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Accumulating discursive capital, valuating subject positions. From Marx to Foucault

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ABSTRACT

Whenever people use language, they participate in valuation practices, i.e. they give value to themselves as well as to others. To account for the construction of social inequality through discursive valuation practices, discourse theorists need Marxist theory and Marxists need discourse theory. By going from the early Marx to the late Foucault, I will revisit Marx's value theory in light of practice-oriented approaches to social inequality. I will discuss examples from two distinct arenas, the monopolization of attention by populist leaders and the academic star system, both of which are accounted for in terms of the accumulation of discursive capital. This perspective asks how the value of subject positions is constructed and hierarchies between them are established in discursive practices. Investigating the construction of valuable subject positions in discourse communities, this perspective attempts to overcome the traditional division between language, the economic and the social. Discourse not only represents value and the social order but, through representation, it also contributes to constituting the social as a hierarchical world of more or less valued subject positions.

Discourse theorists need Marxist social theory and Marxists need discourse theory, especially since discourse and communication have become central in contemporary capitalism.[1] While many Marxist theorists (Jameson, 1991; Marazzi, 1994; Sum & Jessop, 2013) no longer distinguish between a non-discursive base and a discursive superstructure, classical strands in Discourse Studies, such as early 'French' Discourse Analysis and some developments in Critical Discourse Analysis, tend to conceive language as a practice determined by a socioeconomic structure before and outside language. While I want to remind discourse researchers that the lines between language and the economy cannot be easily drawn, I will critically interrogate the reception Marx has seen in Discourse Studies as a structuralist theorist of the social.[2]

By going from the early Marx to the late Foucault, I will revisit Marx's theory of value in light of discursive and practice-oriented approaches to social inequality. I will discuss examples from two arenas in terms of the valuation of subject positions, namely the populist

logics of scandalization in political discourse and the star system in academic discourse. Both populist 'fake news' and 'scientific facts' can be seen as a product of discursive valuation practices. To account for these phenomena, one needs to ask how discourse participants obtain visibility and recognition in their communities. By conceptualizing language use as a practice of valuating subject positions, this perspective attempts to overcome the traditional division between linguistic and economic activity (cf. Borrelli, 2018) and, more generally, between base and superstructure. While asking how discursive capital is produced, accumulated and distributed among the members of a discourse community, this perspective studies discourse which not only represents social, political and economic hierarchies of more and less valued subject positions but, through representation, also constitutes them.

Marx in discourse studies

It has been commonplace to play out a 'traditional' Marx, who is in favour of social determinism, against a Marx more open to 'poststructuralist' or 'pragmatic' readings which recognize the semiotic, linguistic and symbolic dimensions of the social. One can perhaps see the impact of the latter version in Baudrillard (1972), Laclau and Mouffe (1985) or Habermas (1992). Inspired by the linguistic turn, these post-Marxist social theorists have accounted for dilemmas of aesthetic and political representation in contemporary society (such as media, culture, discrimination etc., Spivak, 1988), which had seen insufficient attention in earlier Marxist social theory.

From a post-Marxist perspective, the Marx of traditional Marxism needs to be problematized in two ways. Post-Marxists criticize a certain Marxist tradition for conceptualizing the social as a closed, constituted antagonism where every position has a clear hierarchical value. And they reject the Marxist idea of language and society as two separate but interrelated areas. By making the case for a linguistic turn, these theorists have rejected such deterministic ideas and pointed out the effects of language use for the social (Angermuller, 2015, 83ff.).

