ARTICLE

Reflexivity in the transdisciplinary field of critical discourse studies

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ABSTRACT   This article outlines an agenda for critical discourse studies that reserves a place of honour for the notion of reflexivity. It draws on four concepts of reflexivity developed in the social sciences: reflexivity as a general feature of interaction and subjectivity; as a methodological praxis; as a property of discursive and non-discursive systems; and as a key feature of late modernity. Reflexivity is considered in terms of acts of interpretive movement. Social actors, organizations and systems throw reflexive loops around themselves, around others, as well as around spatial, temporal, linguistic, cognitive, social and historical dimensions of contextual reality. All social entities engage in the Sisyphean task of fixing social reality, trying to grasp it with a porous and amorphous semiotic net, shaping interpretive reality in the process. Reflexive loops can leave ripples on the surface of language and communication for others to pick up and engage with. Through metadiscursive acts, interlocutors can then engage with the meanings that fix who and what they are in an unequal and power-infused world whose boundaries can only be imagined through interpretive and critical praxis. Reflexivity is a precondition for the articulation of critique and should be considered as a key concept in the field of discourse studies. This paper is published as part of a collection on discourse studies.

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Introduction

The phenomenon of reflexivity lies at the heart of many discursive processes and discourse analytical questions. At the same time, discourse analysts rarely make explicit use of the word. Reflexivity has been theorized explicitly in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology that have informed many approaches to discourse, but the notion is frequently absent or merely peripherally present in introductions to the field of discourse studies (Robinson, 2006; Sidnell and Stivers, 2013; Wodak, 2013a; Angermuller *et al.*, 2014a). The principle of reflexivity nevertheless offers a unique way to deal with the main issues around which this field establishes itself. It is relevant for understanding language use, context, social practice, but also for analyses of subjectivity and power.

Discourse analytical literature on reflexivity is rather fragmented. When mentioned explicitly, the notion tends to refer either to a general heuristic principle for doing social scientific research or to a more general property of contextualized language use, subjectivity or practice. Attempts to connect these two types of reflexivity are rare (Fairclough and Chouliaraki, 1999; Feustel *et al.*, 2014: 498). Moreover, many reflexive functions of language use are discussed under other headers such as intertextuality, interdiscursivity, metadiscourse, metalinguistics or metapragmatics (Hyland, 2005; Titscher *et al.*, 2000: 106; Firth, 2009: 71–73; Verschueren and Brisard, 2009: 33–34; Verschueren, 2011: 183). In discourse theory, reflexive modes of discursive practice are often studied under headers such as articulation (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), contingency (Butler *et al.*, 2000), dislocation, subjectivity, bio-politics or governmentality (Foucault, 1979,1982, 1989,; Rose, 1998; Rose *et al.*, 2006; Glynos and Stavrakakis, 2008). Each of these notions highlights other dimensions and aspects of reflexivity. Nevertheless, explicit discussions of these issues under the header of reflexivity remain relatively rare in discourse theory.

At the 17th DiscourseNet conference on *Reflexivity and critique in discourse*, reflexivity was discussed in the context of studies on education, journalism, sociology, literature, politics, art and philosophy. Reflexivity often proved to be a condition, as well as a feature of discourse and politics. It plays a key role in the development of research methods and theories, in the learning of new languages, in the development and praxis of pedagogy, in political debates and policy, as well as in discursive practices constitutive of self, identity and society. The theme hit a nerve among the discourse analysts present. This article constitutes an attempt to link the multiplicity of concepts of reflexivity discussed there from a discursive point of view. The goal is to provide a discursive perspective on reflexivity and to provide a more visible place for reflexivity on the conceptual map of discourse studies.

The word reflexivity can be traced back to the Latin word for bending or *flectere*. The prefix *re-* indicates a backward movement or some sort of repetition. To be reflexive means that an entity, system or structure bends back or refers to itself (Wrana and Galanova, 2014: 325). Questions of reflexivity are therefore intertwined with issues about (self-) regulation, (self-) control and awareness. But awareness, control and regulation come in different historically contingent modes. Discourse analysts therefore need to specify what bends back on what; how reflexivity is performed and/or recognized, and how we can distinguish between different modes of reflexivity in discursive practice and in discourse analysis. Put differently, reflexivity needs to be dealt with more reflexively by scholars of discourse.

The problem is that reflexivity comes in many guises and carries many names to match. The notion has been debated thoroughly in disciplinary contexts ranging from cultural studies over anthropology and sociology to literary studies. It is even possible to identify a transdisciplinary reflexive turn in the study of culture whereby social scientists became increasingly self-critical when dealing with issues of representation in academic (writing) practices (Bachmann-Medick, 2016: 25, 103–126).

Nevertheless, reflexivity is not ideology-free. It may operate as a highly ideological term that allows researchers to deal with questions of bias and subjectivity. Researchers who produce reflexive discourse about their research practices often engage in apologetic discursive strategies that allow them to articulate specific socio-ideological stances while simultaneously boosting the validity of their research. Reflexivity is not the same thing as transparency though. All reflexive articulations of sociopolitical stances are mediated through discursive patterns that give reflexivity a myriad of ideological flavours. This reason alone already warrants a more extensive discussion of the concept of reflexivity in the field of discourse studies.

Overviews that reflect explicitly on the role that could or should be accorded to reflexivity in discourse studies are hard to find; whereas the notion of critique has been debated at length under the influence of neo-Marxist, post-Marxist and poststructuralist approaches to discourse—most notably in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Blommaert, 2001; Blommaert *et al.*, 2001; Slembrouck, 2001; Verschueren, 2001; Lemke, 2002; Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Breeze, 2011; Forchtner, 2011; Forchtner and Tominc, 2012). This cannot be said about reflexivity. Authors like Blommaert and Verschueren point out that the reflexivity of social actors is frequently misrecognized in the explanative phase of many CDA studies. Sympathizing with the goals of CDA, they argue for a mode of discourse analysis that takes reflexivity seriously in every stage of the research process (Verschueren, 2001; Blommaert, 2005: 33).

