

## Deconstruction toward reconstruction: A constructive-developmental consideration of deconstructive necessities in transitions

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this viewpoint paper is to explore the terrain of developmental transitions, more specifically the necessity of the process of questioning or, deconstructing one's whole frame of knowing before a new frame of knowing can emerge a "reconstruction". Leaning on constructive-developmental theory, this paper seeks to define the deconstructive pattern that emerges and reemerges during developmental or "stage" transition, and shows how it is necessary to incorporate this deconstructed "stage" into a more complex system of knowing or "stage". The second portion of the paper then outlines a current example of how an epistemology can have roots in logical coherency, then become disruptive or deconstructive, then re-constructive, in the postmodern theory of social science methods commonly referred to as Critical Discursive Psychology (CDP). This theory is argued to be emerging as fifth order as defined by Robert Kegan (2010) in that it is reconstructive and not just deconstructive or, antimodernist as seen in not denying, but utilizing process, the disunified self, subjectivity, and theory re-production, as it is made clear in the argumentation of the second portion of the paper. The paper concludes in a clear affirmation of the process of differentiation and reintegration as integral for stage transition and growth not just in individual human development, but also in the social sciences.

**KEYWORDS:** constructive-development, stage transitions, deconstructing stages, complexity in meaning-making, critical discursive psychology

**I**NTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES on the growth of the human agent in biology, philosophy or epistemology, theology, psychology concur that there is a kind of rhythm to the life path, as seen through a process of loss, then expansion. Biological narratives claim that the perpetuation of living organisms occurs in and through the process of dividing and joining. Cells divide into their own entities, allowing for continual construction and repair of an organism (Maton et al., 1997). In other words, *wholeness is dependent upon periods of fragmentation*. Operating within a different narrative of theology, Greek Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas is well known for his treatise on the communitarian constitution of trinitarian anthropology (1993). He says that death is the "natural" development of the biological hypostasis (ontological personhood), the cessation of 'space' and 'time' to other individual hypostases, the sealing of the hypostasis as individuality" (p. 51). Yet this constitutional makeup of the individuated (and individuating) human is changed only through "a kind of new birth for man," which he articulates

*"Deconstruction insists not that truth is illusory but that it is institutional."*

~ Terry Eagleton (1987, ch. 6)

as salvation through baptism, believed to be a complete internal (socio-emotional and cognitive) regeneration as symbolized in the act of washing in water. The capacity for integration (communion), and thus healthy growth, comes through a fellowship with a wholly or holy

Other Being. From the constructive-developmental field, Robert Kegan (1982) also references the biologically adaptive necessity of disintegration as proceeding re-integration: "biologists always tell us; adaptation is a matter of differentiation and integration" (p. 5). The ongoing rhythms of actively struggling to make, have, protect, and enhance meaning necessitates the moments of labor and loss of meaning, and indeed a loss of "the 'self' along the way" (p. 12).

These are helpful metaphors for the process of human growth. This process of individuation, of loss, of deconstruction, is a necessary step toward reintegration at more complex levels of being. Through Kegan's framework mentioned above, the meaning-organizing self encounters several moments of instability throughout the life quest. Change is a dangerous enterprise, for it entails balancing a tension between self-preservation and self-transformation (Parks, 1986). This process of psychological reorganization is, in Michael Basseches' terms, "messy" (1989, p. 198). Using a constructive-developmental perspective, I will define this deconstructive

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pattern that emerges and reemerges throughout all of human life, and show how it is necessary to incorporate dissonance into a more complex harmony. In the second portion of this paper, I will then offer a current, working example of how this harmonious-to-disharmonious-to-harmonious epistemology appears in a postmodern theory of social science methods commonly referred to as critical discursive psychology. The point of this exploration is to highlight the often-overlooked theme of deconstruction and reconstruction in any growth process, looking specifically at the growth of individuals and the maturation of systems of thought or human organization.

