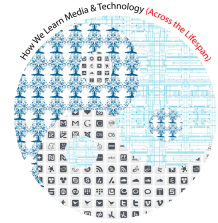




How We Learn (Media & Technology Across the Lifespan)



Funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada

HWL Tracer Bullet #63

Stephen Petrina
3 November 2016

Θ — Π

Theory

1. Theory

a. Theory and History

- i. Kant, *Critique of Pure Knowledge* (Muller, Trans.) (1781/1881, p. 45): “Thoughts without contents are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.”
- ii. Kant, *Critique of Pure Knowledge* (Meiklejohn, Trans.) (1781/1889, p. 46): “Thoughts without content are void; intuitions without conceptions, blind.”
- iii. Schurman (1898, p. 19): “Concepts without precepts are empty” and “percepts without concepts are blind.”
- iv. Crespi (1915, p. 223): “philosophy without history is empty; history without philosophy is blind” (ostensibly quoting Croce, 1915)
- v. Miller (1939, p. 36): “Theory without history is empty, history without theory is blind” (see Emery, 1941, p. 231).

b. Theory and Practice

- i. Sloane (1944, p. 212): Theory without practice is sterile; practice without theory is blind.
- ii. Becker (1954, p. 387): Adapting Kant, “Practice without theory is blind; theory without practice is empty.”
- iii. Panikkar (1991, p. 475): Theory without praxis is powerless, praxis without theory is blind.
- iv.

c. History of Theory

- i. Α & Ω or α & ω or Α & ω (note dif. bet. manuscript and modern fonts)
 1. *Alpha & Omega*
- ii. Θεωρία, ΘΕΩΡΙΑ, *Theoria*
 1. God, *Theos*, *deos*, θεω, δεως, θεός
 2. Apocalypse, 1:8
 - a. τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ
 - b. ego sum Alpha et Omega principium et finis
 - c. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end
 3. Apocalypse, 22:13
 - a. ego Alpha et Omega primus et novissimus principium et finis
 - b. I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

HWL Tracer Bullets are research guides or bulletins with brief introductions to topics, resources, and general strategies for intellectual direction and tracing interpretive quests (based on the concept at the Library of Congress).



Figure 1. From Ripa (1613/1645, p. 207), *Iconologia*, “Filosofia” (note *theta* at top of stairs and *pi* at bottom)

iii. Θ — Π (note dif. bet. manuscript and modern fonts)

1. *Theta — Pi*
2. Mueller & Scodel (2009, p. 76): The Greek letters *pi* and *theta* respectively symbolize ‘*praxis*’ and ‘*theoria*,’ the practical and theoretical branches of philosophy.
3. Boethius, *Dialogi in Porphyrium* (ca. 510, 1.3): “Est enim philosophia genus, species vero ejus duae, una quae θεωρητική [*theoraetikaē*] dicitur, altera quae πρακτική [*praktikaē*], id est speculativa et activa” (in J.-P. Migne *Patrologia Latina*, 1844–49, 64, 11a).
 - a. For philosophy is a genus, of which there are two species, one is called theoretical, the other practical, speculative and active. (Rhodes, 2016, n. 27)
4. Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (ca. 524): While I ruminated these things with myself, and determined to set forth my woful complaint in writing, methought I saw a woman [Philosophia] stand above my head, having a grave countenance, glistening clear eye, and of quicker sight than commonly Nature doth afford; her colour fresh and bespeaking unabated vigour, and yet discovering so many years, that she could not at all be thought to belong to our times; her stature uncertain and doubtful, for sometime she exceeded not the common height of men, and sometime she seemed to touch the heavens with her head, and if she lifted it up to the highest, she pierced the very heavens, so that she could not be seen by the beholders; her garments were made of most fine threads with cunning workmanship into an ever-during stuff, which (as I knew afterward by her own report) she had woven with her own hands. A certain duskishness caused by negligence and time had darkened their colour, as it is wont to happen when pictures stand in a smoky room. In the lower part of them was

placed the Greek letter Π [Greek: PI], and in the upper Θ [Greek: THETA], and betwixt the two letters, in the manner of stairs, there were certain degrees made, by which there was a passage from the lower to the higher letter: this her garment had been cut by the violence of some, who had taken away such pieces as they could get. In her right hand she had certain books, and in her left hand she held a sceptre. Yet the goal of phenomenology is nothing less than to reveal, through the reduction, the structures of prereflective intentional experience.

iv. *Vita contemplativa & vita speculativa v Vita activa*

1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, (10.7-9):

a. contemplativa vita consistit felicitas (10.7)

i. Life of contemplation [contemplative life] will be the greatest source of happiness.

