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How are political concepts 'essentially' contested?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research presented in this article is to advance a culturally informed theory of political terminology, with special attention to essentially contested political terms. The article proposes that a comprehensive theory of political terminology must account for participants' reasons for engaging in essential contestation. In the case of essentially contested concepts, the reason for engagement is concern with moral trouble in the speech community. Through a culturally oriented discourse analysis of a call-in exchange on Hungarian state radio the article demonstrates that the use of the essentially contested term *gyűlöletbeszéd* ('hate speech') emerges as a response to multiple norm violations, and serves the purpose of oppositional membering and redress.

1. Introduction

To the great frustration of many producers and consumers of political discourse, public talk features terms whose meanings appear to be eternally contested. Some frequently used examples of such terms are "democracy," "justice," "rule of law," "citizenship," "war," "genocide," "abortion," "rape," and "hate crime" (Collier et al., 2006). Analysts of political discourse may ask: What do these terms mean, if anything at all? And why do politically active communal members spend considerable amounts of energy on contesting them? Answering these questions requires a theory of political terms, a theory that can account for the widespread and deep normative disagreements that mark modernity in 20th and 21st century societies.

Chilton's (2008) essay titled 'Political terminology' lays the groundwork for such a theory. The author's point of departure is the first question listed above: How does one go about identifying the meanings of sometimes hotly contested political terms? In more general terms, what is the link between the lexical items of political terminology and social facts? The essay covers an impressive range of theoretical approaches to meaning including the work of Walter Bryce Gallie, Hilary Putnam, Richard Rorty, truth-conditional semanticists and cognitive linguists. What interests Chilton about political terms is not how the linguistic properties of such terms shape their meanings but how these terms acquire meaning "both in the mind and in the mind-in-society" (p. 239). A cognitive-pragmatic theory of political terminology, Chilton argues, must be able to account for the widespread contestation of political terms, the variation of terms across time and societies, the degree of detail and complexity ascribed to such terms, and their capacity to shape political action.

In the present essay I concentrate on one aspect of Chilton's theorizing, the issue of contestation. Using a cultural approach to the use of political terms in political discourse I shift theoretical focus from the question of how contested terms become meaningful to the socio-cultural significance of the practice of contestation itself. I begin by offering an alternative reading of Gallie's analytic philosophical theory of essentially contested concepts from a cultural perspective. Next, I interrogate a particular episode of the essential contestation of the term *gyűlöletbeszéd* ('hate speech') taken from a corpus of audio data collected during my fieldwork in Hungary. I end by arguing that essential contestation is socially consequential because it takes place in, and brings into view, a particular speech community's moral universe. The function of essential

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contestation, from this perspective, is to sanction communal members who violate communal norms within the larger framework of an ongoing social drama.

2. Essential contestation

Prior to the discussion of Chilton's take on Gallie's theory of essentially contested concepts let us briefly review Gallie's argument. In public discourse, Gallie (1956) writes, "there are concepts which are essentially contested, concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users" (p. 169). In the case of concepts such as "work of art," "democracy," or "Christian doctrine" public speakers (including philosophers) use them according to diverse interpretive norms. For any of these and other essentially contested terms, "these mutually contesting, mutually contested uses of the concept [make] up together its standard general use" (p. 169). The only way to understand the meaning of an essentially contested concept, according to Gallie, is to analyze the divergent ways in which it is used, and the divergent norms according to which contestants deem particular uses acceptable and others unacceptable.

Gallie identifies seven "conditions" under which a concept can be regarded essentially contested. In the light of Gallie's reception over the years I agree with Collier et al. (2006) and Waldron (2002) that these "conditions" are most useful not as criteria according to which we can determine what concepts are (or can be) subject to essentially contestation but as a framework for analyzing and comparing concepts whose contestation can be empirically established. In Garver's (1990) words, "partisans, not theorists, determine whether a conflict involves an essentially contested concept. [...] Concepts are essentially contested only derivatively, because they are employed in essentially contested arguments" (p. 258).[1] Chilton (2008) makes a similar move in his interpretation of Gallie's theory of meaning by proposing that it "is best understood in terms of discourse" (p. 227). To reflect the view that the meaning of contested concepts is to be located in the contest, I argue that it is more apt to refer to Gallie's framework as the collection of seven 'components' of essential contestation. Below, I list the seven components Gallie identifies and use his discussion (1956) of 'democracy' to illustrate the various components.

