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Interpretative Methods

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SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

All scientific investigations require prior interpretative work to set them up, and all scientific results – whatever methods deployed – require interpretation after the fact. Whether it is rocks or votes, scientists must be trained in a discipline which already interprets the world. In that way, phenomena can be identified and selected for investigation. Any object being studied is then subject to analytical methods, which themselves arise in a similarly interpretative way. Successive interpretation thus produces ongoing dialogical consensus in a scientific community about methods, as well as about results. However, novel methods – with suitable evaluative trials and shared agreement – can win adherents within a discipline, and may generate similarly novel results. Since the mid 20th century, political science that proceeds in this way has occupied a mainstream position in research and training (Easton, 1981).

The observations about interpretation stated above notably transcend the physical science/social science binary, viewing both as similar practices within human knowledge-making communities. In that way both communities are using a similar understanding of what science is, and what an object of study is. That commonality, though, does not exclude differences relevant to the particular sorts of objects involved. Thus meteorology or geology will necessarily involve somewhat different methods from those of physics or biology. On this view, then, social studies, indeed political studies as a science, is thus dissimilar only in kind to various natural sciences. But it is not dissimilar in essence, since science itself is presumed to transcend the natural/social binary, and to offer methodological protocols and truth-criteria common to both. This understanding of science invokes a commonplace notion of interpretation, which is taken for granted and not itself much investigated (Yanow, 2014a).

Alternatively, social and political studies have sometimes been defined as wholly different from the natural/physical sciences: votes not being like sub-atomic particles; politics not being like weather-systems. There is thus no commonality in respect of presuppositions and methods, even if there are areas where similar language is deployed. Apparently similar terms, in relation to rigorous procedures and truth-criteria, are rather said to be mere analogies, but not to represent genuine similarities. From that binary perspective, then, the 'science' in political science seems a misnomer, so the locution political studies has sometimes been substituted. The interpretative methods under consideration below have been developed, but only in part, within one side of the binary just described. That side of the binary, positing social and physical objects as distinctly different in essence, is often identified as hermeneutics (Zimmerman, 2015).

Interpretative scholars might bridle at being called either scientific or unscientific, since they understand social objects and appropriate methods to be radically different from those conceived in 'hard science'. Nonetheless, they sometimes defend their work methodologically, claiming that it is just as rigorous as research done in natural/physical science, albeit in an alternative way. And they sometimes claim to achieve results that are just as objective, albeit derived from alternative methodologies, because the objects of investigation are so different in essence (Yanow, 2014b).

Sometimes political scientists add an element of interpretative methods to the scientific ones, modelled on the natural/physical sciences. While those interpretative methods have been derived from scholars working within the hermeneutic demarcation of the physical from the social, that important distinction is most often simply disregarded by political scientists. They are incurious about this so as to make their appropriation of hermeneutically-derived methods legitimate and to maintain an unproblematic notion of interpretation. Thus, in apparently talking to each other on the basis of agreement, political scientists and hermeneutic scholars are often actually talking past each other (Hawkesworth, 2014).

However, from the 1990s the consideration of interpretative methods in relation to political science has begun to generate a novel perspective on science itself, whether social or physical, and not merely on methods. Those developments have followed on from innovative work in philosophy, and particularly in philosophy and sociology of science, first begun some decades earlier (Kuhn, 2012). That unifying approach uses post-structuralist premises based on the implications of the 'linguistic turn', the terms of which will be explained below. That novel perspective goes well beyond commonplace truisms about knowledge-making in human communities. It does so by transcending the terms through which the ontological and epistemological binaries of familiar knowledge-making practices have been constructed in the first place (Belsey, 2002). For many political scientists the end-result of the discussion here will not look like science, or even like political phenomena as usually conceived. For those in political studies taking a hermeneutical approach, the end-result will not look like hermeneutics, either, or necessarily like political activity, even on a broad understanding of the term.

Many if not most practitioners within the discipline of political science will probably prefer the uneasy but familiar metaphors and compromises through which they operate, and through which graduate training takes place. However, for a full understanding of the significance of the interpretative 'turn' in social and political studies, it is necessary to violate familiar presumptions and comfort zones so as to view the world differently (Culler, 2002). Besides obtaining clarity in understanding and cataloguing interpretative methods, a further upside to this exercise in transgressive thinking is the outreach it offers to other disciplines. This is because

post-structuralist premises and the 'linguistic turn' are based on a revised understanding of how knowledge of any kind, and therefore science of any kind, is constituted.

To do this, our discussion will become more historical and thus centred in the ideas through which the 'linguistic turn' has taken place and post-structuralist premises have been formulated. These developments have undercut long-established traditions and distinctions in philosophy. Many philosophers are also opposed to the presuppositions that will be outlined here. Moreover, the standpoint in question is not coincident with traditional understandings of hermeneutics (Critchley, 2001). And many of the thinkers and academics who pursue these burgeoning studies come from other disciplines entirely, but often address political phenomena and ideas. Perhaps the best way to think about the 'linguistic turn' and post-structuralist premises is to consider interdisciplinary eclecticism a virtue, rather than a vice, and to treat the propositions expounded here as a lens or perspective, rather than as an overturning of valuable knowledge and academic practice (Carver and Hyvärinen, 1997). However, in order to understand how this perspective works, we need to consider in more detail the exact philosophical foundations through which science and hermeneutics were constituted as truth-searching forms of knowledge-making.

