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## Chapter 13. Textual Analysis<sup>1</sup>

This chapter is concerned with ways of analysing political discourse, as instantiated in texts of various sorts. We understand ‘texts’ here in a broad way, to include written texts (e.g. policy documents) – texts in the most obvious and commonplace sense – but also ‘multimodal’ texts which combine written language and other ‘semiotic modalities’ (including visual images), as well as texts in which the language is spoken, not written, i.e. political ‘talk’ of various sorts (political speeches and parliamentary debates).

We shall begin with a general discussion of what analysing texts involves. We shall secondly present a conception of politics which informs our own work, suggesting a view of how political discourse differs from other sorts of discourse, and of how political texts might be analysed, which is based upon this conception. Thirdly, we shall review and assess some significant contributions along different lines to the literature on political discourse and text analysis. Fourthly, we shall focus upon analysis of argumentation in political texts and briefly present and illustrate our own framework for such analysis. Finally, we shall argue that discourse analysis and discourse-based interpretive political analysis need to include textual analysis, referring to two influential approaches (‘cultural political economy’ and ‘poststructuralist discourse analysis’) which do not include an explicit textual focus, and suggesting what they stand to gain from textual analysis.

### Analysing texts

There are many types of analysis which can be applied to texts in the general sense above (Fairclough 2003, van Dijk 1997), some of them coming from Linguistics. These include phonetic and phonological analysis of the sound patterns of talk, grammatical analysis of phrases, simple and complex sentences, and semantic analysis of the meanings of words and meaning relations between words (including metaphors, semantic fields, cognitive frames), and of larger units of text and talk. In addition to these conventional levels of linguistic analysis, pragmatic analysis may be used in the analysis of meaning in particular contexts (this may include the analysis of speech acts, presupposition, implicature) and various forms of interactional analysis, including conversation analysis, may be applied in analysis of particular types of interaction. This extension of analysis to larger patterns of textual organisation also includes generic analysis of particular families of genres, including argumentative and narrative genres, and of more specific situated genres such as interviews, speeches, debates, news reports, and so forth. In addition, there are various forms of content analysis, including analysis of the topics that are in focus in various types of texts (van Dijk 1997). Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1989, 1992, 2003) typically focuses on intertextual analysis, which shows how elements of other texts are incorporated and combined within a particular text, and interdiscursive analysis which identifies how (‘hybrid’) texts can mix diverse genres, discourses and styles together. Analysis can also focus on the ‘recontextualization’ of texts, discourses, genres and styles, i.e. their shift from one context to

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other contexts, for instance the recontextualization of 'Western' neo-liberal discourses in the ex-socialist countries of Eastern Europe after 1989 (Fairclough 2000, 2003, 2006).

All of these can in principle be applied in the analysis of political texts, but all of them are general types of analysis applicable to texts of any sort. It is not, for instance, analysis of genres or analysis of metaphors that distinguishes analysis of political texts from analysis of other sorts of texts. When analysing political texts we need to keep a clear focus on their specifically political character, which depends on how we understand politics (see the next section). That will help us to determine which types of analysis are most relevant amongst those that it is possible to undertake, in relation to the point or rationale of the activity that actors are engaged in. As we argue below, political discourse is primarily argumentative, which makes analysis of argumentative genres (deliberation, negotiation) of primary relevance. Perhaps surprisingly, analysis of metaphor is another relevant focus in analyzing political discourse, and this also has to do with the argumentative nature of such discourse. Metaphors 're-frame' reality in particular ways and can thus, for example, 'pre-select' policy solutions to policy problems. Metaphors occur in the premises of arguments, in argumentative activity types (e.g. policy deliberation), and the inferences they make possible are used to direct the conclusion of these arguments in ways that correspond to the rhetorical goals of arguers.

Texts are 'multi-functional': there are various things going on simultaneously in texts. Texts are (or are part of) forms of action, and they also provide representations (of people, objects, events) and are part of the enactment of identities. In other words, texts draw upon and contribute to the constitution of genres, discourses and styles, and they do all of these simultaneously. Textual analysis therefore needs to identify and connect these different functions. Texts are moreover multifunctional on various levels. For example, argumentative texts can be analyzed simultaneously from a logical, dialectical and rhetorical perspective. Arguments are 'dialectical' in advancing particular standpoints in response to others, in measuring standpoints against each other and critically questioning them (as in deliberation), but they are simultaneously 'rhetorical' in seeking to persuade people to accept or reject standpoints. Analysis needs to be directed at the interplay between the two, as for instance the pragma-dialectical analysis of 'strategic manoeuvring' seeks to do (van Eemeren 2010). It is not enough for (political) textual analysis to analyse action/genres *and* representation/discourses *and* identity/styles; dialectic *and* rhetoric. It should analyse the relations between them, for example the way in which particular *representations* (discourses) can give agents reasons for *action*, and how this in turn can serve particular power interests.

