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Discourse analysis

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DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse Analysis, to begin with a claim of broad consensus, poses the question of how to analyse culture not as a question of behavioural variables or objective social structures, but as a question of understanding culture 'from within' and it provides the cultural analyst with a concrete object of investigation- the text. Its premises draw upon Wittgenstein's 'language games' and upon Foucault's theory of 'discourse', both of which view language as a constitutive component of the social world.

Culture is constituted by the resources of meaning-making, language and image, which are available for use in a community of social actors at any given time. Historically specific and locally variable as these symbolic resources of meaning-making are, they always function to crystallise and to change social beliefs, relationships and identities in the form of texts. The term discourse refers precisely to the capacity of meaning-making resources to constitute social reality, forms of knowledge and identity within specific social contexts and power relations (Hall 1997: 220). In claiming that texts are multiply implicated in their social contexts and, thereby, come to shape various forms of knowledge and identity, Discourse Analysis has been instrumental in developing a more dynamic and historically-sensitive mode of critical inquiry into culture- what is broadly known as post-structuralism.

In this context, it is important to emphasise that behind the post-structuralist analysis of discourse lies a Saussurian theory of language as a meaning-making system that is organised around relationships of opposition and combination. For Saussure, meaning comes about from the possibility of linguistic signs to be different from one another and yet to complement each other in intelligible relationships within the system of language. At the same time, post-structuralism goes beyond Saussure's theory of language to argue that these relationships of meaning-making are not purely systemic, that is appertaining to the language structure itself, but also social- having their 'conditions of possibility' in the historical and political relationships in which they are embedded. In Foucault's terminology, linguistic relations appertain to particular systems of 'power/knowledge relations' specific to their historical juncture (1977:27).

In this sense, the Foucauldian concept of discourse sets up a constitutive relationship between meaning and power in social practice. Every move to meaning-making comes about from a position of power- power both structuring and structured by the social positions available within the practice. And every move to meaning-making makes a claim to

truth precisely from that power position that enunciates it; this is not the truth but always a truth effect, a truth that seeks to re-constitute and re-establish power through meaningⁱ.

Foucault does not, however, postulate that meaning and power pre-exist in an inseparable state as causal conditions of existence for social practice- as ontological a prioris of the social world. What he claims, rather, is that meaning and power are always already encountered in complex grids of co-articulation within every social practice – they are the historical a prioris of the social world. He therefore prefers to consider meaning and power as analytical dimensions of the social, which can be subject to systematic study in terms of their historical conditions of emergence and their effects upon social subjects. It is these effects of subjectification, whereby discourse calls into being forms of social identity at the moment that it simply claims to represent them, which have been the focus of Foucault's discourse analysis (Foucault 1982: 208).

Even though, as Detel says (2005: 6-36), the common view is to classify Foucault's analytical work into separate categories or periods- for example, with discourse analysis taking place in the framework of an archaeology of knowledge, and the analysis of power in the framework of genealogy and in the study of ethical techniques of the self - it would be more appropriate to think of Foucault's discourse analysis as combining the two. In engaging with texts, that is to say with practical forms of language use, discourse analysis simultaneously engages with questions of power, that is to say with the relationships and practices within which discourse is produced.

This situated conception of discourse analysis further implies that, far from considering discourse as a deterministic structure that eliminates agency and brings about the death of the subject, Foucault thinks of discourse as a productive technology of social practice, which subjects people to forms of power while, at the same time, providing them with spaces of agency and possibilities for action. I take this Foucauldian definition of discourse, where power and meaning always appear in a creative tension between agency and constraint, as a normative standard for critically evaluating Habermas' and Derrida's views on discourse in sections 2 and 3 below.

Whereas the situated and relational nature of meaning-making is today commonplace in the analysis of culture, there are differences as to how discourse-analytical perspectives conceptualise the relationship between meaning and power and, consequently, as to how they conceptualise the dynamics of agency and change in cultural analysis. It is these tensions that create varying impressions as to what Discourse Analysis can or cannot do. My discussion in this chapter then

focuses on two key conceptualisations of discourse in cultural analysis, in order to clarify the possibilities and limitations of this approach to the study of culture. My argument is in three steps.

In section one, '*Language, Discourse and Power*', I discuss the epistemological premises that inform post-structuralist Discourse Analysis, namely the 'linguistic turn' with its major ramifications, phenomenology, hermeneutics and their critical appropriations in the terrain of social constructionism. In section two, '*Traditions of Discourse Analysis*', I assess Habermas' Discourse Ethics and Derrida's Deconstruction. Each represents a key position within the antagonistic field of Discourse Analysis, proposing a different connection between meaning and power in cultural life. I argue that whereas Habermas emphasises the negative effects of power on meaning-making, Derrida thematises text and signification at the expense of broader questions of social power; neither of the two, however, adequately resolves the tensions involved in the concept of discourse. Finally, in section three, '*Discourse Analysis and Contemporary Culture*', I argue that one major concern in the study of culture today is to conceptualise and analyse discourse under conditions of technological mediation- about which both Habermas and Derrida have valuable insights to offer but which, again, neither adequately addresses. I conclude that the Discourse Analysis of culture today should reflexively navigate between and beyond the two positions, across all three dimensions of cultural analysis: the *diagnostic* (is mediation good or bad for our culture?), the *epistemological* (which conception of power and meaning is effective for cultural criticism today?) and the *methodological* (how to analyse language and image as inherent properties of our mediated culture?)ⁱⁱ.

1. Language, Discourse and Power

Wittgenstein's analytical philosophy, which introduces the 'linguistic turn' in social research, and the appropriation of phenomenology and hermeneutics in a theory of power, are the key epistemological developments that lead to a post-structuralist conception of discourse in the study of culture. It is these developments that I briefly review in this section.

The linguistic turn

The term 'linguistic turn' refers to a major shift in social scientific research from studying the world as an objective entity that exists 'out there' to studying the world as a language-mediated process that exists in discourse. It was Wittgenstein who reversed this order of inquiry from objective reality to language, when he asserted that there is no reality that

exists independently of language (Harris 1990: 27-45; Thompson 1984:67; 281-82).

Wittgenstein's concept of the 'language game' is premised upon the idea that the social world consists of different types of language activity, each of which is governed by rules specific to its context (Wittgenstein, 1958 sec.23). The rule-bound nature of each language activity suggests that, much like a game of chess, every linguistic utterance makes sense not on its own but only as part of the whole activity- hence the metaphor of the 'game'. It is, in other words, the positioning of each utterance in the strategic system of the language game that gives the utterance its meaning, rather than any inherent feature of the utterance as a linguistic sign, or the intentions of the speaker (Kripke 1982; Blackburn 1984 for a critical appraisal of Wittgenstein's position on the sociality of meaning production). Language, Wittgenstein asserts, is not a private but a social entity and, in its social capacity, language is not only about representing the world in words (the referential force of utterances) but also about doing things with words (the performative force of utterances)ⁱⁱⁱ. In a manner reminiscent of Saussure, as we shall see, the metaphor of the language game introduces to philosophical inquiry the idea that meaning, far from fixing a stable relationship between the human mind and an external object, is itself inherently unstable and contingent upon the social rules of human interaction.

Consequently, the reductive linguistic analysis of early analytical philosophy, whereby 'true' meaning was discovered through the formal study of sentences, is replaced by a heuristic analysis of how meaning is produced in context- in 'reflexive' linguistic analysis, where the analyst describes in detail how patterns of language use emerge as people talk and interact with one another (Habermas 1967:133-135). Because the social world consists of many different patterns of use, describing each one of them presupposes that the analyst not only understands the rules of each language game but is also able to move between games and through the various and incompatible logics of linguistic activity.

