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# Margins of Difference: Constructing Critical Political Psychology

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Constructing Critical Political Psychology***

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**Abstract**

This article sets out elements of discourse and rhetorical analysis in social psychology, followed by an elaboration of three key contributions of these approaches to critical political psychology. The first contribution urges researchers to pay attention to both their own and others' ideological orientations. The second contribution addresses the artificial dualism of individual and society and how to transcend such oppositions. The third contribution is toward cross-cultural political psychology and the possibilities of political psychology beyond the framework of possessive individualism.

*Keywords:* Critical psychology; discourse; rhetorical analysis; political psychology; ideological orientation.

**Margenes de la Diferencia:  
La Construcción de la Psicología Política Crítica**

**Compendio**

Este artículo resalta elementos del discurso y del uso del análisis retórico en la psicología social, que son acompañados por una elaboración de tres contribuciones clave que tal enfoque hace a la psicología crítica. La primera contribución urge a los investigadores que presten atención tanto a sus orientaciones ideológicas, como a las de otros investigadores. La segunda contribución se dirige al dualismo artificial entre individuo y sociedad y a cómo trascender tales oposiciones. La tercera contribución se refiere a la psicología política transcultural y a las posibilidades de la psicología política más allá del individualismo posesivo.

*Palabras clave:* Crítica; discurso; análisis retórico; psicología política; orientación ideológica.

**T**he miscegenation of political science and psychology in the hybrid “political psychology” has generated research practices with deeper roots in traditions of critical analysis than either of its parent disciplines has manifested. An informed eclecticism, theoretical openness, a sense of social justice, a willingness to transgress disciplinary boundaries and sensitivity to others' experiences inform political psychology at its best (Greenstein, 1973; Hermann, 1986). Recent developments in critical social psychology, notably those investigating discourse and rhetoric, have generated

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techniques appropriate to advancing political psychology in a post-national and multicultural global context. As cultures and identities become more complex, fragmented and recombined in new global formations, discourse analysis suggests a political psychology that is capable of both geographical scope and conceptual depth.

This article offers an introduction to aspects of discourse and rhetorical analysis, followed by an exploration of three key contributions of these approaches to critical political psychology. The first contribution urges researchers to examine both their own and others' ideological orientations. The interrogation of ideological premises is intrinsic to the detailed study of language and power in discourse and rhetorical analysis. To explore ideologies is to delve into the political constitution of truth claims emanating from a diversity of cultural fields. The second contribution addresses the artificial dualism of individual and society. The cautious tracing of paths from the social to the psyche and vice-versa that is possible in discourse analysis resists both extremes of "over-socialization" and psychological reductionism. The third contribution is toward cross-cultural political psychology. Discourse and rhetorical analyses are deeply concerned with the boundaries of the everyday and the taken-for-granted in the making of meaning. The cross-culturally useful practice of exploring the contingent boundaries of identity and community construction is a further element of discourse and rhetorical analyses.

#### **Discourse and Rhetorical Analysis**

A broad appreciation of discourse analysis, largely based upon readings of Foucault, is now widespread in the social sciences and humanities, including political psychology. The more specific theorization and application of discourse analysis in social psychology is less well known. Building on the insights of a few political psychologists, such as Haste (1993) and Montero (1998), political psychology has begun to pay attention to critical discourse analysis (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Weltman & Billig, 2001). Despite these developments, the full potential of discourse analysis deserves broader recognition. There is no singular way to conduct critical discourse analysis in social psychology, and the approach is as diverse and as idiosyncratic as are its practitioners. I intend this article to be a partial and selective introduction to discourse analysis and rhetorical analysis as resources for political psychology.

To engage in discourse is to contribute to the production and reproduction of texts. While texts are often characteristically spoken or written, they can assume almost any symbolic form. The symbols that are employed to build texts include icons, indexes and signs. What these symbolic forms share is the capacity - more or less opaque - to render or represent the world. Less obviously, but of equal importance, is the capacity of discourses to shape, condition and to change the world (Larat, 2000, p. 4). Discourses employ a range of narrative forms in

which to encode symbols and render them expressive. The psychological study of discourse is interested in how people produce and reproduce speech and texts and, in so doing, establish the credibility of their accounts.

