TOWARDS A DISCURSIVE APPROACH IN THE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dr. J. BOS
Universtity of Utrecht

RESUMEN

El presente estudio trata de ubicar la historia de la psicología en una nueva perspectiva estudiando tanto la historia como el desarrollo del psicoanálisis como disciplina científico. En esta perspectiva discursiva se enfatiza el hecho que tanto la producción como la consumación de textos son determinadas por su contexto social y que son al mismo tiempo capases de transformarlo.

Utilizando el método discursivo, varias muestras de textos serán analizadas. En estos textos el autor enfatiza 'la autorización del conocimiento'. Por medio de cuales procesos discursivos se autorizan conocimiento? Cómo se estabilizan las posiciones que representan poder en un determinada campo de interés? El análisis muestra que la constitución de diferentes posiciones del sujeto divergen con el tiempo y que este proceso se relaciona con la competencia que existia entre los diferentes actores en el psicoanálisis.

Una cuestión adyacente es en qué sentido el psicoanálisis y el análisis del discurso están relacionados y cómo el psicoanálisis pudiera aprovechar de una perspectiva discursiva. El autor sostiene que el psicoanálisis y el análisis del discurso tienen ciertas presuposiciones básicas en común. Partiendo de éstas, el autor encuentra dos maneras en que el psicoanálisis pudiera aprovechar del análisis del discurso: una función interna (relacionada con la construcción de la identidad personal en el contexto analítico) y una función externa (relacionada con la relación entre el psicoanálisis y sus críticos).

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to throw new light on the history of psychology by studying the early history and development of psychoanalysis as a scientific discipline. The basic starting point is a discursive approach which emphasizes the fact that text

production and consumption is both determined by its social context and at the same time capable of transforming it.

Using a discursive technique, some samples of text will be analyzed. In these samples, the main focus of the author is with the 'authorization of knowledge'. Through which discursive processes does knowledge becomes authorized? How are powerful positions established in a field of interest? Analysis reveals how the constitutions of different subject positions diverge in time and that this development is related to power struggles in psychoanalysis.

A cognate question is, in what sense psychoanalysis and discourse analysis are related, and how psychoanalysis may profit from a discursive approach. It will be argued that psychoanalysis and discourse analysis share several basic assumptions. Starting from these similarities, the author finds two possible uses of discourse analysis for psychoanalysis: an 'internal' use (related to the construction of the personal identity in the analytic setting) and an external use (related to relation between psychoanalysis and its critics).

The more closely one looks at a word, the farther back it points into its own history (Karl Kraus).

INTRODUCTION

Historic documents are, as we all know, not only difficult to obtain, they are even more difficult to understand. Studying the history of psychology, we are time and again confronted with the question of how to appreciate and exploit the materials available. I shall approach this question using a relatively novel method by the name of 'discourse analysis'. I use the history of psychoanalysis as the source from which to choose my materials. I have selected psychoanalysis as my 'principle case'. In this paper I shall first briefly elucidate my understanding of the concept of 'discourse analysis' and the discursive instruments used. Next I shall examine some materials from the history of psychoanalysis and present a brief analysis of them. Lastly, I discuss the relations between psychoanalysis and discourse analysis.

TEXT, DISCOURSE AND DISCURSIVE
PRACTICE

In and by themselves, texts do not make much sense. It is not possible to (fully) understand a given text if you do not know by whom it was written, to whom it is addressed, in which circumstances it has been produced, how it was reproduced, etc. That, and not the fact that texts often seem obscure or ambiguous, is the problem with historic documents. But having knowledge of the immediate context in which the text is produced we often still find it difficult to situate it in a 'discourse'.

So what is a discourse? In a somewhat condensed definition Ian Parker (1989, p. 61-62) puts it this way: "*Discourse is a system a statements which constructs an object. This fictive object will then be reproduced in the various texts written or spoken within the domain of discourse (that is within the expressive order of society).*" Fairclough (1992), on the other hand, prefers the notion 'discursive practices' for the same system, emphasizing the pragmatic and dynamic aspects of it. (In this paper I shall use the two terms interchangeably.) 'Discourse' or 'discursive practices' embody, in either case, the conditions which make production, distribution and consumption of texts possible. It follows that discourse systems produce texts and that texts (re)produce discourse.

Here we have, in a nutshell, the core of my approach (see for a more extensive account Bos, 1997). Discourse analysis in a specific 'field of interest' implies analysis of the reproductive and transformative relation between texts and discursive practices within the greater whole of a 'social practice' (which in turn relates to power and ideology).

Let us note at this point that it has been contended that authors who defend a 'discursive approach' mystify discursive processes so as to obscure a tautology: that texts and discursive practices are defined to explain each other. I admit that this would be true if social reality were explained in terms of discursive processes only. But few authors are prepared to stretch 'discourse' to include all relationships between subjects. Rather, the study of discourse uses non-discursive relations as anchoring points, thus rendering evaluation and appraisal of discursive processes feasible.

