Parker, I. (1992) *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*. London: Routledge.

Chapter 1

Discovering discourses, tackling texts

[pp. 3-22]

> A means of indicating the transition from a sign to a sign is offered by quotation marks. Thus ‘California’ is a sign that denotes California; ‘California’ is written with ten letters, whereas California grows oranges. The transition may be further repeated. Thus "California" is the name of a sign, namely of ‘California’, but is not the name of California. In writing quotes we have to watch that the sign combination occurring in our sentence is always one level higher than the object to which it refers. Thus "California" is written with one pair of quotes, and ‘California’ is written without quotes. It would be difficult to add quotes to California; we then would have to construct huge quotes and put those of the left end into the Pacific Ocean, and those of the right end into Nevada.
>
> (Reichenbach 1947: 68)

What is a ‘discourse’? This chapter is concerned with the task of defining discourses. I will draw attention to some of the descriptions of discourse outside psychology, and then set out some criteria for identifying discourses. My main focus will be on the practical problems which confront a researcher attempting to carry out a discourse analysis. However, each practical problem raises broader issues about the nature of language, discourse and texts. I will also argue, towards the end of the chapter, that discourse analytic research should go beyond seven necessary criteria for the identification of discourses, and consider the role of institutions, power and ideology.

Discourse research strikes a critical distance from language, and one useful aspect of the approach is the reflexivity urged upon a researcher, and reader. When discourse analysts read texts they are [4] continually putting what they read into quotation marks: ‘Why was this said, and not that? Why these words, and where do the connotations of the words fit with different ways of talking about the world?’ I want to argue, however, that this reflexivity needs to be grounded if it is to have progressive effects, and that work in the post-structuralist tradition can ground discourse and reflection historically in a useful way. In addition, the study of discourses carried out by Foucault and his followers has implications for how we describe the emergence of academic psychology and the ‘psy--complex’ in Western culture, and for how we understand the discipline and its objects today (Rose, 1985, 1989).

Foucault (1971), for example, described how a discourse which was about ‘madness’ as a medical category came into being, and the ways in which a medical discourse emerged alongside related ways of speaking about individual ‘pathology’ which involved the categorisation of a section of the population. Debates over rationality and responsibility in the nineteenth century were informed by such discourses. In another study Foucault (1975) and co-workers collected legal papers and accounts given of a murder at that time, and showed how discourses of individual reason and ‘madness’ framed the possible explanations that could be given of the event. Foucault (1977, 1981) also connected the development of discourses which describe and prescribe forms of rationality, responsibility and pathology with discipline, surveillance and power. These discourses informed legal practice, and they helped constitute contemporary psychology. Discourses about the person that we employ today, then, have a history.

It is also possible for discourses about the nature of mental processes, and to whom one attributes them, to fall into disuse. At the beginning of the century, for example, at the very moment when ‘cross-cultural’ psychology was busily demarcating certain human ‘races’ as not fully mentally developed, there was an area of research devoted to plant psychology (Crellin, 1989). The attribution of mental states was framed by discourses pertaining to plants as almost sentient beings. In contrast, the dominant psychology we have today is informed by particular conceptions of rationality, discourses in which one attributes to individual human beings internal mental states which, we suppose, direct behaviour (Costall and Still, 1987).

A number of issues arise from the history of discourse. Discourses do not simply describe the social world, but categorise it, they bring [5] phenomena into sight. A strong form of the argument would be that discourses allow us to see things that are not ‘really’ there, and that once an object has been elaborated in a discourse it is difficult *not* to refer to it as if it were real. Discourses provide frameworks for debating the value of one way of talking about reality over other ways. Types of person are also being referred to as the objects of the discourses. When we look at discourses in their historical context, it becomes clear that they are quite coherent, and that as they are elaborated by academics and in everyday life they become more carefully systematised. Discourse analysis *deliberately* systematises different ways of talking so we can understand them better. A study of discourse dynamics takes off from this to look at the tensions within discourses and the way they reproduce and transform the world.

