PSYCHO ANALYSIS AS A METHOD OF READING TEXTS AND PRACTICES: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Numerous works or novels have been written on the basis of psychology of human behavior towards its circumstances and environment. These works analyze the strategies and reactions of characters used in these works selectively which refer to those problems that are caused in our society for the primitive behavior of human towards its social and cultural studies. In this context the paper explores psychoanalysis as a method of reading texts and practices.

Keywords: Consciousness/ unconsciousness/ pre-consciousness, Instinctive derives, Libido of Id, Severity of superego

INTRODUCTION

Psychoanalysis is a broad field that encompasses the study of human thinking, behavior, development, personality, and much more. Research in psychoanalysis seeks to understand and explain how people think, act, and feel. Psychoanalyst strive to learn more about many factors that can impact thought and behavior, ranging from biological influences to social pressures.

As Freud (1973) argues that the creation of civilization has resulted in the repression of basic human instincts. Moreover, "each individual who makes a fresh entry into human society repeats this sacrifice of instinctual satisfaction for the benefit of the whole community" (p. 47).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does psychoanalysis understand human behavior?
2. How can it be extended to cultural analysis in cultural studies?
3. What does refer to the psychoanalytical criticism on Sigmund Freud's theory of creation of civilization and psychoanalysis.
4. How does Lacanian psychoanalysis reread the Freud's Theory of Civilization?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative and descriptive in nature. The researchers took a critical review of psychoanalysis from different perspectives. Mainly comparison between Freudian and Lacanian was done.

History

Throughout psychology's history, various schools of thought have formed to explain the human mind and behavior. In some cases, certain schools of thought rose to dominate the field of psychology for a period of time. While these schools of thought are sometimes

perceived as competing forces, each perspective has contributed to our understanding of psychology.

The following are some of the major schools of thought in psychology.

- Wundt and Titchener's structuralism was the earliest school of thought, but others soon began to emerge.
- The early psychoanalyst and philosopher William James became associated with a school of thought known as functionalism, which focused its attention on the purpose of human consciousness and behavior.
- Soon, these initial schools of thought gave way to several dominant and influential approaches to psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis centered on the how the unconscious mind impacted human behavior.
- The behavioral school of thought turned away from looking at internal influences on behavior and sought to make psychology the study of observable behaviors.
- Later, the humanistic approach centered on the importance of personal growth and self-actualization.
- By the 1960s and 1970s, the cognitive revolution spurred the investigation of internal mental processes such as thinking, decision-making, language development, and memory.

Psychoanalysis as in Cultural Studies

Psychoanalysis is both an applied and academic field that studies the human mind and behavior. Research in psychoanalysis seeks to understand and explain how we think, act, and feel. Psychoanalysis is a broad and diverse field focusing on understanding how personality develops as well as the patterns of thoughts, behaviors, and characteristics that make each individual unique. It focuses on understanding group behavior as well as how social influences shape individual behavior. Topics studied by social psychoanalysts include attitudes, prejudice, conformity, and aggression. Psychoanalysts use objective scientific methods to understand, explain, and predict human behavior. Psychological studies in literature are highly structured, beginning with a hypothesis empirically-tested. As psychology moved away from its philosophical roots, psychoanalysts began to employ more and more scientific methods to study human behavior. Contemporary researchers use a variety of scientific techniques including experiments, correlational studies, and longitudinal research.

Psychoanalytic Criticism

Psychoanalytic criticism adopts the methods of "reading" employed by Freud and later theorists to interpret texts. It argues that literary texts like dreams express the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of the author, that a literary work is a manifestation of the author's own neuroses. One may psychoanalyze a particular character within a literary work, but it is usually assumed that all such characters are projections of the author's psyche.

One interesting facet of this approach is that it validates the importance of literature, as it is built on a literary key for decoding. Freud himself wrote, "The dream-thoughts which we first come across as we proceed with our analysis often strike us by the unusual form in which they are expressed; they are not clothed in the prosaic language usually employed by our thoughts, but are on the contrary represented symbolically by means of similes and metaphors, in images resembling those of poetic speech".

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Like psychoanalysis itself, this critical endeavor seeks evidence of unresolved emotions, psychological conflicts, guilts, ambivalences, and so forth within what may well be a disunified literary work. The author's own childhood traumas, family life, sexual conflicts, fixations, and such will be traceable within the behavior of the characters in the literary work. But psychological material will be expressed indirectly, disguised, or encoded (as in dreams) through principles such as:

- "symbolism" (the repressed object represented in disguise),
- "condensation" (several thoughts or persons represented in a single image), and
- "displacement" (anxiety located onto another image by means of association).

