Hunting the poststructuralist "snark" – the role of antinomy in Essex School discourse analysis

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Abstract: Poststructuralist Discourse Theory (PDT) is, in my view, a social theory for our time; embracing, as it does, the unconscious and capable of providing new insights into everything from the rise of Trumpian "post truth" through to our collective inability to universally engage with the existential threat of climate change. This article suggests an approach to the empirical analysis of problematised discourses starting from a search for dislocations. I draw from the writings of Laclau, Adorno and Derrida and use Žižek's Lacanian reading of Hegel to find support for this approach as one useful way to proceed towards new critical explanations and understandings.

Keywords: Empirical Ideological Research, Essex Poststructuralist Discourse Theory, Stability and Change, Laclau, Adorno, Derrida, Žižek.

Introduction

To pursue the Absolute is to hunt the Snark.[1]

Poststructuralist Discourse Theory (PDT) with its Lacanian foundations is, in my view, a social theory for our time; embracing the unconscious and capable of providing new insights into everything from the rise of Trumpian "post truth", through to our collective inability to universally engage with the existential threat of climate change. However, although the concept of a "dislocatory event", or simply "dislocation", is centrally important to this theory, the practical and empirical opportunities associated with the idea remain unclear and under-theorised. First, I aim to develop the empirical usage of this concept. Second, I aim to show how this can contribute to a wider literature on political "stability and change". In doing this, I counter a criticism of PDT; that it promotes "a conception of the political as a particular kind of practice involving overt public contestation … losing sight of the more subtle, localized micro-politics (and non-politics) of practice" (West 2011, p,421). This is achieved by acknowledging dislocations with less overt contestation "where decisions (and by inference the public contestation of them) are suspended" (West 2011, p,421), during periods that, on the surface, appear "stable".

After first reviewing the meaning of "dislocations", this article uses insights from a body of post-Kantian philosophy on the antimonic logics of human motivation to develop an approach to the empirical analysis of a problematised discourse based on identifying dislocatory moments. Without claiming any universal concordance of views, I draw from the writings of Laclau, Adorno and Derrida, together with Žižek's Lacanian reading of Hegel to support this approach. Resonance is found in Adorno's "contradictions" between the ideal and the particular, Derrida's concept of différance and Žižek's reading of Hegel's dialectical synthesis and the Lacanian Act.

Seeking Dislocations as an epistemic strategy

While a detailed description of PDT's ontological foundations is beyond the scope here[2], the PDT approach depends on three "basic units of explanation", or types of logics, namely social, political and fantasmatic, which are articulated together to account for a problematized phenomenon (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 8 and 133). Social logics can be seen as the sedimented social norms and practices occurring within a setting; the "way things are done around here". They are synchronic, and not generally foregrounded as current issues. In contrast, political logics are associated with dislocation, change and contestation between competing parties seeking control. They are diachronic, challenging social logics, and attempting to create stabilization and closure. They incorporate equivalence and difference strategies, which, respectively, unite groups and individuals in new coalitions through the promotion of apparent shared interests, or appropriate difference to perpetuate existing regimes of practice. The third type, fantasmatic logics, are associated with ideology, the power to 'grip' the thinking and attitudes of individuals and groups in such a way as to mask the radical contingency of social relations. They have an anaesthetic quality which facilitates the passage from contested political logics to sedimented social logics, either subverting, or preserving, the status quo.

PDT has, at its foundation, the idea of radical contingency, and thus the ever-present possibility of change. It is fundamentally concerned with the process by which sedimented social logics are disrupted and eventually changed, and new logics sedimented. The successful moment of disruption, or contestation, of the existing order is referred to as a "dislocation". Here, I adopt a convention of referring to disruption that fails to bring about a change to a current "hegemonic regime" as a "dislocation", distinguishing it from one that does, referred to as a "Dislocation". The category of dislocations then can incorporate antagonisms in stasis, guarded complaints and quiet subversion, which have not developed into public contestation, but which, given the circumstances, could do so.