(1) *Appraisiveness*. Essentially contested concepts are value-laden.[2] "The concept of democracy which we are discussing," Gallie argues, "is appraisive; indeed many would urge that during the last one hundred and fifty years it has steadily established itself as the appraisive political concept *par excellence*" (p. 184, Gallie's emphasis).

(2) *Internal complexity*. The concept's referent, Gallie shows, is such that the evaluation pertaining to it applies to it as a whole. 'Democracy' fits this description because, in spite of the complex and often conflicting ways in which public speakers conceptualize 'democracy' evaluations apply to it in its entirety, as a coherent whole.

(3) *Ambiguity*. The evaluation of the concept's referent depends on how a given speaker assigns importance to various constituting features of that referent. Gallie writes:

> The concept of democracy which we are discussing is internally complex in such a way that any democratic achievement (or program) admits of a variety of descriptions in which its different aspects are graded in different orders of importance. I list as examples of different aspects (a) Democracy means primarily the power of the majority of citizens to choose (and remove) governments – a power which would seem to involve, anyhow in larger communities, something like the institution of parties competing for political leadership; (b) Democracy means primarily equality of all citizens, irrespective of race, creed, sex, etc., to attain to positions of political leadership and responsibility; (c) Democracy means primarily the continuous active participation of citizens in political life at all levels, i.e., it is real when, and in so far as, there really is self-government (pp. 184–185).

The degree of analytic precision with which Gallie identifies the above "aspects" of 'democracy' is not the issue here. The significance of the above discussion is that it attempts to delineate those basic assumptions about the nature of 'democracy' that can conceivably serve as the theoretical foundation of conflicting interpretations of 'democracy.' For "there is nothing absurd or contradictory in any one of a number of possible rival descriptions of [democracy's] total worth, one such description setting its component parts or features in one order of importance, a second setting them in a second order, and so on" (p. 172).

(4) *Open character*. The use of essentially contested concepts is radically context-dependent. At any historical moment, Gallie argues, such concepts must be regarded "*persistently* vague, since a proper use of it by P_1 in a situation S_1 affords no sure guide to anyone else as to P_1's next, and perhaps equally proper, use of it in some future situation S_2" (p. 172 fn1, Gallie's emphasis). "Politics being the art of the possible," Gallie writes about 'democracy' at a later point of his essay, "democratic targets will be raised or lowered as circumstances alter, and democratic achievements are always judged in the light of such alterations" (p. 186).

[1] This view is somewhat at odds with Gallie's original approach. In his original formulations of essential contestability, Gallie set out to make observations about how the "contestability [of a concept] consisted in its being somehow inherently liable to rival interpretations" (Gray, 1983, p. 95). Much as he insists that the meaning of essentially contested concepts can only be derived from their use Gallie devotes more analytic attention to the structure of the concepts themselves, and limits his "observations of use" to the discussion of hypothetical situations and scenarios. In agreement with Garver, my reading of Gallie's original formulation emphasizes his observation that the meaning of essentially contested concepts is to be found *in* the communicative act contestation, and de-emphasizes his interest in the abstract structure of these concepts. Admittedly, this interpretive move raises the question whether 'essentially contested concept' was itself a candidate for the category of the same name.

[2] In his original formulation, Gallie equated appraisiveness with positive evaluation. As a number of Gallie's critics point out (see Collier et al., 2006), essential contestation does not preclude the possibility of negative evaluations.

(5) *Competitive use*. The use of essentially contested concepts is always 'use-against' and, as such, a rhetorical exercise: "to use an essentially contested concept means to use it against other uses and to recognize that one's own use of it has to be maintained against these other uses" (p. 172, fn1). The claim that 'democracy' is used "both aggressively and defensively [...] hardly requires discussion" (p. 186).

(6) *Positing an original exemplar*. All uses of essentially contested concepts, Gallie points out, posit a single best exemplar of the concept's referent. The rhetorical function of positing an exemplar is to anchor a particular interpretation of a contested cultural concept in a historical event (or series of events), an ideal manifestation of the concept's referent, which, in turn, equips the interpretation with normative status. Reference to an exemplar allows a group of contestants advocating a particular use of a contested concept to claim that their use does meet normative standards whereas other uses do not. In the case of 'democracy,' Gallie argues, contestants have at their disposal a "vague" tradition of "demands, aspirations, revolts and reforms of a common *anti-in*egalitarian character" (p. 186, Gallie's emphasis), a tradition they are free to punctuate in a way that serves their rhetorical purpose.