Let us draw a few useful distinctions from the start. Arguments are premise-conclusion sets of statements; alternatively, argumentation can be viewed as a complex speech act, whose purpose is to convince a critic of the acceptability of a proposition, or to resolve a difference of opinion in a reasonable way (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992). Following van Eemeren (2010: 142-143) we will distinguish between *genres*, *activity types* (as specific genres) and concrete *speech events*. Concrete speech events draw upon (or implement) activity types (specific genres), which themselves draw upon (or implement) genres, such as deliberation, adjudication, mediation, negotiation. For example, the debate that took place in the House of Commons on December 9, 2010, on the UK government's proposal to raise university tuition fees from £3300 to £9000 per year, as a concrete speech event, instantiated the activity type of parliamentary debate, which itself instantiates the broad genre of deliberation. Similarly, particular or concrete (government) policies instantiate the more abstract level of policy as activity type, which in turn instantiates the abstract genre of deliberation. Activity types can of course draw upon a combination of genres, and concrete speech events can draw upon a combination of activity types.

For any individual agent, deliberation results in a normative judgment (a normative proposition about what one ought to do or what it would be good to do). This cognitive outcome can be followed by an intention to act, a decision to act and also by the action itself, but does not need to (Audi 2006: 87). However, in institutional contexts (government, parliament), it is often part of the underlying institutional rationale or point of particular activity types (e.g. parliament debates or policy-making debate) that they should lead to a decision for action; this decision may not be in agreement with the normative judgment arrived at by each and every one of the participants who have deliberated together (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012).

### **Politics, political discourse, analysis of political texts**

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle characterizes politics as action in pursuit of the highest good, based upon decisions, which arise out of deliberation (Irwin 1999, 1094a, 1094b, 1111b, 1112a, 1112b, 1113a). Hay (2007: 61-62) identifies four common elements in a diverse set of definitions of politics which provide a basis for building 'a broad and inclusive conception of politics': politics as choice, as the capacity for agency, as deliberation, and as social interaction. Aristotle's characterization explicitly includes the first three (decision, action, deliberation) and implicitly the fourth. Because politics is concerned with decision-making, it is inherently deliberative. To say that politics inherently involves deliberation is of course not to say that specific instances of deliberative activity are acceptable from a normative perspective, or that they necessarily deliver an outcome that stands up to critical examination. However, bad arguments are still arguments, and bad instances of deliberation practice are still to be analyzed as instantiating the genre of deliberation.

Political action on this view inherently has a partly discursive nature. What distinguishes political discourse from other types of discourse is that it involves deliberation over what ought to be done, in contexts of divergent interests and values, scarcity of resources, uncertainty and risk. Deliberation is an argumentative genre in which practical argumentation (argumentation about what ought to be done, as opposed to theoretical or epistemic argumentation about what is the case) is the main argument scheme. Deliberation is oriented towards arriving at normative-practical judgments about what to do, and on this basis making decisions about what to do, which may lead to action based upon these decisions. The analysis of political texts should therefore give primacy to analysis of deliberation, which will narrow down to analysis and evaluation of argumentation. This is not a reduction of political discourse to practical argumentation and deliberation. Political texts manifest other argument schemes and other non-argumentative genres, for example narrative and explanation. What tends to happen, however, is that other argument schemes and other genres are generally embedded within or in other ways connected to practical arguments within deliberative practice, and are therefore best analysed as elements of such argumentative practice (e.g. as providing premises or premise support).

The position we have advanced here is based upon Fairclough and Fairclough (2012), which approaches political discourse from the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA), in accordance with van Dijk's view (1997) that political discourse analysis is an essentially critical enterprise focused upon the reproduction and contestation of political power through political discourse. It adopts van Dijk's characterization of political discourse as attached to political actors, agents and agencies including politicians, citizens, political institutions and organisations engaged in political processes and events within political contexts which make it possible for actors to exert their agency and act on the world in a way that has impact on matters of common concern.