Despite the importance of the author here, psychoanalytic criticism is similar to New Criticism in not concerning itself with "what the author intended." But what the author *never* intended (that is, repressed) is sought. The unconscious material has been distorted by the censoring conscious mind.

Psychoanalytic critics will ask such questions as, "What is Hamlet's problem?" or "Why can't Brontë seem to portray any positive mother figures?"

Sigmund Freud's theory of Psychoanalysis (Review & Analysis)

Freud's (1973) psychoanalytic theory is a method of investigating and treating personality disorders and is used in psychotherapy. Included in this theory is the idea that things happened to people during childhood can contribute to the way they later function as adults. Freud believed that the mind is made of two parts –the conscious mind and the unconscious mind – and that the unconscious mind often prompts people to make certain decisions even if they don't recognize it on a conscious level.

Fundamental to this argument is Freud's discovery of the unconscious. He first divides the psyche into two parts: conscious and unconscious. The conscious part relates to the external world, while the unconscious is the site of instinctual drives and repressed wishes. He then adds to this binary model the preconscious. What we cannot remember at any given moment, but know we can recall with some mental effort, is recovered from the preconscious. What is in the unconscious, as a consequence of censorship and resistance, is only ever expressed in distorted form; we cannot, as an act of will recall material from the unconscious into the conscious. Freud's final model of the psyche introduces three new terms: ego, super-ego, and id.

Id is the most primitive and instinctive part of our being. It is the part of our nature which is impersonal, and subject to natural law; It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality. It consists of all the inherited biological components of personality present at birth, including the sex (life) instinct – Eros (which contains the libido), and the aggressive (death) instinct - Thanatos. The id is the impulsive (and unconscious) part of our psyche which responds directly and immediately to the instincts. The personality of the newborn child is all id and only later does it develop an ego and super-ego. The ego develops out of the id: 'the ego cannot exist in the individual from the start; the ego has to be developed. The ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world. Moreover, the ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavors to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id. In fact, the ego struggles to serve three masters,

- the 'external world',
- the 'libido of the id', and
- the 'severity of the super-ego'

It is with the dissolution of the Oedipus complex that the super-ego emerges. The super-ego begins as the internalization or introjections of the authority of the child's parents, especially of the father. This first authority is then overlaid with other voices of authority, producing what we think of as 'conscience'. Although the super-ego is in many ways the voice of culture, it remains in alliance with the id.

There are two particular things to note about Freud's model of the psyche: First, we are born with an id, while the ego develops through contact with culture, which in turn produces the super-ego. In other words, our 'nature' is governed (sometimes successfully, sometimes not) by culture. What is called 'human nature' is not something 'essentially' natural but the governance of our nature by culture? This means that human nature is not something innate and unchangeable, it is something at least in part introduced from outside. Moreover, given that culture is always historical and variable. The second, and perhaps much more fundamental to psychoanalysis, the psyche is envisaged as a site of perpetual conflict.

The most fundamental conflict is between the id and the ego. The id wants desires satisfied regardless of the claims of culture, while the ego, sometimes in loose alliance with the super-ego, is obliged to meet the claims and conventions of society. This conflict is sometimes portrayed as a struggle between the 'pleasure principle' and the 'reality principle'.

But as Freud (1973) makes clear, we may have repressed these things, but they have not really gone away. Actually, we never give anything up; we only exchange one thing for another. What appears to be a renunciation is really the formation of a substitute or surrogate'. These 'substitutive formations' make possible the 'return of the repressed'. Dreams provide perhaps the most dramatic staging of the return of the repressed. As Freud (1976) claims that the interpretation of dreams is the royal road to the unconscious. The primary function of dreams is to be the guardians of sleep which get rid of disturbances of sleep.

According to Freud's (1976) famous formulation, a dream is a disguised fulfillment of a suppressed or repressed wishes.

Symbolization transforms 'the latent dream thoughts which are expressed in words into sensory images, mostly of a visual sort'. But as Freud makes clear, not everything is transformed in this way: certain elements exist in other forms. Nevertheless, symbols 'comprise the essence of the formation of dreams'. Furthermore, 'The very great majority of symbols in dreams', as Freud maintains, 'are sexual symbols'.