The notion of discourse studies is of relatively recent date as compared to the notions of discourse analysis and discourse theory. It designates a field of enquiry that emerges out of the partially overlapping points of interest between both approaches to discourse. Whereas discourse analysis can be described as a field of enquiry emerging in the articulation of answers to questions of context, identity and language use, discourse theory can be understood as a field that problematizes relationships between subjectivity, power and knowledge (Angermuller, 2014a; Angermuller *et al.*, 2014b). Such a wide understanding of discourse studies requires a broad and multi-dimensional definition of discourse along the following lines:

> Discourse cannot be reduced to language use alone. It is a multi-layered, context-dependent and socially constitutive practice of articulation. Discourse analytical data can include verbal and/or textual language use but may also include multimodal data and observations about the practices that allow for their articulation. The category of discourse can be used in order to describe various levels of linguistic, textual, semiotic and/or socio-political organisation. Like Foucault, I will allow the boundaries of what is meant by discourse to shift and change because its basic elements are defined by their functions rather than by their forms. The study of discourse can therefore be understood as a study of the way we ride ideas as marked and constituted in and through language use and other semiotic systems. (Zienkowski, 2017: 401)

The figure below was initially conceptualized as a map of the academic field of discourse studies, but it can also serve as a model representing key dimensions of discursive reality. The triangle pointing upwards represents the three main points of interest of discourse theory—an amalgam for relatively abstract and not necessarily linguistic approaches to discourse initiated by poststructuralist authors such as Derrida, Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe. These points of interest are power, knowledge and

subjectivity. The triangle pointing downwards designates the heterogeneous field of enquiry known as discourse analysis. Here, discourse is problematized as an issue of contextualized language use and practice (Fig. 1).

Some caveats should be kept in mind though. To the extent that discourse studies "exists" as a field of enquiry, its unity is constituted by family resemblances than by straightforward overlaps between perspectives or agendas. The field emerges as different disciplinary, theoretical and methodological perspectives engage in dialogue and conflict over partially overlapping approaches to language, practice and communication on the one hand (discourse analysis), and power, knowledge and subjectivity on the other hand (discourse theory). The transdisciplinary field of discourse studies constitutes a terrain of productive conflict rather than a homogenous field of enquiry.

Critical discourse studies address issues of power, ideology and hegemony much like CDA does. However, CDA presents us with a rather specific approach to discourse. It is often marked by a focus on power relations as relations of domination that reproduce unequal social relationships. It also tends to be marked by a mode of analysis that remains rather linguistic or textual in orientation. Social theory certainly enters the picture, but all too often as an external theoretical context for analyses that seek to exemplify how discourses support social injustices of various kinds. Quite often, we are dealing with critically realist perspectives on discursive practice and social reality that make some problematic claims on the truth of things (Verschueren, 2001; Blommaert, 2001, 2005; Van Dijk, 2008; Fairclough et al., 2009; Wodak, 2013a, b,).

The notion of critical discourse studies is broader in scope and encompasses different modes of discourse theoretical analysis—often of the Essex or Foucaultian variety—as well as other critical modes of enquiry that can be found in the ethnography of communication (Gumperz, 1982), in linguistic anthropology (Duranti, 1997), in linguistic and enunciative pragmatics (Blommaert, 2005; Maingueneau and Angermuller, 2007; Verschueren, 2011) and in sociology (Keller, 2011). The question to be asked in the context of this article is how the problematic of reflexivity can be fitted into this wider realm of critical discourse studies in a more explicit way. Drawing on four concepts of reflexivity, I will develop a discursive notion of reflexivity that can be integrated in the scheme of discourse studies presented above.

Four concepts of reflexivity

To clarify what a reflexive notion of critique for discourse studies might look like, I will draw upon four uses of the concept of reflexivity: (1) reflexivity as a general feature of interaction and subjectivity; (2) reflexivity as a methodological praxis in the social sciences; (3) reflexivity as a property of discursive and non-discursive systems; and (4) extended reflexivity as a key feature of late modernity. These four notions are distributed unequally among the different strands of discourse studies. Drawing on these four notions, I will amend the conceptual scheme for discourse studies discussed above with the concepts of reflexivity and reflexive loops.

Reflexivity as (1) a general principle of interaction and subjectivity is rather common in the pragmatist inspired approaches to discourse that can be found in the fields of linguistic pragmatics (Verschueren and Brisard, 2009: 33–35) and ethnomethodology-inspired conversation analysis (Psathas, 1998: 291; Titscher et al., 2000: 106). It is common in related disciplines such as interactional sociolinguistics or linguistic anthropology, but under-theorized in post-structuralist discourse theory. The notion of reflexivity as (2) a methodological stance or praxis is well known in sociological and anthropological discussions on the
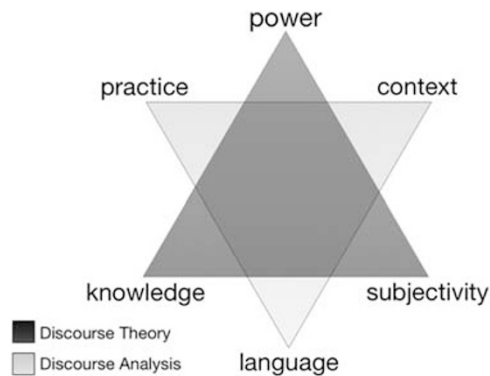

Figure 1 | Discourse studies as theory and analysis (adapted with permission from Angermuller, 2014a: 26; Angermuller et al., 2014b: 6–7). This figure is covered by a CC-BY license and is reproduced with permission of Johannes Angermuller et al. (Diskursforschung. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch, p. 26, Copyright of the German edition: transcript Verlag, 2014, https://doi.org/10.14361/transcript. 9783839427224.intro).

relationship between researchers and their research objects. Reflexivity is thereby conceptualized as a practical value that should be part and parcel of a sociological habitus. This ethical take on reflexivity is relatively rare in the more linguistically oriented approaches in discourse studies but did impact on the ethics of sociologically oriented discourse analysis and theory.

Reflexivity as (3) a property of discursive and non-discursive systems is hardly ever discussed explicitly in discourse analysis and theory. Nevertheless, there are interesting parallels between systems theory and discourse theory that merit closer attention. And last but not least, the concept of reflexivity as (4) a key feature of late modernity has been addressed from time to time in critical discourse analysis, but deserves closer attention if we are to understand how critical subjectivities can be established through discourse in our day and age. By exploring these four approaches to reflexivity, I will clear the ground for a more central place for reflexivity in the conceptual field of critical discourse studies.

Reflexivity as a general feature of inter-subjectivity and discourse.
One can think of reflexivity as a general feature of interaction, discourse and/or subjectivity. This notion of reflexivity can be traced back to the early pragmatists and symbolic interactionists whose work informs many pragmatically oriented varieties of discourse studies. However, this does not mean that the notion of reflexivity is always discussed explicitly in this line of research.

