Discourse Theory, Psychoanalysis, and Logics of Critical Explanation

An Interview with

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Granted to

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Introductory Note

In September 2019, Jason Glynos, Professor of Political Theory at the Department of Government, University of Essex, UK, visited Recife, Brazil, while staying in the country for two months, for a series of academic activities held at the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE), co-convened by Profs. Gustavo Oliveira and Anna Luiza Oliveira (UFPE) and Joanildo Burity (Fundaj and UFPE). Two interviews were then granted by Prof. Glynos, one of them focusing on the Critical Fantasy Studies research programme he is developing and here the reader will find the second one, focused on Glynos's own intellectual trajectory, his engagement with discourse theory and psychoanalysis (expressed in his dialogue with Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek) and a discussion of methodological aspects of the logics framework developed by him and David Howarth (also from the University of Essex). Particular attention will be given to the relation between the logics of equivalence and difference, on the one hand, and the three meso-level logics put forward by Glynos and Howarth, as the social, political and fantasmatic logics. Glynos is also asked to ponder on how the latter relate to one another, especially in contexts of empirical work, around the question of problematization. The interview was conducted by Joanildo Burity and Gustavo Oliveira, at the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation.

Joanildo Burity (JB): Maybe the obvious thing, Jason, would be to ask you to say a little bit about how you came to Discourse Theory and, you know, how did your thinking develop around the theoretical impact of discourse theory?

Jason Glynos (JG): Well, my interest in discourse theory really emerged back in the early 90s. That was at a time when I was studying law and thinking specifically about the ideology of law and how judges and lawyers reasoned. Questions were being raised about *identity*: gender and sexual identities, minority identities – including Native American identities – and so on. It was a big thing in the early 90s. *Perspectives in Law* was a theme and a set of courses introduced at UBC [University of British Columbia] and other universities at the time, responding to a growing awareness and interest in social movements and associated demands. Many were increasingly aware of and registering certain difficulties in translating some of these progressive demands and perspectives into law and policy. And so, I – like many others – became increasingly interested in what it was that made things so difficult to change, why transformation appeared so 'inertial'. Maybe you could say that these issues were more obvious and visible in law, because law tends to be rather conservative in its operation and orientation, building as it does on precedent and incremental change. Nevertheless, it opened up a set of questions for me about the nature of judgment-making, the character of meaning and identity, and their conditions of transformation. And so it was in this period that I became exposed to ideas associated with postmodernism, deconstruction, critical legal studies, and proper names like Foucault, Derrida, Butler, and so on.

It was at that time that I also became exposed to the post-marxist ideas of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, through their *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (HSS)*. (HSS, published in 1985, is considered to be one of the founding texts of their brand of discourse theory. Their work as a whole, alongside other scholarly outputs that their work has inspired, have served to 'found' the so-called Essex School in Discourse Theory.) I was introduced to this book by Joel Bakan – a professor at my Law School – and I was immediately struck by how this short, dense volume could make so much sense out of the developments unfolding before my eyes – in terms of identity, socialist strategy and radical democracy. And so, I became interested in pursuing these ideas more fully. And so - getting back to your question about discourse theory and how I became interested in it – well, in a nutshell, and in retrospect, it was about finding a vocabulary with which to make sense of the difficulties of transformation and the conditions of transformation – legal, economic, and political, transformation. And so I resolved to engage more systematically with discourse theory after attending UBC Law School. At the suggestion of Chantal – whom I had met at that time in Vancouver, while she was on one of her North American lecture tours – I left for the University of Essex to study under the supervision of Ernesto Laclau. That was, I would say, in broad brush strokes, how I became interested in discourse theory, and how I ended up in Essex.

Gustavo Oliveira (GO): Now you teach at Essex. How do you see your own role in the development of political discourse theory and in the Essex School of Discourse Theory?

JG: I would say that one of the key reference points for me, right from the outset, from when I first arrived at Essex had to do with questions around psychoanalysis: the role the psychoanalytic dimension in discourse theory played or could play. Actually, it was another professor at UBC who influenced me a great deal – Joseph Smith – who set me on this path. He was an expert in tort law, but he also ran some of the modules in the *Perspectives in Law* programme I mentioned earlier, and, crucially, introduced me to psychoanalytic jurisprudence, which I know is an ugly term. Basically, it

means something like doing philosophy of law from the perspective of psychoanalysis; in other words, thinking about judgment-making from the point of view of psychoanalysis and some of the key figures within the Freudian enterprise: Freud, Jung, Klein, Lacan, and so on. Working primarily from a Freudian-Jungian perspective, Professor Smith had recently got his interest piqued by the French psychoanalyst Lacan who had died just over a decade earlier, and so this is what led me to Lacan. At the time, my introduction to Lacan was experienced in the same way that one experiences scratching one's head vigorously and repeatedly without this helping to generate much sense. A not uncommon experience of course. There was an amusing moment, when – in my naivete – I called the psychology department for help. Without hesitation I was promptly warned to immediately abandon Freud et al., and how thankful I would be that I had called them at this early stage of my research career. Luckily for me Slavoj Žižek had recently published his *Sublime Object* and one or two other 'introductions' to Lacan and these served as crucial exegetical supports for my entry into the Lacanian universe.

In any case, the relevance of psychoanalysis to our better understanding the process of constructing meaning and identity seemed obvious to me, and so I would say that my work has always tried to foreground this dimension of discourse theory, to play with it, and to explore how and when it is legitimate to amplify its role from an explanatory and critical point of view. Foregrounding and exploring the role psychoanalysis can play in shedding light on processes of identity transformation, and *resistance* to transformation in particular, seemed intuitively promising. But from a broader critical political theory perspective, it's also interesting to think about psychoanalysis in relation to theories of ideology and the critique of ideology. In some sense, then, both explanatory and critical concerns have driven my interest in psychoanalysis and its place and role in discourse theory.

JB: Now, in that sense, how would you see your way into discourse theory through psychoanalysis tallying with or maybe challenging to any extent Ernesto Laclau's own views on this? Because his interest in psychoanalysis also goes a long way back. I mean, we can find in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (HSS)*, at the very basics, the distinction between condensation and displacement, the logic of meaning, you know, trying to connect Saussurean linguistics and psychoanalysis, and so on. Then there's his "Marxism and psychoanalysis" in *New Reflections*. And, of course, in *Populist Reason*, there's a long discussion about, already mobilizing very explicitly, Lacanian theory on the question of the subject, desire and the name. Now, what could you get through this dialogue with Ernesto in terms of insights on how to bridge discourse theory and Lacanian Psychoanalysis?