Yet while making the case for a linguistic turn, they risk losing sight of the social or reducing it to a secondary problem, to an effect of contingent political acts (Laclau, Habermas) or to an unbound play of semiotic representations (Baudrillard). Rather than throwing the baby out with the bathwater and giving up on social theory, I would suggest that there is a problem with a specific idea of the social, namely with the social understood as a closed structure (i.e. 'society', which Marx never advocated). While structuralist models of the social have informed classical strands in Discourse Studies, it is time to recall the practice theory that one can find in Marx, perhaps especially in the early Marx (e.g. Marx & Engels, 1963, 1988). The centrality of the concept of practice in Marx is already apparent in the famous first thesis on Feuerbach, where reality is conceived of as 'sensuous human activity, practice' (Marx, 2010, p. 3). People practically 'make their own history' albeit not 'just as they please in circumstances they choose for themselves' (Marx, 2002, p. 19). Unfortunately, Marx is not very specific about what are 'human' practices, which may evoke the humanism one finds in his early writings. Yet there can be little doubt that human practices would include discourse, i.e. the social uses that people make of language. Therefore, discourse theorists who problematize structuralist notions of the social should find inspiration in Marx's praxeological views of the social as a hierarchical space of positions which is constituted practically (cf. the pragmatist perspective on valuation from Boltanski & Esquerre, 2017).

To insist with Marx on the practices constituting the social does not mean that one considers human beings as autonomous, free from social constraints. On the contrary, the question is how their practices are shaped and constrained by the conditions which they help bring forth in their practices. In his analysis of contemporary capitalism, Marx focuses on a specific practice of valuation: labour, especially labour in the industrial sector. Through their labour, the participants of economic activities produce commodities, which have a certain (exchange) value. The value of these commodities is not an inherent property. Rather, the value of commodities expresses a societal relationship, i.e. the socially necessary time given the technological possibilities at a certain moment of socioeconomic development. This is most poignantly presented in Marx's chapter on *The Fetishism of the Commodity and its Secret* (Marx, 1990, 163ff.), where, in the practice of exchange, 'the relationships between the producers' take on the inverted form of a 'social relation between the products of labor' (Marx, 1990, p. 164).

Most modes of production in the past – and capitalism is no exception – have been built on the crucial asymmetry between the many who produce value – those doing socially necessary work – and the few who appropriate the products of labour and own the means of production. As a result of economic activities which are not necessarily coordinated, the participants of the economic process help produce and reproduce a class structure in which the bourgeois accumulate value and the workers remain bereft of the riches produced in society.

Many Marxist theorists have restricted the generation and distribution of value to activities in the industrial sector. Yet what could be the justification for excluding the many things people do, say and think outside contractual employment? Indeed, from a valuation perspective (Lamont, 2012), discursive practices, too, need to be seen as a source of value no matter whether they are produced during or outside working hours. Indeed, whenever one mobilizes text and talk, one engages in a practice of valuation in the social world. Through language, discourse participants not only negotiate the value of the ideas they express but they also valuate what is perhaps most existential for all, i.e. their subject positions – the identities and roles, the sets of labels and categories that allow people to be recognized as members of a discourse community. As opposed to a philosophical understanding of subjectivity, humans do not *have* a timeless, universal subjectivity. As Althusser (2003) argues with recourse to Lacanian psychoanalysis, they *become* subjects by entering a discourse in which they occupy subject positions. While for Althusser a subject position is embedded in a rather static symbolic structure (like a system of names that are given to and imposed on a newborn), Foucault defends the more dynamic idea that subject positions are constructed in discursive processes and practices involving many members of a community over time.

Not all subject positions have the same value. Subject positions can have a subjective value for discourse participants who relate to them through proximity or distance, positively or negatively (e.g. 'my grandmother'; 'a repugnant person'). Linguists may think of the problems of deixis, modality, evaluation and stance here (e.g. Chilton, 2014). But subject positions can also have an objective value which is recognized in larger communities and in institutions (e.g. the member of parliament, who has been elected; the celebrated football star). In this context, one may evoke macro-sociological work on the construction of social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). While Marx distinguished between use and exchange value to capture the subjective and objective value of

goods, he did not yet recognize the role of language as a practice of valuating human and non-human actants, material and non-material things. Through language, the value subjects have in a discourse community is encoded, displayed and established. And in discursive dynamics that can involve large populations, some people, ideas and things can gain a value that no member of a discourse community can ignore.