Reflexivity comes in many guises. In linguistics, socio-linguistics, the ethnography of communication and linguistic pragmatics, reflexivity is more commonly treated under the headers of poetics, metalinguistics or metadiscourse. These notions do not suggest that interlocutors can occupy a position outside of language, communication or discourse, but rather that the resources that allow us to communicate allow for communication about communication itself (Caffi, 1998; Coupland and Jaworski, 2004; Meinhof, 2004; Verschueren, 2004; Hyland, 2005; Bublitz and Hübler, 2007; Hübler, 2011; Nazaruk, 2011). Discourse can bend back on discourse. Without this principle, no analysis—and certainly no critical discourse theory or analysis—would be possible. One might even argue that the social as well as the political would cease to exist without it (Zienkowski, 2014, 2015).

Pragmatically oriented discourse studies harbour a notion of reflexivity as a universal characteristic of human communication.

Reflexivity is conceived of as an interaction-based feature of human cognition and subjectivity. At the same time, it is argued that all discourse is inherently interactional, dialogical or polyphonic. The high degree of consensus on these principles among pragmatically oriented discourse scholars can be traced back to the pragmatism of authors such as William James, Charles Cooley, George Herbert Mead and to the symbolic interactionism that these authors inspired (James, 1947; Williams, 1961; Mead, 1967; Taylor, 2004; Wiley, 2006; Bacon, 2012). The reflexivity we encounter here can be described as the human ability to act interpretively upon the (potentially) interpretive behaviour of others. It is grounded upon an internalization of the other's viewpoint into one's own sense of self in the twin process of interaction and interpretation.

In pragmatism, reflexivity appears as a problem related to the emergence of self. In this sense, reflexivity usually refers to "the conscious turning of the individual toward himself, simultaneously being the observing subject and the observed object, a process that includes both self-knowledge and self-monitoring" (Pagis, 2009: 266). Pragmatists point out that human beings can be both subjects and objects to themselves and that the human capacity of reflexive awareness plays a key role in the establishment of a more or less coherent sense of self. The early pragmatists did not focus on discourse as such, but they did highlight the importance of interaction and the pronominal system for the emergence of self and subjectivity.

For instance, James (1981: 279) argued that the self should be understood empirically as all that man is "tempted to call by the name of me". Charles Cooley developed the idea of the looking glass self to emphasize the social nature of self-awareness (Cooley in Meltzer et al., 1975; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000: 26–27), and George Herbert Mead argued that "language, in the form of the vocal gesture provides the mechanism" for the emergence of both mind and self (Morris, 1963: xiv). The latter pointed out that the very notion of the self indicates reflexivity as a human universal: "I know of no other form of behaviour than the linguistic in which the individual is an object to himself, and, so far as I can see, the individual is not a self in the reflexive sense unless he is an object to himself" (Mead, 1967: 142).

Like James and Cooley, Mead emphasized the importance of the pronominal system for the emergence and articulation of self-awareness. He argues that the emergence of the self relies on the human ability to internalize conversations of gestures. Mead points out that human beings can use symbols and language to internalize the points of views and the roles of others into one's "me". The self arises in a conversation between this "me" and the "self's" response to it in the form of an "I". For Mead, the "I" is therefore the response of the individual to the attitude of the community as internalized in one's self-experience. The "I" continually turns onto—bends back—onto the "me" of the next moment and is only accessible via one's memory. Today's "I" is always becoming tomorrow's "me". The fact that one cannot turn around fast enough to catch oneself explains our always limited self-awareness, and the fact that people can even surprise themselves with their own actions (Mead, 1967: 141–142, 174, Watson, 2010: 305).

For pragmatists, the self is not so much a substance as the unfinished product of a reflexive process steeped in social symbols, language and interaction processed by an organic form. Pragmatists argue that self-awareness is always also an awareness of something else. It therefore requires the establishment of interpretive links with the social and material realities we face on an everyday basis. Symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, labelling and role theory, as well as Goffman's dramaturgical approach to selfhood are immediate heirs to this agency oriented

pragmatist tradition that stresses the reflexive dimensions of subjectivity without falling into the trap of solipsism (Meltzer et al., 1975: 55–67).

However, in spite of their recognition of the dialogical nature of the self, the early pragmatists and their successors in sociology did not focus on discourse or—more narrowly—on language use in its own right (Wiley, 2006). If pragmatist authors were interested in the social structuring of the self, discourse analysts would stress that the emergence of the self does not occur in the abstract. It always involves an articulation and internalization of specific signifiers, labels, statements and narratives mediated through specific genres and media in particular socio-historical contexts (Foucault, 1984; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Bamberg et al., 2007; Zienkowski, 2013; Angermuller, 2014b). Put differently, a meaningful experience of self and other cannot be thought outside of the realm of discourse. And even though the dialogical or polyphonic structure of subjectivity may be a discursive universal, the various modes and modalities in which subjectivity comes about are as diverse as the possibilities of articulatory practice. Pragmatically oriented approaches to discourse, such as conversation analysis, the ethnography of communication, linguistic pragmatics and many modes of critical discourse analysis recognize the fact that the process of "bending back" is mediated discursively and operates at different levels of discursive structure that impact on the articulation of subjectivity, context and discourse itself. Even though it is rather uncommon to talk about reflexivity in these contexts, such approaches harbour many concepts relevant to this phenomenon such as intertextuality, poetics, performance and re-contextualization. Among the most relevant concepts articulated in the discourse analytical field of enquiry, we find the notions of metadiscourse, metapragmatics and/or metalinguistics.

These three terms refer to the fact that "… every discourse simultaneously says something in itself (for example, it describes a particular state of affairs 'out there') and about itself, about how that discourse should be interpreted, situated in relation to context, social relations and so on" (Blommaert, 2005: 253). From a pragmatic point of view, discourse—understood broadly as linguistic, paralinguistic and multimodal communication—implies that actors make communicative choices at different level of discursive structure simultaneously (for example, at the levels of sound, expression, morphology, argumentation, narrative, genre and medium). Conscious choices made at one level entail automatic choices at other levels. Metadiscursive or metapragmatic awareness can therefore be defined as a necessarily flawed, incomplete and normative awareness of the way communication operates. The production and interpretation of discourse—both in the linguistic and in the broader senses of the term—involves at least some degree of metapragmatic awareness with respect to the communicative and interpretive options at our disposal (Verschueren, 1999: 188; 2004: 446).

Metapragmatic awareness is not a mere add-on to regular human communication. It is what makes it exceptional and what allows it to function in the first place. In a thought experiment, Talbot J. Taylor asks his readers to imagine a world without metadiscourse. It is a world where we have to do without the basic words we use to describe language and communication more generally. We can no longer talk about "talking", "tricking", "lying" or "conversing" with each other. Neither is it possible to judge statements on their veracity, accuracy, truthfulness or poetic quality. In fact, it is a world in which even the designation of something as "meaningful" becomes unconceivable, and where the very concept of a human language ceases to be. Taylor's point is that metadiscourse is a constitutive dimension of all human communication and cannot be understood as a mere addition to

supposedly "basic" forms of communication and language use such as naming or pointing (Taylor, 2000).

