The politics of the ordinary: In search for the common touch

INTRODUCTION

Toughness, leadership and other virtues

Political campaigning in post 9/11-America has put emphasis on the toughness of the character of the presidential candidates. As acting President at the time of the 2001 attacks against the World Trade Center and Pentagon, then organizing 'the war against terrorism' followed by declaring war against Iraq, George W. Bush has taken the opportunities to show a spirit of toughness in his presidential leadership. The image of the President as being tough, i.e. being able to make decisions in challenging situations and then firmly cope with their consequences, provides one of the important assets to the renewal of his candidacy according the agenda of the Republican party, while he is certainly also being criticized for these decisions and this toughness by his opponents. This toughness has initiated expectations among democrats that their candidate also should be able to show similar character traits and comparable leadership values, not only because their candidate might have to cope with the current situation of (in-)security, but also because toughness is vital in order to cope with the presidential campaign.

In the unofficial and official presidential campaign, the war records of the two candidates are important contributions to the image of toughness (Thomas, 2004). The representation of the war records of the candidates suggests a range of personal, psychological and managerial

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qualities such as credibility, trustworthiness and loyalty to the fatherland, important qualities

for a future president that can be found in their past service to the country. Democratic

presidential candidate Senator John Kerry has been challenged on his toughness (did he

threw the 'medal' or 'ribbon' in 1971?), whether it were 'for real' or 'phony'. President Bush

has been challenged on the motives for the abrupt discontinuation of his service as a US Air

Force pilot.

In some democratic contexts the message is that their candidate should '[s]how more spine'

(Signer, 2004). The alleged image problem of the democratic candidate concerning

toughness have been linked to masculinity, described as a 'deficiency in testosterone', as 'a

problem with feminization', as 'a mommy party', associated with supposedly softer attitudes

representing a lack of leadership (ibid). The same writer call for increased toughness: 'an

aggressive, confident, forward stance toward the political world, rooted in the self-reliance

that Americans since Ralph Waldo Emerson have valued' (ibid), suggesting that this was the

kind of self-reliance Emerson had in mind. A web page ('Gadfly – The Aggressive

Progressive')[1] linked to the Democratic Party talk of 'tough progressivism' as an answer to

their candidate's alleged deficit. The incentive for increasing toughness is not only found in

the adversary character of the campaign per se, but also in the realm of popular culture

where toughness reigns:

> Democrats are also missing out on the tough aesthetic that succeeds in today's
> cultural marketplace. Wrestling stars such as The Rock have become mainstream
> icons. The survival of the fittest drives the plot of so-called reality-TV shows such as
> *Survivor*, *Fear Factor* and MTVs *The Gauntlet*. Fox News frequently backdrops its
> montages with heavy-metal music, and Bill O'Reilly's chesty, unchallengeable style
> has become the standard for cable TV. (Signer, 2004)[2]

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[1]See http://www.gadflyer.com

[2] The tough aesthetic in political communication is not entirely new. Since the 1970s, the style of
aggressive questioning in interviewing has made many public figures into celebrities (Clayman & Heritage,
2002:30). This period have also 'witnessed a shift from', what Larry Sabato called, ' 'lapdog' journalism to

This commentator suggests that the lack of toughness among the democrats also resonates with their inability to adapt to the aesthetic trends in the cultural market place. The implicit expectation by him is that they should be more concerned to conform to the dominating trend of a tough aesthetic, even though these trends may display elements of what could be understood as alien to a democratic ideology.

The alleged lack of toughness among the democrats has also been related to the sense of a divide in the party, between the urban elites and the rural poor. Among some liberals there is a fear that their party and their leaders have been 'co-opted by white collar elitists, who neglected the party's roots in the down-and-dirty labor movement, as well as a hard-driving internationalist military policy' (Signer, 2004).

The deficiency of 'spine' and the call for toughness thus have several sources: provoked by the toughness of the republicans; provoked by the toughness expected as a response to the continuous threat of terrorist acts; a lack of timing with dominating modes of cultural aesthetics; an elitist neglect of the party's working-class sources. According to the web page Gadfly, there is a need to reinvent the liberal tradition in the democratic party for instance by the following measures: by creating a brand of internationalism that unquestionably places America first; by the framing of causes in a moral language of certitude; by a renewed fighting approach in campaigning and governance; by the side-stepping of politics based purely on rights and empathy; by creating a new political vocabulary based on courage, fortitude and certitude.

'attack dog' journalism' (ibid:31). The result has been a strengthening of the adversarial styles and what Deborah Tannen calls the 'argument culture' of journalism (ibid:34).

These opinions about the proposed deficits and future remedial strategies among the democrats are of course only a few of the voices within the party, and should not be understood as the official or dominant opinion.

Being 'tough' is just one of many communicative and psychological moves that are made by a politician in his/her campaigning activities. A politician aiming for public office has to be able to show many qualities in order to be elected: toughness, leadership, concern, determination, knowledge and many other things. The person in pursuit of power or representation need to connect with the constituency, establish mutual rapport, being supported, nominated, elected, represented, installed, etc. all the way 'up' or 'away' in a movement of escalating influence. There is a mutuality involved when the politician asks to be elected and he/she also in turn makes promises, declarations, statements, display intention and will that are qualified as being morally binding – at least for the moment. The communicative and psychological moves are made in order to secure the agenda of action and ideology of the politician as well as the qualities in the character of the person which are expected to be desirable. The criteria for evaluating these qualities are that they need to be persuasive, sincere, truthful and authentic – at least they have to be perceived as such. The communicative and psychological moves that are made, functions hence to secure authenticity, trust, confidence, reliability, legitimacy, responsibility, 'representativity' – not to suggest that these qualities are always (if ever) the concrete outcome of the maintenance of relationships in the political domain.

To proceed: John Kerry 'fought for America', he won three purple hearts and a silver star; he can be determined, firm and tough. But he can also be seen bowling with oranges in an

airplane aisle on his campaign trail.[3] He can thus be represented as smiling, playful, as competitive but also relaxing. Bowling is an activity which has lately come to be associated with sociopolitical nostalgia and more particularly connected with the loss of sociality and civil society, according to a slightly dystopian interpretation of the state of politics by Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000). In the context of the airplane aisle, the game of bowling can thus perhaps be interpreted as a sign of the return of a well functioning civil society where the democratic and liberal values once again can be enacted. Of this we can only speculate. We cannot be sure that the image of Kerry playing bowling with oranges is intended this way, but we can as well suggest an interpretation of its meaning. We can always speculate if bowling or any other 'ordinary' activity – made by Kerry or anybody else running for high public office – has political meaning or if it is just an expression of spontaneous 'fun'. Or is it (also) part of a campaign strategy that emphasizes the spontaneous, folksy, everyday character of a candidate. In this essay I will focus on the latter aspect.

Ordinariness in contemporary political and media culture

The context for this work is the series of observations and discussions that was started between a colleague and myself in Scandinavia in the mid 1990s. The working name for this continuous project is 'The State of the Ordinary' (Sw. 'Vanlighetens tillstånd'). We were (and still are) interested in the connections between media and politics and noticed, beginning in mid 1990s, how these realms converged in many ways, for instance in terms of their relations

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[3] *The New York Times*, February 27, 2004

to their audience, that is in terms of their pedagogy. Politicians started to be informal in addressing each other familiarly in the public sphere at approximately the same time when the tone and address in media developed increasingly in the direction of interactivity and audience participation. One of the consequences of the emergence of new forms of interactivity and participation in the media was a change in the way the interactors in the programs addressed each other. Also here informality and familiarity became the new norm for interaction. We started to think of 'ordinariness' as a communicative goal of informality effective both in media and in politics, which of course to a large degree takes place in the media, and we thought of how the reciprocal relations betweens these spheres of power and pedagogy more could be understood in terms of friendship and collegiality than (only) in terms of rivalry and opposition. Despite this tendency toward convergence there were of course also differences between them. The pedagogy of the media was regulated by the everyday habits of media consumption or use (or 'the market') and the pedagogy of politics was regulated by the institutionalized act of voting and of a politics that increasingly can be characterized as a 'politics of trust' (Thompson 1999), or a 'politics of recognition' (Silverstein 2003). What we and others have seen in this relatively recent development is a larger degree of interdependence between the realms of media and politics. The recognition of this development is nowadays undisputed in the field of interdisciplinary studies in communication and politics where the politics of representation is a central object (REF). The present essay is my continuation of our continuous collaborative work and should be seen as an addition to the accumulating body of work that bears our joint signatures.

In this work, as well as in our previous, I want to take everyday life, ordinariness and 'doing being ordinary' seriously as complex activities that are jointly accomplished by competent

actors in their social realm of action. Like Ben Highmore (2002:1), I want to question the 'ordinary', or what he calls everyday life 'as a problematic, a contested and opaque terrain, where meanings are not to be found ready made'. Whether these acts of 'being ordinary' or claiming 'everyday life' are fake or real, we will never know for sure, neither if they are expressions of a real and healthy popular sentiment, nor if it is an outcome of 'populism' or any other strategy of power for domination. Against the supposedly banal character of such a study of social action – the well known accusation of the 'triviality of the quotidian' comes to mind - I want to take it seriously, first by giving some illustrations of ordinariness in political life. With a background in ethnography and as being a student of ethnomethodology, I am forever sensitive to the intricacies of the taken for granted aspects of everyday life, and share with this perspective a fascination with the continuous accomplishment of mundane reason and ordinary life, not as something automatic or given, but as something tacitly agreed upon, something that we all contribute to accomplish in what Stanley Cavell calls the 'uncanniness of everyday life' or perhaps what Bertolt Brecht assumed with his 'theory of estrangement' in drama.

This study, however, is not primarily intended as an empirical study of ordinariness in media and political life, even if I write in the full awareness that these forms of communication in representation in contemporary political culture are inseparable: 'Journalists need access to public figures for their livelihood, while public figures need journalists to gain access to what Margaret Thatcher called 'the oxygen of publicity'' (Clayman & Heritage, 2002:29). The study is rather, secondly, a contribution to theorize the function and meaning of 'the ordinary' in political representation, not however, in the direction of identity politics, which of course is a most relevant operationalization of verisimilitude. I want to add to the analysis

of identity politics a move which is more general and also more vague; the appeal to the 'ordinary'. I will think 'the ordinary' with help from some selected readings in a broad field of social and cultural studies that draws on philosophy, sociology, anthropology and communication (media) studies. Perhaps this work can be thought of as something akin to what Michel de Certeau calls 'a philosophical politics of culture' (de Certeau 1984:13).[4]

The currency of the 'common touch'

What it means to be 'ordinary' have specific importance and functions in various cultures and situations. We will here focus on the situation in Scandinavia and the US, keeping in mind this cultural limitation, while also suggesting ways to theorize 'ordinariness' as a more general phenomenon. Perhaps it is safe to say that the attraction of 'ordinariness' have more currency in political contexts where the constitution allows for the public's recognition and representation, for instance, but not exclusively, in modern liberal democracies. Situations where 'ordinariness' might not be so valued include prehistoric political formations, for instance in Andean and Mayan South America, theocracies, dictatorships, military coups and other formations where the legitimacy of power is based on other criteria than verisimilitude with a group of people. Political formations with a relatively long history in democracy tend to favor the attractions of 'ordinariness', which is the case both in Scandinavia and in the US. In the US, Thomas Paine's pamphlet on the 'common sense' from 1776 became the symbol

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[4] It goes beyond the scope of this study to study all important theories leading up to an interest in the 'ordinary'. It needs to be stated, however, that such a more extended study would need to consider the philosophies of Bergson, Marx and Nietzsche, the psychoanalysis of Freud, the phenomenology of Husserl, the linguistics of de Saussure, and the sociology of Durkheim, Simmel and Weber, to name just a few. This process of tracing the 'ordinary' in important 19th and 20th century social and cultural theory is important but is not within reach in this present project.

of the age passing from traditional aristocratic rule to being replaced by liberal bourgeois values. As indicated in the previous section, being 'ordinary' is not the only thing a modern politician has to do. It might not even be the most important trait of character displayed in the repertoire of qualities and virtues that make up a political representative. But 'ordinariness' seems to be one such important and recurring element in the ways that a politician connects with his/her constituency, in rhetorical terms it could be thought of as a *topos*, a place for rhetorical return or a place for departure. To complicate more, 'ordinariness' means not only one thing, but its significance can shift among individuals and audiences in relation to whom a viable politician needs to be 'relatable ordinary' or 'specifically ordinary', and convincingly so.

Being 'ordinary' will in the context of political representation be comparable to the expression 'the common touch'. 'The common touch' is used in these contexts and others which include relationships with individuals and audiences (such as education, commerce, the media, etc.) to signify 'the ability to appeal to the interests and sensibilities of the ordinary person: '*an effective administrator and also an effective leader, with a common touch*' (*Christian Science Monitor)*'.[5] Having 'the common touch' is therefore an ability of a person to appeal to an ordinary person by appearing to have qualities in common with them, such as experiences, interests and sensibilities. It could be added that attempts at establishing 'the common touch' could be made but not necessarily with success. Whether or not 'the common touch' will succeed is determined by the outcome of the social interaction in which 'the common touch' is displayed, and certainly dependant on the judgments of those addressed by. It is also an empirical question that would need another kind of research design to even be approached. Thus, assessing the efficacy of the 'common touch' is out of

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[5] *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th Edition, 2000, emphasis in original.

reach of this study. A 'common touch' can, however well intended, be doomed as fake. Therefore an element of perceived authenticity is also an important aspect of what we mean by this notion. By the notion being 'ordinary' or searching for 'the common touch' we will refer to those rhetorical or communicative strategies that are used by politicians motivated by, among other things, a wish to 'appeal to the interests and sensibilities of the ordinary person' by appearing to have something in common with them.

In our previous work on 'The State of the Ordinary' we have used examples from Scandinavian, mainly Swedish politics since the mid 1990s. These examples will not be repeated here but let me just indicate the importance of being 'ordinary' in the context of 20th century Scandinavian politics. The background to understand the importance of the notion of the 'ordinary' is the vision of the SDP (Swedish Social Democratic Party) of the welfare state as an equal system of benefits and securities, based not on violent revolution but on democratic social reform. From the late 1920s this vision circled around the metaphor of the 'People's Home', which is central for the understanding of the formation of state and nation during the 20th century. The ideological foundation of this metaphor is the good sense of community and togetherness which allows people to be neither privileged nor repressed. In the ideal of the People's Home, no one is discriminating or attempting to acquire benefits on behalf of their peers. To quote the Secretary of State, Per-Albin Hansson in his famous speech to the Riksdag in January 1928, 'In the good home reside equality, care, cooperation and willingness to help'.[6] The vision of the People's Home has resonated with the ideology of social democracy which has dominated the Swedish governments of the 20th century. It is fair to say that one important outcome of this political and social ideology of

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[6] Per-Albin Hansson, January 29, 1928. (Sw. 'I det goda hemmet råder likhet, omtanke, samarbete, hjälpsamhet').

equality is the ideal of mutual adaptation and the imperative of conformity to others. On the level of political communication, it has therefore been important for the leaders of the social democratic party, in their role as Secretaries of State, to display this attitude as one of their qualities. In the name of social equality and democracy, conformity to the ideal of being one among others in the People's Home has been important. This was probably one of the reasons why Secretary of State Olof Palme in March 1986 chose to go to the movies with his wife, unaccompanied by the security guards. This was maybe also one of the reasons why Foreign Minister Anna Lindh, in September 2003, wanted to go shopping with her friend during a lunch break, unaccompanied by security guards. Being 'ordinary' is sometimes just too challenging for a person in high office, and both had to pay with their lives. In our previous work, we have focused on the political communication of Mona Sahlin, who skillfully epitomized the communicative and political ideal of being 'ordinary'. She stepped forward in the public sphere informally as 'Mona' and won wide recognition for her plain speaking style and straightforward frankness. Her practice of talking politics with metaphors taken from the sphere of the home was just a contemporary update on the vision of the People's Home and was described as her virtuous 'ordinariness'. Addressing the constituency of young families and especially young mothers, she became easily 'relatable', as the casting strategists in Burbank might put it. In Sweden there is thus a long tradition of being 'ordinary' among politicians, especially so among social democrats. Increasingly this has become the case following the development of the forms of interactivity and participation in the media, a process in which also politicians from other parties have been challenged on their 'ordinariness'.

Let us continue with some examples taken from the Democratic Party's presidential campaign in the US during Winter and Spring of 2004. Governor Howard Dean was long regarded as a favorite, not the least in terms of his popular appeal and easygoing style. All seemed to be going well until his aim for 'the common touch' perhaps exceeded and misfired in his Iowa caucus speech, thereafter called 'I have a scream' and subsequently Dean was more often called 'unpresidential' than being praised for his coaching style 'bubba'-qualities. Senator John Edwards often claimed an 'up from the bootstraps'-biography. He grew up in a Carolina textile town, son of a mill worker, with experiences of job losses, hardships, headaches and broken spirits of those whom global outsourcing left behind. He had an affable style with the melodious southern dialect. He often tells the story of his family's hardships, giving the example of his father having to borrow money in order to get John and his mother out of the hospital after maternity. This is how Edwards can be perceived at a political meeting, through the eyes of a journalist.