A good working definition of a discourse should be that it is *a system of statements which constructs an object.* However, this definition needs to be supported by a number of conditions. In the main section of this chapter, then, I will set out seven criteria, the system of statements that should be used to identify *our* object, to enable us to engage with, and in, discourse analysis. Potter and Wetherell’s (1987) account of the ‘method’, their ‘ten stages in the analysis of discourse’, is useful, but sometimes bewilders new researchers as it dawns on them that each step rests on a bedrock of ‘intuition’ and ‘presentation’. At points the reader is told, quite rightly, that discourse analysis is like riding a bike, is warned that the stages are not sequential, and advised that ‘there is no analytic method’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 169). Billig *et al.’s* (1988) suggestions that a researcher needs to look for ‘implicit themes’ is also right, but can also lead to worries on the part of someone new to the area that they may not be picking up the themes that matter. Similarly, when Hollway (1989) draws on her own intuitive feel for what is going on in discourse, how the accounts of her interviewees resonate with her own experience, she produces fascinating and plausible analyses. But how could we do this too? I do not want to suggest that the criteria presented here constitute a method, that they should necessarily be employed sequentially, but that they will help to clear up some of the confusions that have followed the incorporation of discourse ideas into psychology. [6]

SEVEN CRITERIA FOR DISTINGUISHING DISCOURSES

These seven criteria deal with different levels of discourse analysis. There is a degree of conceptual work that needs to go into the analysis before the material is touched, and then, as the analysis proceeds, it is necessary to step back a number of times to make sense of the statements that have been picked out. Each criterion raises questions about the theoretical framework the researcher is using. Along the way I will mark some 'steps in an analysis of discourse dynamics (and you will have to imagine quotation marks around the word 'steps' from now on).

1) A discourse is realised in texts

First, though, where do we find discourses? It would be misleading to say that we ever find discourses as such. We actually find pieces of discourse. I want to open up the field of meanings to which discourse analysis could be applied beyond spoken interaction and written forms by saying that we find discourses at work in *texts.* Texts are delimited tissues of meaning reproduced in *any* form that can be given an interpretative gloss.

Take two examples: (i) I was given a small Liquid Crystal Display electronic game for Christmas. The buttons on the left and right move a male figure at the bottom of the screen from side to side. The figure is waving a crucifix at the ghosts descending from the top of the screen to their graves. As each ghost is prevented from landing and is despatched to the flames at the right-hand side I get awarded ten points (and the penalty for letting each spirit through is a lost life). This is a text. A Christian discourse inhabits this text, and it is the translation of this text into a written and spoken form that renders that discourse 'visible' or, more accurately, in which the category 'discourse' becomes appropriate; (ii) as I work through this chapter a second time a melody comes wafting up the stairs. The unmarried couple I share a house with are playing host to her parents who have come to cosset the new baby. Grand-dad has got his hands on the electric organ and is quietly finding his way round the keyboard. The tune is uncertain snatches of 'Here comes the bride'. A little narrative of heterosexual bonding within familial discourse inhabits this melody as the text.

It is useful, as a first step, to consider all tissues of meaning as texts and to specify which texts will be studied. All of the world, when it has [7] become a world understood by us and so given meaning by us, can be described as being textual. Once the process of interpretation and reflection has been started, we can adopt the post-structuralist maxim *'[t]here is nothing outside of the text'* (Derrida, 1976: 158). This does not necessarily commit us to a particular position on the nature of reality, textual or otherwise. I deal with that issue in the next chapter. I am merely drawing attention to the effects of describing, for research purposes, the world in this way. Speech, writing, non-verbal behaviour, Braille, Morse code, semaphore, runes, advertisements, fashion systems, stained glass, architecture, tarot cards and bus tickets are all forms of text. In some cases we could imagine an 'author' lying behind the text as source and arbiter of a true meaning. But the lessons to draw from this list are, first, that, as Barthes (1977) argued, there need not be an author, and, second, that once we start to describe what texts mean we are elaborating meanings that go beyond individual intentions, discourses that are transindividual. The second step in a discourse analysis, then, should be a process of exploring the connotations, allusions and implications which the texts evoke. A helpful guide to this exercise in cultural anthropology is Barthes' (1973) work on modern 'myth'.

Sometimes different discourses are available to different audiences. The distinction between the inside and outside of psychology is a good case example. On the one hand, the *Ψ* sign gives a text a meaning for those of us inside psychology. The discourses which inhabit a text containing that sign will often be discourses coherent to psychologists. On the other hand, an image of Freud's face gives a text a meaning for those outside the discipline. The discourses which give that sign meaning, and it often means psychology' for outsiders, would not be accepted by many psychologists. It is right, then, to adopt the formulation that discourses are 'linguistic sets of a higher order than the sentence (while often reducible to a sentence) and *carried out* or *actualized* in or by means of texts' (Marin, 1983: 162). Discourse analysis, then, involves two preliminary steps:

1 Treating our objects of study as texts which are described, put into words; and
2 Exploring connotations through some sort of free association, which is best done with other people. [8]