JG: I entirely agree with what you say. Psychoanalysis has been present in Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's work from *HSS* onwards, acquiring greater prominence in Laclau's later works, especially. As you say, the logics of condensation and displacement have been there; Lacan's *point de capiton*, the concept of overdetermination, Althusser...

JB: Maybe it was through Althusser that this whole thing came...

JG: Indeed. Many might see Ernesto as a post-Althusserian thinker, like Rancière or Balibar. Ernesto is struggling with similar puzzles about how to retain key insights associated with Marxian political

economy and strategy, and link them to insights emerging out of the structuralist and psychoanalytic traditions. Althusser was also keen to explore how psychoanalysis can shed light on questions of ideological critique and progressive social transformation. So, yes: overdetermination, condensation and displacement, *point de capiton* – these are all concepts in *HSS* and, as you quite rightly suggest, the significance of psychoanalysis for the enterprise of discourse theory only seems to grow as we move to *New Reflections* and beyond. In fact, *New Reflections* ends with a now-classic essay by Slavoj Žižek, "Beyond Discourse Analysis", which speaks to this internal relation between psychoanalysis and discourse theory. The very inclusion of Žižek's essay in that volume signals a very clear acknowledgement and recognition, even embrace, of the importance of psychoanalysis for thinking about discourse theory.

At that point in time, of course, the interaction between Slavoj Žižek and Ernesto was very productive and interesting, because Slavoj Žižek himself was very keen to point out how Laclau and Mouffe's work helped him see the relevance of psychoanalysis to discourse theory, theories of hegemony, and theories of ideology. It was a rather exciting period that opened up the possibility of establishing, exploring, and building on those connections. And I consider myself rather fortunate to have been at Essex at around this time as a research student, to see how these resonances were encouraged and amplified. For example, how ideas in Saussure and the whole structuralist tradition informed the work of Jacques Lacan, who enriched psychoanalytic thinking so profoundly, while similar (post) structuralist innovations were later carried out by Laclau and Mouffe in the field of political discourse theory. This common heritage facilitated the process of making these connections and amplifying the resonances, and whose effects can be seen clearly in the transition from *HSS* to *New Reflections* and beyond, where the question and role of dislocation, subjectivity and the identification process become absolutely central. And when it comes to *Populist Reason*, there again the role of psychoanalysis is clear to see in discourse theory, where you have an initial set of chapters which are drawing on some psychoanalytic themes...

JB: Yes, Freud's "Psychology of masses"...

JG: Indeed. Exactly. And debates linked to Tarde, Le Bon, and so on. And there is also the idea of radical investment – which is also present beforehand, and which resonates with some ideas in psychoanalysis, for example, the idea of affect. And the important distinction he makes between ethical moment on the one hand and the 'normative-descriptive complex' on the other.

JB: That's right.

JG: These ideas reinforce the point about how psychoanalysis took on an increasingly significant role in the development of discourse theory over several decades.

JB: Yes, but then adding to that, what difference do you think you are making to this discussion?

JG: It's very funny, because we had lots of conversations with Ernesto about this, especially with my fellow research student at the time and later close colleague, Yannis Stavrakakis, who – as you know

– has been from the very outset a most significant travelling companion on this journey into the lands of psychoanalysis and discourse theory. We would, you know – partly joking, partly serious – we'd open up these friendly sort of sparring matches with Ernesto, pressing him on how far he is willing to go in embracing some psychoanalytic ideas, particularly Lacanian ideas. He was always very generous and keen to play along and to engage in various theoretical experiments, but at the same time he was also incredibly cautious, always resisting the impulse to rush.

Of course, it should be said that the development of discourse theory is not necessarily synonymous with Laclau and Mouffe! But even when discourse theory is identified with these proper names, it is important to remember how their ideas were developing in response to debates taking place at the time, including debates with their research students and colleagues. In addition, although we are now focussing on the relationship between psychoanalysis and discourse theory, we should remember too that other hugely significant strands of thought continued to exercise influence on the development of discourse theory. Laclau and Mouffe were master *bricoleurs*, drawing on and reacting to work associated with many figures beyond Freud and Lacan – Heidegger, Hegel, Derrida, De Man, Wittgenstein, Foucault, Barthes, etc. – and many of my fellow research students (and research students before me), and later colleagues and collaborators – were instrumental in bringing other key figures into the mix (Butler, Habermas, Deleuze, Luhmann, etc.), helping to shape these developments through Essex's doctoral seminars in *Ideology and Discourse Analysis* and through Essex's *Centre for Theoretical Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (now rebranded as the *Centre for Ideology and Discourse Analysis*). And you yourself of course were part of this story!

All this is only to say that psychoanalysis is only part of this story in the development of discourse theory, one which I nevertheless think is absolutely crucial. So when you ask me how I think I contribute to this enterprise I tend to think it is a rather complex question that has many strands, some of which are more opaque and difficult to trace, since it is all part of a broader set of processes – some deliberative, some not so deliberative. Still, I can say that a lot of my efforts to engage with the development of discourse theory have emerged through collaborative work, particularly with Yannis Stavrakakis and David Howarth, but also many other colleagues besides, too numerous to mention, as well as many of our research students enrolled on the MA and PhD programmes in Ideology and Discourse Analysis at Essex. In my experience our students have tended to ask some of the most difficult questions and have served as crucial critical voices in the development of my own thinking.

Ok, well, so one way of thinking of the psychoanalytic contribution to discourse theory is through a reference to some key concepts that appear not to have been so fully thematized or explored in the work of Ernesto Laclau – 'fantasy', for instance, or 'enjoyment', or 'transgression'. These were terms that were already visible, even prominent, in some other quarters of critical political theory. So it was always a question for some of us in the 'psychoanalytic orbit' of how these can be used to probe and develop aspects of discourse theory, particularly in relation to ideological critique, but also in relation to a critical political economy. For example, Ernesto Laclau was clear about how the idea of a kind of 'will to closure' or 'radical investment', or 'will to totality' could be useful in thinking about ideology, about the ideological 'gesture'. And I entirely agree that they give us an excellent way to think about this in, let's say, relatively abstract terms. But in an attempt to add further detail, one can

draw on other traditions and concepts. And I think that psychoanalysis offers a set of such other concepts that can, I think, help in trying to account in a more theoretically differentiated way how this 'will to closure' takes place or how to characterize it through appeals to concepts like fantasy, desire, drive, enjoyment, and so on.