As I must necessarily restrict myself, I cannot expand on this theme any further. Instead I shall now spend a few words on the methods used to analyze texts. I use a three step procedure.

The first step consists of portraying and exploring the most important discursive positions within a field of interest. Ideally, a 'discursive position' is to be understood as a statement or a number of statements about the location of one or more subjects and their attributed properties within a given field. This may pertain to the speaker (author) himself and/or to others. Crucial here is to examine not only who takes which position and how, but also who does not and why!

The second step consists of matching discursive positions with other (non-discursive) positions within the field, and in particular with the distribution of power and authority. How are discursive positions related to type and distribution of formal power in a hierarchical organization? And how to access to financial means, formal and informal channels of information? In what way are they dependent upon each other? Numerous researchers have undertaken an attempt to assess the dynamics of power arrangements and discursive positioning, of which I only mention Latour (1987) and Bourdieu (1993) as two authoritative authors.

The last step consists of applying this type of analysis to controversies and other discursive contentions in which power-invested positions become problematized through discursive means. Here we should expect to find reproduction as well as transformation of particular properties of the field. By comparing and contrasting various positions with each other and through time we may be able to find interesting changes and modifications, pointing to power struggle.

In the ensuing section I shall present a tentative analysis of some fragments of discourse to illustrate this procedure.

A CONTRASTED COMPARISON OF TWO SAMPLES

Psychoanalysis provides the perfect opportunity to illustrate the method sketched above. Its history is extremely well documented, full of controversy and debate, and the field as such underwent some significant changes which cannot be grasped from an internal or external perspective alone.

In this paper I limit myself to the period 1910-1920, a time which saw the institutionalization of the psychoanalytic movement, the founding of the first psychoanalytic journals and the publication of some of Freud's most provocative metapsychological studies, but also the emergence of the first controversies within psychoanalysis and the expellation of the first 'dissidents' (Adler, Jung and others).

Which discursive positions emerged at this period? How were they articulated? How do they relate to other positions in the field, and what changes can be detected in them?

Two papers by Freud, which make excellent comparison, present a happy occasion to answer some of these questions. Both were presented to an auditorium of 'insiders' (visitors of the International Psychoanalytical Congress) and are of approximately the same length (ca. 4000 words). Both deal with technical matters (such as what it takes to become an analyst). The first text (Freud, 1910) dates of a time when psychoanalysis had only just become an international organization, the second (Freud 1919) dates of just after the first world war, almost a decade later.

Using what I have called the 'method of contrasted comparison' I present some fragments from the two texts below and contrast them with each other to investigate similarities and differences between them.

(A) The analyst: I, you or we? Who are the analysts? How do they emerge from discourse? What qualities or attributes are they supposed to possess?

Text I	Text II
Gentlemen, - since the objects for which we are assembled here are mainly practical, shall choose a practical theme for my introductory address and appeal to your medical, not to your scientific interest. I can imagine your probable views on the result of our therapy, and I assume that most of you have passed through the two stages which all beginners go through [...](Feud, 1910, p.141).	Gentlemen, - as you know, we have never prided ourselves on the completeness and finality of our knowledge and capacity. We are as ready now as we were earlier to admit the imperfections of our understanding, to learn new things and to alter our methods in any way that can improve them (Freud, 1919, p.159).

The two fragments reproduced here constitute the opening paragraphs of each text. They bear a remarkable resemblance in terms of style, modus as well as composition. They both set the tone for the subsequent lecture, being polite and 'scientific'. The two texts also introduce the most important subject positions: 'I', 'you' and 'we', denoting Freud, his audience and the psychoanalysts. But whereas the central subject position in the first text is an intentionally acting 'I' addressing an overall passive 'you', the central subject position in the second text is 'we'. Scrutinizing the two texts in their entirety, we find a significant shift from use of the second person singular ('you') to the first person plural ('we'), documenting, in my opinion, the evolution of authority within psychoanalysis (for an overview of use of first person and second person singular and plural see appendix, table 1). The individual authority, restricted to Freud and connected to his personal qualities, becomes subordinate to a collective authority, a group of self-conscious agents who are committed to the same cause.

Table 1.- Occurrence of various types of personal and possessive pronouns in two texts of Freud. (1 st p.s. = First person singular; 2 nd p.s./ p. = Second person singular and plural; etc.)

Text I	N	%	Text II	N	%
1 st p.s.	44	22	1 st p.s.	30	22
2 nd p.s/p.	44	22	2 nd p.s/p.	12	9
1 st p. p.	111	56	1 st p.p.	94	69
tot.	199	100	tot.	136	99

(B) The patients: these people or he? Who are the patients that come to seek psychoanalytic help? How do they relate to the therapist?