(7) *Claiming optimal instantiations of the exemplar*. As contestants vie for the acknowledgment of their meaning-in-use, they attempt to 'win over' other contestants by pointing to particular (classes of) referents of the contested concept which, they argue, function as optimal instantiations of the exemplar. The French Revolution, Gallie, remarks, has served as the source of inspiration for a wide variety of political movements, all of which claim to be champions of 'democracy.' In this example, the French Revolution fills the role of the original exemplar of 'democracy,' and the use of the term 'democracy' by a political movement which claims to model its interpretation of 'democracy' on the French Revolution functions as the optimal instantiation.

Motivated by an interest in the semantic properties of political terms, Chilton (2008) invokes Gallie's work on essentially contested concepts to argue that the meaning of political terms like 'democracy' are internally complex and contestable, and their meaning varies significantly over time. From this perspective it does indeed become "highly questionable whether any particular *subset* of the lexicon is *essentially* contested" (p. 228, Chilton's emphasis). This reading, I argue next, fails to appreciate the socio-cultural function the Gallie's theory ascribes to the essential contestation of political concepts. This aspect of Gallie's theory is a significant contribution to the theory of political terms.

One aspect of contestation, to Gallie, is that it is 'essential' if the concept's meaning can only be identified by means of tracing all of its contested uses. Contestation is essential to the meaning of such concepts because it functions as the very locus of their meaning. By implication, the act of defining an essentially contested concept like 'democracy' means, in effect, that the speaker producing the definition inevitably becomes a contestant. It is not enough to say that these concepts have a wide variety of interpretations-in-use. We must recognize that they also function as discursive resources for positioning oneself and one's group against a rival group of contestants. A second, related aspect of essential contestation, as I demonstrate in this article, is that it is animated by participant concern regarding the communal norms that enable and constrain the use of essentially contested concepts. The contest is not simply about referential meaning but about (1) communal norms shaping meaning-in-use, about (2) which group will be able to control the meaning of the contested concept, and, as a result of having achieved control over meaning, (3) which group will be able to position itself as the guardian of communal norms. Put briefly, the contest mobilizes and highlights the reflexive function (Taylor, 1997, Ch. 6) of essentially contested concepts.

Gallie's insight shares a number of elements with the anthropological study of concept use and the communal function of communication. One of the chief meanings-in-use of concepts in any speech community is their capacity to align those who use them with local normative systems of sociality. Silverstein (2004) shows that, in the context of any given socio-cultural system of meaning, the meaning of "cultural" concepts is not exhausted by their denotational (referential) meaning. The use of concepts by a speaker generates conceptual (cultural) meaning by indexing types of persons with (1) particular social characteristics and (2) particular degrees of authority which allows or prevents them from using a given concept in an authoritative manner (i.e., as legitimate members of a social category). The use of concepts is, thus, one of the most significant resources available to cultural members to achieve membering (Philipsen, 1989, 1992), that is, positioning oneself in talk as a legitimate member of a cultural community. In this view, the use of concepts has an important communal function because it allows individual speakers to talk their communal membership into being by using concepts in ways that are recognizable to and accepted by the target community, and by experiencing group membership through using concepts in communally recognizable and accepted ways.

But what about concepts whose use is contested within a speech community? How can these concepts function as membering devices if no consensus exists within a given community about their cultural meaning? The logic of the anthropological approach to the relationship between the use of concepts in everyday talk and social organization as outlined above leads us to the following conclusion: the contestation of concepts can be seen as empirical evidence of the existence of groups of speakers within the larger speech community who define their boundaries via linguistic practice. As we will see in the case study of 'hate speech' below, the boundaries of these groups are enacted in interactional moments when one group of speakers (or a speaker or speakers speaking on behalf of a group) proffers a meaning-in-use of a concept that casts other meanings-in-use as unacceptable. This polarization of positions (Carbaugh, 1996) is, in essence, the process I will refer to as *oppositional membering* – the use of discursive resources (including political terms) in a way that positions one group and its members in normative opposition with another group and its members.

A significant theoretical upshot of the discussion so far is that the diversity of norms for engaging in and evaluating communicative action within a speech community may lead to the lack of discursive *consensus*, but not to the lack of discursive *coherence*. Any cultural system of meaning

> in so far as it is demonstrated in concrete communication practices, is not so much a bland replication of uniformity, as it is an organization of diversity; not necessarily an approved consensus, but a system of collaborative coherence; not a mere mirroring of one view, but a productive portrait, a bricolage of common life. [...] Cultural meaning systems, if not individual applications, cohere paradox, conflict, contradiction, even chaos." (Carbaugh, 1991, p. 339)

The contestation of cultural concepts within a speech community, ethnographic theory assumes, does not necessarily lead to incomprehension among contestants.