EMPIRICISM AND FACTUALITY

The study of politics as a science, using methods applicable to both the natural and social worlds, reaches back to Aristotle. Famously he advocated observation and data-collection, but perhaps now less memorably, he also based his work on a conceptual apparatus of essence and motion, teleology and hierarchy. Those constitutive principles have been under attack since the 17th century. Subsequently the argument for an understanding of the physical world through an anti-metaphysical conceptualization of material presumptions and concepts, such as matter and energy, and a union of experimental and mathematical knowledge-creation, has developed and triumphed. That battle was not just a matter of abstract argumentation but was also an industrial practice through which commercial technologies and scientific research were intellectually intertwined and experientially validated. Revised philosophies of science followed those world-changing developments, often unhelpfully characterized as two distinct revolutions: scientific and industrial. New, materialist philosophies were projected into social studies, conceived on an analogous basis and therefore scientific in practice. German authorities were particularly, though not exclusively, influential in this process (Farr, 2003; Baumgartner, Chapter 18, this *Handbook*).

Two important further developments, through which the 'science' in political science was constituted, date approximately to the later 1950s. Those were the behavioural protocols, typically applied to explaining and predicting phenomena associated with political participation, and the formal protocols, typically used to generate explanatory and predictive models for strategic interaction. For political science, such interactions could be between self-interested human individuals, or in the case of International Relations, the constituent units were states or similar collective actors (Weber, 2001). Both subdisciplines together constituted the self-styled and widely accepted scientific core of the discipline. And – despite obvious differences – both were constituted through observations of phenomena that could be reduced by abstraction such that mathematical, logical and/or statistical methods would apply.

Those methods were easily borrowed from the defining core of post-17th-century science, a powerful union of observation, data-collection and reductive analysis. The apparent success of marginalist economics

in conceptualizing human behaviour and complex interactions in highly abstract, symbolically manipulable terms, was clearly a model. Unsurprisingly, voting was conceived by some political scientists as an intrinsically or analogously economic transaction based on strategic pursuit of self-interest. Self-interested activity by individuals was then understood paradigmatically as the kind of human interaction through which politics itself is constituted.

What holds that view of science together – whether natural/physical or social/political – is an empiricism, that is, a view of the world as comprised of human individual subjects, such as political scientists, who 'know', and objects of knowledge, such as human interactions, which are 'to be known'. In philosophical terms that is an ontology, an account of what exists in the world, which also presupposes an epistemology, a formalization of the ways through which objects can be known with accuracy and certainty. The understanding of what an object 'is', thus determines, in circular fashion, the kinds of ways through which it can 'be known', and vice versa. If human social action is conceived as behaviour that, through observation, can be reductively objectified by means of conceptual abstraction and symbolic representation, then the methods used to understand non-human physical objects, whether inanimate or animate, can be applied in explanatory and predictive ways. Thus the ontology and epistemology of materialism is complete, forming a methodological unity within a comprehensive concept of science. In that way, scientific studies are said to be empirical, and vice versa, and subject-object ontology and epistemology is said to be empiricist (Moses, Chapter 27, this *Handbook*).

TEXT AND TRUTH

Hermeneutics as the study of texts, scientifically pursued, arose within that context. Paradigmatically it posits a knowing subject and an object to be known, the former the scientist/reader and the latter the words-on-the-page. Originally those texts were classical, Biblical and Egyptological. Analytical methods were devised, methodological protocols developed, and explanatory results were understood as the true meaning, derived scientifically from the text at hand. The premise and promise was that a scientific determination of meaning would add accuracy and certainty to what had otherwise been subjectively construed from texts as meaning.

On the one hand, this model for hermeneutics can be applied reductively to any instance of language-use, no matter how ordinary, so the limited quantity of important texts was eventually transcended. This extended hermeneutic study to written and spoken words in general. Thus the study of texts broadened out to include the study of languages and language-users, the former becoming comparative linguistics, and the latter becoming empirical linguistics. Knowledge of meanings, and of meaning-making, in both realms of study presumed that formal structures, derived from analysis, would be both explanatory and predictive. Linguistic scientists would thus command knowledge of true meanings relevant to both everyday interactions and hermetically encoded texts. Moreover, they would eventually command knowledge of the properties common to all human languages anywhere. The former study would generate protocols of symbolic mapping for the myriad ways through which individual speakers communicate meaning to each other. The latter study presumed that the use of scientific methods would disclose a deep structure hidden within human language itself (Matthews, 2003).

POST-STRUCTURALISM AND ITS PREMISES

However, a number of later 20th-century developments reversed the empiricism described above, precisely by positing human

language, social interaction, practical activities and meaning-making, taken altogether, as a substitute for both ontology and epistemology. This 'linguistic turn' supplanted the subject-object/knower-known structure through which empiricism is defined. Post-structuralism thus constituted a re-visioning of the human world, including sciences, technologies and all forms of human 'being' as meaning-making. Moreover, it posits that scientists, researchers, indeed all human 'knowers' therefore function wholly within this environment. There is thus no view-from-nowhere or otherwise disembodied or necessarily privileged point from which truth arises. Post-structuralism is thus a critique of structures that, following the protocols of empiricism, were presumed to be 'there' in the objects of knowledge, such that explanatory and predictive generalizations were validated as accurate reflections of how things really are. Rather, on the post-structuralist view, that situation is one of projection: human 'knowers' are finding what is 'to be known' as already 'there' in external structures, and so evidently discoverable. This is obviously a circular process. On the post-structuralist view, then, objects of knowledge are themselves human conceptual constructs, not 'things' which have a structure or fixed nature in themselves to be known.