2) A discourse is about objects

'Analysis' necessarily entails some degree of objectification, and in studies of discourse there are at least two layers of objectification. The first is the layer of 'reality' that the discourse refers to. It is a commonplace in the sociology of knowledge (e.g., Berger and Luckmann, 1971) that language brings into being phenomena, and that the reference to something, the simple use of a noun, comes to give that object a reality. Discourses are the sets of meanings which constitute objects, and a discourse, then, is indeed a 'representational practice' (Woolgar, 1988a: 93). The representation of the object occurs as previous uses of the discourse and other related discourses are alluded to, and the object *as defined in the discourses* is referred to. Some local councils have had to close off sewer entrances to stop young children from going down to look for ninja turtles. The turtle discourse constitutes these beings as objects for children, and when the children refer to turtles they are referring to the objects of the discourse. They think, as most of us do when we talk about things, that they are talking about real objects in the world. Discourses are, according to one post-structuralist writer, 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972: 49).

Discourse constructs 'representations' of the world which have a reality almost as coercive as gravity, and, like gravity, we know of the objects through their effects. Take, for example, descriptions of medieval Anglo-Saxon sorcery in which the world is full of spirits and physical illness is attributed to the shots fired by elves (Bates, 1983). What we now can describe as 'discourses' created and reproduced spirits and elves. Then, they were real in the way that atoms and electrons are real today. Many of the objects that discourse refers to do not exist in a realm outside discourse. There are fuzzy borders between the set of things we know exist outside discourse and the things which may have a reality only within it. The first layer of reality, then, is the reality of the objects of the discourse, the things the discourse refers to.

The second layer of reality, of objectification that a discourse sometimes refers to is that of the discourse itself. One example is a badge given away at the Commonwealth Institute in London in 1988 with ‘Dialogue on Diarrhoea’ printed around the top. It says ‘international newsletter’ around the bottom, and these phrases frame a picture of a woman feeding an infant with a spoon. There were also huge posters around the cafeteria with the same message blazoned across them. At the first level of meaning, we have the [9]object ‘diarrhoea’, and the badge is a text which reproduces the object in particular ways: (i) we know that ‘diarrhoea’ is, among other things, a medical description, and so we can identify a medical discourse; (ii) we assume that the woman feeding the infant is the mother, and so a familialist discourse also touches the text; and (iii) we understand the image and message as located in an appeal, located in a discourse of charity. The *second* layer of reality, then, is that of the ‘dialogue’, and here there is a reflection in the text on a discourse, and the text says that there is another ‘object’ which is the set of statements about diarrhoea. A discourse is about objects, and discourse analysis is about *discourses* as objects. This criterion, then, takes us into a third and a fourth step of analysis:

3 Asking what objects are referred to, and describing them (turtles, diseases, ghosts etc.); and
4 Talking about the talk as if it were an object, a discourse.

3) A discourse contains subjects

The object that a discourse refers to may have an independent reality outside discourse, but is given *another* reality by discourse. An example of such an object is the subject who speaks, writes, hears or reads the texts discourses inhabit. I will stick with this rather abstract and dehumanising jargon a moment longer and say that a subject, a sense of self, is a location constructed within the expressive sphere which finds its voice through the cluster of attributes and responsibilities assigned to it as a variety of object. (Here, you may find it helpful to think of Harré’s (1979) distinction between the ‘expressive’ sphere in which meanings and selves are presented and contested and the ‘practical’ order of society in which the physical world is organised and worked to sustain life.) A discourse makes available a space for particular types of self to step in. It addresses us in a particular way. When we discourse analyse a text, we need to ask in what ways, as Althusser (1971) put it when he was talking about the appeal of ideology, the discourse is hailing us, shouting ‘hey you there’ and making us listen as a certain type of person.

It has been said that discourses are ‘ways of perceiving and articulating relationships’ (Banton *et al., 1985:* 16). This is right, but it is more than that, for we cannot avoid the perceptions of ourselves and others that discourses invite. There are two ways in which this works, and discourse analysis both attends to and intensifies each of [10] these. First, there is the relation between the addressor (which we should think of here as being the text rather than the author who may have originated it) and the addressee. When a badge says ‘Dialogue on Diarrhoea’, who is it addressing? To put it crudely, and to employ an old social-psychological discourse, what ‘role’ are we having to adopt to hear this message? (i) a medical discourse could draw us in as a carer, but merely to supplement the work of those who are medically qualified; (ii) the familialist discourse draws us in as protector (with different subject effects depending on the gender position we have in other discourses); and (iii) the charity discourse draws us in as benefactor, 'millionaire philanthropist in stately Wayne Manor' say, and the 'dialogue' is about listening, understanding and giving.