> With only minor fanfare, John Edwards enters, walks up to the stage and blows out the candles. Then he descends into the crowd. He wears gray slacks, a blue and gold tie, and a light blue Oxford. It's called the common touch (Chris Haire, *Metrobeat* June 17, 2003)

Being 'ordinary' or searching for 'the common touch' is no guarantee for election or promotion in politics. Despite these qualities, along with others, Edwards dropped out of the race by an announcement at the Broughton High School in Raleigh, North Carolina in early March 2004.

> Thank you all so much for being here. I have never loved my country more than I do today. You know, the truth is, all my life, America has smiled at me and today I am smiling right back!

> More than anything, I love the American people. The people I have listened to; the people I have embraced, the people who made me laugh, inspired me, inspired you. People who made me think. People who have made me reach.

And today, I see their faces. I see the faces of the men and women who worked in the mill in Robbins, North Carolina-the mill my father worked in, the mill I worked in. I can picture their faces as clear as they are in front of me right now, lint in their hair an grease on their faces, men and women who represent the best of what America is.

They went to work day after day, decade after decade in the mill because they believed that if they worked hard and did what was right, they could build a better life for themselves and their families.

I see the faces of the workers at Tower Automotive in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They are wondering where do they go after the doors to their factory close? What do they do? Have they not done the right things in America? Have they not worked hard, been responsible, raised their kids? Where do they go now and will they have a president and an administration who understands their lives and who will stand up for them?

I see the faces of the young men and women that I met in Afghanistan, at night. They are proud of their country, proud of serving their country, but worried about their families back home. They are worried about what would happen when they went back.

I see the men and women at Page Belting in Concord, New Hampshire who wonder if anyone understands the struggles that they face and most Americans face every day in their lives.

And I also see the earnest, young, wise faces from central high school in Des Moines to Pomona College in California. Young people, looking desperately for inspiration-looking for someone who will lift them up, make them believe again that in our America, with their help, with their energy, and their enthusiasm, everything is possible.

Most of all I see all these faces, turning from skepticism and despair to inspiration and hope, because they believe in this country. They believe in themselves and they know that you and I together are going to change this country, and build one America that works for all of us.

It has been my greatest honor to have walked with you. From the beginning, this has never been my campaign. This has been your campaign. And I am blessed to have been a part of it. And I'm also blessed to be back here at Broughton High School with so many friends and family, members of my community.

Today I've decided to suspend my campaign for the presidency of the United States.

ANALYSIS OF SOME ASPECTS OF THE SPEECH

Edwards hired political consultants Steve Jarding and Mudcat Saunders for his campaign, following their previous successes with politicians such as Virginia Governor Mark Warner who wanted to 'go rural' in their districts. The campaign addressing rural voters often features a bluegrass band, a race truck and their very own hunting brigade. Edwards had his

name on a NASCAR-vehicle on the advice of the rural strategists and 'bubba coordinators':

'to rural voters, an appreciation for stock car racing, hunting and bluegrass is a critical show

of faith – and it has to precede any serious discussion of Social Security or tax cuts.' (Bai

2002:97).

In the campaign for the democratic candidacy John Kerry has come out on top, despite (or

because of?) his elitist background in a Boston Brahmin family, complete with the patrician

upbringing and private schools. Kerry has been portrayed as being professional, smart and

cerebral, but also equipped with an emotional distance that does not really loosen up even if

he skips the tie to his suit. He looks serious and perhaps even stern and do not smile as

easily as Dean or Edwards. After the Iowa caucuses, he needed to loosen up even more,

according to political commentators and strategists, he needed to 'borrow[ing] Edward's[s]

common touch' (Halbfinger 2004).

> To bolster his credibility with the working class, Mr. Kerry is trying everything:
> touring deserted mills and still-bustling ones, talking about the plight of struggling
> mill and factory workers, campaigning with them at his side, exchanging hugs with
> tearful laborers, and assuring the countless union members whose bosses are now
> backing him that he will fight to keep their jobs from disappearing overseas. On
> Thursday he campaigned at the side of striking California grocery workers. (---) Mr.
> Kerry's moments with such workers at times seems forced, and almost always clearly
> delineated. Typically he steps out of his dress shoes and into duck boots, throws a
> barn coat over his suit, and slips into a dialect heavy on 'Hey, man' accompanied by
> shoulderclasps. (ibid)

This is the *New York Times*-article where Kerry is shown on a photograph bowling with

oranges in the airplane aisle. Kerry is trying to do what Edwards did with some familiarity

and ease; visit the mill and factory workers, standing by their side, sharing their problems,

siding with them in values and visions. 'Borrowing Edward's common touch' means to get

past 'the Chardonnay, Brie and quiche set' (Silverstein 2003:80), beyond the stereotype of

Democrats in rural America, and beyond the portrayal of them as don't liking guns, don't

praying and don't believing in Christ. Borrowing 'the common touch' might be not only hugging, siding and fraternizing, but might also tilt the agenda. Like what the politician running for Congress in central Tennessee said: 'Nobody in this campaign is going to outgun me, outpray me or outfamily me' (Bai 2002:..). Kerry has not gone that far yet, but he has been seen riding a Harley Davidson into the studio of Tonight Show, he has been pheasant hunting in Iowa and has played ice hockey with the Boston Bruins.

The search for 'the common touch' is not just a contemporary phenomenon. Perhaps one of the best examples in the US is President Jimmy Carter who ran for office on the promise 'I will never lie' against the backwaters of Watergate. His common touch was based both on the fact that he was a southern peanut-farmer and the fact that he sided with the general disapproval of the transgressions of the former president. Going back in history there are plenty of other examples. Michael Silverstein (2003) focuses in this regard on Abraham Lincoln, although a Republican, also a man with an ordinary outlook: 'the true American voice (---) a sacred voice of civic plain-spokenness, inspired with Christian reason and able to articulate with conviction what is right and what is wrong in the world around it' (ibid, 30). Democrats certainly do not have an exclusive mandate on 'the common touch'. Silverstein shows this with regard to Republican Presidents such as Lincoln but also with regard to President George W. Bush. We will return to Silverstein's account of Bush below, but let us here just indicate that the current President also displays these psychological traits, coming across with what is described as an appeal that is emotionally direct, appearing to be a regular guy despite his elitist background in a Texas dynasty, complete with the neo-patrician upbringing and private schools.

When we talk about 'ordinariness' and 'the common touch' among politicians in this context, this should not be understood neither as normative, nor as evaluative processes. Focusing on this aspect of the character of a politician is therefore not based on the suggestion that this is what politicians should do (instead of something else), neither is this the basis for evaluating the concrete performance of particular politicians. Even more cautiously, it is not even a statement of the ultimate decisiveness of these strategies in a political climate where the aim of spin (showing the best face of everything) seems to be the superior mode of accommodation to an increasingly marketized public sphere. We will not here link the analysis of 'ordinariness' to the outcome of political campaigning, more than at a most general level. But we might suggest that the awareness of the importance of 'the common touch' can be an indication of a communicative problem within the sphere of politics. Some remarks at this general level may be qualified, however. Middle class voters seem to be more attracted to the politics of the ordinary than working class voters. This remark might be understood as paradoxical. Theoretically the democratic message, perhaps based partly on the politics of the ordinary, should play well in poor regions when economy declines and the jobless people are juxtaposed to the excesses of corporate leadership. But this is not the case. The 'red state strategy' among the 'blue-state party' has not been successful so far (Bai 2002; Frank 2004).

It has been suggested that the Democrats are facing a cultural problem, and that the Republicans have partially overcome this problem. The Democrats have been associated with the elite and 'in league with effete urban liberals' (Bai, 2002), disconnected from the people in the rural areas. This interpretation of a cultural divide – 'the Chardonnay, Brie and quiche set' (Silverstein, 2003:80) vs. the 'Nascar-Lovin', Moon-Pie Eatin', Bluegrass-Listenin', Shotgun-Totin'' (Bai, 2002) - in the party is of course an interpretation of an

internal institutional estrangement that is not totally shared by party strategists. With or without the empirical accuracy of such accounts, the politics of the ordinary seems to be a strategy for political communication that is used among Democrats as well as among Republicans and it is well worth analyzing.

Following these introductory remarks concerning the presence of 'ordinariness' in contemporary political culture, we will explore the possible assumptions and meanings in the claim of being 'ordinary'. Thereafter we will make a selective inventory of various ways of thinking and theorizing the 'ordinary' in the fields of political communication, political theory, philosophy and social and cultural theory. Finally the theoretical discussions and the empirical illustrations will be brought together in a section that works as a tentative conclusion where five dimensions are focused which all carries the paradoxes and tensions characteristic of being 'ordinary'. In this study I am questioning the 'ordinary' by exploring this rather opaque phenomenon in a wide variety of theoretical contexts. It is not done in order to suggest a normative agenda for 'ordinariness' as the only way ahead for political communication.

1. WHAT POSSIBLE ASSUMPTIONS AND MEANINGS ARE MADE IN THE CLAIMS OF BEING 'ORDINARY'?

What does it mean to search for 'the common touch'? What assumptions about self, others and society, and their respective interactions are made or suggested when a politician claims to be 'ordinary'? Such questions could be answered in many ways, for instance by empirical methods using an audience reception design, by making interviews with interacting parties, or by distributing questionnaires directed at describing the individual's understanding of communicative moves. In this section we will, by means of an interpretation based on reading, approach an inventory of the possible assumptions and meanings associated with the claims of being ordinary. We will for the moment methodologically bracket the relation between the specific discursive form of the search for 'the common touch' – some concrete formal indications of this were given in the previous section – and its interactive accomplishment, intention or content in terms of establishing rapport with a particular audience. In this section we will focus on an aspect of the 'ordinary' which is perhaps less empirically sophisticated, more idealized and exploratory: the possible intention, content and meaning suggested by these rhetorical moves. In awareness of the pitfalls of the intentional fallacy and other methodological obstacles, we will not aspire to secure these interpretations as genuinely authentic. In contrast they will be motivated by the will to explore the semantic landscapes, the *topoi*, suggested by the search for 'the common touch'. This inventory will not be comprehensive but will suggest four primary areas of importance where the claims of the 'ordinary' seem to operate. These four interdependent areas are analytically grouped

around the following concepts: (a) communication, (b) experience, (c) identification and (d) legitimacy.[7]

(a) Communication

Being 'ordinary' or searching for 'the common touch' includes assumptions about communication. These communicative moves are based on the premises that there is a direct access in communicative terms, linking the speaker immediately with his/her audience. To search for 'the common touch' is an action made directly, here and now, without delay. This immediacy could be thought of as being based in a working theory of communication emphasizing transparency. Such tacit theories are not at all unusual in communication, in fact it could even be hypothesized that they constitute the default theory of communication at work in a wide variety of concrete communicative events, among which political representation is only one genre. Maybe the specificity of transparency in this context becomes more distinctive if we think the other way around: would 'the common touch' work if it was based on a theory of communication emphasizing all sorts of complications in the communicative process? This question would be answered negatively, thus indicating that a tacit approval of a theory of transparent communication is a necessary backdrop for the search for 'the common touch'.

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[7] In a more rigorous analysis merging phenomenology, heideggerian existentialism and marxism, Agnes Heller (1984), outlines six general schemes of conduct and knowledge (or 'modalities of subsumption') in everyday life. In these six categories, she wants to 'penetrate into the most generalized schemata characteristic of the appropriation of everyday life' (ibid:165), i.e. the interest is similar to that of ours, namely to indicate what forms of appropriations of everyday life is made in the claims of having access to this 'species-essential objectivations 'in itself''. The five categories are: pragmatism; probability; imitation; analogy; over-generalization; the rough treatment of the singular case (ibid:166-182).

This immediacy is also ethically motivated. Transparency and directness in communication is related to assumptions about the communication as a truthful and authentic interactional activity.

The search for 'the common touch' presupposes presence and embodiment of the speaker as its additional communicative underpinnings. Being 'ordinary' is not only a topic or proposition made in a mode using expository language. The presence of the speaker and his/her embodiment invites many other forms of meaningful activities, those related to the language in its non-expository aspects and those suggested by the physical performance and timing of a speaker in a particular context.

(b) Experience

Being 'ordinary' entails the suggestion that the speaker and his/her audience share a set of experiences. These experiences are treated as fundamentally decisive for the 'common' sense of subjectivity and community. The concrete experiences can be extremely variable, from a description of, paradigmatically so, often rough socio-economic living conditions, to the joint recollection of more abstract, yet vivid, memories, visions and values. The 'ordinary' is therefore importantly localized in these common experiences, or an appeal to what these are constituted by. Searching for 'the common touch' signifies the 'ability to appeal to the interests and sensibilities of the ordinary person'. Perhaps we can see here that being 'ordinary' is a step further in this direction of identification (see below) with an experience ('I am one of you'), and that the search for 'the common touch' is an appeal to 'tap' into this experience, while not necessarily claiming to be a genuine part of it. These two notions, here used relatively exchangeable, therefore might be distinguished in terms of the claims of the

degree of actual experience and authenticity where being 'ordinary' provides the most radical alternative.

What specifically these common experiences are constituted by, is conditioned on the character both of the stability and contingency of these experiences. On the one hand, these experiences are stable, they are always there; they do not change. This, in a way, is a reiteration of the condition that the experiences are constitutive for the individual and his/her sense of community. The stability of the constitutive experience is also such, that is cannot be disregarded and it is displayed as 'undisregardable'. Potential violations to the authenticity and relevance of this experience can therefore be treated as ethical transgressions. It is so foundational that it proves to be perhaps the most characteristic aspect of this sense of individuality and community. On the other hand, these experiences proves to be relatively elastic, they can be interpreted so as to accommodate to particular contexts. An indication of this is that the experience of the common can be adapted to new problem areas in the domain of politics. In particular this is so from the perspective of the speaker, who is using the appeal to the common as a communicative move in his/her representation in relation to different audiences. This is not always the case. Varying permanence and elasticity applies and shifts with personalities, rhetorical styles and strategies. Certainly there are limits for this variability. The politician can be tough, but he/she can also be loving and ordinary. Just like you and me. The rhetorical effect is not one of indeterminacy, but of some kind of security and trust in a character's psychology. The specific content of 'we know what you are talking about!' can therefore be shifting.

The common experience and the experience of the common are, as we have noted, constitutive and relatively stable. It is always there. The condition of being 'always there' proliferate a perpetual access to this experience; it can always be retrieved and called upon. It

can always be accessed and used as groundwork for those who are authorized to be part of it. It is cultivated and sometimes ritualized. This authorization of an authentic experience and its perpetual access is an important aspect of the meaning of searching for 'the common touch'.

Being 'ordinary' prioritizes self-experience and self-expression; I have been there, I have done that, I have seen that, I know what it is like. It compares to the experience in the anthropology of making fieldwork, or in travel writing or reportage of 'having been there'. While being constitutive it is also a kind of retrospective trophy, embodied by the person, an experience that can be displayed in front of others. This cannot be done convincingly by somebody who lacks this experience or, also less persuasively, on behalf of somebody else. It must be done by the one who makes the claim. The self who expresses his/her share of this experience uses this as a source of experiential energy to be drawn upon.

Experiences are also fundamental to a theory of what is real. What people have in common is, in the search for 'the common touch', what is real or 'what really is'. The common experience offers a standard of reality, a baseline for future adventures, an image of reality which is most 'real'. Claiming to be 'ordinary' is therefore synonymous to the epistemological and ontological claims to knowing what reality is, the reality that conditions people's lives. This is perhaps not the most ideal reality, it can potentially contain a mix of individual virtues and community values on the one hand, and shared experiences of suffering and hardships on the other. There is thus an affinity between the 'ordinary' and the real in the sphere of political representation, that parallels a development in the media, science, therapy and other realms of cultural negotiation.

(c) Identification

'I know who you are' and 'I am one of you' are some of the assumptions concerning

identity that takes place. Being 'ordinary' is a claim to be like people are most generally, it is

an identity politics that is generalized to a larger group (humanity, mankind) or that

emphasizes a specific aspect of this group (commonality, non-specificness, ordinariness).

This operates to place, or intend to place, the speaker in a position pitched on the same level

as those who are addressed. This person is thereby not an exception, not different and not

alien in relation to what could be characterized as core values. Identification with a group

carries the intention of the speaker not only to be part of the group but also to be a

competent representative of the group. Identification therefore works as a form of

authorization to speak on behalf of the group and, of course, this is primarily what political

representation is about.

Identification along with a joint experience (and the trust of a transparent and truthful

communication) also supports the promises of the continuity of identification. This is

obviously not necessarily a concrete outcome, but it works at this level as an implicit promise

that the processes of verisimilitude will actually not be discontinued. The promises or the

prospects of continuity make identification not only into the sharing of memory, but into a

reliable trajectory into the future.

