Communication and Processing of Mixed-Viewpoint Situations:

'Ready-Made Packages' versus Online Construction

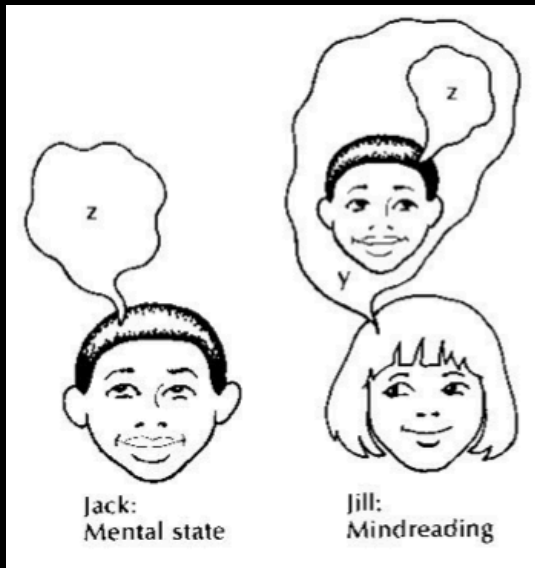ICLC Conference 2013
University of Alberta, Edmonton

Theme Session 8: 'Linguistic Manifestations
of Mixed Points of View in Narratives'

Max van Duijn, MPhil
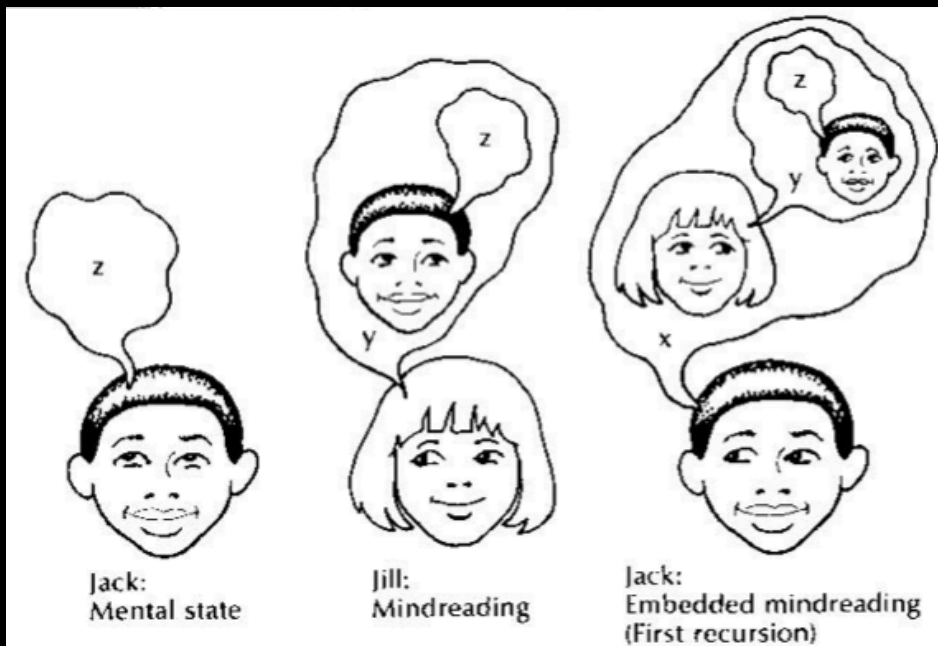PhD canditate Leiden University

Mindreading & Multiple-Order Intentionality

Jack: Mental state Jill: Mindreading

A *knows*
    that B *believes*…

'mindreading', 'metarepresentation', or
'theory of mind'

