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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Philip Cushman, 5480 College Avenue, Oakland, CA 94618.

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the field. However, I believe Stern's popularity is not due to his discovery of universal elements of human development. Rather, his theory is popular because his formulation is such a clear statement of the present indigenous psychology. In other words, Stern has captured the heart of psychotherapists because he has reproduced it in the guise of a universal scientific theory.

Social Constructionism

Stern's circularity is not surprising. Ontological hermeneutics, sociologists of knowledge, and cultural historians have for years been beseeching psychologists to examine their assumptions and practices, especially their insistence on an empiricist, scientific model. The social constructionist argument, summarized, is simply this: Humans cannot be studied outside of their lived context. Any attempt to do that, and thereby to develop a set of universal laws of human nature, is bound to fail. It is not possible to develop universal, transhistorical laws because humans are not separable from their culture and history: they are fundamentally and inextricably intertwined. The distinction between the individual and the society is seen by some theorists as an ethnocentric, post hoc reification of what could be better described as a field interaction process (N. Adler, personal communication, October 27, 1990).

Constructionists argue that human nature is not universal, it is local (Geertz, 1973; Heelas & Lock, 1981). The indigenous psychologies of particular cultures are not evolving from primitive and incorrect to civilized and correct. There is no one cultural paradigm that is universally accurate about human nature. In fact, the single-minded pursuit of the universal laws of a transhistorical human nature is itself an artifact of a particular indigenous psychology (Tourlin & Leary, 1985).

Many writers (e.g., Smelser, 1985; Toulin, 1985) have demonstrated that a culture delineates which topics are important to study, which in turn influence the overall strategy of the study, which in turn influences what is proper data, which in turn influences how the data are collected and analyzed. Smelser argued that social science reaffirms the indigenous psychology of the culture because its hypotheses and findings are reflexive—that is, they are "necessary" and "true" from the outset. Knowledge production is, therefore, a child of its era. It is an artifact of its time and is related to and in various ways unknowingly serves the particular constellation of power and privilege of that era.

Thus, the very act of claiming the high ground of an objective, positivist social science is a political act that obscures the cultural context (and the political uses) of its truth claims. The force with which a theory is claimed to be the product of an objective gathering of uncontaminated "facts" is the degree to which its political roots and potential uses are obscured. As Foucault (1988) taught, discourse is power, and with the advent of the modern Western state, the social sciences have become indispensable to the exercise of power (Rose, 1990).

Social constructionists call on researchers to think of human being in a fundamentally different manner than Westerners in general and psychologists in particular are accustomed. This sometimes leads to confusion and fear because constructionists appear to call into question the foundations of the current cultural frame of reference. Such fears are often expressed in two criticisms. First, constructionists are thought to advocate a radical relativism in which there is no objective reality or transcendental moral code; therefore, they are accused of being amoral. Second, because constructionists are thought to claim that there are no universal human characteristics, it is feared that there is nothing for psychology as a discipline to study.

The first criticism is an expression of the Western, objectivist correspondence theory of truth that has been prominent in the West for almost 2,500 years. This combined with post-18th-century empiricism and 20th-century positivism to produce the epistemology of the modern physical sciences. The objectivist claim provided a scientific justification for the development and positioning of psychology within the modern state and especially in the American university (Ash, 1983; Danziger, 1979; Foucault, 1979; Poster, 1984). In response to the first criticism, theorists (e.g., Faulconer & Williams, 1983; Flax, 1989; Fowlers, 1990; Gadamer, 1988; Taylor, 1989) have contributed to a constructionist argument that describes cultural frameworks that are grounded in moral discourses. All cultural enterprises are considered to be constituted by shared understandings, the values and mores of everyday life, and the everyday practices that express and construct those values. Far from being a radically relativist or amoral philosophy, social constructionism is rooted in the moral. But it is not a moral code that receives its authority because it is removed from, transcends, and is superior to the particulars of everyday living. The everyday is real and moral, it is just not transcendentally real and moral.

Similarly, Gergen and Gergen (1984), Gadlin and Rubin (1979), Harre (1984), Morawski (1984), and Sampson (1983) have argued that, although discovering significant universals is highly unlikely, not possible, or not relevant, it is most certainly not the only activity psychology can undertake. Local, historical, and particular phenomena cannot be removed from either the data psychological subjects produce or the findings that researchers produce. Constructionists, therefore, suggest that psy-

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1 Constructionists take seriously the differences between cultures. These differences may mean that certain actions are difficult or even impossible to interpret from the point of view of another cultural understanding. However, there are features of various cultures, especially moral and ethical concerns, that may appear to be similar. Culture appears to face questions pertaining to how a worthy life is defined and lived, and how obligations and commitments such as promises and agreements are carried out. It is not the content of a particular behavior or belief, but its contextual meaning, that is the crucial issue. Constructionists recognize and respect cultural differences without imposing an a priori unity on these differences. When resemblances between cultures emerge, they are not explainable by an underlying, common human nature (Siggiano, 1990). It is not impossible to appreciate or comprehend the meanings of other cultures, but it is difficult.
chologists should embrace the inevitable and study local, historical, and particular phenomena and the indigenous psychologies of the multitude of cultures on earth. Psychologists have usually framed the search for universals through the language of the person-situation/nature-nurture debate. However, by reframing the relationship between the self and its habitat, constructionists have argued that the debate is based on a folk belief. Humans (i.e., the person or "nature") and their local habitat (i.e., the situation or "nurture"), once conceptualized by positivistically influenced psychologists as discrete forces, can be thought of in constructionism as a fluid, interpenetrating unity (Gadlin & Rubin, 1979; Sampson, 1981). Person-situation distinctions, rather than eternal verities, could simply be interpreted as versions or reflections of Cartesianism. Psychologists try to separate and factor out the particular moral discourse and everyday practices of local communities in order to find a universalizing sanction for our particular practices. Instead, we could do the possible, and, valuing them, study them. One implication of constructionists' vision is that we should undertake historically situated research about the history of contemporary Western psychology and the political impact of psychological theories. Several writers (e.g., Bus. 1979; Danziger, 1979; Gergen, 1985; Harre, 1984; Sampson, 1985; Smedslund, 1984, 1985; Taylor, 1989) have been laboring with that task. My recent work (Cushman, 1986, 1987, 1990) on the history of the self has been informed by their work. I have briefly traced the history of the Western self over the course of the last 2,500 years and explored how it developed a bounded, masterful, inner shape. The self changes over time not because of some essential inner nature or metaphysical evolution, but because it is simply part of what Heidegger (1977) called the clearing of a particular era, and must continually adapt to shifting cultural horizons (Sass, 1988a). The self is a social artifact; it is part of the clearing and therefore is influenced by and in turn influences the political structures and the economic forces of its era.