At a more fundamental level, it is grounded in Searle's view (2010: 164) of political power as 'deontic power', a matter of rights, obligations, duties, permissions, authorizations, prohibitions, conferred on individuals in the process whereby people create institutional reality. For example, becoming a citizen or an elected politician (i.e. taking on these institutional roles) confers rights and obligations on individuals. On this view, all institutions enable and constrain human action, they create possibilities as well as restrictions on people's behaviour as agents operating within their constitutive rule-governed boundaries. The whole point of institutional reality, Searle argues, is in fact to create and regulate power relationships between people: power flows through institutional reality via deontic powers collectively assigned and recognized. The essence of the political as a particular institutional domain is to be found therefore in the system of deontic reasons that political institutions provide as (external, desire-independent) motives for action. For instance, governments are obliged to act fairly in their treatment of citizens, and it is expected that their actions should be motivated by a commitment to fairness (e.g. in distributing the costs of the financial crisis among different sections of the population), a commitment which is part of the social contract with the citizens. In virtue of this collectively recognized commitment or obligation, governments can be challenged and criticized on the grounds that they are not acting fairly, i.e. that the reason that ought to motivate their action is not actually doing so. Not surprisingly, politicians often go to great lengths to show that they are acting fairly, that they are honouring their institutional obligations, even if (or especially if) there are good reasons for thinking that they are not (see Fairclough and Fairclough 2012, and their contribution in Coleman, Fairclough, Fairclough, Finlayson and Hay 2013: 336-344). Deontic reasons (as premises) are therefore at the heart of the political as an institutional order and of the deliberative processes that lead to political decision-making.

### **Approaches to political text and discourse analysis**

This view of politics, political discourse and analysis of political texts takes an unusually strong line on what is distinctive about political discourse and its analysis. This accords with van Dijk's (1997: 38) observation that, to make a substantive contribution to political analysis, political discourse must focus on features of discourse which are *relevant* to the political processes or events under analysis. Analyzing political discourse as argumentative discourse is, we argue, a relevant approach to textual analysis because of what the nature of the political is. The institutional dimension of the political, as a source of deontic reasons for action, as well as the normative-practical orientation or rationale of political activity types, suggest in fact that textual analysis should focus on the argumentative nature of political texts as the most relevant feature of political discourse.

CDA has contributed a substantial amount of analysis of political texts and discourse, and there are a number of approaches which are represented especially in three journals: *Critical Discourse Studies*, *Discourse and Society*, *Journal of Language and Politics*. One general (though not universal) feature of this work is a tendency to focus analysis upon *representations* (or persons, social or ethnic groups, objects, processes, events, places, and so forth) rather than upon *action*, and accordingly upon discourses rather than genres. The position advocated above reverses these priorities: in our view, political discourse is primarily a form of action, and representations are best analysed as elements of actions (e.g. as premises of practical arguments). People do not represent social groups or processes for the sake of it (nor do they narrate or explain events as an end in itself), but do so in the course of producing an argument, or justifying or criticizing a standpoint, as a possible basis for decision and action.

Chilton (2004) is an important and original treatment of political discourse analysis which is widely referred to. It is strongly anchored in cognitive science and cognitive linguistics, and is thus able to offer interesting insights on the relationship between language and politics from a cognitive perspective. Using a combination of pragmatic and semantic analysis, Chilton (2004) provides analyses of political interviews, parliamentary 'question time', political speeches and presidential addresses. His version of political discourse analysis contributes an important focus on the relationship between cooperation and conflict in politics, by highlighting the existence of two distinct strands in definitions of politics within political studies: on the one hand, politics is a struggle for power; on the other hand, it is cooperation to resolve clashes of interest. Chilton's emphasis on the cooperative, interactional nature of politics, inherent in the Aristotelian concept of the *polis*, leads to an analytical focus on the interplay between representations and interaction, or on how 'interaction functions to negotiate representations' (Chilton 2004: 201), with analysis of metaphor, cognitive frames, binary distinctions, mental models (spatial frames, deixis) being put to use in the analysis of 'discourse worlds' and cognitive processing.

