

Tracing the Political Philosophy of Critical Discourse Analysis: Poststructural Tactics Bleeding into Critical Strategies

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Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), with a combination of critical social theories and novel linguistic meta-grammars, has carved out a new space for socio-political critique. In this article I trace CDA's political philosophical and epistemological strands and see how they interact within this emerging research program. At best, what may be accomplished below is the stimulation toward a more productive conversation about the ontological, epistemological and political foundational assumptions presently thriving within critical discourse studies. Hence, my guiding question underneath this more general concern for political philosophy: How are CDA analysts, within this emerging international scholastic movement, negotiating the blending of the Frankfurt school's version of critical theory arising in the 1920's-40's and the French poststructural paradigm prominent in late 1960-70's? My intention is to trace, isolate and dissect these differing philosophical strands that co-exist (and feed off one another) within the CDA research program.

Along with Van Dijk (2008) and Fortchner (2011), I agree that a vibrant discussion about CDA political foundations is long overdue. Besides, if CDA is a self-declared politically oriented method of analysis, why wouldn't its practitioners openly discuss the intricacies of strategic design and tactical planning? But what may be most important about this conversation for CDA practitioners, is taking the time to examine the intertextual implications of their own philosophical assumptions before launching into an ideological critique of someone else's.

Taking into consideration the self-reflexive mandate of interpretive social science this article can be viewed as an attempt to utilize the critical tools of CDA in order to investigate the foundations of CDA itself. This is an attempt to analyze CDA as its own distinctive brand of discourse. Here we will explore how CDA's unique analytical discourse exists in tension between the structural and the existential, between the genealogical and historical-material, and between the epistemological and political. In brief, this political-philosophical examination enables the CDA practitioner to embrace a healthy measure of self-reflexivity.

My suspicion is that while some CDA practitioners may lean more critical or more poststructural politically, most have never employed a consistent framework to analyse how multiple philosophical traditions converge within CDA. When tracing the points of philosophical intersection questions of this sort may arise:

- 1) What is the result of intertwining Althusser's structural Marxism with Habermas' communicative ideal speech situation?
- 2) What happens when you take the Frankfurt school's revival of the young Marx's alienation thesis and blend it with Foucault's notion of orders of discourse?
- 3) What is produced when Adorno's dialectic of enlightenment is fused with Deleuze's pragmatic conviction that theory creation is a form of political action?

In the midst of seeking to answer these kinds of specifics, activation of the larger ontological question is both appropriate and unavoidable. Perhaps the most striking ontological question for the CDA school may be: Is it by this selective interblending of theories that the CDA practitioner's 'consciousness' is elevated to such a degree as to be able to distinguish, determine and reveal what is 'ideological,' 'distorted,' or contributing to hegemony through 'false consciousness?'

And while wrestling with this ontological question, the CDA practitioner should not fail to simultaneously be asking the epistemic one as well. This line of questioning goes: How do CDA practitioners know what they are saying is knowledge? What mixture of theories and methods produce the thick description and nuanced understanding of context aspired to? How much are socio-political goals influencing epistemological choices? To be clear, my assumption going forward is that there can be no strict separation between the ontological, epistemological and political within CDA literature. This is the principal reason that I examine them simultaneously rather than as unrelated or distinct phenomena.

CDA founders, editorial statements, and the discursive turn

In the early 1990's CDA became the brainchild of loosely connected group of linguistically oriented scholars. At a quaint symposium at the University of Amsterdam in 1991, founding members sat down to discuss relevant theories and methods with the intention of establishing a 'critical' research program (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Within this article I will often refer to the 'CDA founders' yet the scope of 'founder' is rather exclusive, including only Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak. Other notable founders include: Michael Billing, Paul Chilton, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen, and Margaret Wetherell (Blommaert, 2005; Kress 1991; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). In this section I introduce CDA founders in relation to their editorial stances appearing in the introductory statements of their respective journal start-ups: *Discourse & Society*, *The Journal of Language and Politics*, and *Critical Discourse Studies*.

Teun van Dijk

Van Dijk is the convener of the cognitive discursive approach within CDA circles. His journal, *Discourse and Society* (D&S), established the beginnings of CDA publishing and served as an

early medium for international collaboration. D&S's introductory statement titled 'a new journal for a new research focus' is sole authored by Van Dijk himself. He opens his statement listing the variety of disciplines that have not escaped the reach of what he terms 'the new cross-discipline of discourse studies' (Van Dijk, 1990: 5) Included on his list of major disciplines that have turned their analytical attention to consider text and dialogue are anthropology, semiotics, literary studies, linguistics, sociology, psychology, and communication studies. He claims that traditional boundaries have been traversed and that this new cross-discipline is increasingly becoming autonomous.

