

Parker, I. (1989) *The Crisis in Modern Social Psychology – and how to end it*. London: Routledge

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### **Further reading**

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Here are some suggestions to guide you into the literature on (1) the crisis and new social psychology, (2) deconstruction, (3) the analysis of discourse, and (4) descriptions of postmodernity. These books and articles will be found more fully referenced in the reference section to this book. The dates for all the main theoretical works given in this book, and in the references, are those for the first publication in English. This is deliberate, for these are the versions employed by radicals in social psychology, and the ones available to readers wanting to follow up the ideas. (As post-structuralism points out, there are no ‘originals’ where you will find the ‘true’ meaning.)

### **The crisis**

The manifesto for the new paradigm is Harré and Secord’s (1972) *The Explanation of Social Behaviour*. Harré takes a realist position, and so he is able to argue persuasively that if we treated people ‘as if they were human beings’ we would be being more scientific. This is not light reading, though, and a more accessible introduction to the new paradigm is contained in Harré, Clarke and De Carlo’s (1985) *Motives and Mechanisms*. Harré’s most interesting accounts of what new social psychology involves for social study and political change can be found in his *Social Being* (1979) and *Personal Being* (1983). There is a third volume of this projected trilogy, *Physical Being*, promised in the near future. An account of the other, hermeneutic, side of the new social psychology will be found in Shotter’s (1975) *Images of Man in Psychological Research*. This is a useful thin book and is more polemical than the more [159] recent *Social Accountability and Selfhood* (1984) which collects scattered papers together, and threads them on a narrative which is more critical than the humanism which informed Shotter’s writings in the early 1970s. The more immediately political side to the crisis is represented in Armistead’s (1974) edited collection *Reconstructing Social Psychology*. There are useful papers by Harré and Shotter in this volume. Although the overall themes of the book are influenced by phenomenology and humanism, the political contributions are still as useful now as they were then (and clearer than most of what I try to say). The political dynamic of the Armistead book should be continued in a forthcoming edited collection I am putting together with John Shotter called *Deconstructing Social Psychology*.

### **Deconstruction**

The clearest account of Derrida’s deconstruction of texts is to be found in Norris’s (1982) *Deconstruction*. The sub-title ‘Theory and practice’ has attracted some criticism for implying that it is possible to maintain a distinction between the two things, but it is a useful way into a difficult area. Derrida deconstructs just such an opposition in the three interviews collected in *Positions* (1981). It would be best to begin reading him here after secondary sources, and before

plunging into *Of Grammatology* (1976) which is difficult at times. Derrida should be seen in context. He can be understood in relation to literature, history, and philosophy. An accessible account of contemporary uses of deconstructions by radicals in English literature which sets Derrida (and Foucault) in the context of other approaches to texts is Eagleton's (1983) *Literary Theory*.

## **Discourse**

It is best to read Foucault before turning to second-hand accounts of his work. *The History of Sexuality I* (1981) is an acute, poetic, and (paradoxically) liberating analysis of discourses of sexuality and practices of confession. Then turn to *Discipline and Punish* (1977). This was written as part of a political campaign in France in the early 1970s in support of prisoners. The analysis of discourse Foucault provides is represented in psychology in Henriques *et al.* [160] *Changing the Subject* (1984). This is heavy going in places, but some of the chapters connect with themes in this book and are useful guides to research. A more politically cautious use of the notion of 'discourse' is to be found in Potter and Wetherell's (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology*. Anyone who is tempted to do research on discourses should read this book. The 'ten steps' to analysis can be taken with a pinch of salt, but they can be used as part of the presentational rhetoric to get work through institutional barriers.

## **Postmodernity**

Perhaps because it is all around us, it is all the more difficult to identify postmodernism. You might like to listen to Talking Heads' music and reflect on whether there is any real meaning to be drawn out of the songs (unlike traditional love songs, for example, which appeal to 'deep' common feelings). The easiest way into this is Hewison's (1987) *The Heritage Industry*, in which he gives an account of how the 'past' has become constructed for present purposes. A sense of history has been erased as romanticized disneyesque snapshots take over the museum service. The first theoretical piece to read should be Fredric Jameson's chapter in Foster's *Postmodern Culture* (1985). (The book was first published in America under the title *The Anti-Aesthetic*.) Jameson at least tries to hold on to a radical political position, unlike Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984). Lyotard's book is not easy to read, but it is short. It helps to begin with the interview at the end of the book. An overall philosophical appraisal of Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard which also traces through their affiliations to psychoanalysis, is Peter Dews's (1987) *Logics of Disintegration*. This is difficult, but after the other books it provides a framework for these complex ideas. I found a way into post-structuralism through Dews's work, and after you have looked at the other reading you could use his book to find your way out the other side.[161]