Yannis and I had many discussions and debates with Ernesto about these things, particularly about how psychoanalysis could help draw out in an interesting way the role affect and emotion play in hegemonic struggles and in this way help develop aspects of discourse theory. It's funny because Ernesto would often claim that these things have always been important in his work, in his theoretical reflections about meaning construction, identification, and radical investment. But he would always say this with a twinkle in his eye, because in a way, he's saying that – and I would agree with him – a lot of these insights, and nuances were present in his thinking, partly because he was always an extremely cautious and sensitive thinker and writer, always very attuned to conceptual tensions and the smallest perturbations in signification. Still, I think that a lot of these nuances, while they may very well have been implicit in many of his conceptual innovations, also called out to be 'unpacked' in a more theoretically differentiated way. In my view, therefore, the appeal to categories like fantasy and enjoyment were precisely attempts to make more explicit ideas present *in potentia* in the interstices of this theoretical framework, admittedly giving them a very particular (psychoanalytic) conceptual inflection. This, in part, is what lies behind the idea of "critical fantasy studies", conceived as a particular frontier of discourse theory. But this is another topic.

GO: In spite of those initial collaborations with Žižek, at some point there was a visible break between the trajectories of Laclau, Mouffe, and Žižek. How do you perceive the theoretical and politico-normative dimensions of this rupture? And, are there still possibilities for dialogues between the works of Laclau and Žižek in the current context?

JG: Yes, well, this is true. Ever since the Laclau- Žižek exchanges in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* things have not been the same! In fact, this spectacularly acrimonious bust-up was unfolding at a rather delicate time for me personally, because I was in the throes of completing my doctoral thesis, which drew heavily on both their work. I mean, just think about it: Ernesto Laclau was my supervisor and Slavoj Žižek was my PhD external examiner. But I remember it being a very fraught time not only for me personally but also for other researchers who were exploring and developing the relationship between psychoanalysis, on the one hand, and discourse theory, on the other hand. The whole thing was a big shock, and I have to say that the event itself was – and has remained – not only a source of sadness but also rather enigmatic. To put it in psychoanalytic terms, the various disagreements appeared affectively overinvested and, while often interesting and intriguing, I have to be honest and say that I didn't find many of the "rupture exchanges" particularly enlightening. Don't get me wrong: it is true that some differences of theoretical and strategic significance were expressed, but I also feel that many of those differences tended to be overinvested in ways that didn't necessarily enhance the integrity of their positions and arguments, nor produce interesting new avenues of theoretical investigation. Of course, they continued to make theoretical advances in their own right. It is just that I do not feel those advances were informed in any productive

way by the exchanges they had between themselves. In this respect I felt almost as if there was a kind of a "talking past each other" rather than any kind of proper engagement.

JB: And really exaggerating their points.

JG: Exactly. Those concrete ways of expressing their differences were sometimes so overinvested that it meant that it was very difficult to make those differences productive. The question for me was always whether these exchanges produced productive ways of thinking about things. And that's where I found them wanting. (A similar point can be made about exchanges between scholars associated with "new materialism" and poststructuralism, respectively. I have always felt that there has been a lot of unproductive "talking past each other" going on here, too, that has been rather unfortunate.)

But just to be clear: As you probably suspect, a lot of my own work continues to draw inspiration and sustenance from both Laclau and Žižek's work! My view is that there are still very profound insights, both in the psychoanalytic tradition and in discourse theory that can continue to be – and are being – mined!

JB: I would say that the Žižek -Laclau rupture never really had anything to do with the question of psychoanalysis. I mean, it seems to me that there was more of a kind of political fallout between Ernesto and Žižek on concrete ideological options that they were considering, or choices they were making. Žižek's "return" to Lenin, for instance, made Ernesto very nervous, because the whole point about post-Marxism was to break with the Leninist tradition. And I think that created some kind of *frisson* there, which didn't really relate to the main collaborative exchange they had during many years… So, in that sense, you would be right to say that nothing changed, because if the question is how to make good sense and use of psychoanalysis in political thought, then their debate had nothing to do with it, or very little to do with it.

JG: Indeed, indeed. The differences between Laclau and Žižek are typically expressed in political terms. But at the same time, it is not so easy always to figure out how deep those differences actually go. I think it is complicated, in part because it is sometimes difficult to discern when Žižek is acting as a kind of provocateur and when he is seeking to illustrate a theoretical point. Lenin, for example, can be invoked to illustrate something about the structure of "choice", or the role of the party, or the character of hegemony, and so on. Some have pointed with alarm at the comments made by Žižek and some Žižekians about democracy, multiculturalism, and identity politics more generally, particularly their apparently "essentialized" connection to capitalism. Now, I would agree that there are many claims made by Žižekians that make them a prime candidate-member of what Wendy Brown calls the "melancholic left". Indeed, there are times when Žižek himself appears to regress into a traditional leftist class politicking that treats class as the privileged agent of revolutionary change, marginalizing the absolutely critical role intersectionality must play in any kind of successful coalition building exercise. I have myself questioned his apparent tendency to treat capitalism in rather abstract, homogeneous and monolithic terms, a tendency that ignores economic and other alternative practices that are already being performed along with the strategic opportunities this presents for change. At the same time there are many other claims he makes which go in different

directions! My point, however, is that when one looks closely at what Žižek has to say about things like democracy, multiculturalism, terrorism, and so on, they end up being a lot more nuanced than what is suggested by the provocative headline-claims he himself makes. Žižek is not against democracy as such, only against our fantasmatic-ideological attachment to particular kinds of democracy and also against the idea that democracy, on its own, can or should exhaust our emancipatory horizon.

In fact, it is difficult not to mention in this context Žižek's style, particularly in relation to Laclau's style! Žižek's style of writing always appears in the mode of a kind of explosion of ideas. You move from one vignette to another vignette. From high theory to low culture. And so on. There are some threads that run through them of course, but generally his interventions are more like putting sweeping brushstrokes to canvas in an impressionistic and iterative fashion. While often rich and suggestive they tend to raise as many questions as they address. Whereas Ernesto's writing is rather formal, going through clear logical steps; and while these steps are not always easy to digest, you at least know where you're at, and so on and so forth. So, their styles are quite distinct! But I like them both! Žižek's writing and intuitions are often intriguing. But for me these are things to be followed up. No doubt many of these ideas can be seen as a kind of surface effect (maybe not so "surface"!) of some really deep philosophical undercurrents. His interventions say: you know, "Here are some nifty ideas and insights. Now, go play with them. Think about them. Think about them a little more systematically, see if they produce anything." I have found this a useful way to approach Žižek.

