of interpretation.

Communication takes place in a world where what we say and do are provided for: they already, always are. Any interpretation must take place in a disciplined manner where action and perception are intrinsically connected in intentionality which requires a common interpretive scheme. We assert that no one is a prisoner of intentionality but rather is a product of intention where we act upon and within prior narratives of action and discourse. Thus, when we engage in any kind of performance, we attempt to do so from a position of coherence, with an intentional attitude. We strive to enact behavior that is meaningful within a nexus of obligation from a subject position in a particular location inserted in an action line.

Obligation, subject position, lines of action, discursive forms, sentient agents, exchange, mediating technology, intentionality, and improvisational performance all come together in a pre-existing communicative routine in a process called communication. This process focuses not on the what of the text, but rather on the how—how the work of reality construction occurs, how the self is manifest, and how mutual exchanges occur. From a semiotic perspective, communication becomes the language of possible and suitable action where properties are only differences, contextualized within relationships. This makes an important move away from viewing communication from the venerable sender-message-receiver model (re)inscribed in a myriad of textbooks and classrooms. As such, it calls for a move for study and research that leads to a means of recognizing significant moral and political issues that enable us to respond to less narrow questions about what constitutes communication.

Being postmodern, or out of modernity, if you will, this theorizing is not an attempt to supplant the theories of modernity's reasoning. It is an attempt to provide support and encouragement for an expanded field of study and epistemology. To quote Conquergood:

> The dominant way of knowing in the academy is that of empirical observation
> and critical analysis from a distanced perspective: "knowing that," and "knowing

about". This is a view from above the object of inquiry: knowledge that is anchored in paradigm and secured in print. This propositional knowledge is shadowed by another way of knowing that is grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection: "knowing how," and "knowing who".

Since the enlightenment project of modernity, the first way of knowing has been preeminent. Marching under the banner of science and reason, it has disqualified and repressed other ways of knowing that are rooted in embodied experience, orality, and local contingencies. (2002: 146)

From obligation to the routine, this theorizing offers a progression from knowing about to knowing that to knowing how to finally knowing who, and in knowing who, we are entered into the lives of others as a force of further subjugation or of intervention as well as the struggle to know the difference. We will not separate our knowledge from "those people," perfect communication, increase productivity, or fix the relationship. We will simply have the opportunity to do good.

[Charley, as he prefers, is a custodian for a large intermountain university.] We're always being bitched at by our supervisors. Custodial work involves a lot of standing and waiting. Waiting for someone to get out of the restroom. Waiting for a faculty member to get out of the way so I can vacuum. It such a big, friggin' deal for them. Anyway, if a supervisor catches you standing there, he'll start to bitch. "What are you waiting for? Go do something and come back". But if you leave, someone else will just go in the restroom or you'll have to wait for the office when you come back. My father was a custodian too. He was a "maintenance engineer" in the power plant. He carried a rag in his back pocket; called it a decoy. Whenever the super would come around, he'd pull it out and start wiping something. He was smart. I do the same thing. The supervisor comes, I'm wiping away. I know everybody knows, but who cares what they think. Just so they leave me alone. (NR 32)

Viewing the process of communication from a Batesonian foundation opens a dialogue that enables scholars to go beyond previous understanding. It enables us to build an argument of the obligated, sentient self enacting a particular subject position within a coherent, constituted performance. It places communication within a frame of analysis that allows a deeper interpretation of the entire process. This analytical frame of action and language constitutes an ecology of communication. Thus, we see ourselves as engaged in a system of obligation in which, our own particular subject position, intentions, performance, and presentation of self in communicative routines are reveled in this deeper semiotic understanding inspired by Gregory Bateson.

References

ABRAMSON, E., H. A. CUTLER, R. W. KAUTZ, and M. MENDELSON.
    1958.   "Social Power and Commitment: A Theoretical Statement", *American Sociological Review* 23, 15-22.

ALDRICH, H. and D. HERKER.
    1977.   "Boundary Spanning Roles and Organization Structure", *The Academy of Management Review* 2.

ALLEN, D., and P. K. HARDIN.
    2001.   "Discourse Analysis and the Epidemiology of Meaning", *Nursing Philosophy* 2, 163-177.

ALLOR, Martin.
    1988.   "Relocating the Site of the Audience", *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 5, 217-233.

ANDERSON, James A.
    1996.   *Communication Theory: Epistemological Foundations* (New York: Guilford Press).
    2000.   "The Organizational Self and the Practices of Control and Resistance", *Australian Journal of Communication* 27, 1-33.

ANDERSON, James A., and Elaine E. ENGLEHARDT.
    2001.   *The Organizational Self and Ethical Conduct* (Fort Worth, Tex.: Harcourt).

ANDERSON, James A., and Timothy P. MEYER.
    1988.   *Mediated Communication: A Social Action Perspective* (Newberry Park, Calif.: Sage).

AUSTIN, John Langshaw.
    1962.   *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press).

BAKHTIN, Mikhail M.
    1981.   *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist; trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas).

BARLEY, S. R.
    1983.   "Semiotics and the Study of Occupational and Organizational Cultures", *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28, 393-413.

BATESON, Gregory.
    1979.   *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* (New York: Dutton).
    1991.   *A Sacred Unity: Further Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (San Francisco: Harper Collins).

BAUMAN, R., and C. L. BRIGGS.
    1990.   "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19, 59-88.

BHABA, Homi K.
    1996.   "Unpacking My Library . . . Again", in I. Chambers and L. Curti, *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (New York: Routledge), 199-211.

BLUMER, Herbert.
    1969.   *Symbolic Interactionism* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall).

BRUGMAN, C. M.
    1988.   *The Syntaxes and Semantics of "Have" and its Complements* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

BRUNER, Jerome.
    1990.   *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press).

BUCK, R., and C. Arthur VANLEAR.
    2002.   "Verbal and Nonverbal Communication: Distinguishing Symbolic, Spontaneous, and Pseudo-spontaneous Nonverbal Behavior", *Journal of Communication*,(Spring), 522-541.

BURR, Vivian.
    1995.   *An Introduction to Social Constructionism* (New York: Routledge).

BUTLER, Judith.
    1997.   *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge).

CARLSON, Marvin A.
    1996.   *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge).

CAPUTO, John.
    1993.   *Against Ethics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

CARBAUGH, Donal.
    1996.   *Situating Selves: The Communication of Social Identities in American Scenes* (Albany: State University of New York Press).

CAVELL, Marcia.
    1985.   "The self and some Related Issues: A Philosophical Perspective: I", *Psychoanalysis & Contemporary Thought* 8, 3-27.

CONQUERGOOD, Dwight.
    2002.   "Performance Studies: Intervention and Radical Research", *The Drama Review* 46, 145-156.

CUNNINGHAM, S.
    1997.   "Two Faces of Intentionality", *Philosophy of Science* 64, 445-460.

DAGGER, R.
2000.   "Membership, Fair Play, and Political Obligation", *Political Studies* 48, 104-118.

DE CERTEAU, Michael.
1984.   *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press).

ECO, Umberto.
1976.   *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).
1992.   *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press).

FISKE, John.
1987.   *Television Culture* (London: Methuen).

FISKE, John, and John HARTLEY.
1978.   *Reading Television* (London: Metheun).

FILLMORE, C. J., P. KAY and C. O'CONNOR.
1988.   "Regularity and Idiomaticity in Grammatical Construction: The Case of *Let Alone*", *Language* 64, 501-538.

FRANKS, A., and C. JEWITT.
2001.   "The Meaning of Action in Learning and Teaching", *British Educational Research Journal* 27, 201-218.

FUKUYAMA, Francis.
1995.   *Trust* (New York: Free Press).

GALATY, J. G.
1983.   "Ceremony and Society: The Poetics of Maasai Ritual", *Man, New Series* 18, 361-382.

GEOK-LIM LIM, S.
1990.   "Semiotics, Experience and the Material Self: An Inquiry into the Subject of the Contemporary Asian Woman Writer", *Women's Studies* 18, 153-178).

GERGEN, Kenneth J.
1994.   *Realities and Relationships: Soundings in Social Construction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

GIDDENS, Anthony.
1984.   *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (University of California Press).
1991.   *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).

GILBERT, M.
1993a.   "Group Membership and Political Obligation", *Monist* 76, 119-132.

1993b.   "Agreements, Coercion, and Obligation", *Ethics* 103, 679-706.

GOFFMAN, Erving.
    1959.   *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday).

GOLDBERG, Adele E.
    1995.   *Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure* (Chicago: Chicago University Press).

GREIMAS, Albert.
    1987.   *On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory*, trans. P. J. Perron and F. H. Collins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

GROSSBERG, L.
    1996.   "Identity and Cultural Studies. Is That All There Is"? in S. Hall and P. du Gay, *Questions of cultural identity* (London: Sage) 87-107.

HALL, Stuart.
    1993.   Minimal Selves, in A. Gray and J. McGuigan, *Studying Culture: An Introductory Reader* (New York: Routledge).

HAWES, Leonard.
    1999.   "The Dialogics of Conversation: Power, Control, Vulnerability", *Communication Theory* 9, 229-264.

HODGE, Robert, and Gunther R. KRESS.
    1913.   *Logical Investigations*, trans. John Findlay, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

INNIS, Harold.
    1951.   *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: Toronto University Press).

JENSEN, K. B.
    1991.   "When is Meaning: Communication Theory, Pragmatism, And Mass Media Reception", in, J. A. Anderson, *Communication Yearbook* volume 14 (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage) 3-32.

KEENEY, Bradford P.
    1983.   *Aesthetics of Change* (New York: Guilford Press).

LAKOFF, George.
    1987.   *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

LAMBRECHT, Knud.
    1994.   *Information Structure and Sentence Form: A Theory of Topic, Focus, and the Mental Representation of Discourse Referents* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press).

LAW, J., and A. MOL.
  1995. "Notes on Materiality and Sociality", *The Editorial Board of The Sociological Review*, 274-294.

MAHONEY, T. A., and P. J. FROST.
  1974. "The Role of Technology in Models of Organizational Effectiveness", *Organizational Behavior & Human Performance* 11, 122-139.

MATURANA, Humberto R., and Francisco J. VARELA.
  1987. *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Boston: Shambhala).

MEAD, George.
  1982. *The Individual and the Social Self: Unpublished Work of George Herbert Mead*, ed. D. L. Miller, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

MCKENZIE, Jon.
  2001. *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*, (London: Routledge).

MCLUHAN, Marshall, and Bruce R. POWERS
  1989. *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press).

MCNAMEE, Sheila, and Kenneth GERGEN, eds.
  1999. *Relational Responsibility: Resources for Sustainable Dialogue*, (London: Sage).

NEWCOMB, Horace M.
  1984. "On the Dialogic Aspects of Mass Communication", *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 1, 34-50.

NEWCOMB, Theodore.
  1953. "An Approach to the Study of Communicative Acts", *Psychological Review* 60, 393-404.

NICHOLSON, Linda J.
  1999. *The Play of Reason: From the Modern to the Postmodern*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press).

PARSONS, Talcott.
  1978. *Action Theory and the Human Condition*, (New York: Free Press).

POLLOCK, D.
  1995. "Masks and the Semiotics of Identity", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institution* 1, 581-597.

POPPER, Karl Raimund, and John Carew ECCLES.
  1977. *The Self and its Brain*, (Berlin: Springer-Verlag).

SCHECHNER, Richard.
  2002. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, (London: Routledge).

SCHOENING, Gerard T., and James A. ANDERSON.
    1995.   "Social Action Media Studies: Foundational Arguments and Common Premises", *Communication Theory* 5, 93-116.

SCHUTZ, Alfred.
    1978.   *The Theory of Social Action: The Correspondence of Alfred Schutz and Talcott Parsons*, ed. Richard Grathoff, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

SCOTT, James C.
    1990.   *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press).

SEARLE, John R.
    1969.   *Speech Acts: An essay in the Philosophy of Language*, (London: Cambridge).
    1985.   *The Construction of Social Reality*, (New York: Free Press).

SHANNON, Claude E., and Warren WEAVER.
    1949.   *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press).

SHAPIRO, L. A.
    1997.   "The Nature of Nature: Rethinking Naturalistic Theories of Intentionality", *Philosophical Psychology* 10, 309-323.

SIGMAN, Stuart J.
    1987.   *A Perspective on Social Communication*, (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books).

SHOTTER, John.
    1993.   *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life: Social Constructionism, Rhetoric and Knowing of the Third Kind*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

STEWART, K.
    1991.   "On the Politics of Cultural Theory: A Case for "Contaminated" Cultural Critique", *Social Research* 58, 395-413.

STOECKER, Ralf .
    2001.   "How Individual Are Intentional States Really"? *Language & Communication* 21, 167-175.

TAYLOR, James R., and Elizabeth J. VANEVERY.
    2000.   *The Emergent Organization: Communication as its Site and Surface*, (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates).

TORRONEN, J.
    2001.   "The Concept of Subject Position in Empirical Social Research", *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 31, 313-329.

TURNER, Victor.
  1969.   *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*, (Chicago: Aldine).

VAN DIJK, Teun A., ed.
  1997.   *Discourse as Structure and Process*, (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage).

WATSON, John Broadus.
  1924.   *Behavior; an Introduction to Comparative Psychology*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967).

WEBER, Max.
  1903.   *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (New York: Free Press, 1947).
  1991.   *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, (London: Harper Collins Academic).

WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig.
  1958.   *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, (New York: Macmillan).
  1980.   *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. Von Wright and H. Nyman, trans. P. Winch, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).