b. If then the intellect is something divine in comparison with man, so is the life of the intellect divine in comparison with human life. (10.8)

c. that which is best and most pleasant for each creature is that which is proper to the nature of each; accordingly the life of the intellect is the best and the pleasantest life²⁸ for man, inasmuch as the intellect more than anything else is man; therefore this life will be the happiest. (10.9)

2. Dante's *Paradiso* (Cantos XXIV-XXVI)

a.

d. *Theoria & Praxis* (θεωρίας, Θεωρία, *Theoria* & πράξις, *Praxis*)

i. Heidegger, "Science and Reflection," (1954/1977, p. 165): The Romans translate *theorein* by *contemplari*, *theória* by *contemplano*. This translation, which issues from the spirit of the Roman language, that is, from Roman existence, makes that which is essential in what the Greek words say vanish at a stroke.

ii. Panikkar (1991, 475): Cicero translated the Greek *theoria* by *contemplatio* and thus changed the original meaning of the Latin word which implies both action and theory at the same time.

iii. *Theoria* is post-classical Latin (4th century). Theorie (theory) is late 16th century.

1. Shakespeare, *King Henry V* (1599, Scene 1, Act1): Archbishop of Canterbury declares

a. So that the art and practic part of life
Must be the mistress to this theoretic

iv. Panikkar (2010, p. 365): The christian "twist" was curiously helped along by one of those effective, although grammatically spurious etymologies: δεόν όργαν ("seeing God"). Theory would then mean nothing less than "to see God." In fact, the word *theoria* was often understood as coming from *theos*, God, and not from *thea*, "vision," "to see." The Pseudo-Plutarch still thought that not only *theorein*, but also *theatron*, "theatre," came from *theos*, so that the first purpose of theater was to honor the Gods, as in the Dionysian festivals celebrated theatrically at Ephesus.

v. **Praxis & Theory** (πράξις & θεωρίας)

1. Plato

a. Work with the Hands, e.g.,

i. *Republic*, 495d-e

1. And it's a reasonable thing to say, for other little men—the ones who are most sophisticated at their own little crafts—seeing that this position, which is full of fine names and adornments, is vacated, leap

gladly from those little crafts to philosophy, like prisoners escaping from jail who take refuge in a temple. Despite her present poor state, philosophy is still more high-minded than these other crafts, so that many people with defective natures desire to possess her, even though their souls are cramped and spoiled by the mechanical nature of their work, in just the way that their bodies are mutilated by their crafts and labors. Isn't that inevitable?

- ii. *Republic*, 590c
 1. Why do you think that the condition of a manual worker is despised? Or is it for any other reason than that, when the best part is naturally weak in someone, it can't rule the beasts within him but can only serve them and learn to flatter them?
2. Aristotle
 - a. Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας (*Peri Hermeneias*) (*De Interpretatione*)
 - b. see Boethius (ca. 520) translation *De interpretatione Aristotelis Minor*
3. Origen, 240, *In Lucam* (Frag. 39, PG 13, 1801)
 - a. πράξις γὰρ θεωρίας ἀνάβασις
 - i. Praxis is the ascent to contemplation [theory].
 - ii. Panikkar (2010, p. 365): For the christian tradition, *theoreia* meant to look for and eventually to see God, although *en ainigmati* only. Or, in a more concrete way, it meant to see Christ in whom all the riches and treasures of the Godhead are hidden and contained. In this tradition, action and contemplation go together and develop an interesting dialectic. The main principle, based on the Gospels, may still be Origen's often repeated phrase: "Praxis is the ascent to contemplation." Or, in the same place: "There is neither theory without praxis, nor praxis without theory."
4. Theodoret of Antioch (ca. 350)
 - a. θεῖαν θεωρίαν φανταζόμενος (*Religiosa historia* 12, PG 82, 1396c; 18, 1425d; 24, 1460a)
 - i. Doing leads to contemplation
 - ii. *Patrologia Graeca* <http://patristica.net/graeca/>
5. Gregory Nazianzen (ca. 380)
 - a. πράξις γὰρ ἐπίβασις θεωρίας (PG 35, 1080)
6. Panikkar (1979, p. 200): *Theoria* and *praxis* are as mutually subservient as they are consistent. I call this an *ontonomic* relation. However this may be, the solution belongs as well to the praxis (although we can, of course, also reflect on the solution and its meaning). If this is the case, the relation between theory and practice is not a dialectical relation.
7. "Theory arises out of practice" (Sloane, 1944, p. 212) / Freedom arises from necessity
 - a. Engels (1878/1894, p. 318): finally cuts himself off from the animal world, leaves the conditions of animal existence behind him and enters conditions which are really human... It is only from this point that men, with full consciousness, will fashion their own history; it is only from this point that the social causes set in motion by men will

have, predominately and in constantly increasing measure, the effects willed by men. It is humanity's leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom.