» **DISCLAIMERS**

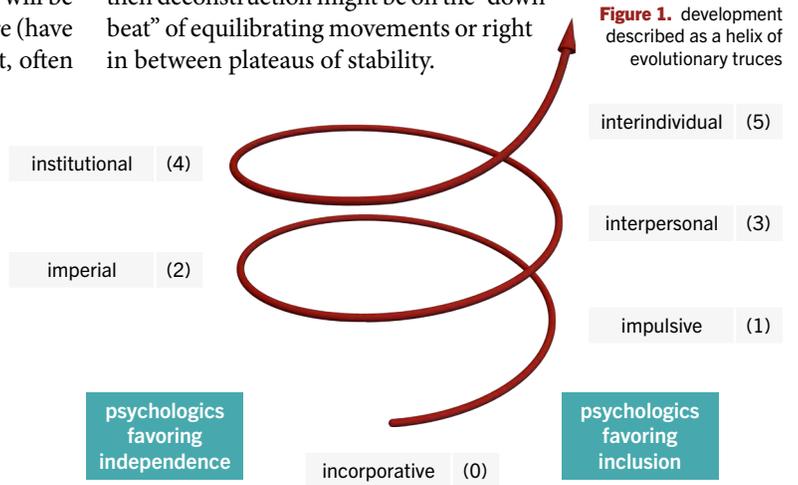
A few disclaimers are in order, however, before I engage fully in this exploration. First of all, when addressing themes of growth and change, there arises in us a tendency to overly romanticize a process of disequilibrium. This is likely due to the textual or cognitive proximity of disequilibrium to (re)equilibration, the regaining of stability, or simply change in general. When there is a disruption in balance, we cannot always assume that there will be a return to harmony. Many people across time and space are (have been, will be) in a constant state of developmental unrest, often characterized as mental illness (Kegan, 1982). Of course, the constructive promise of regeneration reminds us that instability, although necessary, need not be all-consuming; however, when addressing developmental instability in this paper, I want to avoid the use of platitudes or an over-simplification of the real struggle that can go into one’s search for cohesion. Transition is often characterized by social chaos, cognitive static, or emotional vulnerability (Lewis, 1995). I also wish to clarify that this disruption in the cognitive categories (schemas) and structural wholeness of the person is a philosophical concept and does not necessarily entail a physical phenomenon (Basseches, 1989). A person who utters the oft-satirized phrase in American life, “I don’t know who I am anymore,” will say that disharmony is indeed a disorienting experience; but it is not because some illness has entered, or because a piece of him or her has been lost. We cannot downplay the fact that it may very well feel like this to the person in turmoil or, more accurately, the person-in-process. This “loss of the self” (Kegan, 1982; 1994) is nonetheless real in some very significant ways and will be explored below.

» **MICRO AND MACRO-DISRUPTIONS IN STAGE DEVELOPMENT**

This concept of a disruption in cognitive stability comes most clearly from Jean Piaget—in fact, as does the whole constructive-developmental program (Ginsburg & Opper, 1988). Piaget referred to this phenomenon as a disturbance, perturbation, or conflict (1985). His research on children’s epistemologies in an educational context, as opposed to a therapeutic one, was often most focused not necessarily on their right answers, but the “wrong” answers given ever so confidently (Duckworth, 2006; Parks, 1986). Robert Selman (1980) terms this unsettlement as “conflicts, inconsistencies, or inadequacies in his or her internal system or beliefs or values”

(p. 81). This disturbance serves as an attempt at regaining composure, a re-balance in dealing with the world, a re-structuring of self in relationship with reality. This process, therefore, necessarily precedes the birth of new *forms* of knowing or a new equilibrium (Albertson, 2009). Re-equilibrium can be seen as a renewed or as Robert Kegan emphasizes, a newly-conceived, or *re-cognized* awareness of contradictions in thought (Montanegro, 1985). But before this sets in, the person may feel lost or without a formulated or identified voice. It is here that Lahey, et. al. (1988) identify the “growing edge”<sup>1</sup> (p. 37).