To summarize my explication of the cultural insight in Gallie's theory of essential contestation, the contestation of political terms is "essential" when it occasions oppositional membering with regard to an opponent (1) who uses a given term according to a competing interpretation, and (2) whose interpretation is seen as a norm violation. Oppositional membering ensures that contestants maintain alignment with the community whose interpretation of the concept at hand they use. It should be noted that this discussion does not imply that an essentially contested political concept can only be "essentially" contested. As the analysis in the next section will demonstrate, a political term becomes the subject of essential contestation only when an interpretation of a concept is seen as a norm violation.

3. Essential contestation as a response to norm violation

I use the concept of 'norms' in this paper to refer to a culturally variable discursive construct. This use of the concept is rooted in the ethnography of communication (Carbaugh, 2008; Hymes, 1962, 1972; Philipsen, 1992; Philipsen and Coutu, 2005) and cultural discourse analytic (Carbaugh, 2007; Philipsen, 1990) research traditions. This tradition draws a distinction between two kinds of cultural norms: norms of speech production and speech interpretation (Hymes, 1972). Speakers invoke norms in spoken and written discourse when they sense that another speaker's conduct is in violation of the community's normative system (Philipsen, 1990; Hall, 1988/89). In this view, the cultural function of norms is that they guide individual speakers in their efforts to align themselves with the community. Speakers who invoke norm violations position themselves as acting on behalf of a community speakers they align themselves with in that moment of interaction. Hall (1988/89) distinguishes two main types of responses to invocations of norms. Counter-challenges call into question the accused person's responsibility, the blame-worthiness of the action, the occurrence of the norm violating act, or the relevance of the invoked norm. The other response, acquiescence, entails extension (speakers align their criticism with the norm in the absence of the violator), re-do (violator initiates alignment and repair), or spoken or silent apology.

Ethnographic fieldwork I had conducted between 2004 and 2007 revealed that *gyűlöletbeszéd* ('hate speech') is widely regarded as a violation of norms of speech production in Hungarian public discourse. However, the norms of interpretation Hungarian public speakers use to detect 'hate speech' vary. As Boromisza-Habashi (2008, Ch. 6) demonstrates in the analysis of a public debate in the Hungarian literary weekly *Élet és irodalom*, participants invoke two prominent norms of interpretation. The first of these, the tone-based norm, identified instances of 'hate speech' on the basis of the speaker's purportedly hateful tone. The second, content-based norm, suggested that hateful (discriminatory, racist) content rendered public expression 'hate speech.' Participants of the debate agreed tone and content could both potentially function as tokens of 'hate speech' but disagreed vehemently about which one of these tokens was the decisive indicator of 'hate speech.'

Public interest in 'hate speech' was at its peak in 2003 in Hungary. On September 24 of that year one of the state radio stations, *Kossuth Rádió*, devoted an entire 60-min episode of the program *Szóljon hozzá!* ('Have your say!') to the discussion of 'hate speech.' Two expert guests, a sociologist and a political scientist, were invited to have a conversation with the host about definitions and antidotes of 'hate speech' in Hungarian society and abroad. Listeners were invited to call in, send text messages, and to chat online with the host's assistant.

The meaning of 'hate speech' was the subject of contestation throughout the entire episode, but not all contestation qualified as essential. For example, the two expert guests disagreed whether speech was to be described as hateful from the perspective of the speaker of 'hate speech' or its target. A caller contested the views of both expert guests by suggesting that the only reliable indicator of 'hate speech' was its capacity to occasion physical violence. One caller, however, did prompt the host to engage in the essential contestation of 'hate speech.'

The segment analyzed below can be used to demonstrate two aspects of Gallie's (1956) theory of essentially contested concepts: its descriptive utility and its cultural dimension. First, Gallie's work can be used to establish that 'hate speech' is indeed an essentially contested concept in the data segments presented below. The speakers' talk reveals that 'hate speech' has a core *evaluative dimension*. The caller describes it as 'shocking.' Although the host does not explicitly characterize 'hate speech' as a morally questionable act in the segment he does not dispute the caller's characterization of 'hate speech' as such, mainly because the negative moral character of 'hate speech' has been previously established on the program. 'Hate speech' also emerges as *internally complex*: the participants of the exchange equally cast 'hate speech' as a negative act regardless of their different interpretations of the concept. The use of the concept is *ambiguous*: the caller performs the tone-based interpretation, that is, she highlights the emotive aspect of 'hate speech.' In contrast, the host displays a content-based, legalistic

