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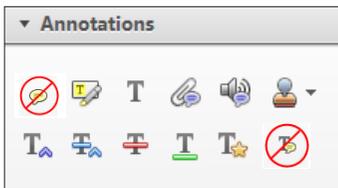
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1	“To begin with”? ↗

Nietzsche or Aristotle: The implications for social psychology

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Abstract

In this article, I argue that there is a divide in social psychology between a mainstream paradigm for investigating the flow of power in a largely competitive social life (such as social cognition, social identity theory, and discourse analysis) and a fringe paradigm for investigating the experience of flourishing in conditions of social learning (such as “the community of practice metaphor,” “dialogical theory,” “phenomenological analysis”). Assumptions of power and flourishing demand different conceptions of the self and the social world (e.g., a strategic subject or motivated tactician in a social group versus a reflective learner/artist in a community of practice). The first goal of this article is to reveal the assumptions that lead to this new classification. The second goal is to draw dotted lines to the blind spots within these paradigms, using one as a foil for the other. These blind spots are: (a) internal goods could be useful to consider for the power paradigm and external goods for the flourishing paradigm; (b) communicative rationality is underplayed within the power paradigm, while instrumental rationality is underplayed for the flourishing paradigm; and (c) judgements and skill are underplayed in the power paradigm, self-interested motivations are underplayed in the flourishing paradigm.

Keywords

competition, external and internal goods, flourishing, instrumental and communicative rationality

There are two parts to this paper, reflecting two complementary goals. In the first part, I set out a new framework, based on moral paradigms, for classifying different strands of social psychology. In the second part, I use this framework to examine how social

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psychology has been shaped by these assumptions and to suggest that each framework reveals blind spots that the other finds difficult to see, but would benefit from seeing.

A common-sense, or textbook means of classifying social psychology is through methodology. This leads to straightforward classifications between quantitative, largely experimental social psychology and qualitative, largely discursive social psychology.¹ Along with methodological divisions come epistemological divisions (e.g., realism and social constructionism; psychological and sociological social psychology) and ontological divisions (e.g., variables or sense-making agents).

In this article I take another fundamental unit of analysis as my starting point, apart from epistemology and ontology. This is axiology. Axiology is the philosophical study of value. It is important for social psychology because it reveals a different set of divisions that are useful for understanding complementary blind spots in the discipline. In the first part of this paper, I argue that, from an axiological stance, social psychology is divided by two different moral paradigms. There is a Nietzschean paradigm premised on the “will to power” in a competitive social world along with a complementary, non-foundational account of truth and morality. In this account, what is virtuous and true is contingent upon social advantage and the power to execute it. On the other hand, there is an Aristotelian paradigm premised on “flourishing” as its key characteristic, where morality and truth are foundational. In this account, virtue is ordained by a cosmic order and “flourishing” is achieved by bringing virtues into harmonious balance with this order through acts of good citizenship. In the second part of the paper, I develop this argument to point out some ways in which these paradigms may help to reveal one another’s blind spots.

Theoretical background

Nietzsche or Aristotle as a classification framework for social psychology

MacIntyre (1981) suggests a distinction between Nietzsche and Aristotle that also divides modern culture from pre-modern culture. Nietzsche, he suggests, successfully undermined all enlightenment and pre-modern attempts to locate a foundational morality, the best example of which, philosophically speaking, is Aristotle’s. Behind every rationalisation of morality lurks the irrational “will to power,” often disguising itself from view.

Nietzsche and social psychology

“The will to power” is perhaps one of Nietzsche’s most famous and controversial theses with a variety of interpretations.² In the “cosmological” interpretation, Nietzsche views the will to power as, a little like electricity, a force that knows no boundaries. It courses through us, floods the world, can join forces in social arrangements (such as National States), conflict with other forces, and is goal-driven, to gain power (Richardson, 1996). As I will argue in the next section, much of social psychology can be viewed as an examination of the cosmological interpretation of the “will to power.” It uncovers the teleological influence of the will to power (in goal-driven behaviour), the formal conditions of the will to power (in interacting variables in balance), and the material conditions of the will to power (in the brain or even in discourse).

Historically, social psychology has been concerned with “drives” and “forces” which resonate with the transcendental and mysterious “will to power.” Triplett (1898) appeared to show, in the first social psychology experiment, that people’s performance on a simple task (cycling) was facilitated by the presence of other people in a competitive situation (what Floyd Allport, 1920, developed into “social facilitation”). As Triplett (1898) puts it:

This theory of competition holds that the bodily presence of another rider is a stimulus to the racer in arousing the competitive instinct; that another can thus be the means of releasing or freeing nervous energy for him that he cannot of himself release. (p. 516)

Nervous energy, Triplett speculated, was released when among others in competition. Later, Zajonc’s (1965) “Generalized Drive Hypothesis” similarly explained the “social facilitation” effect in terms of a type of life-force or “drive” that resides within the person and is released under social conditions of competition. For more contemporary theoretical models, accounting for social success often necessitates the presence of some kind of energy force to explain various levels of success in competition. These could be the personal forces of “motivation,” “energy,” or, more recently, “needs” (Fiske & Taylor, 2013) or the social “drive” to dominate and control (information, other groups, self-esteem, identity). Such forces cannot be easily identified materially although their effects can be seen—through individual and group strategies for success, their effects in creating biases in cognition, or even through “activation” points on the brain (Fiske, 2012).