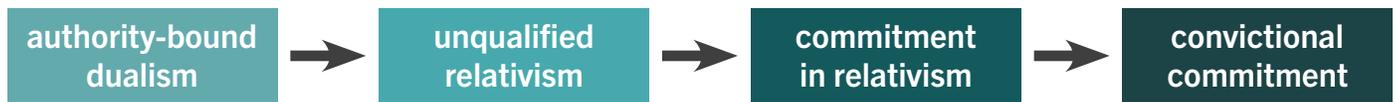
But we must not confuse the general similarities of conflicts or inconsistencies in thought with the actual *process of deconstructing* a way of knowing. The discovery of one’s own cognitive limits, from ongoing or significant conflicts as termed by Selman above, leads to a process of *questioning entirely the meaning system itself*. Is there such a thing as make believe, wonder, or mystery? Is there such a thing as an authoritative voice? Is there such a thing as truth or consistency? If development is to be described as a helix of evolutionary truces (Piaget, 1974 and Kegan, 1982; see Figure 1 below), then deconstruction might be on the “down beat” of equilibrating movements or right in between plateaus of stability.



**Figure 1.** development described as a helix of evolutionary truces

This deconstruction often appears in the form of invalidating the previous way of knowing. A helpful illustration of this phenomenon is that when a person who has “newly matured” into a new way of knowing, will often react strongly to or disassociate from those around them who represent that previous way of knowing. A barely-post-third order person will not want to associate with firmly-rooted third order individuals because the person will speak out at these ways of knowing which serve as representations of the person’s struggled-for, newly-accomplished, and more complex frame of mind (“I can’t believe *she* believes *that!*” “That person is so immature!”). This epistemology is not quite in a new order because the former way of knowing has not yet been synthesized into that still forming system. We can imagine a fourth order individual speaking about a third-order individual in a very self-authored way (“He sees the world in that way, and it is fine, but it is not how I choose to live”). To conclude, disequilibrium serves to draw a person’s attention to insufficient capacities as

1. More accurately, Lahey et. al. (1988) say that “If [a] speaker cannot demonstrate any knowledge of her being an active party to what she experiences, then we hypothesize that she is unable to do so, and that we have discovered her growing edge” (p. 37).



they attempt to remain in dialogue with a surround (the *immediate* down-turn in the helix above), and deconstruction serves to raze this way of knowing so it can be fully *rebuilt* into a synthesized, *new* frame of mind.

### » DECONSTRUCTING THIRD-ORDER TO RECONSTRUCT AS FOURTH-ORDER

Let me now give a practical example of how this happens during a life passage common to American way of life: that delicate move from socialized thought to more institutional or systemic ways of knowing. A significant instance of explicitly questioning coherence can come toward the end of socialized thought, or what Kegan (1994) might refer to as a shedding of the third-order way of knowing, to serve as an introduction to fourth-order thought. Third-order makes authority to be socially-based, it lies outside of the self. This frame is accomplished in that it does not entail a loss of self when needs or preferences are coordinated secondarily to perspective-taking. But its limits might be its subjection to external voices, and a lack of a chosen theory, or chosen way to make sense of experience. How might a third order way of knowing undergo re-assembly? It usually begins with some confusion with regards to the previously rigid boundaries between “us” and “them.” Sharon Parks (1986) calls this a reassessment of the very “Authority by which it was composed” (p. 48). This process might come about as the person begins to place trusted adults or peers, or entire disciplines or philosophical stances, within a relativized or pluralistic stance between one another.

Sharon Parks (1986), by condensing the models of William G. Perry (1970) and James Fowler (1981), refers to this process as moving from Authority-Bound Dualism through stages of relativism, and eventually to a Convictional Commitment (see Figure 2 below, from Parks, 1986)<sup>2</sup>.