Establishing credibility is more than merely stating a position. Potter and Wetherell (1987) point out that discourses are *actions* as well as symbolic expressions. As ideologically constituted entities, discourses privilege certain readings of the world and prefer certain interpretations. Discourses identify an existential world (what exists); a moral code (what is good and what is evil) and - most powerfully, and least obviously - an epistemological order (what is possible and what is impossible). Discourses work in the construction of reality and experience in concrete and material ways. To be labeled a "freedom fighter" is to engage with the world in a manner concretely and materially distinctive from insertion as a putative "terrorist." Being "queer" is a palpably distinctive experience according to who or what has applied the label. To be told that we are all governed by "market forces" and must adapt to "new global realities" implies the daily structuring of our experiences in ways that perpetuate certain regimes, destinies and life chances and discourage alternatives.

A range of typical discourses is discernible in any society. Individuals are born into this range of discourses, socialized to identity(ies) and inscribed into the social world through their operation. The parameters of a discourse are established in part through: "the standardization of methods of producing utterances across the multiple texts claiming membership in it." (Smith, 1999, p. 145). While limited in number, discourses are plural in societies and each discourse is open to challenge and change as well as to reproduction. Culturally and ideologically, we are made by and through our discourses, but as conscious beings, with the capacity to choose and refuse, we also remake discourses as we go on in our daily lives.

The interweaving of the self and society, consciousness and culture that constitutes discourse has been well articulated by Bakhtin (1981):

"As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his [sic] own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language...but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own." (pp. 293-294)

The focus of discursive social psychology is markedly different from traditional psychology. The object of traditional psychology is the individual as unitary and unified subject. Discursive approaches focus upon the production and reproduction of discourses, rejecting the unitary and unified conception of the individual. The individual is constituted as the consequence of a range of discursive practices

and is, therefore, multiple in constitution, incomplete and open. Rather than “possessing” lasting attitudes that arise on the basis of established personal traits, individual perceptions and cognitions, the individual develops positions and makes arguments according to the exigencies of the situation.

If discursive social psychologists are interested in texts, they are equally interested in *contexts* (Billig, 1991, p. 108). What matters in political discourse analysis is the assessment of how power is accomplished, diminished or in some other way affected in the production, dissemination and reception of discourses. Billig (1996, p.121) comments: “words do not possess fixed meanings. That being so, one must understand words in relation to the contexts in which they are being used. The same word, or even sentence, may possess different meanings when applied in different contexts.”

For discourse analysts, the individual is a complex work in progress; an historically-situated resultant of a range of social forces. For Billig (1996), to adopt an attitude is to make an argument and to take a stance on a matter of controversy. In contradistinction to most psychologists, who conceive of attitudes as more or less randomly and freely chosen “predispositions to respond” to objects, Billig regards attitudes as manifestations of positions adopted in ongoing social interaction, and their expression as a matter of rhetorical force. Billig (1991, p. 15) says: “people use complex, and frequently contradictory, patterns of talk; they will use different interpretative repertoires to accomplish different functions.” Potter (1996a) is in agreement and offers the following introduction to rhetoric as a tool (weapon) of discourse and, in so doing, expresses the role of *politics* at the heart of expressivity: “Discursive psychologists have argued that social psychologists have underestimated the centrality of *conflict* in social life, along with the importance people place on issues of stake and interest. An analysis of rhetoric highlights the point that people’s versions of actions, features of the world, of their own mental life, are usually designed to counter real or potential alternatives” (p. 152)

Underpinning the range of phenomenal attitudes - often puzzling and contradictory to the social scientific observer - are arrangements of social structures and social forces that condition the possibilities and constraints governing our existences. We need to pay greater attention to such forces and relations. The consequence of this insight to political psychology is powerful: people who appear to be “confused” or “contradictory” in a synchronic reading, may in fact be exhibiting complex layers of expert response if read diachronically.

In contrast to the positivist and individualistic perspective of mainstream psychology, discursive social psychologists tend to adopt either “social constructionist” or “realist” epistemologies in responding to such complexities. There are debates as to which of these approaches is most appropriate. (Collier, 1998; Foster, 1998; Parker, 1998; Potter, 1998) The social constructionist approach places the emphasis on the manner in which realities are constructed

through discourse. Social constructionists are curious about how different versions of the world come to be accepted as valid or rational. Realism focuses on the underlying social structures and dynamic social forces (which may not be apparent to lay social actors) that condition societal developments. Realists accuse social constructionists of adopting an utterly relativist epistemology, which leads them to ignore forces that operate independent of the volition of social actors and inevitably condition their existences. For realists, social constructionists also exhibit a moral or ethical relativism that inhibits them from the righteous expression of moral outrage in the face of oppression or injustice. For their part, social constructionists criticize the propensity of realists to impose their structural readings of reality on the lay interpretations of social actors. Such impositions privilege frames of rationality that ignore the cultural practices of diverse peoples and underestimate the intelligence or creativity of those lay actors as they go on in their daily lives. At worst, the imposition of realist frames of reference results in the articulation of a correct line or true consciousness that social agents “should” follow were they not the victims of distorted thinking or false consciousness.