interpretation of 'hate speech' as derogatory public talk directed at an identifiable target or targets on the basis of the target(s) group membership, an interpretation also endorsed by the two expert guests on the program. The term as used by the host and the caller also has an *open character*. This element of Gallie's framework sheds perhaps the least light on the call-in exchange. The very fact that the caller is able to coherently contest the dominant content-based interpretation used on the program attests the open character of 'hate speech.' More importantly, 'hate speech' in the data is used in a *competitive* manner. Finally, the last two characteristics of contested concepts (*positing an original exemplar* and *claiming optimal instantiations of the exemplar*) emerge as inseparable. For the caller, the hateful speech of particular "Socialist" speakers functions as such a best exemplar; the host casts the caller's use of this exemplar as the best exemplar itself.

The second aspect of Gallie's theory that requires demonstration is that the essential contestation of concepts is grounded in response(s) to norm violation(s). Below, I show how the host engages in essential – and artful – contestation of the caller's use of 'hate speech' by relying on the term to invoke both a norm of interpretation and a norm of production.

(1)

1	Host	Node akkor a hallgató, ((reads	*All right let's turn to the*
2		phone number)) a telefonszámunk,	*listener, our number is [reads*
3		témánk pedig a gyűlöletbeszéd,	*phone number], our topic is*
4		halló halló	*hate speech, hallo hallo!*
5	Caller	Jó napot kívánok	*Hello.*
6	Host	Kezét csókolom tessék	*Welcome, please go ahead.*
7		parancsolni	
8	Caller	Én teljesen megdöbbentőnek	*I find hate speech completely*
9		tartom a gyűlöletbeszédet, és	*shocking, and I find the hate*
10		megdöbbentetőnek tartom a	*speech of the Socialists*
11		szocialisták gyűlöletbeszédét	*shocking. I will say this*
12		lassan mondom. Hogy mindenki	*slowly, so that everyone*
13		értse. Tehát. Aztamikor	*understands. So. When that*
14		tajtékozva. Szinte habzó szájjal	*lady, that certain Socialist*
15		beszél olyan szörnyűséges	*lady speaks such terrible*
16		dolgokat olyan gyűlöletes	*things, such hateful things in*
17		dolgokat az a bizonyos hölgy,	*a mad rage, close to foaming*
18		szocialista hölgy, hogy hogy	*at the mouth, almost*
19		szinte remegve, akkor amikor	*trembling, when László Kovács*[3]
20		Kovács László. Huszonhárom	*talks about the arrival of*
21		millió. Román ideérkezéséről	*twenty-three million Romanians*
22		beszél	
23		((turns omitted))	
24		Szóval olyan olyan iszonyatos	*So, in such such ghastly*
25		módon olyan gyűlöletesen a	*manner, so hatefully, just*
26		tessék meghallgatni egy Orbán	*listen to a speech by Viktor*
27		Viktor beszédet. Tessék	*Orbán*[4]*.Just listen to it.*
28		meghallgatni. Hogy soha nem volt	*There was never any hate, even*
29		gyűlölet, mégis rásütötték, hogy	*though they accused him of it,*
30		mindig a szeretetről beszél,	*he always talks about love,*
31		tessék megnézni,	*just have a look at, compare*
32		összehasonlítani egyszer, egy	*just once a speech given by a*
33		jobboldali politikusnak, a	*right-wing politician, and*
34		beszédét, és tessék egy	*look at the speech of a left*
35		baloldali politikusnak a	*wing politician.*
36		beszédet. Szóval egyszer	*So just once*

[3] László Kovács: minister of foreign affairs of the Socialist cabinet at the time. As the host points out in a subsequent turn, the arrival of 23 million Romanians to Hungary was predicted by former socialist prime minister Gyula Horn. The prediction was the left's reaction to a December 2001 agreement between Hungary's conservative government and the Romanian government (commonly referred to as the "Orbán-Nastase pact"). The pact provided all Romanian citizens with access to the Hungarian labor market for three months every year. Former socialist prime minister of Hungary Péter Medgyessy later described Horn's prediction as an exaggerated claim made in the heat of the 2002 parliamentary election campaign (Bogád and Tóth-Szenesi, 2007).

[4] Viktor Orbán: former conservative prime minister of Hungary.