If one sets out to study the self, one must necessarily study the historical context in which it exists. That means one must study the political and economic requirements of the era and the way the self functions in order to accommodate and comply with those requirements. For instance, I have argued (Cushman, 1990) that in the post-World War II era in the United States, the predominant form of the masterful, bounded Western self is the communally isolated, empty, consumer self, hungry for food, consumer items, and charismatic leaders. To consider this self to be the single, universal self is to overlook its particular, local nature and thus to excuse its characteristic illnesses, mystify its political and economic constituents, and obscure its ideological functions.

Stern's (1985) interpersonal theory of human development, I argue, is a good example of the subtle uses to which a decontextualized psychology theory can be put. He did not discover a transhistorical law, as he implied; his theory is a restatement of a local theory of a particular culture. This type of unintentional misrep-
spired to construct modern Westerners into this very singular shape, how have they done so, and for what purposes?

Stern should be acknowledged for his intellectual dedication, creativity, and expressiveness. But one must also keep Smedslund’s (1984, 1985) argument about circularity in mind. The degree to which Stern’s (1985) description appears accurate is the degree to which his interests, methods, and ideas fit with the dominant social construction of the time. Instead of universal laws, Stern articulated the shape of the cultural horizon at this historical moment. He did that by using methods that are valued by his professional colleagues, and in doing so collected information that is meaningful to us, in order to aid us in efficiently performing professional roles that are indispensable to our current Western way of life.

**Stern’s Research Goals**

The evidence of circularity in Stern’s (1983) book is evident from the beginning, in his explanation of the goals of his research. These goals, Smedslund would argue, determined Stern’s strategies, subjects, data collection techniques, and ultimately, his conclusions. Stern explained,

> I am most concerned with those senses of the self that are essential to daily social interactions. . . . I will therefore focus on those senses of the self that if severely impaired would disrupt normal social functioning and likely lead to madness or great social deficit. (Stern, 1983, p. 7)

On one hand that seems like a reasonable place to start, especially if one’s readers are primarily psychotherapists whose job it is to work within the everyday social world. But Stern’s (1983) basic stance also established a certain ontological frame of reference that, because it is unacknowledged, obscured his ideology and limited his theory from the outset. With that statement Stern revealed his fundamental mistake. He articulated the particular self of White, middle- and upper-class, late 20th-century Westerners, and the traits that allow that self to adequately function within its era, and yet he implied his theory is universal and transhistorical. In fact, most cultures of the world construct vastly different kinds of selves that would, to refer to Stern’s original concerns, “disrupt normal social functioning” in 20th-century Western society and “likely lead to [a diagnosis of] madness or great social deficit” if displayed in that society. The anthropological studies featured in Heelas and Lock (1981), Shweder and Bourne (1984), Stigler, Shweder, and Herdt (1990), Tuan (1982), and White and Kirkpatrick (1985) describe many varieties of self-configurations. For instance, the Chevong of Malaysia (Howell, 1981, pp. 133–143) believe that the location of the self is in the liver; according to Heelas and Lock (p. 35), the ancient Greeks believed it was in the lungs, and the ancient Egyptians placed it in the heart. The Tallensi of West Africa, Heelas and Lock (p. 34) summarized, conceive of the self as “under the control of an external force located in the past”, whereas Hindus believe the self is “under the control of an internal force located in the past”. But Stern consistently disregarded cross-cultural reports, preferring instead to use the terms society and daily social interaction, without qualifying or particularizing them whatsoever.

Similarly, Stern (1985) mentioned in passing why he considered certain senses of the self to be present at birth, if not before, because “then we are freed from the partially semantic task of choosing criteria to decide, a priori, when a sense of self really begins” (p. 6). This is not adequate. It is precisely this dilemma of how and when the sense of self is formed that developmental theories are supposed to study. It is not a “semantic” task, it is the task of a developmental theory about the self. By brushing the task aside Stern opened the way for a much easier kind of study—one that accepts as a given that a universal self, or its potential, is present at birth and, given the proper conditions, will simply unfold according to a predesigned blueprint. But an easier study does not mean a better study. It just means a less disturbing one. It forecloses the possibility that Stern will grapple with the social construction of the self and the political purposes it serves.

The result of this ontological flaw is that although Stern (1983) set the horizontal limits of his vision, he did not realize that he had done so, and so he proceeded as though his vision had no limits. Because of his unexamined metapsychology he took as a given precisely what he should have accounted for. This blind spot caused him to commit many small mistakes that, taken together, make his vast theoretical claims questionable.

**Stern as Romantic**

Aspects of Stern’s (1985) theory appear to come out of a specific tradition in the West—the humanist–romantic tradition. Sass (1988a, 1988b) has identified and described three characteristics of the expressivist branch of humanism; all three are apparent in Stern’s theory. Stern presented a theory that has universal applicability across time and cultures, and features an organicistic developmental process. That is, he portrayed the infant as containing a transhistorical self that will naturally unfold out of an inner, organic logic—a predesigned pattern. The third characteristic, which Stern also exhibited, is to extoll the ultimate goodness of emotional expressiveness: “[F]ulfillment,” Sass explained, is thought to result from “the actualization or expression of a potential that is inner and individual!” (Sass, 1988b, p. 585). In other words, “The ‘good’ . . . is this inner essence itself, and anything that fosters its natural unfolding; the ‘bad’ (or the ‘unnatural’) is anything that hinders or inhibits this spontaneous process” (Sass, 1988b, p. 382). Sass traced the intellectual history of these values and ideas back to the Counter Enlightenment and the romantics.

In earlier articles I have speculated about which social forces have significantly contributed to the construction of the configuration of the modern Western self. In this article I will try to uncover how certain social processes. In this case parent–infant interactions, and intellectual discourse (e.g., Stern’s [1983] developmental the-
ory that interprets those interactions) actively construct the self.

