

Conceptual_analysis(concordancer(regex(corpus)))

// A case study by Dr. Robert W. Williams

www.webdubois.org/lectures/dhsi22.html

1 Introduction

- 1.1. Project's interpretive goal:** We can understand better how authors express their understanding of the world and their roles within it via concepts. I am a political theorist—by training and interest—studying W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963), the African American scholar and civil rights activist.
- 1.2. Research question:** How did Du Bois variously express his concept of “democratic despotism” (*i.e.*, democracy for some at home, but racial and economic exploitation abroad)?
- 1.3. Prior scholarship:** Scholars of Du Bois have studied his idea of “democratic despotism” (*e.g.*, Gooding-Williams 2020; Karenga 2003). But they have not pursued the synonymous ways that he conveyed the term and they have not studied the term as part of companion ideas (Section 2.3. below).
- 1.4. Research problem:** How can we study the numerous writings of Du Bois? We can explore a corpus of his works via concordancer-mediated regexing.

2 Conceptual analysis

- 2.1. Purpose:** We study how authors use words—including *hapax legomena*—to convey their ideas. We do so via intra- and intertextually exploring their works curated in corpora.
- 2.2. A concept and its senses:** A concept, which articulates some aspect or representation of the world or society and their elements, is presented as a word (or phrase), but is not reducible only to that word. The sense(s) of the concept also can be conveyed, and often are, through synonyms or metaphors (Gunnell 2011; Pearson 1998; Skinner 2002).
- 2.3. Companion ideas:** Authors define and apply a concept via other ideas—companion ideas—which can be meaningful in their own right. Companion ideas ramify across texts, interconnecting, perhaps even illuminating, the other works. Firth (1962) inspired me.
- 2.4. Personal statement:** I do not claim comprehensive or full findings. I do not claim to know the thoughts of Du Bois.

4 Applying regular expressions

- 4.1. Application of regexes via concordancer:** My regexes find results in AntConc v.3.5.9 (Anthony 2020). However, my regexes do not work in the newer version, AntConc v.4.0.x, because it searches a database of words extracted from the texts rather than the texts themselves.
- 4.2. Concordancer-mediated regexing** and its KWIC-viewing capabilities allow for the disambiguation of a word with multiple meanings within the co-text of the matches.
- 4.3. Corpus of Du Bois writings:** It is a single-author corpus of 3 million words in 230 separate documents (published essays, newspaper columns, 19 books, and a few unpublished texts). This corpus is neither comprehensive nor fully representative of his over 2000 published writings.

9 Research results

9.1. «democra\w+» within 30 words of «despot\w*» [regex 8.1.]

Hit	KWIC	File
1	parade of a doubtful democracy often assume to poke fun at Germany to call her mediaeval, and wonder at her submission to	SME Spi
2	world that no industrial democracy can be built on industrial despotism, whether the two systems are in the same country or in c	DARK D
3	load, irresistible tide of democracy, with only delaying eddies here and there; others, looking closer, are more disturbed. Are we	AGPP-1
4	load, irresistible tide of democracy, with only delaying eddies here and there; others, looking closer, are more disturbed. Are we	AROW /
5	load, irresistible tide of democracy, with only delaying eddies here and there; others, looking closer, are more disturbed. Are we	ZPRLT-2
6	The theory of this new democratic despotism has not been clearly formulated. Most philosophers see the ship of state launched	AGPP-1
7	The theory of this new democratic despotism has not been clearly formulated. Most philosophers see the ship of state launched	AROW /
8	The theory of this new democratic despotism has not been clearly formulated. Most philosophers see the ship of state launched	ZPRLT-2
9	rown Colony system is despotic and obsolete; being opposed to democracy, it should be abrogated. "It is the desire of our peop	ZNCLM-

The term “democratic despotism” appeared originally in AROW 1915 (Match 7); Du Bois repeated the passage verbatim in AGPP 1930 (Match 6). Match 8 is a duplicate copy of the AROW essay. Match 2 illustrates a companion idea: Du Bois applied the ideals of democracy to industry.

10 Discussion

- 10.1. Democracy and its synonyms,** in my non-representative corpus, were not often connected with imperialism (or internationally), as conveyed via synonyms (Fig. 9.1, 9.2). Of the 90 non-duplicated matches (Fig. 9.2) Du Bois more often related the synonyms of democracy and despotism to specific foreign countries (12 instances), to abstract theoretical examples (10), and to cases involving U.S. history (48). [Categories are listed in Item 9.2.]
- 10.2. Of the internationally focused matches** (20 cases) only a few were conceptually related to democratic despotism (read Item 9.3.).
- 10.3. Democracy and its ideals, for Du Bois, thus** could not be explained or expanded via fully separating them into foreign/domestic or private/public spheres. What happened in one affected the others.