There is a distinctly Weberian manifestation of Nietzsche’s moral paradigm (MacIntyre, 1981) that is particularly relevant to this kind of social psychology. Weber dissolves the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations. What matters, instead, within the bureaucracy is “effectiveness.” The bureaucracy itself does not draw a distinction between “moral” and “amoral” use of the rules, which guides the actor. The question here for mainstream social psychology is not which virtues are cultivated within bureaucratic social rules but instead which rules are effectively enacted or used when a foundational value is power.

The best proponent of this Weberian bureaucracy, on an everyday level, argues MacIntyre (1981), is Goffman (e.g., 1971). Goffman’s influence on social psychology is significant. Concepts such as “footing” and “framing” are important for discursive psychology but Goffman’s work also gives a theoretical rationale to pervasive metaphors within social cognition—for example, Steele’s (1997) concept of stereotype threat. According to MacIntyre, Goffman provides the precise counterpart to Nietzsche:

The goal of the Goffmanesque role-player is effectiveness and success in Goffman’s social universe is nothing but what passes for success. There is nothing else for it to be. For Goffman’s world is empty of objective standards. (1981, p. 115)

Goffman, MacIntyre points out, provides us with a sociology of everyday life that illustrates, quite brilliantly, how Nietzsche’s thesis—that there is no objective, God-given standard of morality—also functions on a bureaucratic, everyday level. Whatever appeals people make to objective standards reflect only the strivings of the will for an ulterior

goal (such as social success). The paradox, however, is that the will lacks any objective criterion of success such that this ulterior goal will constantly shift according to what society or the bureaucracy considers to be of value (or effective) and actors will adjust their behaviour to accommodate these changing values.

Aristotle and social psychology

If this is the Nietzschean view of morality, its contradictory counterpart is Aristotle's morality, where virtue, civic life, and cosmic order are indissolubly bound. Hence, concepts such as "courage," "character," "honour," and "insult" are distinctly pre-modern, with little legitimate modern space, for example, in the legal system or within modern disciplines like psychology.

A good starting point for rehabilitating the relevance of the Aristotelian framework is through Fowers' (2005) work. He draws attention to the neglect of Aristotelian morality in contemporary psychology (wider than social psychology). A key difference between "competition" and "flourishing" paradigms is the distinction between "internal" and "external" goods (see Fowers, 2005). "Internal goods" are those where the means of the activity provide the end-state in itself. Hence, friendship is a good that emerges from the practice of being someone's friend; skill is the good that emerges from practising a skill. More than this, however, these kind of models in a collaborative world also articulate a different kind of rationality or form of thinking—what one may call "moral-practical or communicative" rather than instrumental (see Habermas, e.g., 1984). That is not to say that instrumental rationality is denied; rather that it is backgrounded in order to examine moral, emotional reflective thinking in a social context. I will return to this point when discussing social cognition later in the article.

There is an over-emphasis on external goods, such as money, status, or desirable resources, (or the aforementioned "ends" separated from the "means"), procured through conditions of competition, in psychology more generally. It moves psychology away from understanding everyday social experiences, Fowers argues, such as long-term friendships but also of participation in communal activities and "shared goods" like democracy, justice, and solidarity. These are engrained in everyday practices, such as the education system, voting, obedience to the law. Not only does an emphasis on external goods suggest that people act instrumentally to achieve their own selfish ends (which sometimes they do but not always), such an emphasis also suggests that life involves relatively incoherent episodic experiences of moving from one transient pleasure to the next, in contrast to the durable and long-term projects that people may also engage in.

In much of social psychology, external goods tend to be presented as economic, educational, and health superiority in society (e.g., Pratto & Stewart, 2012), high-status influential jobs (Glick & Fiske, 2001), high-status per se ("social identity theory") or, like Goffman (e.g., 1971), power is whatever is socially desirable (as all the end-goals are above). These "goods" (prestige, money, scarce resources, and so on) can be separated from a given activity, as money can be from work or prestige from occupying a position of power.

Fowers' framework helps make sense of some recurring criticism of social psychology. For example, Howarth (2001) argues that there is a strange neglect of "community"

in social psychology. She argues that “community,” although hard to pin down, is a meaningful construct or social representation for people in everyday life. It is a source of learning and sharing knowledge; a means of marginalisation, a basis for common identity, and a resource for empowerment. Mainstream social psychology, she argues, struggles to make sense of community clashes and community empowerment.

Under an Aristotelian framework, it is important to have “external goods” but without “internal goods,” the prospects of “flourishing” (*eudaimonia*) are lessened—partly because such internal goods are intrinsic to durable, long-term human projects. It is not easy to bring these external and internal goods into harmony and it is possible that those who have many external goods are unhappy or that those without many external goods can enjoy a high self-esteem based on internal goods alone.

It is also worth briefly mentioning some vices to Aristotelian “internal goods.” The emphasis on “community” and “internal goods” leaves a vulnerability to accusations of totalitarianism (see Barnes, 2005, on Aristotle). For example, finding the “meaning” of any experience, as is the want of “interpretative phenomenological analysis” lends itself to a kind of totalitarianism around “the meaning,” the “community” value of a particular experience. It is pretty normal to caveat away from that in research of course, but nonetheless the opposite pressure often tends to prevail in the write-up—for example, “the experience of x or y” among a group of people. Dissenting voices can be given a place but the Aristotelian framework demands that dissent is also in a kind of community—which may manifest as a theme or as a counter-example that outlines the contours of the community in the write-up.