### » AUTHORITY-BOUND DUALISM THROUGH STAGES OF RELATIVISM TO A CONVICTIONAL COMMITMENT

In this process, we see the person moving between authorities—one that is external and becomes reconstructed as internal. Through this reconstruction, the person-in-process will experience sentiments similar to this young man interviewed by William Perry (1970): “Who will save me then from that ‘wrong decision’ I have been told not to make lest I ‘regret-it-the-rest-of-my-life?’ Will no one tell me if I am right? Can I never be sure? Am I alone?” (p. 33). Here we see clearly the tender limbo of transition. This young man is exploring the limits of the confines of his knowing, what was once strictly defined *for* him. But he has not yet recognized that he, in fact, will not be alone in his new frame of thought—although it may take some time for him to *re-cognize* the people he

**Figure 2.** the process of deconstructing third-order to reconstruct as fourth-order as moving from

now holds so dear (who he once conceived of as *holding him*). Soon this young man will find that it is he who makes decisions, it is he

who defines what is worthy of regret, and it is he who coordinates his relationships. First he must place his dangling feet onto a new, unfamiliar platform that retrieves authorship or even a sense of stability out of the control of others and places it into his own hands. This allows a more sustained *revaluing* of these others or the concept of “others” as a whole.

This is the risk entailed in undergoing the rhythms of life. This young man’s sense of isolation is a necessity, and could be seen as valuable. We rarely esteem isolation<sup>3</sup> but the developmental frame allows us to recognize that the isolation is a step toward something else. The person is not *isolated*, but is *experiencing isolation* because of the reconstruction of his current meaning system. The above example serves as an introduction to an even more complex restructuring of meaning systems in the form of an entire field of study. But first, let me draw a working distinction between the self-authoring and self-transforming minds, to guide my analysis. According to Kegan (1994; p. 313), a self-authoring position sees the self-as-system as complete or whole, and identifies with the self-as-form interacting with other selves-as-forms. A self-transforming stance, on the other hand, regards self-as-system as incomplete, only a partial construction of all that the self is. The self-transforming order identifies with the process of form creation, bringing forms into being and subtending their relationship.

### » CRITICAL DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY AS POST-FOURTH ORDER

Before I analyze data from the field of critical discursive psychology, a history of its development is necessary. The birth of CDP comes directly out of cognitivist psychology, a study of speakers’ accounts as reflecting their mental representations (Horton-Salway, 2001). The most significant theoretical contributors to its formation are Jacques Derrida (1991) and Michel Foucault (1984), and involve a synthesis of linguistic philosophy, speech act theories, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, sociology of scientific knowledge, and post-structuralist study of cultural and literary texts. Instead of seeing language as a resource for evaluating inner events, discursive psychologists takes language as the topic itself, examining the ways social reality is constructed (Edley, 2001). Language, therefore, is not psychological *evidence*, but psychological *action*. Accounts are highly context-specific, and speakers are able to accomplish a variety of social actions through discourse. I will now address three key characteristics of critical discursive psychology as data, following each with a rationale for the ways in which it is evidence of a post-institutional way of knowing.

3. Westerners tend to value autonomy or independence—sometimes closely associated with isolation. I do not here value isolation, but rather advocate the recognition that a person is often in process, especially when voicing concerns similar to this young man’s. It is not our role to adjust the person’s discomfort, but it might be our role to ensure that the discomfort *continues to do its work* of re-establishing a deeper way of knowing.

2. Some theorists (Parks, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Fowler, 1981; Perry, 1970) depart from Kohlberg or Kegan by expanding the 3–4 shift into separate stages to account for the relativist period.