The processes of identification in being 'ordinary' subsume presuppositions concerning

others. First it embraces assumptions of how others are, i.e. claims to know what

characterizes people and how they are which belong to the category of the common. These

important assumptions of others are, so to say, contained in the claim to be one of you. The

minimal version of this claim might not even be qualified, but could be reduced just to such

a claim of verisimilitude and may, despite its restricted character, anyway be functional.

Those who are the others are those who are being addressed, so there is also a performative

aspect to the charge of this claim. This identification of others glosses over what might be individual differences and relative inconsistencies, and directs the attention to that which is common. This underestimation of the rich variety of individual and biographical variation in the experiences of the ordinary is deliberately made in order to achieve the goal of commonality. Again, in the context of a performance, the power of this fixation of identity on a general level may reduce the subtleties of individual differences.

Secondly, postulates on the resemblances of the others also bear hypotheses of those who do not belong to the group of the common. It can signify, for instance, that others (e.g. politicians, voters, people in general) who do not make this specific claims, therefore do not have access to the experience of once having been and still being ordinary. The assumption is that they are (still) in a state of not knowing these important things about reality. They are in a sense extraordinary and thus not representative for the body politic. In the context of political representation this works in many ways, for example to distinguish oneself from politicians that are known for their corrupt or partial tendencies. This kind of narrative used to have a great momentum in the fresh memory of the labor movements and their experience of class motivated exploitation. Disqualifying others on the basis of (dis-)identification means that 'I am not one of them'. In contrast, someone can be accused for not being 'ordinary enough', as if there were fake and real varieties around, or levels of satiety not thoroughly reached. The critique of being 'ordinary' can be geared at those who are regarded to be fake ('populists'), ridiculing their false pretensions or disregarding them at all from the more elitist perspective where 'ordinariness' lacks value, or where it even carries negative value. A public contest for 'ordinariness' can effectuate the adversaries making the claim of being 'more ordinary' than you.

Finally, the identification is importantly both a subjective and a collective phenomenon. It is something that is lived by an individual subject as being part of larger group that share a similar story. It is common, and therefore shared, but based on what a specific individual have been through. The collective experience is, so to say, engraved or embodied in the subject so that his or her share of the common whole is emblematic of a more collective event.

(d) Legitimacy

Identification with a group targets the speaker's yearning to be a legitimate representative. Being 'ordinary' provides, among other rhetorical resources, one such important point of departure for making this legitimacy into a viable claim of legitimacy. If this works or not is of course an empirical question. Claims such as 'I am one of you' and 'I am not different' supplies this will with a point of identification which simultaneously needs to be authenticated and authorized. Legitimacy is provided by these processes of verification and endorsement, and the prospect for a politician is that these processes will be mirrored by the electoral choices.

The suggestion of being 'ordinary' comprises an ambition to be taken as a viable representative of a group, thereby being able to speak on behalf of the group and to interpret the common experience in relation to the changing agenda of political issues. The moment of a elected representative moving 'away' and 'up' can be taken as a threat – the politician want to secure a trust, or at least trying to do so, so that he/she still is 'one of us'. The potential prospect of being elected is the goal, but it is also a potential threat to the very relationship that has been established. A way of attempting to secure this relationship, or at least give it a good start, is what this process of legitimacy wants to secure.

SUMMARY OF THIS SECTION

2. THEORIZING THE 'ORDINARY'

In the previous sections we have faced some examples of being 'ordinary' in contemporary political representation, demonstrating its manifestation in the parlance and strategies of politicians. We have also tried, from a relatively detached methodological perspective, to identify and interpret what this search for 'the common touch' could signify when it is used in the context of political communication. We have suggested that being 'ordinary' can be described in four interdependent dimensions: communication, experience, identification and legitimacy. These dimensions converge into one another and works concurrently to produce the assumptions and meanings of being 'ordinary'. This provisional inventory is far from exhaustive and needs to be related to theories to be further explored. In this section we will engage with theory to explore additional connotations and interpretations of being 'ordinary'. This theoretical engagement will be approached through a choice of four areas of research considered relevant for this venture: (a) political communication; (b) political theory; (c) philosophy; (d) social and cultural theory.

It is well accepted that the personal character of a politician is an important feature of political representation (Gronbeck, 1997:136). This is not the only feature of a politician that is important, however. Qualities such as competence, leadership, will and determination are often ranked higher. The link between these qualities and what constitutes character is blurred. Scholars of political campaigning conceive the centrality of personal character in the 'packaging' of politicians (Hall Jamieson, 1984) and those who study political communication such as in news interviews emphasize the important link between the formation of a public image and the distinctive ways that they play the game in the speech exchange system called the news interview (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). This is not something new in history of political communication, but it is certainly emphasized by contemporary media practices in a way that was not possible in the time of, let us say, Pericles (Thompson, 1999). In the media age it is impossible to observe and interpret politics without acknowledging the interdependency of politics and the media (Hart 1994). Information and entertainment have been at the core of the profession of journalism since its inception (Thompson, 1999). Voters and constituencies, as well as the politicians and their strategists might rank the 'serious' expository content ('issues') of communicative acts as the most important aspect operative in political representation, but features of character are there to emphasize and persuade by indexical or non-expository means (Silverstein 2003). There are critics who consider that the focus on personal character, psychology and image making threatens to reduce politics to a Burbank-spectacle. In response to any such question that might violate the expository character of rational political representation, these critics claim that politics should focus on content and competence, not on appearances. These

critics are found both in the academy and in society at large and they are struggling for the avowal of rationality in exposition and procedural deliberation as the most important dimensions of political representation. The media and politics conglomerate tells a different story. The predominance of consultants and strategists in the market of political communication emphasizes the weight given to the formulation of political discourse on a par with advertising, marketing and impression management at large (Palmer, 2000). Contemporary politicians have to be versatile when it comes to stage character (e.g. being tough; being 'ordinary'; etc.) and it is usually not enough with a limited psychological repertoire for the fear of being labeled as boring or 'unrelatable', to quote Burbank again. But there must be a balance in the staging of character; the maverick will soon be domesticated; the 'unrelatable' bore might expose unexpected inner peace. Anyway, they have to be able to address all kinds of people, interests and groups. In a variety of ways. Without being indecisive. The political strategies are driven by images (REF). The celebrity character of politics and politicians result in a very detailed monitoring of their every move, and especially so when it comes to the level of the presidency (Gronbeck, 1997). Following the media coverage, it is very hard to tell when the politicians are 'working as representatives' or when they are relaxing from being the representative. There is always an opportunity to interpret acts in privacy or even intimacy as political acts, and this is just one of the indications of the systematic breakdown of the private and public dimensions (Habermas, 1989; Thompson, 1999). Contemporary politicians in high profile positions are persons in focus of a permanent media monitoring; they have to be aware that virtually everything they do or say will be potential objects of political interpretation. Before the era of television, public oratory was an important asset to a politician. Today's emphasis on 'being good on television' is a necessary skill and orientation that any politician must master (Clayman &

Heritage, 2002:341). Whatever they do can be used by the intense monitoring in order to continuously portray their character. Anything that deviates from the expectations of that pattern is especially befitting to attack as a 'sign' of something else, a sign of novelty, perhaps a scandal or a 'darker' side of the personality. The adversary attributes of 'dirty politics' certainly contributes to emphasize this search for scandalous properties in the secret lives of politicians.

At the onset of this study we implied that a politician, e.g. the current presidential candidates, have to show many properties of their character; toughness, war experience, masculinity, leadership, managerial qualities, etc. They also have to be competent, smart and knowledgeable, if not learned. They also have to be like people are most generally. They have to be 'themselves'.

Understanding the status of the 'ordinary' in political communication has proliferated in various interpretations and touches also on the concerns of political theory more generally (see below). At the most obvious level, being 'ordinary' has been clarified as an attempt to connect with the constitutional requirements of a base of constituency necessary for representation. This aspect of the primary goal of political representation is quite apparent. Another rationale behind being 'ordinary' is the description of an increasing complexity of contemporary politics soliciting the upsurge of connections with the audience/constituency (Gronbeck, 1997). This might be understood as a continuous improvement in the political pedagogy in order to cope with increasing specialization and professionalization of the political mission. This narrative suggests that politics used to be simpler. With the increasing complexities of economy, technology, distribution and globalization, this simplicity is lost. Being 'ordinary' in this context of professional enlargement and compartmentalization of

politics, amounts to an appeal to the nostalgic return to a time when politics used to be more straightforward and accessible also for 'ordinary' people. Being 'ordinary' and 'the common touch' offers politics as it used to be or proposes a remedy by the politician posing as a candidate to accommodate the realities of politics for 'ordinary' people with an ability to match its burgeoning intricacies. Being 'ordinary' might be a response to this same development, but in a slightly different way. Observing a decline in interest in formal politics might be linked to a growing divide between people and the modern political institutions, their civil servants and representatives. But this development might also be an expression of the changing face of politics in the direction of what Giddens terms 'life politics' in contrast to 'emancipatory politics' (Giddens 1991). 'Life politics' is about enhancing the autonomy of action in a de-traditionalized world where the vital questions of how we should live needs to be negotiated and decided upon. The development of life politics is based not in formal politics or in traditional forms of political participation, despite the attempts by traditional organizations to lure the people back, but in expressions of civic culture, citizenship culture, including extra-parliamentary action, activism, social movements, NIMBYs, flash mobs, internet networks, and other temporary constellations rather than long term engagements. What forms us as citizens today have connection to our life styles and our everyday life. It is not just a shift in values, but a systematic loosening of the patterns and structures of values (Dahlgren, 19xx). 'Life politics' is stimulated by larger social and cultural processes such as de-traditionalization, intimization and globalization (Giddens, 1991) but also by the proliferation of feminist political theory with its insistence upon equity and 'the personal is political'. Changes in the understanding of what is political endorse a shift in the assessment of the state of the 'ordinary'. If 'personal is political' not only in political theory but also in its practical implementation, this will affect the way that political representation take place

(Young, 1990). Finally, we can interpret a change in political representation from class based politics to a politics of trust (Thompson, 1999). MORE ON THIS

From the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA), the larger communicative changes have been analyzed in relation to broader social and political transformations in late modernity. The transformation of public discourse has corresponded to mainly two processes: conversationalization and marketization (Fairclough 1992). The former process refers to the tendency of breaking down the formal ways of communicating in public life at large, in media and in the institutions of the welfare state, in corresponding to a shift from formal ways of talk and address to more informal ways. This development can, on the one hand, be described as an increasing democratization of public discourse and, on the other, as a kind of pseudo-democratization of political discourse and a response to the professionalization of power and an attempt at a discursive level to cope with a growing divide between people and representatives. The second process, marketization, refers to the increasing influence on marketing strategies and commercially motivated advertising in the public discourse, resulting in, among many other things, an accomodation of public discourse to the logics and addresses of the market: the audience become customers; the voter make choices on a market; the goods of the welfare state are regarded as equivalent to sellable products, etc. The 'ordinary' can readily be understood in relation to the development of public discourse described by CDA. 'Ordinariness' can clearly be seen as an aspect of conversationalization, where not only the mode and form of public discourse changes, but also the normative ideals and the role models of the perfect enactment of this discourse. There has been a major reduction in the social distance between actors in the media, politicians and journalists, and this has also affected the audience (Clayman &

Heritage, 2002:339). Being 'ordinary' can therefore be regarded as a way of appealing to this process and an attempt at inhabiting the normative ideal characteristic of conversationalization, epitomized by the 'ordinary' person and his/her communicative and psychological qualities. The 'ordinary' is never exhaustively defined, but exhibits both descriptive and normative properties that are somewhat malleable. It is the skillful blend of the connotations energized by these properties that constitutes the appeal of the 'ordinary'. Also in relation to the other major process described by CDA, 'ordinariness' is conforming. The marketization of public discourse carries, among other things, assumptions about the subject positions of the interactors and the rationale for their interaction. People are treated like customers in any setting, even if these settings used to be motivated by an approach more akin to a client-based relation. In any of these settings the subject positions available for people are reminiscent to the subject positions that dominate commercial activity, mainly an understanding of people from the standard of the rational man chronicled in economic rational choice theory. 'Ordinariness' in political life can be seen as a way of approaching the audience of voters, where they are treated more like customers who will make a choice. Choosing and election are not new phenomena, neither the service minded attitude of the political marketer. The importance of being 'ordinary' can best be seen in relation to the importance of being many other things as well (cf. above), where the politician have to navigate the socio-demographic landscape in a customer oriented fashion. The importance of 'the common touch' is therefore fitting with both of these processes described by CDA.

In the remains of this first part of the theoretical section, we will focus on some contributions to the field of political communication from the perspective of linguistic anthropology, in order to elucidate the possible meanings of being 'ordinary' (Duranti, 2001:

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Silverstein, 2003). In an ethnographically informed discourse analysis, Alessandro Duranti (2001) orients the analysis of political communication from its more general intersubjective foundations. The foundation for any kind of communicative event, he states, is that it is co-constructed where the producer always takes the addressee into consideration as a co-author and where the audience can change the way of speaking by the principal actor. This is not to say that all communication is either pedagogic or successful. So called 'recipient-designs' can be totally misleading or erroneous, but the orientation to the intersubjective dimensions is always present. Duranti sets out to document how a speaker is addressing different audiences with roughly the same goal by following a democratic Santa Barbara-candidate, Walter Capps, during his campaign for Congress in 1995. By following the politician, the goal is to analyze the different ways in which the audiences are addressed and, in particular to see how the different audiences participate in the co-construction of the speech. This form of analysis can also indicate what kind of understanding a speaker have about the audience and an assessment of their knowledge and awareness. Variations on a theme across speech events, according to Duranti, are relatively rare occurrences in empirically oriented discourse analysis, where repetition within the same conversation or genre is more standard. The longitudinal data provided for by the ethnography of political campaigning contain several promises in terms of the analysis of concrete performance: 'This type of variation not only gives us a sense of how speakers adapt or 'design' their speech for particular audiences, it also gives us a glimpse of the role played by members of the audience in shaping the form and content of a person's talk' (ibid:115). The politician needs to balance the intersubjective realm by trying to win the favor of the widest range of people while also controlling one's goals afforded by the political agenda and the expectations of a coherent self. This intersubjective balancing is one outcome of the co-constructed authorship. Designing a

political speech implies understanding the needs of the audience, activating situationally

significant frames, 'recipient design', knowledge and sensitivity to specific interlocutors, and

sensitivity to the audience in concrete performances. The Santa Barbara-politician and

former university professor that was monitored in the ethnographic study was constantly

engaged in predicting and assessing audience responses. This active engagement was partly

an outcome of a professional career as a teacher, but it was also an outcome of an intention

to apply a similar engagement in the context of politics. More concretely, the politician

explicitly draws on his and the audiences shared background as a resource in his talk, for

instance in this excerpt[8] from his talk in Paso Robles in November 1995:

> … but the second announcement is just as important … and that is we- that- we will win this time, we will win this time … and how do- how do- I know that? How do I know we're gonna win? Well you know, I can see it in your faces I mean and- and- and I- and I mean that totally because- because … uh, Lois [his wife] and I … have lived here, in fact the first time we came here in – August of 1964, we stayed across the street. (ibid:123-4).

He tells the story of how they moved to Santa Barbara, carrying a trailer and how all the

children in the family were born in the district and later went to school there.

> We've been here all this time … we've lived here all these years, we know the people ... of the twenty-second district (…) uh so what I am suggesting is … not only suggesting I know this to be the case; that I represent … majority opinion in the twenty-second district I mean, I know what people in the twenty-second district believe in because these are our people … you are- … the people with whom we've lived our lives (ibid:124)

In this excerpt, Capps recounts a story of his and his family's belongingness at the place.

This belonging is suggested by him as a viable and legitimate ground for being a

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[8] The excerpt is simplified in comparison to the relatively detailed transcription conventions in the original text. Audience turns are omitted and the transcription conventions are standardized.

representative. Since he knows the people, the argument goes, and since he is one of the people, he also knows what they believe in. In the story his own biography is merged with that of the community, the individual 'I' merges with the collective 'you' and becomes a community of 'us'.

The object of the analysis by Duranti is not primarily to examine the properties of 'ordinariness' in the politician's speech per se, but more oriented to document the co-constructed character of speech with the help of jokes, laughter and the subtle shifting by the speaker in accomodating to his understanding of the audience's interpretations. He points, however, to this particular story (cf. above) as a personal 'narrative of belonging' which 'is constructed to create a sense of solidarity and trust through the recounting of Capps' life in California' (ibid). The narrative of belonging is clearly an important and recurring part of Capps' political speeches during the campaign, and the article show several examples of the shifting character of this narrative in relation to different audiences uptakes. For our present analytical purposes, the narrative of belonging can be understood as an orientation of a politician to be 'ordinary' or to search for 'the common touch'. The examples show that being 'ordinary' can take the form of a narrative, that it is a salient part of a political campaign speech and describes in detail how this is done in concrete performances.

