13. Modern Educational Philosophies

Modern philosophies build upon the premises of traditional philosophies, some by emphasizing concepts in a new way, like the human value of existence (existentialism), how humans relate to work and things (pragmatism), and the worth of knowledge (postmodernism). The philosophical questions that mattered to previous generations, like good and evil, truth and doubt, God and reason, reason and the emotions, pleasure and pain, duty and devotion, society and self, still arise today and beg for answers. Philosophies like utilitarianism, existentialism, pragmatism, and postmodernism cope with these issues, and this is why we will explore some of these creeds to show how they have shaped our educational beliefs, like humanism in schooling, and American culture, media and commerce.

In this chapter we focus almost exclusively on the philosophical ideas related to our theme—and their founders and principal advocates—of what ideas have persisted from the past relevant to education. The ideas in philosophy which have found their way into education in literature, social studies and humanities textbooks, have also crept into popular consciousness and become embedded in American culture. Pragmatism, for example, is probably the quintessential American philosophy in business, economics and life. Yet its formal development is a phenomenon of only the late nineteenth century based largely on accomplishments of the Industrial Revolution and the impact of machines on the culture and lives of people. In the latter half of the twentieth century, a movement known as postmodernism has become the critical voice of philosophers for education. We will trace some of this history and attempt to show its impact on the culture of schooling.

After a brief synopsis of each of the philosophies we look at a few key figures who made contributions. For utilitarianism, Bentham, Mill and Spencer; for pragmatism, James and Montessori; for existentialism, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, Fromm, Buber and Rogers; for postmodernism, a few key examples. We will begin by looking at the role of ethics in education.

Key Questions

1. What does the individual owe the community?
2. How did individual human existence come about, and what is the role of individual choice in human life?

3. Is it the responsibility of every individual to change society and its standards?
4. What code of ethics should educators promote? What is a sound code of moral philosophy for curriculum and schools?

Important Terms

existentialism	pragmatism	postmodernism
will	utilitarianism	being
progressivism	critical pedagogy	utilitarianism

UTILITARIANISM

Next to selfishness, the principal cause which makes life unsatisfactory is want of mental cultivation. (*John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism*, 906).

Utilitarianism is a philosophy based on the happiness and good of the individual and society. It is often referred to as a hedonistic philosophy because it is based on pleasure, but we recall that Epicureanism (Chapter Four) had a similar belief. Utilitarianism's main premise is that the happiness of the greatest number is the greatest good and the aim of all ethics and morality. But the words pleasure and happiness are used in the broad sense of seeking that which is not painful, and are not meant to imply merely self-indulgence or voluptuousness. Nor in the utilitarian scheme are pleasure or happiness limited merely to bodily, sensual, or selfish pleasures. Utilitarianism proposes pleasure and pain as opposing principles of human ethics. Utilitarianism became prominent during the middle of the eighteenth century. The principal advocate was Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), its founder, who proposed a set of criteria for identifying the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number.

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832)

Betham defined what he called scientific criteria for measuring happiness, a concept which he equated with pleasure, in his main work, *Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), originally intended to be mainly about penal reform. His philosophy, beginning with the twin principles of pleasure and pain, has been described as the principle of utility. Intentions, according to the individual, may be directed towards a good, but actions must be decided by their consequences.

Bentham essentially attacked the idea that there was a natural law or natural rights that human beings unconsciously obeyed or had, an idea traditionally held since Aristotle. Bentham agreed with David Hume who also opposed inherent natural rights and laws. Bentham argued instead for the utility of action, though this principle soon yielded to *the greatest happiness of the greatest number as a basis for social morality*. This principle of usefulness was to be applied equally to governments as well as to individudals, and would, under Adam Smith, become the basis for economic theory.