But to get back to your point, yes, the differences between Ernesto and Žižek tend to be expressed as political differences, not as differences in our understandings of psychoanalysis, or of key psychoanalytic concepts. And this is indeed interesting. Apart from Žižek's explicit intervention in "Beyond Discourse Analysis" – where he sought to add an important psychoanalytic nuance to the concept of antagonism, there has not really been a significant debate between them about the use of psychoanalytic concepts in political analysis or about respective understandings of psychoanalytic concepts and their inter-relationship. On the other hand, Yannis and I have certainly pushed Ernesto on some of these issues, particularly as regards maintaining a distinction between master signifier and *objet petit a*. In any case, and on the whole, then, I would say that the focus of a lot of my own work – and others of course – has been precisely about exploring the analytical and critical import of expanding the discourse theoretical vocabulary to include some other psychoanalytic concepts, such as fantasy, enjoyment, and so on.

JB: Now, would you still see Žižek, who continues to produce quite a lot, as he has always done, contributing towards this question of psychoanalysis in social and political analysis? I mean, is he doing new things now or has he reached that point when he begins to simply apply over and over again the basic schema and maybe he would no longer be the key kind of interlocutor? I mean, how would you place him now in terms of your dialogue with his work around psychoanalysis and political thinking?

JG: Well, first of all, I have to be honest, because I haven't really been following the very latest on Slavoj Žižek 's output. I mean, I think he's absolutely brilliant. But it is hard to keep up with the guy.

I mean, he is a brilliant thinker. And although it's true that there is some sense of – I don't want to say repetition, but a kind of – iteration, his interventions always embody interesting iterations, even though there are some schemas that you can identify, as, you know, from the time of *The Sublime Object of Ideology*.

JB: And *The Ticklish Subject* as well...

JG: And *The Ticklish Subject*. Yes, indeed. And others of course. But I would still see *The Sublime Object* as a crucial reference point if you're thinking about how to conceptualize the relationship between psychoanalytic and political and ideological analysis, at least in broad terms. It set down the basic parameters of this relation and it also introduced many of the key categories of psychoanalysis and political theory, discussing in some systematic detail their inter-relationships. While it is true that subsequent texts have made some advances and have sought to analyse new conjunctures (the Fall of Socialism, 9/11, Occupy, etc.) it is difficult to fully understand these interventions and shifts without having *Sublime Object* in mind. What is particularly significant given the context of this interview is that *Sublime Object* is the text where the relationship between psychoanalysis and discourse theory – and the future potential of this relationship – became fully visible. It also signalled how the work of Laclau and Mouffe was instrumental for Žižek in making this connection thinkable. So, I would say that, yes, Žižek continues to make significant interventions, even if they don't appear in the "big bang" mode that we might associate with earlier works.

And in fact, I would say that there still are many ways of building productively across Žižek and Laclau & Mouffe in a way that belies their apparent differences. For example, while it is true that a large part of Laclau and Mouffe's efforts early on had been focused on drawing our attention to the crucial strategic significance of de-economizing politics, there is enormous scope for politicizing and pluralizing the economy in a way that does not abandon the crucial insights associated with the discursive turn, and in a way that productively draws on the psychoanalytic tradition, via the concept of mourning for example. Or another example: I believe there are potentially interesting ways to combine Žižek's psychoanalytic conceptualization of the "act" with Laclau and Mouffe's "radical democracy" by, for example, making the "act" an internal moment of "radical democracy". In fact, this particular idea comes from an insight expressed by Chantal Mouffe who saw very early on the role that a Lacanian ethics of the real could play in thinking about a radical democratic ethos.

GO: Let's talk a bit more about the "logics approach" that David Howarth and you have developed in *Logics of Critical Explanation* or are still developing now. What *is* the logics approach and how did you get to it and how do you see the importance of this approach in the contemporary research programme of the Essex School of discourse theory?

JG: Well, in some sense you could say that the logics approach was a response to at least two things. On the one hand, it was a response to developments in the academy. These developments had to do with the continued and increasing prominence attributed to scientistic ideals in many social science domains, including political and social studies, often with the support of reconfigured funding priorities and journal outlets that advanced and promoted such ideals. Scholars and students operating

outside the orbit of such increasingly hegemonic imperatives – including students and scholars of poststructuralist discourse analysis – regularly found themselves on the defensive. And this struggle would often take on a rather existential character.

JG: So discourse theory, which belonged to a particular tradition, poststructuralism, needed a way to communicate with a set of other traditions, in a manner that was understandable, and that could engage with a set of debates in the social sciences and the philosophy of science, around questions of explanation, understanding, causality, agency and structure and so on and so forth. And to develop a vocabulary which would allow us to be able to talk to – and defend ourselves against – other scholars, other colleagues, who occupied different positions in other traditions, in the tradition of rational choice or behavioural economics and so forth. So, that's the first thing.

The second thing concerned our students (and ourselves of course, and other "fellow travellers"), who were struggling with this question of how to apply discourse theory in their concrete empirical research. While there was a general acknowledgement that a lot of the concepts in discourse theory were extremely suggestive, they tended to be rather abstract. This is the paradox: these concepts could help us make sense of things happening in the world; and yet there was still a question about how to translate some of these concepts into things that were "operationizable" for doing concrete empirical research.

For this reason, the input of our PhD students into the development of the logics approach was crucial. I recall a particularly scary – but also exciting – time when in the run up to submitting our manuscript to the publisher David and I were presenting the draft chapters in our weekly doctoral seminar sessions at Essex. It was scary because up until the end David and I were struggling to finalize our main theses, spending long hours – mainly in the corridors and common rooms at Essex – discussing and debating issues – old ones that did not appear to want to go away and new unexpected ones – each one feeling more critical than the preceding one. As was the case in the writing process as a whole, we would often entirely lose track of who came up with ideas to resolve or address an issue or who contributed most to its refinement – although I suspect that David, having the memory of an elephant, would be able to tell you a more refined, maybe even a different, story about the whole process! Anyway, this period was a bit scary also because we realized very quickly that our students and other visiting scholars scrutinizing our draft chapters were not prepared to hold back at all on the critical front. In fact, they ended up being some of our most severe critics. At the same time, however, the process was exciting because we learnt a great deal from these exchanges, leading to very productive re-writes and refinements. In many ways, then, the logics project was the product of a truly collaborative and collective enterprise in which our students had a crucial role to play. And I would only add that the project has not ceased to develop. Current students – Essex-based and visiting PhDs and postdocs – and many non-Essex colleagues and collaborators – continue to contribute constructively and generously to this enterprise as critical friends and scholars.

So, the logics approach was a response to developments in the academy – including what was happening in our own University and department – but it was also responding to demands by our students and colleagues (and ourselves) in thinking about how to apply discourse theory. The logics

approach, then, sought to address these two challenges head on by developing a language with which to think through questions of research strategy and method in a more systematic way that was true to basic assumptions of poststructuralist discourse theory, while also enabling its scholars and students to defend poststructuralist discourse theory in the face of sometimes quite strikingly hostile prejudice in the academy – a prejudice and hostility reserved not only for poststructuralism but also for many other forms of speculative political theory and analysis. It forged such a language and defence by demonstrating how all such "bread and butter" ideas of research strategy and method can and should remain relevant to the discourse theory research programme, but with the added – and rather crucial – proviso that the meaning and significance of these terms needed revamping in light of its particular ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Now, the appeal to the term "logics" itself is important for at least two reasons. First, it enables *Logics* to express its fidelity to the founders of the postmarxist brand of discourse theory. After all, the term appears often in the work of Laclau and Mouffe, for example: "logics of equivalence and difference", "political logics", "social logics", and so on. Second, in elevating the term "logics" into a central category of discourse theory, it enabled us to treat it as a handy "entry point" into debates between poststructuralism and other traditions within social science. In this way a space is carved out by the term "logics" (corresponding to poststructuralist discourse theory), because it can then be contrasted with other key categories associated with other traditions: causal laws (positivism), contextualised self-interpretations (hermeneutics), mechanisms (critical realism or some forms of neo-positivism).

So the logics approach is an approach that sort of formalises what had up to that point remained rather implicit in the way we account for phenomena from a (poststructuralist) discourse theory point of view, demonstrating its unique features in a way that could enter into dialogue not only with more positivist traditions but also other post-positivist traditions like hermeneutics, critical realism and so on.

JB: Now, if we follow up on that, Ernesto, many times, would come back to Wittgenstein's discussion of following a rule, which in the end has to do with the methodological issue of how to apply concepts to, but also how to develop a set of procedures that will be repeated in, different situations. And Ernesto was always highlighting this aspect of Wittgenstein's argument that the rule changes with each one of its applications, that when you apply a rule, you're changing the rule. Now, if we think of this need for some kind of systematisation of methodological procedures and so on, in the light of this Wittgensteinian insight, which comes back several times across Ernesto's work, would you see any tension or any kind of ultimate failure of this project of developing a set of methodological principles to operationalise discourse theory? That could also be asked from the perspective of a deconstructive approach, in which you could say: can there be a method of deconstruction? So, how would you see these kinds of questions?

Well, I would agree with you that there appears to be a tension here. And it's true that Ernesto, as a doctoral supervisor, explicitly denounced what he referred to as the "myth of methodology". I remember memoranda doing the rounds which were written in the mode of *Against Method*.

JB: Yes. Paul Feyeraband...

JG: Feyeraband. Exactly. So, yes, I think there is a tension here, but I don't think it's a fatal tension. I think it's a productive tension. The challenge is to find a language which pushes in the direction of a set of, let's say, meso-level concepts that open up possibilities for thinking about how to articulate key assumptions of poststructuralist ontology with empirical material.

JG: Here it is worth recalling how Ernesto Laclau characterized the task of "middle ranging theorization". And I can give you a direct quote. Ernesto says that starting "from a discursive ontology [one] has, as a main task, to redescribe the ontical level in terms of the distinctions brought about by that ontology" (*Laclau: A Critical Reader*, p. 323). *Logics* was written very much in the spirit of the formulation of such a task. So, starting from the "axiomatic" presuppositions of poststructuralism, concerning discourse and radical contingency as its ontological horizon, *Logics* developed a "middle-ranging" framework, comprising social, political, and fantasmatic logics, offering a thin way of operationalizing this poststructural ontology for purposes of critical empirical research. If *social logics* assist in the task of directly characterizing a practice along a synchronic axis, then *political logics* can be said to focus more on the diachronic aspects of a practice, accounting for the way it has emerged or the way it is contested, transformed, or maintained; and *fantasmatic logics* disclose the way specific practices and regimes *grip* subjects ideologically.

In other words, a discourse analytical investigation is – to put it in Heideggerian terms – not just an ontic investigation, it is also an ontological investigation. Which means that these key concepts themselves undergo shifts in the process of performance, in the process of application, it seems to me. The challenge was how to develop a language which was not too prescriptive. How to develop a language which is relatively thin? A language still true to the ontological assumptions of poststructuralism, but not prescriptive in the sense of outlining a set of very concrete techniques. I mean, techniques can be useful. They *are* useful. You can have quantitative techniques, qualitative techniques, mixed-methods techniques, etc. But this is still far removed from a lot of the stuff that we're discussing in the logics approach. Methodology is not understood in this very prescriptive sense, but nor is it understood in the way that Lakatos understood method. Feyerabend was not so much against methodology or method(s) as against THE method, THE methodology. Because what happens very often is that we defer to method as the ultimate foundation of our knowledge claims, as if this method or methodology could stand outside the research process and the researching subjects and – from this external position – serve as ultimate guarantor of our collective judgement-making. So, from this perspective I would certainly agree with Ernesto's stance on methodology. Although we use the term methodology in our book, it is important to note that it is used in a way that is more akin to a mode of reasoning rooted in the basic assumptions of a post-foundationalist ontology. It offers us a distinctive way to think about the research process as a kind of performance of method(s), not a way to found the research process in a methodology that serves as an external guarantor.

JB: Now, one further question would, I think, be: having followed up for over 10 years how students and readers have used that approach, you have done some extra thinking about it. So, what would be

the new developments or maybe some of the problems you find you need to wrestle with in relation to that framework as developed by 2007? I mean, is there anything you think needs to be added by way of supplementing your original proposal? Have students come up with methodological issues that challenge you to think that over and so on?

JG: Well, the short answer to that is a resounding yes. And I would say that it's an enterprise that is still very much in development, as I mentioned earlier. In fact, David and I – in collaboration with some of our doctoral students – are thinking to undertake a kind of literature review, constructing a literature of two sorts of things in relation to the logics approach. One would be a review of literature concerning the question of how it has been applied, let's say, in concrete empirical cases, how they use *Logics* to shed light on substantive issues, how people address ongoing methodological challenges, how they come up with methodological innovations, and so on; and the other would be a review of the literature that discusses the logics approach as such, more from a theoretical or philosophy of social science point of view, interrogating the assumptions that underpin it, challenging its explanatory and critical ambitions – things like that. I am not trying to avoid your question. I'm just saying that we may have a better overall picture of how scholars are engaging with the logics approach after such a process of review is complete, whether by ourselves or others.

Still, I can certainly say something based on my own experiences of engaging with the logics approach up to this point, a point which coincides with the twelfth anniversary of the publication of *Logics*, which we marked recently with a conference held at Essex earlier in the year. My experience has demonstrated to me just how "thin" our meso-level framework has been, because efforts to apply it have clearly not been straightforward, still demanding a lot of work in articulating its concepts and poststructuralist ontological assumptions with respect to one or another empirical or theoretical field. And I have found that working with many colleagues in the policy studies field, more generally, has demanded a set of refinements and a set of conceptual innovations in how to think about logics in relation to concrete empirical cases. Of course, the fact that issues of research strategy and method are a struggle should not necessarily be seen as a problem. In fact, perhaps this is precisely the kind of problem we should welcome rather than avoid by reaching for "well-recognized" and "authoritatively validated" methodological techniques. These sorts of problem are often the very source of empirical insight and theoretical innovation.

So, what are some of the developments I have in mind? There are many such developments in areas beyond political studies, for example: organization studies, media and communications studies, psycho-social studies, critical accounting, linguistics, international relations, critical policy analysis, and so on. I can't go into this in much detail, partly because this would require a lot more time, but also because I still don't have a clear enough idea of the full scope and character of these developments in these fields. However, I can briefly mention a couple of things. One of the areas in which there has been a lot of development is in policy studies. For example, David Howarth has been working with colleagues in and around aviation policy, urban planning policy, and energy policy, and this has produced some important innovations in developing the logics approach to make it relevant to these problem domains. It's the same with work that I'm doing with colleagues in finance policy,

education policy, and health policy. And I know that there are many other scholars who have been using the logics approach in other policy study domains.

In my own work with colleagues in the area of critical policy studies, we have had to invent several "adaptation innovations" to bring logics into closer contact with the empirical worlds we were dealing with, for example, how to think about public services and the service industry more generally from a critical policy perspective, and how to produce concepts and frameworks that would facilitate the research process. I will mention just one such innovation, which we have called the "nodal framework". This framework parses out our understanding of services into a set of nodes – the nodes of provision, distribution, delivery, and governance – although we accept that the number and character of these nodes may vary as a function of the type of service under investigation. But the benefit of this nodal framework for us was that it allowed us to produce distinct "foci" for our critical policy analyses, within which to locate a set of logics: social, political and fantasmatic logics. Scrutinizing the node of provision in policy discourse meant paying attention to those logics pertaining to how those services appeared on the scene. For example, what conditions make it possible for banking or education or health etc. services to appear in the first place? Or scrutinizing the node of distribution meant paying attention to those logics relevant to the way those services were distributed to users: by ability to pay, by universal right, etc. Or scrutinizing the node of delivery meant paying attention to those logics relevant to the way a service was delivered: what logics structure the relationship between service professionals and users? And so on. So, the nodal framework gives us a way not only to structure our logics approach in conducting our analysis of policy documents and the broader political and popular discourse connected to that service. It also offers a way to "apply" our logics approach to the practices themselves, allowing us to consider the way policies are implemented or fail to be implemented. I am not sure how much of all this makes sense. I realize a lot of what I"m saying now is probably quite dense and opaque, because it presupposes quite a bit of background. In any case, I would say that this is one area – the area of critical policy studies – in which more refinements linked to the logics approach have been made.

Another way the logics approach has been forced to evolve and develop can be seen in relation to another interesting set of issues, and I will stick with just these now. They relate to the character of logics themselves, specifically the character of "political logics". Because there have been some questions raised about how precisely our understanding of "political logic" relates to the way, for instance, Ernesto talks about populist reason as a kind of political logic. There are some tensions here I believe. But these tensions, I think, are, again, productive tensions. In fact, to a certain extent, these tensions have informed collaborative work with scholars who are specialists in populism studies (more so than myself) – people like Yannis Stavrakakis, Benjamin De Cleen, Aurelien Mondon. They ask me, for example, how the conception of political logic that I developed with David relates to the idea of populist reason as articulated by Ernesto? And that has brought to the fore a set of interesting issues that I think would be very interesting to explore.

GO: That is my own question, because in the book you say that the main political logics would be those of equivalence and difference. But, I also believe there are some kinds of more contextual

political logics and the populist logic could be one of them. Or one could have fascist logics, maybe. How do you see this?

JG: Yes, indeed. I think you're touching on a matter that is very relevant to some of these issues. What is the relation between a political logic, the way we develop it in *Logics*, and the way that Laclau and Mouffe talk about political logics? It's true that in the book itself, we talk often about political logics as being either the logics of equivalence or the logics of difference. And I would like to reaffirm this, but with some provisos worth spelling out. First, that the logics of equivalence and difference should be understood, first and foremost, as fundamental logics of *signification*. Second, that they cannot but appear together – they never operate on their own, they always appear in some combination or other. And finally, different combinations of logics of equivalence and difference become political logics when they are mobilized to contest or defend a particular norm, or pre-empt the contestation of a particular norm, etc. It is true that this is not necessarily the language that Ernesto might feel comfortable using, but at the same time I don't think it is a departure from the spirit of the discourse theoretical enterprise in the way he and Chantal have articulated it. The benefit for us in understanding the notion of political logic in these terms is to make clear the normative stakes of such critical analyses (but not necessarily to resolve them!). This is because political logics are explicitly understood in relation to specific contexts and the norms that agents consider to be either problematic or worthy of defence. So, ultimately, and I think you put it quite nicely, you only have the contextual manifestations of these political logics which always involve combinations of equivalence and difference, and that require identification and naming. In other words, as analysts we need to reconstruct the way processes function *as* political logics and to name them as such. I hope some of this makes sense. I realize that we are taking a lot of theoretical background for granted here and so can appear rather abstract!

GO: There is another tricky question I would like to ask you. You often state that one of the most remarkable features of fantasmatic narratives and logics is that subjects hardly ever express themselves clearly, directly and publicly in their own statements. These usually appear covertly, such as in jokes, slips, narratives attributed to an other. However, in our current work on the Brazilian scene, we have realised that many fantasmatic narratives, mainly racist, misogynist, homophobic, hygienist, which once appeared indirectly and not assumed in public spaces are now being explicitly affirmed by certain political and social actors. How can one understand this displacement? Can psychoanalytic categories or logics such as paranoia and perversion help to think about these current political slips and scenarios?

JG: It's a great question because in a way, it is a question that we're all wrestling with. It's not just relevant here in Brazil; it's relevant, well, pretty much everywhere nowadays. In part, it's a question of boundaries, I guess. It raises the question of boundaries, which often define the parameters of transgression, for instance. And I think it this, in turn, points to some important ancillary tasks.

What are some of those tasks? Some of those tasks have to do with trying to be more precise about the domains from which the prohibition has been removed. What that means is that you now see people feeling able to say or do – and being permitted to say or do – things that they did not say or

do before. Now, one question is, what are the domains of life within which this "prohibition lifting" is taking place? How widespread or universal is it, really? My suspicion is that it's not universal in any straightforward way. At least it would be interesting to investigate how universal or indeed targeted this "prohibition lifting" is. Perhaps, we should expect the picture to be a lot more complex. Perhaps some domains are subject to "prohibition lifting" and some to "prohibition imposition". Perhaps these patterns vary as a function of space and time, culture and context, not to mention subject position. Think of the domain of high political office (the office of the US president!) or the domain of university (I'm thinking of various no-platforming initiatives). It might be interesting to map out those domains in which prohibitions remain and those areas in which it's been lifted or those new areas in which it is being imposed. To map the "prohibition patterns" and their effects, and to start investigating their conditions of possibility. For example, when certain public figures (did somebody say Trump?) actually articulate things that in the past were taboo – in relation to ethnic and sexual minorities, in relation to women, and so on – it may mean that, especially nowadays, verbal abuse and violence become more common in our everyday experience. These are some of the effects of the removal of certain types of prohibition. But other prohibition removals may generate other sorts of effects, as can the imposition of new prohibitions. And then we can also ask what are the conditions under which these prohibitions are removed, or others are imposed? What is it that's driving these removal and imposition processes? Searching for answers often lead us to investigate the problem of trust and processes of identification, which of course psychoanalysis can help us tackle through its appeal to fantasy, not to mention a whole host of other categories, like the ones you mention: paranoia, perversion, etc. The only thing I would say here is that, while a lot of these categories may have prima facie intuitive appeal and relevance, our task as researchers is to turn such plausible resonances into persuasive critical accounts with patience.

So, having made this cautionary remark I feel I can now continue to speculate with a degree of abandon! Think of your earlier reference to the widespread observation and worry that racist, misogynist, homophobic statements appear to be entering public discourse in a rather unprecedented fashion. You could say that statements made in the context of the PC [political correctedness, JAB] wars is one of the clearest manifestation of this phenomenon. The affective investment associated with taking up one or another position in these wars is hard to deny. From an anti-PC perspective, it is possible to understand how such affective investment is product of a series of contextual overdeterminations – economic, cultural, historical, and so on. One can clearly identify with the feeling of being fed up with an out-of-touch elite, and this can be explosively combined with a lethal loss of trust in traditional institutional authorities that have repeatedly let people down: "You guys – by which I mean you, the elites, politically correct people, have been telling me for so long what I can and cannot say. F*** you". Underpinning this missive is also the wounded pride and humiliation associated with the idea that we cannot discern properly the grammar of this elite language, how precisely to behave, and what exactly we can and cannot say, or why. And this is compounded by an all too clear appreciation of their privileged background and upbringing, their special education, their comfortable life. The transgression of PC rules cannot but bring a wildly europhoric release as it embodies the gesture of giving the system the finger. Participating in this collective self-transgression generates a special sort of enjoyment that is palpable and obvious, and this is certainly something that a psychoanalytic perspective can help us grasp. This experience of sharing in the enjoyment of a

collective self-transgression is similar to the way we experience certain forms of humour, jokes, and so on, as you noted in your question, about which of course Freud had a lot to say. And this takes us back to the question of boundaries, because I think that jokes and humour generally is a fascinating domain of inquiry in a time of shifting boundaries about what is acceptable to say or not say. Because comic effects – and comedy generally – rely on a set of boundaries, and on playing around with those boundaries. And I think the study of comedy could be an interesting domain through which to monitor and understand how these shifts are taking place and to map them. I have always found it interesting when comedians – at certain moments – say they can no longer make jokes about something or someone. What does this tell us about the nature or movement of such boundaries?

GO: ... And rules of comedy become valid through the political field...

JG: …That's a really interesting way of putting it. It's a pithy kind of hypothesis that we could try to unpack. Appreciating the shifts, crossings, and enjoyments associated with boundaries is also crucial from the point of view of critique, including political critique. I mean, just think of the so-called "Teflon effect" associated with critiques of Trump, Bolsonaro, and so on, when they are taken to task by media spokespeople and other respectable figures associated with the establishment. Although they're saying things that are outrageous, certainly from a liberal elite point of view, their status and popularity appear to be unaffected – in fact boosted – among their base supporters. What we appear to see here is how the arrows of anti-PC rhetoric have lodged themselves firmly not in what critics say (the content of what they say) but in the subject position from which they speak. It is the subject position of the liberal elite that has been discredited. So, it doesn't matter what someone like Clinton says. Everything she says (at the level of content) is discredited in advance because it is the subject position from which she speaks that has been discredited. Without appreciating the overdetermined character of this conjuncture, including the enjoyments folded into it, it seems difficult to see how we can establish a pathway out of this rather polarized impasse.

JB: I would like to come back to the theme of logics variations. For instance, first, this distinction between the fundamental logics of equivalence and difference. And the three other logics that are highlighted in the logics framework – social, political and fantasmatic – and then the second aspect of the question has to do with "logics" as a plural noun. Political logics, in a plural sense. So, the first part of the question is: are we talking about some kind of a nested relationship between the way we picture equivalence and difference as fundamental logics and these other three logics? Are we talking about five different ways in which we can think of logics? Are we talking about these fundamental logics working transversally through these three other ones?

The second question, which has also to do with application, is about "logics" understood as a singular noun or a plural noun. You have a particular concrete case to analyse and then to the extent it refers to how these practices have been normalised and are lived through by people without much questioning, you talk about the domain of social logics, and so on and so forth. Now, in your presentation the other day [reference to a talk given at the Federal University of Pernambuco, in Recife, Brazil, JAB], you talked about different lines of reasoning or argument as illustrating a variety of political logics that were happening to some extent in an articulated way to produce some moment

of institution. So, in that sense, you don't have a single political logic. You have several political logics or you may have several political logics which are identified at some juncture or operating in a particular case, joining up to produce a certain effect of institution. Now, how do we transition from *a* logic to *a number of* logics operating in a particular context or case? Or, do we always have logics (plural) and in that sense, shouldn't the logics framework make that more explicit and highlight the fact that when we approach concrete cases, we are always faced with the need to delineate, identify and see how a number of logics are operating together or criss-crossing in some sense to produce a political logic effect? Do you see my point?

JG: Yes, I think I do. I think I do see that. That's a really tough one because the questions you raise are very important and profound and would probably demand some considerable time to address properly. They are questions which have both analytical and practical significance. But my first reaction in addressing your first question would be to agree that the logics of equivalence and difference – insofar as they are fundamental logics of signification – will have a role to play in giving shape and content to each of the three logics. So yes, there is a kind of nesting going on. At the same time, when I think about these logics as explanatory units, I tend to attribute to each of them an analytically distinct character – or singularity, to put it in your terms. In other words, we have answers to the questions: What is a social logic? What is a political logic? What is a fantasmatic logic? A social logic speaks to those aspects of a practice which are relatively stable and sedimented. A political logic speaks to those processes responsible for transforming, contesting, or defending key aspects of a practice. And so on....

JB: ... and maybe, just to be a bit provocative, in *Contingency, Hegemony and Universality*, when Ernesto himself distinguishes between social and political logics, we would tend to think he's talking about *a* logic, singular. Social logic is a form of looking at a particular formation from the perspective of how it's been stabilized, normalised and so on.

JG: Yes.

JB: When you look at it from the perspective of how it is formed or transformed, then you are looking at the political logic.

JG: Yes. And this takes us nicely to your second question. This is where things start getting a bit messy. Or at least this is where things *can* get rather messy if one is not careful – in other words: when we try to think about these analytically distinct – or "singular" – logics in relation to the concrete case. I think you've put your finger on something crucial. My feeling is that adding that perspectival dimension is important because this allows us to navigate the "application process" in a helpful way. In some sense it also enables us to re-thematize the idea – often associated with Laclau and Mouffe – of the "primacy of the political".

What do I mean? I mean that a process of "problematization" is what enables us to get the application of the logics framework off the ground. There are always intuitions that inform our research enterprise, about the puzzle, about what is "not quite right", about what "could be otherwise", and so

on. These intuitions can – perhaps should – be seen to express a kind of sensitivity to contingency that demands our attention. Although their nature or character may be opaque to us, certainly at the outset, we assume there are some norms at stake that provoke us, in the sense of piquing our curiosity or our sense of injustice, or some such. Having an initial fix on these intuitions and norms serves as an important reference point in our efforts to identify the social logics that embody those norms, and to identify the operation of the political and fantasmatic logics that can account for the way norms maintain their sedimented character or the way they are contested or transformed. In other words, the process of problematization helps us get a fix on those norms that furnish us with a *perspective* from which we can "see" those social, political, and fantasmatic logics that are relevant to our research enterprise.

I'm not saying this is a simple process. It can be a bit messy, not least because the process of problematization and the perspective it furnishes us with is itself caught up in a "retroductive cycle", involving moments of critical explanation, justification, and re-problematization. But it does present us with a productive "entry point" and "directionality" that offers the prospect that such a cycle can become "virtuous".

So, I think your point about taking seriously the perspectival dimensions of the logics approach is crucial in at least three ways. First, it serves as a neat way to grasp the way logics make "contact" with the concrete cases: through the process of problematization, involving norm identification and characterization. Second, once this entry point has been "entered", it helps us see how, while analytically distinct, the three logics are dependent on one another. Political logics presuppose the operation of social and fantasmatic logics. And our examination of social logics opens up questions about the operation of political and fantasmatic logics. And insofar as they have a relation to norms, we could say that fantasmatic logics also have a relation to social and political logics. I am tempted to say that they have the quality of rings in a Borromean knot, each serving as a vantage point from which to interrogate and engage with the others. And perhaps an added bonus of seeing these logics as so tightly interdependent is that they bring together within one framework three dimensions of critique: normative, strategic, and ideological. But now I'm getting ahead of myself…

So, I can think of at least one other way we can flesh out the significance of this perspectival dimension of the logics approach. Although each of these three logics may have an integrity at a theoretical or conceptual level (and in this sense be "singular"), their empirical instantiation will vary enormously as a function of research context (and in this sense be "plural"). Although we may have a relatively clear idea about what a social logic, political logic, or fantasmatic logic is, these will inevitably have a very particular instantiations in the concrete, real world, say in relation to educational practice or social work, and so on. And these will have to be characterized and named in a way that reflects that contextual specificity. In some sense, this is why I think the use of term "logic" is immaterial (just to provoke my own self a bit here). What I mean is that it is not worth getting too attached to the technical term itself, even though I think there are very specific reasons for introducing this term. What the term "logics" does for us – what the grammar of social logics, political logics, fantasmatic logics does for us – is simply act as a kind of reminder of the sort of background ontology that's in play – a post-foundational or post-structuralist ontology. Which means it is possible to use

other terms to capture something that is relevant to what we take to be a social logic, or a political logic, or a fantasmatic logic. Sometimes people use the term "mechanism" in the way that we use the term social logic. Some people may use the term "logic" in the way that we use the term social logic, as opposed to the way that we use the term political logic or fantasmatic logic, and so on. Or they may use "logic" in a way that does not correspond to any sense in which we use the term logic ourselves. The point is that term "logic" for us is a kind of shorthand reminder of the ontological assumptions that animate the logics approach, and so the term itself is immaterial – it can serve as a ladder that can be thrown away, once the perspective has been opened up for us. So, for me, it's almost, you know, on one level, it's immaterial the terms that one uses. It's important always to examine how it is used, how it is applied, what ontological presuppositions underpin its use, and so on. Sometimes there is a danger also in the overuse of the term "logics", particularly when it comes to writing up one's research. So, in that sense, you know, there's a sense in which paying heed to contextual and ontological features opens up avenues for making connections with the empirical material and others' work on similar research topics.

I think I'm in danger of losing myself. I hope some of this makes sense. Basically, a lot of the task of conducting empirical work, the way I see it, and the way that many of our discussions go when we're talking about how we, our students and our colleagues are using the logics approach, is that it's a process of making judgments throughout the course of the research process, always asking whether this or that way is a productive way of thinking about the relationship between logics and the corpus. A productive way in what sense? In the sense of its capacity to help shed light on the material. Does it open up new avenues of thinking and questioning and critiquing? Does it enable us to see things that we might not otherwise see? Does it allow it to see things differently? How so? And so on.

JB: Well, lots of things to keep pressing on. Thank you very much, Jason.

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