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3 Regular expressions

- 3.1. Why use regexes?** As a search notational system, regexes provide flexible, and at times complicated, ways to search texts and potentially to match patterns therein.
- 3.2. Authors pattern texts via concepts.** Regexes, applied to find words, also mediate our interpretations of any thematic patterns in the writings. Thus, via regexing we might be able to conceptually thread together the various works in both intra- and intertextual ways. This helps us to understand how an author defined and applied a concept over time and texts.
- 3.3. Types of regexes: Node word regexes** search the text uni-directionally for one or more words (Sections 6 and 7). **Proximity regexes** can be bi-directional and search for words near each other within a specified span (*e.g.*, 30 words). Section 8 covers such regexes, which incorporate subpatterns defined as subroutines within the whole regex.

5 On “democratic despotism”

- 5.1. In “The African Roots of War”** (AROW: 1915) Du Bois wrote:
[13] “The theory of this new democratic despotism has not been clearly formulated. Most philosophers see the ship of state launched on the broad, irresistible tide of democracy....
[14] “It is this paradox [of “democratic despotism”] which allows in America the most rapid advance of democracy to go hand in hand in its very centres with increased aristocracy and hatred toward darker races....
[15] “Yet the paradox is easily explained: The white workingman has been asked to share the spoil of exploiting [Asians and Blacks.] It is no longer simply the merchant prince, or the aristocratic monopoly, or even the employing class, that is exploiting the world: it is the nation; a new democratic nation composed of united capital and labor.”
- 5.2.** The phrase appears once each in two writings (Fig.9.1. and caption).

9.2. Synonyms of «democra\w+» near synonyms of «despot\w*» [regex 8.3.]

Hit	KWIC	File
55	a purely imaginary majority vote. Are the methods of such a revolt wise, howsoever great the provocation and evil may be? If	DARK D
56	sumed that a privileged and enfranchised majority cannot equally harm a nation. Insane, wicked, and wasteful as the tyranny of the fe	DARK D
57	t up with all sorts of ideas of aristocracy as far as those children were concerned. They were ragamuffins; they were dirty and lived in	DATN C
58	mes the problem. Who shall elect? The earlier answer was: A Select Few, such as the Wise, the Best Born, the Able. Many	DISF Di
59	roes in the United States are disfranchised despite intelligence and property, if property barriers and administrative oligarchy reduce	FAFA Fi
60	memorial to His Majesty the King which is a worthy and remarkable document: <quotation> In presenting the case for the franchis	FEAF Fu
61	at it is honest and unselfish, aristocrat and working woman working hand in hand. But in America, despite the brave effort of women	FORW F
62	it; the escape from European imperialism; the discarding of New England aristocracy; and the enfranchisement of the Negro slave. WI	GBF-05
63	hip has varied from absolute monarchy to oligarchy, limited by organized labor and by often ineffective public opinion, trying repeate	IBFP-10
64	in the hands of an industrial oligarchy. Thus the citizen of the United States today has small control over candidates or over the issue	IBFP-14
65	in can deprive another of his vote at his discretion; can restrict the education of his neighbors' children as he sees fit; can with	JBN Joh
66	ness, first by slavery then by disfranchisement and always by the Color Bar. [23] The second influence on white labor both in Americ	MNP M
67	's work. Under a benevolent despotism the greater energies of all could be devoted to this end, but under a republic, where the	NBCL N
68	irulent antipathy toward the disfranchised, due to racial difference or social caste, poverty or ignorance, then it means that the unfort	NBCL N

Listed are matches that emphasize U.S. historical cases, while some results point to other categories of classification: a foreign focus (1 country); an international focus (between countries; imperialism); and a theoretical focus.

11 Future directions & thanks

- 11.1. Inquiries evoked by the co-text of “democratic despotism”:**
 - Race and its synonyms as companion ideas (How does Du Bois express his thoughts on race and racism?)
 - Democracy and synonyms in proximity to race and its synonyms
 - The concept of “industry” as a companion idea with democracy
 - Industry in proximity to colonialism and imperialism
- 11.2. Methodological dimensions:**
 - Explore search results after changing the proximity distance. Are there different emphases based on 10, 30, or 50 words of distance?
- 11.3. I gratefully thank** Dr. Crystal Winter, Uni. of Victoria, and the DHSI 2022 organizers. **Background:** Joan Miró, “La danse des coquelicots” [colors modified; rotated 90° CW; flipped horizontally; explosion effect].