Evidence of dislocations in the absence of overt contestation and/or occurrences of suppressed contestation, supports a view that the process of change continues to develop during periods of both "stability" and "change". This suggests a model of

change where antecedents and possible triggers for change can be observed during periods of stability rather than change occurring due to autonomous crises arising from largely exogenous forces. In critiquing a formal dualism of "stability" and "change" in the "punctuated evolution"[3] model of political change, Marsh (2010: 94) notes "that stability inevitably provides the context within which change occurs" and:

> that, in order to treat stability and change ... as a duality, rather than a dualism, it is necessary to acknowledge that the relationships between structure and agency and the material and the ideational are dialectical, and not privilege agency and ideas (Marsh 2010: 93).

It is significant that, as we will see, PDT's adoption of Lacan's three orders of the "real", the Real, Imaginary and Symbolic (see Fig.1) precisely reflect these dualities[4].

All D/dislocations have both an ontological and an ontic face. The ontological understanding of dislocation relates to the Lacanian notion that "each and every symbolic order is penetrated by an impossibility that has to be filled or covered-over for it to constitute itself" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 14). In simple terms, this means that organised human behaviour is always a temporary attempt to deal with the real, and hence vulnerable to situations that fail to fit the way we think. Dislocations occur "when a sense emerges, however localized or diffuse this may be, that 'things are not quite right', whether this is registered by the researcher or the subject affected by the dislocatory event" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 143). More formally, in an ontic sense, dislocatory moments occur when:

> the subject's mode of being is disrupted by an experience that cannot be symbolized within and by the pre-existing means of discursive representation. From this perspective, practices are governed by a dialectic defined by incomplete structures on the one hand, and the collective acts of subjective identification that sustain or change those incomplete structures on the other (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 14).

Such events precede the arrival of political logics; the possibility of making the hidden visible and bringing change through contestation for hegemonic control.

Laclau describes the "triple effect" of dislocatory relations. First, dislocations show "the historicity of being of objects" making sedimented logics more transparent. Second, he suggests that the more "dislocated the structure is" (related to the force of intervention and resilience of the subject) the more "recompositions and rearticulations will ... operate at increasingly deeper structural levels, thereby leading to an increase in the role of the 'subject' and to history becoming less and less repetitive" (Laclau 1990: 40). This means that individual subjectivities will be more impacted, and the outcomes less predictable, as the level of dislocation increases. Finally, and most significantly, Laclau suggests that the dislocations he refers to are those associated with the decentring effects of antagonistic uneven power struggles. He writes:

> A dislocated structure can clearly not have a centre and is therefore constitutively decentred. But it must be understood what a decentred structure is. The dislocation we are referring to is not one of a machine that has broken down because of the maladjustment of one of its components. We are dealing with a very specific dislocation: one that stems from the presence of antagonistic forces (Laclau 1990: 40).

An important criterion for labelling an event as a "dislocation" within a discourse is therefore the potential level of subjective disruption and existential antagonism that the event entails. Once again, this approach is usefully applied to the analysis of policy change. Peter Hall (1993) distinguishes between three "levels" of policy change. The first two reflect simply changes of setting in policy instruments and changes in the policy instruments themselves respectively. Importantly, both categories of change do not aim to "decentre" the policy in any antagonistic sense but support continuing overall policy goals. In PDT terms they are not dislocatory. The third level, however, he compares to a Kuhnian[5] "paradigm shift" in science resulting from the contradictions to the existing paradigm which could equally be seen as a Dislocation. As Hall (1993: 280) writes:

> Like scientific paradigms, a policy paradigm can be threatened
> by the appearance of anomalies, namely by developments that
> are not fully comprehensible, even as puzzles, within the terms
> of the paradigm. As these accumulate, ad hoc attempts are
> generally made to stretch the terms of the paradigm to cover
> them, but this gradually undermines the intellectual coherence
> and precision of the original paradigm. Efforts to deal with such
> anomalies may also entail experiments to adjust existing lines
> of policy, but if the paradigm is genuinely incapable of dealing
> with anomalous developments, these experiments will result in
> policy failures that gradually undermine the authority of the
> existing paradigm and its advocates even further.