Enunciative pragmatics provides a linguistic perspective on discursive valuation of subject positions. From the point of view of enunciative pragmatics, discourse mobilizes utterances, which are linguistically encoded speech acts (Angermuller, 2014, 54ff.). Utterances are the smallest linguistic units that members use to negotiate their positions in the community and in the social space. Formed from a subject (e.g. 'The wall … ') and a predicate (e.g. ' … is white.'), utterances always define a locutor (a deictic centre), which constitutes the position from where the speech act is performed at a certain point in time and space vis-à-vis other speakers. Through utterances, language users show their and others' positions in discourse. Hence, to understand the meaning of 'The wall is white', language users need to define the locutor, which represents one of the points of view mobilized by the utterance (Ducrot, 1984, chapter 8). 'The wall is not white', for instance, implies two points of view, one of which (L[ocutor]) holding 'The wall is white' at a distance and the other (A[llocutor]) taking in charge what is negated by L. By processing polyphonic utterances, discourse participants participate in positioning and valuating practices of members in a discourse community.

The positions participants construct through language in spontaneous encounters can be ephemeral but they are crucially important for the sense of identity discourse participants can have (cf. Harré & Davies, 1990). As many participate in discursive positioning practices in large populations through written texts over a long time, highly valuable positions can emerge from the interplay of the many discourse participants (cf. Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Once such subject positions are established and once they are perceived as 'real' in a discourse community, they have an objective value that others can, and sometimes have to, relate to. All participants are involved in producing hierarchies between those who occupy more and less valued subject positions (and excluding the many who occupy no position, Rancière, 1995). Discourse, therefore, is not a neutral medium that allows people to simply express what they want to say. It is a practice that responds to the existential question 'Who am I for others?'

This is the point where one should consider praxeological conceptions of discourse as *doing* subject positions in a context of power and inequality. While praxeological ideas have informed sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and many areas of qualitative social research, one should not forget the critical theories of practice from the early Marx to the late Foucault. Foucault hardly cites Marx and when he does so, one often sees him criticize what he perceives as Marx's economism. Foucault does not share a teleological vision of history. Nor does he see a single type of practice, the 'economy', as the fundamental, causal base that explains the social order. Foucault points out the crucial importance of subjectivity for practices of governing, notably free, entrepreneurial subjectivity for the neoliberal governmentality. And he insists on discourse as a practice that coordinates social behaviour of large populations and constitutes social inequalities through subject positions (Foucault, 2004). Yet just like Marx, Foucault grounds knowledge in a social and historical context and asks how knowledge is mobilized in the making of social hierarchies. In many ways, Foucault extends Marx's intuitions concerning the nexus of valuation and the social order.

While Marxist theorists often concentrate on the impact of external economic and political interests on scientific knowledge or public deliberation (Fairclough, 1989; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997), the accumulation of discursive capital *within* discourse communities has been given insufficient attention (but see Bourdieu, 1982; Reitz, 2017). As a practice of valuation through language, discourse needs to be seen as an important source of value in the social world. For just like commodities, whose (exchange) value is a function of the socially necessary labour time, subject positions become valuable by absorbing the time and energy of the members of the discourse community. As a result, some subject positions gain more (exchange) value than others. And one can often observe a transfer of value from the many discourse workers (who talk only about others) to the few discourse 'capitalists' (who are talked to and about).

Processes of value transfer and accumulation do not have to be organized strategically by powerful actors (even though they often are). Nor do they have to replicate a constituted social structure of power (even though they often do). Discourses may indeed operate under conditions of perfect 'freedom' (i.e. where nobody follows any command, script or law) and still engender extreme hierarchies between those who get recognition and those who do not. If some participants occupy dominant subject positions and others do not, they usually benefit from a redistribution of value from the many invisible discourse participants towards the few who occupy highly valued subject positions. Indeed, the highly valuable subject positions of the community result from the time and energy dispensed by all members of the community, most of whom unheard and nameless, while some manage to appropriate the few subject positions which absorb the discursive labour of the many. This is what I call the accumulation of discursive capital in a discourse community.