The second way in which we are positioned as a subject in discourse flows from that last point about what we are expected to do when addressed. What rights do we have to speak in a discourse? The medical discourse, for example, is one in which we adopt the position of nonmedic, and, while we may use a medical vocabulary in some situations, there are others in which it is inappropriate. At the doctor's surgery, for example, the translation of the deliberately prosaic and everyday language *we* use into medical terminology is *their* task. We know we are the patient in this discourse. We are also positioned in a relation of power when we are placed in relation to the discourse itself. A (pseudo-)scientific discourse such as psychology, for example, is one in which rights and powers to speak are clearly signalled by the amount of knowledge held, and the desire to be a scientist may be provoked when we hear or use that discourse. We may also resist it, but we have to take a position. This brings us to fifth and sixth steps in analysis:

5. Specifying what types of person are talked about in this discourse, some of which may already have been identified as objects (turtles, doctors, mothers, benefactors, etc.); and
6. Speculating about what they can say in the discourse, what you could say if you identified with them (what rights to speak in that way of speaking).

4) A discourse is a coherent system of meanings

The metaphors, analogies and pictures discourses paint of a reality can be distilled into statements about that reality. It is only then that it becomes possible to say that a discourse is 'any regulated system of [11] statements' (Henriques *et al.,* 1984: 105). This notion of discourse explicitly draws on Foucault's work. The statements in a discourse can be grouped, and given a certain coherence, insofar as they refer to the same topic. We have to employ culturally available understanding as to what constitutes a topic or theme, here making a virtue of the fact that there are different competing cultures which will give different slants on the discourse, ranging from those whom the discourse benefits (and who may not even want to recognise it as a discourse) to those whom it oppresses (who are already angry about that way of talking about things and categorising people in that way). This is not to say that the set of statements is ever watertight. I will return to the role of contradictions within particular discourses under the next heading.

There is a similarity here between this aspect of a definition of discourses and the way 'interpretative repertoires' are defined in *Discourse and Social Psychology.* It is worth building on the idea that we are indeed looking for 'recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena ... a limited range of terms used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions... [often] ... organized around specific metaphors and figures of speech' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:149). We should be cautious, though, about three aspects of this label 'interpretative repertoire': (i) to talk about 'grammatical constructions' is inappropriate and risks getting bogged down in formalism at the expense of content; (ii) the assertion that there is a 'limited range of terms' feeds the positivist fantasy for an ultimate complete picture of a particular system, a totality of meanings; and (iii) the term 'repertoire' has uncomfortable resonances with behaviourism, especially when we are invited to look for systems of terms which are 'recurrently used'. There is a case for adopting the term repertoire to catch the almost physical positioning of a person as they turn in a text along the lines of pre-existing representations of the world, perhaps in the way that Barthes (1990) talks about a 'figure moving through space (Margaret Wetherell, pers. comm.), but it is surely better to label sets of metaphors and statements we find as *'discourses'.* (This is the term I use throughout this book.)

To return to the problem of how to recognise one discourse when faced with a mass of text, how do we employ this notion of coherence? Take the example of Dan Quayle, American vice-president, speaking at a Thanksgiving festival: [12]

> I suppose three important things certainly come to my mind that we want to say thank you [for]. The first would be our family. Your family, my family - which is composed of an immediate family of a wife and three children, a larger family with grandparents and aunts and uncles. We all have our family, whichever that may be.. The family ... which goes back to the nucleus of civilisation. And the very beginnings of civilisation, the very beginnings of this country, goes back to the family. And time and time again, I'm often reminded, especially in this presidential campaign, of the importance of the family, and what a family means to this country. And so when you pay thanks I suppose the first thing that would come to mind would be to thank the Lord for the family.
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> *(Guardian,* 8 November 1988)

Quayle attempts to define the 'family', but what I want to draw attention to here is the way we have to bring our own sense of what 'the family' is to this text in order to make it coherent, to string these repeated references to 'the family' together so we recognise it as a discourse with an object (the family) and with subjects (mothers, fathers, children). In this case we are able to do this because there is such a strong 'familialist discourse in our culture: 'society has been familiarized' (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982: 31). But we also have to bring a knowledge of discourses from outside, our awareness in this case that this is not the only way of talking about relationships, to bear on any example or fragment of discourse for it to become part of a coherent system in our analysis. A seventh and an eighth step can be taken here, in which we are:

7 Mapping a picture of the world this discourse presents (running in accordance with God's plans, through the operation of discourses, at the mercy of hidden conspiracies, etc.); and
8 Working out how a text using this discourse would deal with objections to the terminology (sinful doubt, crude out-of-date materialism, receipt of Moscow gold, etc.).