At the same time, in drawing attention to the incompatibility between language games, Wittgenstein is criticised for overemphasising difference at the expense of regularity across linguistic activities and, consequently, for regarding communication as an impossible achievement, rather than seeking to understand how communication can be achieved through difference. The epistemological relativism of cultural analysis, which begins with Winch's anti-positivism (1958) and culminates in Lyotard's 'delegitimation' of the discourse of science (1979/1992:40), is premised precisely on the idea that there are as many incompatible cultural forms of life and scientific rationalities as there are language games, and that these are so different from one another that no

comparison or evaluation is possible among them.

Against this type of relativism, it can be argued that the social relations of all language games are relations of power and that the rules of the language games are more or less institutionalized in specific fields of power - not least in science, where the production of knowledge is a game of competing and conflicting interests among paradigms. By regarding all games as on a par with one another and yet as radically different from each other, the Wittgensteinian perspective not only makes the evaluation of cultures and rationalities impossible, it also promotes a conception of culture that is devoid of dialogue, conflict and mutual influence, that is to say, of the basic dynamics of transformation inherent in every culture.

Phenomenology

The major premise of the 'linguistic turn', namely the language-mediated quality of the social world, is shared by another influential approach to the analysis of culture, the phenomenological analysis of everyday life. This is because phenomenology, too, emphasises the role of meaning in constituting social reality and relationships. Whereas philosophical phenomenology postulates that it is human consciousness which construes the world and, therefore, remains pre-linguistic in its conception of human action, sociological phenomenology postulates that it is human interaction that construes the world as common to all social actors (Schultz 1960, 1962)^{iv}.

The commonness of the world, or its 'intersubjectivity', is the key research focus for the group of phenomenological research traditions known as Action theories: *'how can two or more actors share common experiences of the natural and the social world and, relatedly, how can they communicate about them?'* (Heritage 1984:54). Action theories include the traditions of Ethnomethodology and Conversational Analysis, both heavily influential in social research. Despite their differences (Cicourel 2006), these traditions introduce to the study of culture the concept of linguistic performativity- a concept which, echoing Wittgenstein, refers to the power of language not only to represent but also to act upon the world in ways that have concrete effects on people. Language here 'performs' cultural identity, say gender or ethnic, through the use of speech acts and the management of utterances in specific interactions- an insight that, as we shall see in section 2, also informs Derrida's post-structuralist view of discourse.

The sociological inquiry into intersubjectivity, it follows, is not a theoretical but a practical project, which seeks to establish how people jointly produce and organise their lifeworld through local acts of conversation (Giddens 1993:34). Consequently, the methodology of Action Theories is empirical, invariably involving the analysis of

conversational texts through which social actors work towards a common understanding of the situation. Discourse Analysis categories that are extensively used and draw upon Action Theories include the 'sequential organisation of speech' (the overall logic of a stretch of talk), 'turn taking' (who speaks in which order), 'adjacency pair' (exchange units of dialogue, such as Question-Response) and 'indexicality' (language that refers to social realities beyond the text itself, by use of pronouns, adverbials of place and time)- for a critical overview of the methods and vocabulary of action theories see Thompson (1984: 98-118).

It is their insistence on things not as they 'really' are but rather as they are performed in language that brings the 'linguistic turn' and phenomenology together. Their common ground is a conception of reality that rests on the interpretations of its actors and a conception of science that does not seek a foundational 'truth' about how the world is. The difference between the two is that phenomenology locates the source of meaning and of human action in the language use of individual actors, rather than in the social rules of the language game.

From a post-structuralist perspective, then, the main criticism to be made of the phenomenological analysis of culture is that it tends to reduce the social world to the linguistic representations of its actors; in Bourdieu's words, phenomenological science is '*the purest expression of the subjectivist vision*' (1990:125). In its emphasis on the subjective dimension of social interaction, the criticism goes, phenomenology ignores historical and structural aspects of the social world, which may act upon social actors but which actors may not be able to directly perceive (for Foucault's ambivalent connection with phenomenology see Oksala 2005; Hann 2002; Rajan 2002).

This may be because phenomenology has a somewhat 'individualist' view of meaning, which conceives of language as a resource possessed and used by the individual at her own will. Rather than being a historical resource that positions social actors in social contexts of power, language is something that speech participants apply to their own purposes and effects- although always jointly and in interaction. As a consequence, social reality is not structurally prior to the individual but always re-invented from the particular horizon of the speech participant. Society in phenomenology is constituted *egocentrically* rather than socially, as Habermas puts it (1967/1988:107).

Hermeneutics

In contrast to the methodological 'egocentrism' of phenomenology, Gadamer's hermeneutics, one of the most influential research paradigms of the social sciences, considers meaning to be an ontological condition of social life that pre-exists the individual and defines the individual's

perception of self and others. In line with the 'linguistic turn', hermeneutics claims that there is no such thing as the 'social' before our ability to put it into language. It is the historical nature of language or, more accurately, the horizon of interpretation that linguistic communication has historically constructed, that provides the conditions for understanding our world- what Gadamer calls 'tradition'. Tradition introduces into the study of culture a historical macro-perspective on language as a generalised resource of symbolic definition that shapes our sense of social reality. In this, it corrects Wittgenstein's conception of the language game that ignores the 'macro' in favour of a 'micro'-perspective on what is specific, distinct and different from others in each language game (Outhwaite 1987:69).

At the same time, the understanding of language in terms of broad historical structures of meaning also challenges the phenomenological approach to culture as the sum of subjective acts of interpretation. By expanding the concept of culture beyond the local procedures of meaning-making, hermeneutics introduces into cultural analysis the idea that language is itself bigger than culture, encompassing 'everything, not only the culture that has been handed down through language, but absolutely everything...' (Gadamer 1976:25). Social, political and even economic realities are here considered to be parts of human experience mediated through language much like a 'mirror' that 'reflects everything that is' (1976:31).

The study of culture, it follows, coincides with the study of linguistic communication that, located as it is in the historical horizon of tradition, always involves an analysis of texts from within the limits of tradition^v. In the absence of an outside point of view, cultural analysis inevitably moves within the 'hermeneutic circle' of understanding, which uses the linguistic resources available in culture at any point in time, in order to reach deeper insights into human societies.

The 'hermeneutic circle', however, can easily turn into a vicious circle of relativism. Hermeneutics may rightly draw our attention to the inescapable situatedness of understanding, but it does not locate the act of understanding in concrete power structures that provide the specific positions from which cultural interpretations emerge. If everything is constituted within the totalizing whole of language and of tradition, there is no way of formulating normative criteria according to which different types of interpretation are evaluated against one another. Hermeneutics, in other words, acknowledges difference, linguistic or cultural, but it does not evaluate it.

From a Foucauldian perspective, we may consider the lack of a normative dimension in the hermeneutic analysis of culture to be related to its rather idealistic view of language (Outhwaite 1987: 61-71). As the

primary order of experience, language is somehow located beyond actual social contexts and above the dynamics of history or the politics of social groups. Rather than producing specific and differentiated effects of power, language serves simply to mediate the world, constituting what Gadamer calls 'the totality of our experience in the world' (1975:xiii).

Yet, if we accept that language is inherently implicated in struggles over power, then we cannot regard it as simply a benign means of reflecting 'everything that is' because not all that there is may be reflected. Rather, language is also a means of exercising power and it is itself a site of competing representations of the world (Habermas 1967/1988:172)^{vi}. Despite its interest in the broader conditions of meaning-making, hermeneutics shares with Action Theories an ultimately subjectivist view of the social world as existing in so far as it is perceived to exist by its actors- albeit not from the perspective of the individual consciousness but from the perspective of the collective consciousness of tradition (Outhwaite 1987:74).