Post-structuralists have argued that objects of whatever kind cannot be presumed to be constituted in themselves in terms that map to human conceptual constructs. As just stated, the process of knowledge-creation must be working the other way round. Knowledge is necessarily humanly derived and socially driven, rather than 'there' as structures to be 'discovered'. For that to be so, objects would have to have already come into existence in ways that do – or will – map to human conceptions. Thus for structuralists certain knowledge of things as they really are – even if only gradually and asymptotically approached – requires a metaphysical presumption of coincidence between the human mind and everything else, or a creator-God, Himself human-like, who made a universe that was founded on, but was mysteriously concealing of, singular truths that can be mirrored in human conceptual constructions (Rorty, 1989). The origins of the contrary post-structuralist arguments lie again in German intellectual achievements of the mid-nineteenth century through which the truths of biblical revelation of God's creation and His will were undermined, and religion was explained as a projection of human concepts and capacities onto imaginary beings.

Physical and natural sciences were the next objects to fall within the post-structuralist critique, and for the same reasons: the truthful and certain coincidence between what material objects are, and the human capacities and conceptions that enable knowledge-construction, cannot be presumed at the outset or in finality. Rather, human-knowledge construction arises and proceeds within socially communicative practices of meaning-making. Of necessity those meaning-making activities include the ontological-epistemological protocols through which standards of validity are socially set in on-going ways. Thus the use of the natural/physical 'hard science' model in the social sciences, through which certitude could be obtained, was challenged by post-structuralists, though most political scientists have chosen not to engage (Hawkesworth, 2014).

However, the above line of argument does not necessarily result in a nihilistic scepticism or judgemental vacuum. The fall-back and antidote is rather a pragmatic one: technologies that work and find a market, and research projects that engage participants and find funders. While the natural/physical sciences provide very obvious referents for those practices and successes (subject of course to varying judgements), the social sciences have in general been hugely successful in engineering social change and producing modern individuals (again, subject to varying judgements). While some 'hard scientists' and social scientists might distinguish their activities as pure or theoretical, and so create

a distinction and hierarchy relative to applied technologists and disciplines, nonetheless the logic of the deconstructive argument sketched above applies across the board. What is produced by humans is known and judged within human terms, and not in relation to anything that is somehow external to that.

THE 'LINGUISTIC TURN' AND SPEECH-ACT THEORY

The legacy of hermeneutics involves more than the 'linguistic turn' and the dissolution of certainties supposedly derived from the methodological protocols of science. Because hermeneutic researches focused on written texts, and therefore on words, and on language and languages, the relationship of word to object, and language to object, was made problematic. If words do not refer to things, such that the relationship is either correct (when words mirror things accurately) or incorrect (when they do not do so accurately), then to what do words, and therefore languages as such, refer? The answer to this question reversed the familiar referentiality of empiricism. Empiricism is itself reflected in numerous locutions in many languages. Speakers and writers use locutions that describe – rather than construct or create – a material world that is supposed to exist external to, or outside of, the conscious minds within which words and languages arise. The 'linguistic turn' and post-structuralist premises arose from the counter-declaration that language refers only to language, and that descriptive statements are a trope, not a mirror of things in thought. From that perspective, language is a closed system through which meanings arise in relation to other meanings, not through a relationship between language-user and 'external' world – however it is conceived or experienced.

During the 'linguistic turn' this form of intersubjective idealism developed two further postulates: the self-referential nature of language-use is founded on an 'excess' through which an open-ended instability in meaning-making is definitionally inherent; and within the linguistic system there are 'performative' speech-acts that are coincident and co-constitutive with social action. The former explains the creative powers through which cultural and social change, including natural/physical scientific and technological innovation, is possible yet always already unstable; the latter demonstrates the way that abstractions are made real and intelligible through practices that involve citation and repetition. The now commonplace examples of performativity in speech-acts include the marital statement 'I do', which does not refer to marriage as an abstract idea but rather realizes a specific social actuality when publicly performed. Thus a performative concept, and the corresponding illocutionary declaration, perform and construct the meaningful reality of marriage as an on-going social institution.

More controversially, this view of human language users as meaning-makers dissolves familiar binary distinctions between the material (as invested with an inherent stability and predictable regularity from which certainties can arise) and the immaterial (contrarily invested with instability and unpredictability, hence uncertainty). The immaterial realm was thus in practice, and metaphorically, a home for mere opinion, whereas the material realm was in practice, and metaphorically, a home for knowledge and – within appropriate protocols – science. The dissolution of this familiar dichotomy arises from a practice-based and meaning-oriented concept of materialization as the repetitive, citational learning through which the distinction is made socially operative (Butler, 2011). Put very simply, we learn to talk that way, so materiality is projected as a matter of routine in order to generate for us 'things' to which words are said to refer. Similarly, we learn to reject locutions that fail to follow that particular repetitive pattern but are

instead incorporated into another, contrasting category. Thus, among many language-users the locutions 'horse' and 'god' map to 'real' and 'unreal'; though it is easy to imagine, or indeed experience, cultures where the opposite repetitive citation would reverse the attribution. The history and sociology of natural/physical science, understood from that perspective, provides many similar illustrations, as do the social sciences.