## » I. DISUNIFIED SELF

One of the most significant ways in which a critical discursive approach is deconstructive of the institutional way of knowing lies in its *denial of a unified self*. A modernist approach to psychology, and in some ways this includes the constructive-developmental approach, takes as implicit that a whole self, or a self striving for wholeness, consists of an inner life that is available for evaluation by the psychologist. On the other hand, Edley (2001) demonstrates that discursive psychologists and cultural anthropologists pose identities as “more fleeting, incoherent and fragmented than many of us would have believed” (p. 195). Indeed, the discursive analytic agenda is to reveal the Western “myth” of personal integrity and consistency of identity over time: contradictions in produced selves as objects will leave Westerners to feel defensive or embarrassed. Therefore, a discursive approach actively *seeks* variability, inconsistency, and variation-in-accounts—or, what have become called *ideological dilemmas* (Billig, 1988). Parker (1997) claims that this is not to “catch people out, but to lead us to the diverse and sometimes contradictory fragments of meaning that come together in any particular discourse” (p. 3). He roots this in Foucault’s focus on contradictory discourses and the self as torn in different directions by these discourses. Deconstruction and its use of contradiction and variability, therefore, serves to dislodge the dominance of privileged forms of knowledge. Potter & Wetherell (1987) go on to assert that a multitude of selves is to be found in “the different kinds of linguistic practices articulated now, in the past, historically and cross-culturally” (p. 102). The material of self-as-theory-producer is considered culturally-prescribed. Ron Harré (1985) says that “to be a self is not to be a certain kind of being but to be in possession of a certain kind of theory” (p. 262).

Through a constructive-developmental lens, this stance is indeed a fascinating one. It is as if critical discursive psychologists integrate within the methodology a study of the very phenomenon addressed here: the deconstruction of favored or preferred, i.e. self-authoring ways of knowing! These ways of knowing are previously formed and become self-authored within a given society or subculture. For example, the client-centered therapy of Carl Rogers exhorts the person to drop façades and accept the whole self, and Gestalt therapy attempts to *recover* wholeness—for the purpose of discovering a true self, and finding the attainment to be in our own hands (Burr & Butt, 2000). These are clearly self-authoring guidelines. On the contrary, Parker (1997) asserts CDP to be going beyond this program by tracing distress to “networks of social relations and to patterns of language. Thus, a turn to discourse in therapy has helped therapists who want to link their work to wider issues of social justice” (p. 8). The hallmark of the self-authoring mind is the recognition that there is a cohesive self, a synthesis of different lives (social, professional, intimate, spiritual, etc.) which have been *chosen* rather than socially prescribed (Kegan, 1994). What makes critical discursive psychology of a more advanced frame is that it recognizes this, while going further to *sanction the disjointedness* of such a once-touted-as-united testimony or self-authorship. CDP is quite clearly a postmodern theory, and Kegan (1994) affirms that “what postmodernism is ‘post’ to is the fourth order of consciousness” (p. 317). The self-as-theory-producer referenced by Harré (1985) may be self-authored, but that self-authoring is realized to

happen in the context of social material and reality, thereby making it only semi-self-authored or limitedly self-authored, and those limits are suddenly becoming explored by the person as discussed further below. Social material, therefore, are opportunities for a fifth order experience of “multiplicity” (Kegan, 1994). CDP clearly allows room for a paradoxical or post-ideological identity: a fifth-order accomplishment.

## » II. PROCESS

The second element of critical discursive psychology under constructive-developmental scrutiny is its *emphasis on process*. Indeed, CDP seems to forsake psychological “position” for a capturing of linguistic *action*.