The epistemological goals of D&S are to bring this autonomous interdisciplinarity to a fever pitch as Van Dijk (1990: 9) declares that theoretical-methodological innovations should 'fully re-conceptualize the analysis of both discourse and society.' This full reconceptualization is necessary to further erode these traditional analytic and disciplinary boundaries, thus making his epistemological intent firmly transdisciplinary. Van Dijk (1990: 12) goes on to present the journal as a prophetic 'voice' crying in the interdisciplinary wilderness, insistent that it not be viewed as a strict representation of a domineering research program. Even so, this self-definition as the 'voice' of an emerging community does share affinities with a few other critical socio-political communities centred explicitly on theory creation (c.f. the Frankfurt School, Gramscian-inspired theorists, French social philosophers, Anglo-Saxon language philosophers, and those within the school of critical linguistics).

Van Dijk holds that these socio-politically oriented discourse analysts have the ability to bring to light social processes that 'elites' either ignore or explain away. He contends that CDA's social-issue-focused approach to discourse analysis requires 'the formulation of [political]

principles and aims that were traditionally banned from university departments and scholarly journals' (1990: 11). With an emphasis on 'critical research' D&S intends to make explicit left-leaning ideological positions that are usually suppressed in traditional academic publications. Van Dijk (1990: 12) claims that the prime benefit of this ideological openness is in revealing to the text consumer in 'whose interests our analysis turn out to be.'

Norman Fairclough

Fairclough is best known as the creator of the dialectic-approach to CDA. At times his books read like tactical field manuals, demonstrating the subtleties of ideology-laced institutional encounters, as in hospital discourse (1992), mass media (1995a) and the educational sector (2004). In the 2004 introduction of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) the editors, Norman Fairclough, Phil Graham, Jay Lemke and Ruth Wodak, recognize that although discourse is well established as a meta-category, there is still 'widespread suspicion of discourse analysis amongst social scientists' (2004: 3). Manifold definitions of discourse within differing academic traditions, as well as the perception that discourse analysts are discursively reductive in interpretation of social contexts, tend to downplay the potential of integrative discourse studies.

However, the CDS editorial team points to the 'increasing convergence across disciplines' as the reason for the launch of their journal. The editors argue that most of this new kind of theoretical work doesn't fit neatly into existing journals because of the exclusivity-criteria within the disciplinary structure of the academy. CDS arrives, within this disciplinary stalemate, as the medium of an 'emergent field' that is open to theoretical diversity. CDS is meant to act as a conversation starter, to stimulate dialogue between differing school's pet theories and methods, to be characterized by an interdisciplinary mandate. As if to underline this emphasis on theoretical

emergence, the editors, in active self-reflection, posit that they have ‘tried to avoid overly rigid specification of appropriate contributions to the journal so as to be open to original approaches’ (Fairclough et al., 2004: 6).

Within their introductory statement the CDS editors also discuss the multitude of ways an academic study can be considered ‘critical.’ They conclude that ‘critical social research’ is meant to identify pressing social problems, reveal to what extent these problems ‘are products of human invention’ and to ‘discern feasible ways of alleviating...them’ (Fairclough et al., 2004: 1). Ideally, these critical findings are inducted into the tactical repertoires of active social forces seeking to transform the social landscape. The editors close their introduction emphasizing this critical dimension, with activist overtones they state their intentions ‘to publish work that contributes...to projects and agendas for social justice’ (Fairclough et al., 2004: 6). CDA thus establishes a kind of ‘free range’ methodology, not cooped up within strict disciplinary boundaries, able to roam the theoretical spectrum, essentially pragmatic in its appropriation of methods and theories from various research programs.

Ruth Wodak

Wodak is the founder of the discourse-historical approach within the CDA School, which she positions as a continuation of the project of interdisciplinary social theory initiated by German critical scholars. Within her approach grand theories of the Frankfurt school serve as the point of departure for the middle-range theories of linguistic and cultural critique (Wodak and Meyer 2001/2009: 87-89). Wodak’s historical approach places high emphasis on contextual concerns and advocates for an ethnographic component when studying political movements. CDA practitioners are continually developing various aspects of Wodak’s methodology in studies

ranging from contemporary religious expression (Von Stuckrad, 2013) to creating rhetorical profiles for presidential speeches (Slavíčková, 2013).

Ruth Wodak and Paul Chilton (2002: v) introduce the *Journal of Language and Politics* by asking why such a journal deserves to be published in the first place. The reason, the editors claim, is that the borders of the traditional fields of linguistics, communication studies, discourse analysis, and political science have become ‘fluid.’ They argue that, as a result of the complexity of social problems, an emerging disciplinary fluidity is required in order ‘to cope.’ Their introductory statement claims an ‘undogmatic point of view’ that intends to promote ‘all interdisciplinary approaches.’ The editors reveal the extent of their fluid, open approach as they claim not to prefer one methodology over another, but only ask for ‘very explicit discussions of positions, theories and methodologies.’