POST-EMPIRICISM AND POWER-RELATIONS

The reversal of empiricism identifies referentiality – as a truthful-or-not relationship between words internal to the mind and things said to be external to it – as a trope within language itself. That is, we are used to repetitive practices expressing an image of mind, world and knowledge suited to certainty. Thus the world as variously understood within different languages, in different cultures and by different individuals, will have such commonalities as human language users generate, and also and perforce importantly such differences as they generate. But the world will not exist in a meaningful sense until meaning-makers work together in practical activities to make meanings that more or less suit themselves. Thus, humans are what they are in and through their activities as language-users.

Because language has properties of excess and instability, it incites distinction-making and the institution of differences. Those properties are thus the origin of power-relations and hierarchies, and of knowledge-claims, whatever the terms through which these claims are expressed. From that basis arise disciplinary practices, however physically violent or verbally rhetorical. Power hierarchies and power-plays are thus inescapable among language-users, for two reasons: communication between language-users is always non-coincident; and power is everywhere because language is everywhere. Or to put this in commonplace terms: human nature lies in the nature of language, not in any bundle of physical, moral or divine set of properties given to, or inherent in, human bodies, subjectivities or souls. If there were such things to be known, we would have to know them within language, apart from which there can be no meaning-making practices.

Communication between language-users will always be miscommunication, no matter how strictly terms are defined and deviance is punished. Though meanings are made through the social activities of which individuals are constituents, it does not follow that each individual interprets the meanings that are made in precisely the same way. That is because individuals as language-users are necessarily active interpreters, rather than passive recipients, of verbal messages from one to another. Thus, the excess that is a property of language necessarily arises within language-users as individuals. In general terms, agreement in forms of words is conditional on agreement in forms of life, which is necessarily unstable, as meaning-making among individuals evolves (Wittgenstein, 2009: §241).

As initially practiced on texts, hermeneutics presumed authorship in individuals, even if they could not be identified authoritatively. Following a protocol that valued certainty, linguistic analysts aimed to identify meaning as a singularity located in an authorial mind, conceptualized as the author's intended meaning. Truth in hermeneutics was therefore the revelation, by means of analytical methods, of this otherwise hidden or misinterpreted message. However, from the post-structuralist perspective, and following the 'linguistic turn', a reversal was in order: meaning-making is an active process of interpretation engaged in by readers of texts. It is of necessity uncontrolled by authors themselves or their hermeneutic avatars. It further follows – and this is another reversal of hermeneutics as initially practiced – that social activities

are themselves texts to be read, whereas written texts were formerly considered to be the sole instance of textual artefacts. Many of the methods developed to de-code written texts, such as symbolic analysis or semiotics, were thus adapted to understand non-verbal modes of communication, whether gestural (e.g. bodily movements and expressions) or representational (e.g. visual and aural communicative modes) (Chandler, 2007). Those media, of course, may be more or less precise in conveying meanings than spoken or written words, depending on the respective circumstances of the communicators.

Structuralist approaches to meaning work from a data-set or *corpus* of spoken or written words. Analysis presumes that meaning is located in individual words, groups of words, locutions, repetitive patterns and the like. The research goal is that revelatory understanding will emerge that bears on an author's non-obvious intent or a hidden pattern in community meaning-making. The properly schooled and trained researcher is thus, like a scientist, licensed by protocols of certainty to state otherwise obscure or obscured truths such that knowledge is made available authoritatively. By contrast, post-structuralism and the 'linguistic turn' take meaning-making to be constitutive of humanness itself. Human understanding is therefore a capacity common to all language-users, an insight loosely derived from phenomenology (Inwood, 2000). Moreover, meaning-making arises through non-verbal as well as verbal activities, and communication occurs through signs, which are spoken or written words, and all other representational media. Communication is necessarily imperfect, so any claims to authority and thus control are matters of persuasion. Those claims may then succeed or fail as power-plays (Bateman, 2014). They succeed when meaning-making is institutionalized as education, training, law and convention and suchlike disciplinary methods that attempt to ensure agreement, uniformity and certainty. They fail, at least somewhat, when – given the capacity of language-users to generate distinctions and differences – resistance and subversion arise as contrary power-plays.

The art of rhetoric was a classical study in the art of persuasion. However, contemporary accounts of rhetoric are well placed to summarize what the post-structuralist perspective can do. Rhetoric has traditionally considered the speaker and concomitant stylizations or body-language that are deployed in public settings. Rather than merely verbal statements or responses of agreement, speakers often aim to stimulate action. We are thus close to the speech-acts considered by theorists of the 'linguistic turn' and to the post-structuralist view of communication as a realm of power-play. Thus, rhetorical analysis is a good place to begin the consideration of interpretative methods in detail. Moreover, the social context – public-speaking to persuade – is paradigmatic for those who study politics, political scientists or otherwise. It is also certainly a key to the careers of politicians and political activists. The American political scientist Richard E. Neustadt famously said, 'The power of the President is the power to persuade,' and perhaps even more famously, Otto von Bismarck, from the practitioner side, remarked, 'Politics is the art of the possible ….'

RHETORICAL POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Classical rhetoric operated in a realm of instability rather than certainty, offering technique rather than knowledge, action rather than truth. It was thus marginalized as an applied art in relation to the more abstract accounts of human experience pursued by philosophers within which knowledge, and therefore criteria of truth, were the stated outcomes. Much the same marginalization and exclusion characterizes rhetorical political analysis today as a set of methods, unless post-structuralist premises and perspectives

are invoked, in which case those methods are foundational.