6 Synonyms for “democracy”

- 6.1. Examine the co-text of the quotation** (see 5.1.) as well as the full quotation in “The African Roots of War” (1915) for synonyms of, and related words to, democracy, and for participants in democracy (*ex.*, agents like working class [workingman: sic]).
- 6.2. Search for those node words:**
`(?i)\b(labor|worker|working)\w*\b`
- 6.3. Are there other components of democracy** from Du Bois's own works (or from a thesaurus)? franchise, election, vote, suffrage
- 6.4. Craft regex searches for those node words:**
`(?i)\b(franchise|vot|suffrage|elect)\w*\b`
[Such node words form part of regex 8.3.]
- 6.5. Disambiguation will be needed for the search results.**

7 Synonyms for “despotism”

- 7.1. Examine the co-text of the quotation** (see 5.1.), and also the full quotation, extracting synonyms and related words for systems of autocracy and autocrats.
- 7.2. Search for those node words:**
`(?i)\b(despot|aristocra|prince)\w*\b`
- 7.3. Are there other components for despotism** from Du Bois or from a thesaurus? empire, emperor, monarch, tyranny, etc.
- 7.4. Regex searches for those node words:**
`(?i)\b(oligarch|monarch|king|queen|tyran|emper|imperial)\w*\b`
[These node words are part of regexes 8.2. and 8.3.]
- 7.5. Disambiguation will be needed for the search results.**

8 Proximity regexes

- 8.1. democra\w+ / despot\w* (& vice versa) w/in 30 words:**
[Research results displayed in Figure 9.1.]
`(?i)(? (DEFINE) (?'grp1'democra\w+)(?'grp2'despot\w*) (?'prox'\W+{?:\w+\W+}{0,30}?)) (?P>grp1) (?P>prox) (?P>grp2) | (?P>grp2) (?P>prox) (?P>grp1)`
- 8.2. democra\w+ near synonyms of despot\w* (30 words):**
`(?i)(? (DEFINE) (?'grp1'democra\w*) (?'grp2'\b(despot|aristocra|oligarch|monarch|king|queen|tyran|emper|imperial|prince)\w*) (?'prox'\W+{?:\w+\W+}{0,30}?)) (?P>grp1) (?P>prox) (?P>grp2) | (?P>grp2) (?P>prox) (?P>grp1)`
- 8.3. Synonyms of democra\w+ & of despot\w* (30 words):**
[Partial list of research results displayed in Figure 9.2.]
`(?i)(? (DEFINE) (?'grp1'\b(\w*franchise\w*|vot\w+|elect|^r)\w*) (?'grp2'\b(despot|aristocra|oligarch|monarch|king|queen|tyran|emper|imperial|prince)\w*) (?'prox'\W+{?:\w+\W+}{0,30}?)) (?P>grp1) (?P>prox) (?P>grp2) | (?P>grp2) (?P>prox) (?P>grp1)`

9.3. “Democratic despotism” conceptually—synonymously—expressed

- 9.3.1.** Figure 9.2. displays a partial listing of hits matched by regex 8.3. Among the results are 20 disambiguated matches with possible relevance to my project, including six cases of direct relevance: Du Bois described “democratic despotism” without so naming the concept within the co-text of the document.
- 9.3.2.** I present two cases of direct relevance here. In 1924 Du Bois wrote: “The dullest European wage-earner will gradually come to see that by upholding Imperial Aggression over the darker peoples by his political vote and his growing economic power he is but fastening tighter on himself the rule of the Rich;...” [WND1 1924: 113]
- 9.3.3.** In 1945, Du Bois penned: “[W]ithin the imperial nations, the status of the colonies has been determined largely by the attitude of the mass of the working people, whereas in Spain, where workers were disfranchised and had little power, colonial labor conditions prevailed even in the mother country. In the British Empire colonialism could be carried through only when it was applied to alien peoples and not to white people, especially those of English descent. The growing home vote vetoed this. In the United States fear of European aggression was back of the Monroe Doctrine, but later the doctrine was continued as the white laborers tried to establish in the United States and under American control outside the United States, colonial labor conditions bordering on slavery.” [CDCP 1945: 65]

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