Jack: Mental state Jill: Mindreading Jack: Embedded mindreading (First recursion)
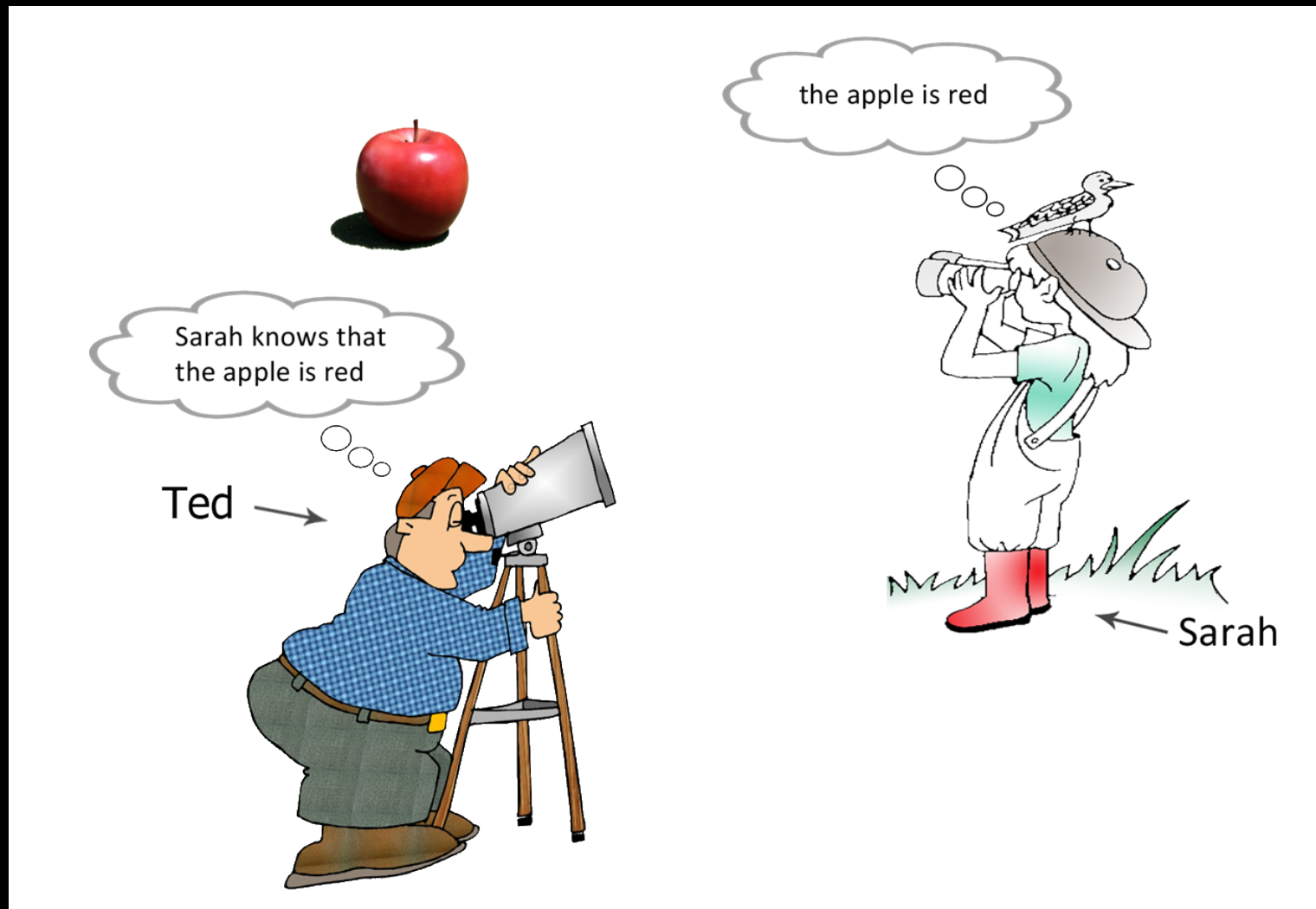
A *knows*
    that B *believes*
        that C *intends*
            …etc.

'multiple-order intentionality'

Representation of multiple-order intentionality

Ted knows that Sarah knows that the apple is red.