5) A discourse refers to other discourses

Post-structuralists contend that thought is bound up with language, and that reflexivity is continually captured, and distorted, by language (Descombes, 1980). If they are right then reflexivity itself should be understood to be merely the employment of available discourses. At [13] the very least, to take a weaker line on this, the *articulation* of our reflections on discourse must require the use of discourses. A critical reflection on a discourse will often involve the use of other discourses. Talking about the inability to use certain discourses in terms of 'repression', for example, could be seen as the use of psychoanalytic discourse rather than the discovery of a profound truth. Foucault's (1981) devastating historical critique of psychoanalysis starts from this point, and goes on to describe the way people using this discourse are compelled to use it more and more in a spiral of (what they think is) reflexivity and deeper truth.

Discourses embed, entail and presuppose other discourses to the extent that the contradictions *within* a discourse open up questions about what other discourses are at work. For example, my children wanted to see the Mona Lisa when we went to Paris because it was painted by Leonardo, who is one of the ninja turtles. The turtle discourse which constituted the painting as one type of object can be understood as 'just' a discourse by a competing discourse of artistic genius, one which captures most of the Louvre visitors in its vice-like grip as they admire the picture.

It is in this sense that it is right to argue that '[t]he systematic character of a discourse includes its systematic articulation with other discourses. In practice, discourses delimit what can be said, whilst providing the spaces - the concepts, metaphors, models, analogies - for making new statements within any specific discourse' (Henriques *et al.* 1984: 105-6). This point raises, in turn, two further issues. First, metaphors and analogies are always available from other discourses, and the space this gives a speaker to find a voice from another discourse, and even within a discourse they oppose, is theoretically limitless. (It is not limitless in practice. I will take up this point when I discuss the role of institutions, power and ideology in the next section of this chapter.)
Second, analysis is facilitated by identifying contradictions between different ways of describing something. The examples I have referred to so far include familialist discourse and Christian discourse, and these interrelate in various paradoxical ways with racist discourses. It is possible to imagine ways in which each of these can contradict the others. The metaphors of family used to describe the human race used alongside the currently popular liberal-humanist discourse could characterise Christian doctrine and racism as coterminous and equally dangerous (Barthes, 1973). Alternatively, [14] some versions of liberation theology include conceptions of community which are suspicous of the nuclear family and are committed to anti-racism (Löwy, 1988). Then again, racist discourses which appeal to mysticism take forms hostile to the modern family and liberal Christianity (Trotsky, 1933).

Now, I am *not* intending to imply that each of these discourses is discrete in practice. You may have to stretch your imagination to accept some of the combinations I suggested. At the moment, it could be argued that the discourses draw metaphors and institutional support from each other, and the process of distinguishing them is purely conceptual. Well, this is precisely the point, for we need to understand the *interrelationship,* the interrelationship between *different* discourses in an analysis. In the ninth and tenth steps of an analysis, then, we can start:

9 Setting contrasting ways of speaking, discourses, against each other and looking at the different objects they constitute (brains, souls, epiphenomena, etc.); and

10 Identifying points where they overlap, where they constitute what look like the 'same' objects in different ways (secretions of neural matter, immortal spiritual essences, rhetorical devices, etc.).

6) A discourse reflects on its own way of speaking

Not every text contains a reflection on the terms chosen, and not every speaker is self-conscious about the language they use. However, a condition which applies to each discourse taken as a whole is that it is possible to find instances where the terms chosen are commented upon. At these points, the discourse itself folds around and reflects on its own way of speaking. The devices employed to bring about this reflection range from the uneasy phrase 'for the want of a better word' through disingenuous denials of a position being advocated -'don't get me wrong' - to full-blown agonising as to the moral implications of a world-view.

This raises the issue of 'intuition' in the research, for the analyst needs to be able to step into the discourse at points to get a sense of what it feels like as a coherent whole. How are the contradictions in the discourse referred to, and how would another person or text employing this discourse refer to the contradictions within the discourse? When these questions are answered, other instances of a discourse can be identified, and it is important here not only to [15] articulate instances of a discourse into a coherent pattern, but also to take it back where possible to the speaker, an interviewee perhaps, or to relate it to other texts.

A related point has been made by the authors of *Ideological Dilemmas,* that it is necessary to attend to different layers of meaning. Working on the assumption that assertions in a discourse also pose an opposing position, by virtue of the 'dilemmatic' nature of language and thought, they argue that we should attend to 'hidden meanings': 'discourse can contain its own negations, and these are part of its implicit, rather than explicit meaning' (Billig *et al.,* 1988: 23). They suggest that we should engage in hermeneutics to recover these meanings. A hermeneutic style of inquiry is being used at points in discourse analysis, but it is a type of hermeneutics which does not attempt to trace the meanings to an author (e.g., Ricoeur, 1971). What we can take from this is the idea that analysis should bring in other readers and listeners, and use their understanding of a discourse to bring out the implicit meanings, the views which are rarely voiced but which are part of that way of talking about things.