People can mark aspects of their metalinguistic awareness by means of contextualization cues (for example, shifts in tonality, dialect, or body language), adverbs (for example, frankly, regrettably), hedges (for example, sort of, like, perhaps), boosters (for example, of course, absolutely), quotations, indirect reported speech, complex metapragmatic statements, and irony (Verschueren, 2004: 446). Traces of metadiscursive awareness can be observed in the way we organize and rearticulate different identities, voices and statements in discourse. It should therefore not come as a surprise that metapragmatic language use or metadiscourse also plays an important role in the articulation of political awareness and ideological discourse (Zienkowski, 2014; 2017). The articulation of textual, social and political awareness is dependent on one's ability to reflexively organize and rearticulate a network of social actors as a polyphonic orchestra of conflicting voices.

Metapragmatic performances serve as a means of commenting on and interfering with one's own discourse, as well as with the discourse of others. Without some degree of metapragmatic awareness it would be impossible to go beyond definitions of reality as handed to us by our interlocutors. We would be doomed to misrecognize the contingency of our sense-making processes and would be unable to emancipate ourselves from hegemonic discourse and to imagine alternative worlds. Critique can be understood as a container term for those practices that allow actors to challenge unequal social relationships and distributions of resources in the public sphere. Metapragmatic discourse strategies such as ideological processes of framing, argumentation, (de-) legitimation, (re-) contextualization, and (de-) identification, render critique and the political game in general imaginable.

An important caveat is that reflexivity does not only operate through linguistic discourse. It can also function silently at the level of the body. Human beings frequently practice a mute type of reflexivity whereby the body senses sensing itself. Human beings are never fully aware of their bodily functions. However, they can learn to recognize some of their bodily reactions as significant indexes or icons with particular meanings: "as human beings, we can attempt to affect these embodied feedback loops consciously and deliberately". This is what mindfulness courses and certain mediation techniques aim at (Pagis, 2009: 268).

The embodied dimension of reflexivity can also be illustrated with reference to cultural performances. People involved in the performance of an event such as the Mexican carnival can be said to be reflexive in the sense that they engage in a "self-conscious manipulation of the formal feature of the communicative system … making one at least conscious of its devices". Such performances are reflexive: "insofar as the displayed mode of performance constitutes the performing self as an object for itself as well as for others, performance is an especially potent and heightened means of taking the role of the other and of looking back at oneself from that perspective" (Bauman, 1996 cited in Coupland and Jaworski, 2004).

Since a great deal of interaction is mediated and performed discursively, reflexivity gets refracted through the lenses of identity, narrative, genre, image and medium. We come to ourselves as embodied discursive beings, and so do the others we interact with. Moreover, if we consider reflexivity as a universal for human (inter-) action, it follows that there is a reflexive—and potentially critical—dimension to *all* aspects of symbolic, social and material reality. And this reflexivity may or may not be marked in varying degrees in the discourse through which we communicate. One may therefore say that reflexivity can leave ripples on the surface of discourse whenever we articulate a statement that connects our sense of self with some aspect of social reality.

Reflexivity as a property of discursive and non-discursive systems. The notion of reflexivity can also be considered as a property of discursive and non-discursive systems that show signs of self-reference and self-regulation. Such a systemic approach to reflexivity can be found in the systems theory of Niklas Luhmann for whom reflexivity counts as a defining feature of all living, psychic and social systems. Here too, we are dealing with reflexivity as a universal property of the social, but the principle is not merely about language, interaction and inter-subjectivity. It operates at a higher level of abstraction. In Luhmann's framework, systems constitute themselves as they differentiate between themselves and their environments. All systems therefore include self-referential, self-organizational, autopoetic, autonomous and interdependent boundary-establishing processes. The reflexive process of drawing a boundary generates meaningful (self-) identities for any type of system (for example, individual bodies, interactions, the economy, the law or mass media) (Wrana and Galanova, 2014: 325; Görke and Scholl, 2006; 646).

Interestingly, this systemic understanding of reflexivity comes close to post-structuralist concepts of identity, discourse and society as developed in Essex style discourse theory. Nevertheless, the notion of reflexivity hardly figures in the original writings of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. The Essex school stresses the contingency of all processes of signification and states that the meanings of identities, subject positions, subjectivities, discourses, and even the very concept of "society", can merely be partially fixed since all significance requires a constitutive outside. For instance, the very meaning of (the signifier of) society is constituted through discursive and hegemonic struggles over what society is (not) and over what it should (not) be like. Societies, discourses and identities are conceptualized as fundamentally open structures whose porous and shifting boundaries are first and foremost constructed through discursively articulated power relationships (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 1990; Torfing, 1999; Howarth *et al.*, 2000; Critchley and Marchart, 2004).

Reflexivity does not enter into the theoretical vocabulary of the first generation of works in Essex style discourse theory in any explicit way, but the very principle of hegemonic struggle outlined by Laclau and Mouffe does imply that discourses—as systems of signification—bend back and refer to each other. In fact, political strategy and critique—including discourse theoretical mode of ontological critique advocated by the Essex school—would be impossible without this type of metadiscursive and systemic reflexivity. In Foucaultian discourse theory, the notion of reflexivity is not often mentioned explicitly either. But neither is it incompatible with Foucaultian claims on the conduct of conduct or the shaping of the self.

In fact, Foucault's take on subjectivity, power and discourse presupposes reflexive processes whereby statements act upon statements, discourses upon discourses, subjects upon subjects, and power upon power. Historically specific reflexive modes of discourse, power and subjectivity are everywhere in Foucault's work, even though he makes practically no use of the term as such himself. Some sociologists have elaborated on this reflexive dimension of Foucault's work. Examples include the narrative account selfhood developed by Gubrium and Holstein (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Gubrium and Holstein, 2003) or the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse developed by Keller (2011). In both cases, the Foucaultian historical take on

subjectivity is combined with pragmatist lessons on the reflexive and interactional dimension of subjectivity.