In order to be engaged in this way with an audience, it is not only sufficient to have a good script that is delivered to various groups. The politician also needs to work at designing his speech for the particular audience addressed. There is a struggle going on between 'the speakers voices' and 'the audiences' voice': 'Above all, this struggle over the right balance between pleasing others and asserting oneself reminds us of the centrality of morality in the construction of human agency through talk' (ibid:132). Duranti's contribution to the analysis

of political discourse across communicative events do not explicitly address the issue of 'ordinariness' per se, but appeals indirectly to this through its emphasis on the moral underpinning of human agency. The ability to adaptation to audiences by politicians is well documented in other genres, such as in the media and current political commentary, but it is rarely analyzed at this level of detail. The analysis shows that it is not only a matter of a speaker's adaptation - perhaps emphatically so in this case where the speaker is significantly willing to adapt – but also of a speaker's adaptation to the contributions by an audience. The analysis also shows in what ways the audience actually contributes (by laughing, applauding, intervening, approval and support at predictable moments, disapproval and resistance at predictable moments, etc.). The balancing of the respective needs and expectations of speaker and audience is an aspect of the construction of human agency through talk. 'Ordinariness' is perhaps one of the labels that could be given to this process of negotiation and mutual mitigation between a speaker and his/her audience. MORE ON THIS?

In a somewhat different approach to linguistic anthropology and with an analysis blending rhetorical analysis with sociolinguistics, Michael Silverstein (2003), aims to portray the two extremes of 'the political alphabet' in the USA, *Talking Politics. The Substance of Style form Abe to W'.*[9] With an eye both for contrasts and similarities, he juxtaposes two Republican Presidents, Abraham Lincoln and in particular his 'dedicatory remarks' in the 'Gettysburg address' vs. a selection of random quotes from George W. Bush.

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[9] It needs to be noted that Silverstein's book is part of a series, The Prickly Paradigm Press, marketed and distributed by The University of Chicago Press which, according to the executive publisher, Marshall Sahlins: 'aims to follow their lead in publishing challenging and sometimes outrageous pamphlets, not only on anthropology, but on other academic disciplines, the arts, and the contemporary world'. *Talking Politics* is based on research but it is also an intervention in a political debate where the author also feels free to express opinions that are challenging.

Without any specific education, Abraham Lincoln was as the autodidactic frontiersman, according to Silverstein, one of the most skilled rhetoricians among American presidents. He wrote his own texts, he had the verbal ability, and displayed the aesthetics and style of a deeply Christian yet rationalist politician. Being assassinated on a Good Friday did not lessen his secular Christ-like character to embody 'the (…) recapitulation of the narrative – his word made flesh - of American civil morality' (ibid:29-30). Silverstein attributes several properties of what we could call 'ordinariness' to Lincoln. His plain-speaking style, 'the natural Everyman of American soil' (ibid:30), the embodiment of 'the true American voice' all contributed to an 'honest and direct' (ibid:31) inhabitation of the 'message' of America: 'a sacred voice of civic plain-spokenness, inspired with Christian reason and able to articulate with conviction what is right and what is wrong in the world around it' (ibid:30). The point of Silverstein's analysis is perhaps not primarily to indicate 'ordinariness', but to show how Lincoln's voice deeply resonated with the contemporary communicative ideal fostered both by the democratic tradition of the founding fathers, but also by the ministerial and liturgical language of Evangelical Christianity. Lincoln spoke in the plain style similar to the communicative style of the religious awakenings and of the Evangelical Christian preacher. This sense and style of Evangelical Christianity was merged with civil religion and the almost mystical patriotism of feeling. The Gettysburg address delivered in November 1863 is therefore, according to Silverstein, filled with the 'message' of the quintessential American. It is a ritual text that '**paints a picture of what it accomplishes in relation to that context and** *can change our experience of the context* **to the degree we accept the picture.' (ibid:38 emphasis in original)**. His 272-word speech at the cemetery at Gettysburg, is part of the 'civil religion' of USA, and one of the peaks, claims Silverstein, of the tradition of

'presidential style'. To this group he also adds Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan.

Silverstein asks: '… who can be comfortable with the notion that a 'great' president would not also be a great communicator, especially when speechifying in person and on broadcast media?' (ibid:2). Among the less successful presidents from this standard, he counts Dwight Eisenhower and Harry Truman. Richard M. Nixon is also mentioned as someone who 'seemed not quite successfully to be hiding something' (ibid:3). To this group he also ranks George W. Bush, a.k.a. 'Dubya'. Silverstein juxtaposes Lincoln's memorable eloquence against a quote from 'Dubya': 'Natural gas is hemispheric. I like to call it hemispheric in nature because it is a product that we can find in our neighborhoods.' (ibid). The juxtaposition between the eloquence of the Gettysburg address with random quotes from 'Dubya' may seem a bit unfair since the latter are totally decontextualized soundbites, but it helps Silverstein to ask the question what constitutes the attraction of 'Dubya's' style: 'He must be communicating *something* attractive to a large fraction of the electorate (besides merely 'Being There' in 2000 as a non-Clintongore alternative).' (ibid. emphasis in original). His way of speaking is definitely not Lincolnesque, but it is popular and attractive and 'our voting contemporaries seem to respond to his 'message'' (ibid). What he have in common with Lincoln is the rhetorics of Evangelical Christianity, a circumstance that is not noted by Silverstein. Against the 'nerdy disdain' of disaffirmation, Silverstein argues that 'Dubya's' style is totally congruent with the contemporary culture of political communication, and his book, *Talking Politics*, aims to show precisely this by localizing W:s communicative performance in context, in order to show that 'he just might not be a mere aberration but a slight readjustment of the terms of politics the country has operated on all along' (ibid).

Differences abound between the extremes of the political alphabet, but Silverstein also sets out to see what they have in common (apart form their Evangelical faith).

In order to elaborate on the differences and similarities between Lincoln and 'Dubya', Silverstein discuss the distinctions between two kinds of 'message'. He observes that the interpretation of the word 'message' is somewhat shifting in the politicoglossia of technicians of political communication. 'Being on message', 'being off message', 'sticking to message' are examples of uses which do not indicate 'message' as expository content in its traditional form. For analytical purposes he distinguishes between 'communicating message' and 'inhabiting 'message''. In analogue to the uses of the word 'call' in 'making a call' vs. 'being on call', 'message' have developed from a meaning as a count noun (denoting a thing) to one 'that denotes a locus or place in a containing space, realm, or condition of being' (ibid). Message can be understood as a topic, theme or central proposition, denoting the point of something objectifiable. This is the meaning that is preferred in the mediation of political communication, and this understanding of 'message' as 'issues' is also what many politicians wants to make us believe is the most important. 'Issues' are 'vital matters in which we severally have stakes, that we can rationally focus upon by the use of expository communication, language that lays them out in some denotationally orderly way for deliberative decision-making…' (ibid:17). 'Message' in the latter meaning is inhabitable and refers to more than what is actually said. Identifying the 'more than what is actually said' in discourse is largely the business of explorations in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. Silverstein uses activity theory and cultural psychology (Vygotskij) to elaborate how 'thinking in complexes' as a way of grouping things is different from rational scientific contexts, and that this is better way of understanding 'issues': 'In politics, likewise,

it's chain complexes of 'issues' all the way down. Issues are the raw semiotic material, the things-in-reality. To give birth to 'message' issues must be brought together – given plot and characters, rhyme of not reason – in occasions devoted to the making of image. (ibid:24). The talking person constitutes 'the analogic bridge' who are embodying the principles of 'the right stuff, that holds issues together ('me')' (ibid). The successful 'analogic bridge' is therefore the person 'on message' whom these issues are going into 'by fashioning organized, potent displays of them' (ibid).

In political discourse, linguistic and discursive aspects such as grammar, denotational coherence, descriptive content and information structure are crucially important, but so are also, and this is the particular contribution of discourse analysis and linguistic anthropology, the developing information structure, the intersubjective co-authoring (cf. Duranti above), the evolving and cumulative coherence(-ing) of information: 'in every discourse a large number of extra-verbal contextual factors leave their determinate traces in the forms we use – what are termed in the trade indexical (pointing) traces' (ibid:9). These indexicals, reminiscent of pantomicical gestures, point to the proverbial 'how, what, when where, and why' of discourse. Lincoln already knew this, claims Silverstein, since the tacit awareness of the importance of indexicality and 'the cumulative indexical poetry of properly arranged words' have intuitively been known by the masters of political 'message' (ibid:10).

There are several theoretical points of importance in linguistic anthropology for our present analytical purposes. We find ourselves acting in communicative frameworks and we are always already arranged with respect to one another in an intuitive socio-cultural organization. Each time we talk, we (re-)create social arrangements and in the process of talking, these social arrangements are (re-)confirmed and/or altered. These frameworks, arrangements and frameworks encompass assumptions of constructed and imagined

identities, who we are and who we are communicating with. We can basically identify one another as distinct or as equal. Identifying one another as equal correlates, according to the theory, in some sense to being 'ordinary'. AM I SAYING TOO MUCH HERE? The function of indexicals in interaction is to help develop these relational identities: 'we continuously point to our own' and our interlocutor's 'transient and more enduring identities' (ibid:12). Consequently, they are also an outcome of communicative behavior. This complex work of identity and burbankian 'relatability' is done almost effortlessly, but in certain situations it can be attended to and strategically manipulated. This is an option available both in everyday life and in more official situations.

'Message' in the sense of inhabiting communication is more complicated than message as the expository character of denotational content. What count as important when somebody is speaking is not only what is said, but also how this is done and all sorts of associations that are prompted by the indexicals. There are several different kinds of meaningfulness, states Silverstein, and these are always present and possible when language is used: 'Over multiple indexical channels, then, there comes into being a kind of poetry of identities in motion as the flow of communicative forms projects around the participants complex patterns – let's say 'images'- not onto Plato's caved wall, but unto the potentially inhabitable and then actually inhabited context.' (ibid:15). The poetry of identities in motion coordinates into flows of discursive projects that in turn converge into 'images'. These images are not necessarily visual, but rather abstract representations elicited by words and indexical meanings. The importance of this observation is that what counts in communication is not only what is said, but also all the other surplus of meaning suggested by performativity.

'Message' relates to style, image and impression management. These images are not necessarily visual, but can imaginatively be experienced by addressees and audiences to consist of 'an abstract portrait of identity fashioned out of cumulating patterns of congruence across all manner of indexical signs' (ibid). Style refers to the way images are communicated, its degree and depth of organization, and its degree of consistency. "Message' is the strategic use of style to create an image in a consequential way. Stylists professionalizing in political communication want the 'messages' to be good, lasting and cumulative in relation to a set of audiences. 'Message' is a value, and a communicative capital that might enhance the chances of its agents in a competitive electoral market situation. It validates somebody's worth in a desired and expectable way, projecting the 'message' out from the present into the future. The future is thereby potentially inhabited by the person who is 'messageing'. Silverstein concludes:

> So being 'on message' contributes to that consistent, cumulative, and consequential image that a public person has among his or her addressed audience. A really powerful 'message' ascribes to me – as opposed to describe - my reality. It allows my audience to image-ine a whole set of plausible stories in the fictive universes of the must-have-been, the could-be, and, especially, the sure-as-hell-will-be ('I'll vote for *that*!'). Votes are such stuff as dreams are made on – and vice versa. (ibid:16).

The meaning of 'message' (as in 'being on message') contributes to the building of an image of a public person. It is the deliberate exploitation of the surplus meaning that is always part of communication, but that in the technology of political communication needs special attention as elements of manipulation. This is a meaning of 'message' that was intuitively understood by Lincoln, and that is also applied by George W. Bush and his byzantine communication consultants and spin-doctors. Under the satirical heading, 'Homer Simpson goes to Washington', Silverstein expiates Bush's success story as CEO, from Texas Rangers

and Harken Oil to the post as 'the CEO' of US government. The career as a politician is to a large degree, argues the author of *Talking Politics*, just such a corporate career and this is also mirrored by the managerial characteristics of his language and speaking style, cognate to what CDA-researchers calls 'the marketization of public discourse' (cf. above).

The examples from Bush-speak, so called 'Bushisms', leaves the reader of *Talking Politics* in a mood of thinking if this is a form of political parody perhaps scripted for The Daily Show, if it is stupidity or simply some dyslectic word play. This is also what the author thinks: 'Double-talk, malapropisms, the worst hack bromides, logical-denotational-non-sequiturs and redundancies, semantic ignorance of one or another sort, and on and on. At times, the speaker wants to correct himself, but, like verbal slapstick, gets bollixed up even worse.' (ibid:70). However satirical, and perhaps, as indicated, even a bit unfair in relation to the extensive analysis of Lincoln's speech - random quotes from Bush does not do justice to the appeal of his performances. Satire is not, however, the main motive of Silverstein's analysis, as he sets out to understand how and why the 'message' of Bush is appealing in its own way precisely as a performative phenomenon. The interconnection to the Evangelical preaching style that derivated Lincoln's rhetorics, is also a potent dimension of Bush's speeches, although these interdependencies are not sufficiently emphasized by Silverstein. But Bush is really on 'message' in a way that is consistent with a position of strong faith, both spiritually motivated and encouraged by the ideal of hard-core Texas masculine determination: '(…) it has been consistently delivered with a manly tone of conviction, even aggressiveness; with a firm-jawed, non-sissy Texas style of pronunciation that Poppy never really mastered; and with a facial and whole bodily posture of earnestness that has got to make our hearts go out to the guy: he's really, really attempting to grasp things – whatever they are – with his whole

being.' (ibid:70-1). The conviction, the earnestness and his attempts at 'really trying', are some of the typical aspects of his speaking style that bestow a person 'who is trying to touch issues, but is somewhat uncomfortable, as well as unfamiliar, with the details of them' (ibid:72). In this analysis we see elements of what could count as 'ordinariness', the upright straightforwardness that is partly Southern Evangelical preacher style, partly Texas pragmatism and that was also endorsed by one of Bush's communicative consultants, Frank Luntz in his memorandum 'Straight Talk'.[10] The emphasis that Silverstein makes on 'really trying' is significant for the search for 'the common touch', available to be identified with as a position of a person in office, with leadership experiences but perhaps not with total knowledge of the complexities of contemporary politics. Part of the success of George W. Bush, lie definately in his form of 'straight talk', which could be thought of as a form of 'ordinariness'.

What also contributes to 'ordinariness' is what Silverstein calls 'presidential misspeakingfulness'. In the face of all the 'double-talk' and 'malapropisms' (ibid:70) Silverstein lists a whole catalogue that reads like an inventory of linguistic pathologies (ibdi:91f): register violations: grammatical hypercorrection: incoherence by locution: verbose redundancies/incoherence: broken grammar: ignorance of terms: morphology and referents: malapropisms, etc. Although Bush is not unique in this regard and in spite of the general non-standard character of transcribed spoken spontaneous language, replete with all sorts of repetitions and mistakes, Bush seems to profit from his way of 'misspeaking' so that these mistakes are really transformed into a virtuous 'misspeakingfulness'. Bush's administration is known for limiting the President's public speaking appearances and also for the importance of controlling the public access to 'Dubya's' spontaneous speech. His speaking style differs

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[10] The memorandum by The Luntz Research Companies is not officially published but selected parts of it concerning the environment have circulated on the Internet.

from his other staff who show off in the more expected repertoire of professional expository standard American-English. There are errors in Bush's speech but there are also, argues Silverstein, 'message'-worthy aspects of it which is the main explanation for his political success. 'Dubya's' determination to cope with issues and to win is important and outdoes 'the fluency of dysfluency', which is reduced by rich visual contextual cues. This is why it works: 'It is the culminative coming together of a politics of recognition – a two-way affair with a public that encompasses a politician's electorate – with a very contemporary sensibility about language and its power to contribute to image. Language reformed for a *People Magazine* politics' (ibid:114-115). EXPAND A LITTLE HERE

To understand the efficacy of Bush's 'misspeakingfulness' as a 'very contemporary sensibility about language and its power to contribute to image', Silverstein elaborates on the meaning of a 'politics of recognition' (ibid:80f). In a democracy, everything depends on talk. Enlightenment revolutionary political theory, from the philosophical views of Lord Bacon and John Locke to Jurgen Habermas, is underpinned by the emphasis on communication as the medium of politics. Like a talking cure in therapy, talking politics is a means and a cure for society. The mechanics and belief in 'talking politics' are evocative of the natural sciences as the paradigmatic enterprises in truth-seeking. In democratic theory there is a deeply rooted language dependent framework, including expectations about the kind of language that should be used in the social cure. This language, Silverstein summarizes, is rational and expository and speaks to truth and falsity. It is also a language of argument which situates rationality in the context of dialectic interchanges, ideally leading to judgments and persuasions that result in action. Communication is the momentum in democratic decision-making processes. In contrast to this ideal, or, as its practical accomplishment, Silverstein

notes the contextual conditions for messages, where indexicals and other properties of speech in context participates to make communication into something more than the rational deliberation posited by Enlightenment philosophy.