Wodak, in collaboration especially with Reisigl, has made an influential contribution to political discourse analysis from the perspective of their 'discourse-historical approach' (DHA, Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 2009). They view the field of politics as segmented into a number of 'fields of action' ('lawmaking procedures', 'formation of public attitudes, opinion, and will', 'political advertising', etc.) each of which is associated with a distinct set of political 'sub-genres'. A crucial concept is that of 'discursive strategy', understood in terms of the linguistic choices that social actors make from among available resources according to what they judge to be the best means to achieve their ends. The DHA identifies five 'discursive strategies', which are said to be realized linguistically in texts: *nomination* (reference), *predication*, *argumentation*, *perspectivisation* (involvement) and *intensification* (or *mitigation*) (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 46, 2009: 94). Textual analysis begins with identifying these strategies and their linguistic realization, for example particular argumentative *topoi*, but also fallacious versions of these *topoi*, as well as other linguistic forms of realization, e.g. the use of pronouns ('we'/'us' vs. 'them') to indicate sameness or difference, the use of metaphor, metonymy, personification, the choice of particular lexical fields (Wodak et al. 1999). In their analysis of the discursive construction of Austrian national identity, Wodak et al (1999) identify, for example, four types of discursive strategies: constructive strategies (serving to establish a certain national identity construct), strategies of perpetuation and justification (serving to support and reproduce a national identity under threat), strategies of transformation (attempting to transform a well-established identity construct into another) and destructive strategies (serving to deconstruct an existing national identity construct). Examples of *topoi* in DHA include a *topos* of abuse, of advantage, of authority, of comparison, of consequence, of culture, of definition, of example, of fulfilling duty, of the hero, of history, of humanitarianism, of ignorance, of justice, of law, of responsibility, of threat or danger, and so on (Reisigl and Wodak 2001). (The study of 'strategies' and their linguistic realization is in focus in other analytical approaches. Chilton (2004: 45-46) speaks about the *strategic functions* of political discourse, the role it plays in influencing people's attitudes, beliefs, behaviour: coercion, (de)legitimization and (mis)representation.)

For Reisigl and Wodak (2001), as for van Dijk (1997), political discourse is a form of political action, so an initial concern is differentiating the ('sub'-)genres of political discourse associated with various types (or 'fields') of political action. Both van Dijk and Reisigl and Wodak give some prominence to argumentation in political discourse, and van Dijk (1997: 29) observes that argumentative genres are 'perhaps' the 'most pervasive in political text and talk'. However, in neither of these approaches is there any systematic analysis and evaluation of argumentation. There is rather reference to particular *features* of arguments, treated in

isolation from the overall process of argumentation/deliberation, which are seen primarily as germane to the main focus on positive self-representation and negative other-representation. To sum up, although the starting point in the DHA seems to be action, and although genres are correspondingly fore-grounded initially, actual analysis tends to be focused upon differences in the *representation* of 'us' and 'them': positive self-representation and negative other-representation (e.g. immigrants or asylum seekers, as opposed to the general population), or what van Dijk (1997) calls the 'ideological or political square': emphasis/de-emphasis of 'our' good actions as opposed to 'their' bad actions.

What seems to define these approaches to discourse analysis is a preoccupation with representation issues, rather than decision-making and action. This is not to say that textual material which instantiates the genre of deliberation, such as policy texts or parliamentary debates, is overlooked: even the chosen text obviously involves a practical argument, or refers to policy issues, the choice is still to attend exclusively to matters of representation, not action. Wodak (2009), for example, begins by analyzing a quote from a 2000 speech by Romano Prodi (former president of the European Commission) – 'The challenge is to radically rethink the way we do Europe. To re-shape Europe' – and observes that the 'doing' aspect of politics is important, and so are political 'visions'. She nevertheless does not view this quote as making an argument in which the 'vision' itself can be taken as a reason supporting the claim for action, but instead relates the 'vision' to Bourdieu's theory of the political field, i.e. to a view of 'politics as a struggle to impose the legitimate principle of vision and division' (Wodak 2009: 1). In other words, politics seems to be about imposing representations and about how representations serve power, but there is no indication about how this can occur: the connection of such representations to decision and action via argumentation and deliberation is not made. Such a connection is nevertheless essential for an adequate analysis of policy texts and the policy-making process.

### **Analysis and evaluation of argumentation in political discourse**

We shall now focus upon argumentation analysis in policy texts (and political discourse more generally), in accordance with the position adopted above that analysis of political texts should give primacy to practical argumentation and deliberation. We shall present our approach with reference to what is widely regarded as the 'problem-solution' character of policy-making, which will also be an issue in the next section. A common concern in the policy studies literature is with 'problematization', in Foucault's (1984) sense: the problems addressed in policy-making are, it is argued, not an objective feature of existing circumstances but social constructs, in the sense that the circumstances are 'problematized' differently by different social agents and particular 'problematizations' favour certain possible solutions and preclude others. While this pairing of problems and solutions is widely recognized, there is little actual analysis of relations between them. But these are argumentative relations, and practical argumentation in particular is argumentation from problem to solution. Thus the problem-solution character of policy-making is a case where the form of textual analysis we advocate can offer improvements on existing treatments.