The caller's interpretation of 'hate speech' is at odds with the interpretations proffered by the experts prior to her call but it does not constitute direct contestation. In response to the host's questions the expert guests formulated content-based interpretations of 'hate speech' without reference to political parties. In contrast, the caller's interpretation centers on left-wing

(Socialist) political figures' public expressions of hatred (lines 13–19, 24–25: 'speaking terrible/hateful things, in a mad rage, close to foaming at the mouth'; 'speaking in a ghastly manner, hatefully'). She casts these instances as violations of norms of production committed purportedly by non-present "Socialists" but the data do not offer evidence that she is directly contesting the expert guests' or the Socialists' use of 'hate speech.' Although she clearly positions herself in opposition to the "Socialists" and aligns herself with the political right (lines 26–36), we are not in the position to analytically establish that she in fact uses the term 'hate speech' itself to engage in oppositional membering.

Segment (2) below shows the host first invoking a norm of interpretation, then a norm of production, to position himself in opposition to the caller and to rhetorically undermine her position.

(2)

37	Host	Ugye arra azért gondolom hogy	*You remember, don't you that,*
38		tetszik emlékezni hogy... ön hát	*I think... you are obviously not*
39		nyilvánvalóan nem MSZP párti	*an MSZP[5] supporter*
40	Caller	Nem nem isten ments tőle	*No, no, god forbid! ((laughs))*
41		((laughs))	
42	Host	és nem az MSZP szavazótáborát	*and you are not strengthening*
43		erősíti, de azt azért tudja	*their voter base, but don't*
44		hogyha mondjuk most itt ebben a	*you think if let's say here*
45		pillanatban és lehet hogy lesz	*and now, in this moment, and*
46		is olyan hallgatónk, egy olyan	*we may have a listener like*
47		személy szólalt volna meg, aki	*that, someone supporting the*
48		mondjuk az MSZP-t segíti vagy az	*MSZP, an MSZP voter, spoke up*
49		MSZP-t támogatja a	*they could probably mention*
50		szavazataival, az valószínűleg	*countless examples from the*
51		számtalan példát tudott volna	*previous four years[6] when they*
52		hozni, az előző négy évből,	*had felt that it was... Fidesz[7]*
53		amikor úgy érezte, hogy mondjuk	*that behaved aggressively*
54		a... Fidesz viselkedett	*when Fidesz politicians*
55		aggresszíven amikor a Fidesz	*discriminated others,*
56		politikusai rekesztettek ki	*or when right-wing politicians used or*
57		másokat vagy amikor jobboldali	*said things that perhaps offended*
58		politikusok... alkalmaztak vagy	*the sensibilities of others.*
59		mondtak olyan szövegeket,	
60		amelyek esetleg mások	*But let me ask you*
61		érzékenységét sértették, viszont	
62		hadd kérdezzem meg öntől.	
63	Caller	Igen?	*Yes?*
64	Host	Teljesen egyértelmű volt az	*It was obvious*
65	Caller	Igen?	*Yes?*
66	Host	hogy *egy*ik politikai csoportot	*that you support one political*
67		támogatja a másik politikai	*group and the other political*
68		csoportot pedig... hát nem tudom	*group well I'm not sure how*
69		hogy hogya ö gyűlöli.	*(to say this) you hate?*
70	Caller	Hát akik akik ilyen módon	*I, well, people who are*
71		tönkreteszik az országot hát	*ruining the country like this*
72	Host	nem én most a személyes	*No, no, I want your personal*
73		véleményére egy...	*opinion*
74	Caller	Én	*I*
75	Host	egy szóban szeretném hogyha	*I would like you to answer in*
76		válaszolna	*one word.*
77	Caller	Igen természetesen hát én	*Yes, of course, well*
78	Host	Nem érz...	*Don't you feel*
79	Caller	a mindig gyűlölöm ((inaudible))	*I have always hated*
80		meg a	*((inaudible)) and the...*
81	Host	Nem érzi...	*Don't you feel*
82	Caller	Igen?	*Yes?*

(*continued on next page*)

83	Host	Nem érzi úgy esetleg hogy... ugye	*Don't you feel maybe that, and*
84		most ezt nagy nyilvánosság előtt	*you are speaking in front of*
85		mondja el,	*the general public*
86	Caller	Igen? igen igen?	*Yes? Yes yes?*
87	Host	Nem érzi azt hogy végülis	*don't you feel that after all,*
88		bizonyos szempontból. Talán	*from a certain perspective,*
89		azzal hogy másokat	*perhaps by charging others*
90		gyűlölködéssel vádol. Okkal vagy	*with the expression of hatred,*
91		ok nélkül, nyilván ezt nem	*and it's not my job to decide*
92		tisztem eldönteni maga is	*whether or not you do this in*
93		gyűlöletbeszédet folytat.	*a reasonable way, you are also conducting hate speech?*
94	Caller	Én nem hiszem én csak tényeket	*I don't think so, I have*
95		állapítottam meg ((continues))	*merely stated facts ((continues))*