Silverstein talk of the 'politics of recognition' as the more apt description of current political processes. A candidate with only issues and rational deliberation will fall short, he argues, in relation to the forces at work when politicians are 'on message'. Identities and demography are mobilized in the electoral processes aiming for the legitimate renewal of government: 'Politics is a subtle process of inclusions and exclusions. Candidates and officials and legislative bodies and even courts selectively 'recognize' categories of persons whose 'equal protection' must be considered – by courting votes, by administering laws in certain ways, by passing laws or not, and by interpreting statute one way or another. Politicos call it 'someone's constituencies'; their media advisors call it 'their markets." (ibid:84)

Any elected person, even and perhaps foremost the President is caught in such a politics of recognition. If the politics of recognition is local it can also be made personal. Doubtless, the media are key institutions in these processes (Thompson, 1999). They are, following Silverstein, the networks of institutions that shape personal identities in the public sphere, and absolutely central for how identity is merged with political process into a 'politics of recognition'. Contemporary media have an emphasis on immediacy and transparency that are supported by state of the art interactive technology. The impression of immediacy of media offers opportunities to 'message' with high visibility and with a specific eye for the indexicals at work in language. The journalists, political figures and those in the target of being 'recognized' by political markets 'rely upon the communicated 'message' as the glue bonding them together. Truly a 'mediated' charisma.' (ibid:85). This process works pretty much like any advertising for goods and services focusing on 'brands' and 'names', whether

Ralph Lauren or Max Mara. The idea in this rationale of communication is 'to help people define themselves by structuring a significant portion of their identity-image, their 'life-style', around use or consumption, 'brand' conferring value on identity-image.' (ibid). One is, to take the example from *Talking Politics*, a Ford Bronco kind of guy. Another is the Chevy-man.

Silverstein want, in his analysis of Dubya' as a successful expression of a politics of recognition, to conclude that his way of speaking is a political hit, not because of its skillfully distributed soundbites, but more because of the commodification of a language that is conditioned by the norms and logics of marketing. Bush's image centers round the ideal of the efficient CEO, with an eye for leadership and determination, but with less sensitivity for details (that is what is delegated to the staff) revitalizing the corporate standard register and its centering on an image at the rim of future. An air of 'corporate responsibility' encircles Bush. He concludes: 'Talking politics is publicly experienced nowadays through a very different, this-worldly rhetorical sensibility. It rests upon a different set of intertextual connections, to what I would term *corporatized language*.' (ibid:116. emphasis in original). The corporatized language is suggestive of advertising copy, and composed by phrases and words as units, not as sentences and chunks of denotational exposition. But it is not just soundbites; it is also performance and embodiment of image in 'message'. It is a matter of flashing the right emblems in speech: 'It uses what look and sound like words, but ideally, each contributory word or expression counts as a kind of autonomous emblem of an identity, targeting the sensibilities of a position in social reality.' (ibid).

MORE ON THE ORIDNARY AND SUMMING UP

<center>(b) Political theory</center>

From our encounter with studies in political communication in the previous section we have confronted traces of political theory, especially so with regard to the thesis that the current culture of political communication includes both the ideal of rational, expository language and the media-motivated emphasis on being on 'message'. We found that being 'ordinary' fits well within several of these theoretical frameworks and, in particular, with a politics of recognition. In this section we will pursue the grounding of 'the common touch' in some selected readings from political theory starting with Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

It is not far fetched to locate the appreciation of 'the ordinary' in 18th century revolutionary France. All three parts of the revolutionary slogan (liberte, egalite, fraternite) relates in one sense or another to the ordinary man as the alternative successor to the aristocracy. By contemporary standards the ordinary man was more thought of as the representative of the bourgeoisie class, but in the revolutionary rhetorics and propaganda recurrent allusions are made to a more generalized human being, exhibiting more fundamental human qualities. In fact, this is one of the periods in history, where humanity is becoming the base of politics and philosophy. It may be argued that the sense of the ordinary as an experience of the human is not at all an ordinary understanding, but something that targets a commonality beyond superficial ordinariness. The experience of the human constitutes in the thinking of Rousseau the search for the common and what unites all people. Rousseau can be read as a proponent of the idea that this sense of human commonality must be the very object of politics and that this ideal in several respects must be the standard for policy replacing the absolutist ideals of religious descent. Rousseau can also be read as the untimely anticipator of

modernity, which parallels the fall of human standards and means the loss of this capacity to share the experience of the human in another and to acknowledge our commonality. The eternally elusive Rousseau can be read paradoxically as the visionary prophet of humanity and/or as the truth telling rebel of the vain ambition of the project of liberty and democracy. However he is read, Rousseau spend quite some space on elaborating a theory of the common person, and perhaps is he rightly accredited as the first philosopher of what humans have in common, especially in his discourse on inequality. This is what Tracy B. Strong (1994) claims in his book *Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The Politics of the Ordinary*. To think of humanness is to think of common existence. The social bond is 'that which is common'. Strong relates, following the linguist Emile Benveniste and summarizing the nine pages in the *OED* and the five pages in *Le Robert*, the etymology of the word 'common' to the Indo-European word *mei* (exchange), which later figures e.g. in the German *gemein*. 'Common' is the basis for the word 'communication' and for that which is social, *communicare* in Latin refers to 'make common'. There is a double meaning at play here. On the one hand, what we have in common and what we share, on the other hand that which is ordinary, everyday and vulgar. In Rosseau's *Emile,* the author talk of a sixth human sense, called 'the common sense', not because it is common to all, but because it is the outcome of the well ordered use of the other senses. The sixth sense is the virtuous mastery of all the other senses that coordinately produces its sensory phenomenon. The productive character of 'the common' is important in the political philosophy of Rousseau, it is not something automatically given, but it is a basic resource that, if acted upon with the skillful coordination of the other sense, will produce a citizen for which commonality is a sensuous property. Common and community is therefore what humans have together as 'togetherness' and the access to this acquaintance is both general and exclusive. It is not based on class, but on the proficiency of

being human. The sixth sense instructs us 'in the nature of things, by the collective

participation of all of their appearance' (ibid:75). Lack of 'community' means a society of

strangers or indicates those who are estranged from a group. The second meaning of

'common' refers to the ordinary in its pejorative sense as everyday and vulgar. The twin

roots of the word 'common', according to the reading by the linguist Emile Benveniste,

dates back at least to the 13th century. A third meaning has developed since then, as an

extension of the latter. This refers to 'common' as badge of pride, typical for instance of the

'free burghers' in England who were referred to as the as the common, institutionalized and

engraved in the 'lower' section of the British parliamentary system, the House of Commons.

All these meanings of the 'common' designates in French a state of affair characterized by

equality, indicating the way human beings are like each other: 'It is the ability to perceive the

common that is at the root of the ability to have politics that rests on equality.' (ibid:76). This

idea is central to Rousseau in *The Social Contract* (1762). Strong interprets this as that 'the

common' is only established in and by politics. Politics is constitutive for 'the human' side of

humans. For Rousseau the conditions of our nature are not entirely given, but must be made

or emancipated. Humanness is made in politics and this is also where the ability to

experience the human as 'common' will take place.

Rousseau composes a particular human being called the citizen. The citizen is not given, but

must be made. The citizen is the being from which the common is realized. The citizen lives

thus, per definition in a common world, which is the only truly human world. Rousseau's

preoccupation 'is with what the word *common* means in phrases such as 'the common people',

'having something in common', our 'common humanity'. Common here is both ordinary

and everyday, and that which is our 'portion' as human beings, the entitlement of our

existence.' (ibid:77, emphasis in original). Strong warns, in this interpretation, that liberalism

is not the only outcome of this commonality, thus are also proto-totalitarian and anarchist readings possible consequences. Rousseau is elusive also when it comes to understand what it means to be a citizen. Is that a subject position or is it a position of a collective? Who am 'I' as a citizen politically? Rousseau obscures the numerical categories plural and singular, maybe deliberately, in his texts. Here are examples, first from *On the Social Contract*, and then from *Reveries*, both quoted from Strong (1994):

> *Each of us puts in common his or her person and his or her power under the supreme ordering of the general will; and we receive corporeally (*en corps*) each member as a part indivisible from the whole.* At that moment, instead of the particular self (*personne*) of each contractant, this act of association produces a moral and collective body composed of as many members as the assembly has voices, a body that receives from this same act its unity, its common ego (*moi*), its life and its will. (emphasis in original)

> Let *us* fix once and for all *my* opinions, *my* principles, and let *us* for the rest of *my* life be what *I* have found *I* should be after having thought well about it' (emphasis added by Strong)

These uncertainties certainly evoke several interpretations. The one that Strong is endorsing is to regard them as intentional by Rousseau, in order to mix the plural and singular as one of the specific properties of what it means to be a citizen and to experience the human. This is certainly a relevant political question, whether or not it is motivated by this interpretation. Another related modern political question in connection with this theory would be: what claim could the common or the ordinary be said to have on me? Also when it comes to interpret what Rousseau meant by the general will the exegetes diverges. Is this plural/singular conglomerate an expression of the singular self undergoing transformation, of the common self, of the self that I can find in myself and in others (as the same self)? All

these possibilities are open and in some sense suggested by the interpretive openness of the text. Strong advances the argument, despite the risk of making an anachronistic reading from the vantage point of 20th century theory of subjectivity, that Rousseau is one of the first theorists of the composite self. Commonality or the potential thereof is one its possible properties and one of the greatest achievements of political culture: 'The availability of the ordinary, the common, is thus the greatest in political society, in the society of the social contract.' (ibid:104). SUMMARIZE ON THE ORDINARY

We will not here trace the whole history of the concept of 'the ordinary' through post-revolutionary Western political theory, but rapidly move ahead to present times. Inspired by post-structuralism (e.g. Foucault and Derrida), a philosophy of the ordinary (Cavell; see below) and some American writers who 'underwrite' such a philosophy (Emerson and Thoreau), Thomas L. Dumm embarks on the project of *A Politics of the Ordinary* (1999). Here is at play a certain kind of liberalism, that Dumm is at pains describing what it is not: 'not the liberalism championed by mechanics of procedure who calculate the common as transparent communication, not the liberalism of those who retreat behind barricades of legal rights into zones of private privilege' (ibid:ix-x). Thus, not the simplified version of what is common suggested by a mechanics of communicative transparency, neither its legalistic corollary. He is tending towards a spirit of liberalism in the vein of Emerson, from whom he is inspired to 'acknowledg[e] the extraordinary ordinary'. Dumm's fascination with the notion of 'the ordinary stems largely from his reading of Emerson, partly through the emersoinan reading by Stanley Cavell. The issues at stake in a politics of the ordinary are, according to Dumm, political action, the questions of public and private, the limits of language, the varying roles

of mood and desire, and the embodiment of the self (ibid:ix). I think his introduction is

illuminative for his ambitious, yet unfinished project:

> Ordinary life, the life-world, the everyday, the quotidian, the low, the common, the
> private, the personal – everybody knows what the ordinary is. The ordinary is what
> everybody knows. The ordinary gives us a sense of comfort; it allows us to make
> certain predictions about what will happen; it provides the context for the text we
> provide. The ordinary allows us to assume a certain constancy of life. It is reliable.
> We can count on it. The sun sets, the sun rises, another day of life begins. No matter
> what else happens, we live our lives in the manner of ordinary people. And so we
> celebrate the ordinary as a practical form that peaceable living takes when life is
> good, and we cling to any vestiges of the ordinary that survive when catastrophe
> takes hold of us when our circumstances are diminished, when life is bad.' (ibid:1)

COMMENTARY ON THE QUOTE

Dumm observes two features of the 'ordinary' in contemporary political life. The first is the

modern celebration of the ordinary, especially in the USA, with its almost fetishistic

significance in consumer society. He ties this embrace of consumer felicity with the

declaration of independence and the pursuit of happiness uniquely inscribed to it. He traces

in this a celebration of a sort of normalized hedonism in 'an image of the ordinary as the

limit of allowable pleasures and the form that pleasures might take.' (ibid). A life saturated

with goods is characteristic of an ethic of production that, following the lead of sociological

prognosis, to a 'post-Protestant ethic of consumption' where the goods still are central, but

not its ultimate insatiable goal. In critical manner, Dumm speculates on consumption and its

'shadow', indebtedness as another outcome of the 'ordinary'. The common sense of the

'ordinary' life as the pursuit of material good can be read through media, advertising,

television and film. The 'ordinary' is inscribed in the senses of self operative in consumption;

'in the cacophony that shapes our dreams of good lives' (ibid:2). This first sense of the

'ordinary' is apprehended as an aspect of consumer capitalism, a benchmark of the morality

of convention in a normalizing intuition characteristic of consumer society, expounded on by Foucault in his sociological and philosophical works.

The other aspect of the ordinary that Dumm elaborates is its 'mysterious indeterminacy', its evasive and elusive character. This is the emersonian reading entering into the romantic character of the 'ordinary'.

From this dual appreciation of the 'ordinary' in contemporary political culture, Dumm indicates the role of the 'ordinary' in liberal democracies where it is kept as its specific preserve, a kind of substance made up of common sense that is unique for liberal democracy. The 'ordinary' is, in this political formation, understood as 'a primary repository of meaning, a dimension of life from which the raw material of happiness might be drawn.' (ibid:3). Thus the 'ordinary' becomes normative as the essence of what democracy can accomplish. The scenario of 'ordinary people' living 'ordinary' lives and consuming according to the standards of normalization constitutes a visionary ideal of society, the corollary to the socialist dream of the classless society.

In the previous works on the 'ordinary' that Dumm relates (ibid:3f), all authors are cautious and tentative, approaching its object as if delicate and even dangerous. This reading is certainly present in the transcendentalist's philosophy with their vision of nature as the 'extraordinary ordinary', and with their reverence of the wild in nature as well as in the human psyche. The 'ordinary' is 'a font of common meaning, an immeasurable measure of common sense' (ibid). It is confused with the sites that surround and yet never contain its meaning. It is also an aspect of language and, as Dumm observes with Cavell, its character of being infinite and resistant to totality. The 'ordinary' plays a certain role in renditions of the civil society as the third space between the state and private enterprise. Civil society-theory solemnize the 'ordinary' as common sense, basic decency, human nature, and as moral truth.

Dumm identifies the disciplinarians ('the rigid and fearful') who try to 'comprehend the paradoxical character of the ordinary as the underwriting instrument of civil society' (ibid:4). But, from another contrasting perspective, the 'ordinary' remains a repository for the unknown, obviously a Freudian theme and an aspect that fuels its mysterious indeterminacy. The psychoanalytical (or transcendentalist) recognition of the 'ordinary' as a category which resists domestication frustrates the 'disciplinarians' as 'they try to whip us into their truth' (ibid).

A less disciplined understanding recognizes a struggle against the romanticized power of the 'ordinary' as an important aspect of politics. Dumm quotes Hannah Arendt who in *The Human Condition* sees the 'ordinary' as a danger to the autonomy of political action. The 'ordinary' constitutes a hazard precisely because of its openness, it is unpredictability and its elusiveness. Perhaps Arendt's reading should be regarded in light of the development of 20th century populism which more or less co-opted 'ordinariness' as a racial standard for exclusion. Arendt's worry is the fear that the political will disperse in the social body if everything is political. This can result in the well known syllogism, 'For where everything is political, nothing is'. Dumm claims that such postulations based on dualities tends to 'kill[s] the possibility of a politics of the ordinary, because the ordinary insinuates itself into every where and touches every thing.' (ibid:6). The ordinary has been overlooked as a subject precisely because so many political thinkers, in the vein of Arendt, believe that 'the political' is an autonomous form of forum for political action, excluded from 'ordinary' life.

In contrast to Arendt's negative acknowledgement of the 'ordinary' and its importance for politics, Dumm recognizes another view on political action stemming from the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who shows that power operates in a field of intensities and spaces, possible to describe through an alternative syllogism: 'Where politics is arboreal,

institutions hierarchize and colonize meaning, establishes zones of legitimacy for privileged kinds of politics. When politics is rhizomatic, institutions disperse meaning and pluralize the dangers and power of politics. In all cases, politics exists as a capacity and as a yearning.' (ibid:5). COMMENTARY

The book by Dumm is designed to explore this other sense of the 'ordinary' and to see how it mediates politics by its expressions. The meaning of the 'ordinary' that he explores is the second, the mystical, the capacity and the yearning. Another point of theoretical clarification is to how the 'ordinary' is intertwined with the eventful and normalized (ibid:5). To show that 'ordinary' aspects of life are 'never purely one thing or another but are shaped through the struggles and pleasures that constitute human existence as its most persistent and common levels; and that the ordinary in turn reshapes the terms through which struggles (and pleasures) unfold.' (ibid). 'Ordinary' is thus taken in a broadly political sense where political struggles partly are understood through the ordinary as a fate of existence.