For the discourse analyst, the reflexivity of a discourse is found at points which will probably be found in other texts when it folds around to note its own nature as an argument or theory. Finding these points can be useful as a marker that the discourse analyst is actually picking up a discrete discourse. We can also think of this part of the research as proceeding through an eleventh and a twelfth step in which we are:

11 Referring to other texts to elaborate the discourse as it occurs, perhaps implicitly, and addresses different audiences (in children's books, advertisements, jokes, etc.) and;

12 Reflecting on the term used to describe the discourse, a matter which involves moral/political choices on the part of the analyst (describing discourses about 'race' as 'racist' discourses, for example).

7) A discourse is historically located

Discourses are not static. I have already pointed to the relationship between different discourses, and the ways in which discourses change and develop different layers and connections to other discourses through the process of reflection. When we think about discourses as consisting of a system of statements, it could appear as [16] if an appeal is being made to the 'synchronic' dimension of language which inspired structural linguistics (Saussure, 1974). However, just as post-structuralism moved beyond the distinction between a system (the 'synchronic') and the development of individual terms (the 'diachronic'), so discourse analysis cannot take place without locating its object in time. Discourses are located in time, in history, for the objects they refer to are objects constituted in the past by the discourse or related discourses. A discourse refers to past references to those objects.

For discourse analysts, the structure and force of particular discourses can only be described by showing other instances of that discourse, and explaining how it arose. The familialist discourse, for example, includes a history of the family and the way that history is reinterpreted to legitimate the Western nuclear family form. The way the metaphors of family are used are not only to describe other forms of life, but also often to reinforce the notion of the family as natural, as going back to the beginnings of civilisation. When we analyse the discourse of the family, we are disconnecting ourselves from that history. Similarly, discourse analysis of religion and racism switches back and forward from the elaboration of coherent systems of statements out of the texts it studies to look at what those discourses meant as they emerged, and so what the present allusions actually 'refer' to.

It then becomes possible to use our knowledge of the historical weight of racist and religious discourses, say, to understand occasions when they combine. One reflection on the importance of language comes together with these themes in a statement made in 1986 by a supporter of a campaign in Southern California against the use of Spanish as a second language in the state. It ran: 'If English was good enough for Jesus Christ, it's good enough for me.' Of course, a reading of this phrase needs not only an understanding of what discourses there are and how they arose. It also calls for a study of the types of texts within which those discourses became dominant in the last fifty years or so. (My guess in this case would be that Hollywood films would be powerful texts in which these discourses fused and altered each other.) This prompts two further steps for the analyst in which she is:

13 Looking at how and where the discourses emerged; and
14 Describing how they have changed, and told a story, usually about how they refer to things which were always there to be discovered. [17]

We have arrived, through these criteria and steps, at a sense of discourse as something dynamic and changing, but we need to go a little further to make the analysis politically useful.

THREE AUXILIARY CRITERIA

Although the seven criteria I have outlined are necessary and sufficient for marking out particular discourses, I want to draw attention to three more aspects of discourse that research *should* focus upon. The three further aspects of discourse are concerned with institutions, power and ideology. I will go through each in turn, and indicate why each is important and why these final three should be worked through in an analysis.

8) Discourses support institutions

The most interesting discourses are those which are implicated in some way with the structure of institutions. The medical discourse, for example, exists in a variety of texts - medical journals and books, research reports, lectures, General Medical Council decisions and popular medicine programmes, as well as the speech in every consultation with a doctor. In cases such as these, the employment of a discourse is also often a practice which reproduces the material basis of the institution. Feeling an abdomen, giving an injection or cutting a body are *discursive practices.* For Foucault (1972), discourses and practices should be treated as if they were the same thing, and it is true both that material practices are always invested with meaning (they have the status of a text) and that speaking or writing is a 'practice'. Foucault's (1977) work on discipline and power is concerned with the ways in which the physical organisation of space and bodies developed.

However, it is also possible, and more useful, to identify a distinction between physical order and meanings in his work, and it is helpful to hold onto a conceptual distinction between meanings, the expressive, and physical changes, the practical order (Harré, 1979). 'Discursive practices', then, would be those that reproduce institutions, among other things. An academic Discourse Group could operate as an institution, for example, if it could validate or prevent certain styles of discourse analysis. Happily, at the moment discourse analysts reproduce a discourse about discourse which [18] operates in a contradictory way in relation to institutions. Radical analysts could start by:

15 Identifying institutions which are reinforced when this or that discourse is used; and
16 Identifying institutions that are attacked or subverted when this or that discourse appears.

