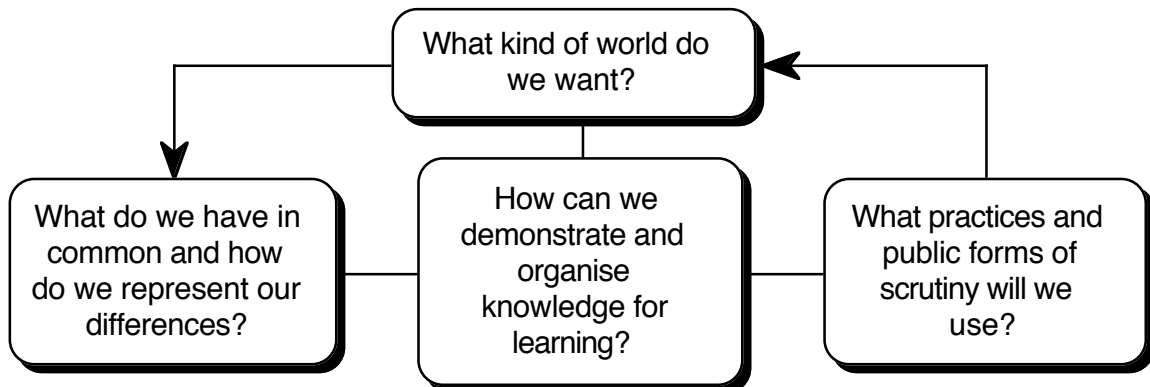


Theory Primer

For

CUST 601



Dr. Stephen Petrina
Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy
University of British Columbia
August 2008

Philosophy

What is Philosophy?

What ought Philosophy be?

- Active search for and love of wisdom; knowledge for its own sake
- Worldview or “Weltanschauung”
- Conceptual framework or series of formal statements
- Efforts in thinking, clearly and logically, about our deepest and broadest questions
- Attempt to give meaning to human experience
- Constructive (normative) and/or analytical

What kind of world do we live in? What kind of world do we want?

What does it mean to be human?

How do we know?

What ought to be?

What ought we to do? How ought we be?

Fields of Philosophical Inquiry:

Metaphysics— (deals with ultimate origins and causes) What is real? What is the nature of ultimate reality? Is reality ultimately reducible to a single underlying substance? If so, is it essentially spiritual or material? What is its ultimate cause (etiology)? Does the universe have an origin and rational design or is it meaningless (cosmology)? Is the universe intelligible and orderly or incomprehensible and chaotic? Is it moving toward some ultimate end (teleology)?

Ontology—(deals with being) What is real? Are the objects we perceive real or illusory? Does the external world exist apart from our consciousness of it? What is the nature of existence? What is the nature of being? Is the behavior of all organisms causally determined or is there a measure of freedom? What counts as evidence? What is nature? What is culture?

Epistemology—(deals with origin, nature and construction of knowledge) How do we know? How do we come to know? What is the nature of knowledge? Can anything be known beyond what is understood through the senses? How can we show that knowledge is "true"? What is the relation between the act of knowing and what is known concerning an object/subject? Are there different types of knowledge? What role do values play in understanding?

Axiology—(deals with ends and normative values) Are values personal or impersonal? Do they change? What is of value? What is good? What role do values play in our lives? How do we evaluate between what is of value? What is the difference between what is

(and what ought to be) known-unknown, right-wrong? What knowledge is of most worth/value? How can people disagree so murderously on right and wrong?

Aesthetics—(deals with preferences) What is pleasant? What is tasteful? What is distasteful? What is pleasing?

Ethics—(deals with human conduct and morality) What is right? What is good? How ought we behave? Providing values for action

Logic—(deals with rules and techniques of reasoning) Are causal links possible between bits of information?

Politics—(deals with governance of individuals, communities and societies)

Teleology— (deals with questions of purpose) What is law-like? What is the purpose of education?