Practical arguments, according to Fairclough and Fairclough (2012), have the following elements: a Value premise, a Goal premise, a Circumstantial premise and a Means-Goal premise, attempting to support a Practical Claim (or Conclusion). Existing states of affairs are represented in particular ways in the Circumstantial premise. Possible and desirable alternative future states of affairs are represented in the Goal premise, in relation to representations in the Circumstantial premise and underlying values and concerns (Value premise). The Means-Goal premise has a conditional form: if a course of action A is pursued, it will (or

is likely to) take us from the existing problematic state of affairs C to the desirable future one G in accordance with values V. The practical claim (Conclusion) advocates pursuing a particular course of action: taking the means to the goal G (performing action A) is, allegedly, the solution to the problem identified in the Circumstantial premise.

Let us take as an example the Emergency Budget speech of 22 June 2010, delivered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, a few weeks after the election in Britain of the Conservative/Liberal- Democrat Coalition Government. The Government's strategy of austerity in response to the financial and economic crisis was first set out in this speech (see chapter 4 of Fairclough and Fairclough 2012 for a detailed analysis). The main claim for action (what needs or ought to be done) is expressed clearly in the opening sections of the speech: the government needs to 'deal decisively' with the deficit and debt, and 'deliver [an] accelerated reduction in the structural deficit', with 'the bulk of the reduction' coming from 'lower spending rather than higher taxes'. So the solution is to cut public spending in order to reduce public deficit and debt. What problem is this type of action intended to address? Existing circumstances are 'problematized' as an unacceptably high 'budget deficit', 'inherited' from the previous Labour government, amounting to an 'emergency situation', a situation of risk where the very 'liquidity and solvency' of governments are at stake. The long-term goal (in the Goal premise) is 'a sustainable private sector recovery built on a new model of economic growth', intended 'to raise from the ruins of an economy built on debt a new, balanced economy'. The intermediate goal towards achieving this is 'to have debt falling and a balanced structural current budget by the end of this Parliament'. The values which inform these goals (Value premise) include the national interest, financial responsibility/sustainability, and fairness: the budget 'is tough; but it is also fair', 'everyone will be asked to contribute', 'we are all in this together'. This suggests that several competing concerns have been weighed together (in an antecedent deliberative process) and have emerged as non-overridable reasons guiding action: in pursuing necessary financial objectives, the government will also stand by an existing commitment to fairness towards the citizens. The Means-Goal premise (which says that, if the government's strategy is pursued, the goals will be achieved) is formulated in such a way as to suggest that the government's plan is not only sufficient in view of the goals, i.e. will achieve them ('a credible plan to cut our budget deficit goes hand in hand with a steady and sustained economic recovery'), but is also necessary in view of these goals, i.e. no other alternative can deliver them ('this is the unavoidable budget').

The approach to practical argumentation developed in Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) is a normative one: arguments are evaluated as well as analysed. Following Walton (2007b), we distinguish three ways in which practical (policy) arguments can be critically evaluated: (a) criticism of the conclusion of the argument, which seeks to reject it (and the policy proposal) by arguing that pursuing the line of action advocated will have consequences which will undermine the stated goals or other goals which cannot be compromised; (b) criticism of the validity of the argument on the grounds that there are other better means than those advocated for achieving the goals, or other facts about the context action in view of which the conclusion no longer follows; (c) criticism of the rational acceptability (or truth) of premises, for example of the way in which existing states of affairs are represented, interpreted or 'problematized' (the circumstantial premise), criticism of the goal or value premise, or of the means-goal premise. The conclusion of the practical argument from goals, values and circumstances (a practical proposal, e.g. a policy proposal) can be tested by a pragmatic argument from consequence. Briefly, if in the process of deliberation it emerges that the consequences of doing A (or pursuing policy proposal A) would be unacceptable, then the proposed action should be either abandoned or revised (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012).

All of these possible lines of criticism have been pursued to various degrees in the public debate on austerity, following the launch of austerity policies in Britain in May 2010. Let us take them one by one. One line of attack has implicitly challenged the means-goal premise, the claim that it is possible, in principle, for austerity to deliver the desired goals. Critics (economists, politicians, journalists) have challenged the UK government's stated belief in the possibility of economic recovery by pursuing spending cuts. Bringing examples from the Great Depression and Japan's history of stagnation, they have argued that austerity invariably fails to deliver the intended goals. In other words, based on all available information – which indicates that, in similar situations, by killing demand, austerity has always tended to worsen the economic situation – it is not rationally acceptable that austerity can in principle deliver economic recovery.

