

Why everyone should read Kurt Danziger's *Naming the Mind*

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When Christopher Green (2010) was interviewed for the magazine, *The Psychologist*, he was asked to name a book that he thought all psychologists should read. His reply was Kurt Danziger's *Naming the Mind*. In her review of the book, Laurel Furumoto (1999) wrote: "I wish that I had it in my power to make this book by Kurt Danziger required reading" (p. 701). Charles Tolman (1997) expressed a similar view: "It should be required reading for all who wish to call themselves psychologists" (p.197). Such views are not limited to psychologists. The philosopher, Tetsuya Kono (2004) wrote that it "has already been highly valued as a must-read book in the domain of history of psychology, theoretical psychology and critical psychology ... My conclusion is that this book is also a must-read for philosophers" (p.432). Why is the book considered to be so important? Different authors might give different answers but one of them is that it offers a radical redefinition of the things that we regard as "psychological". Danziger convincingly shows that they are the products of a particular time and place. They are also intimately related to the practices of the society in which they occur. This is not how we usually view them. They are assumed to be natural. As Kono (2004) points out, taking something that is historical as natural can be a sign of authoritarianism: "We can easily find this kind of authoritarianism in the case of seeking the cause of lower social standing of a certain minority group in gene combination, instead of seeking it in social inequality or historical disadvantage" (p. 436). By placing them in the realm of the historical, where they properly belong, we can begin to discuss their moral and political implications.

References

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