“Flourishing” and “the will to power” do not contradict the other, necessarily, and they can be complementary assumptions. Mainstream prejudice-reduction models clearly have “flourishing” in mind, for example. However, as Fowers (2005) argues, “flourishing,” as a way of life, tends to be backgrounded in psychology in general. The correlate of this argument is the foregrounding of the will-to-power and, in particular, the cosmological interpretation of the will to power. Like Aristotle’s “cosmic order,” it is a transcendental assumption with moral connotations. It is these connotations that make sense of social psychology, from an axiological point of view.

In the next part of this paper, I look in more detail at how these moral frameworks enable complementary perspectives to bring to light one another’s blind spots. I first contrast cognition as instrumental with cognition as communicative, then I move on to contrast group identity as bound to status to looking at group identity as a community of practice, I then contrast the material of the brain with phenomenology and the material of discourse with dialogicality.

Revealing blind spots in each framework

Thinking as instrumental and/or communicative

Instrumental. The “motivated tactician” (replacing the “cognitive miser” and being replaced by the “activated actor”—of which we shall have more later) is a pervasive root metaphor in social cognition (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). It suggests that people are motivated to process information according to different goals. Indeed, people are theorised as

“juggling” between different goals (Ruscher, Fiske, & Schnake, 2000). These goals work backwards to have a psychological impact on the person—insofar as their activities are driven by these future goals.

So what are these goals? They include the need to belong—because “social survival determines physical survival” (Fiske, 2000, p. 305); the need to understand others—because “people are motivated to make the world more predictable” (Fiske & Taylor, 2013, p. 50), the need to control “to get desired resources” (Fiske & Taylor, 2013, p. 50), the need to enhance self “benefitting mental and physical health” (Fiske & Taylor, 2013, p. 51), and the need to trust the in-group “as protection against threat” (Fiske & Taylor, 2013, p. 51). All of these needs are linked to specific socially desirable goods (survival, resources, health, protection), that can be secured in myriad different ways and hence are not intrinsic to any given activity.

The “motivated tactician” presents us with a framework for understanding who we are, suggesting that we are primarily tactical in our pursuit of socially desirable goods and these goods, if held in abundance, are the obvious signifiers of status and power. In other words, our thinking takes the form of “instrumental rationality” (see Habermas, 1984). More durable by-products of this are acknowledged in this framework (e.g., the need to belong creates long, stable friendships) such that much of our experience (e.g., the enjoyment of conversation) is a by-product of teleological processes. This is because the motivated tactician, by definition, has an end-goal in sight, rather than engaging in an activity (long-term friendship) for its own sake, without any higher purpose.

Social Dominance Theory (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 2001) is equally teleological, and instrumental, suggesting that we are driven by the desire to dominate others. This drive is known as “social dominance orientation” and some people have more of it. Men, for instance, score higher on “social dominance orientation” than women. From here, the theory creates a corresponding psychological “drive” (“social dominance orientation”) to fulfil these goods. These goods or “resources” are the final state towards which the drive strives in an interesting model of backward causality.

Other teleological/instrumental models in social psychology include “mortality salience” (Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997)—where we are motivated to believe in ideologies, not in terms of their meaning to our lives, but rather in terms of their capacity to outlive us and thereby continue our vicarious existence and the related “Terror Management Theory” (Castano & Dechesne, 2005), according to which, we identify with in-groups as another means of transcending death—as they will outlive us. In all of these cases, behind the manifest content of what people find meaningful, lies the latent content of an ulterior goal that is driving our choices. This speaks to a “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Ricoeur, 1981) where behind the screen of ourselves lie our goals that can be scrutinised and discovered. These goals are generally conceived as external goods. In this sense, social cognition reflects back a teleological understanding of the “will to power” that works back from goals to the shape of our social psychology.

Communicative. On the other hand, from a broadly dialogical perspective, Gillespie and Cornish (2010) argue that thinking involves perspective taking at a number of different levels. We not only take the perspective of others (as in a quotation of their voice) but we also imagine what their perspective is on our perspective (a meta-perspective). ~~These perspectives can be~~

researched, Gillespie and Cornish (2010) argue, using an array of measures including ethnography and discourse analysis. The capacities and skills involved with taking the perspectives of others is crucial to human development (Gillespie, 2006).

Yet “semantic barriers” (such as rigid oppositions between “self” and “other”) get in the way of good perspective taking. Such barriers, in this reading, involve the moral judgements that individuals and groups make around each other’s practices, rather than their identities per se. For instance, the equation of someone with AIDS as being immoral in China (Liu, 2008) or an asylum seeker as being deceitful (Linell & Kessler, 2008). These “semantic barriers” are indicative of an irreconcilable moral world view around the “practices” of the “other.” This clash of moral frameworks may not only move from those with the most external goods to those with the least but also the other way around in a bi-directional movement, as for instance, when working class boys articulate a moral distaste for the practices of middle-class boys (see Willis, 1977).