A discourse analyst examines a discourse empirically through a relevant "corpus" of evidence and it is first useful to develop a working definition of what a "corpus" is and how it relates to the more abstract and contested concept of discourse. PDT is founded on the "ontology of the lack", in the radical gap between the "big Other", the symbolic order and the "real" in the Lacanian sense. A corpus then is that body of "ontic" artefacts that provides the analyst with persuasive explanatory evidence for an articulation of logics present in a problematised discourse. The worth and adequacy of the corpus is measured ultimately in its evidential value in persuading a "relevant community and practices of scholars and lay-actors" (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 19) that the explanation is the "best" available or, at the very least, complements existing explanations in a productive way.

One way of researching a corpus is therefore to look for the artefacts of dislocation in the narrative; where things don't add up, where the "Big Other" social order doesn't appear to work. Such artefacts are present in both dislocations and Dislocations, since they are associated with the period of hegemonic struggle when the outcome is still unknown. Clearly, the actual outcome of the struggle, "regime" change or survival, is important to the analysis, but the artefacts of dislocation we are interested in here are associated with the process, rather than the result. With these artefacts, the discourse analyst is able to begin to articulate the nexus of social, political and fantasmatic logics present in the narrative towards a retroductive explanation of the

corpus. Dislocatory discursive artefacts can be discovered in the "contextualised self-interpretations" of actors, in interviews, statements, writings, transcripts etc., as well as behaviour, in response to dislocations, external to language. At the time of writing, for example, we are seeing, in many countries, the largely unnecessary hoarding of toilet paper, in response to the uncertainties of the Covid-19 pandemic, during which the everyday social logics of living, have been severely dislocated. Things don't make sense, so we fixate on this product as a *petit a* (a little other), a part of a signifying chain of security and cleanliness, the hoarding of which provides some relief to the reality of the pandemic[6]. The protestations against hoarding by governments and health officials, representing the social order (the Big Other), largely fall on deaf ears as the powerful "survival against the other" fantasmatic takes its grip on many people's subjectivity. In the next three sections, I examine ideas arising from the work of Adorno, Derrida and Žižek, on the types of dislocatory ontics that discourse analysts would benefit from exploring.

Adorno and Nonidentity

Foundational to Adorno's philosophy is the idea of the radical "nonidentity" between the particular and the concept which encompasses it. In his "negative dialectics", which he identified as "critical theory[7]", "objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder" and the contradictions this creates indicate "the untruth of identity, the fact that the concept does not exhaust the thing conceived" (Adorno 1973: 5). At a logical level, Adorno is saying that the Law of the Excluded Middle[8], when applied to identifying a particular object or idea with a totalising concept, automatically gives rise to contradictions. For example, the concept of "woman" and the difficulties in classifying a particular individual as a woman leads to normative difficulties and political contestation within feminist scholarship and an awareness of intersectionality[9].

From this position of nonidentity, Adorno develops a comprehensive critique of Hegelian Absolutism, systems thinking and scientism which is largely outside of the present scope. More relevant here is the idea that conceptual idealism is used politically. The political logic in Adorno's thinking is that the totalization of identity in squeezing particulars into a concept is the basis of rhetorical metonymy as an

exercise of control; a difference logic to corral non-identical claims within a dominant hegemonic regime. Adorno (1973: 48) argues:

> The principle of dominion, which antagonistically rends human society, is the same principle which, spiritualized, causes the difference between the concept and its subject matter; and that difference assumes the logical form of contradiction because, measured by the principle of dominion, whatever does not bow to its unity will not appear as something different from and indifferent to the principle, but as a violation of logic.