Teaching Application: Natural Law

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and that their Creator has endowed them with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. . . . (The Declaration of Independence)

Discuss and consider building a discussion unit around the right of "inalienable rights" and the issue of natural law, and discuss whether Jeremy Bentham would agree with this statement, and if not, why not. Are there natural laws which everyone is born with and adheres to? Discuss how an entire political system can be established based on philosophical principles such as that of natural law.

Bentham divided ethics into two spheres: private ethics of the individual (self-government), and the public ethics of directing the actions of others. The moral and scientific criteria he proposed for measuring the extensiveness of happiness or pleasure are: intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, purity, and extent of pleasures (Bentham, 803).

Bentham developed his moral philosophy not for idle speculation, but as a basis for prison reform and legislation about criminals. Thus for him, the greatest good of the greatest number was the basis for just legislation. "The general object which all laws have, or ought to have, in common, is to augment the total happiness of the community; and therefore in the first place, to exclude, as far as may be, everything that tends to subtract from that happiness; in other words, to exclude mischief" (Bentham, 843). Mischief was a code word for punishable offenses.

Bentham writes in the Introduction to *The Principles of Morals and Legislation:* "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure.* It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do" (Bentham, 791). From this passage we can detect a determinism even before Darwin in which people's actions are governed by inexorable forces beyond human control. Bentham proposes that mankind is governed by both pain—to be avoided—and pleasure—to be cultivated. The description of this ethical code is, for Bentham, the *"principle of utility."*

Bentham writes defining utility: "By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the principle which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question" (Bentham, 792).

Whereas Adam Smith had defined self-interest as the basis for economic development, Jeremy Bentham defined personal and social happiness as the goal of all humans and devised a kind of arithmetic of morality, a quantitative code, for determing how to arrive at achieving ethical correctness, or the greatest good for the greatest number.

Bentham's theory won some converts, but alienated many. He was a hermit much of his life, never married, never had a academic appointment, and had a deficient understanding of the real world of venal men. His theory has little creativity. His contribution, apart from the specific quantification of morality and

legislation—like using a periodic table from the sciences for politics—is carrying Descartes' skepticism to its fullest, employing Smith's laissez faire economics to morals in general, and beginning afresh with a theory for how governments should operate (Bronowski, 445).

Discussion Questions

1. Is conscience an innate moral sense, a quality one is born with, or a trait acquired through experience?
2. Is the good toward which individuals are moving an absolute or relative good?
3. Is all human good based on religious principles, or are some based on human reasoning, conscious choice, and behavior?

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873)

> The multiplication of happiness is, according to the utilitarian ethics, the object of virtue. (John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 910)

John Stuart Mill was one of the greatest intellectual giants of the nineteenth century in philosophy, but (unique in the modern age) he did not have any formal education. His entire schooling was conducted by his father, who taught him Greek and mathematics at age three and Latin at age six. By the age of fourteeen he had supposedly finished reading all the classical authors in the original Latin and Greek.

By the age of seventeen (1823) he began a career in the East India Company where his father worked, and continued working there for the next thirty-five years, until 1858 when the company itself was dissolved. He never held an academic appointment, but throughout his life wrote for newspapers, journals and magazines on a variety of social and philosophical issues. His best known works are a *System of Logic* (1843), *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), the famous *Essay on Liberty* (1859), and *Utilitarianism* (1863). He served for a term as a member of Parliament from 1865–68, agreeing to stand for election though he refused to campaign, expend any money towards a campaign, or even defend his views.

Mill elaborated on Bentham's code of quantitative measurement of ethical values by including a qualitative ingredient for happiness. Happiness is the promotion of pleasure not merely for oneself but for others. Mill writes in *Utilitarianism*: "I must again repeat, what the assailants of utilitarianism seldom have the justice to acknowledge, that the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct, is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned" (Mill, in Burdtt 1939, 908) A part of the basis of utilitarian philosophy, then, is a foundation of "social feelings" towards one's fellow human beings, and a contribution to their happiness (Mill, in Burtt 1939, 920). He notes again: "We ought to shape our conduct by a rule which all rational beings might adopt *with benefit to their collective interest*" (emphasis in original, 938).