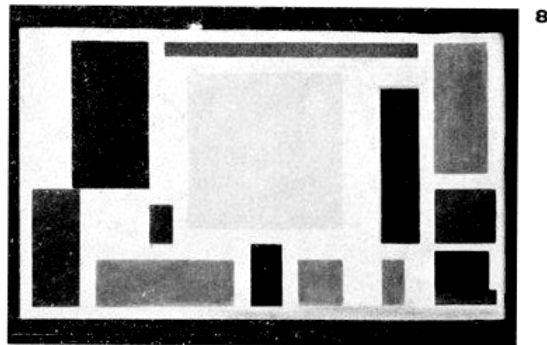
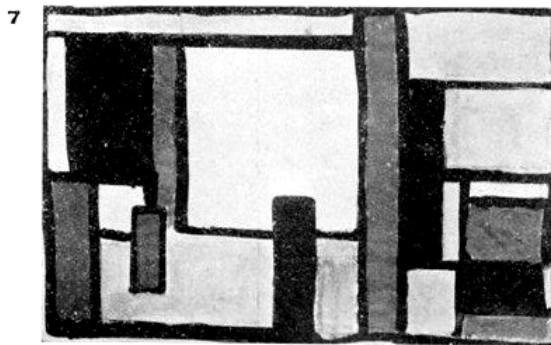
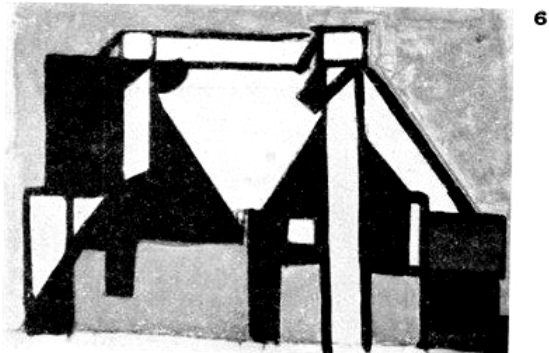
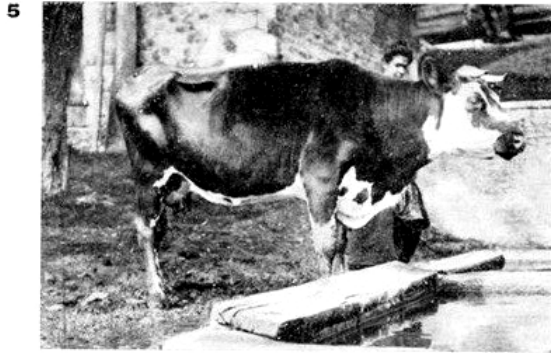
e. Purposes of Theory

- i. Among other things, such as providing an imprimatur for research, theory moves us to articulate, effect, join, perceive, depict or predict that which would otherwise be inarticulate, fleeting, isolated, occluded, unimaginable or obscured. Theory helps us represent— describe, explain, evaluate, interpret or deconstruct. Theory makes data, but makes them imperfectly. Data test, challenge, morph and re/produce theory, however imperfectly. Like method, both theory and data are generative.
- ii. Theory helps or makes us see, and basically find, what we look for. However simple this truism may be, there is something profound here. This is not to say that researchers will not see or find the unexpected. Rather, this reiterates a limitation of theory.
- iii. Radhakrishnan (1987, p. 17): The purpose of theory is "to make us see" connections, homologies, similarities, and isomorphisms among disconnected and disparate realities. It helps us realize often that the local is an instance of the global and that the global can be changed by re-alignments at the regional level. In this sense then, the capacity of theory to generalize and travel among constituencies can have a positive and progressive impact on the constituencies themselves.
- iv. Held (1980/2013, p. 22): The purpose of [critical] theory, therefore, is to analyze and expose the hiatus between the actual and the possible, between the existing order of contradictions and a potential future state. Theory must be oriented, in short, to the development of consciousness and the promotion of actual political involvement.
- v. Said (1983, p. 226): Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel— from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another. Cultural and intellectual life are usually nourished and often sustained by this circulation of ideas, and whether it takes the form of acknowledged or unconscious influence, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation, the movement of ideas and theories from one place to another is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity.