Adorno suggests a way forward for the researcher to deal with her own, and others' idealised subjectivity, using an analogy of translation from one language to another:

> How one should think instead[10] has its distant and vague archetype in the various languages, in the names which do not categorically cover the thing (Adorno 1973: 52).

A translator and experienced readers of the translation are conscious that words translated from the original never have an "exact" correspondence. Both parties live with that impossibility, and yet acceptable translations still happen. This idea is elegantly described by Claudia Leeb as "the moment of the limit". In that moment, discourse meets a radical limit, which, far from being problematic, is full of possibility. For Leeb, it is the moment "the possibility of a political subject with the capacity of agency emerges" (Leeb 2017: 30). For a discourse analyst, it represents support for analysing a corpus through understanding the role of discursive contradictions in D/dislocations.

The analytical practice of identifying contradictions between concept and particularity is closely linked to the identification of examples of metonymy. Metonymy is understood as a language device, often used rhetorically, in which an attribute or an adjunct to a thing is substituted for the name of the thing itself. Significantly, it can be used as a political categorising tool, to enforce the common identity of a group of individuals, or, in PDT terms, to exercise a controlling difference logic. Collective nouns, such as "immigrants", "candidates" and "clients", for collections of individual people can create a false homogeneity, obscuring particularity and creating

contradictions. The empirical manifestation of Adorno's non-identity however extends beyond nomenclature into praxis, and particularly technology. Governments, for example, metonymically use "forms" and "templates" to enforce homogeneity (Author 2018: 111) and online digital technologies to regulate and standardise interaction with the public (Author 2020: 11).

Adorno's promotion of the role of "non-identity" in the political logics of "difference" is relevant to the work of the discourse analyst. Where the particularities associated with individuals are squashed into conceptual categories, the analyst may find evidence of dissatisfaction, non-compliance or even civil disobedience; symptomatic of D/dislocation. An excellent example of this can be found in the area of Aged Care in Australia, where the category of "care worker" applied to staff caring for the elderly in institutions has driven a managerial "performance" regime that actually mitigates against many providing what is understood by society in general and marketed by many aged-care institutions as "care". The gap between the concept of "care worker" appropriated by neoliberal management, and the actual care work that many continue to try and offer the residents in their charge, has become unacceptably wide and recently the subject of a Royal Commission of Inquiry in Australia (ACRC 2019). The ontic artefacts of disquiet among the care workers are observable as complaints and regrets in interviews but have not led to Dislocation. As Carter (nee Tauschek) (2018: 194) writes:

> the development of the Australian aged care regime resulted in the development of today's sedimented, aged care practices. Here, neoliberal ideology maintains this powerful regime, suppressing opportunities for radical contingency and dislocation.

**Žižek's Hegel - capturing the "absolute" snark**

In his 1991 book, *For they know not what they do: enjoyment as a political factor*, Žižek (2008b[11]) parted company with some of the basic tenets of Laclau's theory of radical democracy and turned to a Lacanian reinterpretation of Hegel's, often

rejected, "absolutism"[12]. Notwithstanding the robust dispute that this turn engendered, we will see that the category of a Lacanian political act offers a further type of ontics associated with dislocation, directly relevant to empirical discourse analysis. The ongoing arguments between Žižek and others' readings of the Lacanian "Act", centred around the concept of an authentic political act as a "real" occurrence in time independent of the spatiality of the symbolic order preceding and following it[13]. Žižek's reading of the Lacanian "Act" provided a resolution to what he described provocatively as the Left's continuing "celebration of failure". Referring to weaknesses in his earlier book of 1989, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (2008a[14]), Žižek writes that:

> it basically endorses a quasi-transcendental reading of Lacan,
> focused on the notion of the Real as the impossible Thing-in-
> itself; in so doing, it opens the way to the celebration of failure:
> to the idea that every act ultimately misfires, and that the
> proper ethical stance is heroically to accept this failure (Žižek
> 2008b: xii).