Political philosophical distinctions: formal, strategic and tactical

Newly minted CDA practitioners may have been drawn to CDA research for a number of reasons. On the one hand, graduate students may find the combination of social theory and linguistic approaches useful when searching for a way to complete the data analysis portion of their thesis, on the other hand students may be drawn in by the overt and unapologetic social justice component announced as intrinsic to a proper critical analysis of text.

Through familiarization with the early gateway texts of CDA (Fairclough, 1989/1991; 1992; 1995b; Van Dijk, 1984; 1998; Wodak, 1989; 1996; 1999) incoming students can begin applying useful textual models for discourse analysis. Because of the accessibility of these models, CDA practitioners can start working on new projects without really having ever grasped

what political and epistemological characteristics join these particular models together as a ‘school.’

Indeed, these new academics are brought into CDA producing individual work closely modelled on the CDA founders’ previous achievements. Though, I suspect only few could discuss with great depth the philosophical underpinnings of the field—its underlying assumptions about theory and methods. Completing a successful research project in no way indicates more than a peripheral grasp of the turbulent philosophical complexities churning just beneath the surface of their ‘findings.’

To this point, Thomas Kuhn (1996: 47) indicates that scientific paradigms ‘guide research by direct modelling as well as through abstracted rules.’ Within a scientific paradigm, rules do not always have to be explicit as long as most practitioners within the research community accept the reported objects of study and solutions given as valid. As a result of this modelling emphasis within disciplines, even in an explicitly political research program like CDA, work is lacking that uncovers the intricacies of philosophical relationships in a straightforward manner. My aim below is to remedy this situation by utilizing a traditional framework active within political science that is useful for categorization of socio-political thought strands.

Political Philosophy can be thought broadly to lie within a three tiered framework, that of formal, strategic and tactical. Formal political philosophy is usually stationed within the strict polarities of either a realist approach describing ‘what is’ or a utopian rendering characterizing ‘what ought to be’ (May, 1994). The transition from formal to strategic political philosophy is one of reliance solely on one particular end of the formalist divide into a determined preoccupation with the tension between the two poles. Therefore, strategic philosophical thought

is distinct in that ethical realizations of a just society are not in any way secondary to concrete contextual descriptions. Institutional histories and the current cultural milieu are analysed not simply to imagine or describe a particular political program, but for the exploration of entry points into an advantageous social intervention.

Because these entry points are historically contingent, strategic political philosophy tends to place high value on meticulous contextual evaluation. While this tension between the ‘what is’ and ‘what ought to be’ could be seen as a dramatic interplay between realist and utopian interaction, within the critical tradition it is treated dialectically. At times, strategic political philosophy is accused of being closer to an actual political agenda than serving as an analysis simply concerned to illustrate ‘What is the good society?’. Strategic philosophy receives this criticism often for two reasons: 1) The question of what makes for a virtuous society seems to already have been presupposed; and 2) Strategic philosophical adherents usually write with the intention of realizing this already fashioned ethical foundation.

CDA founders claim the Frankfurt School as the primary source of their political philosophy (Fairclough, 1995b; Van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 1996), and thus present their findings as individual pieces that contribute to the make up of a comprehensive political program. Specifically, this is a critically oriented political program that is striving to uncover instances of oppression that reify unsuspecting subjects via discourse. Strategic contextual concerns and ethical dilemmas serve as a CDA practitioner’s ground zero because it is within historically contingent spaces that discourses must be deconstructed in order to reveal the manifold entry points of intervention.

What distinguishes strategic from tactical political philosophy is its insistence on being a unified project that aims at a monolithic target (for traditional Marxism: capitalist economic relations). However, CDA, though finding its theoretical roots in the strategic tradition, is far more philosophically diffuse in seeking a multiplicity of sites for resistance: identity (Wodak, 1999), race (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; Van Dijk, 1993), gender (Wodak, 1997), immigration (Krzyzanowski and Wodak, 2008), economics (Fairclough 2010), and education (Van Dijk, 2011).

Therefore, within the confines of this three-tiered framework, I propose that the political philosophical configuration adopted by CDA is that of *poststructural tactics bleeding into critical strategies*. Thus, in my analysis below, traditional Marxism and the Frankfurt school's critical theory are considered to be the origins of strategic philosophical influence on CDA, and the French poststructuralist tradition is presented as the crucial tactical philosophical influencer. This critical-tactical interblending can easily be seen at first glance, as the founders of CDA take up the critical mantle by instituting a research program concerned with uncovering ideology, while simultaneously seeking to cultivate possible sites of resistance to dominant discourse by suggesting tactical advances on multiple cultural fronts.