Teaching Application

A man saves another from drowning in a boating accident. The details are sketchy. But you discover afterwards that, although the deed was praiseworthy, the man

did it to recover a reward for his efforts. Discuss with students the relative value of honorable and moral deeds versus intentions, or that right actions do not necessarily imply a virtuous character. Is justice relative or absolute?

In a related case, a person betrays a friend who trusted him. On the surface, this is a violation of trust guilty of rebuke. But you discover later that the purpose was to preserve the trust of many others to whom this individual had greater obligations (such as some Christians hiding Jews from the Nazis who would have sent them to death camps during the Holocaust in Germany during World War II). Discuss the same example of behavior or good deed versus intention in an ethical framework: of private versus public utility.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) and the Curriculum

Herbert Spencer, a utilitarian, was in agreement with this practical philosophy of ethics. But, in addition, he was a social Darwins because he believed in the natural evolution of human progress and worked to establish an educational philosophy built on evolutionary principles for all organic beings. Spencer was very prolific and wrote several volumes each on philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, and education using Darwins principles of evolutionary progress.

Spencer's book *Education* was first published in 1861, just two years after Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. Spencer argued for the inclusion of science in the curriculum because, like Bacon, Spencer believed it was one of the most *useful* studies. Spencer believed that science was more useful than language in preparing the young for what he called a "complete living." His main question, still useful today as a topic for educational discussion, though probably not cocktail conversation, but which goes to the heart of the content of the curriculum, is: "What knowledge is of most worth?"

He asks this question In the opening chapter of *Education* and answers by listing a taxonomy of schooling goals in order of importance. They are:

> self-preservation
> the necessaries of life
> the rearing and disciplining of the young
> the maintenance of proper social & political relations
> skills for the leisure part of life (Spencer 1906)

Notice that, unlike other curriculum proposals like Locke's, there are no listed academic subjects, but only schooling goals. By arguing for the larger, more life-relevant goals, Spencer has personalized the curriculum by suggesting appropriate life priorities for the school and individual. Spencer may be one of the first philosophers writing about education to suggest that real experiences (the empiricist's and later progressivist's code word) should be the foundation for school. Thus, Spencer departs from the usual, more traditional method of offering a curriculum syllabus, and instead presents a philosophical, utilitarian basis for an education.

His practical views emerge when he writes that school needs have to be related to life needs. School life, he wrote, should not have a monastic life apart from the real world. This is a practical, empirical view of the philosophy of education, and

anticipates American pragmatism, which shifts the curriculum content away from totally academic subjects to student needs and societal needs.

His favoring of Darwin's theories and his practical philosophy for education survive today in modern schooling's emphasis on personal competition, both academic and athletic, to see who emerges the winner. This is a legacy of the school's philosophy of the "survivial of the fittest," a phrase which Spencer coined.

He is buried in Highgate cemetery in north London. Karl Marx was interred directly opposite him, but with a larger memorial edifice.

Discussion Question

If it is considered just for a merchant to charge an identical amount for a product or commodity of everyone, whether or not people can afford it, why is not the same argument used for taxation? Why does the government, in its quest for fairness, use a sliding and graduated scale for taxing citizens based on income and not simply tax everyone the same? Or, put another way, why do merchants not charge for an article based on a sliding scale of people's income imprinted on their charge card?

PRAGMATISM: THE AMERICAN PHILOSPHY

Pragmatism is a modern American philosophy, the English equivalent of utilitarianism. Spurred by the commercial developments of the Industrial Revolution, it is the philosophy of making something happen and is manifest in financial deals, the construction of buildings, the shipment of goods, and all the pulse and rhythm of daily American business and economic life. In America, the principal proponents are William James (1842–1910) and John Dewey (1859–1952) (Knight 1989, 64). We examine Dewey in more detail in the next chapter.