Text I	Text II
A certain number of people, faced in their lives by conflict which they have found too difficult to solve, have taken flight into neurosis and in this way won an unmistakable, although in the long run too costly, gain from their illness. (Freud, 1910, p.149)	[When] the illness has been broken down by the analysis, the patient makes the most assiduous efforts to create for himself in place of his symptoms new substitutive satisfactions, which now lack the feature of suffering (Freud, 1919,p.163).

Again we find interesting similarities, such as the fact that in both texts the illness of the patient is vexed in moral terms, emphasizing the idea that the patient must 'confess to himself' in order to be cured. But there are also many striking

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differences. In the first text, it seems as if the patient only need to gain insight in his own mental processes in order to cure from his neurosis, whereas in the second text this no longer seems enough, he must do more. Underneath this difference we find a changed outlook on psychoanalysis as a profession, as Freud was apt recognize. In the first text it is the analyst who is largely responsible for the cure of the patient. In the second text it is patient himself who is responsible. He has become someone who struggles with and against the therapist and in doing so becomes involved in psychoanalysis and almost unwillingly learns to speak the analytic language. The patient and the analyst become more and more involved with each other. As an indication of this involvement, we find a striking difference between the two texts in the way the patient is characterized. The impersonal 'a certain number of people' becomes a more personal 'he' and 'him' (for use of personified, impersonal and propertied agent constructions in the two texts see appendix, table 2).

Table 2.- Use of different types of agent constructions in two texts of Freud

Text I	N	%			
Text II	N	%			
Impersonal	36	73			
Impersonal	55	49			
Personified	7	14			
Personified	58	51			
Propertied	6	12	Propertied	0	0
tot.	49	99	tot.	113	100

What conclusions may be drawn from these fragmentary observations? Three points I believe are worth emphasizing. Firstly, the two lectures by Freud, published in one of the 'official journals' represent, particular stages in the development of psychoanalysis, both as a praxis and as a theory. By contrasting them this way, it becomes possible to detect the line of progress in this development. Shifting images of the therapist, shifting responsibilities and a changing outlook on psychoanalysis itself are represented in psychoanalytic discourse. Secondly, it is interesting to note that these lectures not merely represent this evolutionary process, they also serve as mediators in that very same development. By pointing out new possibilities and hinting at novel prospects, Freud not merely responded to developments in psychoanalysis, he set them in motion as well. Lastly, what is presented and discussed by Freud should not be perceived as something entirely individualistic. On the contrary. Our analysis is above all concerned with the way texts contribute to the structural organization of the field in terms of authority. The authorization of knowledge is, however, not a simple matter of individual power. It is a collective process.

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

I now turn briefly to the question posed earlier: how can discourse analysis contribute to the understanding of a field of interest in general (and to psychoanalysis in particular)?

Before answering this question, let us note first that there are some interesting parallels between psychoanalysis and discourse analysis. First, both disciplines approach texts with skepticism, pointing out that there are several layers in one text which do not always say the same thing. Secondly, researchers in both disciplines need to take a neutral and impartial stance vis-a-vis their subjects while they can only rely on their own discursive capacities in order to understand them and their texts.

Having said this, it should be pointed out that there are vast differences as well. A discourse analyst does not reduce utterances to intra-individual psychological processes, whereas a psychoanalyst does. So in what sense can a discourse analysis contribute to an alternative understanding of scientific practices? I see two possible uses in the case of psychoanalysis.

Firstly, by discursively analyzing psychoanalytic discourse, it may become possible to get an understanding of psychoanalysis without becoming absorbed by it. Critics have always been either for or against psychoanalysis; psychoanalysis, on the other hand, has blamed its critics of misinterpretation. As a result we find little discussion in this area. A discursive approach enables the researcher to criticize psychoanalysis constructively, and thereby to restore the dialogue between psychology and psychoanalysis which has broken off long ago. This I would call the 'external use' of discourse analysis.

Secondly, it may be instructive to use discourse analysis within the analytic setting, and study the process of analytic training, interpretation and education. This would reveal something about the way psychoanalysis (re)constitutes personal identities in the course of analytic therapy. This is what I call the 'internal use' of discourse analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

Discourse analysis offers a method of studying texts (including historic and contemporary sources). Its aim is to analyze how texts must be situated in social-discursive practices, and to elucidate their function as mediative bodies. A discursive approach cannot, however, stand on its own. It must be used in association with other approaches. But it does offer an alternative way into scientific practices. It enables us to understand texts from an internal and an external perspective at the same time. But in all fairness I should add that it does not offer an 'objective method' for analyzing texts. It offers us the possibility to weigh and balance various interpretation of texts at a meta-level. Perhaps it can do no more than offers (at a different level) yet another interpretation.

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