The path to this conclusion relates to an understanding of the complex interactions of the Lacanian triad, the Real-Imaginary-Symbolic[15]. In 1954, Lacan introduced a concept of the "real" based on this triad as three "orders", or modes, by which psychoanalysis could be described. The three modes are strongly interrelated, as he expressed in the figure of the Borromean Knot (see Fig. 1). The topology of the knot is such that cutting any ring immediately breaks all the links, and the way in which the three rings intersect is meaningful[16].

Fig. 1 The real represented as a Borromean Knot (R - Real, I - Imaginary, S - Symbolic)
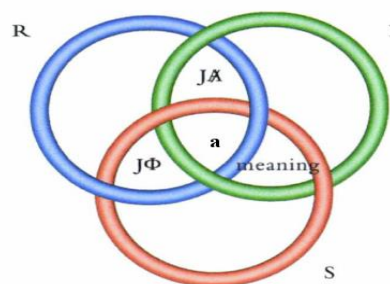
Source : Modified from (Lacan, Price, Miller 2016: 36).

The link to the break with Laclau and the contribution to discourse analysis lay in understanding the accessibility of the real-Real (the non R ring) and particularly the role of the overlapping Real-Imaginary and the Real-Symbolic. In other terms:

> The real-Real, for Žižek, is the Freudian unconscious, the primordial repression, fundamental fantasy, and das Ding which can never come to conscious awareness. It is that which must be presupposed to account for reality (Goldfarb 2016, p,57).

The Symbolic Order also referred to as the "Big-Other" is the language, mores and social regulations to which people are first inducted as children[17]. The Real-Symbolic is the space in which these social logics become dissipated, or where Žižek suggests "the signifier [is] reduced to a senseless formula, like quantum physics formulas which can no longer be translated back into - or related to - the everyday experience of our life-world" (2008b: xii) and is thus the natural home of dislocations. The Imaginary is the order of images, identifications and interpellation. The Imaginary-Real locates "the mysterious *je ne sais quo*i, the unfathomable 'something' on account of which the sublime dimension shines through an ordinary object" (2008b: xii). Here lies art, the invocation of motherhood in Michelangelo's Pieta or nature's force in Van Gogh's Sunflowers.

Foundational to the PDT project is the idea of the radical contingency (even chaos) present in the real, and thus humanity's resulting radical inability to effect closure in the symbolic order it creates to deal with it. There is always a "gap" present in any signifying chain which can become dislocated, a "non-ALL" totality. This opens up a universality, but one which for Laclau "is never 'objective' but rather hegemonic – always the result of a contingent struggle for the conceptualization of society – for how external difference will be articulated as internal difference" (Goldfarb 2016: 59).

For Laclau, the Real, while unilaterally capable of unsettling and dislocating the human Symbolic Order was impervious to human influence. This position had a number of important ramifications, unacceptable to Žižek. First, the positing of the Real beyond reality as a noumenal "thing-in-itself" heralds a return to Kantian

formalism. Second, more importantly, this approach is the source of the progressive Left's inability to engage with the Real structural inequality at the heart of capitalism. Laclau's own position appears to support this:

> If hegemony means the representation, by a particular social sector, of an impossible totality with which it is incommensurable, then it is enough that we make the space of tropological substitutions fully visible, to enable the hegemonic logic to operate freely. If the fullness of society is unachievable, the attempts at reaching it will necessarily fail, although they will be able, in the search for that impossible object, to solve a vari-ety of partial problems (Laclau 2001: 244).