Philosophy

Systems of Philosophy:

Idealism—

Realism—

Pragmatism—

Existentialism—

Eastern Philosophies (Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam)—

Aristotelian—

Thomist—

Marxist—

Analytic Philosophies—

Continental Philosophies (Existentialism, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Critical Theory, Post-modernism)—

Philosophical Tools: Language

Clarification (Concept Analysis, Definition):

Grammar and Semantics

Logic

Justification:

Dispute and Argument

Dialectics- Setting up & recognizing oppositional forces and bringing through which contradictions in reasoning can be teased out

Claims

Grounds

Warrants

Backing

Conclusion

Rhetoric

Logic

Philosophy of Education

What is Philosophy of Education?

What ought the Philosophy of Education be or do?

What philosophical schools of thought ground your own conceptions of education and its endeavors?

—Efforts in thinking, clearly and logically, about education and its basic purposes and/or problems

—Application of philosophy to education

—Conceptual framework or lens for resolving educational issues

—System of principles for guiding action

—Practical theory for action

—What is knowledge? What is of value? What (and whose) knowledge is of most worth?

—What is education? What does it mean to educate?

- activity of schooling What are educational foundations?
- process of learning What do you mean?
- what the learner learns How do you know?
- social practice What is pre-supposed (assumptions)?
- life
- preparation for life
- socialization or enculturation

—What is schooling?

—Who should attend school?

—What is teaching? How ought we teach?

—What is human nature? Is it durable or malleable?

—What is thinking?

—What is good thinking?

—How ought knowledge be organized?

—Does learning proceed from particular to general or general to particular?

—What is the nature of the student? Victim? Threat? Vanguard?

—What is the nature of knowledge?

—What is the nature of society?

—What is the purpose of the school?

Post-Conditions

Postmodernism
Poststructuralism
Postpositivism
Postanalytic
Postcritical
Postetc.

1. Authorial style, frame, positionality and narrative
2. Text, textuality, (con)textuality, authority and inscription
3. Obliteration of Paradigms, Methods, Foundations, Selves, Subjectivities, etc.
4. Playful ironies
5. Sign versus significance

Willinsky's 10 Laws of Postmodern Literacy

Willinsky, J. (1991). Postmodern literacy: A primer. *Interchange*, 22(4), 56-76.

1. Approach cultural movements with an eye toward opportunity and advantage inherent in their forms
2. The diffuse and unsteady realm of text works to define the world within us and without us
3. We participate in the circulation of meanings as readers first of all, and then as writers and critics
4. Appreciate that pop songs, literary works, billboards, TV news, and the law are means of cultural production situated, more than ever, at the busy intersection of commerce and state
5. You are made, and made over, by acts of expressions and assertion
6. You no longer need to take your story from that shelf of master narratives
7. What is at stake in the poetics of cultural forms is the packaging of power in a regime of truth that can, on occasion, be told otherwise
8. Ask after language in public forums: What is it up to? What does it make of us? Then try turning it to different purposes
9. Reach into the screen and appropriate the mechanisms that govern discourse, creator and consumer
10. The contest of sign and significance is the subject of a literacy that will be written in the future tense

Some Key Terms in Curriculum Theory

Stephen Petrina

Some web sites for Key Terms in Curriculum and Cultural Theory:

<http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/> (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

<http://www.sou.edu/English/IDTC/Terms/terms.htm> (Swirl)

<http://www.freedonia.com/panic/> (Postmodern Dictionary)

<http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/asc/IndexASC.html> (Cybernetic Encyclopedia)

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/diction5.html> (Specialty Dictionaries)

<http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/guide/> TARGET= (Guide to Literary Theory)

<http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html> (Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/postmodern.html (Postmodern references)

<http://www.philosopher.org.uk/index.htm> (Philosophy Since the Enlightenment)

Critical Theory— "Often erroneously used to refer to contemporary theoretically informed criticism in general, critical theory was a specific and hugely influential school of thought also known loosely as the 'Frankfurt School.' Much preoccupied by 'mass' society in the 1930s and early 1940s, when fascism so successfully mobilised mass opinion and action, critical theory's most influential work was Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which argued that the Western intellectual tradition of instrumental rationality— using reason as a tool to manipulate the world— was complicit with capitalism's managerial approach to organising human life in the interests of production and ultimately with the totalitarian impulse to use people as mere disposable raw material. The ferocity of this Marxist-influenced critique was especially directed at the mass media and the 'culture industry' that they sustained, the latter viewed as manipulative, deleterious and distracting people from any political consciousness" (Fleming, 2000, p. 68).