Social Constructionism: Post-structuralism and Critical Theory

Post-'linguistic turn' approaches to cultural analysis constitute, broadly, the terrain of social constructionism. This is the terrain of a set of powerful epistemologies which break with science as the reflection of a positive reality and view science as itself a language game that constructs its objects of study through its own linguistic practices. In so doing, social constructionism not only opens up a critical outlook on to the modes of rationality through which scientific knowledge is produced, but also shifts the agenda of social research towards the study of human action as an inherently linguistic endeavour (Giddens 1993:75; Outhwaite 1987:10).

There is, however, a problem with these social constructionist epistemologies. All of them acknowledge, or even celebrate, difference between language games, between individualised acts of conversation or between traditions and cultures as an inherent trait of meaning-making that resides in the very structure of forms of life (in Wittgenstein), patterns of interaction (in action theories) or historical structures of meaning (in hermeneutics). None of them, however, acknowledges the existence of difference in social relations of power as an integral part of the work of language in constituting the social world. As a consequence, none of these social constructionist epistemologies are able to account for experience that goes beyond the appearance of the world in the speakers' language, nor can they explain cultural change that takes place through conflict and competition rather than free will and consensus among social actors.

The idea that power penetrates and organises the practices of

language use is established in the social sciences through two major perspectives: the post-structuralist perspective, which I outlined earlier with reference to Foucault, and the critical perspective, which is broadly associated with neo-Marxism and with the Frankfurt School. Their common argument is that linguistic difference is difference between social groups and cultures and that such difference is consolidated in historical processes of struggle rather than being a benign feature of tradition that can be overcome through dialogue.

The two perspectives differ in their conceptualisations of the relationship between meaning and power. For post-structuralism, this relationship is inherent to the very idea of discourse and linguistic practice, since for Foucault, let us recall, there is no meaning without a power position that enunciates it. As a consequence, for post-structuralists, culture is a regime of 'power/knowledge' - the slash signifying the inseparability of the two-, and social change can only occur as a tactical shift in the regime's power relations rather than as the utopia of a power-free culture. This constitutive link between meaning and power, in post-structuralism, has led to versions of Discourse Analysis that equate culture with meaning, power with the 'plays' of textual difference, and social change with novel combinations of textual signs (Bennett 1992: 24-29 ; 2003: 47-63 for a criticism). In the next section, I critically discuss Derrida's Deconstruction as an exemplary case of 'textualist' Discourse Analysis.

For neo-Marxism and the Frankfurt School, in contrast, language and power are organised around economic and political structures of domination and, therefore, changes in such structures also entail the promise of power-free communication. For neo-Marxist approaches, the relationship between meaning and power takes the form of ideological domination. Gramsci's term 'hegemony', one of the most influential concepts of power in cultural studies, focuses precisely on language as an instrument for constructing the 'common-sense' of culture, rather than taking economic interest to be the driving force of social dynamics. Breaking from Marxist determinism, this line of thinking introduces a cultural-linguistic perspective into political analysis and renders culture a significant terrain for social and political change. Influential in British Cultural and Media Studies as well as Political Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis, especially during in the 80s and 90s, neo-Marxist concepts such as 'hegemony', 'articulation' and 'rule by consent' are today an integral part of the critical vocabulary of the social sciences^{vii}.

The Frankfurt School has, similarly, focused upon the analysis of social power and culture, with important contributions to the study of mass popular culture and the emergence of consumer and media culture

in capitalist modernity. But it does so at the expense of engaging with the role of language in social life. The exception is Habermas's seminal theory of 'communicative action' and his thesis of Discourse Ethics, which I here take as the exemplary approach of a power-oriented Discourse Analysis in the study of culture.

Section 2, 'Traditions of Discourse Analysis', discusses the discourse approaches of Habermas and Derrida, in order to argue that, whereas neither adequately addresses the duality of discourse as both meaning and power, a dialogic juxtaposition of the two can contribute important perspectives to the critical analysis of culture.

2. Traditions of Discourse Analysis

Far from exhaustive, the approaches of this section illustrate two key positions in the study of contemporary culture from the perspective of discourse. Habermas represents a power-oriented analysis of discursive communication in public life and Derrida represents a textualist approach to discourse analysis. For different reasons, these approaches to culture do not ultimately manage to account for the dual dimension of discourse both as power and as meaning- both as social and historical relations and as material technologies of text.

I wish to argue that cultural analysis today would benefit from a dialogic approach that keeps in creative tension the textualist interest in the production of meaning with the interest in power and its specific and material articulations with discourse. As I claim in section 3, given that our culture is today thoroughly mediated by diverse technologies (from print and electronic to digital media) and types of mediation (mass, interactive or personalised), the analysis of culture needs to incorporate a more historicised view of discourse both as systemically embedded in the material technologies of texts, bringing together the semiotics of language-image-sound, and as socially embedded in asymmetrical relationships of media interaction, engaging audiences in subtle forms of agency and subjectification.

Habermas' 'Discourse Ethics'

Habermas' theory of discourse stems from his own critical engagement with hermeneutic research, where he advocates that hermeneutics has to be complemented by 'a reflection upon the limits of hermeneutic understanding' itself (1982: 190). Discourse Ethics is just such a reflection. Following hermeneutics, Habermas recognises that knowledge formation takes place within the limitations of language and simultaneously, pushing hermeneutics to its limits, he recognises that relations of power constrain and shape the production of knowledge

(Outhwaite 1987: 61). Discourse Ethics is, in this sense, Habermas' attempt to analyse communication, subjective and power-laden as it always is, through a set of inter-subjective rules of evaluation that are themselves not distorted by power- and therefore to be able to identify the degree to which the four main validity claims to speech are upheld in any communicative practice.

Discourse, in this context, is that particular form of communication which is comprehensible, truthful, sincere and appropriate for all participants independently of their status (Searle 1969). Because power is always implicated in real communicative encounters, however, Habermas' discourse only refers to an 'ideal speech situation' that is free of the pressures of hierarchical relations and therefore can apply the 'universal' principles of fair conversation (for criticisms see Thompson 1984: 273-4; Hoy & McCarthy 1995:177-88; Butler 1997: 86-8).

For this reason, we should not view Habermas' discourse as being about linguistic practices as such. Discourse, or Diskurs, refers rather to an analytical norm that defines the degree to which actual linguistic practices distort communication, by systematically ignoring the validity claims of speech. Despite mainstream classifications, Habermas's Discourse Ethics and the Foucauldian concept of discourse are not purely antithetical. Their convergence (Hanssen 2000:1-14) lies precisely in Habermas' refusal to think of language independently of power. It lies moreover in his belief that cultural change is constituted through the dynamics of discourse as communicative action. Discourse Ethics, similarly to Foucault, is therefore grounded in a view of discourse as praxis, as procedure rather than 'content' of communication. Where Habermas differs from Foucauldian post-structuralism is in his insistence that, after all, language and power can and should be dislocated, in the realm of the 'ideal speech situation'. Habermas' concept of discourse then may be called paradoxical, in so far as it both points to the inseparability of language and power in contemporary culture and, at the same time, anticipates their separation in the ideal of power-free cultural encounters.

From this perspective, Habermas' Discourse Analysis is not simply a proposal for the scientific analysis of culture beyond hermeneutics. It is also, importantly, a proposal for the conduct of cultural life today, in his theory of the public sphere- Discourse Ethics pointing precisely to the ethics of public conduct that this theory of discourse seeks to formulate. Consequently, the ambivalence in Habermas' concept of discourse throws into relief another paradox- a paradox in Habermas' concept of culture.