Whereas Marx makes out the industrial factory as a locus of capitalist exploitation, the accumulation of discursive value through highly recognized subject positions does not require discourse labourers to sell their labour force to an institution, at least not completely. Many academics can be considered as semi-autonomous producers working in hybrid employment contracts where contractualized work for an institution (e.g. as a teacher) is combined with a quasi entrepreneurial component (e.g. as a researcher who produces for a market of symbolic goods, a disciplinary community where he/she publishes in his/her own name). If, technically, the members of such discourse communities (such as in art, the media or the liberal professions) do not have to be exploited by a surplus-extracting organization, they are nevertheless subject to massive de- and revaluations of their subject positions in the spontaneous dynamics of discourse. In these arenas of semi-free-lance value production, the relationships of production are no longer those of the industrial age (think of new challenges like intellectual property rights). 'Late capitalism' (Jameson, 1991), 'cognitive capitalism' (Boutang, 2012), 'mental capitalism' (Franck, 2007) or the 'knowledge-based economy' (Sum & Jessop, 2013) capture the profoundly discursive nature of these areas in contemporary capitalism.

Two examples from political and academic discourse: making 'fake news' and 'scientific truths'

I will now come to how hierarchies of subject positions are constructed in two social arenas – firstly, in the way that political actors boost their visibility in political discourse

through strategic scandalization (as has been theorized by CDA scholars) and, secondly, in the way academic recognition for valued knowledge is redistributed among academic actors, the 'Matthew effect' (Merton, 1968), also known as the academic star system. Both examples, the production of 'fake news' and 'scientific truths', will be accounted for through the same mechanism of discursive capital accumulation. By applying a symmetrical explanation, I will give an example of how discourse research following the Strong Programme (Angermuller, 2018) can account for discourses critically no matter whether one considers them as true or false.

My first example is right-wing populist parties and movements, whose rise one can observe in many Western countries since the late 1970s (Richardson, 2004), e.g. Front National in France, anti-Islam propagandists in the Netherlands, UKIP and Brexit in the UK, the Tea Party and Trump in the U.S. and, more recently, AfD in Germany. Such parties turn around highly visible subject positions constructed in public political discourse through a mechanism which Wodak (2014) has described as a strategy of discursive provocation. The textbook example comes from Austria, where FPÖ has applied this strategy for more than 30 years and refined to such a degree that it got them into power repeatedly. Populist discourse always follows the same script of scandalization, which begins with a right-winger saying something (i.e. Trump: 'We need a wall to keep Mexican rapists out.') which then creates outrage in the public sphere (and also some applause from Facebook posts and FoxNews). Commentators from the liberal and left-wing spectrum frantically react until the maligned populist declares that he or she was not racist, that he or she never meant to say that all Mexicans are rapists (which indeed he or she may never have said) and that he or she apologized if he or she had hurt anybody. Public interest then subsides until the next provocation from the populist tests and redraws the limits of the morally acceptable by starting another circle (e.g. Trump announcing to ban people from 'Muslim' and 'shithole' countries to enter the U.S.). One can observe that populists typically reject being held accountable for what is said (they never say that it is they who claim Mexicans are rapists). However, in recurrent loops of scandalization and denial, they monopolize visibility in the political space while others remain without a voice. Hence, over time, the 'Trump' subject position has grown from a media celebrity (articulating socially recognized labels such as 'New Yorker', 'real estate entrepreneur', 'billionaire', 'beauty pageant contest organizer', 'participant in The Apprentice'…) to a character with a distinct personality and style ('tweets against adversaries', 'calls himself genius', 'gropes women', uses words like 'bigly') and with a political profile ('Republican', 'Mexican wall', 'protectionism', 'Putin-friendly'…). It is from such a discursively constructed subject position, which others cannot ignore, that political ideas are imposed on others.