Critical theory as continual reformulation of Marx's original thesis

One hundred and thirty five years after Marx's foundational text *Capital* the critical project seems no closer to realizing its high ethical ideals of social justice within the context of Western enlightenment. Yet, despite this deferment of the success of historical materialism, academics in the 21st century continue to uphold the crucial nature of Marx's approach through ever more reformulations of his analysis. This is a continuous theoretical updating of contemporary context

as an attempt to keep Marx's thesis relevant for the present socio-political situation. This ongoing theoretical revisionism can be seen as an attempt to keep the class struggle alive to some degree. As a result, many critically oriented theorists in the West have attempted to explain why the socially oppressed have not yet sought a permanent solution through revolution (Callinicos, 1976).

Dialectic of enlightenment

In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argue that the enlightenment ideal of rationality has unfortunately been reduced to a quantitative calculation (1944/1997: 5-7). This disturbing tendency leaves no room for a holistic totalization of society, pushing everything outside of strict mathematical thinking into the questionable realm of irrationality. In their view, this much delimited boundary line for rationality causes the emergence of a new myth—one that horribly alienates people, eventually even from themselves. For Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997: 120-167) this alienation is perpetuated by what they call the 'culture industry,' effective through the pervasive reach of media outlets. CDA continues this dialectical critique of the culture industry by examining the available media texts that contribute to the manufacturing of consent in newspapers (Van Dijk, 1988), television broadcasting (Kalyango, 2011; Oddo, 2013), and new media outlets (Milani, Davies and Turner, 2011).

Thus CDA founders share special affinity with Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectic. The common thread running throughout CDA programmatic self-identification is the rejection of an arbitrary choice between performing critical analysis at either the level of structure or agency. In fact, to operate within the CDA program, the analyst must embrace both structure and agency simultaneously. This is why CDA founders hold the epistemological conviction that new sociolinguistic tools should be developed to act as intermediaries between macro super-structural design and micro-grammatical interactions. Touted at the beginning of many a CDA methodological exposition is this guiding principle, one that is axiomatic for all CDA approaches, a compact, bite sized, and by now sloganized statement of epistemological position. This is an in-group affirmation consisting of the irresolvable, of the circular, of the dialectic. Consequently, a *new socio-linguistic dialectic* is championed. And it is upon this underlying methodological presupposition that CDA practitioners hinge the relevance of their analytical claims: that language is 'socially constitutive' while at the same time 'socially conditioned.' (Fairclough, 1992: 64; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258).

Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectical critique identifies specific cultural technologies acting as the source of alienating disempowerment, thereby perpetuating the capitalistic mode of production. With this same dialectical tone, CDA founders acknowledge the alienating influence of an elite culture industry. This acknowledgement guides the new socio-linguistic dialectic as CDA practitioners seek to spread the ideological critique across the socio-cultural spectrum accordingly (Carvalho, 2007; Tomlinson, 2010; Xiong and Qian, 2012). While CDA leadership continue this dialectical tradition, they do not share the ominous sense of despair contained in Adorno's assessment: that the capitalist project has largely won and that critical theory has been

regulated to analyzing the failure of Marxist theoretical design. This theoretical optimism is discussed more within the context of Habermas' discourse ethics below.

Ideological state apparatuses

In Louis Althusser's *Essays on Ideology* (1974/1993: 16) he outlines a theory of ideological reproduction by introducing the concept of 'ideological state apparatuses' (ISAs). In his project to produce a theory of 'ideology in general' he distinguishes between 'the repressive state apparatus' consisting of the governmental system (bureaucrats, armed forces, police, courts, prisons) and the 'ideological state apparatuses' made up by specialized institutions (religion, education, family, political, cultural). Althusser (1974/1993: 35) claims that ideology is so entwined with the power structure that the current political situation seems unalterable, as if one is born into a 'omni-historical reality.'

Althusser admits that setting up a framework for viewing ideological macro-structures in no way means that he is unaffected by ideology himself. In fact, his view is that ideology is inescapable, stating that 'man is ideological by nature' and that it is 'from within ideology [that] we have to outline a discourse which tries to break with ideology, in order to dare to be the beginning of a scientific (i.e. subject-less) discourse on ideology' (1974/1993: 45-47). CDA relates closely to Althusser's brand of structural Marxism, because it too emphasizes the theoretical importance of the determinative impacts of institutional modes of production. Many critical discourse analysts appropriate Althusser's structuralist perspective, viewing societal transformation to be bound up in the macro-interactional practices within dominating social structures (Baker and Ellece, 2011: 160).