Habermas' view of discourse has two implications for his view of culture. First, in evoking the 'ideal speech situation',

Habermas poses a strict normative standard as to how our public life should look: it should be culture without power. Indeed, even though the concepts of public sphere and culture cannot be conflated, Habermas does not strictly differentiate the two. In defining the public sphere as the sphere of lifeworld relations enacted in a public space of deliberation, Habermas' view of culture emerges as a hybrid concept. Culture brings together, on the one hand, the practices of everyday life and the figure of the private person (the lifeworld) and, on the other hand, the practices of civil society and the figure of the citizen (the public). In this view of culture, it is the citizen who brings everyday life under the public spotlight and turns the private into a legitimate object of collective deliberation, under conditions of rational-critical discourse (Gardiner 2004: 28-46; Fraser 1989: 113-43).

Whereas it may be argued, conversely, that it is purely the lifeworld, that is to say 'the linguistically organised stock of interpretive patterns' (Habermas 1987: 124), which constitutes culture as a collective resource for people's everyday acts of understanding, in fact Habermas' insistence on the norm of communication without power necessarily always brings into his definition of culture the rationality of the 'ideal speech situation' - a public rationality, par excellence. This is because the lifeworld, protected as it is from institutional authority and expert systems, consists primarily of sedimented ideologies and unexamined values and interpretations. How else, then, could these 'doxas' of the lifeworld become amenable to intersubjective judgement and, thereby, lead to a fairer conduct of dialogue, unless they were elevated to the rational critical discourse of the public sphere and became subject to the test of the validity claims of speech?

The first problem, therefore, with Habermas' Discourse Ethics is an ambivalence in his conceptual account of culture. Culture is, on the one hand, lifeworld relations, (theoretically) immune to the erosion of systems of power but full of unreflexive 'doxas', and, on the other hand, a characteristically civil phenomenon that is capable of subjecting these 'doxas' to rational criticism (Gardiner 2004: 41; Fraser 1989: 122-29; Thompson 1984:273-74). Whereas culture, as we shall see below, is better conceptualised as the co-articulation of the two- that is, forms of knowledge and belief in the lifeworld together with the overt forms of rationalisation in public life- and cultural analysis is, therefore, about rendering explicit the boundaries of tension between the two, Habermas remains unhelpfully suspended between asserting their clear differentiation and, simultaneously, eliding their articulation (Fraser 1989: 113-143).

It is evident that the elision between lifeworld and the public has to do with Habermas' belief that communication without power, Diskurs, is

the most desirable form of communication in our culture. Yet, from a Foucauldian perspective, Habermas' Discourse Ethics unduly imposes one specific norm of communication, power-free communication, as the 'universal' norm of public ethics- a norm for all times and all societies. Rather than considering power to be a productive economy of culture, both (potentially) positive in that it makes possible all forms of communication in the lifeworld and the public, but also (potentially) negative in that it creates hierarchies between the lifeworld and the public or between the private person and the citizen, Habermas only thinks of power as something negative, a distortion that we must eliminate (Fraser 1997:76; Calhoun 1995:75).

Habermas' 'universal' norm of discourse brings me to the second implication of his concept of culture. Culture, for him, should be about communication in face-to-face encounters; about dialogue that requires the presence of participants in speech. This is no longer an argument about the validity conditions of communication, or Diskurs, but an argument about the historical conditions under which our culture came to lose its public life and, with it, the promise of undistorted communication. This historical understanding of the conditions of communication today, however, still evokes the ideal of undistorted communication as the 'paradise lost' of contemporary culture and blames the mass media for this loss.

The mass media, Habermas argues, are responsible for transforming what used to be a public space of active deliberation over lifeworld matters into a mass culture that thrives on the passive consumption of spectacle^{viii}. Drawing on the critical legacy of the Frankfurt School, Habermas accuses the media, particularly television, that they manipulate public opinion for political power and for economic profit. Culture, in this account, is seen as increasingly conquered by systems of power that corrode critical discourse through the trojan horse of mediated entertainment.

The second problem with Habermas' Discourse Ethics then lies in an ambivalence in his historical account of culture. How can the ideal of undistorted communication survive in a culture where the vast majority of public talk takes place in and through the media? Is mediated lifeworld a dimension of culture still 'protected' by systems of power or is it colonised ('re-feudalised' as Habermas says) by them? And is the mediated public a dimension of culture that could promise the ideal of civil judgement or does it only serve specific political and economic interests? As before, Habermas does not seem to see the two sides of each tension as a matter of particular articulations in specific contexts and moments in time. These tensions of culture remain as unresolved paradoxes throughout his work.

It is evident that Habermas' problem with the pervasive mediation of culture today has to do with his idea that face-to-face communication is more desirable than the mediated. Indeed, the key argument of Habermas' account on the transformation of the public sphere associates the decline of face-to-face communication, in the 18th century public debates of the Viennese coffee house, with the rise of electronic technologies that promote one-way communication flows- a form of 'quasi-interaction' in contrast to the 'dialogic interaction' of physical proximity (Thompson 1995 for the vocabulary).

From a Foucauldian perspective, again, Habermas' Discourse Ethics can be criticised not only in so far as its conceptual account of culture takes power-free communication to be a 'universal' norm of communication, but also in so far as its historical account of the present elevates face-to-face dialogue to a 'universal' norm of public life. At a time when contemporary culture is constituted by mediation, Habermas insists on looking back to unmediated dialogue as the one desirable norm for communication for all societies and all times.

In summary, Habermas' Discourse Ethics seeks to provide the analysis of culture with a measure that distinguishes ethical from unethical, fair from unfair, manipulative from genuine communication. However, his approach has a rigidly normative orientation that fails to acknowledge both the positive role of power in enabling the ongoing production of culture through communication and the presence of mediation in contemporary culture. As a consequence, his Discourse Ethics gives rise to pessimistic accounts of contemporary culture and, importantly, it does not provide a perspective on change in a culture that is increasingly saturated by media technologies and communications. Derrida's Deconstruction builds upon a less universal and more situated account of discourse and, thereby, develops a more optimistic view of contemporary culture. But, again, this is not without costs for cultural analysis.

Derrida's 'Deconstruction'

Derrida's theory of discourse stems from a critical engagement not with hermeneutics, as does Habermas', but with structuralism. Following Saussurian linguistics, Derrida recognises that all forms of knowledge arise out of the meaning relations - relations of opposition and combination - inherent in language structure; simultaneously, pushing structuralism to its limits, Derrida claims that these relations of meaning have a capacity for re-combination that transcends the closed structure of language. In this sense, Derrida is concerned less with language as a system of signs and more with discourse understood as an open field of meaning relations, which cannot be fully predicted by its system and

which fully constitutes our experience of the world.

Discourse, in Derrida, is therefore something very different from Habermas' 'ideal speech situation'. Discourse is the condition of possibility for any speech situation, in so far as it is a loose quasi-structure that enables the mobility of all linguistic signs in infinite combinations of text. Meaning, it follows, is always an unfinished business because these signs constantly alter their relationship to other signs as they travel from context to context. Traces of signs exhibit a minimal sameness in the different contexts in which they appear, yet they are slightly modified in these new contexts (Howarth 2000:41). It is the capacity of the sign both to appear different and to be recognized as the same, the 'iterability' of discourse, that lies at the heart of Derrida's project of Deconstruction.

Deconstruction is an analytical project which aims at demonstrating that all dominant systems of thought emerge through discourse and, therefore, are contingent and fragile constructions rather than absolute truths. The key deconstructive practice is to subject texts to analysis of their discursive elements, in order to show how these texts privilege certain meanings at the expense of others and, in so doing, manage to construe specific regimes of meaning as 'the' truth. The discourse analysis of Deconstruction proceeds in two moves.

First, it involves a re-description of the linguistic features of the text in order to show, in an 'interior' reading, how these features are put together in a coherent whole, by suppressing the meaning potential inherent in the oppositions of language - such as self-Other, white-black, male-female. Second, it seeks to establish, from an 'exterior' position, how the text succeeds in producing its specific topic in meaning by fixing 'points of undecidability', that is by imposing one dominant meaning over other possible alternatives- self over Other, white over black, male over female. This second move is key to Deconstruction. It shows that, whilst every text is produced at the expense of suppressing the iterability of discourse, it is also always undermined by these very oppositions of meaning that, in seeking to suppress them, the text inevitably carries.