Critics of austerity have also challenged the government's representation of the current situation in Britain and its attached explanation. For example, they have denied that the crisis is one of excessive spending and the product of the Labour government's profligacy, insisting instead that financial deregulation and various practices in the banking sector were the problem. This question can be said to address the 'framing' (Entman 1993) of the problem: is the particular framing in the circumstantial premise (including the definition and causal explanation of the problem) rationally acceptable? Would another definition of the problem in the circumstantial premise, and another explanation for it, support a different claim for action (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012: 169-173)?

The motives of action (goals, values) have also been questioned. It has been argued that austerity policies are in fact ideology-driven (Krugman 2010) and that the government's real goal is to 'complete the demolition job on welfare states that was started in the 1980s' (Elliott 2010). The government's explicit insistence on 'fairness' as a driving concern has been criticized as window-dressing intended to legitimize policies that are in fact driven by questionable covert motives. In other words, it has been argued that publicly accepted goals and values are being used to deceive and manipulate the public.

Criticism of practical conclusions on the grounds of their likely undesirable consequences was widely used, for example, in a debate on the strategy of austerity hosted by the *Financial Times* in July 2010 (discussed in Fairclough and Fairclough 2012). Opponents of austerity pointed to the likely catastrophic consequences of cutting expenditure too soon and too quickly: massive unemployment, particularly amongst young people (a 'lost generation', Blanchflower 2011), leading to more welfare spending, requiring more borrowing, which would only increase the existing debt. In turn, defenders of austerity pointed to the likely catastrophic consequences of *failing* to deal with the debt: loss of business confidence, a downgrade of Britain's credit rating, leading to higher interest rates, which would increase the existing debt. In both cases, the argument was that the anticipated consequences would undermine the government's stated goal (to reduce the debt) as well as other widely accepted, legitimate goals (keeping unemployment down, retaining business confidence). Notice that these consequentialist criticisms depend upon explanatory accounts of structural relations and tendencies and cause-effect relations (what will lead to what) which can themselves be critically questioned.

In criticizing the validity of the government's line of argument, participants in the public debate argued that, while the advocated means of austerity may be necessary to achieve the stated goals, they are certainly not sufficient, and that for instance simultaneous structural reforms to promote growth are also necessary. It was also argued that the advocated means were neither necessary nor sufficient, for instance that austerity understood as primarily cuts in expenditure was not necessary, because the alternative means of increasing



taxation and tackling tax evasion and tax avoidance were available but were not being used, or that a programme of public sector investment was a superior alternative to austerity (a better means towards the stated goals).

As we have indicated, criticism of the rational acceptability of premises includes criticism of the representation, interpretation and ‘problematization’ of the existing state of affairs. In ‘problematizing’ the crisis as a state of deficit and debt in public finance and explaining it as the result of the recklessness of the previous Labour government, rather than the failure of finance capitalism (or neo-liberalism, or capitalism), the government has been effectively reducing the scale and scope of the crisis to that of a crisis *in* rather than *of* finance-led accumulation (Jessop 2009). This interpretation of the crisis (as having been caused by ‘living beyond our means’ and ‘excessive state spending’) has been consistently repeated, despite criticisms voiced in the public debate, and has found a measure of ‘resonance’ with widely shared beliefs. Actual persuasiveness (‘resonance’) is nevertheless distinct from *rational* persuasiveness, which involves the capacity of such interpretations to withstand critical scrutiny. (Let us note that a critical analysis of the public debate on austerity includes an evaluation, from the external normative perspective of the discourse analysts as critic, of the evaluations produced by other participants in the debate.)

Finally, let us observe that an argumentative approach to policy analysis can also provide a new perspective on ‘framing’ phenomena (Entman 1993, Nelson et al 1997, Druckman 2001). From an argumentative perspective, framing can be viewed as the selective salience given to certain premises in a deliberative decision-making process. Consequently, ‘framing effects’ may occur, depending on which particular premise is in focus, and how that premise is realized. For example, emphasizing particular values or goals may direct an audience’s conclusion in a particular direction, while emphasizing some potential consequences may direct it in the opposite direction. Similar effects are obtained by re-framing the context of action (circumstantial premise), or some other premise, in a rhetorically persuasive way in accordance with preferred rhetorical goals, via ‘persuasive definitions’ (Walton 2007a) or metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) – (Fairclough I. forthcoming a, b).