[5] MSZP: the Hungarian Socialist Party, the largest left-wing part in Hungary.
[6] "Previous four years": the parliamentary term of 1998–2002 during which Fidesz governed Hungary in coalition with two other smaller conservative parties, the Hungarian Democratic Forum and the Independent Smallholders' Party.
[7] Fidesz: Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union, the largest conservative party in Hungary.

Radio hosts have a distinct advantage over callers, the ability to take second positions in arguments (Hutchby, 1996, p. 75). This power differential is ensured by the conventional structure of turn-taking in call-ins. For example, hosts have more opportunities to respond to or challenge callers than the other way around. On lines 37–61 the host crafts a primary normative challenge against the caller for formulating an interpretation of 'hate speech' that violate the norms of interpretation the host aligns himself with. He performs this first challenge in two moves. First, he highlights the partisan position from which the caller formulates her interpretation (lines 38–39, 42–43), Second, he undermines the caller's tone-based interpretation by suggesting that her partisan interpretation can only be partially correct since, arguably, the same acts of 'hate speech' highlighted in the caller's examples ('behaving aggressively,' 'discriminating others,' 'using/saying things that perhaps offend the sensibilities of others') had been committed by members of the conservative right (lines 43–61).

The host relies on the term 'hate speech' to direct his second normative challenge (lines 61–95) against the caller's speech production. The caller's position is changed from the judge of 'hate speech' into the performer of 'hate speech' by getting her to state on the air that she hates the Hungarian left (line 77), her utterance is cast as public talk (83–86) and, after a considerable amount of hedging (which may be attributable to the norm of journalistic neutralism) her talk *about* 'hate speech' is identified *as* 'hate speech' (lines 92–93). The host accomplishes two things: he calls into question the caller's credibility and moral standing, and upholds a content-based interpretation of 'hate speech' according to which 'hate speech' involves the public statement of hatred against a group. The caller responds to the second normative challenge with a negotiation of occurrence move ('I don't think so, I have merely stated facts,' lines 94–95).

The host's contestation of the caller's interpretation-in-use of 'hate speech' is essential because the host makes use of the term to perform normative challenges directed against the caller. Invoking two different types of norm violation, the host positions himself as the protector of communal norms and the caller as an individual whose actions fall outside the realm of normativity.

The above analysis served as an illustration of the essential contestation of political terms in response to norm violation. I continue by offering a theoretical framework for understanding the larger, socio-cultural significance of essential as opposed to other forms of contestation.

4. Managing zones of acceptable variability

Why the essential contestation of political terms? Why is it the case that these terms are of such concern to members of speech communities that they are willing to engage in sophisticated discursive maneuvers in order to achieve oppositional membering? Essentially contested terms, as Gallie points out, are value-laden which, from a linguistic perspective, implies that they index the normative systems of the speech communities in which they are used. The essential contestation of these terms indicates the existence of a rift in that moral system. The social consequentiality of these rifts – that is, the social tension in the community that the rift creates – may vary in degree. (The normative challenges leveled at the caller by the host in the above data segment seem particularly face threatening.) However, what is more important from the perspective of the present discussion is that essential contestation not only exposes the moral issues of the speech community, it also shows contestants trying to do something about those issues.

To continue with the example of Hungarian 'hate speech,' it is helpful to think about 'hate speech' as an observable form of communicative conduct and the public response to such conduct as a social drama (Turner, 1980), and the use of the contested term for such conduct as an element of that social drama. Social dramas, according to Turner, are universal commu-

nicative forms speech communities rely on to make sense of, and deal with, moral trouble. 'Hate speech' as a type of public expression constitutes a *breach*, the violation of some communal norm(s). The breach phase is followed by the *crisis* during which "the pattern of current factional struggle within the relevant social group – be it village or world community – is exposed" (p. 150). The essential contestation of 'hate speech' as a breach of communal norms expose deep set divisions within Hungarian political life and public discourse. The crisis phase occasions attempts at *redress*. Communal members engage in efforts to make sense of the breach and to contain the crisis. Finally, in the fourth phase of the social drama, the community either experiences *reintegration* or gives way to "the social recognition of *irreparable breach* between the contesting parties, sometimes leading to their spatial separation" (p. 151, emphasis mine).