Stern's (1985) observational data provide a rich and detailed look into the very process of social construction itself. Stern's complicated electronic equipment did not reveal the unfolding of an invariant, predesigned, universal human. Instead, Stern described the enactments of millions of behavioral microprocesses that lead, teach, and demonstrate to infants that they are little bounded, masterful, feeling selves. Furthermore, I suggest that Stern's psychological theory may itself be an important constructor of the self, because its popularity may influence many parents and psychotherapists. This ontological perspective may help in the exploration of one of the great puzzles of human history—how the peculiar current Western self, which is so remarkably different from other selves throughout history and across cultures (Geertz, 1973), is made.

**Issue 1: Predesigned Mastery?**

The first aspect of Stern's (1985) theory that I will examine is the development of the core self. As always, Stern's observations were acute and his experimental structures creative. The data were fascinating and engaging. However, I do not think that one can infer from the data the larger interpretations that Stern made. Stern argued that the core self of the infant forms from three to nine months of age, as infants develop "an integrated sense of themselves as distinct and coherent bodies, with control over their own actions, ownership of their own affectivity, and a sense of continuity." (Stern, 1985, p. 69). In the core self phase a sense of the fundamental qualities of self begins to take a clearer and more recognizable shape. The infant begins to organize a sense of self around "the palpable experiential realities of substance, action, sensation, affectivity, and time" (p. 71). These qualities are referred to as a sense of agency, coherence, affectivity, and history. Stern considered them to be the "basic self-experiences... necessary for adult psychological health" (p. 71). The task of the early months of life is to find, identify, and integrate the four self-experiences that Stern referred to as "islands of consistency" (p. 72) or "self-invariants." That is, senses of self that do "not change in the face of all the things that do change" (p. 71).

The identification and the interpretation of these invariants are the first problem that I will discuss. Although at first reading the four invariants appear to make sense, on closer scrutiny they become more problematic. They sound suspiciously correspondent to the characteristics of the current configuration of self predominant in the United States today. What is agency if not mastery, cohesion if not boundedness, affectivity if not emotions, and history if not continuity? Stern's (1985) description of a young infant is too close to the current American self to escape close inspection. Is it just a coincidence that the invariant aspects of self in an infant correspond so directly with the current Western concept of self?

There seems little reason to question Stern's (1985) data. The tasks performed by the infants, such as recognizing the smell of their mothers' milk or realizing that the fingers they are sucking belong to another infant's body, do appear to demonstrate a certain very physical sense of agency and physical coherence. But I do not think that one can infer from the most basic of physiological perceptions the more complex aspects of self-definition that Stern suggested.

I am sure the infants did perform the tasks that Stern (1985) described. It is in his interpretations of the tasks that the influence of his indigenous psychology is revealed. It seems problematic to interpret basic orienting and perceiving tasks in terms equivalent to full-blown adult identity issues. This part of Stern's theory is unconsciously influenced by the West's 20th-century, indigenous psychology. For instance, because the attached Siamese twins pull with their arms in order to keep their respective fingers in their respective mouths they appear to have a rudimentary kinesthetic sense of what muscles work what parts of their bodies, and which fingers belong to which twin (Stern, 1985, pp. 78–79). But to call that self-agency and self-coherence, terms that usually connote complex concepts, is either an unwarranted interpretive leap or an incorrect use of words. The terms self-agency and self-coherence imply complexities and advanced capacities far too sophisticated to be applied to these behaviors.

I understand that Stern (1985) gave his schema more thematic unity by organizing it according to the qualities of the self that he believed to be present in each developmental phase. But structuring the phases in this way imputed qualities to the infant self that were not sufficiently demonstrated. Stern did this, I believe, because his ontological frame of reference causes him to see the masterful, bounded self wherever he looks. He is accustomed to seeing it because it is in the cultural clearing. He sees it even before it is constructed.

For example, when discussing the "smile of recognition" (Stern, 1985, pp. 92–93), Stern attributed complex traits to the infant self that are not present until later in the child's life. Stern wrote that infants remember the smell of the mothers' milk. When a baby's head turned toward the pad soaked in his or her mother's milk, a smile appeared. Stern attributed to the infant the thought, "My mental representation works—that is, it applies to the real world—and that is pleasurable" (p. 93). This is a gigantic leap, an attribution of adult capacity and thought far in excess of the actual behavior of the infant. The infants probably were pleased—but why? What did this mean to them? It seems more reasonable to interpret the infant's smile as an indication that a pleasurable experience was being remembered or, at most, anticipated, rather than as a confirmation that certain hypothetical mental representations have been proved to be accurate. To use this as evidence of a mind that thinks conceptually in this self-reflective manner is unwarranted.

The same mistake of overestimating the infant's behavior to prove the presence of the current configuration of self occurred throughout Stern's (1985) discussion of the core self phase. Stern defined self-agency as a "sense of authorship of one's own actions... having volition..."
having control over self-generated action... and expecting consequences of one's actions" (p. 71). Can these characteristics of self really be ascribed to a three-to nine-month-old infant? Given the kind of infant behavior Stern described, I see no reason to impute these characteristics to the behavior he observed. For example, Stern also described the infants as dependent on others, with a predesigned need for guidance and instruction. If they have a sense of self at this age, why did Stern not describe it as a sense of being dependent on and determined by others? Why did he emphasize the characteristic of individual agency when it seems that cooperation with and dependence on others is at least as prominent? An alternative interpretation of this quality might be the sense of social dependence. Stern might say that this concept is too compartmentalized for the infant to grasp at this early age. And yet there is nothing uncomplicated about his concepts of "a sense of authorship of one's own actions," or "having control over self-generated action."

Stern (1985) defined the second self-invariant of the core self phase, self-coherence, as "a sense of being a non-fragmented, physical whole with boundaries and a locus of integrated action" (p. 71). But what moved Stern to characterize infants as developing a sense of self-coherence just because they seem to sense that things move coherently in time and space belong together (pp. 82-89)? Equally compelling is Stern's description of infant experience as predominately one of being part of a social grouping, a familial interaction that also includes friends, neighbors, and others. Why did he emphasize the characteristic of self-coherence when a sense of community seems at least as prominent? An alternative interpretation of this quality might be the sense of group or field coherence.

Stern (1985) defined self-affectivity as a sense of "experiencing patterned inner qualities of feeling" (p. 71). But why did he characterize the infants as having a sense of inner feelings? What did they do behaviorally that suggested to Stern that they had definitively located their kinesthetic feeling states within themselves? I found nothing in Stern's data that demonstrated that. He often stressed that the parent-child dyad is composed of the interactional nature of emotions. Why, then, did he refer to "inner" qualities? If one takes Stern's argument seriously, it is more plausible to characterize infants as developing a sense of the mutuality and interdependence of affect. Is it more accurate to emphasize the interactive nature of infant affect by interpreting this quality as a sense of social affectivity? Stern's interpretation is a good example of how difficult it is for 20th-century Westerners to conceive of feeling states that are not located interiorly.