We could look at these barriers quite sympathetically. Cresswell (2011) does not explicitly refer to “semantic” barriers, but from a dialogical point of view, draws attention to the “experiential compellingness” of a community and its role. Encountering difference is a pull away from this compellingness as the individual embodies, partly, the practices of their own community in their contact with another. Cresswell hints at the existential challenge attached to being pulled towards another community, and clarifies how relations of duty (to community) and desire (to commune with otherness) intermix in outer and inner dialogue—leading to quite a profound dialogical account of the barriers that both produce selves and carve out difference.

On the whole, the dialogical framework suggests a model of “flourishing” for social cognition (e.g., through perspective taking), which (a) focuses on communities with different practices rather than “high-status” and “low-status” groups or “dominant” and “subordinate” relations, (b) focuses on the internal practices/goods of these communities and transformation from engagement in these, and (c) the role of character (as opposed to personality) in deliberating, judging, and being educated in the perspective of others.

This framework appears to offer a lot to theorising social action. Yet, the more strategic and instrumental dimensions of social action, revealed by social cognition, are backgrounded or absent in this dialogical framework. This is no surprise as conflicting perspectives are viewed sympathetically, in general. However, it does mean that instrumental reasoning is under-theorised and under-researched. In the next section, I will take up this issue again in the context of the social identity approach.

Group identity as status led and/or as learning led?

Status led. The social identity approach (including social identity theory and self-categorisation theory) specifies the conditions under which power moves between groups and individual dispositions and how individuals relate to power in a competitive world. The nuances of these shifts between individual dispositions towards authority and social forces take up much of the research agenda. From a “will to power” perspective, the “formal causes” of the “will to power” are revealed in this approach. Formal causes are defined by the simultaneous co-production of cause and effect (Slife & Williams, 1995)—as power moves through groups, there are simultaneous adjustments in individuals.

More particularly, in this research, “high status” and “low status” groups are the first groups we see when we examine the social field (see, e.g., Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This does not necessarily mean that high-status and low-status groups lead to discrimination or prejudice (and there is some internal debate here within the field—see, e.g., Dixon et al., 2012). What it does mean, however, is that “high-status” and “low-status” very often form the ground for experimental manipulation as well as the theoretical framework. High-status can be identified by the quantity of external goods that groups possess. For instance, in the BBC prisoner study (see, e.g., Reicher & Haslam, 2006), the high-status group were the “guards” and the low-status group were the “prisoners.”

This experiment showed that individuals do not necessarily identify with a dominant (guards) group, that power can be overthrown when the conditions are right (when the dominant group appears weak and indecisive), that internal dispositions to authoritarianism can change depending on the context, and that egalitarianism can break down and move towards tyranny in other social conditions (when there is a lack of procedures for dealing with dissent, when there is no visible alternative). All of these findings are consistent with the predictions of social identity theory.

From here, Reicher and Haslam (2006) suggest that Arendt’s (1963) Aristotelian view is mistaken and Haslam and Reicher (2007) later develop this into a critique of the “banality of evil” perspective, based on the BBC study. That is, bureaucratic practices do not make people evil; instead evil emerges from a complex interrelationship between socialisation in a group, dispositions to authoritarianism, and the social context. This disagreement is unsurprising. Arendt draws from Aristotle, Haslam and Reicher articulate a Nietzschean view (in assuming that “power” looms large on the landscape as something that is difficult to accommodate to or fully embraced, depending on the situation), and these are conflicting moralities.

Learning led. Under an Aristotelian reading, the disintegration and lack of control of the guard group had as much to do with the failure to bond as a group as with the fact that they did not serve any apprenticeship in the “community of practice” (see also Lave & Wenger, 1991) in which the community could arouse their interest in the “internal goods,” such as the mastery of a skill. For instance, there is research to suggest that prison guards do not only identify with the power and control that their position brings but also with the mastery of particular skills. These include interpersonal skills, judging situations, running awards, teaching skills, and handling complex situations around race, gender, and class (e.g., Liebling & Price, 2003).

This is why Arendt is so careful to point out that the “banality of evil” is rooted in a failure of judgement and thinking. Again, words like “judgement” and “thinking” are social but not part of much of social psychology’s vocabulary—precisely because it moves away from the idea of “forces” that infuse situations. Judgement and thinking instead are part of an Aristotelian concern with the individual’s relationship to a community of values. Individuals who commit atrocities exercise poor judgement and poor, non-reflective thinking around the values that are embedded in particular bureaucracy and their relationship to a wider community of common values.

In the case of the prison-guards experiment, the lack of a community of practice and a reflexive value-base led to a series of poor judgements by the guards around how to

treat the prisoners. Interestingly, the disharmony between the prisoners and guards was improved by the introduction of a skilled trade unionist. While this is interpreted in terms of the capabilities of an individual to change the power forces in a situation, it could also be interpreted in terms of the practice of skill and the possibility of educating others in using this skill (although this does not fall into the parameters of the study).

In other words, if one were to re-run the experiment under an Aristotelian framework, one would first provide minimal training in the skills attached to being a prison guard. One would predict, from here, that exercising power may not be quite as dilemmatic or difficult as the original experiment showed (as the focus would switch from exercising power to exercising judgement).