- a. Critical theory v. critical pedagogy v critical thinking v. critical inquiry
 - i. Critical literacy derives from **critical theory** — Critical theory generally derives from Max Horkheimer's (Frankfurt School) 1937 essay "Traditional and Critical Theory." Horkheimer responded to the problem of founding the human and social sciences on the natural sciences, which reinforced individualized "liberalist bourgeoisie" attitudes of independence. "Under the condition of monopolistic capitalism," he wrote, "a relative individual independence is a thing of the past. The individual no longer has any ideas of his own. The content of mass belief, in which no one really believes, is an immediate product of the ruling and political bureaucracies, and its disciples secretly follow their own atomistic and therefore untrue interests; they act as mere functions of the economic machine. The concept of the dependence of the cultural on the economic has thus changed. With the destruction of the classically typical individual, the concept has as it were become more materialistic, in the popular sense of the term, than before" (1937/1972, p. 237). In this short description is critical theory's objective of theorizing of power, capital, culture, the individual and the masses. The Frankfurt School drew on Marx and political economy (ideology, alienation, reification, historical materialism), and Freud and psychoanalysis (desire, repression,

- sublimation), and directed theories / critiques of the "culture industry" toward this objective.
- ii. **Critical pedagogy** and critical literacy draw from this basis of critical theory. According to Shor, critical pedagogy is learning and teaching that address "habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse" (Shor, 1992, p. 129).
 - iii. A **critical pedagogy of new media and technology** prompts and guides students to ask fundamental questions about what particular media and technologies offer (**perception and description**), what the media and technologies mean with their embedded values (**analysis and interpretation**), and the particular media or technology's worth (**judgment**). How do specific media and technologies frame ecology, equity or quality of life? A critical pedagogy of new media and technology is not an *anti-technology* stance, but a fund of knowledge toward public understanding, regulation, and sensibility. It encourages a critical attitude toward questioning technocratic assumptions, and technologies' interaction with notions of autonomy, determinism, and progress. Questioning acknowledges the voice of those marginalized by western styles of mediated, technological and cybercultural practice, such as aboriginal peoples, the financially disenfranchised, differently abled, racially and sexually segregated, feminists and ecologists.
 - iv. **Critical thinking**, however, is much more of a liberal practice and to this day there continue attempts to define the concept as neutral (e.g., "critical thinking is the art of analyzing and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it" (Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2006, p. 4).
 - v. **Critical inquiry** is split, partially parceled out to the liberal, neutral notion of critical thinking and partially to critical theory. For example, critical inquiry is often defined as "using various modes of inquiry and interdisciplinary perspectives or methodologies to conceptualize, investigate, and derive meaning. It implies that learners are active learners, self-motivated learners, and learners who understand the ambiguities and uncertainties of achieving absolute knowledge, as well as the implications of various courses of action" (Skidmore College, 2005, <http://www.skidmore.edu/administration/assessment/> *See "Critical Inquiry Report").
 - vi. The journal *Critical Inquiry* was founded in 1974 for authors who "value examination of the assumptions underlying particular discriminations... and insist upon the highest standards of evidence relevant to conclusions drawn in practical criticism... criticism that aspires to be a special kind of 'learning'— not in any sense dispassionate or impersonal but something akin to that fusion of human commitment with objectivity that Michael Polanyi characterizes as 'personal knowledge'... disciplined criticism" (Sacks, 1974, p. iii). Hence, *CI* "aims to be independent of any theoretical bias. It promotes discussion and

controversy about current critical trends, as well as reviving debate about more established critical traditions [i.e., critical theory and Kantian philosophy]."