Stern (1985) defined the last of the invariants of the core self phase, self-history, as "the sense of enduring, of a continuity with one's own past" (p. 71). A powerful sentiment indeed, and no doubt an important one for human development. But why must one turn to this individualistic characterization, when what seems at least equally germane, given Stern's descriptions, is a sense of sustained and continuing patterns of interaction with particular others? If interrelatedness is so crucial and prominent in infant behavior, why would they not remember and embody a sense of continuity related at least as much to the social as to the individual? In fact, because social interaction is, according to some of Stern's statements, the most important aspect of experience and survival for the infant, it would seem to be the more prominent and compelling memory. An alternative interpretation of this quality is the sense of a social history.

It is likely that Stern (1985) found a masterful, bounded, feeling, continuous infant in his data because that is the self that can be seen in his culture. His interpretations of the data were unintentionally necessarily affected by what constitutes the self of his time and place. He could not see the circularity of his interpretations because they are so culturally in tune with his social terrain.

Stern's (1985) circularity becomes even more obvious when cross-cultural data are contrasted with his theory. Stern stated that the development of the four self-invariants are necessary for "adult psychological health" (Stern, 1985, p. 71). But if this is true, then how does he understand the members of cultures such as the Tiwi, the Maori, the Chewong, the Dinka, or the Lohorung Räi? (see Heelas & Lock, 1981; Shweder & LeVine, 1984) that do not believe that they have developed these qualities? Does Stern believe that they are incorrect about themselves, and that he actually knows more about their experience of life than they do? Or does he suggest that somehow the qualities of self that were predesigned in them and emerged at 3 to 9 months disappeared as they got older? If, as Stern maintained, these characteristics of self are invariants, and yet some peoples do not exhibit them, does this mean that they are genetically different from current Westerners?

Issue 2: Attachment Behaviors

The data that Stern collected as he studied what he called parental attachment behavior (Stern, 1985, pp. 138-161) illuminates an important aspect of the construction process of the Western self. The interpretation of affect attachment processes might be the most insightful and creative of Stern's contributions. Attachment behavior is a remarkable concept that he has amply demonstrated with a wide variety of colorful and vivid examples from observational data. In brief, Stern thinks that during the initial development of the sense of the subjective self, a phase between 9 and 18 months, parents respond to their infants with a specific type of specialized behaviors. These behaviors, which Stern believes are predesigned, intuitive parental responses elicited by certain predesigned behaviors from the infant (Stern, 1985, p. 140), have the effect of producing in infants a preverbal understanding of subjectivity. Stern also believes that parental attunements communicate to the infant that the parent can understand the infant's interior sensations of intensity and rhythm. He called this intersubjectivity. He believes that attunement responses demonstrate to the infants that not only can the parent understand the infant's interior realm, but
that the infant can actively communicate or share feelings with the parent. This is possible, Stern said, because behavioral expressions "are to some extent interchangeable as manifestations of a single, recognizable internal state" (Stern, 1985, p. 142) in the child.

Stern (1985) argued that the intensity and frequency of parental interventions in the play of the child are unconsiously calibrated to match with or attune to the intensity and frequency of the infant's behavior. This is most striking to the observer and most effective for the infant when the matching is done cross-modally, that is, when the parent's behavior is in a different sensory mode from that of the infant. For instance, if the baby is rocking in a certain kinesthetic pattern, the parent might match intensity and rhythm in a verbal mode. Stern gave the following example:

A nine month old boy bangs his hand on a soft toy, at first in some anger but gradually with pleasure, exuberance, and humor. He sets up a steady rhythm. Mother falls into his rhythm and says, "kaaaaaaaa-bam, kaaaaaaaa-bam," the "bams" falling on the stroke and the "kaaas" riding with the preparatory upswing and the suspenseful holding of his arm aloft before it falls. (Stern, 1985, p. 140)

Stern explained that

What is being matched is not the other person's behavior, per se, but rather some aspect of the behavior that reflects the person's feeling state. The ultimate reference for the match appears to be the feeling state...not the external behavioral event. (p. 142)

Stern's creative interpretation of this phenomenon was that by matching the infants behavior cross-modally, the parent unconsciously and nonverbally communicates the most important lessons of the subjective self-phase of development. The lessons are that the baby has an interior self that contains subjective feelings that can be brought into conscious awareness and can be communicated to another person, and that another person can match these and thus somehow share the subjectivity. Stern explained, "What is at stake here is nothing less than the shape of and extent of the sharable inner universe" (Stern, 1985, p. 152). With intersubjectivity achieved. Stern argued that the infant is then ready to move to the next phase of development, the verbal stage. Without an awareness of subjectivity and an ability to share subjective sensations, the child will be psychologically deficient all his or her life (Stern, 1985, p. 126).

Although Stern's (1985) methodological assumption (i.e., that behaviors contain or mask more complex meanings that are located within or underneath behavior and must be properly discovered) is highly questionable, this is a most powerful interpretation of parent-child behavior. Unfortunately I also think there is something not quite right about it. What is wrong is what is wrong with Stern's whole approach. He said that parental attunement behaviors are intuitive, predesigned responses to the infant's predesigned behavior. If the parent emits the proper response, then the infant's predesigned developmental pattern—the unfolding of the inner, subjective, bounded, masterful self—will proceed naturally.

Stern's (1985) perspective seems like common sense. But, as Smedslund (1984, 1985) explained, one should beware of scientific theories that seem like common sense; when they seem like it they usually are. That is, they are so much in tune with the dominant indigenous psychology of the era that they are circular arguments, not scientific discoveries of universal truths. Why should one believe that any of this mutual interactive pattern, which Stern observed primarily in White, middle-class mothers and children, is predesigned and universal? What moved Stern to present this phenomenon as independent of the sociohistorical context in which these infants and their parents lived? Why did he emphasize so strenuously that the infant self does not learn from the parents, but simply unfolds, and that the parents do not shape the infant's self (Stern, 1985, p. 148)? In fact, Stern emphasized that the parents' major role in all this is not to interfere; they are simply to let the independent, predesigned process flow along unimpeded. Stern continually presumed the mechanistic, organicist, universal aspects of this process, yet he offered no evidence to support that assumption.