At this point, we encounter the characterization of rhetors or speakers, engaged in power-plays, as necessarily or at least habitually untruthful. That characterization accords with the practical, power-related character of the activity, such as politics, but presumes a subject-object epistemology aiming at singular truths. The contrary, post-structuralist position resolves itself into the situation as already understood: the human world of meaning-making is itself about relative powers of persuasion, rather than a situation in which some humans make regrettable departures from truths that can be established with unarguable certainty.

For students of politics the situation is already one of 'doing things with words', whether spoken or written, so classical protocols can be adapted and updated (Austin, 2018). Using rhetorical analysis, speech can thus be classified by genre, for example: epideictic or ceremonial; forensic or judicial; deliberative or political. Those three genres map very roughly to the past, present and future, constructed as ideas in discourse. Genre is thus a shortcut, for speaker and audience alike, to intelligibility. And with intelligibility there is then the possibility of approximate and conditional alignments among active meaning-makers.

Rhetorically, the issue at stake in a speech can be parsed as conjecture, in relation to a truth or falsehood; definition, in relation to what to think or not to think; quality, in relation to an action as good or bad; and circumstance, in relation to differentials in authority and power. A speaker endeavours to persuade by discovery, that is revealing the argument to the audience, and so marshalling appeals that are typically of three kinds: *logos*, or appeals to reason; *ethos*, or appeals to authority; *pathos*, or appeals to emotion.

The *dispositio* or arrangement of these appeals was crucial to teaching rhetoric as an art, and can therefore be used to analyse political speech: *exordium* or introduction to prepare the audience; *narratio* or narration to set out facts selectively; *confirmatio* or proof to present the argument; *refutio* or refutation to reject alternatives; *peroratio* or conclusion, to sum up persuasively. From the speaker's point of view, individual interpreters in the audience should be more aligned in their understanding, feeling and motivation towards agreement and action, and less aligned with alternative views, feelings of rejection, and motivations of opposition.

The rhetorician will employ aspects of style or *elocutio* as persuasive devices within and supervenient to speech. In appealing to *logos* or truth, speakers may affect a styleless mode of factuality, using the simple, direct language of the literal; in appealing to *ethos* or authority, they may deploy overt mannerisms that repetitively and therefore performatively reference legitimated power; in appealing to *pathos* or emotion, they may deploy any number of verbal images or tropes to elicit positive feelings about themselves or negative feelings about others. All those devices of style rely on denotative and connotative aspects of meaning-making: the former referentially specific and limited; the latter associative and suggestive (Martin, 2014).

Classical rhetoricians identified hundreds of rhetorical schemes, too many to list here. Indeed, those lists were the core of their methodological contribution to political studies (Lanham, 1991). Rhetorical analysis considers repetition in various forms, antithesis and binary contrast, puzzle and resolution. Most famously, we have the rhetorical question, a device in which the speaker already knows the answer, and the audience either already knows it, too, or knows that the speaker knows it and will reveal it on the spot. Rhetorical analysis, while speaker-focused, is also founded on audience-reception. Analytically that can be parsed down to individuals who may – or may not – interpret the devices as the speaker intends, and therefore may – or may not – be persuaded.

Imagery or tropes are at the fine-grained end of rhetorical analysis. Figures of speech

are connotative practices of association, typically founded on metaphor and simile as ways of transferring meaning from one term to another. Tropological analysis extends to hyperbole, or exaggeration; irony, or saying one thing and meaning another; paradiastole, or a reversal of moral significance through deliberate misnaming; and numerous other ways of using language to effect persuasion (Carver and Pikalo, 2008).

With televisual and digital media, delivery or *actio* has become increasingly important, given that communication from speaker to audience can be expanded when recorded material is shared, sometimes across platforms and to world-wide audiences. Moreover, politicians are encouraged by that situation to access theatrical coaching and actor-appurtenances to make their performances persuasive. Voice, gesture, dress, embodiment, props, lighting, make-up are all important constituents not just of performance but of identity. Branding is understood as an image to which repetitive citation can refer performatively (Howells and Negreiros, 2018). Rhetorical analysis, conducted this way, reveals how truths are constructed as persuasive practices in speaker-audience situations. Analytically the object is to show how this is done, and to construct plausible accounts of effectivity. Those results will be derived from observation in the full sense, rather than from limiting the object of study to a words-in-transcription, that is, a reduction of experiential data to verbal units.

Note the term 'plausible' in the paragraph above. As an interpretative method, rhetorical political analysis itself must persuade an audience that an analysis is meaningful and significant. But this persuasive communication can occur only in relation to the criteria that each interpreter brings to the communicative context. Interpreters are always at liberty to make individual judgements, even if they keep these to themselves and outwardly dissemble. Post-structuralist premises are thus founded on the indeterminacy of language and the inherent uncertainty in any one human about knowing another.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND DECONSTRUCTION

Discourse analysis and deconstruction arose within the development of the 'linguistic turn' and post-structuralist premises. Together these developments summarize the performative approach to meaning-making as embodied and enacted in social circumstances that are inherently imbued with power and hierarchy (Howarth, 2000). Other methodological approaches to communication, derived from Kantian philosophy, or from empirical linguistics and ideology-critique, will be considered separately below. There are thus profound differences in presuppositions underlying what might otherwise seem to be a common, indeed commonplace term: discourse.