In a seemingly impromptu postscript to his ideology essay, Althusser points to at least two major unanswered questions that should be addressed. First, he admits that although he has named the culprits, the totality of processes indicated within the relations of production is still far too abstract. For this very reason one can see why CDA practitioners latch onto Althusser's ideological designations, as the research imperative becomes uncovering the micro-linguistic processes that make up these larger reproductive interactions. Second, Althusser locates the class nature of ideologies as sorely under theorized and in need of much exploration. His hypothesis is that each individual ISA is both a battleground and a prize in class struggles, yet his broad approach doesn't provide an adequate way to analyze institutional rituals and their everyday practices. CDA here fulfils another structuralist ambition: the ability to identify and dissect discursive practices.

Distorted and ideal speech situations

Precisely because of this emphasis on ISA discursive infiltration, a figure like Jürgen Habermas occupies a prominent position within much CDA theorizing (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999/2004; Forchtner, 2011). Habermas is vitally important to the more activist oriented within the critical school because he opens up the possibility of fruitful critique by pushing critical theory out of the fatalistic position of simply complaining from the political sidelines. He takes up the strategic philosophical model, but moves the possibility of resistance from changing subjectivities to an emphasis on transforming linguistic-communicative circumstances. This linguistic shift is especially appealing to CDA adherents who seek to operationalize Habermas' theoretical framework through the provision of empowering discursive instruments.

Habermas continues Adorno and Horkheimer's emphasis on reason by investigating the structure of human activity linguistically within the historically grounded context of modern capitalism. His most notable framework of critique is what he terms 'communicative action' (Habermas 1984: 94-101). Armed with this concept, he attempts to show to what degree people can communicate unimpeded from ideological distortions inherent in cultural discourses. For Habermas, there is still the possibility of a rational consensus in the midst of a capitalist society that 'colonizes the life world' through its overemphasis on calculative rationality (Habermas, 1984: 70-71).

Habermas contends that the poststructuralist rejection of the enlightenment (as a narrative of myth debunking) leaves no grounds for political critique. However, the poststructuralists are simply building upon Althusser's structuralist Marxism that claims all of society has been co-opted by ideological cultural apparatuses, leaving no social space for critique to arise. In response, Habermas (1973: 211-265) devises an 'ideal speech situation' (ISS) as an attempt to provide room for such a critical space to exist. His speech situation is 'ideal' in that those involved are sincere, good listeners, and will be convinced by the most reasonable speaker. In this way Habermas intends to salvage the enlightenment legacy of exposing myths through his provision of a discourse ethics.

Habermas attempts to overcome contextual and ethical tensions by proposing an ISS in which the dialectic is temporarily resolved. However, this temporary freezing of the dialectic is the point of methodological departure between CDA and Habermas. This is the case because what Habermas presents are not pragmatic tactical manoeuvres for social groups to implement, but an idealistic situation that should be striven after. Even so, if this rational speech situation is

ever only presented as a theoretical model, but is never able to be realized in replicable practice, what does it offer those groups looking for points of entry into ideological resistance?

It seems to me that the overarching mission of CDA is to demystify the ‘distorted speech situation’ and to provide tactics for manoeuvring within this linguistically concealed minefield of oppression. The critical perspective CDA practitioners do avidly share with Habermas is the urgent necessity to uncover manipulative linguistic structures in order to create a space for ‘rational’ communication. But the CDA practitioner has no methodological interest in lingering on concepts, such as ISS, that offer no practical demonstration of how to bring about such a lofty discursive scenario. Instead, CDA moves beyond theoretical deconstruction of the ‘distorted speech situation’ through the use of linguistic methodologies capable of spelling out subtle ideological moves within texts, moves that attempt to suppress or co-opt active resistance. In sum, CDA practitioners do acknowledge Habermas’ ISS as a glorious communicative dream, as an ideal of the aspired-to discourse, but when performing actual analyses they must quickly move back into fluid dialectical thinking in order to locate the ideological microstructures of the powerful.

To place these theoretical concepts within our political-philosophical framework, the ISS belongs amongst the utopian tendencies of polarized formalist philosophy. The difference between the formalist-utopian ISS and the strategic dialectic of enlightenment is like the difference between hearing an inspirational message about helping the poor, and actually going into the slums and seeing the situation first-hand. This is why the dialectic is far more politically important to CDA—it has the ability to map out the terrain of contradiction. Similarly, the dialectic is also more epistemologically important. While utopian ideals do indicate broad

directions for research proposals and teleological goals to be striven after, everyday tensions require the analyst to be fully engaged in negotiating discursive distortions.

Poststructural theory as a complication of the Marxist critique

Ever since Laclau and Moffe (1981/2001) identified the so-called ‘crisis of Marxism,’ there has been a concerted effort by some research schools to ‘re-establish the authority of Marxist theory and analysis and to prescribe the appropriate line(s) along which socialist political strategy might develop’ (Smart, 1983:2). CDA, as a new critical perspective, sprang up in the midst of this theoretical vacuum, acting to renew the lagging critical tradition by integrating probing socio-linguistic techniques.

An ongoing staying feature of Marxist analysis is the need for continual rethinking of the relationship between theory and political practice. The events in France during the May 1968 resistance movement stimulated fresh theoretical explanations for the post-modern political scenario. The spontaneous and independently formed worker-student movements signalled the emergence of new political forms that had not been given adequate consideration in critical studies. The May Movement protest can be seen as the birth of the so-called ‘new social movements,’ organizing around identity discrimination (women’s liberation, gay liberation), social justice issues (education reform, prisoner’s rights), and ecological concern (animal rights, anti-nuclear).

During this time theorists like Jean-Paul Sartre (1975) were advocating for a Marxist existentialism. Sartre’s philosophy advanced that subjects could tap into a highly developed sense of self-consciousness, which, if activated, could spur on self-determining acts. The rise of structural interpretations in the 1960s can be understood in part as a reaction to the exalted status

of the subject within existential thought. Structuralists, while following divergent methodological routes, all agree that the subject is produced by an intricate institutional socialization, by which the subject is but an effect (May 1994).

Poststructuralists retain this structuralist ousting of the subject, but instead of confining the subject underneath grand systems of domination, they reject the subject/structure dichotomy altogether and focus on historically contingent material practices. This examination of specific institutional practice aims to reveal the source of both subjective and structural (re)production. Thus, in poststructural critique, subjectivities can be altered only by the implementation of new practices.

Poststructural political philosophy has been viewed as conservative by some thinkers (Epstein, 1995; Moss, 2004; Poster, 1989) because there is an emphasis on experimental procedures rather than confrontational subjectivities. Preference is given to finding gradual political alternatives instead of providing inspiration large-scale class revolt. The goal of political reflection here is to liberate individuals to attempt new practices that can undermine and transform unhealthy power relationships. CDA literature seeks to further this poststructural emphasis by suggesting both sites and tools for possible successful discursive experimentations.

Seizing the rules

Michel Foucault is known as the premier philosopher of power/knowledge relations. The prominence of theoretical position Fairclough affords to Foucault in his seminal work *Discourse and Social Change* signifies that, while he finds his ontological orientation in Marx's strategic philosophy, he understands the necessity for the inclusion of mid-range tactical philosophy. As a result of Foucault's (1977: 151) various genealogical analyses (of madness, discipline and

sexuality), he became convinced that ‘humanity installs each of its violences in a *system of rules* and thus proceeds from domination to domination’ (emphasis mine). While these ‘rules’ have a reproductive element to them, he found them to be perpetually unfinalized and therefore open to manipulation. Yet, Foucault goes a step further noting that, ‘The successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing the rules...and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them; controlling this complex mechanism, they will make it function so as to overcome the rulers through their own rules.’

As I see it, post-revolutionary Marxism within the political program of CDA has taken Foucault’s admonition to ‘seize the rules’ seriously. To engage in localized battles over discursive transformations signals a direct implementation of such a ‘rule seizing’ tactic. Besides, what ultimately is the desired political outcome of all this ideological finger pointing if not to appropriate this ‘system of rules,’ reinterpret them, and to direct institutions in a more humane direction? Thus, the CDA founders, while still participants in the critical top-down vanguard activity of uncovering the false consciousness of the masses, do take seriously Foucault’s (1977: 154) insight that ‘knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.’

Strategic and tactical truths are held in tension through a unique critical-poststructural interblending within the CDA research program. This tension spans from the universal to the local, from the grand to the specific, and from the revolutionary to the incremental. The interpenetration of these two political philosophies can be seen within CDA as affiliations to the critical school tend to determine which tactics will be highlighted as useful, and as the successes and failures of the tactics chosen influence the overall critical strategies of the program. The

ability of these two political philosophies to mutually inform one another within CDA brings about a new kind of strategic-tactical dialectical praxis.

Theory as political practice

Within the CDA school, Marx's admonition to change society is seen to be primarily accomplished gradually within the established institutional system. This can be seen as a sympathetic embrace of the poststructural deterministic nightmare: that waiting for revolutionary proletarian movements in post-totalitarian societies are ultimately a waste of time. In this way, CDA practitioners have embraced tactical thinking by taking up the mantle of the 'specific intellectual': seeing the role of the intellectual as 'specific' (meaning historically contingent and context bound) instead of universal (providing forever relevant truths). Specific intellectuals use theory not simply to provide grand political visions of society, but intend to uncover localized abuses of power relations in order to build a tactical repertoire for the abused (Foucault, 1984/1991: 67-71).