Within the social drama framework, the essential contestation of the term 'hate speech' in the data segment analyzed above can be seen as the enactment of crisis *and* as the participants' incompatible attempts at redress. Crisis is enacted when participants pit the tone-based interpretation against the content-based interpretation of 'hate speech' with the intent to win the contest. In addition, because contestants use the term to expose particular acts of 'hate speech' they are also performing redress. Pointing to original exemplars of 'hate speech' is not simply a speaker's act of recognition. It is also an act of appraisal directed at instances or types of communicative conduct that the speaker finds objectionable according to his or her definition of 'hate speech.'

As I have mentioned earlier, not all contestations of 'hate speech' in this episode of 'Have your say!' are essential, that is, not all instances of contestation involve normative challenges. Essential contestation only takes place when speakers see their opponent's use of a term as violating norms of appropriate production or interpretation. I follow Etzioni (1993), Hall and Noguchi (1995) and Fitch (2003) in arguing that communal norms allow communal members to act within certain zones, or ranges, of appropriate conduct. Members are not "cultural robots" (Hall and Noguchi, 1995, p. 1143) who mindlessly obey the normative edicts of their communities. Rather, cultural members perform all types of ordinary activities within "behavioral zones" (Etzioni, 1993, p. 1056). Acting outside the limits of these ranges of appropriate conduct invites sanctioning from the community. I borrow the zone analogy from Etzioni to suggest that in the case of essentially contested, value-laden concepts 'zones of acceptable variability' comprise interpretations and uses of the concept that a particular community of speakers find appropriate and acceptable. Within these zones, the contestation of the concept is not only allowed, it is sometimes even seen as productive.

From this perspective, when the caller charged the "Socialists" with 'hate speech' using the term according to a tone-oriented norm of interpretation the host (1) interpreted her use as falling outside the zone of acceptable variability, and, as such a norm violation, (2) determined that the caller's use is a misguided attempt at redressing a prior norm violation, the moral issue of 'hate speech' in Hungarian society, and (3) engaged in essential contestation of the term in order to uphold the boundaries of the zone of acceptable variability he and his expert guests began to establish, (4) using his privilege to formulate second positions, set out to undermine the credibility and moral standing of the caller and thereby achieve oppositional membering.

5. Conclusion

Chilton's (2008) call for a theory of political terminology must be heeded. This article is a first move toward elaborating the cultural significance of essentially contested political terms in political discourse. A comprehensive theory of political terminology's use in political discourse must be able not only to account for the meaning of essentially contested terms but must also provide reasons for communal members' engagement in such contestation. I suggest that the reason for essential contestation is a concern with the moral order of the community. This concern can occasion moral agency in two ways. On the one hand, essentially contested terms can be invoked in response to a prior moral issue or norm violation. On the other hand, the use of such terms can acquire additional moral charge in the process of contestation because speakers often see their opponents' use of the term as a norm violation in itself. The opponent's use constitutes a norm violation in the sense that, according to the participant performing the normative challenge, it falls outside the zone of acceptable variability, the range of uses with the capacity to adequately redress the prior norm violation. The response to the immediate norm violation within the framework of the exchange at hand serves the function of oppositional membering, a discursively enacted social separation between contestants and the groups the align themselves with. Essential contestation thus locates the meaning of contested terms in the contestation itself. The alignment of meanings-in-use becomes impossible because for either contestant to accept the other's use means to jeopardize their own moral standing according to the normative system of the community they claim to represent.

I agree with Chilton that the theory of political terminology must be pragmatic. A pragmatic theory of essentially contested political concepts should serve as a framework for explaining the observable use of such concepts, with special attention to indexicality. In addition, a pragmatic theory should inform political action; it should help us reflect on the role essentially contested concepts play in the politics of morally diverse modernity. "Fascism," "racism," and "terrorism" are but a few examples of essentially contested concepts that, when used in local, national or world politics, tend to exacerbate social divisions along moral fault lines. Gallie teaches us to appreciate an important paradox of political action in public discourse. Day after day, citizens genuinely concerned about social cohesion and peace in their communities set out to identify the "real" fascists, "true" racists and "actual" terrorists. However, due to their choice of concepts the social rifts they are seeking to redress often grow wider and deeper as a result of their involvement. The present study suggests that political actors

dissatisfied with the contestant role may be able to exit the endless cycle of essential contestation by re-evaluating the conceptual core of their political agendas.

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