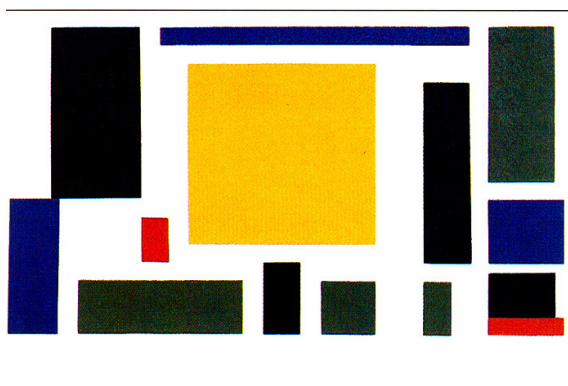
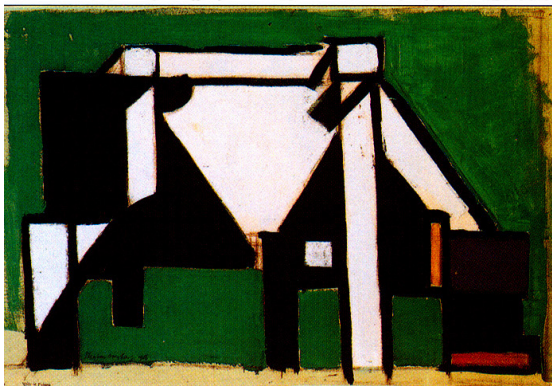
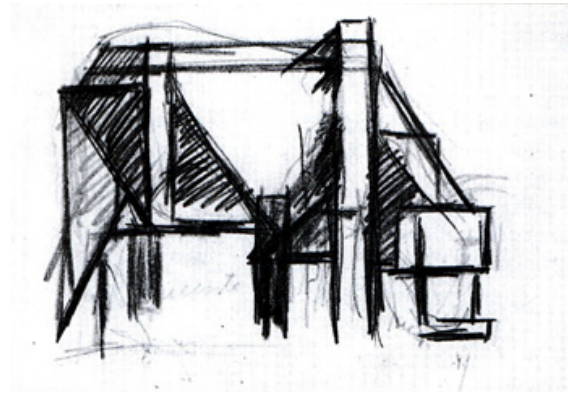
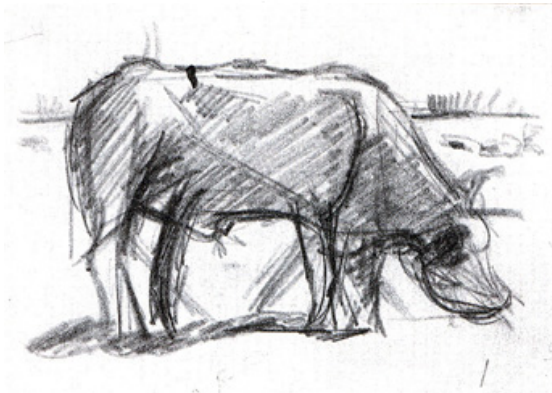
2. Theory is Abstraction (Generalization, etc.)

- i. Karlsson (1958, p. 10): We should always remember that theory is abstraction. Our intellect is limited, and, in order to be able to handle a theoretical system at all, we must necessarily limit the number of variables and parameters in theory. It is not a valid criticism of a theory to point out that it does not take account of every variable which could possibly be relevant. Instead the burden of proof lies wholly on the person who wants to introduce an additional variable. Karlsson, G. (1958). *Social mechanisms: Studies in sociological theory*. Stockholm, SW: Almqvist and Wiksell.
- ii. Lewis & Erickson (1969, p. 14): The essence of theory is generalization. The essence of generalization is abstraction.
- iii. Ocvirk et al. (2003, p. 12): Abstraction usually involves reordering and emphasis—in short, the route taken to arrive at a certain result. It is a stripping-down to expressive and communicative essentials. The end result is not always appreciated by observers conditioned to expect a literal copying [or depicting or describing] of a subject. Although simplification frequently results, changes in direction toward abstraction do not mean a less profound outcome; instead, they are intended to make the deeper meaning more accessible.

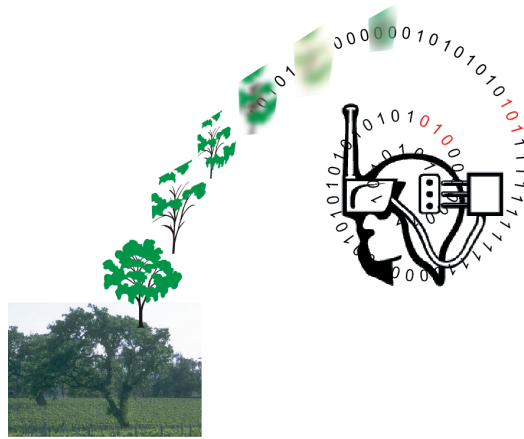
- iv. van Doesburg's (1925, p. 47) cow in *Grundbegriffe der neuen gestaltenden Kunst* demonstrates the point:



ÄSTHETISCHE TRANSFIGURATION EINES GEGENSTANDES
 Abb. 5: Photographische Darstellung. Abb. 6: Formgebundene Akzentuierung von Verhältnissen.
 Abb. 7: Aufhebung der Form. Abb. 8: Bild



- v. An abstraction or digitization of a tree similarly depicts processes of theorizing, assuming an object or subject:



vi. TBA

3. **Hermeneutics (see also TB #64a and #64b)**

4.