Unlike other approaches in critical discourse analysis (Chilton 2004, Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 2009, Wodak 2009), the approach we have briefly sketched and illustrated above focuses on analysis and evaluation of argumentation, argumentative genres and activity types (such as policy-making) as the most relevant type of analysis of political discourse, given the nature of politics, and its orientation towards decision and action. Another approach to policy analysis with a strong orientation towards analysis of argumentation has independently emerged from the field of interpretive policy analysis. Fischer’s (1995, 2003, 2007) ‘four-level discourse model’ sets out to evaluate policy proposals by asking four sets of questions, corresponding to four types of ‘discourse’ or levels, ranging from the micro levels of the argument and its concrete situational context to the macro societal and ideological context. Upon examination, Fischer’s approach and ours share a number of important features. Both focus on practical arguments from circumstances, goals and means-goal relations towards a proposed course of action, and both seek to develop a *rational procedural framework* for the evaluation of practical argumentation and deliberation in political discourse (specifically, for policy evaluation in Fischer’s framework) in terms of a set of critical questions capable of testing a practical proposal and/or the argument that supports it.

Both Fischer’s approach and ours show why approaches to policy analysis that limit themselves to discussing ‘representations’ and ‘narratives’ are insufficient. There is no point in ‘representing’ or ‘narrating’ *as ends in*

*themselves* in political activity types, but only in relation to a normative conclusion that can ground decision and action, this being the point or purpose of deliberative activity types. Hence, the need for an 'argumentative turn' (Fischer and Forester 1993, Fischer and Gottweiss 2012) in policy analysis, as well as in policy evaluation. A dialectical theory of argument, with its emphasis on critical dialogue or questioning, therefore seems to be the most appropriate analytical instrument in view for assessing proposals and decisions for action.

### **Conclusion. Textual analysis as a necessary part of interpretive political analysis**

Textual analysis is a necessary part of discourse analysis and of discourse-based interpretive political analysis. Fairclough (2013) is a critical evaluation of two approaches to interpretive political analysis which have been influential in political and policy studies, neither of which includes textual analysis: post-structuralist discourse analysis, or PDA (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Howarth 2009, Howarth and Griggs 2012) and cultural political economy, or CPE (Jessop 2004, 2009, Sum 2009). Both are, like CDA, forms of critical analysis, and both have a Gramscian focus upon hegemonic struggle and the production of hegemonies. The argument of that paper is that the contribution of CPE and PDA to policy studies could be enhanced if they were to incorporate textual analysis, and specifically analysis centred upon practical argumentation and deliberation. CPE and PDA are by no means isolated cases of discourse analysis without textual analysis, indeed this seems to be the rule more than the exception in discourse-based analysis in the social sciences, and a case for 'textually-oriented discourse analysis' was made in response to this tendency a long time ago in Fairclough (1992).

Howarth and Griggs (2012: 325) formulate the 'first analytical task' of critique as 'to 'problematize' the various 'problematizations' of the issue under consideration, so that we can construct a viable object of research'. This suggests that 'problematizing' is a part of critical analysis as well a part of the discourse which is its object, such as policy-making discourse, and accords with our position above that critical analysis includes evaluation of the evaluations of participants in such discourse. We can usefully distinguish (a) how policy issues are 'problematized' by people in general, as citizens, (b) how they are 'problematized' by 'experts' of various sorts, including people involved in management and governance, and social scientists, (c) how these 'problematizations' are themselves 'problematized' by critical analysts. But issues are not 'problematized' for the sake of it, but to some end, in order to arrive at or advocate solutions, so what needs to be in focus in critique is, as we suggested above, argumentation with a problem-solution structure, and its critical evaluation. Howarth and Griggs' 'first analytical task' needs to be reformulated in this way, but this would require textually-oriented analysis and evaluation of argumentation.