Thus, in the post-totalitarian era, the way to realize political goals in left intellectualism has shifted to the fashioning of useful theoretical instruments. The emphasis has shifted from revolutionary global transformation to a focus on incrementally seizing the technologies of control. CDA actively participates in this more recent form of socio-theoretical activism, as they perform detailed analysis of the dominant technologies of control. That this new kind of intellectual activist is dedicated to tactics is clearly displayed in *Language, Countermemory, Practice* when Gilles Deleuze (in discussion with Foucault) picks up on Althusser's theme of theory as a form of practice. Deleuze (1977: 206) assesses the critical situation as such: 'A

theorizing intellectual, for us, is no longer a subject, a representing or representative consciousness...representation no longer exists; there's only action—theoretical action.'

For Deleuze, the intellectual's role should transition from being a distant figure crafting grand critiques of the ideological superstructure to a figure that comes alongside those in the midst of regional power struggles. Foucault in agreement states, 'theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice' (Foucault 1977b: 208) This sentiment, present in Althusser, and running through Deleuzian critique, dwells within the halls of CDA in the form of an academic-ethical conviction. In this sense CDA leaves its epistemological universe open ended, demanding from its more serious practitioners not simply hermeneutical description nor quantitative grounding but political engagement. By this standard, an epistemological component's usefulness must be determined to some degree by its political applicability.

Discussion

A pre-paradigmatic perpetuation with appropriative intent

Based on Kuhn's (1962/1996: 47) characterization of scientific paradigm stages, CDA seems to be intentionally drawing out its 'pre-paradigm period.' This is a stage in the lifecycle of a research program that is 'marked by frequent and deep debates over legitimate methods, problems, and standards of solution.' I understand this drawing out of the pre-paradigmatic stage as integral to both the epistemological and political ethos of CDA.

This pre- paradigmatic perpetuation is epistemological because of the key dialectical issue identified above. This dialectical fascination within CDA fuels an unending call for ever-more useful intermediary concepts to facilitate more complex descriptions of what happens between

institutional structures and emerging devices of agency (Wodak and Chilton, 2005). Yet, lingering in the pre-paradigmatic stage is also political, because CDA itself never truly intends to cut off debate, to ever be satisfied with being a stabilized academic tradition that gives intellectual aid to dominant discourse structures.

To this point, applied linguist and CDA critic H. G. Widdowson (2004: 168) remarks that CDA claims ‘to be informed by a quite different set of assumptions and premises [than established academic convention], a radically new epistemic order, and one based more on moral than on rational principle.’ However, after a survey of founding CDA literature, Widdowson concludes that there is no persuasive demonstration of what this ‘new epistemic order’ may be. He finds that the CDA founders and practitioners fail to confront ‘opposing paradigms’ or struggle with ‘intellectual uncertainties.’ Despite his disappointment, he goes on to commend CDA for turning its analytical tools upon pressing socio-political issues and praises its ‘interventionist mission.’ Sympathetic to CDA’s socio-political stance, the thrust of his critique is therefore epistemic in nature.

In my view Widdowson fails to take into account that for the CDA practitioner the epistemological and the political are intimately intertwined. When applying a critical discourse model to a chosen text, the expectation of theoretical operationalization is high and interlaced with the expectation of opening up possibilities for new political realities. In short, epistemology and political philosophy are not neatly consigned to different portions of the research project, but pervade the entire process—from the construal of the research object to the tools selected for uncovering ideological revelations, even in the writing up of results (Gouveia 2003). So when Widdowson (2004: 168) charges that CDA founders have not explicitly acknowledged ‘any

change of epistemological principle' or that there is not any indication that CDA literature constitutes 'a shift into a radically different mode of enquiry' he fails to recognize the pre-paradigmatic state that CDA as a research program intends to perpetuate as long as it possibly can.

Epistemological critics of CDA need to understand that the goal of CDA as a research program is not to follow the more positivistic schools in a *tradition of confrontation*. They are not looking for an epic battle of opposing paradigms. Instead, CDA takes strong cues from the qualitative research *tradition of appropriation* (Bradley, 1993). In this way CDA's epistemological stance of undermining disciplinary distinctions is as cunning as its political agenda of undermining hegemonic discourse structures. In sum, the underlying epistemological and political philosophical ethic of CDA roughly translates as *appropriate, appropriate at all costs*. In the political sphere this CDA ethos of appropriation translates to the use of poststructural tactics that aid in seizing the discursive rules, and in the epistemological sphere it is to apprehend any conceptual tool from the wide range of humanistic theorizing that can sharpen the perspective of the analyst. If CDA is initiating a 'new epistemic order' it is one of amassing social discourses and conceptual tools for its own political prowess. Hence, CDA acts as a non-defensive discipline as it seeks to infiltrate sister disciplines, not berate them from a distance.

