

## Topic Page: [Constructivism \(Philosophy\)](#)

Definition: **constructivism** from *Dictionary of Psychological Testing, Assessment and Treatment*

The argument that learning is not objective and factual but is inevitably shaped and even biased by the learner's prior experience, the context in which the learning takes place, etc.

### Summary Article: **CONSTRUCTIVISM**

From *Dictionary of Visual Discourse: A Dialectical Lexicon of Terms*

Or 'constructionism'. Both a philosophical outlook and a perspective in social theory informed by the principle that '*All knowledge is constructed (relative, conditioned) but some knowledge(s) is (are) more constructed than others*'.

There are thus weak and strong variants of constructivism. Weak constructivism is the elementary hypothesis that directs inquiry to conceptual, linguistic and cultural factors involved in the social organization of experience. More extreme variants, however, dogmatically assert that: 'Since *all* reality is artefactual, we are prisoners of our constructions.'

If reality is a sociohistorical construction, it follows that there are an indefinite number of historical 'worlds' organized as plausibility structures correlated to specific historical agencies, societal machineries and communication technologies.

The seminal idea of constructivism - *verum ipsum factum convertuntur* - can be traced from Giambattista Vico through Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Piaget, Husserl and Heidegger. Today the human sciences are the main promulgators of social constructionism. A major function of contemporary social and cultural inquiry has been to introduce the idiom of world fabrication into the currency of the human sciences. We now unthinkingly speak of the cultural construction of knowledges relative to different paradigms, world-views, forms of life and historical periods. In this spirit Nietzsche claimed that: 'We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we can live - by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith nobody now could endure. But that does not prove them. Life is no argument. The conditions of life might include error' (1974, Book3, section 121:177). What strict constructivists underplay is the idea that 'construction' always involves a *transformation* of life.

Terminology is clearly not neutral. 'Object constitution' suggests phenomenological perspectives (intentionality, noetic-noematic correlations, transcendental consciousness, etc), while 'object construction' suggests social and cultural practices of world fabrication. Both grammars - 'constitution' and 'construction' - tend to downplay the material and physical constraints on object formation.

### Note

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**APA**

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Harvard

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## Chicago

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## Harvard

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## MLA

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