I see no reason to discount Stern's (1985) data. What I dispute is the interpretation that this marvelous process is predesigned. I believe that he offered no evidence for this because there is no evidence for it. Stern did not explain how human parents could be predesigned to facilitate the development of a masterful, bounded, interior, subjective self when only a small portion of the world's population conceives of the self in that way. In fact, as researchers such as Geertz (1973) and Shweder and Bourne (1984) have pointed out, most people in the world think middle-class Westerners are very strange to conceive of the self in the way they do. If this self is predesigned why did so many people get confused and wander so far off the predesigned path?

The varieties of the self in the world and over time cannot be explained away by saying that only one view of the self—the current, Western self—is predesigned and that all the rest are aberrations, primitive misunderstandings, or poor copies. Instead, one should question the notion that cultural artifacts (in this case a particular configuration of self) could possibly be predesigned. Ontologically, this way of thinking has been roundly discredited; the vast weight of cross-cultural and historical evidence argues persuasively against it.

For instance, LeVine (1990) reported that the Gusii, a tribe in Africa, have radically different child-rearing practices from those described by Stern (1985). Gusii mothers are prohibited from looking directly into their children's eyes or encouraging their children to look into the parents' eyes. They hold their infants much more than Western mothers do, leave them alone much less, and yet pay them far less direct, intense, sustained personal at-
tention. Around the age of 18 months, when Stern dated attunement behaviors, the infants are placed almost exclusively in the care of their slightly older siblings, cousins, and neighbors. It is difficult to imagine how attunement behaviors could be enacted in such a setting, or how a masterful, bounded self could be constructed. Indeed, LeVine observed no such attunement behavior, nor did he uncover any evidence of a Western configuration of self before the influx of Western culture.

Critics of social constructionism often claim that the theory is unbelievable because the totality of social life, especially aspects as complex as the configuration of the self, could not possibly be created, taught, and transmitted from one generation to another. I believe that Stern’s (1985) attunement theory is a brilliant description of the way that such a construction is accomplished. Attunement is not a predestined instinct, it is a historically situated tool of this era. Historians of childhood (e.g., Aries, 1962; Demos, 1970; Kessen, 1979; Van den Berg, 1961) have demonstrated how unusual this type of child-rearing practice has been in the West. For instance, Kessen quoted from a 1914 advice manual published by the government regarding parent-child interaction: “The rule that parents should not play with their children may seem hard but it is without doubt a safe one” (Kessen, 1979, p. 815).

When attunement behavior is viewed from a social-constructionist perspective, Stern’s (1985) description of the process takes on new meaning:

A ten month old girl finally gets a piece in a jigsaw puzzle. She looks toward her mother, throws her head up in the air, and with a forceful arm flap raises herself partly off the ground in a flurry of exuberance. The mother says “YES, that girl.” The “YES” is intoned with much stress. It has an explosive rise that echoes the girl’s fling of gesture and posture. (p. 141)

Stern wrote, “Attunement behaviors recast the event and shift the focus of attention to what is behind the behavior, to the quality of feeling that is being shared” (p. 142).

Again we see Stern’s (1985) operative assumption was that the important meaning is what is behind the behavior. Even so, I find this interpretation to be powerful and compelling. There is, however, no reason to assume that attunement interactions or interior subjectivity are predesigned. Rather, through Stern’s imaginative interpretation one can get an idea of how interiority is constructed. Affect attunement could very well be one way in which the more subtle and psychologically complex horizons of the current cultural clearing are formed. The construction of interiority might get its start in these amazing exchanges between the parent, who is well versed in the language of inner feelings, and the infant, who is so actively seeking instruction in how to live in the parent’s world. Attunement activities can thus be interpreted as an illustration of how language and movement function as a symbolic habitat into which the infant is inducted (N. Adler, personal communication, October 27, 1990).

I suggest that the innovative ways in which parents relentlessly demonstrate the cross-modal nature of interior sensations really instruct the child in the most basic characteristics of the Western Cartesian self—the split between subject and object, emotion and reason, feeling and thought, nature and society. According to Stern (1985), attunement behaviors communicate several ideas to the infant. The primary message delivered by parent to infant is that sensations are a primary, pure kind of spiritual energy that transcends the categories of language and society and even the five senses. These primary sensations, the parent demonstrates, come before any limitations or objective categories inherent in language. They are pure subjectivity, and they dwell in a realm beyond mere words or characterization—a realm originally safe from the mundanity and limitation of words. Before language intrudes, parent and infant enjoy a kind of pure communion (Stern, 1985, p. 148), a sort of Robinson Crusoe-like existence, that cannot be possible once language intrudes. The innerness message thus helps construct the boundedness that is characteristic of the Western self. The cross-modal communication message that there is a realm of pure experience helps teach the subject-object split. And, using Stern’s emphasis on the fullness and purity of inner sensations that antedate and are destroyed by the acquisition of language, attunement processes subtly teach the fundamental, adversarial relationship between the individual and society.

**Issue 3: Acquisition and Function of Language**

This leads me to a discussion of the third issue under examination: Stern’s (1985) concept of the acquisition and function of language and culture. A careful reading of Stern’s book uncovers a series of intellectual moves that constitute a crucial element in his ideological argument. It is an argument that ultimately obscures the constructed, historically situated nature of the masterful, bounded Western self and its political uses.

In brief, Stern’s portrayal and discussion of language acquisition is as follows.

1. In the second year of life language becomes a new medium of interpersonal exchange (Stern, 1985, p. 162).
2. The acquisition of language is dependent on the development of emergent, core, and subjective senses of self and their capacities of boundedness, mastery, emotionality, interiority, and self-objectification.

During the period from two to six months, infants consolidate the sense of a core self as a separate, cohesive, bounded, physical unit, with a sense of their own agency, affectivity, and a continuity in time. The period of life from roughly nine to eighteen months involves learning that one’s subjective life can be shared with another. (Stern, 1985, p. 10)

[The] period of the formation of the sense of a subjective self provides the experience with analogue... an essential step toward the use of symbols. (Stern, 1985, p. 161)
Toward the middle of the second year ... children begin to imagine or represent things in their minds in such a way that signs and symbols are now in use. Symbolic play and language now become possible. Children can conceive of themselves as external or objective entities. (Stern, 1985, p. 163)

3. In the early months of life, infants are guided by a mysterious and somewhat mystical process that Stern (1985) described as predesigned. For instance, he wrote that,

Infants are predesigned to be able to perform a cross-modal transfer of information ... [which] is brought about by way of the innate design of the perceptual system not by way of repeated world experience. (p. 48)

Stern implied that infant behavior is governed initially by a set of biochemical patterns that were somehow determined before they were designed, and that infant behavior is broadly determined by these inherited and universal characteristics. According to Stern (1985), this predesigned capacity can be seen most graphically in the infants relationship to sensation and experience. The infant has the capacity to experience the world in an unmediated, pure way. “Prior to ... linguistic ability, infants ... reflect the impress of reality” (p. 182). In other words, Stern argued that the infant can experience reality without the contaminating effects of linguistic-cultural interpretations (p. 176).