*Discourse does not provide a transparent window into the mind of the individual or into the world outside, as many psychologists seem to believe. Rather, language organized through discourse always does things. When we seem to be merely describing a state of affairs, our commentary always has other effects; it plays its part in legitimizing or challenging, supporting or ironizing, endorsing or subverting what it describes. In both everyday language and in psychological description, our utterances are speech acts (p. 5, emphasis my own).*

In this account, Parker (1997) emphasizes the action orientation of speech. As discussed in preceding paragraphs, discursive psychology does not make claims to hold a person’s inner experience as “data.” What it does claim as “data” is *speech* located in discursive time and space, and considers the ways in which it accomplishes social acts. According to Edwards (2005), CDP identifies how people are “shown to formulate or work up the nature of events, actions, and their own accountability through ways of talking. These ways of talking are both constructive and action oriented” (p. 260). Thus, studies are conducted on event reporting, script formulation, the use of emotional syntax in personal narratives, and other discursive activities or, more accurately, *accomplishments*. Michael Halliday (1985) calls this “transitivity,” holding basic grammatical categories through which language of agency and action construct a social world full of events and social actors that perform such feats as owning, obscuring, downplaying, or omitting agency.

Robert Kegan (2010) finds a post-ideological formation to be highly involved with movement, process, or modification rather than categories, stasis, self-completeness, or imperatives. Here we find another break from a former (modernist) emphasis on psychological location. For example, Jean Piaget’s genetic epistemology valued such (fixed) things as structured whole, end, means, quality, quantity, object, space, causality, and so forth (Morra, S., Gobbo, C., Marini, Z., & Sheese, R., 2008). But because CDP is interested in social processes, linguistic and ideological movement gives rise to contradictions in discourse. As mentioned above (and below), CDP centers its focus on contradiction. Motion and oscillation between paradoxical stances are crucial. Michael Basseches (1984) confirms that for the self-transforming (dialectical) mind, contradiction is not only viewed as positive, but necessary. “Every system,” he says, “is limited in its ability to maintain stability” (p. 123). As such, forms and entities are found as limiting, but motion, process, and change are the focus of study for discursive psychology and indeed prioritized in a fifth order framework (Kegan, 1982).

### » III. SUBJECTIVITY

The last element of critical discursive psychology to be analyzed here is its self-criticism as a theory-making theory. CDP readily admits its own subjectivity while operating within a discipline it criticizes as socially-constructed (psychology). Indeed, subjectivity arises from this assertion of socially-constructed knowledge, as Potter & Wetherell (1987) elaborate...

*The assumptions on which modern Western psychology is based, the concept of the self as the center of experience, for instance, which we discussed above, may be peculiar to this period of history and this type of society. What psychology discovers, therefore, may not be the timeless universal features of personhood. Psychology may simply elaborate instead upon the conventional ways people are described in this particular society (pp. 102–3).*

As it identifies its limitations, it is also actively seeking disciplinary partners particularly as it was born out of cross-disciplines, as noted above in the historical review of CDP. Discourse and stakes of power occur in the day-to-day. It is here that Parker (1997) identifies promptings for a need for discursive analysis, but only as it is affiliated with “life experience and political identities *outside* the discipline. Only then does it make sense to deconstruct what the discipline does to us and to its other subjects” (p. 13, emphasis in original). For Parker, this involves addressing how psychological facts are socially constructed, how subjectivity is discursively reproduced within present social arrangements, and how the underlying historical conditions emerged that gave rise to the psycomplex. Understanding how the field of psychology reproduces realist notions like individuality and human nature opens the possibility to “transform it, and to socially construct it as something different, something better” (p. 11). A theory closely aligned to CDP is Grounded Theory, which attempts to construct theory out of everyday discourse, “grounding” it closely with the data rather than imposing a pre-formed theory on the data. This self-criticism and grounded reconstruction begins with a strategy in the field known as “subjectivity.” Whereas scientific (modernist) research methods heralded objectivity, a discursive approach not only claims subjectivity but *values* it. A constructed theory includes such subjectivity, and Kathy Charmaz maintains that we are all—even as researchers—part of the data that is collected (2006). As a whole, discursive psychology is both self-aware, and self-proclaimed as undergoing its own process of formation (Edwards, 2005). It appears that the theory itself, with its prizing of process, reflexivity, and identity-as-fragmented, makes room for such lack of wholeness in its own architecture.