The idea that the text is an inherently ambivalent construct is the most important tenet in Derridean discourse analysis and, broadly, in post-structuralist thinking. In opposition to Habermas' 'universalism', where the removal of differences of power guarantees ideal forms of speech, Derrida tells us that the production of meaning never escapes the constraints of its context- meaning is radically historical and, therefore, always partial and incomplete.

How exactly does the concept of culture figure in Derrida's conception of discourse and what implications does this concept have for the analysis of culture? As in the discussion of Habermas, I address a

conceptual and a historical dimension of Derrida's definition of culture^{ix}.

First, the conceptual dimension. Derrida's concept of discourse implies that culture does not pre-exist the performative force of signification. It is, therefore, impossible to fix people's identities, as private or public, before they are performed in discourse, and it is equally impossible to assume people's sense of community with others as pre-existing its construction in discourse.

Central to this performative conception of culture is Derrida's deep suspicion towards speech- a mode of communication that favours the proximity of face-to-face over the written word. Derrida's broader critique of western modernity as 'logocentric' challenges precisely the key role that speech plays in our understandings of culture as a matter of 'being-together' and of the public as a conversation among equals- the Habermasian view. At the same time, Derrida's critique of 'logocentrism' is simultaneously a re-appraisal of the written mode of communication and its dual function: to produce meaning, as speech does, but also, in so doing, to inscribe meaning onto various materialities, from stone to paper to analogue and digital surfaces (Derrida 1976: 27-64). It is this capacity for inscribing and, thereby, reproducing meaning through various media of representation that is essential, for Derrida, in constituting any form of sociability, including our current cultural and political communities (Howarth 2000: 36-42).

The mediation of meaning through technologies of recording is, by this token, also constitutive of culture because mediation enables the dispersal of discourse beyond the locales of immediate interaction and decouples communication from any particular person as the sovereign and embodied author of discourse. Derrida's culture, in this sense, consist of spaces of discourse that are constantly disarticulated and rearticulated through those technologies of meaning that bring them into being as, specifically, political or cultural, public or lifeworld.

This view of culture manages to avoid Habermas' normative standard that our public life should involve culture without power. It is evident that Derrida does not consider social differences, reflected as they are in communication practices, to be a problem that, once eliminated, would lead to the elimination of inequalities in the conduct of public life. Yet, precisely because difference for him is primarily a systemic category that originates in language – society itself being structured 'like language' -, Derrida does not adequately deal with social relations of power (Caputo 1997: 104; Butler 1997:150-1; Said 1978:703).

Power in Deconstruction appears only as a constraint upon the workings of the text. And because it never transcends the materiality of semiotic codes, power never becomes something that is located in specific contexts of human action with their own institutional and

material character. A consequence of this thorough textualisation of culture is that Derrida further fails to install analytical distinctions between spheres of human practice, such as culture, society or politics (Rose 1999; Bennett 2003). These historically distinct domains of social practice are subsumed under the all-encompassing category of discourse and their analysis is reduced to the indiscriminate deconstruction of texts in terms of their 'play of differences' and linguistic effects.

This brings me to the historical dimension of Derrida's concept of culture. To be sure, Derrida's diagnosis of contemporary culture as thoroughly mediated is more positive than Habermas'. For Derrida, the transformations that the media bring about in our cultural experience today, either in global broadcasting or new media interactivity, are simply a radicalisation of iterability; after all, the deferrals and shifts of meaning across media and their contexts of use have always been a part and parcel of communication. Questions of truth and authenticity, proximity and distance, self and 'other', which have always haunted the debate on cultural publics and political communities, Derrida argues, today return with a vengeance, demanding new answers in the contexts of electronic and digital media.

Nevertheless, this positive narrative does not go with a concrete historical account of the relationship between media and culture. How can we best conceptualise the power of the media today and how can such conceptualisations contribute, as Derrida himself envisages, to the critical project of imagining 'global cultures' or 'cosmopolitan subjects'? How can we understand the impact of interactive texts of new media technologies on new cultural collectivities- as an expansion of consumption or as an emerging sense of publicness? Derrida does not address such questions. He does not offer adequate insight into the material conditions and the specific logics of power, which make our mediated culture what it is today. This neglect is probably due to the general detachment that characterises Derrida's project of Deconstruction towards the specificity and historicity of practices of cultural life (Howarth 2000: 46).

As a consequence, Deconstruction also demonstrates a certain indifference towards the discourse analysis of contemporary texts of mediation that go beyond traditional forms of signification, such as the moving image or multi-media interfaces- even though Derrida acknowledges the semiotic complexity of such texts and gestures towards the importance of developing a new analytics of the image (2002: 263).

In summary, Derrida offers a situated account of our culture as discourse, which rests on the capacity of signification to bring culture into being and on the affirmation that mediation, far from a necessary

evil, is the very condition of possibility for contemporary culture. Derrida's account, however, does not include an understanding of power as a social category that organises relationships between groups and individuals, and, therefore, his account tends to reduce power to linguistic oppositions within texts and to limit social agency to the regimes of action provided by texts themselves.

While Habermas' Discourse Ethics privileges social relations of power over the performativity of discourse and, thereby, reduces discourse to a 'universal' norm in the service of his ideal of power free culture, Derrida's deconstruction privileges performativity over social power and, thereby, ignores the historical and material constraints of culture that always already regulate the performativity of discourse. What I suggest, in section 3, is a dialogic navigation between and beyond the two, which avoids the shortcomings of Discourse Ethics and Deconstruction whilst, simultaneously, it recognises the constitutive role of mediated discourse in our culture and the pressing dilemmas that such discourse confronts us with today.

3. Discourse Analysis and Contemporary Culture

Discourse Ethics and Deconstruction disagree in their conceptual approaches to discourse. Yet, their accounts of contemporary culture agree that discourse today is thoroughly mediated. Mediation is a key dimension of our culture and Discourse Analysis can now barely address the dynamics of culture independently its contexts of mediation. In this section, I take my point of departure in the mediated quality of our culture and address three dimensions of cultural analysis that the discursive perspective can usefully address. These dimensions are the diagnostic (in *Diagnostics of Culture and Phronetic Research*), the epistemological (in *Analytcs of Culture: Difference within and Outside the Semiotic*) and the methodological (in *The Discourse Analysis of Culture: Critical and Multi-modal perspectives*).

Diagnostics of Culture and Phronetic Research

At the heart of both accounts of culture, in Discourse Ethics and in Deconstruction, lies the question of the ethics of mediation^x. Habermas' pessimism expresses disillusionment with the promise of the mass media to re-invent the conditions of proximity necessary for public dialogue and, thereby, to deliver the goods of a democratic politics and an inclusive culture^{xi}. If Habermas' ethical problem with mediation refers primarily to the cultural space of the western nation-state, the 'democratic sovereign' as he calls it, Derrida poses the ethical problem of mediation

in a more cosmopolitan manner. In Derrida's optimistic account, the question of ethics is essentially one about how we western spectators manage our encounter with the 'arrivant', the cultural 'other' who enters our homes through the media and demands our attention, emotion and even action (Derrida 2002: 11-16).

A key concern in both accounts is the 'de-territorialisation' of experience that mediation brings about in our culture: the experience of connecting us with dispersed locations and people around the globe without, at the same time, giving us the option to communicate with or act upon them, in any meaningful way.