Although these symbols are drawn from myths, religion, fairy stories, jokes, and everyday language use, objects are not consciously selected from the repertoire: 'the knowledge of symbolism is unconscious to the dreamer that belongs to his mental life.'

There are at least two ways that Freudian psychoanalysis can be used as a method to analyze texts.

- The first approach is author-centered, treating the text as the equivalent to an author's dream. Freud, Masson, & Fliess (1985) identify what they call 'the class of dreams that have never been dreamt at all – dreams created by imaginative writers and ascribed to invented characters in the course of a story'. The surface of a text (words and images, etc.) are regarded as the manifest content, while the latent content is the author's hidden desires. Texts are read in this way to discover an author's fantasies; these are seen as the real meaning of the text.
- The second approach is reader-centered, and derives from the secondary aspect of the author-centered approach. This approach is concerned with how texts allow readers to

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symbolically play out desires and fantasies in the texts they read. In this way, a text works like a substitute dream.

Freud deploys the idea of 'fore-pleasure' to explain the way in which the pleasures of the text 'make possible the release of still greater pleasure arising from deeper psychical sources'. In other words, fictional texts stage fantasies that offer the possibility of unconscious pleasure and satisfaction. As he further explains,

> "In my opinion, all the aesthetic pleasure which a creative writer affords us has the character of a fore-pleasure our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from a liberation of tensions in our minds enabling us thenceforward to enjoy our day-dreams without self-reproach or shame."

In other words, although we may derive pleasure from the aesthetic qualities of a text, these are really only the mechanism that allows us access to the more profound pleasures of unconscious fantasy. Freud's translation of psychoanalysis to textual analysis begins with a somewhat crude version of psychobiography and ends with a rather sophisticated account of how meanings are made. However, his suggestions about the real pleasures of reading may have a certain disabling effect on psychoanalytic criticism.

How Lacanian psychoanalysis rereads the theory?

Jacques Lacan rereads Freud using the theoretical methodology developed by structuralism. According to Lacan, we are born into a condition of 'lack', and subsequently spend the rest of our lives trying to overcome this condition. 'Lack' is experienced in different ways and as different things, but it is always a non-represent able expression of the fundamental condition of being human. The result is an endless quest in search of an imagined moment of plenitude. Lacan argues that we make a journey through three determining stages of development: **"**mirror stage", "fort-da game", and "Oedipus complex".

Our lives begin in the realm Lacan calls the Real. In the Real we do not know where we end and where everything else begins. The Real is like Nature before symbolization, before cultural classification. To put it another way, nature as Nature is always an articulation of culture: The Real exists, but always as a reality constituted that is, brought into being by culture – the Symbolic.

As Lacan explains it, 'the kingdom of culture' is superimposed 'on that of nature': 'the world of words creates the world of things'.

In the realm of the Real, our union with the mother or who is playing this symbolic role is experienced as perfect and complete. We have no sense of a separate selfhood. Our sense of being a unique individual only begins to emerge in what Lacan calls 'the mirror stage'. As Lacan points out, we are all born prematurely. It takes time to be able to control and coordinate our movements. This has not been fully accomplished when the infant first sees itself in a mirror (between the ages of 6 and 18 months). The infant, 'still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence', forms identification with the image in the mirror. The mirror suggests control and coordination that as yet does not exist. Therefore, when the infant first sees itself in a mirror, it sees not only an image of its current self but also the promise of a more complete self; it is in this promise that the ego begins to emerge. According to Lacan, 'The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of fantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality'. On the basis of this recognition or, more properly, *misrecognition* (not the self, but an image of the self), we begin to see ourselves as separate individuals: that is, as both subject (self that looks) and object (self that is looked at). The 'mirror phase' heralds the

moment of entry into an order of subjectivity Lacan calls the Imaginary: The imaginary for Lacan is precisely this realm of images in which we make identifications, but in the very act of doing so we are led to misperceive and misrecognize ourselves.

The second stage of development is the 'fort-da' game, originally named by Freud after watching his grandson throw a cotton reel away ('gone') and then pull it back again by means of an attached thread 'here'. Freud saw this as the child's way of coming to terms with its mother's absence – the reel symbolically representing the mother, over which the child is exerting mastery. In other words, the child compensates for his mother's disappearance by taking control of the situation: he makes her disappear (fort) and then reappear (da).