Critical discursive psychology could be seen as fourth-order in that it is theory-producing. It makes claims that seem absolutist or all-encompassing. Yet the theory takes as central to its formulation the capacity for “self-”criticism, and identifying the limits of its own theory. Belenky, et. al. (1986) see fourth order, “procedural knowing,” as being surpassed by an epistemology of “constructed knowing.” Here, we emerge from our self-authorship more aware of and *responsible* for the constructed nature of our realities. Kegan (1994) affirms this: “A theory that is also a theory

about theory-making is about the *way* we take a stand will by necessity make judgments about and deprioritize those procedures, theories, and stands that are not self-conscious about their own tendency toward absolutism” (p. 330; emphasis in original). This appears consistent in a discursive psychological approach, with its emphasis on dilemmatic formulations of ideology and contrary elements of thinking, rather than treating ideological systems as integrated ways of knowing, “as schemata *par excellence*” (Billig, et. al., 1988; p. 27). CDP mirrors the dialectical self in that its formulations “affirm a bipolarity, opposition, or contradiction as the fundament of dynamic systems” (van den Daele, 1975; p74). Indeed, CDP is consistent with Arlin’s (1975) proposal of a fifth-order *problem finding*. She claims that while “formal structures are stable, having achieved equilibrium and remaining available throughout life,” they become surpassed by creative thought characterized by problem-discovery processes (p. 602). Although she fails to show here how this problem-finding becomes directed toward one’s own stable or achieved “formal structures,” she duly emphasizes that which CDP is about: a respect for inconsistency and not for the purpose of providing wholeness.

On the topic of subjectivity, discursive analysts are able to comprehend that ideologies form as a means of making sense of a complex world. We either unknowingly blend into pre-formed narratives (3rd order), or form our own narratives whether they be pre-existing or not (4th order). But a 5th order stance recognizes the *limits of preferred ideologies*. Although necessary, ideologies are also restricting. Critical discursive psychology edges closer to a firmly-rooted fifth level plateau in that it does not problematize the holding of a preferred ideology as a deconstructive post-fourth order, or anti-modernist<sup>4</sup> might (Burbules & Rice, 1991). It attempts to bring out as much as possible, and cherish, subjectivity through a process of memoing (Charmaz, 2006). This process allows an opportunity to evaluate what the research knows, knows she doesn’t know, and doesn’t know she doesn’t know (Kegan, 2010). CDP is fifth order, indeed beyond an anti-modernist emphasis on deconstruction, in that it *re-values* preferred ideologies but seeks to identify the certain boundaries they carry, which is important because it instructs us and the researchers on the limits of preferred theories. Overall, subjectivity and theory re-producing serves as a reformulation of the previous institutional way of knowing, as the fifth order reorganizes and acquires these concepts for use in new ways and to serve new functions (Turiel, 1974).

To conclude this section on CDP emerging as fifth-order, I will review what Kegan (1982) calls the “cracking” of the institutional self. The construction of “the self as system, form, or institution of which ‘I’ am the administrator who must keep the organization intact, *a way of seeing now seen through*” (p. 237). Deconstructive tendencies of stage transition show how the person has not yet integrated the former-form into a new form. Critical discursive psychology is a re-conceptualization or more complex recasting of cognitivist psychology rather than a splinter-theory or reactive

4. For Burbules and Rice (1991), antimodernism (as opposed to a *fully* post- or reconstructive modernism) upholds the deconstructive strain addressed in the first half of this paper. It is not “concerned with recapturing and reformulating modern values, such as reason or equality, but with deconstructing them. Not surprisingly, this tradition in particular has been more convincing in pointing out the limitations and contradictions of modernism than in reformulating positive alternatives” (p. 398).

theory, thereby re-legitimizing its preceding form of study. CDP adopts the fifth order understanding that ideologies only provide a partial view of reality (Billig, et. al., 1988)—a reality that is complex, moving, and paradoxical. They must be deconstructed so as not to be left disassembled, de-institutionalized, and removed of power, as an antimodernist might offer; but deconstruction allows a reformulation (a *re-form-ing*) of abstract systems to appreciate their limitations, constructed-ness, and divisions which give them their identity, fully validating their potency *and* futility.