Through his turn to Hegel, Žižek focuses on establishing the role of the "political economy" as an "ahistorical motor to historicity" in the Real, which "affects and is dealt with by the historical (as Imaginary-Symbolic reality)" (Johnston 2008: 119) [my emphasis]. The relevance here, is that, by reading Hegel's sublation (*aufhebung*) of the particularity of the Imaginary-Symbolic into the Real as a two-way dialectic between two mutually exclusive positions, Žižek provides a path for political change to "not simply involve waiting around for the Real (a politics of idly standing by and watching for a contingent event [a dislocation] to occur", but also for dislocation to occur by a subjective Act, "where the subject critiques and identifies with the renounced truth that ties him or her to the symbolic order, the placeholder of lack – object a" (Goldfarb 2016: 63). Hegelian sublation to an ideal, interpreted as the subject taking on a parallactic position in which the object[18] only emerges through the adoption of both perspectives, provides the way out of the Left's "celebration of political impotence", and, from the discourse analyst's point of view, another class of relevant ontic artefacts to observe empirically.

The split between Žižek and Laclau can be viewed, at one level, as a disagreement over Laclau's position that the Symbolic is unable to affect the Real, which Žižek sees as a disavowal of the Lacanian "Act". [19] They have no disagreement over the idea that the Real manifests antagonism in the Symbolic or in other words that the Real creates dislocations such as intersectional challenges to gender identity. As Žižek writes:

It is in fact Laclau's notion of antagonism that can exemplify the Real: just as sexual difference can articulate itself only in the guise of the series of (failed) attempts to transpose it into symbolic oppositions, so the antagonism (between Society itself and the non-Social) is not simply external to the differences that are internal to the social structure (Butler, Laclau and Žižek 2000: 120-121).

Žižek argues that the whole point of Lacanian psychoanalytic treatment is that the "internality of the Real to the Symbolic" means that "it *is* possible to touch the Real through the Symbolic" and that the Act goes beyond attempting to solve partial problems, such as gender inequity and racial discrimination:

An act does not simply occur within the given horizon of what appears to be 'possible' it redefines the very contours of what is possible (an act accomplishes what, within the given symbolic universe, appears to be 'impossible', yet it changes its conditions so that it creates retroactively the conditions of its own possibility) (Butler, Laclau and Žižek 2000: 121).

Žižek's position here suggests that, in her analysis of an evidentiary corpus, the analyst should be looking out for Lacanian acts, which while appearing "crazy", would be meaningful to Žižek's Hegelian sensibility but less meaningful from a Laclauian perspective. My own view, to be explored elsewhere, is that Lacanian symbolic acts are visible in the political activism of leaders such as Gandhi, Martin Luther-King, Mandela, and more recently Greta Thunberg and Donald Trump, and are central to their ability to effect wide-scale political change.

The Lacanian Act shares many similarities with the PDT description of dislocation in which "the subject's mode of being is disrupted by an experience that cannot be symbolized within and by the pre-existing means of discursive representation". Compare that with a description of the Act as "an explosion of the Real that breaks the continuity of the symbolic order and brings about its structural inconsistency" (Goldfarb 2016: 62). As with dislocations, the Act not only attempts to bring about

change to the reality of the subject, but also exposes the radical incompleteness (the non-All) of that reality. What is different is that a subject can be seen to undertake an authentic symbolic act which goes beyond simply disrupting the symbolic to "traverse the fantasy", to redefine "the very contours of what is possible".

The reason such Acts appear "crazy" is because they are undertaken with "the courage to act without a 'big Other'", without the underpinning and legitimising logics of the Social Order. They necessarily appear initially as irrational, because they have not yet set up the new social logics by which they are judged. (Goldfarb 2016: 63). If they are dislocatory, rather than Dislocatory, they will continue to be seen as failed aberrations by the hegemony. Given our proclivity for Derrida's dominant transcendental signifiers in language, often there are no verbal signs to support such acts; they are silent. Alternatively, they appear nonsensical - "the Snark was a Boojum, you see".

Here I identify some general categories (overlapping) of Lacanian acts which might be identified in a discourse analysis. To reiterate, the defining characteristic is that they seek to change and intercede with the Real through symbolic action that defies the Social Order. First, I posit a class of overt social action (or non-action). An example of this is the so-called "Christmas Truce" that occurred along parts of the Western Front in 1914, where soldiers in trenches on both sides, engaged in killing their enemy both before and after, without official sanction and with some risk of being charged with treason, stopped shooting and congregated in "no-man's land" to sing Christmas carols, exchange gifts and converse. This Act, completely outside the social logics of warfare, and at best temporary (a dislocation), is an example of a symbolic engagement with the Real, unthinkable from a hegemonic military command perspective.