Representation of multiple-order intentionality

[*The audience believes*]

that Iago intends

that Cassio believes

that Desdemona intends

that Othello believes

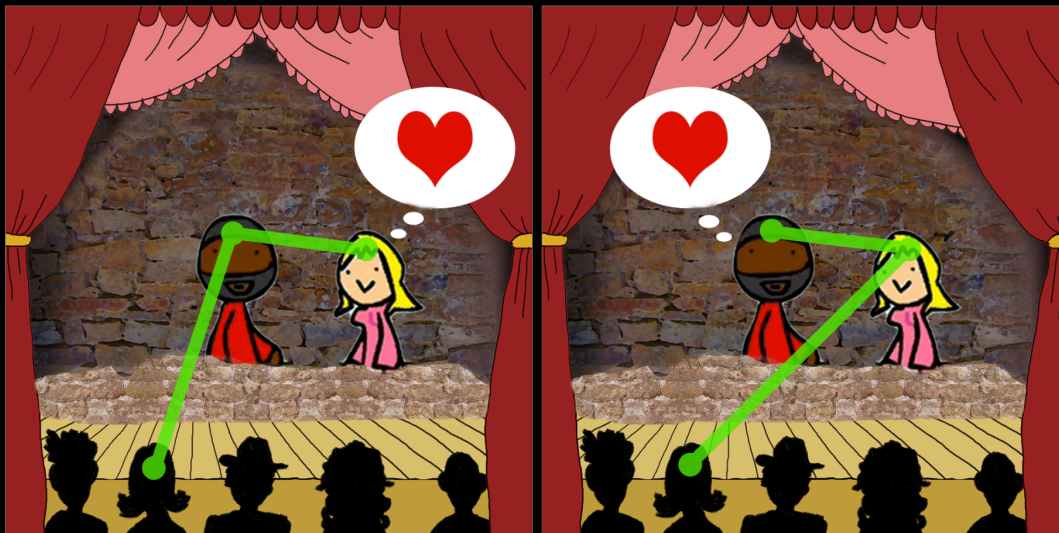*that Cassio was thinking that he served the good cause…*

(cf. Van Duijn et al., in prep.; Dunbar 2008)

Representation of multiple-order intentionality

Some aspects of the exposition of information in *Othello* 'alleviate' the cognitive burden of processing multiple-order intentionality

(Van Duijn et al., in prep.)

> Viewpoint alternation ('focalization')

> Episodic structure
(cf. also 'narrative anchors', Dancygier 2012)

Representation of multiple-order intentionality

One more example: Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)

[Woolf intends

us to recognize . . .]

that Richard is aware

that Hugh wants

Lady Bruton and Richard to think

that because the makers of the pen believe
that it will never wear out

the editors of the Times will respect and
publish the ideas recorded by this pen…

(Zunshine 2006, 32-33)

>> Obviously, *Othello* and *Mrs. Dalloway* do
not contain such sentences

Case 1: Dancygier's analysis of Eggers' *AHWOSG*

Dave Eggers' *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000)

>> main character Dave worrying about having left his small brother at home with a baby-sitter:

> I will come home … door will be open … baby-sitter will be gone … blood on the walls … a note to me … There will be a hearing, a trial …
> *How did you come to meet this … baby-sitter?*
> We found a posting, on a bulletin board.
> …etc.

(excerpt based on Dancygier 2012, p. 38, citing *AHWOSG*, p. 126)

Case 1: Dancygier's analysis of Eggers' *AHWOSG*

> 'micro-level viewpoint phenomena'…
　　(*such as pronouns, verb tenses, italics*)

> …prompt input spaces that blend into higher-level structures of 'narrative spaces'

> Result: aggregate at the macro-level is increasingly rich and complexly structured

(Dancygier 2012, esp. ch. 2 & 3; see also
Coulson 2001; Fauconnier & Turner 2002)