Normative Values and Cultural Theory : This is not a new problem. The majority of cultural theory acknowledges that the discursive power of the media lies precisely in their power to make the spectators witness distant realities and events otherwise unavailable to them (Peters 1999; Tester 2001; Ellis 2001; Silverstone 1999, 2006). This witnessing function of mediation is the most profound moral claim upon contemporary cultural identities, dividing cultural theory into two types of diagnosis concerning the role of the media as agents of moral responsibility: an optimistic and a pessimistic diagnosis (Tester 2001; Chouliaraki 2006: 23-9).

The optimistic diagnosis celebrates the proliferation of mediated signs, linguistic and visual, because this diffusion of messages facilitates our engagement with other places and people across the globe and brings about a 'democratization' of responsibility and a new cosmopolitan disposition (Giddens 1990, 1991; Thompson 1990, 1995; Tomlinson 1999). This is, essentially, a positive interpretation of Derrida's idea that the media accentuate the natural iterability of discourse- an interpretation that becomes, eventually, appropriated in a 'happy story' of ethical action. The pessimistic diagnosis, by contrast, laments the fact that the media sensationalize or exoticize distant places and people and turn their realities, often realities of suffering and war, into spectacles for consumption (Tester 2001:1-9; Miller 1971:183). This cultural pessimism echoes Habermas' criticism of the media, on the grounds that they entertain the illusion of engaging with public life when, in fact, they commodify information and aestheticize politics.

Evidently, these two diagnostic positions concerning the ethics of mediation today draw upon normative claims about the role of discourse in culture: mediated discourse is treated as either inherently good, under the influence of a Derridean view, or as inherently bad, under the influence of, among others, a Habermasian view^{xiii}.

The Foucauldian perspective on discourse, however, understands

the mediation of culture as a ‘power/knowledge’ regime - a regime of meanings with its own historical relations of power, which defines how specific media produce ethical discourse in their institutional contexts of operation. This Foucauldian position challenges the diagnostic ethos of cultural theory on the grounds that it is prematurely normative: it already entails an implicit evaluation of discourse, optimistic or pessimistic, before it empirically investigates concrete practices of mediation.

Normative Values and Discourse Analysis: The Foucauldian position on discourse maintains that the potential of mediation to cultivate a sensibility beyond the ‘at home’ is neither de facto possible, as in the optimistic diagnosis, nor a priori impossible, as in the pessimistic diagnosis. The potential of mediation to deterritorialize our ethical sensibilities, as much as it deterritorializes our technological contact with the ‘other’, has its own historical and social conditions of possibility.

This diagnostic ethos in cultural analysis is characteristic of the Aristotelian practice of *phronesis* (practical or everyday reason), which deals with the question of culture and ethical norms from the concrete perspective of praxis^{xiii}. Phronesis approaches ethics as the situated enactment of values in the discursive practices of culture, rather than as a priori norms that regulate our narratives of culture (Flyvebjerg 2001: 53-65). Phronetic discourse analysis, in this sense, is a form of critical inquiry that regards texts as particular instantiations of those public values and norms that, at a particular moment in time, happen to be dominant in our culture- hence their ‘universal’ status.

The normative perspective of phronetic discourse analysis, it follows, neither pre-supposes Habermas’ ‘universal’ value of power-free culture, rendering any account of mediated culture pessimistic, nor does it dissolve media power into the Derridean ‘plays of difference’ on the surface of particular texts. Rather, the normative perspective of phronetic discourse analysis seeks to show that every text entails its own struggle of ‘universal’ vs ‘particular’ meanings and that the dominance of certain meanings as ‘universal’ is an effect of the relations of power in which the text is embedded.

Phronetic discourse analysis, therefore, begins with the question of ‘how’: how the texts of mediation manage to ‘universalise’ certain ethical meanings whilst suppressing others as ‘particular’. Whereas this formulation of discourse analysis is reminiscent of Derridean Deconstruction, the concern with power, to which I return just below, provides a critical corrective in the diagnostic capacity of Derridean discourse analysis. In place of the various diagnoses of culture, with their

implicit normativity, phronetic Discourse Analysis proposes a Diagnostics of culture: a procedure of critical engagement with concrete texts, which, in their cumulative production and consumption come to shape our present as a particular historical moment.

Analytics of Culture: Difference Within and Outside the Semiotic

A diagnostics of culture takes its point of departure in the claim that our involvement in culture, mediated and de-territorialized as it is, rests upon ethical values that appear as 'universal' but are, in fact, construed by the semiotic choices of texts of mediation and by the relations of power that these practices of mediation articulate and reflect.

What this means is that the shift towards a phronetic discourse analysis of culture is not only a shift from normative diagnoses of culture towards situated practices of mediation- texts. It is also a shift in understanding the role of power in culture and the ways in which power may appear in the form of texts. This poses a problem of epistemology for cultural analysis, because it has implications as to how we conceptualise power as an analytical category.

Difference within and outside the semiotic: For Derrida, let us recall, power resides in meaning itself and is conceptualised as difference within the semiotic system of language. This leads to a textualist bias, which often tends to understand cultural politics as a play of linguistic difference. Informing the majority of post-modern cultural studies, particularly the paradigm of audience studies, the textualist emphasis often tends to celebrates pleasure, consumption and individual empowerment- what McGuigan calls 'cultural populism' (1992).

For Habermas, on the other hand, power resides outside semiotic systems and is conceptualised as difference in society; difference, here, either traverses social relations between people, and can be bracketed out in the 'ideal speech situation', or lies in the political-economic relations of technology, and distorts public communication. This type of 'universalism' harmonises with traditional Political Economy studies of media industries, which emphasise the dependence of mediation on economic interest and, in a deterministic manner, deny the possibility that the media produce critical discourse.

What we need for an analysis of mediation that avoids textualism and universalism is a view of power which refers simultaneously to both types of difference: difference that is textual or difference within the semiotic, following Derrida, and difference that is social or difference outside the semiotic, following Habermas. Useful, to this end, is the distinction between discourse as a power/knowledge regime, which –as we have seen- places emphasis on the textual or semiotic side of

discourse, and discourse as governmentality, which places emphasis on the side of discourse as a contemporary form of power that seeks to govern populations and individuals through the ‘micro’-practices of their everyday conduct. Whereas both sides of the distinction (power/knowledge and governmentality) take into account text and power, as Foucault would insist, there are differences of emphasis between the two and, therefore, in their conceptualisation of cultural agency and change.

If discourse as a power/knowledge regime comes closer to a view of culture as text, giving rise to the analytical traditions I reviewed earlier, discourse as governmentality comes closer to a view of culture as an ensemble of material technologies and practices that seek to promote specific modes of being, relating and acting upon oneself and others.

Discourse and Governmentality: Mediation, I wish to argue, needs to be understood and analyzed as a technology of governmentality, that is as a technology of contemporary rule that does not exercise direct authority on people but acts indirectly on the qualities of connectivity and interactivity among media publics so as to cultivate certain types of identity and agency.

It is the fact that action in the media is always action at a distance that most forcefully thematizes the dimension of mediation as governmentality. Because of the practical impossibility to ‘be there’ in the de-territorialised space of the media, the forms of engagement that the media make available have less to do with immediate, practical action and more to do with patterns of identification on the part of media users (Barnett 2003:102). This is the case not only with electronic media, such as television and its options for identification through its multiple genres and narratives, but also with new media, such as blogs and msn spaces, where the potential to create a virtual civic society rests precisely on the capacity of media users for imaginary identification, deliberation and action at a distance (Dahlgren 2000).

In this sense, we should regard mediation as a process of technological meaning production and dissemination which is firmly located in the global relations of information technology- both in the asymmetrical patterns of global viewing and in the unequal access to new media technologies. The question of who watches and who suffers, to take an example from Habermas’ and Derrida’s concerns with the ethics of mediation, captures a fundamental aspect of this asymmetry, which, grounded as it is in differences in economic resources and political regimes, becomes refracted and reproduced through mediation in the hierarchies of place and human life that divide our world^{xiv}.