- vii. In "Critical Pedagogy and the Futures of Critical Theory," Peters (2002) cautions, however, that critical inquiry as merely disciplined inquiry "does seem to rob critical theory of its original critical intent or to tame it, recasting it as a method of inquiry in the service of democracy... it is too easily denatured and stripped of its critical intent and reduced to 'thinking skills,' critical or otherwise." <http://construct.haifa.ac.il/~ilangz/oslo/peters.htm>

Hermeneutics— Hermeneutics is the study of interpretive understanding or meaning. It is the theory and practice of interpretation. Hermeneutics is necessary where there is possibility of misunderstanding and to recover the particularity, or the animating muse or notions of an author's thoughts. The aim is to understand the author as well or even better than he or she understands himself or herself. The emphasis is on the "lived experience" expressed in the author's text. Lived experience is the focus and starting point for hermeneutics and all human science. Expression is the text or artifact as objectification of lived experience. Understanding is the moment when "life understands itself" (not a cognitive act or psychologized understanding). "To interpret a text is to understand the possibilities of being revealed by the text. Hermeneutic science requires that the authors be given space to speak truthfully—the researcher must not construct an interpretation out of context. The text must be given space to speak for itself, literally, without editorial license" (van Manen, 1989).

Narrative— "Narrative inquiry refers to a subset of research in which stories are used to describe human action. Narrative refers to a discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot. It is a discourse composition that draws together diverse events, happenings and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed processes. Narrative configuration is the process by which happenings are drawn together and integrated into a temporally organized whole. The configurative process employs a thematic thread to lay out happenings as parts of an unfolding movement that culminates in an outcome. The thematic thread is called the plot. Narrative inquiry gathers events and happenings as its data and uses analytic procedures to produce explanatory stories" (Amos & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 5). Life history and autobiography are forms of narrative inquiry.

Phenomenology— "Phenomenology is a philosophy of experience. For phenomenology the ultimate source of all meaning and value is the lived experience of human beings. All philosophical systems, scientific theories, or aesthetic judgments have the status of abstractions from the ebb and flow of the lived world. The task of the philosopher, according to phenomenology, is to describe the structures of experience, in particular consciousness, the imagination, relations with other persons, and the situatedness of the human subject in society and history. Phenomenological theories of literature regard works of art as mediators between the consciousnesses of the author and the reader or as attempts to disclose aspects of the being of humans and their worlds" (Armstrong, <http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/guide/entries/phenomenology.html>).

"The study of the lifeworld—the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it. Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper

understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences. Phenomenology asks: "What is this or that kind of experience like?" It differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9).

Features:

- "Study of lived experience (as we experience it and not as we conceptualize it)
- Study of essences (awakening of deeper meaning behind experience)
- Attentive practice of thoughtfulness (a minding, a heeding, a caring attunement)
- Search for what it means to be human (to become more fully what we are)
- Poetizing activity (a thinking on original experience, calling forth a speaking in a more primal sense)

Postcolonialism— "The designation "postcolonial" has been used to describe writing and reading practices grounded in colonial experience occurring outside of Europe but as a consequence of European expansion and exploitation of "other" worlds. Postcolonial literature is constituted in counterdiscursive practices. Postcolonial writing is also related to other concepts that have resulted from internal colonialization, such as the repression of minority groups: Chicanos in the United States, Gastarbeiter in Germany, Beurs in France, and so on. It is similarly related to women voicing concern and frustration over colonialization by men, or a "double" colonialization when women of color are concerned. Among the large nomenclature, which includes so-called Third World literature, minority discourse, resistance literature, response literature (writing back or rewriting the Western "classics"), subaltern studies, othering discourse, colonialist discourse, and so on, the term "postcolonial" (sometimes hyphenated, sometimes not) has gained notoriety in recent years and clearly has replaced "Commonwealth literature" or "Commonwealth studies."