Case 1: Dancygier's analysis of Eggers' *AHWOSG*

Main narrative space: structure
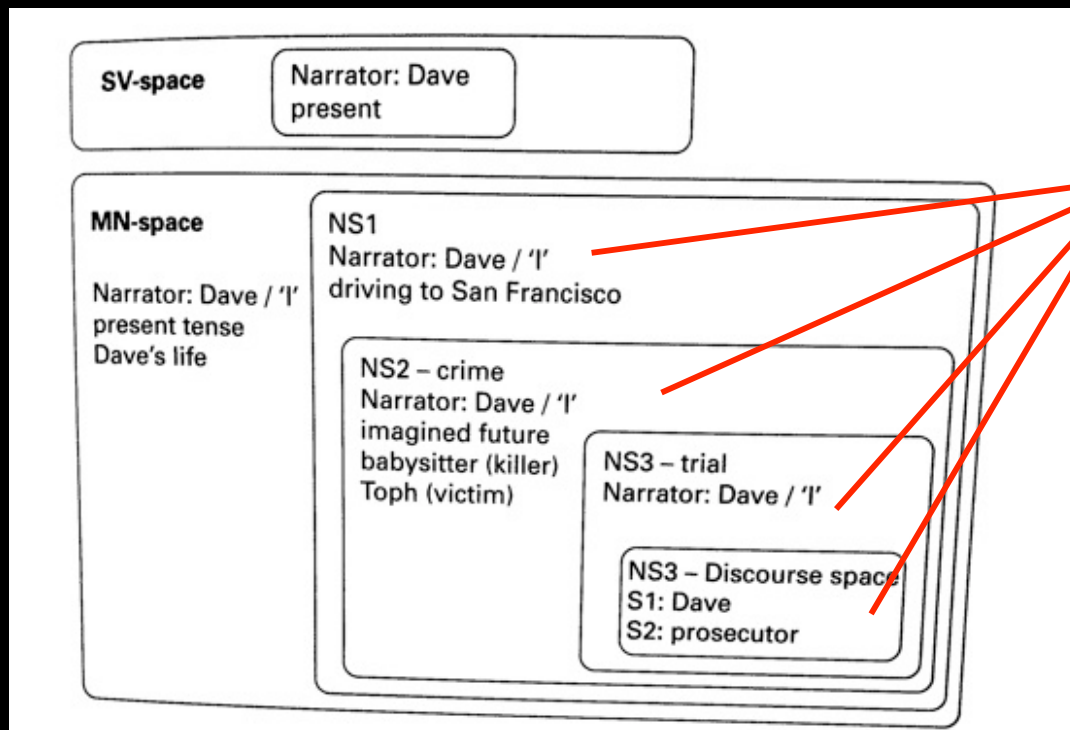
low-level phenomena --> narrative spaces: one layer at a time

>> complexity of the main narrative space is built **online**, 'from the ground up'

(Dancygier 2012, 38-40)

Case 1: Dancygier's analysis of Eggers' *AHWOSG*

Main narrative space: contents

After a while…
(*from the chain of the imagined, terrifying though unlikely scenario's*)

…readers can conclude that at the level of the main narrative space, we are dealing with a first person-narrator with *hysteric* tendencies

>> however, 'overarching' word *hysteria* is nowhere found in the text

Case 2: Newspaper articles on Pistorius shooting

February 14, 2013: Pistorius' girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp
dies from 4 gun shots, fired by Pistorius from behind
the bathroom door

> Murder or accident? Depends on assumed mind-states!

Pistorius: *I thought there was an intruder*

Police: *he knew it was Reeva
in the bathroom*

> Other people (witnesses,
spokespersons) also have
beliefs and views on which
newspapers report

Case 2: Newspaper articles on Pistorius shooting

At the end of the day…

[Readers understand]

that Beeld.com [etc.] reported

that a spokesperson declared

that the police detective reported

that the athlete claimed

that he did not know

that his girlfriend was behind the bathroom door when he fired shots at it.

Case 2: Newspaper articles on Pistorius shooting

> Again, obviously, the news reports nowhere phrase this in such an explicit and exhaustive form

> In fact, in the actual headlines and articles, the news is never just presented in the format of embedding constructions, but it is also 'packed' in more common and convenient expressions…

Case 2: Newspaper articles on Pistorius shooting

Athlete Oscar Pistorius allegedly accidentally shot dead his girlfriend at his house in Pretoria on Thursday morning, Beeld.com reported.

He had mistaken her for a robber, the Afrikaans daily reported on its website.

Police spokeswoman Captain Sarah Mcira confirmed she was shot in the arm and head. She died on the scene.

(SAPA, 'Oscar Pistorius shoots girlfriend: report', 14 February 2013).

Case 2: Newspaper articles on Pistorius shooting

indirect discourse:

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JOHANNESBURG, Feb 14 (Reuters) – South African police said on Thursday a woman had been found dead at the Pretoria home of paralympic star Oscar Pistorius.

Local radio and online newspaper reports said the woman was understood to be Pistorius' girlfriend and that he may have shot her after mistaking her for an intruder.

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Case 2: Newspaper articles on Pistorius shooting

> Is it reasonable to assume that readers do indeed conceptualize the event as a layered complex situation?