Such dynamics do not take place in a power-free space. While some discourse participants can mobilize more economic resources than others (e.g. billionaires pushing for tax cuts), populist discourses are often fuelled by the energies and affects that come from the misrecognition of the subject status of many voters, sometimes caused by social and economic deprivation or a crisis that reinforces the sentiment of 'being left behind'. In the case of the Trump election, Trumpist political subjectivity ('Make America Great Again!') apparently appealed to voters from rural areas with low educational degrees more so than from urban areas with high formal education. Such voters turned out to be especially responsive to the promise of voice, recognition and agency. And the social demographics show that

they appropriate the white, male, nationalist subject positions articulated in Trump discourse according to their social, cultural and economic situation. By mobilizing a specific mix of economic, political, cultural, religious and symbolic resources, political discourses bring forth subject positions which allow millions of voters to be counted and recognized as subjects in discourse.

One cannot account for discourse only in terms of the ideas that it conveys. It is not sophisticated knowledge or a 'true' account of reality that explains discursive activity. Rather, discourse turns around the social subject positions that the participants tacitly or overtly compete for. Discourse is a struggle over subjectivity as a result of which social hierarchies are sometimes reinforced, sometimes mitigated. The Trump brand is an example of extreme concentration of discursive capital in one subject position which results from many participating in media discourse no matter whether they share Trump's ideas or not. 'Trump', in other words, is the product of thousands of journalists and millions of anonymous discourse participants, of his right-wing fans as well as of his left and liberal detractors, who all participate in boosting his subject position in the exclusive, competitive and hierarchical space of mass media discourse (this includes somebody like me, the author of this article, who regrettably contributes to the Trump phenomenon by discussing it as an example here even though I have no political sympathy whatsoever with Trump). Therefore, the 'Trump' subject position absorbs the discursive labour of the many participants of media discourse while resonating with the (devalued) subject positions of his voters (cf. Stavrakakis, Katsambekis, Nikisianis, Kioupkiolis, & Siomos, 2017).

The second example illustrates the concentration of value in academic discourse. If the Trump presidency is an example for somebody who has attained a position of power through what, from the point of view of many scientific observers, are 'lies', 'narcistic self-celebration' and 'hate speech', academic discourse, too, can be cited as an example of a discourse where actors occupy positions of power. Academic researchers engage in struggles over 'truths' in order to establish 'scientific facts'. By applying the principle of symmetry following the Strong Programme, I consider both scientific 'truths' and populist 'post-truths' as products of discursive processes and practices of members of a discourse community. Given that populism and science is often perceived to be in opposition to each other, this may be a counterintuitive and surprising claim. However, acknowledging that both truths and post-truths result from the same discursive mechanism does not mean that one accepts 'that they are all the same', that their claims have the same normative value. On the contrary, it is important to see that by engaging in academic discursive practices, academics give value to certain knowledges (which are made true as it were). And by defending the value of scientific truths that one understands to be discursively constructed, one can criticize populist ideas as lies, which are accepted in some, especially in non-academic communities (e.g. NRA supporters, white evangelicals). Therefore, while the emerging hierarchies between subject positions should be seen critically, they cannot be criticized on the ground that some ideas are inherently true or false or that some actors pursue good or bad intentions. Rather, the Strong Programme opts for immanent critique (Herzog, 2016), for which discourses can be criticized only on the grounds of normative criteria which are themselves a product of the discourses in question.