"The word "postcolonial" shows up in a variety of journal titles since the mid-1980s but is used as a full title in a collection of interviews with a leading Indo-American critic, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990), as a subtitle to the book by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989), and again in a subtitle by the Canadian and Australian critics Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin, *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism* (1990), thus showing clearly the preoccupation with the term in discourse from British Commonwealth countries. Benita Parry, one of the leading critics of the various attempts to come to terms with the colonialist formation, still speaks of colonial discourse. The term was probably used for the first time by Australian Simon During in his 1985 *Landfall* essay. Max Dorsinville had used "post-European" already in 1974, while Helen Tiffin used "commonwealth literature" still in 1984 but switched to the new term by 1987. By now, and largely due to Australian efforts, the terms "postcolonial literature" and "postcolonial culture" are well established" (Gugelberger, http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/guide/entries/postcolonial_cultural_studies.html).

Postmodernism— Theory particularly inspired by "Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and Michel Foucault, brought postmodernism from the streets and from the novel into the academy. At first, these French theorists were not associated with postmodernism, but the publication of Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) made the two nearly synonymous. (The accuracy of this labeling is still a matter of dispute.) Lyotard emphasized the antifoundational and antiholistic aspects of French theory, as well as its hostility to eternal,

metaphysical truths or realities and to grand narratives (theories that provide totalizing explanations). "I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives," Lyotard wrote (xxiv). He proposed a postmodern world in which decisions are made on the basis of local conditions and are applicable only in that limited context. Individuals participate in a multitude of such localities and the lessons, beliefs, and practices of one site are not transferable to any other. Lyotard celebrated this multiplicity of "language games" (xxiv) and offers ceaseless experimentation in all these games as the highest good." "In sum, postmodernism is best understood as marking the site of several related, but not identical, debates among intellectuals in the last four decades of the twentieth century. These debates revolve around the relation of artworks to social context, the relation of art and of theory to political action and to the dominant social order, the relation of cultural practices to the transformation or maintenance of society in all its aspects, the relation of the collapse of traditional philosophical foundations to the possibility of critical distance from and effective critique of the status quo, the relation of an image-dominated consumer society to artistic practice, and the future of a Western tradition that now appears more heterogeneous than previously thought even while it appears insufficiently tolerant of (open to) multiplicity. At the very least, postmodernism highlights the multiplication of voices, questions, and conflicts that has shattered what once seemed to be (although it never really was) the placid unanimity of the great tradition and of the West that gloried in it" (McGowan, <http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/guide/entries/postmodernism.html>).

Poststructuralism— often associated with postmodernism and associated theorists, poststructuralism is characterized by a rejection of totalizing, essentialist, foundationalist thinking and concepts. Poststructuralists reject.

- ❑ **Totalizing** concepts that put all phenomena under one explanatory concept (e.g. it's the will of God).
- ❑ **Essentialist** concepts that suggest that there is a reality which exists independent of, beneath or beyond, language and ideology— that there is such a thing as ‘human nature,’ “The self,” “the feminine,” or “truth” and “beauty.”
- ❑ **Foundationalist** concepts suggesting that signifying systems are stable and unproblematic representations of a world of fact, which provides a solid foundation for action or thought.
- ❑ **Oppositional** concepts that create binaries by positioning one concept against the other, for example male v. female, rich v. poor, black v. white, proletariat v. bourgeois, or labor v. management.

“Post-structuralism contests the concept of 'man' as developed by enlightenment thought and idealist philosophy. Rather than holding as in the enlightenment view that 'individuals', are sacred, separate and intact, their minds the only true realm of meaning and value, their rights individual and inalienable, their value and nature rooted in a universal and transhistorical essence -- a metaphysical being, in short -- the post-structural view holds that persons are culturally and discursively structured, created in interaction as situated, symbolic beings. The common term for a person so conceived is a 'subject'.