To be fair to Haslam and Reicher (2007), they advise caution when applying experiments to the real world while Reicher and Haslam (2006) clearly state that the aim of the BBC study was never to replicate an actual prison or simulate a prison but rather to simulate “a site to investigate the behaviour of groups that were unequal in terms of power, status, and resources” (p. 7). It is precisely the lack of interest in the education attached to bureaucratic roles and internal debates within the institution as to how to fulfil these that betrays a one-sided concern with instrumental rationality and external goods to the detriment of understanding the desire to “flourish” somewhere like a prison.

This is not a one-sided critique, however. The innovation of this experiment also has much to say to the “community of practice” perspective. It suggests a focus not on “legitimate participation” in the community but “illegitimate” participation, such as when those with authority in the community are viewed as illegitimate leaders. What is likely to happen to the rest of the community? What values can be re-fashioned? Can the community of practice survive the exercise of instrumental rationality? These are questions that are peripheral in this tradition but the predictions of social identity theory could provide a valuable insight (but tend to be ignored as being outside the paradigm).

The material of social life in balance with power and/or self-reflective

In this final part of the article, I will look at the material of social life. I will first of all examine whether the brain can be viewed as a material cause of the “will to power” (much like stone “causes” a stone sculpture) and contrast this with a phenomenological view on the brain. I finish this section with a brief detour on whether discursive material can be viewed as imbued with power and/or as imbued with voices.

In balance with power. Starting with a quote from Nietzsche, Bargh and Chartrand (1999) suggest, in a seminal paper, that it is possible to experimentally manipulate cognitive “material” to produce predictable social-psychological responses. For instance, and to give just one example of many, Bargh, Chen, and Burrows (1996) and Chen and Bargh (1997) subliminally presented 41 “non African-American” participants with a series of either images of young male African Americans or young male Caucasian Americans. They found that those participants subliminally presented with the African American faces were subsequently more hostile in the laboratory (when the experimenters engineered a computer breakdown).

The material, here, is mental representations of others (e.g., African Americans). This mental representation, Bargh and colleagues argue, is like a button that can be pushed intentionally, accidentally, or by a decision made in the past. “In whatever way the start button is pushed, the mechanism subsequently behaves in the same way” (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999, p. 476). In this sense, analogous to Penfield’s experiments on the brain, they show in incredible detail how the prejudices and biases can be quarantined, manipulated, and directed, regardless of “the person” and their “vain” beliefs about their own character. From this, I deduce that mental mechanisms (stereotypes and general biases) are a kind of material responsible for our action and behaviour. In Bargh and Chartrand’s (1999) words, they are like “butlers” who know our needs better than we do and are quite adaptive—to go back to teleology, insofar as these processes serve functions. For instance,

our perceptions of the emotional and behavioral reactions of others make us tend to respond in the same way, establishing bonds of rapport and liking in a natural and effortless way. (p. 476)

They find support for this assertion from brain-imaging studies (e.g., Cacioppo, Crites, & Gardner, 1996) which reveal the activation of the basal right hemisphere in evaluation goals. However, if they had been inclined, they could have also reached this conclusion via a turn to Goffman, as the ongoing evaluation of others’ responses in modulating our own is an essentially Goffmanesque point.

What is of value here is only what desirable others find to be of value. In other words, external goods (being liked, liking, creating hierarchies of status) is what the cognitive system revolves around. The subsequent conclusion that Bargh and Chartrand (1999) reach—that we are largely unfree in our pursuit and processing of these goals—is indeed an empirical confirmation of a Nietzschean point made over a hundred years ago. Yet, while they are confirming Nietzsche, they are also stuck in a Nietzschean web—that is his moral philosophy, that has shaped the questions to being with **[AQ: 1]**—for example, focusing on “goals” and “groups” rather than “projects” and “communities.”

In brain studies, the medial prefrontal cortex is implicated in much of this social psychology as well (see Fiske, 2012, for a review). Fiske (2012) makes a point of showing its relevance to her Stereotype Content Model (SCM), according to which all groups are evaluated both in terms of their competition for external goods (competence) and the degree of warmth that they invoke. While the medial prefrontal cortex glows approvingly or disapprovingly to groups that are warm and competitive respectively, it fails to activate at all to the lowest of the low or the “low-low” groups such as drug-addicts, homeless people, and migrant workers, unless individual circumstances are outlined, in which case it comes back “on-line.”

Much of this work on the “material” responsible for biases in our cognition and our perception shows a rather glum picture of morality—just like Nietzsche’s “will to power.” However, this is not the whole story in social psychology. According to “dual-process” models of cognition (e.g., Chaiken & Trope, 1999), our cognitive system (and brain) is able to overcome its own implicit prejudices and biases, when it is necessary, by paying careful attention and putting in extra effort to the way they process information. For instance, Richeson et al. (2003) who found racial bias predicted activity in the right dorsolateral prefrontal cortex also found that:

Individuals with high scores on subtle measures of racial bias may put forth additional effort to control their thoughts and behaviours in order to live up to their egalitarian, non-prejudiced values. (p. 1326)

Other kinds of “ambivalence”—for example, “ambivalent sexism” (Glick & Fiske, 2001)—show that our cognitive system is divided between espoused “values” (e.g., non-prejudice, equality for all) and automatic prejudices.

In Nietzschean terms, the “master” morality lurks in the peripheral cognitive system while the “slave” morality (non-prejudicial, Christian values) lives in the central cognitive system. Both moralities, in different ways, however, serve the cosmological interpretation of the “will to power.” Yet, these findings are important for “flourishing” approaches because they suggest a more complicated picture to the often self-reported experiences of participants. For instance, participants may appear to wish for everyone to flourish in a given setting only to renege on this in practice (see Glick & Fiske, 2001, for instances of this with regard to male attitudes to female promotion).

Self-reflective. At the same time, however, this concern with the cognitive and neural system can be enhanced by turning also to flourishing. Different questions become possible with the consideration of flourishing: for example, are the social values of egalitarianism open to negotiation by different actors as part of a deliberative democracy?; can the self legitimately disown the movements of its own brain as it occasionally does with other parts of the body (e.g., the unruly movements)?; what is the difference between the material of life and the form of life and how can these be studied? Next, I will briefly focus on the potential of turning to phenomenology in efforts to understand the material of social life.

Drawing on Aristotle, and his own ethnographic explorations, Cohn (2004) argues that the values associated with “bios” and flourishing is “slipping from view” (p. 73) in brain imaging studies. This is partly because the technology itself is best suited to studying events in a disembodied container from life, rather than in life. As such, the internal goods that people enjoy in life are not, as yet, accessible to the brain scan. This is always the risk when the material of life (*zoe*) is given precedence over the form of life (*bios*).

There are many interesting examples from phenomenological analysis of how “the form of life” can be studied alongside “the material of life.” Sartre’s (1946/1954) analysis of anti-Semitism is one well-known example of an existential-phenomenological approach. Anti-Semitism, Sartre argues, is a form of passion. Indeed, the anti-Semite will befriend Jews as “exceptions” or out of desire to be close to the object of their passion. This is a peculiar passion indeed. It is not born out of provocation or out of social fact and is not characterised by love but by hate. The anti-Semite may consent to argument but places little value in reason or in words, unlike an earnest interlocutor. They do not wish their opinions to be acquired, Sartre argues, but rather to be innate.

This phenomenological analysis asks interesting questions of dual processing models. Why would someone place little value in the central processing capabilities in the first place? Currently, the assumption is that individuals are motivated or not motivated to use this capability—not that they simply devalue the capability in the first place.

Reciprocally, what can phenomenological approaches learn from the “material of life”? Smith (1996) and Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) already argue that there is a

place for cognition within lived experience. In particular, in understanding how participants make sense of their social world. In phenomenological terms, this translates into a concern with “pre-reflective,” immediate experience and “reflective” experience. The constraints and freedoms offered to *lived experience* by an understanding of the cognitive and neural system is potentially important to draw on here. In particular, the extent of shared experience, competing misunderstandings of the object of experience, and the flexibility in changing patterns of experience are all questions relevant to phenomenology and available in the mainstream social psychological literature.

How to categorise discursive material in social psychology?

In this final section, I take a short detour to discuss whether the cosmological interpretation of the will to power can be extended to an understanding of discourse analysis. This argument is counter-intuitive because much of discourse analysis has targeted the individualism and Cartesianism of mainstream social psychology and fostered an understanding of the organisation of social goods that enable flourishing, such as neighbour disputes (Stokoe & Hepburn, 2005), telephone helplines (e.g., Hepburn & Potter, 2007), and therapeutic interactions (e.g., Edwards, 1995), not to mention an analysis of problems such as hate speech (e.g., Asquith, 2008). People’s everyday practices and concerns are the material of analysis and this work can be applied to training workshops to improve everyday flourishing and emancipatory projects (e.g., Stokoe, Hepburn, & Antaki, 2012). Moreover, Edwards, Ashmore, and Potter (1995) explicitly disavow an amoral, Nietzschean universe. There are morals but they are open to argument and discussion in everyday life such that their foundational claims can be examined. Similarly, these various forms of discourse analysis present us with many different images of the person—as one who is concerned with the exercise of duties and responsibilities (as in positioning theory), or who displays a certain strategic capability, the dissolution of agency into broader discourses, or an agent who is fluidly enacting social rules. Drawing these diverse positions together under any singular rubric is problematic.

Despite the danger of fitting a square peg in a round hole, I will make the case below for classifying “discourse analysis” in the “will to power” paradigm (in the cosmological interpretation of the will to power). The first point in support of this case is a general one that relates back to internal goods. From an Aristotelian point of view, there are no tools in discourse analysis that allow us to understand the pleasure and pain of engaging in discourse or having a conversation with someone or the enjoyment of writing. Even laughter is interpreted as fulfilling interactional functions such as oppression (e.g., Walkerdine, 1981, on laughter) or building rapport (e.g., Pomeroy & Weatherall, 2014). Of course laughter may well achieve these functions but the place of laughter as a goal in itself within conversation is left out of the analysis.

Secondly, however, the recurring critiques of discourse analysis, in its various guises, are moral critiques. While the critics may well be confused, as Potter (2012) suggests, the direction of their disparate confusions often emerges from an Aristotelian concern with community values (although this is unacknowledged/possibly opposed by the critics). I will take three examples. These are indicative rather than definitive of all criticism of discourse analysis. The first is the concern with the predominant focus on “function” as

a coding practice; the second follows from this and relates to the neglect of reader-response and the third is its alleged lack of attention to ethical responsiveness.

Madill and Doherty (1994) argue that notwithstanding the methodological merits of discourse analysis, it implies a notion of the person as “strategic language user.” This, they suggest, arises from some key analytic planks of discourse analysis—the emphasis on the “function” of words and the emphasis on the notions of “stake,” and “interest.” “Function,” they argue, implies a subject motivated to carry out certain intentions. “Stake” and “interest” similarly assume that the participants have a vested interest or stake in how they use language. Parker’s (1997) analysis of “blank subjectivity” suggests that the refusal to theorise subjectivity as anything more than a resource to be drawn on in conversation means that it creeps back into the analysis as untheorised—in Madill and Doherty’s (1994) critique as a strategic language user.

The critique of “function” begs the question of why “function” is so important to the analytic practices of various kinds of discourse analysis, including approaches as disparate as conversation analysis and positioning theory (unlike, for instance, interpretative phenomenological analysis which relegates function to a peripheral place in its search for authentic experience). One clue is the reliance on Goffman (1971), outlined at the beginning of the article. Alongside Goffman, however, the early work of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) illustrates the Weberian sense of an economy of relations organised in a bureaucracy of rules. Take note in the quotation below that whatever is valued is secondary to the means of its distribution:

For socially organized activities, the presence of “turns” suggests an economy, with turns for something being valued—and with means for allocating them, which affect their relative distribution, as in economies. An investigator interested in the sociology of a turn-organized activity will want to determine, at least, the shape of the turn-taking organization device, and how it affects the distribution of turns for the activities on which it operates. (1974, p. 696)

This quotation set the parameter for understanding conversation as a kind of economy of relations. The imbalances of the economy are addressed in conversation analysis—for example, “repairs” work to rebalance the economy of relations. This seems to be in the Weberian tradition of relegating values to the rules to implement them. The bureaucracy of language is the organisational material for effecting ultimately arbitrary values. A very efficient bureaucracy of language is a hegemony. Edwards et al. (1995) are correct to argue that their approach is not amoral but instead examines morals—but their means of doing this is not through a Socratic cross-examination of values. Indeed, what is Nietzschean about this work is the analysis of the means of the creation and sustenance of morality—how morality executes its will rather than the relationship between morality, citizenship, and society.

The second, related direction of critique comes from a concern with the interpretation of the functional effects of discourse. Jahoda (2013), for example, argues that discourse analysis often overreaches with its interpretations. One example he gives is of Stokoe and Hepburn’s (2005) analysis of calls to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) telephone helpline. The authors suggest that screaming followed by crying signifies fear followed by distress. Jahoda points out that it could

equally signify fury followed by distress. This taps into a point that Breeze (2011) makes regarding the lack of a cogent theory of audience effects or reader-response in critical discourse analysis (but also discourse analysis). Similarly we can understand Taylor's (1984) seminal critique of Foucauldian discourses (where he suggests that Foucault leaves us with an account of discourse divorced from their relation to human projects) as a version of this reader-response deficit in critical discourse analysis. One such remedy, Breeze argues, is to turn to ethnographies of communication and to use concepts such as the "community of practice" metaphor or "discursive communities" to understand the "broad spectrum of divergent readings" (2011, p. 512) that people bring to an utterance. This, however, is difficult from within current formulations of discourse analysis because it would mean a shift from the analysis of the material of discourse towards some kind of pragmatic commitment to a foundational "community" within discourse.

The third direction of critique of discourse analysis stems from its putative lack of attention to lived experience (e.g., Corcoran, 2009; Cresswell, 2012; Cromby, 2004). Cromby (2004) suggests that discourse analysis is not very good for dealing with the lived experience of enjoying music (again, an internal good); Cresswell (2012), that it does not capture the immediacy of lived experience (e.g., the compelling experience of revulsion in response to a racist comment), and Corcoran (2009), that it lacks the kind of moment to moment, visceral ethical responsiveness outlined by theorists such as Shotter (e.g., 2003). The focus of these critiques (lived experience, ethical responsiveness) makes sense as critiques from an Aristotelian moral framework of community values.

The response to these critiques is also telling. The response is multidimensional but a key response for my argument is that all of these criticisms invoke a Cartesian divide between experience and talk; one that has been laid to rest by Wittgenstein (see, e.g., Potter, 2010, 2012). Speaking of the inner could lead us back to cognitivism. Potter makes a very good point here. On the other hand, Murdoch (1970/2013) also makes quite an interesting counter-argument to this Wittgenstein impulse. Part of living the Form of the Good (from a Platonic point of view) are half-formed, inner thoughts, even discursively formed in the best traditions of non-Cartesian thinking. That is, an outer conversation can co-exist and influence an inner conversation and vice-versa without implying a mysterious "ghost in the machine" that lies behind the outer conversation. Regardless of the accuracy of this critique, which is contested, Hämäläinen (2014) makes the comment that one of the unfortunate legacies of Wittgenstein's work, from Murdoch's perspective on the aesthetic and ethical life, has been an overcautiousness of the inner world; along with an overdone fear of Cartesianism.

