

From psychoanalysis to neuroanalysis. A dead-end journey in a brain dedicated world of evidence - Jos Dirx

There is a growing tendency in psychoanalysis to search for scientific credibility by seeking alliance with neuroscience. *Neuropsychanalysis* is the new hope for restrengthening psychoanalysis in an evidence based world of mental health. Once the reductionistic mission will be completed there is only *neuroanalysis* left because any behavior can than be explained by a single causative neuron with a specific (representational) task. After the decade of the brain and the search for the final gene everything is neuro-based nowadays, a kind of semantic reductionism: Neurogenetics, neurobiology, neurophilosophy, neuropsychiatry, neuropsychanalysis. We are our brain and our brain explains us e.g. a puberal brain, a brain in love, a criminal brain, a transsexual brain. This antropomorphism of the brain, the comeback of the homunculus, is also known as the mereological fallacy of neuroscience (Bennett & Hacker, 2003). It's impossible for merely a brain to fall in love or to behave in a criminal way. Only a human being as a whole, an embodied, and embedded person, can think, perceive, imagine, decide, make plans and experience emotions.

In this presentation I will venture on the epistemological status of psychoanalysis, seen as the most mind focused branch of psychiatry.

In psychoanalysis people are seen as unique individuals with their own idiosyncratic life history, and are approached as such by the methodology of the case history (n=1), opposed to evidence based psychiatry where only the randomized controlled trial (RCT) is taken seriously. Psychoanalysis as a therapeutic endeavour is an intersubjective search for meaning and self-understanding in an idiographical, and hermeneutical context which seems out of date compared to modern psychiatry in it's neuroscientific driven attempt to find a generalisable etiology for mental disorders somewhere in the brain.

These different perspectives on mental health and mental disorders through the science of the mind (psychoanalysis) and the science of the brain (originally only neuroscience but nowadays including general psychiatry) are not easy or even impossible to merge into an overall view, taking into account the influence of the brain, the mind, the social environment and developmental history. The biopsychosocial view is only of heuristic value in that sense. There remains an explanatory gap which seems to be unsolvable: how can the mind be explained by the brain, or, in other words, how can consciousness be explained in a neuroscientific way. Related 'problems' are mental causation and subjective psychic reality (qualia). Approaching this mind-brain dilemma, as neuroscientists mostly do, by dual-aspect monism seems to be avoiding the problem because there still is a form of epistemological dualism left. In other words two languages are spoken and never the twain shall meet.

This enhances the possibility for an autonomous scientific position of psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic discipline with epistemological problems of it's own however. The procedure of investigation and method of treatment that define psychoanalysis coordinate interpretation and the handling of resistances at the same time in psychoanalytic praxis. This calls for a psychoanalytic theory in which the mind or psyche can be seen as a text to be interpreted (hermeneutics strictu sensu) and as a system of forces to be manipulated (Ricoeur, 1977).