In favoring a critical realist epistemology, my own current position blends elements of social constructionism with realism. While acknowledging that reality is a creative and contingent accomplishment, constructed by social agents in their daily practices - that discourses have to be produced as the outcomes of introspection and interaction - I am also aware of the conditioning effects of social structures and social forces on people. Discourses are not just the outcome of social practices; they are the very media through which social practices are able to occur at all. As critical researchers, we need to pay attention to those patterns and regularities of social structure that generate social constraint and possibility. We also require a constant vigilance toward discourses in circulation, including our own, in order to trace the lineaments of discursive creativity and rhetorical persuasion. In this process, it is useful to adopt the kind of self-referential sensitivity advocated by Giddens (1984, p. 374) in his employment of “the double hermeneutic.” What Giddens has in mind is that while social scientists might carry with them more advanced theoretical appreciation of social forces than lay actors, (a more developed “discursive consciousness”) each of us - lay actor and social scientist alike - is a theoretician to some extent. Moreover, each of us is conditioned by the looser and common-sense realm of “practical consciousness.” The best social theory emerges from the ongoing four-way sharing of practical and discursive insights among researchers and those researched. Operating according to double hermeneutic principles also carries with it the probability of greater ethical soundness in research.

Social constructionism and realism share a rejection of the liberal enlightenment view of the monadic individual as the principal social actor. The worlds we inhabit are worked up through social practices that transcend individu-

al being. Texts and their contexts can tell us more than the decontextualized and ahistorical examination of monadic individuals. As Parker (1998, p. 1) says, discursive approaches in psychology represent: "a critical reflexive movement away from mental paraphernalia in each individual's head towards a socially mediated and historically situated study of action and experience."

Among the greatest gifts of discourse and rhetorical analysis is the insight that consciousness exhibits the capacity to resist the given world and to transform it. A key moment in this transformation is the practice of deconstruction. Parker and Shotter (1990) state that to deconstruct: "is not just to unravel hidden assumptions and to uncover repressed meanings, but to bring to the fore concerns altogether different from those implicated in the discourses concerned....a political economy of voice and silence." (p. 4)

In this political economy of voice and silence, the scarce resource is the capacity to be taken seriously, to be someone, to be heard and attended to, to have one's views noted. The marketplace is the realm of discourse itself: places and spaces in which speech can occur, texts can be inscribed and experiences symbolized. Arguing from a feminist perspective in discourse analysis, Smith (1999, p. 94) says that "knowledge must be differently written and differently designed if it is to bear other social relations than those of ruling." To continue the political economic metaphor, Smith is making the case for the "decommodification" of texts and for their re-inscription with the use values of the oppressed. Adopting a social constructionist mindset permits the agent to construct texts, syntaxes, grammars, tropes and words that are dangerous, unnerving, eccentric and potentially liberating. (Haste, 1993, pp. 205-207)

### Ideology

To infuse a discourse with particular patterns of ideas that purport to explain and justify the world - ostensibly in the interests of all, but actually according to the desires of a specific community - is to engage in ideological work. Ideologies are the consequence of the deliberate selection and shaping of ideas and ideals found in a broadly accepted political culture. Agents promoting an ideological orientation adopt one or more generic elements in the diffuse culture - such as a belief in freedom, order or equality - and then represent them in a more or less coherent view of the world. Ideologies offer explanations of the existing order and, depending on the orientation to the *status quo*, a vision of what might replace the established order, what needs to be done and encouragement to work for change.

Discourses are the ideal site at which to unearth the work of ideology in shaping and privileging aspects of the broader culture through the subjective and intersubjective work of reception. As Billig (1991, p. 14) says: "ideology operates through the mobilization of discourse. Thus, the processes of ideology, as means of mobilizing meaning, are also means of mobilizing consciousnesses." Ideologies are never complete or foolproof and are always open to contestation. Even when

discourses appear to exhibit ideological power, (systematic bias toward some order, regime or entity, achieved through coercive and persuasive semiotics) they may have elicited only grudging, partial, brittle or expedient consent from those affected by them. Those ideologies that are most successful are those we hear nothing about. They have so successfully infused discourse with the tropes of common sense and the taken-for-granted that they aspirate for social agents the very conceptual air that they breathe. It is interesting to note, however, how rapidly such acceptance can change and how speedily ideologies can be challenged and the known world changed.