Discourse refers here to speech and text, though in another post-structuralist reversal, text has taken priority over speech. That priority is asserted notwithstanding the obvious fact that humans learn to speak before they can read and write, and that reading and writing postdate the existence of speaking humans. Moreover, text is understood here to include any mode of human expression that communicates meaning, even when no written or spoken words are involved. Thus, discourse in this broadly defined way includes images, both still and moving, sound, movement including dance, and all the symbology of semiotics (Mills, 2016). Understood that way, discourse analysis invites methodological eclecticism, borrowing insights, concepts and procedures arising in art history, aesthetics, photography, cinema-studies, media and cultural studies, and communication theory. Given the global ubiquity and evident effectivity of digital social media, notably in political communication and campaigning, discourse analysis offers a powerful

framework that embraces real-world complexities (Weldes, 2014).

From the post-structuralist and performative perspective, written texts are in the first instance physical objects, whether inscribed on paper or on a screen, or rendered visible in some other medium, or made aural through fluid vibration. Words in texts are thus not transparent windows used by 'knowers' to view meaning as objectively 'there' in a common conceptual space. Rather, texts are themselves objects with 'surfaces' presented 'to be known' by interpreters for whom meanings are variously 'there', but subjectively in individual consciousnesses. Written texts thus have surface properties which can be analysed using methodological concepts and protocols that reveal how objects are constructed so that meaning-making takes place. That approach does not look for an underlying meaning, but rather promotes an exploration of the textual surface by different interpreters. Therefore, a variety of meanings will emerge as readers engage with texts. Discourse analysis presumes that human communicative relations are inherently antagonistic and conflictual because they are constituted in and through articulatory practices of meaning-making undertaken by individuals as readers. Articulation is the construction of nodal points where meanings are partially and temporarily fixed or 'sutured'. Logics of equivalence and difference can then be traced in written texts as sequences of nodal points. It is through those nodal points that social practices are defined, stimulated and promoted. Social practices as meaning-making activities, and written texts as meaning-making objects, are thus mutually constitutive. As with linguistic excess, those processes of meaning-making are open-ended and never-ending.

The presumption of antagonism in social relations generates the concept of the discursive 'other', a moment of negation that sparks meaning-making as an articulation of differences into an unstable equivalence. Since that unstable equivalence already contains differences, and therefore inherent antagonisms, articulations of equivalence are necessarily vulnerable to re-formation as further differences, and similarly along endless chains of signification. In more formal and even more abstract terms those procedures presume that any given concept has a constitutive 'outside', i.e. anything is what it is, only because it is *not* any number of other things. And they presume that human meaning-making arises from conscious and sub-conscious emotions of fear and anxiety that are never really resolved into stability but rather constitute inherently what we are. The former view is derived from the philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, and the latter borrowed from Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis.

As meaning-makers humans have subjectivities through which agency arises, though agency in this framework does not presuppose a stability of identity or a consistency in consciousness, rational or otherwise. Rather, subjectivities arise in and through subject positions, which are products of meaning-making activities into which individuals are interpellated, or 'hailed' (Montag, 2002). However dominated individuals may then be, or however constrained they feel, linguistic 'excess' is the medium through which complicit or subversive agency arises and is made meaningful. The concept hegemony provides an explanatory framework through which, in political terms, individuals may be, or may be said to be, consenting to oppressive structures. Or, conversely, they may be working to rearrange power-relations as a matter of resistance. Conceived on this basis and in these terms, discourse analysis necessarily invokes deconstruction as a method. While the above protocols explain how meaning is performed in social activities, deconstruction mandates historical research in order to establish the conditions of possibility that enabled a text of that kind to appear as meaningful. Research is directed genealogically towards preceding texts, and thus to former meaning-making activities. A given text only makes sense as a dialogical

successor to former ideas and practices, so deconstructive analysis embraces diachrony as well as synchrony. Deconstruction works from a hermeneutics of suspicion, enabling researchers to identify essentializing, naturalizing, and universalizing logics in texts. Those logics work to persuade readers that meanings are thus secured as certain and moral. Deconstruction, which presumes the undecidability of concepts, and reveals the power-plays inherent in meaning-making practices, is an important, though non-formulaic, tool in political analysis.

Rather than providing researchers with a method to follow formulaically, the analytical perspective arising from post-structuralist premises and the 'linguistic turn' promotes creativity and individuality in researchers, as well as innovation in methodology and novelty in results. However, under the general heading of discourse analysis there are contrasting approaches, which sometimes generate unproductive hostilities, or simply mutual misapprehension. Here are two further approaches, which also contrast with each other.

COMMUNICATIVE ACTION AND DISCOURSE ETHICS

A theory of communicative action, or in some versions discourse ethics, uses a Kantian methodology to intuit, formulate and propound an ideal speech situation through which rational individuals communicate dispassionately in order to reconcile their differences and to achieve consensus. Reasoning from first principles, it is possible, on this view, to deduce transcendentally, i.e. abstractly from logic rather than empirically from evidence, a set of rules through which argumentative discourse should proceed. Using these rules as analytical tools, rather than as practical constraints, analysis can thus reveal defects and dysfunctions in real-life situations. The rules can be summarized in relation to dialogical participants as: inclusion and open admission; free questioning; freedom of assertion; openness in expression; and exclusion of coercion.