Through this example, we can see that the definition of mediation

as a technology of governmentality capitalizes on the semantic ambiguity of the term *technology* as a materiality that enables not only the process of mediation itself, in the technical devices of recording or digitalising information, but also the exercise of power, in the re-production of global relations of viewing. In its governmental capacity, the example tells us, mediation mobilizes regimes of meaning in order to shape the conduct of particular media publics in terms of who cares about whom or who acts for whose benefit. It therefore begs for an analysis of power that focuses specifically on how the media selectively report on human affairs around the world and, in so doing, manage to promote (or not) certain cultural sensibilities, those of the ‘cosmopolitan philanthropist’ or the ‘global citizen’, under conditions of cultural deterritorialisation^{xv}.

The view of mediation as a technology of governmentality is fully compatible with the phronetic spirit. Neither celebrating the audiences’ capacity to re-articulate the ‘play of differences’ in media texts nor a priori precluding the capacity of the media to engage audiences in critical discourse, governmentality conceptualises cultural agency as conditional freedom.

Conditional freedom refers to the function of media texts to regulate, but by no means determine, our capacities for engaging with other people, by opening up multiple ethical positions for us to identify with. This multiple economy of identification is inherently ambivalent. It is positive, because we can only relate to others on the condition that we are already constituted as free subjects that draw selectively upon an existing repertoire of identity resources- those of the philanthropist, the activist or simply the voyeur (Boltanski 1999). And it is negative, because the systemic ‘bias’ in the possibilities for identification across western media ultimately reproduce an exclusively western sensibility towards people who are culturally closer to us at the expense of those who are not- Derrida’s ‘arrivants’. It is this ambivalence in the economy of identification of the media that makes the relationship between media text and media users an ethical relationship, par excellence, and a crucial stake in the shaping of a cosmopolitan culture today.

Foucault uses the Aristotelian concept of ‘analytics’, in order to distinguish his own study of power as a double economy of freedom and subjectification from an abstract ‘theory’ of power. Discourse Analysis, I would argue, is a form of an analytics of culture, in so far as it accounts for this duality of power; in so far, that is to say, as it describes in detail the operations of mediated meanings (or difference within the semiotic), so as to show how these meanings engage human beings with specific technologies of rule and place them in concrete relationships of power to one another (or difference outside the semiotic).

The Discourse Analysis of Culture: Multi-modal and Critical perspectives

I consider the duality of the concept of difference to be a key distinction for the methodology of the analytics of mediation in contemporary culture. In difference within the semiotic, focus falls on each technological medium and its meaning-making affordances, such as the telephone and the privileging of the verbal vis-à-vis, say, television and the privileging of the image, or interactive media and the privileging of a mix of the verbal and the visual. In difference outside the semiotic, focus falls on the work of language and image that these technologies perform in representing the social world and in formulating proposals of moral involvement with the social world- implicitly or explicitly. In practice, of course, technological and semiotic mediation are not separable, but the distinction helps us draw attention to the moment of their articulation, say of a camera position and its images, and how such articulation works as a technology of power- zooming in on and personalising the other or zooming out and keeping a distance from her or him.

Multi-modal Discourse Analysis: Difference within the semiotic refers to difference that resides in the very system of language or the image (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996; 2001; van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001 for the grammar of the visual; see also van Leeuwen & Jaworski 2002; Perlmutter and Wagner 2004; Schroeder 2006). The analysis of mediation as difference within the semiotic is multi-modal analysis. Multi-modal analysis is not a radical break from the analytical frameworks that I have examined, which centre on the analysis of language as the main meaning resource. Multi-modal analysis is, rather, an opening of Discourse Analysis to the semiotic mode of the image. In recognising that the visual is *'an independently organised and structured message – connected with the verbal text, but in no way dependent on it'* (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996: 17), multi-modal analysis focuses on the ways in which media technologies bring image and language together in hybrid texts, on various types of screens- from television to the pc or the mobile phone- and in various modes of interactivity – from no- to quasi- to full- interactivity. In so doing, multi-modal analysis draws creatively upon a variety of traditions, including aesthetic theory and art history, phenomenology of the image, social semiotics and iconographic analysis, formulating a distinct and increasingly popular approach to cultural analysis^{xvi}.

The methodological principle of multi-modal analysis is that the technologies of mediation construe regimes of meaning, which represent the world in various degrees of connectivity to us, media

publics. These regimes of meaning in mediation do not coincide with the specific image or language we encounter on screen. Because such regimes of meaning are patterns of co-appearance and combination rather than single pictures or sentences, they are best understood as analytical constructs that help us describe the systematic semiotic choices by which the world ‘out there’ becomes meaningful to us through specific technologies and genres of mediation. Three aspects of media texts are relevant in the multi-modal analysis of mediation: the *mode of presentation* through which the media text represents an aspect of the social world; the *correspondence between verbal narrative and image* in the text, which creates forms of connectivity and identification for media audiences or users; and the overall *aesthetic quality* or *interactive potential* of the text (Cottle & Rai 2006 for similar proposals on the analysis of media texts in terms of their ‘communicative architecture’).

Critical Discourse Analysis: Difference outside the semiotic lies in the asymmetries of power that traverse the social world and in the historical and political relations within or between social groups. The principle of difference outside the semiotic is the multi-functionality of semiotic practice. Multi-functionality assumes that every semiotic mode, language and image, creates meaning that fulfils more than one social function at once (Halliday 1985/1995; Halliday and Hasan 1989; Kress 1989; Fairclough 1992, 1995, 2003; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999). Whereas the first social function of semiosis is the need to name and represent the world, the ‘ideational’ function, the second one is the need to engage in interaction and relate to other people, the ‘interpersonal’ function of semiosis. It is because these two functions concern themselves with the implications of semiosis in the social world - with the *representation* of reality and with the *orientation* to others - that they are conducive to the study of social relations of power and bring forth the dimension of mediation as difference outside the semiotic (Iedema 2001:191-3).

The analysis of mediation as difference outside the semiotic is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)^{xvii}. CDA is an approach to media texts that treats the linguistic and visual choices on screen as subtle indicators of the power of media technologies to represent the world to us and to orient us towards others in this world. Despite this general definition, CDA should not be regarded as one single method. As part of the broad hermeneutic tradition, CDA is a context-specific and historically-sensitive research approach that does not simply provide us with a tool-kit of categories for the analysis of power. Depending, rather, on the research question and the nature of technological texts under study, the critical analysis of mediation may require defining the power of

mediation in different ways and combining different categories and techniques to examine the link between power and mediated discourse. It follows that the categories of representation and orientation may be variously operationalised in specific critical analyses of mediation.