9) Discourses reproduce power relations

We *should* talk about discourse and power in the same breath. Institutions, for example, are structured around and reproduce power relations. The giving and taking away of rights to speak in medical discourse and the powerlessness patients feel when in the grip of medical technology are examples of the intimate link between power and knowledge (Turner, 1987). A phenomenon that a discourse analysis which employed my three auxiliary criteria as well as the first seven outlined above could usefully explore is the way that when psychology in Britain becomes a 'Chartered' profession it will both be able to popularise the discourses which constitute its objects ('behaviours', 'cognitions' and suchlike) *and* be able to police the boundaries between its regime of truth and the others outside, the 'charlatans'. Psychology's increasing institutionalisation will, in this way, increase *its power* over both those outside and those inside it.

Foucault (1980) and his followers popularised the couplet ‘power/knowledge’, but the two terms are not the same thing. It is important to distinguish discourse from power. Discourses often do reproduce power relations, but this is a different claim from one which proposes that a criterion for recognising a discourse is that there is power. If this criterion were to be adopted, we would fall into the trap of saying that ‘power is everywhere’ and that, if power is everywhere, it would be both pointless to refer to it and politically fruitless to attack it (Poulantzas, 1978). There are three good reasons why we should not talk about discourse and power as *necessarily* entailing one another: (i) we would lose a sense of the relationship between power and resistance, lose the distinction between power as coercive and resistance as a refusal of dominant meanings; (ii) we would lose sight of the ways in which discourses that challenge power are often tangled in oppressive discourses, but are no less valuable to our understanding of relationships and possible future relationships for that; and (iii) it would be difficult, as researchers, to support the [19] empowerment of those at the sharp end of dominant discourses and discursive practicees. The further steps an analyst could take here include:

17 Looking at which categories of person gain and lose from the employment of the discourse; and

18 Looking at who would want to promote and who would want to dissolve the discourse.

10) Discourses have ideological effects

Lying behind each of the objections to confusing discourse and power, of course, is a political position. This has to be even more explicitly marked when we talk about ideology. One deleterious effect of the rise of discourse analysis has been that the category of ideology virtually disappeared. In part, this has been a result of Foucault’s (1980) insistence that the term ideology presupposes truth, and that we should instead, speak of ‘regimes of truth’ in which one regime is no more correct than any other. It is right, I think, to say that discourse analysis need not necessarily be concerned with ideology, but it would be wrong to avoid it altogether. The use of the category of ideology has progressive political effects, and it is not necessary to buy the whole package of ‘mystification’ and ‘false consciousness’ that Foucauldians caricature (e.g., Henriques *et al.,* 1984). However, if we are to hold onto the term ‘ideology’, there are two theoretical traps we do need to avoid.

The first trap is to say that *all* discourses are ideological, and thus to follow in the steps of some sociologists who claim that ‘ideology’ is equivalent to a belief system (e.g., Bell, 1965). As with the category of power, this position sees ideology everywhere and makes the term redundant. It neatly folds into the discourse which claims that the ideas of those who resist existing power relations are as ideological as those who support them, and it has similar political effects. This relativism either evacuates politics of any meaning (other than leaving things as they are) or confines politics to the sphere of individual moral choice. Both these positions are ideological positions. The second danger is that we try and distinguish between discourses which are ideological and those which tell the truth. For those who want to defend the use of the category of ideology, this is the simpler and more attractive trap. [20] The mistake being made in both these cases is that ideology is being treated as a thing, or is being evaluated according to its content. We should see ideology, rather, as a description of *relationships* and *effects,* and the category should be employed to describe relationships at a particular place and historical period. It could be, for example, that Christian discourse functions in an ideological way when it buttresses racism as a dominant world-view. But it is also *possible* that such a discourse can be empowering, and that even claims that it is a 'subjugated knowledge', in Foucauldian jargon, could be well founded (Mudge, 1987). If discourse analysis is to be informed by descriptions of institutions, power and ideology, then the history of discourses becomes even more important. The final 'radical steps', then, would involve:

19 Showing how a discourse connects with other discourses which sanction oppression; and
20 Showing how the discourses allow dominant groups to tell their narratives about the past in order to justify the present, and prevent those who use subjugated discourses from making history.