4. Language is the first major skill that is learned through interpersonal interactions that are not primarily predesigned. It is only with the acquisition of language that the first influences of culture affect the previously uncontaminated infant. After language acquisition,

objectifiable selves and others can be translated into words ... [Then] mutually shared meaning becomes possible. (pp. 167–168)

The advent of language is a very mixed blessing to the child. ... The infant gains entrance into a wider cultural membership, but at the risk of losing the force and wholeness of original experience. (p. 177)

5. Language is used primarily by the parent–child dyad to create new shared meanings between them.

The ... process of learning to speak is [one] ... of forming shared experiences, of re-establishing the “personal order,” of creating a new type of “being with” between adult and child ... a sharing of mutually created meanings about personal experience. (p. 172)

6. These shared meanings, developed through language, are symbolic, impersonal, mediated, generalized, abstract, superficial, and alienated from subjective, lived experience.

[Language] moves relatedness onto the impersonal, abstract level intrinsic to language and away from the personal, immediate level. (p. 163)

By binding it to words, they isolate the experience from the amodal flux in which it was originally experienced. Language can thus fracture amodal global experience. A discontinuity in experience is introduced. (p. 176)

Language is inadequate to the task of communicating about specific lived experience. ... [There are] forms of slippage between personal world knowledge and official or socialized world knowledge as encoded in language. ... The very nature of language, as a specifier of the sensory modality in use ... and as a specifier of the generalized episode ... ensures that there will be points of slippage. (p. 178)

7. Language progressively separates lived experiences from verbally represented experiences. It also alienates earlier senses of self from the verbal sense of self.

[Language] makes some parts of our experience less sharable with ourselves and with others. It drives a wedge between two simultaneous forms of interpersonal experience: as it is lived and as it is verbally represented. (p. 162)

8. Language requires infants to have the capacity to represent the self as an objective and instrumental entity that is seen from the outside. In other words, the self has become an objective category as well as a subjective experience. The capacity for acquiring language is the natural, unavoidable cause of this development.

Infants’ initial interpersonal knowledge is mainly unshareable, amodal, instance specific. ... Language changes all of that. With its emergence, Infants become estranged from direct contact with their own personal experience. Language forces a space between interpersonal experience as lived and as represented. And it is exactly across this space that the connections and associations that constitute neurotic behavior may form. (p. 182)

9. Language is significant to the degree that it is a union experience for infant and parent, and because it provides a way to move to the next developmental level, in which Infants begin to express themselves in more social ways and begin to build a narrative of their lives (Stern, 1985, p. 162).

10. Language, by attempting to translate amodal experience into words, drives amodal experiences underground. It is inevitable that the unconscious is created; consequently the infant becomes unavoidably fragmented and divided.

To the extent that events in the domain of verbal relatedness are held to be what has really happened, ex-
periences in these other domains suffer an alienation. (They can become the nether domains of experience.) (Stern, 1985, p. 163)

[Sometimes] the language version of experience and the globally experienced version do not coexist well. The global experience may be fractured or simply poorly represented, in which case it wanders off to lead a misnamed and poorly understood existence... Some global experiences... simply continue underground, nonverbalized, to lead an unnamed... but nonetheless very real existence. (p. 175)

11. Forms of “slippage” between personal and social knowledge become inevitable. These slippages cause a divergence between reality and fantasy, and between the existential self and the verbal self. Therefore, the infant’s growing self is unavoidably divided by language. The self becomes divided, fragmented, alienated from itself, less intense, less emotional, less connected to its own feelings and sensory experiences, less connected to reality (especially personal reality), and less able to be in the moment.

With the advent of language and symbolic thinking, children now have the tools to distort and transcend reality. They can create expectations contrary to past experience. They can elaborate a wish contrary to present fact. They can represent someone or something in terms of symbolically associated attributes... that can be pulled together from isolated episodes into a symbolic representation (“the bad mother” or “incompetent me”). These symbolic condensations finally make possible the distortion of reality and provide the soil for neurotic constructs. (Stern, 1985, p. 182)

Stern (1985) depicted humans as individual, separate atoms that relate. Therefore language, like the traits of emerging consciousness and subjectivity before it, was relegated by Stern to the category of processes by which separate atoms interact. He conceived of language as something external to the individual—intrusive, creative, even revolutionizing, but a dangerous imposition nonetheless.

I will examine each of Stern’s (1985) points in turn. His first point was that in the verbal self phase, language becomes a new medium of exchange for the parent–child dyad. I suppose this depends on how one defines language. The parent, of course, has been speaking to the infant from the moment of birth (and probably before). It does not seem correct to consider language new just because the infant becomes more skilled with it. What, after all, is language? Is it only words? And is it only through words and verbal language that culture is transmitted? It makes far more sense to argue that the language and frame of reference of a culture, which Heidegger (1977) called the clearing and Geertz (1973) called the “web of meaning,” is enacted, taught, and discussed as soon as the parents begin interacting with the fetus through movements, touch, and sound. The millions of clues, nuances, and indicators that delineate the shared horizons of the clear- ing and the microexpressions of approval or proscription, that pass across the face or through the body of the parent are all aspects of language. This all begins to happen long before infants can articulate their culture’s indigenous language and string sentences together. Culture comes to the infant in this way: It arrives, literally and figuratively, with mother’s milk. Thus, Stern’s contention that culture arrives with language acquisition misses the point. The infant is immediately and profoundly surrounded, held by, and embedded in the practices of a culture.

Stern’s (1985) second point was that language ac- quisition depends on earlier phases of self and their growing qualities of mastery, boundedness, and subjectivity. Two things are interesting in this. First, Stern framed his entire developmental theory around the self and its vi- cissitudes. This was directly in keeping with the social construction of his era (Baumeister, 1987; Sass, 1988a). Second, if language acquisition is dependent on the rudimentary capacities of the Western self, then how do other peoples whose configurations of self do not include boundedness, mastery, and inner psychological feelings (Geertz, 1973; Hardman, 1981; Highwater, 1981; Howell, 1981; Shweder & Bourne, 1984) learn to talk?

In Stern’s (1985) third and fourth points, he implied that with language and its prerequisite, the capacity to make symbols and to objectify the self come the imposi- tions, limitations, and distortions of culture. Predesigned characteristics that unfolded naturally in earlier phases are replaced by the mediations of cultural concepts. Be- havior ceases to be the enactments and elicitions of innate psychology and becomes instead the effects of lin- guistic forms and social rules. I believe that Stern had to propose this in order to protect his entire methodological structure. He needed to maintain that there is a time in life immune from the influence of culture, in which scien- tists can study the infant in vivo and maintain that the resultant data are uncontaminated by sociohistorical forces such as philosophical ideas and economic modes of production. But Stern’s distinction is an artificial one: Infants are born into a social world that immediately speaks, gestures, and holds them. Language is not an ex- ternal imposition, it is a habitat. From the more general influences of architecture, body language, and clothing to the more intimate interactions of voice, gaze, and touch within the parent–infant dyad, the cultural frame of reference is omnipresent. It is a convenient fiction for de- contextualized theorists to maintain that the preverbal infant is free of culture, and it is certainly in keeping with popular notions of language and culture prevalent in the West since the Enlightenment (Geertz, 1973; Shweder, 1984). It allows researchers to interpret the behavior of the infant without having to take culture and politics into consideration.

Stern’s (1985) fifth point was that the function of language is the creation of shared meaning within the parent–infant dyad. But are these shared meanings not fundamentally cultural in origin? The implication that
the parent and infant create from scratch meanings that are exclusive to the dyad alone seems impossible from an ontological perspective. The activities that parents and infants participate in, the language they use, and the meanings imputed to them, consist of everyday habits, songs, games, and stories that are embedded in a culturally transmitted heritage. It was also incomplete for Stern to imply that language's primary function is something other than cultural transmission. Again Stern revealed a tendency that is characteristic of him—to see only the present dyadic relationship. He rarely acknowledged or discussed issues and relationships beyond the dyadic or temporal concerns that extend beyond the immediate moment.

Stern's (1985) sixth and seventh points characterized language's shared meanings as alienated from subjective, lived experience and as driving a wedge between lived and verbally represented experience and between earlier senses of self and the verbal self. This argument attacks language as the cause of a "fall from grace." With language, Stern argued, comes the splits between nature and society and between emotion and rationality. Because Stern did not acknowledge these splits as historical artifacts, he was required to explain them in another way, through the universal nature of language.

This argument contains a type of "noble savage" view of infant development. When infants are characterized without language or the capacity for language they experience the world in an immediate, unmediated way, directly through the sensorium. As a result the infant is pure and whole. But with the advent of language the infant self becomes divided and fragmented; its experience of the world becomes mediated, superficial, and abstract. The infant loses the pristine communion with nature into which it was born. This view of human nature has been roundly discredited by numerous authors. If this view is correct, then what is the "I" by which the infant self views and interprets the world? From what vantage point or with which tools can the infant categorize, discriminate, and make choices?

Stern's (1985) stance regarding language is simply untenable. I believe he was forced to take this position in order to introduce the influence of culture, which he did not wish to acknowledge in earlier stages of development. When he did introduce it, he depicted it as an evil (or at least a two-sided force) that disrupts the natural purity and beauty of the predesigned self and causes irreparable damage to a previously natural wholeness. He placed the full weight of the cultural enterprise on language, and held it responsible for the particular illnesses of Western culture, such as alienation, fragmentation, and emotional isolation. Stern's decontextualized schema required a way to hold universal aspects of development responsible for the influences and consequences of cultural factors such as political and economic systems. Otherwise, he would have been forced to analyze the minute influences of the particular Western systems on the particular Western self. This he chose not to do.

Stern's (1985) eighth point explained the way that language requires infants to objectify and instrumentalize the self. Stern portrayed the split between subject and object, which is so characteristic of and exclusive to the modern Western self, as a universal occurrence. If he had not done this, Stern would have had to study and explain how and to what purposes sociohistorical forces constructed the modern self.

Stern's (1985) ninth point was to claim that language is important because it helps achieve union between parent and infant, and because its achievement is necessary for the next stage of development. Again, Stern's cultural frame of reference emerged in his conclusions. Language assists the self in its two greatest tasks: the dual achievement of relatedness and continual personal growth. Stern ignored language as a tool of cultural transmission and communal well-being. He valued it primarily to the degree to which it promotes the counter-Enlightenment values of the primacy of dyadic relationships and individual expressiveness.

In Stern's (1985) tenth point responsibility for the loss of amodal perception and the origin of the unconscious was placed squarely on the acquisition of language. The result of these occurrences, he suggested, is an increasingly fragmented and divided self. Universalizing the cause and the interiorized location of the unconscious allows Stern to disregard its historical causes and the part it played in the development of the capitalist, industrial state. Also, by using language as the scapegoat, he explained away a potentially embarrassing gap in his theory: Because amodal perception has been discovered, its disappearance from adult experience had somehow to be explained. He accomplished this by blaming language for its absence or undergroundness. The historical constituents and political functions of cultural artifacts such as the unconscious have been discussed by such authors as Jacoby (1975), Lowe (1982), Sass (1987), and Taylor (1989). To ignore the historical roots of an artifact such as the interior unconscious mystifies its historical origins and thus obscures its sociopolitical functions.

Stern's (1985) eleventh point was to posit the unavoidability of slippage between personal and social knowledge. This slippage, he argued, causes a divergence between reality and fantasy, and finally, between the natural and the social self. Most of the ill of the 20th century Western self—its divided, fragmented, alienated qualities, and its loss of immediate feeling capacities—are laid at the feet of language acquisition. This argument again reflected Stern's steadfastness in imputing the causes of particular social and historical products to universal, predesigned features of human development.

Thus Stern (1985) unintentionally supported the current political constellations of power and privilege by defining psychological problems as originating in universal, normative human development. To Stern, psychological problems occur between individuals who are members of dyads, between an individual and his or her own senses of self, and between various internal objects within the self. Stern implied that psychological problems are exclusively cured by personal, intrapsychic changes such as getting more in touch with and expressing more
directly one’s subjective feelings, living more in the existential moment, and developing more intimate moments with loved ones. Stern’s formulation ignored sociohistorical causes of personal alienation and thus potential political solutions. It is a vision that is inner directed, ahistorical, and anticultural. Critiques of this type of person-centered, cognitivist approach have been developed by Gadlin and Rubin (1979) and Sampson (1981), among others.