Following on Derrida's ethical concern with the electronic mediation of the 'arrivant', CDA would here define the power of mediation as the power to classify the world into categories of 'us' and 'them' and to orient (or not) the viewers towards those others who are not like 'us'^{xviii}. In the analysis of *representations*, CDA then would look into the construal of the scene of mediated action within a specific space and time that separates 'us' from 'them'. The category of 'spacetime' refers to the place and the temporality of action. It tells us how close a specific media event appears to the viewer and how important engagement with or even action on the distant 'other' is. The analysis of 'spacetime', then, shows us how media technologies not only de-territorialise our experience of the world but also, simultaneously, how they re-territorialise such experience, by regulating the degrees of proximity/ distance or urgency/finality for each mediated event. In the analysis of *orientations*, CDA would look into the category of agency. Agency is about who acts upon whom in the scene of mediated action. There are two dimensions of orientation that are relevant in establishing the social relationships of de-territorialised connectivity. First, agency refers to who and how active the distant other appears on screen and, second, it refers to how other actors present in the scene of action appear to engage with one another. These two dimensions of agency come to shape how media publics are invited to relate to the mediated event, that is if they are supposed to simply watch, to feel for or to react practically to the other's misfortune or struggle. The analysis of agency, then, shows us how the media as technologies of governmentality may re-territorialise the distant event not only in terms of proximity or urgency but, simultaneously, also in terms of the emotional engagement and moral commitment or, perhaps, civil action that they propose to media publics. This distinction between representation and orientation, let me repeat, is necessary for analytical purposes. In practice, representations and orientations are not separate parts of the media text and we must look at once into both dimensions in order to determine how they are brought together in each media story^{xix}.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that the field of post-structuralist Discourse Analysis, a key approach in the study of culture today, is traversed by

certain tensions as to what discourse itself is and how it figures in our culture today. I demonstrate this point by critically reviewing two prototypical theses of Discourse Analysis, Discourse Ethics (Habermas' appropriation of the Frankfurt School's critical social theory) and Deconstruction (Derrida's textualist appropriation of French post-structuralism). I claim that this 'undecidability' inherent in the field of Discourse Analysis is not a bad thing. On the contrary, it can become a creative resource for reflexively using Discourse Analysis as a methodology for the analysis of contemporary culture- a culture characterised by unprecedented processes of intense and pervasive mediation.

I conclude that cultural analysis today could benefit from a reflexive Discourse Analysis approach, which *i*) prioritises questions of ethics, under conditions of cultural globalisation and the de-territorialisation of social relationships and moral commitments; *ii*) grasps the question of ethics from the pragmatic perspective of practice and focuses on the instantiation of ethical values in the texts of mediation (phronesis); and *iii*) effectively combines the interest in the production of hybrid media texts (multi-modal analysis) with the interest in power both as hegemony and as governmentality.

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ⁱ *Truth isn't outside power...it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power* Foucault (1980:131); see also Dreyfus & Rabinow (1982, ch. 4); Barrett (1991: 126-137); Howarth (2000:67-85); Chouliaraki (2002: 83-114).

ⁱⁱ Hanssen (2000: 14) for the argument that 'the between' is not a position of inconclusive suspension or impass but rather a position that both exposes the fundamental differences between post-structuralism and Critical theory and acknowledges the terms on which they may converge.

ⁱⁱⁱ J.L. Austin ('How to Do Things with Words', 1962) and J. Searle ('Speech Act Theory' 1969) for Speech Act Theory, the study of meaning-making and its effects on human action. The theory is based upon the idea that linguistic conventions do not only determine how the world is represented in language (the propositional content of utterances), but also how things get to be accomplished in speech (the 'illocutionary force' of our speech acts) - what Habermas (1971) calls the 'performative-propositional dual structure' of meaning. Habermas' 'Universal Pragmatics', which, as we shall see, informs his Discourse Ethics, is based precisely on language as acts oriented towards pragmatic objectives.

^{iv} Schutz's sociological phenomenology does not aspire to explicate a priori rules that constitute the empirical world, as Husserl's philosophical phenomenology does, but to describe the concrete ways in which social actors constitute common understandings of their social situations in the contexts of their everyday life (Giddens 1992:32; Eagleton 1991:56).

^v Even though Gadamer did not specify one concrete methodological route for hermeneutic inquiry, the concept of text interpretation is central in all contemporary

qualitative research. Embedded in broader designs of anthropological fieldwork, including participant observation, interviews, diaries or archive search, the text is today at the centre of the hermeneutic analysis of culture (Eagleton 1991).

^{vi} Apart from Habermas' argument, which I explore in detail below, the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' also came as a response to Gadamer's idealism in that it perceived understanding not only as a positive move towards partial, yet illuminating truths, but as a violent move that seeks to expose deeper truths purposefully hidden (Ricoeur 1970). Freudianism and Marxism are seen, in Ricoeur, as different forms of hermeneutics of suspicion, whereby the aim has been to understand reality in order to 'demystify' it, in order to disclose an order of things that the self-deluded social subject is unable to perceive.

^{vii} Notably Raymond Williams (1981, 1982, 1989); also Hall (1987, 1994); Gitlin (1994); (Fairclough 1992). For criticisms see Laclau & Mouffe (1985); Barrett (1991: 51-80); Bennett (1992: 23-34).

^{viii} Habermas (1989) for the thesis on the 'structural transformation of the public sphere', but also Habermas (1998) on 'facts and norms'; Barnett (2003: 57-60); McLaughlin (2004: 157-9) for critical discussions

^{ix} For Derrida's conception of culture see Derrida (2002); for a critical discussion of Derrida's deconstruction and post-modern culture see Harvey (1989/1991: 39-65); for Derrida's approach to culture, public life and the ethics of the 'other' see particularly Barnett (2003: 9-32 and 54-80).

^x For the relative neglect of questions of ethics in Cultural Studies in favour of a politics of representation see Kellner (1999).

^{xi} More recently, Habermas' reluctant openness toward the media is based on the recognition that they create interconnectedness among publics and contribute to articulating and evaluating public discourse Habermas (2006: 9-10); see also Barnett (2003: 71-5)

^{xii} The most radical version of pessimism on the role of the media in our culture is Baudrillard's thesis, where the media are considered to be responsible for the disappearance of the real into a *simulacrum* - a mirror image of reality that is nowadays the only authentic reality of the spectator. This position combines an extreme version of Derrida's iterability (signs are here disconnected from any reference external to the medium itself) with the pessimism of Habermas vis a vis the corroding role of media in our culture, and, as a consequence, entails a disabling nihilism- a nihilism, which leaves no space for the ethical content of mediation (for a criticism directly related to this, Chouliaraki 2006: 50-3).

^{xiii} Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics 1140a24-1140b12 and 1144b33-1145a11. Also Flyvebjerg for the use of Aristotle in the social sciences (2001:110-28) and Ross (1923/1995:31-49) for Aristotle's inductive methods and his analytics.

^{xiv} Hall (1996:1-17; 1997: 223-290) on the concept of difference and 'other'; Calhoun (1995: 231-82) on difference and national identity; Peters (1999); Silverstone (1999; 2006) and Butler (2004) in relation to media and the 'other'.

^{xv} Couldry (2005) for an overview of Discourse approaches to the question of social action and media texts; also for a persuasive argument for expanding the scope of Discourse approaches beyond media texts towards, broadly, texts about the media by audiences and media users as part and parcel of the contexts of mediation today.

^{xvi} For the increasing interest in visual analysis in cultural studies see Mirzoeff (1999); Evans & Hall (1999); Emmison & Smith (2000); Sturken & Cartwright (2001); van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001); Iedema (2001) among others.

^{xvii} Inspired by the multi-functional theory of language (see below) and by the Russian school of linguistics and literary criticism, with figures such as Voloshinov and Bakhtin, CDA combines the close analysis of linguistic text with a Gramscian view of discourse as a key dimension of hegemonic struggles, showing how meaning and power articulate in a range of public discourses, such as political and media discourse (Fairclough 1989, 1992, 1995, 2003). Moreover, Mediated Discourse Analysis operates with a broad view of mediation and provides critical contributions on the ways in which, specifically, discourse and technology shape everyday actions and dispositions in our culture today (Scollon 1998; Scollon & Scollon 2003; Levine and Scollon 2004).

^{xviii} I discuss this categorisation in detail in Chouliaraki (2006: 84-93).

^{xix} Other versions of Critical Discourse Analysis, such as the historical approach towards political discourse (Wodak 1999; 2003; Chilton 2003) as well as the cognitive approach to discourse (van Dijk eg 1997a,b), do not directly draw upon the multi-functionality principle of discourse but sustain the interest in language and power, contributing to an analysis of culture from the perspectives of domination and social inequalities.