Whatever the ideas and intentions academics want to convey through academic discourse, they are always engaged in social practices of constructing subject positions. A

case in point is the practice of academic citation in academic communities, which can bring forth strong hierarchies between few academic stars and many un- or misrecognized academics (Angermuller, 2009). The reputational and institutional hierarchies which keep being reproduced through ongoing, spontaneous valuation practices of academics are also known as the 'Matthew effect': 'For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance'. Just like populist scandalization, which involves populist and anti-populist discourse participants, academics produce and reproduce the academic star system in their everyday discursive valuation practices no matter how they relate to those they cite. It is difficult for academics not to participate in this game (Angermuller, 2013b). It is by citing and being cited that they recognize the value of others and also find their own value recognized by others (Hyland, 1999). As a discursive micro-practice of valuation, academic discourse not only represents the value that people see in a researcher but through citation, the value of research and researchers is also constituted. As Marx has pointed out in his writings (e.g. Marx, 1990, 138ff), such value is *relational* – it only exists within the relations to all other citations. By using utterances in their talks and publications, researchers express subjective relationships of proximity and distance to other researchers (Hamann, 2016). While the scientific system of producing and distributing values among participants is a powerful incentive for all participants to boost up knowledge claims and produce scientific truths, one can observe the emergence of strong inequalities between the many who cite and the few who are cited.

As a result of such dynamics which nobody entirely controls, the value of some subject positions is boosted while many fail to get any recognition at all. Academic discourse, therefore, can be seen as a process in which participants value others in the hope of being valued by others and thus reproduce a hierarchy between dominant and dominated groups (Maeße, 2013). In these processes, which involve many participants over long time, subject positions absorb the discursive labour that all academics dispense to be part of the game. Few academic positions make a difference to large numbers while many positions make no difference to anybody. And the hierarchy between the few positions that absorb the discursive labour of the many and the many that fail to make any difference at all is not only symbolic (in Bourdieu's sense). Ongoing discursive valuation practices in everyday academic life contribute to reproducing institutional hierarchies between status groups which can go hand in hand with strong financial salary spreads between the top and the bottom. Academic discourse is not only about the 'soft' hierarchies of reputation but also about 'hard' institutional and economic power (Angermuller, 2017).

Both populist scandalization and the Matthew effect are systematic features of political and academic discourses where many members participate in the discursive construction of hierarchies. Inequalities which are constructed in discourse are not only about knowledge; they do not exist just in the heads of those who take part in discourse. Discursive positioning practices are material (Beetz & Schwab, 2017) in that they divide large populations into dominant and dominated subject positions. Yet the heterogeneity of valuation practices needs to be stressed. Subjective value does not always translate into objective value (one may value ideas that nobody else values). Institutionalized value hierarchies (e.g. academic status or elected office) do not necessarily replicate the ephemeral but equally important value hierarchies constructed in more spontaneous discursive dynamics (such as reputation or celebrity). While 'soft' hierarchies (e.g. Trump's branded subject position or academic reputation)

can turn into a 'hard' asset with political and economic power (a presidency or a professorship), not all value can be broken down to the same scale (such as prices set on markets or other number-based techniques of valuation, see the critique of numerocracy in Angermuller & Maeße, 2015). Discourse participants need to find practical solutions for the difficult task of negotiating the value of subject positions without there being a common set of valuation criteria. Hence, the challenge for discourse researchers is to account for the heterogeneity of valuation practices which can but do not have to be subject to governmental practices of commensurabilization (e.g. evaluation schemes applied to large academic populations, Angermuller, 2013a).

Discourse research as reflexive critique

I will conclude by recapitulating what it means to consider discourse as a practice of valuation. By critically interrogating the structuralist reception of Marx that predominates in some strands of Discourse Studies, I have questioned the top-down view on constituted social structures and inequality. Instead, one will prefer bottom-up views on the processes and practices of doing subject positions in the social. Power and inequality are not simply imposed on discourse participants from above; the question is how power and inequality are done in the ongoing discursive practices of all members of a discourse community. Against this background, discourse needs to be seen as a valuation practice that

- is not only instrumental in representing value but also constitutive of it;
- cannot be accounted for by the ideas, intentions and theories the actors have about their practices. Truths, post-truths and untruths need to be explained in terms of the hierarchical social order that these practices produce and reproduce;
- goes beyond a narrowly economic understanding as it also includes the discursive practices of using language that attribute value to people, things and ideas;
- produces and reproduces material hierarchies between more and less valued members of a discourse community.