The notion of reflexivity is dealt with even more explicitly in the writings of a second generation of discourse theorists working in the Essex line of investigation. Reflexivity is important to their discussions on the role played by self-interpretations articulated by subjects in discourse theoretical explanations of the logics that structure large-scale social and political processes. Following Pierre Bourdieu, David Howarth and Jason Glynos argue that a great deal of social life goes on without much conscious reflexivity. Many practices are so ingrained in everyday life that they have become part and parcel of the bodily dispositions of social actors. Nevertheless, the contingencies of discursive reality force actors to engage in a permanent process of adaptation. Human beings constantly rearticulate their sense of self and other as their contextual circumstances shift and change (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 104–105). Glynos and Howarth (2007: 221) argue in favour of a mode of critical explanation that takes the reflexive self-interpretations of subjects into account and point out that the explanations and predictions of social practices by social scientists may be "as fragile as the agents' self-understandings and interpretations". This type of claim brings them a bit closer to the pragmatist notion of reflexivity outlined above. It also taps into the idea of reflexivity as a research ethic that will be discussed in the upcoming section.

According to Howarth and Glynos, reflexivity enters the picture at every level of critical explanation since even the most sedimented practices are mediated by the first-order beliefs and meanings of those who practice them. Second order reflexivity can be observed when social actors become aware of prior behaviour and revise their actions and their self-awareness accordingly. Second order reflexivity also explains phenomena such as self-defeating and self-fulfilling prophecies triggered by predictive social science (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 221). Howarth and Glynos argue in favour of an explanative and emancipative social science able to analyse the large-scale discursive logics while taking the reflexive self-interpretations of social actors into account. From their poststructuralist point of view, reflexivity can be considered as a key principle of discursive practice that acts upon discourses as open and decentred systems of signification that allow for contingent articulations of self and subjectivity.

Reflexivity as a research practice. The notion of reflexivity can also be found in methodological discussions about the way researchers (should) acknowledge their own subjectivity and its effects on the production of scientific knowledge. Here, reflexivity refers to an ideological social scientific attitude or praxis closely associated with (post-) modern sensibilities. This methodological reflexivity relies on a more basic mode of reflexivity defined in terms of a general capacity of human cognition, social practice, and/or discourse. One could therefore distinguish between the substantial reflexivity discussed above on the one hand, and the derived type of methodological reflexivity discussed in anthropology, science studies and sociology on the other hand (d'Oliveira-Martins, 2014).

In his plea for a reflexive sociology, Pierre Bourdieu illustrates the complexities of reflexivity and critique with reference to a fictive discourse analysis. Asking his readers to imagine a televised electoral debate, he points out that the panellists would engage in metadiscursive truth games over the objectification of social relations, actors, practices and institutions. It is possible to argue that this type of metadiscourse already involves some degree of reflexivity on the part of everyone involved. Nevertheless, Bourdieu reserved the term reflexivity for a particular type of metadiscourse produced in the context of sociologic practice.

Bourdieu warns his readers against a mode of sociologic (discourse) analysis that restricts itself to summaries or reformulations of points made in (televised) debates. Instead, he argues in favour of a sociologic praxis marked by reflexivity. In the televised election debate all actors make truth claims about exit polls. They all claim authority by legitimizing their positions in the field and by objectifying these figures in different ways: a politician might read the electoral results as a personal victory or defeat; a journalist might lay claims to objectivity by providing a report about the spread of electoral results; and an academic expert in electoral history might claim objectivity by invoking his knowledge of past elections. In the (televised) debate, the game is all about placing oneself "meta" to articulate some truth while simultaneously claiming a position in the field of social relations. The reflexive sociologist faces a difficult problem here. In facing such debates, she can never detach herself completely from the discourses involved: "depending on what object she studies, the sociologist herself is more or less distant from the agents and the stakes she observes, more or less directly involved in rivalries with them, and consequently more or less tempted to enter the game of metadiscourse under the cloak of objectivity" (Bourdieu, 1992: 259).

For Bourdieu, the reflexive sociologist should be more than an expert ensnared in the trappings of commonly accepted discourse. She has to problematize the terms of the truth game itself and to reflect upon the common sense pre-constructs that social actors—including the sociologist herself—rely on to objectify their worlds. Bourdieu recommends that reflexive sociologists think relationally while bringing objective structures into the analysis. In this way, they could account for "the particulars of discourse and of rhetorical strategies, complicities and antagonisms, and for the moves attempted and effected—in short, for everything that discourse analysis believes it can understand on the basis of discourse alone" (Bourdieu, 1992: 258–259). Bourdieu (1992: 259–260) understands reflexivity in terms of participant objectification —that is, a mode of analysis that allows researchers to reflexively engage with their relation to their (interests in their) objects, as well as with the different fields in which they are implicated and occupy positions of various standing.

Many sociologists consider reflexivity to be an integral aspect of their critical practice. Already in the early seventies, Alvin Gouldner proposed a reflexive sociological practice whereby sociologists reflect upon their social practices and positions to avoid the trappings of classism and ethnocentrism. The point was that researchers should acknowledge and objectify their own involvement in processes of objectification while transforming their very sense of self simultaneously (Tsekeris and Katrivesis, 2008: 3). A similar notion flowered among ethnographers in the 1980's and 1990's who understood reflexivity as "a constant awareness, assessment, and reassessment by the researcher of the researcher's own contribution / influence / shaping of inter-subjective research and the consequent findings" (Salzman, 2002: 806). The proposal of James Clifford and George Marcus to engage in a kind of meta-anthropology continues to challenge many authors in the social sciences and humanities at large (Bachmann-Medick, 2016: 104).

It has become quite common to understand reflexivity as a desirable characteristic of interpretive social research. This often involves a hightened awareness on the part of the researcher with respect to her subjectivity as performed at every stage of the research process. It also involves a heightened awareness of one's shifting position with respect to changing social, historical, political and discursive processes and relationships of power and/or domination. Methodological reflexivity implies an inward

movement most clearly expressed in the rise of auto-ethnography and experimental modes of writing in social science (Doran, 1989; Marcus, 1994: 103–126; Bachmann-Medick, 2016).

This methodological understanding of reflexivity led to experimental styles of writing and to an increasing popularity of distinct genres of auto-ethnography. So, even though it might be argued that all discourse is in some way reflexive, methodological considerations of reflexivity came to be more narrowly understood as reflexivity on the part of the researcher with respect to his or her own identity, perspective, position and/ or discourse in relation to the subjects under investigation.

Texts that deal directly with questions of reflexivity in the context of (critical) discourse studies frequently recognize the tension between universal and derived modes of reflexivity. For instance, Fairclough and Chouliaraki argue that all practices include a reflexive element because "people constantly generate representations of what they do as a part of what they do" (Fairclough and Chouliaraki, 1999: 25–26; Fairclough *et al.*, 2009: 360). This observation pre-empts any easy distinction between theory and practice. The authors recognize that CDA should not be excluded from this principle either. At the same time, they refer to Bourdieu's more narrow understanding of reflexivity in arguing that "theoretical practices can and should be reflexive in the sense of seeking to illuminate their own conditions of possibility, including their own location within networks of practices and the internal (including ideological) effects of these external relations (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992)" (Fairclough and Chouliaraki, 1999: 27). Seen as such, reflexivity touches upon the question how to articulate our academic voices with the voices of those we investigate—an issue dealt with directly by Howarth and Glynos (Glynos and Howarth, 2007).

Several authors have argued that critically realist CDA perspectives that understand ideology as a mode of domination and/or false consciousness often inform heuristics that privilege the researcher's point of view and his or her theoretical efforts (see Fairclough and Chouliaraki, 1999: 25–30). Even though all language users are believed to have the same metadiscursive capacities as the researcher, they still need the assistance of the analyst to grasp their own misunderstandings and illusions about themselves and about the world (Bucholtz, 2001: 168). Many critical sympathizers with the CDA programme have remarked that this attitude easily leads to a high predictability of research findings and to a variety of heuristic problems concerning the types of context one should take into account when formulating empirically grounded modes of critique (Blommaert, 2001; Blommaert *et al.* 2001; Bucholtz, 2001; Verschueren, 2001; Billig, 2003). Moreover, this attitude is at odds with the notion of reflexivity as a general feature of inter-subjectivity and discourse as well as with reflexivity as a universal feature of discursive and non-discursive systems.

A productive alternative way of thinking reflexivity as a research practice has been developed within post-foundational discourse theory. Elaborating on poststructuralist understandings of discourse, French epistemology and Bourdieu's take on reflexivity, Tomas Marttila argues for a mode of post-foundational discourse studies whereby social science "uses its weapons to understand and check itself" (Bourdieu, 2008; cited in Marttila, 2016: 114). According to Marttila, this should be done not in order to arrive at some objective truth about non-discursive reality, but in order to arrive at a "second order reflexivity" that "indicates the possibility to experience potential constraints between an initial model of representation and the cognitions of reality, but not in relation to reality itself". We are thus dealing with a type of metadiscursive awareness that allows us "to reflect upon the consistency between the foundations of

observation and the acts of observation" without falling in the trap of equally validating all models of representation. He suggests that this type of reflexivity allows us to distinguish between discursive constructions of knowledge that can be fixed partially and temporarily from others that are less likely to do this (Marttila, 2016: 114).

It is possible to find a similar stance in Foucaultian governmentality studies (for example, Diaz-Bone, 2007). And within Essex style discourse theory, Howarth has pointed out that every stage of the research process can be understood as a practice of (re-) articulation that alters our understanding of the discursive realities under investigation (Howarth, 2000: 140–141). As such, there is—or should be—an important reflexive dimension to any type of discourse theoretical analysis (Howarth, 2005; Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Zienkowski, 2017: 85–86). Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that critique and reflexivity are not the sole prerogative of academics.

Reflexivity and critique are ideological and practical values that infuse different journalistic, psychological, political and ethical self-images. Politically conscious citizens adhering to very different ideologies would be more than happy to claim the values of reflexivity and critique for their hegemonic projects, dismissing the discourses of their opponents as naïve or politically correct nonsense. Social researchers should therefore train themselves to recognize the way others communicate their reflexive and critical stances to each other. At the same time, they should recognize that neither critique nor reflexivity free us from ideology. We can merely loosen ideology's hold over us, allowing ourselves the freedom to occupy a different position, a different point of view from which to analyse and re-imagine society beyond reality as we find it.

Reflexivity as a historically contextualized practice. Reflexivity can also be conceptualized as a historically specific phenomenon. This approach to reflexivity is usually associated with the more recent work of Anthony Giddens who wrote that "sociology … deals with a pre-interpreted world, in which the meanings developed by active subjects actually enter into the actual con-stitution or production of that world" (Giddens, 1993 cited in Fairclough and Chouliaraki, 1999: 26). But even though reflex-ivity has always been around in human affairs, Giddens argues that reflexivity has become increasingly important in modern and late modern societies. In discourse studies, this extended reflex-ivity thesis is supported by critical discourse analysts such as Norman Fairclough and Lilie Chouliaraki (Fairclough and Chouliaraki, 1999; Adams, 2006; Fairclough *et al.*, 2009: 360).

According to Giddens, several late modern transformations have prompted individuals to become ever more reflexive: changes in communication technologies and structures; increas-ing global flows of images, ideas and finance; as well as cultural exchanges that increase one's awareness of the contingency of one's identities and convictions. His extended reflexivity thesis postulates that these changes have undermined conventional knowledge on how to lead one's life up to the point where reflexive considerations on how to shape one's life have become an integral part of everyday experience (Adams, 2006, 512–513). He argues that these changes have forced human beings to think and act reflexively in most areas of life. Questions of who we are and how we should shape ourselves inform everyday concerns more than in any other epoch. All of this goes hand in hand with a reflexive structuring of self-narratives. According to Giddens,

"[…] the self establishes a trajectory which can only become coherent through the reflexive use of the broader social environment. The impetus towards control, geared to

reflexivity, thrusts the self into the outer world in ways which have no clear parallel in previous times. The disembedding mechanisms intrude into the heart of self-identity: but they do not 'empty out' the self any more than they simply remove prior supports on which self-identity was based. Rather, they allow the self (in principle) to achieve much greater mastery over the social contexts reflexively incorporated into the forging of self-identity than was previously possible." (Giddens, 1991: 244)

There are many critiques that can be levelled against Giddens' extended reflexivity thesis. For instance, it has been argued that he sketches an overly homogeneous picture of high modernity and that his theory does not sufficiently recognize differences in the reflexive experiences of people at different locations in the social realm. Other authors take issue with the fact that his approach sets agency free from structural constraints and refer to Bourdieu as a more deterministic counter-weight (Adams, 2006: 513).

Bourdieu's theory of field and habitus is indeed marked by a more deterministic tendency and a bias towards structure over agency. His notion of habitus—defined as a set of internalized dispositions that reproduce social structure through individualized acts—allows for a type of agency that is always overdetermined by a personal and collective history embodied in pre-reflective action-orientations. In Bourdieu's work, reflexivity enters as a field-requirement for the development of an academic and sociological habitus. He tends to treat reflexivity as a disposition that is "the habitual outcome of field requirements" (Adams, 2006: 513). As we saw before, Bourdieu considers reflexivity to be of special importance in the fields of academia and science (Giddens, 1991: 148–149). Nevertheless, reflexivity may be more common than Bourdieu's approach seems to suggest.

Reflexive awareness can be the outcome of any situation in which field requirements and habitus cease to match. As a consequence of increased individual mobility, institutional reflexivity, the quantitative differentiation of social fields, and the blurring of boundaries between them, the experience of a lack of fit between habitus and field has become ever more common. Lois McNay therefore argues that "reflexivity arises in the specific, concrete negotiation of conflictual fields, not amidst the world of increased exposure to choice-based social systems posited by the extended reflexivity thesis" (Adams, 2006, 512–515). Her point is that the increased mobility of people between fields can lead to reflexivity and change. However, Adkins points out that reflexivity can also be supportive of social order—a statement supported by studies that show how reflexive thinking has permeated almost all areas of neo-liberal life (Adams, 2006: 518).

It is therefore useful to recall Foucault's notion of neo-liberal governmentality as a conduct of conducts—a clearly reflexive phenomenon (Foucault, 1978; Lemke, 2002; Adams, 2006; Rose et al., 2006: 519–520). Even when reflexivity operates as a form of social or political awareness, this does not necessarily lead to emancipatory social change. One may be very much aware of possibilities for reflexive self-development and/or social change while having none of the resources for realizing it. Adams (2006: 525) therefore points out that "reflexive awareness and the delimitations of field enclosures uncoupled from resource realization amount to frustrated isolation. Reflexivity in this context does not bring choice, just a painful awareness of the lack of it".

If we consider reflexivity as a historical phenomenon, the Foucaultian perspective provides an alternative to Giddens' extended reflexivity thesis. Even though Foucault never discussed reflexivity as such, his approach allows for a differentiation between different modes reflexivity. The way in which man relates to himself and to knowledge about himself changes over time. In this sense, the Foucaultian perspective turns reflexivity on itself. Inspired by Foucault, Winther Jørgensen (2003: 80) proposes to consider reflexive research as "research that emphasizes and explores the situated production of scientific knowledge as a necessary context for understanding and assessing this knowledge and its consequences". This Foucaultian mode of discourse analysis does not offer an outside view of reality but a perspective and a vocabulary for a reflexive approach to reflexivity.

Elaborating on this perspective, Winther Jørgensen (2003: 68) argues that the methodologically oriented reflexive turn in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology can be understood as a truly modern enterprise. In explicit reference to Foucault, she asks herself questions such as: what makes the debate about reflexivity make sense; what are its conditions of possibility; which view of the world is constructed; which subject positions are created; and from what positions do knowledge producers make authoritative claims about reflexivity (Winther Jørgensen, 2003: 64).

In contrast to accounts that emphasize the reflexive turn as a break with naïve modern concepts of knowledge and academic authority, Winther Jørgensen identifies a considerable degree of continuity. The reflexive turn can be understood as a continuation of a modern transdisciplinary tendency to constitute man around three doublets: man as an empirico-transcendental doublet; man as being structured around the cogito and the unthought; and man as being structured around retreats and returns to so-called origins (Winther Jørgensen, 2003: 66–67).

"The transcendental condition for knowledge production is taken to be that knowledge is always produced by particularly situated knowledge producers—and this applies to both the anthropologists and their informants. And thus, the knowledge produced by the cogito is always embedded in a never fully recoverable unthought. As far as the origin is concerned, it is now widely agreed that different communities produce partly imaginary ancestries and myths of origin to support their claims, anthropologists and informants alike" (Winther Jørgensen, 2003: 72)

For Marianne Winther Jørgensen, the reflexive turn is part of a modern episteme. As such, it constitutes an attempt to keep the opposing poles between the three doublets of man together within the same object.

A place for reflexivity in critical discourse studies
The concept of reflexivity allows critical scholars of discourse to investigate how subjects engage with the logics, rationalities and ideologies that infuse their discursive worlds with meaning at different levels of analysis. In this sense, reflexivity is a precondition—be it an insufficient one—for the development of political awareness, critique and social change. It should therefore be accorded a central place in the field of critical discourse studies without losing sight of the fact that the notion can be deployed in different—and sometimes contradicting—ways.

Let us engage in a brief comparison of the different discursive takes on subjectivity. The notion of reflexivity as a general feature of interaction, discourse and/or subjectivity can be found in many pragmatically oriented approaches to discourse. It is implicitly present in all approaches to discursive subjectivity that have inherited the basics of pragmatist thought. Notions such as metalanguage, metapragmatics, metadiscourse, polyphony, poetics, performance, contextualization, intertextuality and dialogism implicitly or explicitly recognize that the discursive modes and modalities in which subjectivity comes about are grounded in a human ability to deal reflexively with discourse as well as with the

self. Such perspectives can be found in conversation analysis, in the ethnography of communication, in linguistic pragmatics and in different varieties of critical discourse analysis.

Reflexivity can also be seen as a property of discursive and non-discursive systems that show signs of self-reference and self-regulation. Discourse theories that address discourse as open-ended and de-centred systems implicitly or explicitly acknowledge this type of reflexivity as a key feature of discourse. The notion cannot be found explicitly in early Essex school thought but the principle of it does appear in a model of society where hegemonic politics is defined as a struggle over empty signifiers in a context marked by ontological contingency. Later Essex authors do address the issue of reflexivity explicitly and it is telling that they do so when they try to think the way in which systemic discursive logics are mediated and performed through self-interpretive practices of subjects. However, Essex style discourse theory does not provide us with a great deal of insight into the intersubjective, linguistic and (inter-)textual dimensions of reflexive discursive practices.

The rapprochement of discourse theory and discourse analysis in the field of discourse studies requires that we recognize reflexivity as an organizing principle for any type of system—no matter whether these are intra-subjective, inter-subjective or systemic. Moreover, to the extent that subjectivity is a discursive phenomenon, it is important to address it as a historical phenomenon. It comes to awareness when subjects move between conflicting and overlapping social fields. The Foucaultian take on the self is particularly informing on this point. The particular ways in which we relate to ourselves is historically grounded and marked by the conflicting modes of power that mark our times.

If reflexivity has become a key value in critical social science, if it has become a desirable characteristic of interpretive social science research, this development has to be understood as a historical phenomenon that generates specific effects of power as well as specific modes of political awareness. Bourdieu's discussion of the reflexive sociologist demonstrates this.

Also, if reflexivity is a general feature of human interactions and discursive systems, it is equally important to realize that reflexive students of discourse cannot step outside of history. As we have pointed out repeatedly, discourse analysts and theorists are not the only social actors who make use of reflexive discourse to change themselves and/or the world we live in. As such, the task of the critical scholar becomes to identify the different historically grounded modes of reflexivity through which we relate to ourselves, to each other and to the world. To arrive at this point, a further dialogue between heterogeneous perspectives on reflexivity is required.

I will now return to the question what place we can accord to reflexivity in the emerging field of discourse studies. To conceptualize this field, I will enrich the scheme of discourse studies introduced above with the concepts of reflexive potential and reflexive loops (see Fig. 2 below), thus outlining my preferred perspective on reflexivity.

My multi-dimensional notion of discourse implies a model of reflexive awareness as something that can be directed towards any aspect of discursive reality. We can use discourse to reflect on knowledge, power and reflexivity but also on everyday practices, language use and the contexts we rely on to make sense of the world. Discourse is thereby not restricted to language use alone. It is a multi-layered, context-dependent and socially constitutive practice that can be described at various levels of linguistic, textual, semiotic and sociopolitical organization (Zienkowski, 2017: 91-98).

Through discourse, we orient ourselves to the spatial, temporal, linguistic, intertextual, social and political dimensions of contextual reality. Reflexivity is the property of discourse that

Figure 2 | Reflexivity in discourse and in discourse studies (adapted with permission from Angermuller, 2014a: 26; Angermuller et al., 2014b:6–7). This figure is covered by a CC-BY license and is reproduced with permission of Johannes Angermuller et al. (Diskursforschung. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch, p. 26, Copyright of the German edition: transcript Verlag, 2014, https://doi.org/10.14361/transcript. 9783839427224.intro).

allows us to do so and is therefore relevant to every single one of the issues that constitute the field of discourse studies. The field of reflexive potential encompasses the whole of discursive reality, as well as the actors or subjects that populate it. Within this reality, social actors—including researchers themselves—use linguistic, paralinguistic and non-linguistic discourse to throw reflexive loops around themselves and around specific dimensions and sections of their discursive environments whenever they engage in interpretive and communicative behaviour.

Statements generate reflexive loops that fix selves and others in temporary discursive relationships. These metaphorical loops are acts of interpretive movement through which social entities engage in a Sisyphean task of fixing social reality, trying to grasp it with a porous and amorphous semiotic net, shaping interpretive reality in the process. These loops can leave material ripples on the surface of language and communication for others to observe and engage with. The ensuing ripples materialize in a multiplicity of discursive markers. We can rely on all sorts of metadiscursive, metapragmatic or metalinguistic forms and markers to generate inferences about the reflexive processes that shape our social worlds.

Reflexivity is never communicated in the abstract. When observable, it is refracted through the discursive prisms through which it is articulated. An unschooled labourer working in a sweatshop will not reflect upon her living conditions in the same way as an academically trained anthropologist might. But this does not mean that this labourer would be non-reflexive or uncritical about her position, her bosses, or about the inequalities that characterize her social relationships. Neither does it imply that she would be unaware of the discursive strategies that justify the inequalities that structure her life. Moreover, two social scientists studying the practices that allow that sweatshop to operate in the first place, may articulate very different forms of critique depending on their frameworks, the genres in which they write, the methods they deploy and the voices they rearticulate in this process.

Social actors fix meanings through metadiscursive acts that partially fix who and what they are in an unequal and power-infused world whose boundaries can only be imagined through interpretive and critical praxis. Reflexivity is therefore a precondition for the articulation of critique and should be considered as a key concept in the field of discourse studies. Without the metadiscursive capacity to distinguish between the voices, arguments, narratives and identities of social actors, it

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would be impossible to criticize the way political opponents seek to overpower each other in debates, policies and other practices. It would also be impossible to learn and to develop knowledge. The capacity for metadiscursive awareness is key to processes of persuasion, domination and control, but also for dialogue, emancipation and the creative shaping of social relations in the image of a more equal or just society.

It is not certain that reflexivity and critique are more important now than they have been in the past but it is likely that explicit reflexive discursive practices have come to play a more important role in the truthful, deceitful and constitutive ways in which we monitor, articulate and value our selves. From a critical point of view, it is important to realize that reflexivity is not merely a symbolic value. Reflexivity is economically valuable for anyone who sells financial audits or devices that quantify the functions of our bodies or our online behaviour. Even critical reflexivity can be commercialized. This goes just as much for the works of novelists, producers, artists and comedians, as for our own work as paid academics. But even if critique and reflexivity operate as important personal, professional, economic and—ultimately— ideological values in our day and age, they do not operate in the same way for everyone.

There is a reflexive component to the confessions dictators force out of their victims before executing them. And there is an element of control that goes along with the reflexive ways in which we deal with our biodata generated by our iWatches or the ways in which we write about ourselves on blogs and in diaries. Moreover, propaganda can only operate effectively if people feel like they are articulating their own ideas and do not let others think for them. Entire economies are built on the reflexive capacities of advertisers, managers, psychologists, coaches and financial analysts. It seems as if we are being haunted by highly modern Foucaultian spectre that incites us "to be reflexive" or to govern the government of one's self in most areas life. This type of reflexivity is not necessarily good or bad, but it is always dangerous—as Rabinow would put it. As critical students of discourse, I therefore think it is important to heed Bourdieu's warning and not to treat reflexivity and critique at face value.

Like all abstractions, reflexivity and critique potentially operate as ideological values. People value these signifiers in different ways depending on their subject positions and the habitus they acquired through their socialization into multiple social fields. In sociology and anthropology, the researcher's reflexivity has become a key aspect of many heuristics. Anthropologists are stimulated to reflect upon the effects of their involvement in the field of investigation, as well as in the academic field to which they belong. They are supposed to reflect critically on the usage of their conceptual frameworks as well as on the way their observations, interactions and writings impact upon the realities they co-construct. But reflexivity is not the same thing as transparency. Moreover, researchers cannot claim a monopoly on reflexive practice. Critical reflexivity is also the trade of poets, writers, comedians and talk-show hosts. Satirical outlets such as the Onion or the French Guignols, as well as forms of infotainment and political commentary such as the Daily Show provide us with many examples of critical discursive interventions marked by high degrees of reflexivity.

Critique is such stuff debates are made of and reflexivity therefore lies at the heart of any process of societal renewal. Critical modes of reflexivity serve as an antidote for stale and depoliticizing understandings of self and society. Critique is a discursive autoinoculation against the crystallization of standpoints, positions, identities, boundaries and societal structures into rigid and limiting patterns of control and domination. As such, it is important that students of discourse interested in societal change and transformation do not focus exclusively on the forces of inertia and domination. They need to focus their attention on the full complexity of discourse, taking the reflexive properties of discourse and subjectivity into account.

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