- ❑ Subjects are created, then, through their cultural meanings and practices, and occupy various culturally-based sites of meaning (as family members, as occupationally and economically and regionally defined, as gendered and of sexual orientation, as members of clubs or clients of

- psychotherapy or presidents of their school parents' organization, and on and on -- every site evoking a different configuration of the self, different language uses, different foci of value and energy, different social practices, and so forth).
- ❑ Subjects are material beings, embodied and present in the physical world, entrenched in the material practices and structures of their society -- working, playing, procreating, living as parts of the material systems of society.
 - ❑ Subjects are social in their very origin: they take their meaning and value and self-image from their identity groups, from their activities in society, from their intimate relations, from the multiple pools of common meanings and symbols and practices which they share variously with their sub-cultural groups and with their society as a larger unit.

Post-structural understandings of persons are sometimes referred to as 'anti-humanist', because they are opposed to the Humanist idea that persons are isolate, unified, largely immaterial beings, and that humanity is transcendent, universal and unchangeable in its essence. To be anti-humanist is not to be anti-humane, however, but to have a different philosophical and ideological understanding of the nature of the person (<http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/4F70/poststruct.html>).

Queer Theory— Queerness, in the work of theorists like Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick, is as much a semiotic as it is a social phenomenon. To say that someone is "queer" indicates an indeterminacy or indecipherability about their sexuality and gender, a sense that they cannot be categorized without a careful contextual examination and, perhaps, a whole new rubric. For gender to be, in Judith Butler's words, "intelligible," ancillary traits and behaviors must divide and align themselves beneath a master division between male and female anatomy. From people's anatomy, we can supposedly infer other things about them: the gender of the people they desire, the sartorial and sexual practices they engage in, the general elements of culture that they are attracted to or repulsed by, and the gender of their "primary identification." While in practice each of these categories is rather elastic, it is usually when they do not line up in expected ways (say, when a man wears a dress and desires men) that one crosses from normative spaces into "queer" ones. In Butler's view, queer activities like drag and unexpected identifications and sexual practices reveal the arbitrariness of conventional gender distinctions by parodying them to the point where they become ridiculous or ineffective.

Semiotics— "Semiotics can be defined broadly as a domain of investigation that explores the nature and function of signs as well as the systems and processes underlying signification, expression, representation, and communication. As can be demonstrated from numerous cultural traces (verbal, pictorial, plastic, spatial artifacts, etc.), the role of signs in human life has been an ongoing concern over the ages whenever questions have been asked about what constitutes signs and what laws govern them" (Perron, <http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/guide/entries/semiotics.html>).

Positivistic Orientation

Main Concern—Inherent Aim:

Main Assumptions:

Focus of Investigation:

View of Values:

Research Guiding Interest:

Method of Validation

Theoretic—Philosophic Orientation:

Kinds of Questions:

Methodological Issues:

Interpretive Orientation

Main Concern—Inherent Aim:

Main Assumptions:

Focus of Investigation:

View of Values:

Research Guiding Interest:

Method of Validation

Theoretic—Philosophic Orientation:

Kinds of Questions:

Methodological Issues:

Critical Orientation

Main Concern—Inherent Aim:

Main Assumptions:

Focus of Investigation:

View of Values:

Research Guiding Interest:

Method of Validation

Theoretic—Philosophic Orientation:

Kinds of Questions:

Methodological Issues:

Postmodern Orientation

Main Concern—Inherent Aim:

Main Assumptions:

Focus of Investigation:

View of Values:

Research Guiding Interest:

Method of Validation

Theoretic—Philosophic Orientation:

Kinds of Questions:

Methodological Issues:

Art-Based Orientation

Main Concern—Inherent Aim:

Main Assumptions:

Focus of Investigation:

View of Values:

Research Guiding Interest:

Method of Validation

Theoretic—Philosophic Orientation:

Kinds of Questions:

Methodological Issues: