

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been an attempt to provide the theory of grammar with a more adequate notion of syntactic variable, a notion which I showed in Chapter 1 and elsewhere to be absolutely essential if the central fact of syntax -- that there are unbounded syntactic processes -- is to be captured. In Chapter 2, I argued that the earliest attempt at limiting the power of variables, Chomsky's A-over-A principle, is both too strong and too weak. A far more serious inadequacy in this principle than those I discussed in Chapter 2 is the fact that it cannot be extended in any natural way, as far as I can see, to account for the phenomena which led me to construct a theory of syntactic islands. In Chapter 3, I gave a preliminary sketch of a theory of node deletion, or pruning -- a theory which interacts closely with the constraints developed in later chapters. In this chapter, I also gave some evidence that a rather substantial revision in the syntactic component was necessary -- that many conditions previously thought to be best stated as restrictions on particular rules should instead be regarded as static output conditions, with the rules in question being freed of all restrictions. These output conditions effect no changes on final derived constituent structures -- rather they lower the acceptability of sentences output by the transformational component, if these sentences exhibit certain formal properties which are specified in

the conditions. Thus the relationship between grammaticality and acceptability must become much more abstract than has been assumed.

In Chapter 4, I formulated two putatively universal constraints and one putatively universal convention, as well as a number of language-particular constraints, which I showed to be intermediate in generality between conditions on particular rules and universal constraints, and thus to necessitate a further addition to the syntactic component -- the conditions box.

In Chapter 5, I showed that various facts made necessary the adoption of a new mechanism into the theory of grammar, so that rules whose variables would otherwise be too strong could be correctly stated. Langacker's notion of command, with suitable extensions, was demonstrated to be adequate to this task, and a number of interesting restrictions on types of rules were shown to be stateable in terms of this notion. Various rules of pronominalization were discussed, and it was shown that while these rules did not obey the constraints of Chapter 4, they also did not obey restrictions which could be stated in terms of command.

And in Chapter 6, I discussed a large number of rules, showing them all to be subject to the constraints developed in Chapters 4 and 5. A close examination of all rules subject to these constraints reveals that not only are feature-changing rules and unidirectional deletion rules subject to the same constraints as the chopping rules for which the constraints were first developed, but that it is only rules which

make crucial use of variables which are subject to them. Thus, in a sense, it is wrong to speak of constraints on rules -- the constraints in Chapters 4 and 5 are rather to be construed as limiting the power of variables that can appear in a certain type of rules. In conjunction with the notion command, the constraints divide up phrase markers into islands, the maximal domains of rules of the type in question.

All the proposals I have made should be regarded as being extremely tentative, for our present knowledge of syntax is ridiculously small. This thesis has raised far more questions than it has attempted to answer. Among them are: Why should rules which adjoin terms to the right side of a variable be upward bounded, and not those which adjoin terms to the left of a variable? Why should it be that chopping rules, feature-changing rules and unidirectional deletion rules share the property of being subject to the constraints, to the exclusion of other rules? Why should there be a difference between unidirectional and bidirectional pronominalization? Why should it be that the constraints are all "downward-oriented"-- that is, why should it be that there are phrase marker configurations that prevent elements indefinitely far below them from undergoing various syntactic operations, whereas there are no configurations which affect elements indefinitely far above them? Why should complex NP's, coordinate nodes, sentential subject clauses,

and NP's on the left branches of larger NP's all function the same in defining islands? Can islands be shown to behave like psycholinguistic entities?

While none of these questions can now be answered, the fact that they can now be asked is a major result of the thesis. For as e.e. cummings has said, "always the more beautiful answer who asks the more beautiful question."

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BIOGRAPHY

I was born on May 7, 1938, in Boston, Massachusetts, the son of Dr. Douglas Allen Ross and Eleanor Campbell Mott Ross. I lived in Montreal and then in Sudbury, Massachusetts, until I was nine, when we moved to Poughkeepsie, New York. I had the good fortune to go to the Poughkeepsie Day School from the third grade to the eighth grade, graduating in 1952. My luck continuing, I was accepted at, and managed, despite many disciplinary problems, to stay in, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, where I graduated in 1956.

As I entered Yale in the fall of that year, intending to major in mathematics, I stumbled by chance into a brilliant and fascinating introductory course in linguistics -- which I had never heard of -- a course taught by the late Bernard Bloch. After I had failed out of mathematics, he allowed me to piece together a special undergraduate major in linguistics, and became my adviser. It is to his understanding, humor, and patience that I owe the fact that I am now a linguist.

After graduating from Yale in 1960, I received a grant from the Deutscher Akademische Austauschdienst and went for two semesters, to the University of Bonn and for one semester to Berlin, to the Free University and to the Technical University, where I studied a little linguistics and a lot of everything else.

Having returned to the United States, I received a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to study at the University of Pennsylvania,