I have concluded that Stern executed these moves because his argument depended on them. He had to posit a time of life essentially free from cultural influence in order to collect the ahistorical, decontextualized data that he values and believes exist. Therefore he also had to stipulate a time when that type of pure data and the organicistic, developmental unfolding that generated them can no longer be found in their uncontaminated state (i.e., when culture first begins to influence the infant). He chose as that developmental moment the phase in which language is acquired. Language then became the inevitable purveyor of much that is bad (i.e., not pre-designed) in the world, including alienation, isolation, and self-objectification—the basic problems of the 20th century Western self.

Conclusion

Of course Stern (1985) did not make these mistakes intentionally. His ahistorical, anticultural paradigm is currently favored by a majority of psychologists, both clinicians and academicians. That is part of the reason his work has been received with such acclaim: He “proves” in humane and well-turned prose that the themes of the culture and world view that dominate psychology are scientifically correct. His ideas feel right to many psychologists because they seem to capture the essence of their human experience.

But, for good or ill, the ways that modern Western culture moves one to experience life and to conceive of the self are not the only ways to do so. If scientific investigators acknowledge this, they may be able to generate explanations and develop solutions to our problems that are not quite so limited by the necessity of protecting current scientific theories, the inviolability of the current configuration of self, or the political and economic status quo.

Discourse is especially powerful when theories are claimed to emanate from an unquestionable source that transcends human authority, or when data are purported to be entirely removed from history and politics. For example, the Book of Deuteronomy, which the Jewish priestly class “found” in a cave in 621 B.C.E., coincidentally granted that class vast new powers through God’s holy word (Rivkin, 1971, pp. 42-63). In a second example, the avant-garde, modernist myth embedded in the landmark 1913 ballet “Rites of Spring” was claimed to draw its authority from a transcendent, pre-rational realm beyond good and evil. It was an essential element of the cultural clearing in which Hitler eventually came to power (Ekteins, 1989; Stiglitz, 1990). Similarly, a scientific theory that explains current psychological ills through universalist, intrapsychic explanations exempts the current socioeconomic system from responsibility. Regardless of its form, any discourse that is said to be free of political influence or to have authority from the gods is dangerous.

Stern’s (1985) theory of infant development is an example of this kind of subtle political discourse. Stern reinforced the current configuration of self and contributed to its ongoing construction. He did this by claiming to prove that the problematic qualities of the current Western self are universal and invariant, and by maintaining that his data were collected through a scientific process that ruled out historical and political influences. Therefore the vicissitudes of the current self, such as its alienated, divided, fragmented state, were presented as ahistorical, unavoidable, pre-designed psychological phenomena and not as artifacts of the 20th century Western world in which Stern lives.

By claiming to have found scientific proof that the human infant automatically emerges as a Western infant, Stern (1985) made a profoundly political statement. He implicitly argued that the empty, divided, narcissistic, confused, isolated individual of the modern West, who has such difficulty maintaining intimate relationships and cooperating in communal endeavors, is the natural, inevitable shape of human being. He believes that socioeconomic forms have had no effect on the essential shape of this self, and therefore they can have no significant effect on changing it. In Stern’s view, political forces will come and go, but they are primarily inconsequential; what matters is what has been pre-designed, and nothing that can be done in the social realm can change that.

That is a political statement with profound consequences. The political problems of the present time are immense, and it is dangerous to believe that they are simply the inevitable consequences of a pre-designed human nature. If that were true, there would be no hope that human intellectual activity could change them.

Although the constructionist critique challenges the foundational beliefs of most mainstream approaches to experimental psychology, constructionists do not consider all psychological research to be ill conceived. Several writers (e.g., Danziger, 1979; Faulconer & Williams, 1983; Gadamer, 1988; Gergen. Hepburn, & Comer-Fisher, 1986; Habermas, 1987; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Harre, 1984; Mednick, 1989; Morawski, 1984; Packer, 1985; Prillettensky, 1989; Sampson, 1978, 1983; Smedslund, 1984; Stiglitz, 1989) have advocated contextual approaches to psychological research that feature an ontological hermeneutic perspective. These writers are developing the way to a new, more historically situated psychology. New approaches would recognize a new psychological subject, and in response develop new data-collection processes, new means of analyses, and thereby more historically situated conclusions—in short, a new body of psychological literature.

I believe there is an unequivocal need for such a new body of literature. The variety of configurations of the
self over time and across cultures indicates that selves are constructed socially and thus can be shaped to some degree according to what researchers value. Uncomfortable as it is to think in these terms, psychologists are in the business of doing just that. If psychologists are going to do more than support the status quo and reproduce the current forms of power and privilege in the world, we must situate our work historically, situate the current concept of self, and study how that self is constructed and how it fits with and reproduces the current socio-political forms and structures of our world. We will have to decide whether we approve of that fit and whether we want to contribute to it.

Those who "own" the self control our world. That is, those who are accorded the right to define, describe, understand, and heal the self are in a powerful, prescriptive position. They can determine what constitutes health and pathology, proper and improper behavior, and the appropriate objects and practices of love and hate. The self-specialists have expertise in the realm of interpersonal behavior in our world, in our world, means nearly all aspects of life. All social activity is thus defined, described, and controlled by those who are experts on the self.

Therefore, the battle over the self—who knows it, who is responsible for it, who can heal it—is a central aspect of this era's struggle for power and hegemony. The "mythologizing of the monadistic self" (N. Adler, personal communication, October 27, 1990) is the linchpin of a particular ideological agenda. For this reason seemingly neutral, apolitical theories on such subjects as infant development have important political consequences. It is not the kind of battle that psychologists can opt out of; we are integral to the struggle. Let us be careful not to unknowingly lend our support to forces that perpetuate a kind of world that, ultimately, we would abhor.

Decontextualized psychology theorists have obscured their ideologies, denied their historical situatedness, and mystified the impact of political forces on individual lives. Decontextualized theories, creative, soothing, and eloquent though they may be, in the end prevent people from facing the political consequences of this era and developing structural solutions that might lessen the suffering that is all around us. Recently, social constructionists in psychology have offered the field an alternative direction. Let us explore the possibilities.

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