Evidence: details in the texts presuppose complex structure, e.g.:

…a witness saying there had been "**nonstop talking, like fighting**" from 2 a.m. to 3 a.m. at the Pistorius home on the morning of the shooting. The prosecutors are seeking to depict the killing as happening **after an argument**.

→ intentional killing, not an accident

Case 2: Newspaper articles on Pistorius shooting

[Readers understand]
   that Beeld.com [etc.] reported
      that a spokesperson declared

         that the police detective reported

a witness saying…

         that the athlete claimed

            that he did not know

               that his girlfriend was behind the bathroom door when he fired shots at it.

"nonstop talking, like fighting"

> Relevance of several different pieces of information implies *accessibility* of layered structure!

Case 2: Newspaper articles on Pistorius shooting

Layered structure communicated by means of:

1. indirect discourse (different subtypes):

   "Athlete… shot dead his girlfriend…, Beeld.com reported."

   "Police spokeswoman Captain Sarah Mcira confirmed she was shot …."

2. lexical units, '**viewpoint packages**':

   "Athlete Oscar Pistorius allegedly accidentally shot dead his girlfriend…"

   "He had mistaken her for a robber…"

   "he may have shot her after mistaking her for an intruder."

Viewpoint packages

> Lexical viewpoint packages evoke a *topology of mind- states*

  this is then mapped onto situation-specific details

> Gestalt-like, holistic

  Cf. constructions, frames: retrievable, not built up
  ('online') from parts, but parts are accessible

(> different from/similar to 'frames'? >> question time)

Viewpoint packages

> "Athlete Oscar Pistorius <u>allegedly</u> <u>accidentally</u> shot dead his girlfriend…"

allegedly: EVIDENCE FOR CLAIM IS INDIRECT, HEARSAY, OTHERS HAD REASONS TO MAKE THE CLAIM

accidentally: AGENT INTENDED THAT P; WE KNOW THAT OUTCOME IS DIFFERENT FROM INTENTION

> 'Unpacking' *allegedly accidentally* already comprises $3^{rd}/4^{th}$ order intentionality (*cf. 'decompression', Dancygier 2012*)

> co-occurrence with indirect discourse: combination easily leads to $5^{th}/6^{th}$ order!

Discussion

This analysis demonstrates that:

> Linguistic construction of mixed-viewpoint situations matters to processing/understanding
 (*Othello/Mrs. Dalloway: sentence vs. narrative*)

> Complex viewpoint structures can be constructed
 - through blending of separate levels, from the ground up
 >> structure built on stage, 'whole' implicit; or
 - using **viewpoint packages**
 >> 'whole' on stage, structure implicit though accessible

Future: packaging vs. ad-hoc construction

> Frequencies are likely to differ across genres and modes

	Absolute		Per 100.000 words		Ratio
	spoken discourse	*written fiction*	*spoken discourse*	*written fiction*	*wf/sd*
packages (average)	**294**	**120**	**3.27**	**12.00**	**3.67**
per ongeluk	60	15	0.67	1.50	2.25
misverstand	63	8	0.70	0.80	1.14
vergis	134	57	1.49	5.70	3.83
misleid	24	9	0.27	0.90	3.38
stiekem	73	31	0.81	3.10	3.82
complementation	**14218**	**1013**	**157.98**	**101.30**	**0.64**
denken, weten					

Frequencies based on Corpus Gesproken Nederlands (CGN), containing spoken Dutch discourse (9,000,000w) and written Dutch fiction (1,000,000w)