For the CDA school, the dangers of a 'methodological compactness,' as preached by Widdowson (2004: 98), is the reigning in of the creative energies, those energies currently being harnessed for creating new methods of ideological critique. CDA's socio-linguistic-cognitive methodological triangulation is currently being used to intentionally complicate Neo-Marxist thought with subtle textual realizations. This is the primary reason CDA practitioners analyze

political discourse: 1) to uncover the mechanisms of ideological manipulation and 2) to reveal and eradicate those arbitrary discursive boundary lines to free thought.

The underlying methodological question is whether analysts should continue developing traditional linguistic concepts that academics like Widdowson claim haven't been given a fair shake, or should the analyst be free to amass every available cutting edge theoretical design and attempt a convincing synthesis. The CDA School dismisses the former view as a form of zealous methodological conservatism at best, and at worst a stifling agenda leading to an unending regurgitation of well-worn platitudes. Instead, within CDA the analyst intends to act as social philosopher as well as creative methodologist in order to present novel interpretations of reality. This pluralistic ethos represents a socio-linguistic rally cry for critical theorists to emerge from stale theoretical models to an up-to-date uncovering of ideological manipulation on the micro level.

The socio-linguistic vanguard and tactical creativity

CDA founders have carved out an institutional space between social theorists concerned with language and linguists who want to broaden their analytical frameworks by considering relevant social theories. Because of the dire urgency to understand the relation of language (linguistics) and ideology (sociology) to the administration of power (politics), CDA founders have made the move from being isolated theorists publishing disconnected ideological analysis to the formation of a proper research program (Blommaert, 2005; O'Mallaran, 2003).

CDA founders ideological analyses of texts are intended to demystify hidden hegemonic processes that pass unbeknownst to the unsuspecting masses. This specialized analytical knowledge, combined with remarkable institutional credentials, gives CDA founders a privileged

vantage point from which to stage an ideological counter response. This kind of interventionist approach has historically been associated with an intellectual vanguard speaking on behalf of the oppressed.

Despite that fact, CDA founders may be hesitant to self identify as such because this blending of poststructural tactics into critical strategies is eroding any rigid hierarchical, top-down perspective. Tactical political philosophy holds any ‘representative’ leadership faction as highly suspect, thereby refusing the merits of a vanguard party. Tactical approaches theorize power as diffused throughout the social system as a network, so that liberation comes about by localized groups within specific regions of resistance. This stance of widely diffused power precludes the necessity of representation by one enlightened group of schemers.

Conclusion

In this article I have argued that while sitting comfortably within the strategic philosophical tradition, CDA takes tactical cues not to conquer but to infiltrate, to become a common perspective within humanities departments, and to transform methodological and theoretical design from within. CDA analyses cohere with Foucault’s insight that challenging institutional ideological oppression means ‘seizing the rules’ from the inside, and that the goal is ‘to overcome the rulers through their own rules’ (Foucault 1977: 151). Yet, for the CDA program, this rule seizure requires an incremental, piecemeal process from within, not a hostile takeover of material resources and radical redistributive schemes.

This top-down filtration process of rule seizure is mainly accomplished by challenging hostile discursive boundary drawing, through exposing stifling ideological microstructures that linguistically trap the masses in constraining, culturally induced folklore tales that negatively regulate identity construction, ethical values, utopian goals, and strategic measures. In short, CDA aims to be a new kind of tactical based strategy for rooting out contemporary ‘false consciousness’ by seeking discursive infiltration within multiple ISA terrains.

We have seen that CDA embraces both structural (more function oriented) and existential (more subject-centred) analyses of the political situation. Also, that the incorporation of poststructural analysis is not intended to replace critical political studies, but is meant to supplement and inform grand strategies, giving tactical guidelines for institutional intervention. In the end, CDA cannot be contained solely within the strategic because the founders intend to accomplish far more than a monolithic doctrine of unilateral political action would allow. Instead, they present a heterogeneous approach emphasizing the benefits of a theoretical-methodological multiplicity. As the political and epistemological goals of CDA are realized programmatically through their broadcast for methodological pluralism, their emerging critical-poststructural program will continue to draw in academics from a broad range of socially oriented disciplines, especially those excited about discourse, politics and theory creation.

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