A second class of Acts are more overtly political, often associated with non-compliance and Gandhian *satyagraha*, relates to symbolic resistance to social or State hegemony. Here, we might include an act such as Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in 1955 Alabama. Rosa Parks' act was Dislocatory and heralded a civil rights movement that achieved significant social change in the United States. Similarly, the photograph[20] of Greta Thunberg's

knowing gaze towards Donald Trump at the Davos World Economic Forum in January 2020 captured a Lacanian Act. The wartime solo flight to Scotland by Adolf Hitler's Deputy Führer, Rudolf Hess, that resulted in his sanity being questioned and life imprisonment in Berlin's Spandau Prison was another type of dislocatory Lacanian act.

We see the presence of Lacanian acts frequently in the Arts. The Dada movement of the 1910s and 20s:

> opposed society's sense and logic by creating non-sense in the form of anti-art and a-art. Unlike Cubism, Futurism or Surrealism, Dada is, …, 'not a literary school' [and] denotes not a certain artistic style, but a rebellious, playful 'state of mind' that dissolves fixities, truths and myths (Kuenzli 2011: 17).

In his theatre, Bertolt Brecht, himself influenced by a Dadaist Berlin, incorporates Lacanian acts into his drama in what is known as his *Verfremdungseffekt* or Alienation effect. In it the audience is exposed to techniques that aim to defamiliarize the focus of its attention:

> A defamiliarized illustration is one that, while allowing the object to be recognized, at the same time makes it appear unfamiliar (Rouse 1984: 32).

Brecht adopts this dislocatory approach to awaken his audience from the signifying slumber of the Social Order to a new awareness of the real. From a Derridean perspective he might be said to expose the contradictions of his characters and their relationships by putting them "*sous rature*".

The last category of Lacanian acts I identify, while surprising, is more prosaic and relates to religiosity and its beliefs and rituals. For a religious person who believes in some form of real extra-human deity, the question arises as to whether communication and causal relationship with that deity is either one-way (presumably deity => believer) or is bilateral; a distinction, which, in a rough way, is similar to the gap between Laclau and Žižek. The practices of worship and prayer, to have any role beyond self-meditation and habit, must assume that some degree of

accessibility is possible. The deity, may or may not, value the nice words of thanks and may, or may not, respond to the prayers and desires of the worshippers, but the assumption is that they can be received by the deity, and, hence, that, in principle, they could affect the real. Worship and prayer then, for the true believer, are Lacanian Acts. The point here is that, in searching for the evidence of dislocatory events through Lacanian acts, the discourse analyst should, in addition to seeking "crazy" behaviour, subversive political symbolic behaviour and relevant disruptive art, be aware of who in the corpus is praying to what.

Conclusion

Poststructuralist Discourse Theory has been criticised for a lack of empirical applications (Wagenaar 2011: 158) and a need to justify its insights through:

> address[ing] questions about the choice and design of
> research strategies, methodological problems relating to the
> collection and interpretation of data, and technical issues about
> the use of different methods of text analysis (Torfing 2005: 25).

While welcoming an increasing body of empirical applications, Glynos and Howarth (2007: 7) have consistently rejected "the temptation to offer a 'method' or 'technique-driven' solution to the alleged methodological deficits", or, as Torfing (2005: 25) suggests, "surrender[ing] to the positivist obsession with[21] method that is founded on the belief that the observation of a set of methodological rules somehow guarantees the truth of the research results". In taking this position, they remain consistent with Laclau's view in relation to the "concrete analysis" of identity at the impossible, and necessary, intersection of sameness and uniqueness:

> Impossible, because the tension between equivalence and
> difference is ultimately insurmountable; necessary, because
> without some kind of closure, however precarious it might be,
> there would be no signification and no identity (Laclau 2005:
> 70).