How many orders can we process?
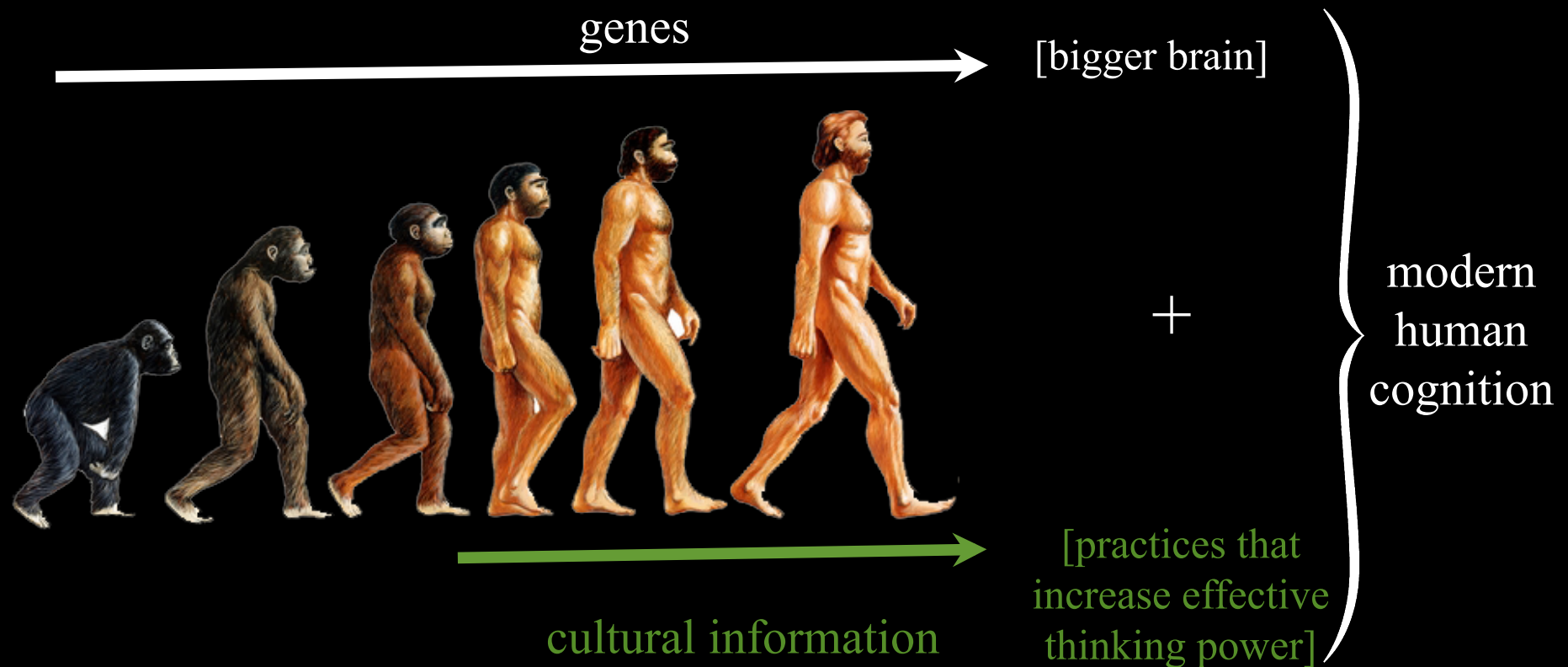
psychologists: brain-inherent limit at around 5th-order

(cf. Stiller & Dunbar 2007)

However…

Viewpoint packages clearly support **efficient communication** of mixed-viewpoint situations.
If it is assumed that they support **processing** similarly, understanding multiple-order intentionality may get as complex as can be constructed in a story!

Bigger picture: viewpoint packaging and evolution of human cognition

genes

[bigger brain]

+

modern human cognition

cultural information

[practices that increase effective thinking power]

'tools for thinking'
(*cf. Beekhuizen & Van Duijn at this conference; Dennett 2000*)

Many Thanks!

Prof. Arie Verhagen
Prof. Ineke Sluiter
Barend Beekhuizen

Max van Duijn

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Extra slides

Frames vs. Packages

> Frames

'war criminal' or 'national hero'; 'restaurant' or 'bar'; 'terrorist' or 'freedom fighter'

rich, hierarchical conceptual structure, lots of (evaluation-laden) default content, allowing/ inviting many (related) inferences

> Argumentative/discourse operators

Negation: evokes conceptual structure of two perspectives, without specific (default) content

If-conditional: same

Frames vs. Packages

> Viewpoint packages: do both

  mistake, *error*: negative; *surprise*: positive

  in CTPs: *promise*, *hope* (positive), *threaten*, *warn* (negative)

  (Possibly cline of specificity in combinations)

> In all cases: contextual details mapped onto conceptual structure
    given by the expression (space builder, operator, package)

> 'By-product': order(s) of intentionality