Lacan rereads this as a representation of the child beginning to enter the Symbolic, and, in particular, its introduction *into* language: 'the moment when desire becomes human is also that in which the child is born into language'. Like the 'fort-da' game, language is 'a presence made of absence'. Once we enter language, the completeness of the Real is gone forever. Language introduces an alienating split between being and meaning; before language we had only being a self-complete nature, after language we are both object and subject: this is made manifest every time I think subject about myself (object). In other words,

> "I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object'. I
> am 'I' when I speak to you and 'you' when you speak to me."

As Lacan explains, 'It is not a question of knowing whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather of knowing whether I am the same as that of which I speak'. In an attempt to explain this division, Lacan rewrites Rene Descartes's (1993) 'I think therefore I am' as 'I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think'. In this formulation 'I think' is the subject of the enunciation (the Imaginary/Symbolic subject) and 'I am' is the subject of the enunciated (the Real subject).

Therefore, there is always a gap between the I who speaks and the me of who is spoken. Entry into the Symbolic results in what Lacan describes as castration: the symbolic loss of being that is necessary to enter meaning. In order to engage in culture, we have given up self-identity with our nature. When 'I' speak I am always different from the 'I' of whom I speak, always sliding into difference and defeat: 'when the subject appears somewhere as meaning, he is manifested elsewhere as "fading", as disappearance'. The Symbolic is an inter-subjective network of meanings, which exists as a structure we must enter. As such, it is very similar to the way in which culture is understood in post-Marxist cultural studies. It is, therefore, what we experience as reality: reality being the symbolic organization of the Real. Once in the Symbolic our subjectivity is both enabled (we can do things and make meaning) and constrained (there are limits to what we can do and how we can make meaning). The Symbolic order confirms who we are. I may think I am this or that, but unless this is confirmed– unless I and others can recognize this in the Symbolic – it will not be really true. The day before I was awarded my first degree I was no more intelligent than the day after, but in a symbolic sense I was: I now had a degree! The Symbolic order recognized and therefore allowed me and others to recognize my new intellectual status.

The third stage of development is the 'Oedipus complex': the encounter with sexual difference. Successful completion of the Oedipus complex enforces our transition from the Imaginary to the Symbolic. It also compounds our sense of 'lack'. The impossibility of fulfillment is now experienced as a movement from signifier to signifier, unable to fix upon a signified. For Lacan (1989), desire is the hopeless pursuit of the fixed signified (the 'other', the 'Real', the moment of plenitude, the mother's body), always forever becoming another signifier – the 'incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier'. Desire exists in the

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impossibility of closing the gap between self and other– to make good that which we 'lack'. We long for a time when we existed in 'nature' (inseparable from the mother's body), where everything was simply itself, before the mediations of language and the Symbolic. As we move forward through the narrative of our lives, we are driven by a desire to overcome the condition, and as we look back, we continue to 'believe' (this is mostly an unconscious process) that the union with the mother (or the person playing the symbolic role of the mother) was a moment of plenitude before the fall into 'lack'. The 'lesson' of the 'Oedipus complex' is that the child must now resign itself to the fact that it can never have any direct access to the prohibited body of the mother. After the Oedipus crisis, we will never again be able to attain this precious object, even though we will spend all our lives hunting for it. We have to make do instead with substitute objects with which we try vainly to plug the gap at the very center of our being. We move among substitutes for substitutes, metaphors for metaphors, never able to recover the pure (if fictive) self-identity and self-completion.

In Lacanian theory, it is an original lost object – the mother's body – which drives forward the narrative of our lives, impelling us to pursue substitutes for this lost paradise in the endless metonymic movement of desire. The ideology of romantic love – in which 'love' is the ultimate solution to all our problems – could be cited as an example of this endless search. What I mean by this is the way that romance as a discursive practice holds that love makes us whole, it completes our being. Love in effect promises to return us to the Real: that blissful moment of plenitude, inseparable from the body of the mother. We can see this played out in the masculine romance of *Paris, Texas*. The film can be read as a road movie of the unconscious, a figuration of Travis Henderson's impossible struggle to return to the moment of plenitude. The film stages three attempts at return: first, Travis goes to Mexico in search of his *mother's* origins; then he goes to Paris (Texas) in search of the moment when he was conceived in his *mother's* body; finally, in an act of 'displacement', he returns Hunter to Jane (a son to his *mother*), in symbolic recognition that his own quest is doomed to failure.

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