Billig's work on rhetoric (1982, 1991, 1995, 1996) opens a methodology for deconstructing discourses to identify patterns of ideology. The entire range of tools for linguistic analysis is at our disposal. Easthope (1990, p. 78) identifies: "...phonetic, syntactic and semantic levels in language, the first pertaining to sound, the second to grammar and sentence structure, the third to systems of meaning." Analysis of the ideological attributes of discourse must also engage in forms of paralinguistic analysis. Parker (1989, p. 112) and Potter (1996b, p. 43) alert us to the importance of indexicality, obliging us to place the linguistic text in its social context. Specifically, sentences: "...are anchored to certain aspects of their contexts of utterance" in the analysis of "deixis." (Brown & Levinson, 1987, cited in Billig, 1995, p. 106). Thus, critical discourse analysis is time-consuming and challenging. Even highly sophisticated (social constructionist) analyses of texts are not sufficient on their own. They must be complemented with the broader contextualization of discourses (realist) in a reading of the social structure and social relations.

The analysis of discourse and rhetoric opens up the interplay between culture, consciousness and ideology. An adequate analysis of texts and contexts in which self-referential exploration is combined with reference to the life-worlds of others, promises to lay bare those words, symbols, indexes, texts, and narratives that convert chance and happenstance into discursive pattern and cultural potentiality into ideological destiny. In order to effect such developments, the political psychology of discourse might well be guided by the precepts of Jurgen Habermas (1975, pp. 107-108) in his conception of an "ideal speech situation," which I have modified. As people make use of the facility of enhanced communication across divergent cultures, such precepts seem increasingly important: each agent is accorded full dignity and respect; each agent's voice carries with it the genuine possibility of exerting an impact on others; people speak their "truths" with sincerity; dialogue is open and free; and no ideas fall victim to premature closure. While for Habermas, the emphasis is on the discursive moment itself my own emphasis is on the agentive capacity of those engaged in the dialogue. Habermas's position of stressing the twin ends of uniformity of argument and rational outcomes is, in my view, too narrow and limiting. There may simply be no agreed upon means and ends. But precisely because of this we must work toward the agentive powers I have specified.



**Individual and Society**

Among the more important services afforded by discourse analysis in social psychology is the calling into question of the unitary and unified individual, the ahistorical and asocial constant of most mainstream psychology. Certain scholars, inspired by a particular reading of Foucault and Derrida, have laundered critical theory of *any* conception of the coherent individual, regarding the individual as agent as a conceit which fails to recognize the constitution of that very subjectivity at the fragmented intersection of various discourses. I do not adhere to such conceptions. Instead, I conceive of the individual as the locus of consciousness and as the basis of ontological coherence. If such coherence is lacking, the individual can be regarded as more or less psychotic, unable to participate with agency in the social world. I favor Adorno's (1967, p. 69) version of the constitution of the individual: "People are incapable of recognizing themselves in society and society in themselves because they are alienated from each other and the totality." If individual pathology generates psychoses, *social* pathology generates misrecognition. Among the best known theoreticians of self in society is Rom Harré. It is worth citing him at length from *Social Being* (Harré, 1993) in order to draw the distinctions effectively:

"The self is a location, not a substance or an attribute...human beings become persons by acquiring a sense of self. But that can only occur in social milieu in which they are already treated as persons by the others of their family and tribe. The public-social concept of person then serves as a model for the private-individual concept of self" (p. 4)

"Among the most salient of...endowments [at birth] are conscious awareness, agentive powers and recollection. I simply assume that these features of the infant are capacities it has by virtue of a developing nervous system. But to become a person the infant's native endowments must be synthesized into a coherent and unified structure...In particular, conscious awareness becomes self-consciousness, agency becomes moral responsibility and recollection becomes the ordered memories of an autobiography through the acquisition, above all, of ways of making indexical reference to self and others, in short the pronoun system and its equivalents." (p. 6)

Harré's (1993) point is that while the self is always and everywhere a social construction, its evolution is grounded in endowments and potentialities that are inherent to the individual at birth. Consciousness (an individual feature) and culture (belonging to the collective) meet in the creation and recreation of discourses. Such work is evident in the dialogical conduct of rhetorical discourse in which individuals and groups exhibit the propensity to draw upon existing stocks of common sense, tropes, narrative structures, *clichés* and stereotypes in order to articulate, appropriate, subvert or in some other way engage them. Among the more important of these are what Moscovici calls "social representations." For Bhavnani (1991, p. 57) social representations are constructed as the unfamiliar is anchored to what is already known. Thus, social representations "objectify" ideas.