Discursive terminology may change, if we consider discourse as part of a human project, existing on both an inner and outer plane. In drawing on the philosopher, Bakhtin, I have called attention to the possibility of studying "double-voiced discourse" (Sullivan, 2012) or discourse that is addressed both to the self and to the other. The first implication of this is that the analytic focus turns to "voice" and their various intonations. So, for instance, a "qualifier," is what Bakhtin (1929/1984) calls a "loophole"—a means by which we do not finalise ourselves by our statements but hope for agreement or disagreement; an "extreme case formulation" (Pomerantz, 1986) is suggestive of a "sore-spot" in consciousness or is tangled up with the fear of someone touching a truth we barely acknowledge to ourselves.

On the other hand, perhaps the most devastating critique of Bakhtinian approaches to “voices” in discourse comes from Hirschkop (1999). The critique is wide-ranging but most salient for our purposes is that these self-reflective, self-conscious voices championed by Bakhtin (1929/1984) neglect the power relations in discourse, particularly the institutional preconditions that set the unequal landscape upon which voices interact, or in other words, the distributive imbalances with the discourse as economy metaphor. The “subjectivisation of discourse” is both optimistic and naïve, from this perspective. This critique again makes sense under the Nietzschean paradigm—and acts as a potential obstacle to current approaches seeking to bring dialogism and discourse together, although they are elegant and intriguing bridges (e.g., Crossley & Lawthom, 2014; Gillespie & Martin, 2014; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). However, when viewed as a bureaucracy, discourse does not need voices or perspectives to be efficient but rather has the potential to dissolve them into its bureaucratic structures (this is why Bakhtin, 1929/1984, is so suspicious of formal linguistics).

Overall, my argument in this section is that the practice of discourse analysis, with its concern with function, the economy of discourse, lack of attention to judgement in a discursive community, and concern with the public as in “publicly observable,” creates a symmetry between discourse analysis and the cosmological interpretation of the “will to power.” This is not to say that discourse analysis cannot be used in emancipatory projects—much as in the rest of social psychology—for example, the contact hypothesis. Emancipation is actually particularly suited to a Nietzschean paradigm as it is premised on rebalancing the economy of language that has been distorted by power. Nor is this to say that the approach is individualist. The dynamic inter-relationships within this system speak to the Aristotelian sense of “formal causality” as well as material causality. This may help to make sense of the direction of the various critiques of discursive approaches. This, however, is to reserve judgement on whether these critiques are justifiable (which would need an extended article) and as a consequence whether this classification is definitive.

Discussion

It is very possible that most of the sub-disciplines of social psychology would object to their place in this classification. They may see it as a bifurcation of extreme poles rather than a classification. Perhaps the classification works better as a “weak” rather than a “strong” classification. Interpreted strongly, it is easy to pick holes in this argument. Who would take a literal cosmic order in harmony or disharmony with society as a serious means of doing social psychology? Who would agree that the world is made up of an elusive force called the “will to power”? I appreciate the risks in sully social psychology with this strong interpretation.

Interpreted weakly, however, this classification suggests that MacIntyre is correct to point to a legacy of Nietzsche’s moral framework and his “will to power” in modern culture and this finds an expression in social psychology in the focus on social competition, external goods, and the backgrounding of internal goods, skill, and judgements. Similarly, the concern with “community,” interpreted loosely foregrounds these but backgrounds the more suspicious concern with advantage.

This classification also illustrates a means for the sub-disciplines to dialogue within their own traditional parameters. For example, to borrow a distinction from Moscovici and Marková (2006), the Indigenous American (epitomised by the Allports) tradition focuses on individual cognitive biases towards in-group favouritism (with “social cognition” a good example of this) while the “Euro-American” psychology, following Kurt Lewin, takes groups as a gestalt and examines individual behaviour within this context (with social identity theory a good example of this). This could be reframed as a concern with the teleology of the “will to power” and the formal causality of the will to power, respectively. Similarly, seemingly disparate approaches such as the community of practice and phenomenology may find common cause under a “flourishing” framework.

To conclude, however, perhaps this article itself is naïve. Maybe there is no real desire for these frameworks to learn from one another’s blind spots. This could be because of power dynamics between the mainstream and the fringe (with the fringe attempting to de-legitimize the mainstream a la social identity theory) or it could be because they are both simply compelled already by their respective traditions. In both cases, I hope to be proven wrong.

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Notes

1. There are exceptions to this such as “Social Representation Theory.” In this article, I discuss social cognition, social identity theory, community of practice, phenomenology, and discursive social psychology. I omit Social Representation Theory only because its epistemological framework is too wide to position justifiably in this wide-scoping article (see Parker, 1987, on “strong” and “weak” versions of the theory for instance).
2. The precise meaning of “the will to power” in Nietzsche’s philosophy has generated an array of interpretations, partly due to his changing ideas but also, as Reginster (2007) argues, because “the will to power,” has embarrassing connotations for its supporters; for example, that Hitler is the paradigmatic example of “the will to power.” This is the traditional interpretation, articulated for instance, by Stern (1979). More palatable versions of the “will to power” have emerged over time. For instance, Kaufmann (1974) suggests “the will to power” could mean the desire for self-perfection, including ascetic self-denial, while Nehamas (1985) argues that it is a mere rhetorical flourish or a literary parody and tangential to his broader theory of creativity. Reginster himself suggests that it involves a more generic overcoming of resistance. Yet, there is still no consensus. Soll (2012), for instance, argues against these widespread tendencies to “sanitize” the “will to power.”

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