## » CONCLUSION

Because all transitions involve leaving behind a consolidated self to make space for a new self, the disruption in self-unified-theory can be disharmonious. It often entails facing an abandonment of or denial of reliance upon a form, group, standard, convention, indeed a very system of meaning-making (Kegan, 1982). Checking myself against my own disclaimer above about over-simplifying complex transitions, we must conceive of this transition as a jarring demolition of what might otherwise feel like to be a refuge, in the self-authoring stage. Kegan (1982) talks of this transition as getting the sense of “leaving the moral world entirely” and disorientation regarding right and wrong or the institutional conception of a standard (p. 232). And how might this feel for the context—the holders of the person-in-process? It might feel like betrayal, faithlessness, disloyalty, deception, or even signs of mental illness. But we must recall the developmental hope that Kegan (1994) offers: “*differentiation always precedes integration*” (p. 326). Before an integration of previous forms can take place, distance must be maintained. Parents will take personally a two-year-old’s first signs of protest in their increasing use of the word “No.” But Kegan (1994) reminds us that this is “literally its first objection, a declaration that it is making into object the people and things with which it had formerly identified itself” (p. 326). So it may not so much be the parents this child is objecting, but the child’s former organization of the self.

The institution that experiences a barely post-fourth order objection often reacts vehemently at the deconstructions of its heralded truth, only perpetuating ideological wars. But the fourth order institution, and the emerging fourth order questioner-of-coherence, will forget that such a stance is often untenable

and will likely give way to a re-absorption and re-cognition of institutional values and limits. Anti-modernists, therefore, can look to critical discursive psychology as an advisor in the ways of not just deconstruction, but healthy reconstruction. Its ability to re-integrate institutional characteristics, as well as its former way of knowing—cognitive psychology—give it a more stable stance in the fifth order of making meaning.

William G. Perry is reported to having had a favorite axiom: “The person is always larger than the theory” (Parks, 1986; p. 41). A person-in-process is especially larger than any theory, and will experience discomfort that can hardly be appeased by insight from a theory. Therefore, in my concluding thoughts, I turn to an excerpt of an interview between bell hooks and Pema Chödrön. In discussing the necessity of death, Chödrön asserts that

*“For me the spiritual path has always been learning how to die. That involves not just death at the end of this particular life, but all the falling apart that happens continually. The fear of death—which is also the fear of groundlessness, of insecurity, of not having it all together—seems to be the most fundamental thing that we have to work with. Because these endings happen all the time! Things are always ending and arising and ending. But we are strangely conditioned to feel that we’re supposed to experience just the birth part and not the death part (bell hooks, 2010, p. 3).”*

Seasons come, and seasons go. The lush shrubs of summer make way for death and rotted leaves, and eventually naked trees. And darkness; the cold, bitter isolation of long winter nights. But soon nights get shorter and new sprouts re-emerge. All people will die; all humans-being are in a process of death and decay. Cells join, but so too do they divide. Beyond just physical deterioration, all humans feel loss and instability to various degrees and for various periods of time. Chödrön’s advice, or promise—indeed, a constructive-developmental<sup>5</sup> “truce,” to use Kegan’s (1982) early term for harmonious equilibrium—is to avoid the struggle against struggle. As this paper has affirmed, deconstruction or Chödrön’s “struggle against struggle leads to new integration and composition of a whole new way of knowing, or a wider view of reality. ■

5. Chödrön seems especially constructive-developmental earlier on in the interview when she asserted that “Getting stuck in any kind of self-and-other tension seems to cause pain.”

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