Consciousnesses draw upon social representations in their deliberative work, in the constitution of attitudes and arguments. This leads Billig (1996, p. 135) to the profound insight: "our thought processes, far from being inherently mysterious events, are modelled upon public debate." Such insight draws the psychological researcher away from the abstracted universal individual or unified personality toward the constitution of selfhood - always contingent and conditional - in practices of discourse.

This reading of individual and society is more than merely academic. In returning to Adorno's (1967) insight, abstracted and ahistorical individualism is a specific variant of social pathology with concrete effects. While there is some debate as to the extent and character of American individualism, a series of celebrated cultural critics, notably Riesman (1962), Hartz, (1964), Bellah et al. (1986), and Putnam (2000) has identified the social consequences of the hegemony of liberal individualism in American society. Michael (1990, p. 175) points out that in contemporary western societies, the *social* characteristics of dominant white, middle-class males have been resolved into sets of "individual" traits - purportedly fair and equal - by which all are now judged. Michael says (1990):

"Deconstruction would show, in this instance, how this individuality derives its power by simultaneously excluding its own group characteristics, while at the same time incorporating them as the unspoken ground on which individuality is based and which this individuality serves to sustain." (p. 175)

Critical studies in psychology employing discourse analysis and techniques of deconstruction entail constructions of self and society that transcend the limits of liberal individualism. As such they suggest techniques that are better suited than mainstream ones for the application of political psychology to non-western polities.

#### Crossing Boundaries

Through its exploration of the relationship between psyche and polity, political psychology suggests an approach deserving of more widespread currency than the USA and a handful of other, largely western, polities. Existing applications of political psychology to non-western environments have been curiously limited in their exploration of how theories and methodologies developed in the metropolis relate to cultural and social conditions in the periphery. Discourse analysis prompts us to adopt the perspective of the marginal, the outsider, the peripheral and the Other.

Billig (1996, p. 12) draws our attention to the liberating potential of certain aspects of postmodernism in opening spaces for the articulation of the feminine and "the Other" in rhetorical argumentation. Unlike Foucault (1980), Billig regards discourse as a site of argument. According to Billig (1996, p. 14) in Foucault's terms, discourses: "operate to obliterate argument in the interests of domination." Foucault's conception of discourse is very much as the

masculine force of language (*langue*) a structured order that imposes itself and forms of social and individual closure. For Billig as for Bakhtin, discourse - whether written or spoken - is also a matter of speech (*parole*) a playful reworking and creative subversion of language that invites the feminine.

Billig's deconstruction of British Prime Minister John Major's political rhetoric (Billig 1995, p. 102) illustrates the capacity of the marginal to subvert the mainstream. In a highly patriotic speech, Major employed a series of metonymic images in an attempt to craft a sense of British national identity. At one point he referred to: "the country of long shadows on county grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and pools fillers." These images constitute powerful rhetoric and engender a superficial appeal. Looked at from the margins of British society, however, they are also imperialistic, male, heterosexist, white and middle class in their exclusivity.

Haste (1993) celebrates the important work of feminists in social and political psychology, such as, Daly, Paglia, Irigaray, Cixous, Gilligan and Chodorow, in generating metaphors and discursive forms in counter-position to the mainstream. Haste (1993) speaks of women: "subverting the form of the text as well as its content...forms of language and syntax that are open, non-linear, unfinished, fluid, exploded, fragmented, polysemic and attempting to 'speak the body' - including the use of silence." (p. 207)

In Lacanian terms, to be positioned as an outsider, as marginal, as eccentric, engenders a space from which to question the encrusted and obdurate character of the established order. Employing a linguistic reading of Freud, Lacan defines this linguistic structure as the phallic "law of the Father." (Althusser, 1971; Gallop, 1975; Lacan, 1968, 1972; Rose, 1983; Roussel, 1968) In explaining the world, the system of phallic signification appears immutable. In practice, its very rigidity, in binding signifiers to signifieds, is simultaneously its brittle weakness. There is something indeed pompous and sententious in this linguistic order. It is vulnerable to ridicule, probing and playful manipulation. To break into the chain of signifiers of the phallic order is to return to that stage of ego development prior to the phallic stage, the narcissistic stage. Freud points out that our primary narcissism, which infants experience early in their development, is constituted by the conceit of omnipotent agency. The first recognition of one's own agency is a misrecognition of one's capacity to order the nature of things in the world, with all the attendant rage of frustration when such order remains unrealized. However, in returning to narcissism for a second time, the ego brings with it an understanding of the dominant discursive structures as well as the will and propensity to render it according to one's desires through the manipulation of metaphor and metonymy. Those on the margins of the dominant order, women, non-whites, gays and lesbians, the poor, the colonized and the oppressed have the most to gain and the greatest resources through which to undermine the law of the Father. However, the drive toward

