

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

Part III

Individuals

[pp. 83-84]

Discourse research repeatedly begs the question: 'what is going on inside human beings when they use discourse?' We now need to consider the model of the person which flows from the framework. A consequence of the usual refusal to speculate about the nature of the individual discourse user is that analysts could be accused of some kind of behaviourism. A further consequence, and one which has often afflicted varieties of behaviourist 'black box' psychology in the past, is that a space is left open for cognitive, mechanistic conceptions of the individual. If, as is sometimes claimed by its supporters, the analysis of discourse lays the basis for a non-cognitive approach, what alternatives are available? This third part of the book considers two models.

Whilst cognitive psychology conceives of the person as a mechanism, and, when it becomes obsessed with the notion of internal representations, splits the individual from the social, an ecological view treats internal 'cognitive' operations as the exception rather than the rule. In Chapter 5 I discuss how the ecological work of Gibson could be developed to provide an account of the person as embedded in language, and as moving between different discourses insofar as each 'affords' possibilities for compliance, or resistance. Aside from questions of 'ecological validity', the ecological model raises questions about the value of different discursive niches for individuals and the groups they belong to.

Whilst traditional Freudian views could be compatible with cognitive models, the retranslations of Freud's original terminology open up a contrasting 'humanist' description of the relationship between the social world and the individual 'soul'. This then warrants the turn to language in structuralist, Lacanian and hermeneutic, [84] Habermasian theory. Both developments, discussed in Chapter 6, provide an account of the place of the self and a sense of individual subjectivity in discourse, and each provides a different perspective on the role of reflexivity and resistance in the 'real' world as well as in its various textual reproductions and transformations. Each offers to a study of discourse dynamics a socially embedded variety of psychodynamics.
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