The world we live in today looks massively different from the world 200 years ago, when Marx was born. Yet Discourse Studies can still gain from his seminal explorations of the nexus of value and social inequality. And Discourse Studies can point out the crucial role of language as an ongoing practice of constituting the social through representation. The objectives of Marx's theoretical project were historical: he wanted to account for capitalism as a historical mode of production. In this contribution, I discussed discourse as a valuation practice more generally and future research will need to look into more specific regimes of accumulation such as the advent of social media in political discourse and the managerialisation of higher education These historical changes have meant new challenges for discourse research whose consequences still need to be spelled out. Going beyond the structuralist division between language, the economic and the social, a praxeological Marx/Foucault view on discourse will insist on two points in particular:

Firstly, the value attached to subject positions expresses a social relationship in the discourse community. Subject positions do not have an inherent value. Rather, their value is the product of the social practices and processes among all members who participate in

constituting and establishing it. Therefore, the value of any given subject position needs to be related to the value that is created by all members of the discourse community.

Secondly, by using language, discourse participants contribute to producing and reproducing an unequal social order through the accumulation of discursive capital. In discursive dynamics among many participants, value, which is produced by the many, is concentrated in the hands of the few. This process is usually neither intended nor reflected upon by the language users. While discourse participants usually use language to achieve an intended goal (i.e. express an idea), they are mostly unaware of the redistribution of value that takes place from those who produce it to those who take credit for it.

Discourse, therefore, is understood to be a source of value and not just a means to represent value. It takes time, energy and many non-linguistic resources to use language and to engage in discourse, which is why discourse creates value and does not only represent the social as a hierarchical world of more or less valued people, things and ideas. No research which tries to account for valuation processes in the social world can be neutral as it participates in making people, things, ideas valuable no matter how 'objective' it intends to be. Just like any other discourse, discourse research, too, contributes to creating and establishing truths and realities. It cannot but have critical effects on its objects and intervene in the discourses that it analyzes. Therefore, one should encourage discourse researchers to engage in reflexive critique and to recognize that theirs is a struggle over truths which involves those who engage in it (the actors), those who account for it (the observers) and those who intervene (the clinicians, cf. Parker, 2014).

Discursive critique should be reflexive of the 'scientific truths' it mobilizes to question 'populist lies'. Hence, one can and should admit that all truths are discursively constructed. Yet in no way does one have to accept that any idea can be true because somebody wants it to be true. All truths do not have the same subjective and objective value and nobody can escape from the practices of valuation, the processes and dynamics of attributing value to people, things, ideas, in which one is caught up with whenever one uses language. There is no outside the discursive struggles over true and valuable knowledge. Through language, one always participates in valuation. And when we enter discourse, we should always reflect on what is perhaps the most existential good for us all, namely to be in a position of saying, thinking and doing things which we value.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Johannes Beetz, Benno Herzog, Kolja Lindner and Juliane Reinecke for their valuable comments.
2. One can mention early French Discourse Analysis, which asks how utterances relate to the social conditions (i.e. 'class struggle', Haroche, Henry, & Pêcheux, 1971). A similar correlation between the linguistic and the social domains can be observed in Critical Discourse Analysis, which places the 'text' (i.e. linguistic expressions) within the 'interaction' (i.e. practices), both of them being surrounded by the 'context' (i.e. society and its institutions, Fairclough, 1989, p. 25). The structuralism of early French and Critical Discourse Analysis has been challenged by pragmatic and interactional strands of research, which consider the social context as a practical achievement of those who use language rather than something that can be given by social theorists. A longer discussion of the structuralist heritage in these classical approaches and their limits can be found elsewhere (Angermuller, 2018).

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