As a diagnostic tool those rules are ideals, but subject to revision. Counter-arguments can be shown, by invoking performative contradiction, to presuppose what they object to. The communicative action approach is thus the inverse of the post-structuralist discourse analysis discussed above. That view was to some extent argued in opposition to the presumption within the communicative action approach that there is a singular ideality of consensus to which speech and behaviour ought to conform. Poststructuralist premises are also in opposition to a view that antagonism and conflicts are necessarily defects in, rather than inherent constituents of, humanness. Where post-structuralism sees persuasion and power as constituting of humanness, discourse ethics sees morality and values. Many researchers in political studies prefer to position their results positively in relation to the morality and values, working from the premises of communicative action, rather than to put themselves into an ambiguous position in relation to political judgement and action, as post-structuralists do.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Critical discourse analysis, self-styled CDA, arose from the traditional hermeneutics that promised the discovery of hidden meanings. Those meanings were said to be concealed in texts, whereas properly trained researchers applying science-like protocols could reveal them accurately (Machin and Mayr, 2012). The 'critical' in CDA was derived from so-called critical theory, which posits a political realm of interest- and/or class-driven ideology (Freeden, 2003). Ideologies articulate an outlook or worldview systematically and persuasively. But they are in some sense – to be revealed by means of intellectual critique – misleading, selective, *parti pris* and suspect. Critical theory and ideology-critique derive

loosely from Marxism and the writings of Marx and Engels, who argued that the ruling ideas in politics, law, religion, morality and suchlike are not derivative of timeless truths, but rather historical products. Therefore, they are malleable effects of meaning-making. Despite overt claims to be in the general interest, or indeed everyone's individual interest, such systems of ideas are covertly articulated so as to benefit some classes in a society to the detriment of others (Bronner, 2017).

Although derived from empirical linguistics, within which claims to scientificity rely on a value-neutral stance of objectivity, CDA has reversed the enterprise in order to embrace an egalitarian political perspective. And like poststructuralist approaches to discourse as meaning-making, it has also embraced visuality. The tool kit elaborated in the how-to volumes generated within CDA overlap considerably with the eclectic mix of concepts developed by discourse analysts working from post-structuralist premises. The difference between the two arises, however, in two things: the singularity of the critical project for CDA, that is revealing a hidden truth; and the necessary positioning therefore of the researcher as superior, through training and credentialization, to the ordinary reader. By contrast, the post-structuralist approach, discussed above, embraces indeterminacy in meaning-making, rather than the singularity of the hidden truth. And it acknowledges uncertainty about meaning-makers, rather than proceeding from mere suspicion. Taking the meaning-making involved in discourse analysis itself to be persuasive, rather than definitive, thus relieves discourse analysts working from post-structuralist perspectives from charges of authoritarianism and elitism.

CRITICAL REALISM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

So far we have pursued interpretative methods on post-structuralist premises related to the 'linguistic turn'. And we have briefly noted the two contrasting starting-points: discourse ethics and ideal-speech, on the one hand, and critical theory and ideology-critique, on the other. Two further alternatives are now on the horizon.

Critical realism was a response to the way that post-structuralists embraced uncertainty in judgement and identified meaning-making with power. For critical realists this could be resolved with a conditional but Kantian argument, namely that humans should be acting *as if* certainty in ethical and scientific judgement is attainable, even if there is no unarguable basis for indubitable deduction. And similarly they argue that knowledge-making should proceed *as if* humans are capable of knowing how any phenomenon really is in itself, thus expecting human categories and all else in the world to arrive eventually at coincidence. That position is thus a heuristic presupposition, licensing certainty but on a conditional basis. That tactic, so it was argued, avoided the problems of relativism. Relativism implies that the ultimate absence of certainty in judgement necessarily disallows the invocation of any criteria at all on which judgement can be soundly based (Benton and Craib, 2001). A post-structuralist response is that resolving differences into relative powers of persuasion presumes that countervailing powers are possible and are themselves founded on judgements. For judgements to be effective, human agents must make meaningful some courses of action as opposed to others. Or put simply, any alleged foundational and thus indubitable certainties, whether of ethics or science, are themselves performatives that enact, via meaning-making communities, what they purport to describe (Chambers and Carver, 2008).

Constructivism references post-structuralist premises and the 'linguistic turn', as described above, but only to the point that the existence and properties of the material world come into question. Thus it is said that humans construct the social world in and

through performative concepts. Those meanings are projected into, and arise out of, social activities that are meaningful and intelligible, precisely because they are constructed in that way. However, the material world, and the sciences thereof, are typically bracketed off from consideration, thus referencing a social/material presumed binary which divides objects of knowledge that are different in essence. However, following the discussion of materialization provided above, the post-structuralist riposte to constructionists is that concepts of the material, and all other categories of science, arise performatively within human communities. Thus material technologies, as well as social ones, are seamless with processes of discovery and validation.

As methodological premises and useful heuristics, both critical realism and constructivism function within political studies as approaches that incorporate many of the interpretative methods considered here.

VISUALITY AND COMMUNICATIVE OBJECTS

Theorizing from post-structuralist premises aims for complexity rather than simplicity. It thus rejects the scientific tradition which has, for some centuries, celebrated reductionism, parsimony and elegance. The orientation towards complexity is a clue to the inclusion of visual meaning-making not only within, but crucially important to, discourse analysis as practiced on premises derived from post-structuralism and the 'linguistic turn'. Words, whether written or spoken, are essential to meaning-making, and – through the preservation of written texts and repetitive intertextual citation – to communicative practices. But then so are visuality and aurality.