In a section describing the everyday boredom of life in a New Mexico settlement, Dumm illustrates the openness of the concept of the 'ordinary' by understanding 'the ordinary' as 'a dynamic waiting' against 'the static actions of events and the composed behavior of the normalized' (ibid:18). He is trying, against the odds in the settlement, to recover a political ethos in the gist of ordinary life: 'To suggest that such a political ethos may be at work in a politics of the ordinary is to lay a groundwork for seeking evidence of practices of freedom that ordinary people engage in as we lead our lives.' (ibid:18). Dumm suggests that living in everyday life contains a political element in the practices of freedom. To expand more on this line he engages his interpretation with a reading of the American romantic philosophers, Emerson and Thoreau, inspired by Cavell (see below). Here is at work a kind of intuitive

proximity to nature, or an intuitive ontology oriented to assumptions about the worlds existence. This is an everyday ontological claim about a natural relationship 'before' believing and knowing, typical for romantic, transcendental and non-cognitive philosophy. This idea in the philosophy of Cavell, is based in the reading of Emerson and Thoreau (and partly on the interpretation of existentialist philosophy), and provides an alternative vantage point than that of both faith (theology) and facticity (epistemology). The American philosophers 'authorize this kind of interest in the ordinary as a repository of existence's relationship to truth' (ibid:21). Here is at work an intimate, 'pre-cognitive' relationship with truth and what Dumm calls 'the ethical sense', a grasping of truth in the waiting for truth. The waiting for the truth is the preferred non-violent mode of cognizing, in contrast to the violence of conceptualization which is reflected in a truth that comes through grasping, what Cavell calls an 'unhandsome' one. Heidegger also resonates through Cavell's reading: 'From the ordinary we resist the unhandsome condition of grasping, oppose (or avert) the violence of conceptualization that can stop thinking in the name of thought.' (ibid:20-21).

The famous quote from Emerson figures in this connection, where he begs not for big conquests but for a humble attitude towards life: 'I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is Greek art, or Provencal minstrelsy; I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into to-day, and you may have the antique and future worlds.' (ibid:21).[11] Following Cavell, Dumm insists that this quote should be read to say that the 'ordinary' is misconstrued if it is understood as small and unnoticed. What is emphasized is rather its incessant presence. 'The uneventfulness of the ordinary' constitutes perhaps a 'boredom' but it is also 'the inevitable ground from which we may come to a better appreciation of events.' (ibid:21). Dumm sees

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[11] Quoted from Emerson (1983) *Essays and Lectures*, ed Joel Porte, NY:Library of America, 68-69.

similarities in this regard in Foucault and Cavell, as two contemporary thinkers who see the 'ordinary' (or, in Foucault's case, the 'anonymous') as the ground for reason. This philosophical thought relates with the interpretive approaches in sociology (see below). Normalizing processes is a social power that operates on the ordinary in order to standardize its characteristics according to a scientifically or otherwise specified norm. Normalization thus threatens the wildness of ordinary life by dictating its properties, and in this sense it can be said to destroy the 'ordinariness'. This is the analysis that gives momentum to Foucault's historical description of the politicization of ordinary life. Dumm also notes that there is a resistance to normalization aiming to protect the 'ordinary' from what is ordered by the citizen management technologies of state and power.

The home works as a metaphor for the ordinary in the transcendentalist philosophy:

> Rather than live in such a house (even when one calls it home), it may be possible to embrace a kind of homelessness, a condition that could make the idea of home more palpable by showing more clearly the character of what home lacks. The play of home and homelessness is a process of a politics of the ordinary, fronting the ordering principles that would undermine the possibilities of their common disappearance. Both are spaces of happenstance privacy, one exposed, the other concealed; one composed of the discarded and wasted, the other elevated by modern politics as the privileged space to which we all might repair at the end of struggle. But both home and homelessness depend on a continued and persistent confrontation with a realm of the ordinary that would not be exhausted by the ordering of events and the normalization of selves. (ibid: 31-32)

COMMENTARY ON THIS

The home is a never complete place, it is an always incomplete project and its attractiveness is partly explainable by this indeterminacy. In the writings of Thoreau, he is embracing indeterminacy, and declares that a home is best when it is uncompleted. This romanticized philosophy of the home suggests that the same indeterminacy is operative when it comes to

self and polity. The metaphor of the home is clearly related to an understanding of the 'ordinary'.

SUMMARY OF THE ORDINARY IN POLITICAL THEORY

In the previous section we have visited some strands of political theory that typically is also grounded in political philosophy in order to excavate the meanings of the 'ordinary'. Rousseau, the transcendentalists, Foucault and Cavell can all be thought of as being both political theorists and philosophers (and in some cases even more disciplinary labels apply) who have all, in their specific way, approached 'ordinariness' as both a political theoretical phenomenon and as a philosophical issue. The four sections that divide this theoretical chapter are to a large degree interdependent with each other and the division is hence somewhat arbitrary.

One strand of philosophy that is not so much appropriated, at least not in its original rendition, by political theory, however, is the so called ordinary language philosophy, a tradition in which Stanley Cavell could be thought of as one of its contemporary interpreters. The fate of this philosophy in the hands of Cavell is nevertheless innovative and eclectic and deviates from its originary sources, confronted and merged with other traditions such as psychoanalysis, romanticism and existentialism. So in order to get an idea about the idea of the 'ordinary' in ordinary language philosophy we would have to retreat to Austin, Ryle, Wittgenstein and their British comrades.

The school of ordinary language philosophy (OLP) influenced analytic philosophy during the period 1940 to 1960, especially in the UK. The school was largely a reaction against the abstract and hypothetical character of the logical empiricism that dominated analytic philosophy and turned instead towards everyday spoken language as its object of analysis. The philosophers started to look at linguistic behavior from the assumption that ordinary language use encompasses all the practical distinctions and meanings that are useful for

people in their lives – an acknowledgement of their competence as meaningful everyday

semioticians. It would perhaps be an overstatement to say that OLP turned sociological, but

there is certainly in this movement an interest in accounting for practical accomplishments

by individuals and collectives. Even though their object of interest overlaps with that of

some strands of sociology they never pursued the kind of empirical work in context that was

typical of social studies (see below). The object of analysis was ordinary language and

language use, but the examples were brought together in a more intuitive way from

conversations at the local pub or in the armchair. Ludwig Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical

Investigations*-period famously talked of the meaning of words from the context of the

language games in which they operated, theoretically grounding the emergence of meaning in

a situation unique to the individuals and their negotiations.

> When I talk about language (words, sentences, etc.) I must speak the language of
> every day. Is this language somehow too coarse and material for what we want to
> say? *Then how is another one to be constructed?* – And how *strange* that we should be able to
> do anything at all with the one we have! (Wittgenstein 1953 # 120. emphasis in
> original)

In the writings of Wittgenstein, he contrasts the everyday, ordinary, *alltäglich* use of language

with that which is queer, *merkwurdig* and strange. The strangeness that Wittgenstein attributes

to ordinary language is ironical in the sense that he paraphrases the skeptical attitude of his

opponents. He believes that ordinary language contains all there is, and that the project of

establishing an analytical language on the top of ordinary language is precisely the mistake

that philosophers have been doing all along and that is also why., according to him, that

project is so unfruitful. The strangeness refers ironically both to the project of OLP, but also

lends itself to associate everyday life with a kind of peculiarity in that there is more than

meets the eye. A third strangeness (the ironical sense) slips into the project of analytic

philosophy itself, as assumedly placed above any other language.

An important aspect of OLP is the way that their proponents reach beyond the truth-false

dichotomy of utterances and the obsessively factual orientation that dominated philosophy

up until the mid-20th century. J. L. Austin, among others, questions this dichotomy on the

basis of his understanding of ordinary language use and tries to see what utterances are *doing*

than merely *saying*. The doing that so called performative utterances accomplish are neither

true nor false and they are henceforth not objects for the polarized formula characteristic of

the dichotomous analysis (Austin, 1961:220f). The idea of performatives opened up a whole

new branch of philosophy devoted to its exploration, speech act theory, and came also to

influence linguistics in the direction of pragmatics and discourse analysis. This is also the

direction in which OLP continued to flourish; philosophy approaching linguistics in its

pragmatic version. In analytic philosophy itself, it seems as if the killing machines of analysis

effectively have declared OLP to be dead, partly helped by the anthropologist Ernest Gellner

who in a famous intervention criticized its lack of context awareness.

In Cavell's interpretation of OLP (which is not at all dogmatic), skepticism comes to take a

specific place. Skepticism is a radical epistemological questioning, which raises doubts

concerning our ability to know with certainty the existence of objects. Skepticism is often

used in order to find some firm bedrock foundation for the conditions of language and

thought; hence skepticism is often refuted by philosophers as soon as this firm basis is

discovered. But skepticism is not, according to Cavell, a theoretical position that should be

refuted, it is a constructive reflection of the fundamental limits of human knowledge of the

self, of others, and of the external world. Thus skepticism needs to be explored, not in

search for absolute standards of truth and being, but in understanding how it opens to an indeterminacy that needs to be acknowledged. This orientation of indeterminacy characterizes also everyday life and ordinary language. The direction of the ordinary is contrasted against the 'ascent' of philosophy as something 'higher', in the same vein as Wittgenstein ironically identifies its 'strangeness'. 'Against false ascent, Cavell poses philosophy as descent, the necessary faithfulness of philosophy to the common and the ordinary, as the only available loci of repertoires of language, thought, conceptual life, and human action.' (Eldridge, 2003:2). But this move 'downwards' can also be an illusion, motivated by trance, need or artificiality, therefore an analytical ascent is also needed: 'Hence what is pursued, in and through the pursuit of fully expressive action, aiming at exemplariness of voicing, is an eventual or transfigured ordinary, a fit common habitation of the human.' (ibid). At the end of the day, Cavell seems to embrace skepticism as well as he recognizes the importance of a form of analytical 'ascent'.

In his analysis of the ordinary, Cavell also borrows from Heidegger (from his 'The origins of the work of art') the idea that the ordinary is not really ordinary in the sense of simple, but it is extraordinary or 'uncanny'. This 'uncanniness' of the ordinary is recognized in 'the capacity, even desire, of ordinary language to repudiate itself' (Cavell, 1988:154). In relation to the ordinary we are both at home and not at home, it is uncanny, it is indeterminate like the metaphors of the home in Thoreau. 'Inhabiting our relation to the ordinary, therefore, are opposed drives towards both its acceptance and its overcoming.' (5). In his book on Thoreau, *The Sense of Walden* (1969), Cavell expands on the concept of the ordinary and its philosophical relevance. Ordinary language philosophy merges with transcendentalism in its concessions to common sense and the appeals to 'ordinary' examples. Cavell wanted initially to write his dissertation, *The Claims of Reason*, about 'the implications of Austin's procedures

for moral philosophy'. But this became just a chapter in his work and the problem he focused on in part III of the dissertation was 'what makes a remark or a judgment or the use of a term 'moral'' (Bates, 2003:24). He was asking the question of how knowledge could be understood as a basis for morality. His implicit criticism was an analogy to his critique of skepticism as a project in the service of ontology, in that he attacked the metaethical position that offers a neutral position from which to analyze any moral standpoint. Cavell highlights what he calls 'the moralization of morality', i.e. the claim of moral philosophy to be the final judgment on every moral action: 'Moral theory has usually been understood to claim a universal competence for itself to make final assessment of every action; hence, it could seem that any limitation or inapplicability of moral theory would necessary mean its overall failure.' (ibid:27). This neutral position which also becomes a vehicle for moralization is what Cavell regards as problematic and to support his opinion he draws on both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

Cavell's interest in the ordinary comes, as we have seen, both from Austin and Wittgenstein and from Thoreau and Emerson. This does not mean that these philosophers are advocates of 'ordinary beliefs', but that they feel that our relation to the world's existence is somehow *closer* than what the ideas of believing and knowing have been made to convey. Especially in regard to the transcendentalists, who obviously do not shy before romanticism, but also in some sense in relation to OLP, where he excavates a humble awareness of the mysterious character of everyday life, he accounts for an intimacy with existence, or, as he likes to put it, an intimacy lost. According to Cavell, this is best expressed by Thoreau and Emerson. In his Beckman lectures, Cavell makes this lineage very explicit:

… that the sense of the ordinary that my work derives from the practice of the later Wittgenstein and from J.L. Austin, in their attention to the language of ordinary or everyday life, is underwritten by Emerson and Thoreau in their devotion to the thing they call the common, the familiar, the near, the low. The connection means that I see both developments – ordinary language philosophy and American transcendentalism - as responses to skepticism, to that anxiety about our human capacities as knowing subjects that can be taken to open modern philosophy in Descartes, interpreted by that philosophy as our human subjection to doubt. My route to the connection lay at once in my tracing both the ordinary language philosophers as well as the American transcendentalists to the Kantian insight that Reason dictates what we mean by a world, as well as in my feeling that the ordinariness in question speaks of an intimacy with existence, and of an intimacy lost, that matches skepticism's despair of the world. (…) the thought that ordinary language philosophy is not a defense of what may present itself as certain fundamental, cherished beliefs we hold about the world and the creatures in it, but, among other things, a contesting of that presentation, for, as it were, the prize of the ordinary. (…) I came to the idea that philosophy's task was not so much to defeat the skeptical argument as to preserve it. (Cavell, 1988:4-5)

COMMENTARY There is a poetic and spiritual magnitude in the claim or in the wishing to make the incidents of common life interesting. In this regard he also quotes romantic poets, among them Wordsworth who exactly coined that very phrase: '[making] the incidents of common life interesting' (ibid:6). The compass and eclectic scope of Cavell's philosophy certainly did not fit well within the more conventional community of philosophical analysts, and it became even worse when romantic poets entered the scene in shape of the philosophers Cavell claimed that they were. Cavell changes the epistemological categories in order to reflect a greater humbleness in relation to cognition, and talks of acknowledgement instead of knowing. Given that the criteria for epistemological cognition are altered he can include all sorts of speculative traditions in the quest for the ordinary. The fact that the quest is for the ordinary and not for something strange, qualifies the poets to be philosophers on better records than perhaps the academic philosophers. In our ordinary lives we experience tragedy in the partaking of skepticism which is an everyday mode of philosophizing. This everyday condition is what Thoreau called 'quiet desperation', what Emerson termed 'silent

melancholy', what Coleridge and Wordsworth figured as 'despondency' or 'dejection', what Heidegger neologized 'bedimmed averageness', what Wittgenstein named 'bewitchment', and what Austin designated as 'drunken profundity' and 'lack of seriousness'. Cavell himself, in his text on Beckett, calls this 'the extraordinary of the ordinary', what at other places was called 'the uncanniness of the ordinary'. That there is something extraordinary about the ordinary is a thought that Cavell repeatedly formulates.

> …to the sense that the ordinary is subject at once to autopsy and to augury, facing at once its end and its anticipation. The everyday is ordinary because, after all, it is our habit, or habitat; but since that very inhabitation is from time to time perceptible to us – we who have constructed it- a extraordinary, we conceive that some place elsewhere, or this place otherwise construed, must be what is ordinary to us, must be what romantics – of course including both E.T. and Nicholas Nickelby's alter ego Smike – call 'home' (ibid:9)

As we have seen above, Cavell attests to the ordinary language 'the capacity, even desire, of ordinary language to repudiate itself, specifically to repudiate its power to word the world, to apply to the things we have in common, or to pass them by (ibid:154). COMMENTARY! So the everyday is not just a philosophical vogue or trend, it is something that a philosopher's grappling with skepticism always needs to encounter. But this task is immense, and this is why the frequent references to romanticists and transcendentalists fertilize his work. He quotes for instance Thoreau: '…there is nothing beyond the succession of each and every day; and grasping a day, accepting the everyday, the ordinary, is not a given but a task' (ibid:171). And a little later: 'I said that the new philosophical step in the criticism of skepticism developed in ordinary language philosophy is its discovery of skepticism's discovery, by displacement, of the everyday; hence its discovery that the answer to skepticism must take the form not of philosophical construction but of the reconstruction or resettlement of the everyday.' (ibid:175-6).

Skepticism's threat of the world consuming doubt becomes what philosophy should investigate, not in the aim of settle its ontological foundation, but to prosper from its indeterminacy. As we also have seen, Cavell engages with images of human intimacy in form of the home, but also in the form of marriage or domestication, fictional equivalents of what ordinary language philosophers understand as 'the ordinary'. Philosophers in search of the ordinary are often, as we have seen, following Wittgenstein's plea to 'lead[ing] words home' (Henderson, 19xx). Cavell is one of those who follows that avenue in his determination that that the task of philosophy is 'to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use', back from the sublime and into our poverty in everyday life. The poverty should here not be understood as a place barren of meaning and importance, but as an alternative to the grandiose claims of any sublime theory.

More linguistic theories of the ordinary in language: Volosinov/Bakthin

FINAL COMMENTARY ON THE ORDINARY IN PHILOSOPHY!

(d) Social and cultural theory

In the final stop in our inventory of theoretical traditions in search for the 'ordinary', we will take a broad glance on social and cultural theory.[12] As was the case in the preceding three sections, this theoretical discussion will be highly selective and non-comprehensive.