The six supplementary steps cannot be taken without the elaboration of political motives, and I deal with such motives in the course of this book. That they are supplementary steps, and support auxiliary criteria, is evidence that discourse analysis could become just another psychological method, something which I think we should resist.

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The three auxiliary criteria I have proposed, and in particular the final one concerned with ideology, prompt a question which is implicit in much of the discourse analysis literature, and which occurs routinely in discussions with those new to the area: 'how do we escape discourse?' If it is true that discourses frame the way we think about the objects they construct, and the way we are positioned as subjects, is there any way out? Well, one way out is to address the question instead of attempting to answer it. We need not answer the question. It is loaded against radical discourse analysts, and that is why it is continually thrown at us. Four points can be made to support the tactic of *not* answering the question.

First of all, attempts to *escape* discourse invite us to regress to exactly those conceptions of individual culpability for social practices [21] that discourse analysis attempts to avoid. When we choose words that have connotations we think we did not intend, and which effectively reproduce a discourse we know is oppressive, this does not mean we have failed to follow the path of the good and true. Discourse analysis draws attention to language, and can help us reflect on what we do when we speak (or write), but the reflexivity advocated by some discourse analysts is not a solution. Reflexivity is necessary and has been employed to good effect in discourse analytic work, but it does not dissolve discourse.

A second related point is that we need to be cautious about what discourse analysis can accomplish. If we take the first seven criteria, then we shift the balance of the discipline from being, in Rorty's (1980) terms, a 'systematising' approach to an 'edifying' type of inquiry. We cannot escape systematising when we research into discourse. However, discourse analysis should bring about an understanding of the way things *were,* not the way things are. Another way of putting this is to say that when we strike a critical distance from a discourse we, in a sense, put it behind us, consign it to the past. If we adopt the three auxiliary criteria, we describe, educate and change the way discourse is used. Discourse analysis should become a variety of action research, in which the internal system of any discourse and its relation to others is challenged. It alters, and so permits different spaces for manoeuvre and resistance.

A third point connected with the previous two is that both reflexivity and discourse analysis are historically and culturally bound. This is not to say that people in other cultures do not reflect on what they do, but that reflexivity seen as a solution is specific to our time and place in Western culture. Similarly, this should not be taken to mean that it would be impossible to go and pick out discourses in other cultures. We now have specified an object which is discourse, and we could see it everywhere in the world where there is meaning. We have not 'discovered' it, but it is available for us as a topic, and we have to intervene in the contradictions it contains. Discourse analysis is both a symptom and part of the cure: the preoccupation with language in contemporary psychology is a symptom of an evasion of the material basis of oppression on the part of academics, but an attention to language can also facilitate a process of progressively politicising everyday life. Linked to the positive side of this process is the feminist claim that the personal is political (Rowbotham *et al.,* 1979). It is no accident that the [22] 'turn-to-language' was paralleled, and then followed through most thoroughly with an attention to power outside psychology by feminist researchers (e.g., Spender, 1981; Stanley and Wise, 1983).

A fourth and final point relates to the politics of discourse analysis and to the importance of contradiction. Politics here is bound up with history, both in the sense that we have discourse now at this point in history (here we feel the weight of the past), and in the sense that politics and power are about the ability to push history in particular ways (there we construct a hope for the future). The difference between discourses is aggravated as one discourse is employed to supersede the other. When progress and change are notions built into contemporary political discourse, and things are changing so fast, it is hardly surprising that this dynamic should be reflected in our everyday experience of language. In political debate, the dynamics of resistance are of this discursive kind, and we have to have a sense of where discourses are coming from and where they are going to understand which are the progressive and which the reactionary ideas at different times and places. I deal with the issues raised by these third and fourth points in Part II of this book, for it is here that we need a sense of wider cultural dynamics.

At the beginning of this chapter I briefly described histories of 'psychology' in which attention was drawn to the ways rationality and responsibility have been located in the minds of individuals. Inside the discipline these burdens have been supplemented by a variety of cognitive paraphernalia, and this has been supported by, and in some cases necessitated, the operation of a variety of dubious discursive practices (Shotter, 1987). The advantage of discourse analysis is that it reframes the object, and individual's psychology, and allows us to treat it not as truth, but as one 'truth' held in place by language and power. Now the old question about whether our discipline is helpful or harmful seems to depend on our place in a contradiction between two views of truth, whether one takes the side of psychology or the side of discourse. It seems to. The point we need to bear in mind, though, is that in order to analyse institutions, power and ideology, we need to stop the slide into relativism which much discourse theory, and post-structuralism generally, encourages. We need some sense of the real to anchor our understanding of the dynamics of discourse. I turn to this question next. [end of page 22]