Images and sounds are important meaning-makers, though they need not, and in many cases do not, occur in conjunction with written or spoken words. Modern cultures are logocentric in conflating writing and speech with concepts, and thus finding images and sounds problematic as meaning-makers in communicating ideas. Like written and spoken texts, images mean different things to different people. As the commonplace saying goes: one picture is worth ten thousand words. Like words, images can be denotative, or representational, and connotative, or associational. Similarly, they evoke feelings and emotions. And rhetorically they can persuade or dissuade. Like people they 'want' to be looked at, to be engaged in dialogical meaning-making, and to be social creatures and political agents (Mitchell, 2005). Of course that is a projection of humanness into physical objects, but then that trope licenses an interpretative analysis of non-verbal communications. Non-verbal communications, perhaps because of their ubiquity and potency, are often even more effective meaning-makers than purely verbal media.

Thus meaning-making does not have to come to humans only from other humans via the physical media as described. Rather, meaning-making within human social activities is done in conjunction with further physical objects and phenomena. Thus images and sounds do not merely represent concepts, albeit defectively and imprecisely. Nor are they merely vehicles for conveying meanings that are necessarily only verbal. Rather, images and sounds convey conceptual and emotional messages, which may or may not be easy to put into words. As communicators of concepts through which we experience sociality as meaning-making, they are indispensable to being human. This understanding of meaning-making extends even more to the built environment. That is because the instantiation of concepts, such that meanings are communicated more or less effectively, and then read and interpreted variously by individuals, are a constituent of architectural theory and practice, and similarly with respect to interior design (Yanow, 2014c).

Discourse analytical methods thus include picture-space, geometry, composition, colour, light, perspective, symbolism, culture,

audience, intention, economics, reception, and any number of similar categories developed in art history and aesthetics (Rose, 2012). For photography, many of those apply similarly but with additions of 'the gaze', viewer-camera positioning, framing and cropping, the window-on-reality effect and similar technical considerations (Hand, 2012). For moving images, whether cinematic, animation or amateur video, a grammar of narrative meaning-making has been derived from literary studies to which technical terms are analogous: editing and cuts are similar to the ways that prose and poetry shift time and space; montage and fade-out mimic narrative devices that proceed episodically; *mise en scène* and set-dressing condense the continuous prose of narration and description. To the dramaturgy of theatrical performances cinema adds camerawork understood as close-up, long-shot, focus-pulling, panning, zoom, dolly shot, camera motion, and many other techniques – taken as analytical tools – through which a film can be read. Reading a film is thus portraying it dialogically as a meaning-maker (Monaco, 2009).

Narrative analysis is applicable to any medium in which someone tells a story, whether it is a novelist or film-maker. This includes authorial voice in a novel or voice-over in a movie, or an interviewee in response to an unstructured or semi-structured question from a researcher (Bevir, 2006). The method is also applicable to non-verbal communicative objects, such as pictures or photographs, individually or sequentially, when viewers construct a narration that puts images into words. In commonplace terms, a story has a beginning, a middle and an end, and is narrated in prose or poetry. In relation to living human subjects researchers will necessarily have a self-reflexive account of what they are doing, and research projects are themselves narrations with a narrator.

Over and above the rhetorical, symbolic and metaphorical or tropological considerations that are operative in discourse analysis, narrative analysis requires genre-classification. This includes comedy, tragedy, satire, romance and the like, each of which will have defining features. It also requires consideration of the narrator's point of view and reliability; tests of consistency and continuity in relation to space, time and character; and crucially, reconstruction of social mythologies, through which facts and fictions are understood. It also apprehends concepts of identity, through which self-understandings are pursued in dialogical relations of recognition and misrecognition. Narrative analysis offers a powerful way to explore meaning-making (Charteris-Black, 2005).

Aural meaning-making, other than speech, is the area where there is the least consensus on analytical categories and methodological tools. So far it relies on rather banal staples of musical appreciation, such as the association of minor keys with sadness, or the use of evocative genre-distinctions, such as the association of march-time rhythms with militarism (Franklin, 2005). As recording and playback technologies have developed, music has become very widely accessible in text-less and disembodied modes. In that way, it is increasingly experienced apart from live performers or moving images with dialogue. In genres of pure sound, with increasing reduction of, and isolation from, background noise, listeners are encouraged to be meaning-makers independent of authorial or other instruction. Cinematic sound design is highly developed, including even subliminal and other aural effects. But even within multi-media studies, analysis of sound as itself meaning-making, rather than meaning-enhancing, represents a methodological opportunity (Sexton, 2007).

CONCLUSION

A perspective that follows post-structuralist premises and the implications of the 'linguistic turn', as we have done here, affords

researchers the most extensive array of interpretive methods, and the most promising possibilities, for knowledge-creation in the study of politics. However, knowledge-creation that proceeds from other premises, e.g. the subject-object empiricisms through which protocols of reduction, deduction and induction are deployed, are sometimes extended to include data-collection from non-verbal media. In that way, such media-specific methods can apply within political science (Banks and Zeitlyn, 2015). Empirical research into the effectivity of political campaigns, for example, can take up visual and aural data with appropriate tools, thus improving on intuitive and untutored observations.

The practice of obtaining data from non-verbal sources inevitably raises questions as to the comparative validity of results. The use of interpretative methods, appended to empiricist social science, will produce knowledge that always looks subjective in relation to the researcher. And it will look uncertain in relation to reproducibility of results, predictive power of models, or explanatory value of conclusions. Taken on other terms, namely those of post-structuralism and the 'linguistic turn', interpretative methods will open up a non-reductionist understanding of politics as human social interaction arising from power-differentials. It will also necessarily promote an all-round consideration of the meaning-making activities through which political relations actually operate (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2012).

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