secondary narcissism, while it liberates repressed terms and voices in the unconscious, is not necessarily beneficial. We can attack the established order, but this does not imply liberation for others. Also, as Jerrold Post (1993) points out, skilled mainstream politicians characteristically exhibit narcissism. Mainstream politicians are skilled in the arts of stimulating and motivating our desires. This can lead to the invocation of pseudo-subversive forces that, no matter how rebellious they might appear to be, are reactionary in their impact.

The radical spaces opened up through discourse analysis - the capacity to speak and write in different voices and different tropes - responds to Montero's profound concern with "altercentrism" in Latin American politics. (Montero, 1986, p. 422; Montero, 1997, p. 239) Altercentrism is the propensity of people to diminish their own worth and dignity through the voluntary denigration of their own marginal culture and society in combination with the sycophantic over-evaluation of cultures and societies in the metropolitan centre. Montero (1986, p. 422) refers to individuals and groups "...blaming themselves, denying their possibilities, and devaluing their identity." Such self-denigration leads to political apathy and despair. Montero (1997) calls for an active and interventionist political psychology to empower people, to:

"break the vicious cycle of self-diminishing attributions and political alienation. That is, ordinary people have to fight the belief that politics is a world that is foreign to them, belonging exclusively to professional politicians and holders of power whose decisions cannot be questioned." (p. 241)

The radical deconstructive potential of discourse analytical approaches suggests a political psychology that is capable of contributing to these ends.

### Conclusion

Discourses are spoken or written texts that render or represent our worlds to each other. Discourses produce, promote and suggest certain ontological, moral and epistemological realities. Produced and reproduced in societies, they condition and may even determine the agents who speak them. It is even plausible to state under certain circumstances that human individuals are the agencies through which discourses come to be articulated. At the same time, humanity possesses the creative capacity to speak in voices other than those of its inherited linguistic orders. It is through discourses that we attain individual agency; as it is attained, individual agency works on the very substrata of its own existence.

The discursive approach to political psychology problematizes the unitary and unified conception of the individual. Discourse analysis lays bare the fragmented, contingent, emergent and historically-socially contextualized nature of human agency. While not entirely rejecting traditional psychological conceptions, (attitudes, schema, and attributions) the discursive approach is centered upon the analysis of what people do as they give expression to their experience and attempt to order their worlds in so doing. The deconstruction of

discourses facilitates the tracing of lineaments of power in rhetoric and argument. This opens up existing dominant discourses to alternative and marginal readings. A critical realist epistemology regards discourses both as deliberate social constructions and as the consequence of social structures and forces, understood in the realist frame. Sensitivity to the double hermeneutic opens us to the exploration of structure and agency, individual and society in the making and remaking of meaning.

Ideologies are those partial appropriations from the broad culture that shape and determine meaning to the political advantage of dominant groups in discourse. To deconstruct such discourses requires both the social constructionist tools of textual analyses and the realist insights of the social structural relations underpinning such discourses and their generation. In order to deal adequately and ethically with the plenitude of lay and social scientific theories of reality that come together in discourses, Habermas' "ideal speech" (1975) precepts suggest self-conscious techniques through which to promote validation, insight, revelation and communication.

The opening up of the "individual" to the realm of the social encourages exploration of the social, historical and political within the individual as much as the role of the individual in the polity. Adopting a contingent and open position on individual being enables discourse analysis to craft an appreciation of the evolving character of individuality, and how in detail individual agents reflect and shape their inherited conditions.

Marginal voices, those of women, non-western societies, ethnic minorities and others, represent alternatives to the law of the father and suggest ways of seeing that render the taken-for-granted exceptional and the familiar absurd. Critical discourse analysis offers to political psychology a set of theoretical perspectives and methods of investigation that promise to deepen our appreciation of the personal and the political in ways that transcend the boundaries of western liberal possessive individualism.

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