Laclau suggest that, in such a dialectical state:

> [t]here is no concrete analysis which can be downgraded to the status of empirical research without theoretical impact; conversely, there is no transcendental exploration which is absolutely 'pure', without the presence of an excess of what its categories can master —an excess which contaminates the transcendental horizon with an impure empiricism (Laclau 2005: 222).

In advocating the search for "dislocations" as an approach to PDT inspired empirical research, I have stayed true to this methodological pluralism, and sought ideas from three important thinkers, who, while definitely not in total agreement, proffer ontological positions that can embrace this radical dialectic. Notwithstanding the differences between Adorno and Hegel, and Laclau and Žižek, they each support the significance of antimonies in observable/empirical behaviour, whether it be through contradictions and metonymy (Adorno), "undecidable" différance and metaphor (Derrida) or categories of "irrational" Lacanian acts (Žižek). In Lewis Carroll's poem, the crew sets out to discover a snark which is ultimately found by one of the crew, the baker, who promptly "vanishes away" mid-sentence. A discourse analyst's discovery of the real, while arguably "absolute", is realised only as a journey down a radically dialectic path of antinomy.

Notes

[1] Referring to Lewis Carroll's epic "nonsense" poem, The Hunting of the Snark; see Morrison (2007: 58).

[2] For a more detailed summary see (Author, 2018, Chapter 2) or comprehensive explanations in (Glynos and Howarth, 2007).

[3] See (Hay 2002)

[4] The agential subject exists within a shared Symbolic Order whose radically incomplete signifying structures interpellate the agent's identity through the Imaginary order, such that the whole is forever exposed to disruptive intrusions of the "real". See, in this article, the section on Žižek's Hegel .

[5] Reference to the work of Philosopher of Science, Thomas Samuel Kuhn see (Kuhn 2012).

[6] Žižek offers an alternative reading suggesting that people actually believe that there are enough supplies but do not trust the "other" to know, and therefore act preemptively (Žižek 2017).

[7] See Adorno (2008: 20).

[8] That the proposition A is both true and false is excluded

[9] See Leeb (2017), Author (2018) and Crenshaw (1989).

[10] Contrasting his approach here with existentialist philosophy, which he argued, "remained in idealistic bonds" (Adorno 1973: 49).

[11] later edition

[12] Žižek (2012) subsequently developed this in a major work on Hegel.

[13] The debate can be followed in Stavrakakis (2003, 2007a, 2007b, 2011, 2016), Žižek (1998, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008b), Johnston (2009), McGowan (2010) Pluth (2016).

[14] later edition

[15] In the seminar of 1975, Lacan introduced an extra discursive 4th order he named the sinthome, which interlaces with RIS in ways to protect a particular subject from psychosis by holding the other three orders together. This development is not discussed here.

[16] "Meaning", is found at the intersection between the Imaginary and the Symbolic; $J\Phi$ represents "phallic jouissance," which is "not related to the Other as such" (Lacan 1998, §§14); J[barredA] represents the the idea that "there is no jouissance of Other because there is no Other of the Other" and hence the Other (Autre) is barred from any jouissance in the Real. The little other (petit autre) "a" is central to the three modes, as a signifier in the Symbolic, an image to be consciously identified with in the imaginary and an object mitigating the lack in the Other's capacity to encompass the Real.

[17] Lacan refers to this induction process as the signifier, $THE - NAME - OF - THE\ FATHER$.

[18] Žižek writes that "Parallax means that the bracketing itself produces its object 'democracy' as a form emerges only when we bracket the texture of economic relations as well as the inherent logic of the political state apparatus" (Žižek 2006: 56).

[19] In practice both Žižek and Laclau's position support the importance of Lacanian acts in discourse analysis.

[20] See https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/16/trump-vs-greta-thunberg-davos-prepares-for-climate-crisis-showdown.html

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