One place to start is with the approximations of the 'ordinary', or that of the common man, that emerged with the development of the scientific study of statistics, not necessarily a part of social and cultural theory as we know it today, but certainly a part of the new scientific interest in the social world that followed the Enlightenment. This tradition have been studied by several philosophers, sociologists and historians of intellectual culture who focus on the social use of numbers for various social and political purposes, such as Ian Hacking, Michel Foucault and, more recently, Theodore M. Porter. Controlled collections of data started already in the 16th century France but propelled with the developments of the mathematics of probability in the 17th century. The Enlightenment tradition promoted education, progress and social justice, and the emerging traditions of collecting data on social life became a tool in that process of emancipation. Collections of data also functioned for power purposes, such as maintaining a population for warfare in the nation states of Europe and, more fundamentally, for understanding what a population is characterized by in order to standardize, normalize and identify deviations. The development of the systematical statistical tradition in the 19th century paved the way for the use of statistics for underpinning and motivating social reforms in the 20th century, most typically so in the welfare states of Northern Europe. Famously in the history of statistics, the Belgian statistician Adolphe Quetelet (1796-1874), was one of those who started to apply statistics to the study of social

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[12] See Highmore (2002a;2002b) for a fuller analysis of everyday life in cultural studies.

phenomena in the early 19th century. He developed the concept of the 'average man' as a measure and as the arbiter for mankind. He participated in the establishment of the theoretical foundations for the use of statistics in 'social physics', 'statistics of labor' or, as it is known since late 19th century, sociology. Thus, Quetelet, author of *A Treatise on Man* ([1835] 1842), is considered by many to be the founder of modern quantitative social science. Parachuting rapidly into to the mid 20th century, we can recognize that the notion of the common man also surfaced to prominence in the qualitative tradition of sociology, most famously in the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schutz and of his followers Peter Berger & Thomas Luckmann in their *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1967), where they approximate the world view of the common man ('the man on the street') as a point of departure for understanding the formation of the social world. This approximation is also motivated by a wish not to engage in what they thought of as the relatively unfruitful ontological foundationalism of mid 19th century analytic philosophy. Their blend of sociology and phenomenology were preceded by the movement of phenomenology, initiated by the mathematician turned philosopher Edmund Husserl and by the mediation of persons located in between sociology, phenomenology and psychology, such as Schutz in his analysis of the 'attitude of daily life'.

It is important to recognize that the notion of the 'ordinary', implemented either as the 'average man' of the quantitative tradition or as the 'common man' in the qualitative tradition, have the functions of being both descriptive and normative. Truly, many scientists believe that their way of leveling an approximation of man is only a descriptive measure which does not propose any values or opinions, as does any 'lay sociologist' who is describing 'the natural state of affairs'. Such sophisticated and methodologically cautious use of the notion of the 'ordinary' tends, however, easily to be co-opted and contaminated by

various values and ideologies, if not in the original theories, then in the subsequent appropriation of their followers' who operate in society by using theories as a foundation or legitimating for policy or implementation. The questions remains: How can it be explained that the ordinary and everyday life is treated with such ease and self-evidence in the public discourse? This is a very central sociological topic that for a long time was neglected due to a certain disciplinary blindness.

The perhaps most determined approach towards an understanding of the 'ordinary' in everyday life is done in the sociological traditions of microsociology and ethnomethodology. While not disregarding the work of Erving Goffmann and others in the tradition of microsociology who regards everyday life as an arena which stages the self in various performances of changing durability, we will here focus on ethnomethodology. Its founder, Harold Garfinkel, was inspired by the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schutz and other introductions of phenomenology to the American scene of social science (Heritage, 1984:37-74). His sociology can be regarded as a deviation from the theory of Talcott Parsons in the direction of focusing upon the participant's meaning-making activities and interpretation not just in theory, but also in the context of action. These activities are intersubjective in character and rationalized by the actors as common sense or 'for-all-practical-purposes': 'Ethnomethodological studies analyze everyday activities as members' methods for making those same activities visibly-rational-and–reportable-for-all-practical-purposes.' (Garfinkel, 1967:vii). 'Members' in social groups engages with a rational account of why they act the way they do, and are also able to account for this action. These accounts by the members for the activities they partake in stands as rational descriptions of the 'organization of commonplace everyday activities' (ibid). In ethnomethodology, the study is oriented to the methods that are used by 'members' 'to make practical actions, practical

circumstances, common sense knowledge of social structures, and practical sociological reasoning analyzeable; and of discovering the formal properties of commonplace, practical common sense actions, 'from within' actual settings, as ongoing accomplishments of those settings.' (ibid:vii-viii). Ethnomethodology wants to study 'the formal properties of common sense activities 'as a practical organizational accomplishment' (ibid).

The description of the methods of ethnomethodology by Garfinkel is not exactly known for its accessibility. The opaque formulations are often highly abstract and complex, which resonates perhaps oddly with the very object of ordinary reasoning, i.e. as if we expect ordinary reasoning to be in some sense more simple than, for instance, scientific reasoning. One central aim in the work of Garfinkel and his followers is, however, to show that ordinary life is as complex and sophisticated in its background assumptions and ways of reasoning as any other (complex) social activity. They want to understand and approach everyday social activities with the kind of attention that is usually only given to extraordinary activities and in this sense come to treat these actions as if they were complex and 'anthropologically strange'. The main aim is perhaps not to reinvent them as complex activities but to study them as phenomena which have so far been curiously largely neglected in the study of social life. The object of ethnomethodology is the practical sociological reasoning of people, whether this is done by lay people or by professionals in their role as sociologists. This reflexive dimension in ethnomethodology as a form of critical introspection is one of the reasons why this form of sociological inquiry became so contested and ill received by the community of sociologists.

Garfinkel 'use[s] the term 'ethnomethodology to refer to the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life' (ibid:11). He noticed with

analytical clarity that statements on ordinariness or any other property of 'common culture' have both descriptive and normative functions. Thus he writes in the introduction to the famous study 'Studies of the routine grounds of everyday activities':

> For Kant the moral order 'within' was an awesome mystery; for sociologists the moral order 'without' is a technical mystery. From the point of view of sociological theory the moral order consists of the rule governed activities of everyday life. A society's members encounter and know the moral order as perceivedly normal courses of action – familiar scenes of everyday affairs, the world of daily life known in common with others and with others taken for granted. (ibid:35)

The 'normal courses of action' is referred to, by the 'members' as 'natural facts of life' and have a descriptive function. But these are also moral facts of life because they are based in ideologies and assumptions of how things 'really' are. This moral 'blindness' applies also to the discipline of sociology per se:

> In every discipline, humanistic or scientific, the familiar common sense world of everyday life is a matter of abiding interest. In the social sciences, and in sociology particularly, it is a matter of essential preoccupation. It makes up sociology's problematic subject matter, enters the very constitution of the sociological attitude, and exercises an odd and obstinate sovereignty over sociologists' claims to adequate explanation.' (ibid:36)

This is such a central aspect of sociological inquiry, argues Garfinkel, but so very few studies have actually been concerned with this topic. They even rarely see this as a topic for investigation, it is rather just assumed or initially settled via some form of theoretical representation or justification: 'As a topic and methodological ground for sociological inquiries, the definition of the common sense world of everyday life, though it is appropriately a project of sociological inquiry, has been neglected.' (ibid). The world is known in common and taken for granted by members in society, not only in everyday life

but also in the academic discipline of sociology. This common culture refers, sociologically speaking 'to the socially sanctioned grounds of inference and action that people use in their everyday affairs and which they assume that others use in the same way.' (ibid:76) Such '[s]ocially-sanctioned-facts-of-life-in-society-that-any-bona-fide-member-of-the-society-knows' are the 'common sense knowledge of social structures' (ibid).

One of the most fruitful and important developments of ethnomethodology have taken place in conversation analysis (CA) where the object of study is 'ordinary' or 'casual' conversation (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 1986). This extremely detailed and innovative way of studying social interaction have primarily concerned the study of speech exchange systems in contexts such as telephone conversation, family dinners, playing games, peer talk, etc. The study of these varieties of everyday conversation shows that despite their differences they share a common core of organizational features that structure ordinary conversation as a speech exchange system. On such important aspect is the system of turn-taking which 'defines the basic ground rules for interacting in any social setting' as a thoroughly unscripted and open-ended affair in casual conversation. The minute details of any casual conversation, such as 'how long any speaker will retain the floor, and who will speak next, remains to be worked out by the participants themselves on a turn by turn, moment by moment basis' (Clayman & Heritage, 2002:21-22). This aspect of turn-taking in everyday conversation contrasts to more formal speech exchange systems, such as the news interview or doctor-patient interaction. In CA the speech exchange systems are studied with specific attention to the kind of actions that are accomplished, the action sequences and their interactional outcome.

Additional aspects of ordinary conversations are the following: openings of speech exchange are interactional rather than monologistic; they consist of the participants' mutual greetings;

the process of coordinating entry into talk by 'issuing and responding to a summons or engaging in parallel non-vocal process' (ibid); identifying or recognizing the participants; closings of conversation by recognition and the display of recognition, etc. Casual conversation is usually personal, non task-oriented, and its time-frame are usually not determined. Topics can emerge freely, every participant is free to make diverse contributions; anyone can initiate a new departure, etc. In concrete studies it is shown that these characteristics of everyday communication often deviates from the typical case, thus power and influence can add hierarchies and power structures also to everyday casual conversation.

Everyday casual conversation contrasts with, for instance, the news interview (Clayman & Heritage, 2002:68) which displays interactional qualitites such as 'formality, impersonality, and theatricality': 'Furthermore, when contrasted with parallel processes in ordinary conversation, it becomes apparent that there is nothing 'natural' or inevitable about how these processes work within the news interview. They represent one particular and distinctive way of managing the task of opening and closing on occasion of interaction. (---) … a mode of journalism being orchestrated on their [the audience's] behalf.' (ibid:93-94)

A close analysis of how political communication, such as that taking place in news interviews with politicians or other public figures, shows a degree of adaptation of the news interview 'game' to features of ordinary conversation. These features are adapted in a setting which is very differently constrained by time, genre, participants, access and audience. Among other important findings, the study by Clayman & Heritage shows that even though there is a gradual development of public discourse in the direction of 'conversationalization', the news interview as a form of political communication still remains a very formalized form of speech exchange system. This setting is characterized by, among other things, the

expectation that it is an impersonal encounter between occupants of the institutional roles of interviewer and interviewee, and this basic condition structures the conversation as a very formal speech exchange system.

Another strand of contemporary social and cultural theory, taking its point of departure in the work of Michel Foucault, focuses on the social and political processes in which a population becomes standardized and normalized (cf above). These processes are enabled by the findings in the emergent sciences on the human psyche and human social life. These sciences, Foucault argues helps to identify what is typical and normal and thus also as an outcome produces the criteria for what is deviant. Foucault follows these processes in the historical study of the emergence of institutions for the mentally ill, the prisons and the schools in Western Europe as well as in his study of the development of a normative heterosexual society. The work in the tradition of Foucault focuses on processes of normalization and, in particular, the importance of normalizing practices for the distribution of power as disciplinary power and self-governance, and the way that normalization become regarded as a standard. This standard is used to divide the population in groups according to criteria for (not) accommodating to this norm. Normalization involves all kinds of intricate assumptions and power in their institutionalization in various social practices.

From our perspective, the constant appeal to the ordinary and the everyday in various strands of social theory and practice, can be regarded as an aspect of this process of normalization. Thus, statistical work on the 'average' man and approximations of the world view of 'the man on the street' could be used in order to normalize a political body. This form of interrogation is a critique directed against the power strategies at work in society which uses approximations and standards of humanity as tools to identify, stigmatize and

correctionalize the deviants. We have to leave to more thorough historical study to

investigate if this is also the case with the 'average' man and 'the man on the street'; given

the possibility that these are perhaps not the best examples of power as the approximation

of man.

Michel de Certeau dedicates *The Practice of Everyday Life* not to the gods but to the common

man, and this cryptical formulation concentrates the essence of his hypothesis. His study (of

which *The Practice of Everyday Life* is just a late theoretical and methodological compilation) is

an investigation of the ways in which users operate in everyday practices. He writes against

the assumption, perhaps fuelled by Frankfurt school critical theory, that the common man is

a passive agent and guided more by established rules than by his or her own agency. The

everyday practices, the ways of operating and doing things needs to be articulated, according

to de Certeau. What he refers to as the study of 'usage' could be found less in the basic

routinized activities studied by ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, and more in

the realm of popular culture and consumption. The work of de Certeau has thus largely

theoretically inspired studies that focus on the realm of popular culture as a field in need of

the user's perspective. Studies of everyday cultural practice can help to identify hypotheses

concerning the specific logic of action and motivation characteristic of everyday life, to be

taken seriously. Such studies can be undertaken in the three areas that, according to de

Certeau, comprise the scope of studies of everyday life: sociology, anthropology, history;

ethnomethodology and sociolinguistics; semiotics. He tries to see how these three areas can

address the question of how 'the logic of unselfconscious thought' and its tactics can be

taken as a serious scholarly topic. The first area can be focused on developing a theory of

these practices, their rituals and *bricolages*, their management of space and time and their

interconnected networks (ibid:xvi). The second area describes, as we have seen above, a

description and analysis of the detailed procedures taking place in concrete intersubjective relations, with their complex set of background expectations, co-construction and play (ibid). The third area is semiotics and links with the philosophical and psychological topics of action, time and modalisation. These are not areas that de Certeau himself engages in, but is more to be taken as his mapping of the new domain of everyday practices as a concerted effort among various kinds of scientists.

A 'common place' which is referred to by De Certeau, is 'ordinary' language. He quotes Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* as announcing the society of the masses (the 'ant society') which symbolizes the erosion of the singular and the extraordinary and anticipates the coming community of the masses, dominated by the masses and the ordinary. The ordinary language is the 'common place' of this new era. He sees in Musil's work as a sort of imperial nostalgia which offered opportunities for the extraordinary and fears the social and cultural emergence of a framework of leveling rationalities. This was not totally new, as we have seen in the historical work of Foucault, but this development has its antecendents in the 16th century, and, for instance, in the way that society were coping with madness and death: 'Thus at the dawn of the modern age, in the sixteenth century, the ordinary man appears with the insignia of a general misfortune of which he makes sport' (ibid:1). This man is the *Everyman* ('a name that betrays the absence of a name') who plays a role in Renaissance ethics and drama, a personification of the impersonal conglomerate of a generalized humanity.
'But when elitist writing uses the 'vulgar' speaker as a disguise for a metalanguage about itself, it also allows us to see what dislodges it from its privilege and draws it outside of itself: an Other who is no longer God or the Muse, but the anonymous.' ???

He mentions Freud and his work on the ordinary man, *der gemeine Mann* as the starting point of the analysis of civilization in *Civilization and its Discontents* and in his studies of religion in *The Future of an Illusion.*

In all these cases, the representative of an abstract universal man follows a similar logic of approximation and generalization in the service of '*generalizing* a particular knowledge and of *guaranteeing* its validity by the whole of history' (ibid:3, emphasis in original). De Certeau claims, and here we return to his cryptic dedication in the book, that the ordinary man functions in the same way as God did in former times. It is represented as an abstract universal man with a particular knowledge and which is validated by history (ibid:4). From the anonymous conglomerate of humanity in the *Everyman* of Renaissance ethics and drama, to the systematic psychological disattention of God in the work of Freud, de Certeau see an analogy in its social and cultural function. That is an interpretation with no less ambition than pertaining to explain the values of the 'ordinary' on a scale comparable to that of God. Like Foucault, he also identifies the historical role of the sciences and its privileges in assuming to be speaking in the name of the ordinary. This scientific ventriloquism can be seen as something that motivates both a shift from an absolutist belief in God as the historical 'generalizer', and a shift to an empirical legitimation of the facticity of the ordinary. 'The important thing here', notes de Certeau, 'is the fact that the work of overflowing operates by the insinuation of the ordinary into established scientific fields' (ibid:5). Science with its theories and methods claims to be in that general place where the ordinary can be grasped. Science also offers a kind of glorification of the ordinary, a hagiographic everydayness for its edifying value in the spirit of Enlightenment secularization. This historiographical critique and social studies of science approach is useful as a critical lesson for the assumptions underpinning the contemporary self-consciousness in the human and

social sciences: 'Even if it is drawn into the oceanic rumble of the ordinary, the task consists not in substituting a representation for the ordinary or covering it up with mere words, but in showing how it introduces itself into our techniques – in the way in which the sea flows back into pockets and crevices in beaches – and how it can reorganize the place from which discourse is produced.' (ibid:5)

De Certeau wants to focus on the analytical techniques whereby the 'ordinary' turns up as that entity in whose name so much speaking is done by authorities. In particular, the 'ordinary' shows up in the discourse of the expert and the philosopher as that which is most characteristic. Talking in the name of the 'ordinary' is a rhetorical move which aims to 'bring back' scientific practices and scientific language to its native land. It is a promise of return and connection with basic reality which also, paradoxically and strangely, simultaneously is an exile for science and expertise, due to its process of distancing itself from the everyday realities by the specialized language and thought patterns of the scientific disciplines. The expert can be read as a politician that mediates between society and a body of knowledge by means of which his competence is transmuted into social authority: 'as he introduces his speciality into the wider and more complex arena of socio-political decisions' (ibid:7).
The curious operations which 'converts' competence into authority involves talking in the name of the ordinary. This is curious because increasing authority means, following de Certeau, instantly decreasing specialized competence, the expertise is, so to say, drawn out of its orbit. This process of despecialization by the expert resembles the process in which a politician is becoming an expert and a professional and how he/she later tries to return to the common place (the *topoi*) and the community where he/she came from. This illustrates a general paradox of authority which depends both on competence/expertise and the

blessings or authorization of a larger group: 'a knowledge is ascribed to it and this knowledge is precisely what it lacks where it is exercised' (ibid:8). In saying that authority is a kind of abuse of knowledge, de Certeau echoes Foucault's critical analysis of the grid of knowledge and power. De Certeau recognizes the strategy used by a person in authority in order to cope with this loss and he continues: 'and in this fact we ought perhaps to recognize the effect of the social law that divests the individual of his competence in order to establish (or re-establish) the capital of a collective competence, that is, of a common verisimilitude.' (ibid:8). In talking of this dynamics of back and forth in between the constituency of legitimacy and the position of social authority, de Certeau names this process a 'social law' which determines a person in power to retreat in his/her footsteps. Such analysis brings us very close to an understanding why the prospect of addressing the 'ordinary' is so very attractive for a politician:

> Since he cannot limit himself to talking about what he knows, the Expert pronounces on the basis of the *place* that his specialty has won for him. In that way he inscribes himself and is inscribed in a *common* order where specialization, as the *rule* and hierarchically ordering *practice* of the productivist economy, has the value of *initiation*. Because he has successfully submitted himself to this initiatory practice, he can, on questions foreign to his technical competence but not to the power he acquired through it, pronounce with authority a discourse which is no longer a function of knowledge, but rather a function of the socioeconomic order. He speaks as an ordinary man, who can receive authority in exchange for knowledge just as one receives a paycheck in exchange for work. He inscribes himself in the common language of practices, where an overproduction of authority leads to the devaluation of authority, since one always gets more in exchange for an equal or inferior amount of competence. (ibid:8)

COMMENTARY ON THIS The politician, or in the analysis of de Certeau, the expert or philosopher, can be using this rhetorical move to the place and the common order as a strategy in pursuit of legitimacy, power and representation, but this strategy can also be a trap:

But when he continues to believe, or make others believe, that he is acting as a scientist, he confuses social *place* with technical *discourse*. He takes one for the other: it is a simple case of mistaken identity. He misunderstands the order which he represents. He no longer knows *what* he is saying. (ibid)

COMMENTARY ON THIS

(Additional material:

Williams: 'Culture is ordinary: that is where we must start' The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land.' Two senses of culture, (1989 Resources of Hope. Culture, Democracy, Socialism, London: Verso p 3))

Wittgenstein distinguishes between discourses regulating specialization and the narratives of exchange on a massive scale, as exemplars of various language games. He shows thereby, according to de Certeau, that they are ruled by different logics and that they in some sense are incompatible and untranslatable. The rhetorical move by the expert in the direction of the common is, following the analysis, to be understood as a form of insinuation of the beliefs of the verisimilar and of the illegitimate innuendo of metaphors, of the use of the common in scientific discourse. Thus he criticizes the philosopher and expert for what he/she is doing in retrospect to (re-)connect with a basic world. The expert is shown to be a sort of fugitive whose sins consists in wanting to look back, a rather harsh judgment over those who follow a trajectory of specialized knowledge. Although, this attitude in de Certeau

is talked about with some degree of generality, his object of criticism is not the pursuit of knowledge per se, but rather the use of knowledge for the purposes of social authority and for strategies of power. In this process, the 'ordinary' person, the common order and the same 'common' place of origin is invoked along with ordinary language, and all of this, according to the analysis, have the function of being hostage to the person in pursuit of power. De Certeau may be critical against the image of the audience as passive, exacerbated for instance by the analysis of the Frankfurt school, but in the analysis of the expert he runs the risk of repeating this same mistake. The expert makes efforts to rejoin pieces of language which were disconnected and abusively hierarchized. This is made in a philosophy which provides a 'model' for understanding the complex logics implied by ordinary language. Here the target of his analysis seems to be Wittgenstein himself and ordinary language philosophy (ibid:9). As we recall, Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations* (1976 #116, 48) heralded a move back to the roots: 'to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use'. In the face of de Certeau, Wittgenstein become the scientist reflecting about 'the activity of signifying in the common language', our ordinary language and its apparatus as the default. The problem for the ordinary language philosopher becomes to say nothing which exceeds the limits of ordinary language, never to become an expert on use and meaning. But the question could be asked if this not a kind of firm belief in ordinary language. De Certeau fears that the philosophical or scientific privilege disappears into the 'ordinary' in the same way as the privilege disappeared into the specialized discourses of the disciplines. Wittgenstein's reductionism is therefore a form of invalidation of truths, a criticism of the places in which facts are converted into truths, by doing the reverse. Can Wittgenstein's reduction be understood as an analogue to the kind of reduction that politicians are making

when the invoke the 'ordinary', expressing a need to validate a specific place of experience and an awareness of a common order formulated in 'ordinary' language?

The science of the ordinary, studied through the analytical techniques of ordinary language philosophy in Wittgenstein, reveals the threefold foreignness: the situation of an ethnologist or historian in relation to the field of study; the situation of the specialist (and of the wealthy bourgeois) in relation to common life; the Germanic person who uses the everyday English language to express his thoughts about ordinary language. For Wittgenstein this becomes like a journey in several dimensions: 'To leave Vienna or Cambridge …to set out toward the open sea of common experience that surrounds, penetrates, and finally carries away every discourse…' (ibid:22). This resonates with the tendency of philosophical resistance in the theories of Wittgenstein: 'The critical return of the ordinary, as Wittgenstein understands it, must destroy all the varieties of rhetorical brilliance associated with powers that hierarchize and with nonsense that enjoys authority.' (ibid:13).

The criticism against the experts and philosophers in their tendency towards reductionism, applies also to the cultural theorist. De Certeau self-critically observes the social hierarchization which organizes scientific work of the ordinary in popular culture. The interest in everyday life in popular culture is in principle no different from that of the expert or philosopher; all areas are based on a similar paradoxes of a dynamics of power across incompatible domains of practice. The intellectuals, says de Certeau, are still borne on the back of the common people (ibid:25). What he has in mind here more directly is the studies made by the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss in Brazilian society.

As a parallel to the God of the pre-scientific era with the 'ordinary' man of the subsequent era, de Certeau regards political organizations to be substituting themselves for the Churches as the places of faith practices. The analogy between religion and politics is not new, but the

interpretation of the characteristics of this analogy by de Certeau adds a new momentum: 'We must locate the modes in which believing, knowing, and their contents reciprocally define each others today, and in that way try to grasp a few of the ways believing and making people believe function in the political formation in which, within this system, the tactics made possible by the exigencies of a position and the constraints of a history are deployed.' (ibid:185). More directly; the claim to be speaking in the name of the ordinary expressed by the expert and philosopher have a parallel in speaking in the name of a reality (which is assumed to be inaccessible) by the media. He notes the critical importance of a discourse authorized by an access to reality to distribute itself in articles of faith, elements that organizes practices and in consumption. COMMENTARY ON THIS Through de Certeau's critical analysis of the various ways in which the 'ordinary' have been taken hostage by science and expertise, we can perhaps see in the contemporary media and politics a similar attempt at taking reality as hostage for the attempt of justifying and legitimating a position of social authority in the interpretation of the flow of events. The establishment of the real is '[n]arrations about what's going on constitute our orthodoxy.' In politics each party derives its credibility from what it believes about its referent or about its adversary, the real is therefore instituted by what the other is assumed to believe.

COMMENTARY AND WRAP UP

3. BEING ORDINARY IS A VERY HARD THING TO BE

To invoke the everyday can often be a sleight of hand that normalizes and universalizes particular values, specific world-views. Politicians, for instance, are often fond of using terms like 'everyday life' or 'ordinary people' as a way of hailing constituents to a common culture: people like us, lives like ours. The underside of this, of course, is that this everyday life is haunted by implicit 'others', who supposedly live outside the ordinary, the everyday. Claiming everyday life as self-evident and readily accessible becomes an operation for asserting the dominance of specific cultures and for particular understandings of such cultures. (Highmore, 2002:1)

A tool for domination, siding with the dominated as voices fro below,

Unproblematic acceptance of the everyday as a transparent realm – questioning the

transparency of the daily,

Rationalities of the common.

The 'common' in the 'common sense' and the 'common touch'

Commonality, Common sense, Common touch

(following Strong 1994 who follows Benveniste) Indo-European root *mei* (exchange) various

words in Indo-European language, among them German *gemein* designating the social

common as a basis for the word communication

common have a double meaning in both French and English,

- what we share

- what is ordinary, everyday, vulgar

Rousseau in *Emile*, humans have a sixth sense, 'called the common sense (sens commun) 'It

is called so not because it is common to all persons, but because, he says, it is the outcome

of the well-ordered use of the other senses. It instructs us in 'the nature of things, by the

collective participation of all of their appearance.' (Strong 75) exists only with reference to the mind

Both uses are old, in English since at least the 13ᵗʰ century,

Common – as in community, that which humans have together as part of a group, 'lack of community' means a society of strangers, or those that are estranged from the group,

Common – as in ordinary, vulgar, often pejorative, denotes an aristocratic superiority,

Common – a development of the former, can become a badge of pride: old English use refers to free burghers as 'the common' (we are in the commons), the house of commons, etc.

French
a state of affairs based on equality, the way human beings are like each other, 'It is the ability to perceive the common that is at the root of the ability to have politics that rests on equality.' (ibid 76) Rousseau's central point in the Social Contract, that the common is only established in and by politics, constitutive of the human,

Something is taking place here, the rationality of 'common sense' is complemented with a shift to some other mode of being (call it tactile, embodiment, immediate), I do not want to reiterate a static mind-body dichotomy here, but certainly there is both rational and irrational elements of both common sense and the common touch

This shift might help us to account for the politics of attraction and politics of trust as

something that is not only reliant on the rational mode but also needs something else,

Citizenship and political membership.

Also in a reading of Rousseau, a particular understanding of the human being, Being a

citizen is not a natural state of affairs, it has to be made, not only a member of a society or a

political system, a being in whom the thought of the common is realized, 'The citizen is, in

other words, someone who lives in the ordinary or common world, the only world that is a

real human world.'

The thought of the common have to be realized by the person speaking, 'contract with

himself' , the project of thinking the 'we' in the 'I',

See quote, the many and The One, vs. in the social pact we take into ourselves a self that is

common or general, (musical metaphors) the free realization of the humanly common, the

others are taken into me and I am taken into them,

The 'we' in the I, the idea of the common 75-79

Obscuring the boundaries between first person singular and first person plural

The ordinary and its exceptions.

Normative and descriptive

What is available for scrutiny, but also what remains hidden, to make the invisible visible, producing a problem, raising consciousness, both revealing and in its psychoanalytical dimension,

Commonality but also difference,

Psychoanalysis and the radical commonality (Highmore 2) 'that we all share a condition where our consciousness can be undermined by our unconscious' transforming our sense of the everyday,

Hiding the every day in Marx the ppearanvce of the everyday hides/distortsthe material circumstances that gives rise to this distortion, false consiousness and the prospects of true consciousness,

Theories of representation,

Illusory and real at the same time,

'For Freud it is the almost inevitable tragedy of loss, forbidden love, and death anxiety, which lurks bubbling under the everyday. For Marx everyday capitalism is a catastrophic engine devouring material and human resources and structured across class antagonisms.' (Highmore 8)

The emphasis of the ordinary and the excommunication processes that is one result, a way of dividing us and them, of sketching the boundaries of community and of claiming to be a truthful representative of this community with an open mandate to continuously define these boundaries,

Ordinary

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A regular or customary matter, condition, or course of events: commonplace, norm, rule, usual,

Commonly encountered: average, common, commonplace, general, normal, typical usual

Being of no special quality or type: average, common, commonplace, cut-and-dried, formulaic, garden, garden-variety, indifferent, mediocre, plain, routine, run-f-the-mill, standard, stock, undistinguished, unexceptional, unremarkable

1. Commonly encountered; usual. See synonyms at **common**. **2a.** Of no exceptional ability, degree, or quality; average. **b.** Of inferior quality; second-rate. **3.** Having immediate rather than delegated jurisdiction, as a judge. **4.** *Mathematics* Designating a differential equation containing no more than one independent variable.

Extra-ordinary

Adj. Far beyond what is usual, normal or customary: exceptional, magnificent, outstanding, preeminent, rare, remarkable, singular, towering, uncommon, unusual Informal: standout Slang: awesome, out of sight, SEE better, usual

1. Beyond what is ordinary or usual: *extraordinary authority.* **2.** Highly exceptional; remarkable: *an extraordinary achievement.* **3.** Employed or used for a special service, function, or occasion: *a minister extraordinary; an extraordinary professor.*

Opens for psychoanalytical questions about power:

What is the extraordinary? What is this realm of experience that is avoided precisely as the inversion of the commonality? Is this the realm of forbidden desires or strange thoughts? The everyday, the extraordinary, the exceptional as Giorgio Agamben following Carl Schmitt have shown, is a logical requisite for any democratic constitution, the hypocrisy of the strategy of being ordinary because power rests with the one who can make an exception, the extraordinary,

We could think of the emphasis on ordinariness in a world of hostility and terror, and that it functions to identify the enemy

The ordinary as a moment of the real.

Garfinkel 1967:vii) 'In doint sociology, lay and professional, every reference to the 'real world', even where the reference is to physical or biological events, is a reference to the organized acitivites of everyday life' (intro to Studies)

What are the functions of the promises of the ordinary?

'the return of the real' (new historicism, the body, the city, ' a frustration with the opposition implied by a focus on *re-presentation*. It is, ironically, the refusal to assume that there is something else *there*, that is being *re*-presented, that would activate a return of the real.; (Highmore 29)

Compare how we talk about 'the real' (in media) and how we analyze this from a critical perspective, for instance in so called reality TV shows or in other interactive participation production formats! Compare how we talk of the real (in science) and how we claim validity and relevance and truth by our continuous reference to this.

'The Real Deal' is the name of Kerry's campaign

The ideological background in representative politics and in the democratic or social democratic tradition

A response to the convergence of media and politics

Ordinariness in a world of specialized and professionalized politics which can be taken as unreal?

The determinacy and indeterminacy of the ordinary

'the persistence of the past' Highmore 3 the idea of permanent culture in traditional anthropology

the everyday is always going to exceed the ability to register it' (ibid) concerning the everyday as a theoretical project and its unlimited character,

Lefebvre, everyday is defined by what is left over after all specific analysis is done,

the ordinary is perhaps one of the primary sources of the democratic imagination,

'The ordinary is what everybody knows' giving us a sense of comfort, allows us to make certain predictions, assuming a certain constancy of life, it is reliable and we can count on it,

A celebration of the ordinary (the All-American), a fetishism of the ordinary,

'And so we celebrate the ordinary as the practical form that peaceable living takes when life is good, and we cling to any vestiges of the ordinary that survive when catastrophe takes hold of us or when our circumstances are diminished, when life is bad.' (Dumm 1999:1)

- consumption and material culture – 'the common sense of ordinary life as the pursuit of the material good' and the constitutional pursuit of happiness, 'The ordinary becomes the bland and stultifying ground of American values' suggests Dumm (ibid).

- the other aspect: mysterious indeterminacy , the unfulfillment of happiness as an activity with a determined process, a kind of anxiety at being exposed to the elusive hopes of consumer society, alienation, the elusive character of the ordinary,

Indeterminacy in the use of the ordinary as contrast to the apparent determinacy of this

rhetorical move… Dumm in the vein of Deleuze

CONCLUSION

<u>Methodology: The relevance of the analysis</u>

#Are we asking too much? Are we focusing on something that do not hold for close scrutiny and that is not supposed to be exposed to such scrutiny? Is it way beyond what we could ask for?

#Is this an important question at all in the context of the analysis of political communication? Is it just another blind search in the details? Is it at all important to bring up in the realm of politics – is it in fact not a way of hiding what is really important in political analysis? – My answer – It is interesting to understand the relationships between the audiences and the politicians (or the media production), what we are studying is constructed on these conditions if constitutional mutuality.

The king's two bodies, Kantorowitz (1957) medieval monarchy, a body natural and a body

politic, 'This dualism of the king having two real bodies, one visible and one invisible,

provided sovereign authority a means by which it might stabilize its representation before

the public, as that public was coming into being as the constituency of the emergent state.

The gathering of authority into the hands of the king was a way to signify the unity of the

people.' (139)

Techniques of representing sovereignty that is no longer there (on the president) 144f

'To represent sovereignty, as Ronald Reagan showed, involves acting *like* a president more

than it does acting *as* a president. This who succeed at the 'acting like' function are more

likely to win election and remain high enough in the polls to be protected from

congressional or special prosecutorial subversion. This technique of presidential

impersonation would seem to have its limits: it generally favors those who act the most

presidential.'

The celebrity as president and the president as celebrity, a president 'who rules through a

politics of identification-as-projection' quoting Hal Foster (144)

The contemporary presidential temptation is to reinvent the invisible and immortal body of

the king through the media, through the spectacle, the political theology of the King's Two

Bodies,

Generally Dumm's book is disappointing, because it is not coherent and it s expectations

about dealing with the ordinary is not fulfilled.

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