In our view, the approach we have outlined above offers more satisfactory accounts of a range of issues which are of concern to CPE and/or PDA. First, a motivation for including discourse analysis in interpretive social science, shared by CDA, CPE and PDA, is that discourse has, or may contingently have, *constructive* effects, including the production and contestation of hegemonies. An adequate account of such constructive effects needs to go beyond asserting *that* discourse may have them to showing *how* discourse may have them. In our view, CDA contributes an account of how discourses may have such constructive effects which is currently provided by neither CPE nor PDA. It does so by treating discourses as *providing premises in practical arguments*, and therefore as elements in the reasoning and actions of social actors, rather than analyzing them in isolation from action. Discourses, as we argue in Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 241),

provide agents with reasons for action, with beliefs and values that social actors can turn into motives for action. If a particular discourse is drawn upon in representing the context of action or some desirable goal, and if such a representation comes to provide social actors with a motive for pursuing one line of action rather than another, then, in so far as these motives come to inform decision-making and action, this particular discourse will come to have constructive effects upon the world. Unless we incorporate the question of the effectivity of semiosis in an account of agency and action, we cannot adequately account for how discourses can have constructive effects.

Second, CPE is concerned with how extra-semiotic as well as semiotic factors bear upon the selection and retention of certain strategies and imaginaries and rejection of others. Extra-semiotic factors include structural and agentive 'selectivities', ways in which structures are more open to, and agents are more disposed to, some strategies than to others. Again, CDA can contribute to showing how this occurs in a way which can enhance CPE. In evaluating and criticizing practical argumentation and developing strategies to move step-wise towards a goal (or 'imaginary'), social actors anticipate the likely consequences of particular courses of action in terms of the likely effects of semiotic and extra-semiotic factors on their action plan, or revise their action plan in light of emerging feedback. Thus, relations between semiotic and extra-semiotic factors affecting selection of strategies are anticipated in action by social agents, and this is designed to achieve the selection of particular strategies and imaginaries and prevent the selection of others, or to revise action in progress. It is essential to understand that, alongside extra-semiotic factors such as power, the quality of argumentation can play an essential role in the process whereby particular strategies come to be selected and implemented. Although bad arguments do often win the day, they do not always do so, even when they have power on their side. The UK Government's Big Society strategy (Fairclough I. 2012) is a case in point: as a strategy for action (involving several inter-linked arguments), it was grounded in a highly selective and partial representation of the context of action, and for this reason was based on a poor grasp of what conditions would have enabled it to succeed. As critics have pointed out (NEF 2010), the Big Society project was doomed to fail from the start as it was being undermined by concomitant austerity policies. No amount of extra-semiotic (e.g. government) support or resonance with public beliefs can save from failure a policy strategy that sees its own conditions of possibility undermined at every stage by other policies taking place simultaneously in the same context. Adding the effects of austerity policies to the circumstantial premises, as part of the context of action, we might say, invalidates (defeats) the argument: practical conclusions which may have seemed reasonable no longer follow. The policy is impossible to implement, hence it cannot follow that it should be adopted. Evaluation of the argument (which includes assessing the acceptability of representations of the context of action, e.g. are the facts as described? are there other facts that ought to be considered?) is thus inseparable from the analysis of 'structural selectivities'. Conditions of possibility for the success of a particular strategy therefore include the quality of the argument itself, as well as structural and agentive selectivities.

Third, in Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) we argue that integration of the CPE categories of 'strategy' and 'imaginary' into practical argumentation can give them greater analytical force and help to put them to work as analytical categories. A 'strategy' is on our account a plan of action for achieving a goal through potentially highly complex chains of means-goals-circumstances relations. Achieving a longer-term or final goal often requires achieving a number of intermediate goals. Insofar as a particular means is successful in achieving an intermediate goal, that goal ceases to be a vision and becomes part of the circumstances of action for achieving the next goal, and so on. An 'imaginary' is in CPE a discourse which represents a possible

and desirable alternative reality to the existing reality; on our account, imaginaries are treated as goals and are assigned to the goal premise.

Fourth, critique itself can be seen as a form of practical argumentation (Fairclough 2013), a way of arguing in favour of one course of action or other. Seeing critique in this way clarifies the 'internal connection between explanation, critique and normative evaluation', in the words of Howarth and Griggs (2012: 335), and the character of explanatory critique. Critique systematically develops the explanatory character of critical evaluation: in critically evaluating representations of existing states of affairs as problems, it seeks to explain why particular social actors and agencies 'problematize' them as they do, drawing upon critical explanatory models (for example that of Harvey 2010). Through such explanatory evaluation, critique is able to clarify the political and ideological character of particular 'problematizations', including especially dominant ones, but it is also able to show how such 'problematizations' may contingently have constructive effects. It does so by treating them as elements of practical arguments and deliberative activity, informing social agents' practical reasoning and action, and contingently resulting in changes in social reality.

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