The term pragmatism was first coined in 1878 by Charles Pierce in an article, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," in *Popular Science Monthly*. William James, in his book *Pragmatism* published in 1907, spoke about the "pragmatic method." James wanted to develop not a new philosophy but a new method, "to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consquences" (James 1949, 45). James' reasoning was that thought and belief lead to action. To find a thought's meaning we need to discover what action it produces. The result is its philosophical significance. Pragmatism is rooted in *experimentalism*, the philosophy based on personal experience.

Pragmatism was a reaction, as so many philosophies have been, against the dry and speculative forms of philosophy, in particular philosophies which derived truths from *a priori*, or prior given, absolute, principles. We will recall that rationalism too was a reaction to the dullness of scholasticism in the Middle Ages, and experimentalism to all previous philosophies based on eternal and absolute truths. Technology and industrialization gave the impetus to the development of a philosophy that was geared to results and consequences, and not first principles or hypotheses. Pragmatism was aptly suited to the commerical and industrial revolution occurring in America in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and today to the occupation, or pragmatic, value of schooling for an individual. It also

forms the basis for education based on results, and has led to the emergence of the testing industry and its dominance of measures for schooling outcomes.

Pragmatism built upon the empiricists, who gave central importance to sensory experiences. The epistemology of pragmatism is to act upon sensory experience and create knowledge by interacting with the environment. Pragmatists like Dewey drew from Charles Darwin's concept of social determinism: the human organism interacting with the environment in order to survive. Herbert Spencer also believed in Darwin's social determinism and held that principles of ethical living were based on organic developments.

But to reverence and honor thy own mind will make thee content with thyself, and in harmony with society. (Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations*)

The pragmatist in education would usually emphasize the importance of experiences or activities for students. The pragmatist, following Dewey's lead in the 1930s, made these experiences of the student more important than the traditional core of knowledge or subject matter. The idea was to let students explore their interests through problem-solving activities. The teacher, meanwhile, would interweave the school subjects as the student's interest expanded. Critics, like the perennialist Mortimer Adler, claimed that this diluted the common knowledge base for all students.

William James (1842–1910)

Education, in short, cannot be better defined than by calling it the organization of acquired habits of conduct and tendencies to behavior. (William James, *Talks to Teachers*, 36–7)

William James was a renowned American philosopher and psychologist who trained as a doctor, the brother of the novelist Henry James. William James received his medical degree at Harvard in 1869 and became a lecturer there in anatomy and physiology in 1872. His *Principles of Psychology* was published in 1890 and it established his permanent international reputation. He taught at Harvard for thirty-five years until his retirement in 1907.

His theory of knowledge, his epistemology, was pragmatism, a theory based on sensations and direct experiences. But he is also deterministic, which means that mental concepts are based in physiological functions. He defines his determinism for the emergent sciences in *Psychology*, his 1892 synopsis of his longer 1890 *Principles of Psychology*: "Let psychology frankly admit that for her scientific purposes determinism may be claimed, and no one may find fault" (James, 1892, 461).

James does not totally agree with the utilitarians that pleasure and pain are the main driving forces of individuals. He notes in a passage on the will (1892, 444 ff) that pleasure and pain are indeed instrumental in action, but that instinct and emotional responses are also motivating forces and spurs for human action. The

impulsive power of the instincts exerts a powerful force on our responsive actions, He writes: "All the daily routine of life, our dressing and undressing, the coming and going from our work or carrying through of its various operations, is utterly without mental reference to pleasure or pain, except under rarely realized conditions. It is ideo-motor action" (1892, 446).

Thus, with his training about the importance of human physiology in human conduct, James added a new dimension to concepts that had ruled the philosophy of ethics, concepts built on the new foundations of modern psychology. James's whole philosophy is rooted in biological necessity. Here are some quotes which synopsize his principal practical beliefs about human conduct.

> It is impossible to disguise the fact that in the psychology of our day the emphasis is transferred from the mind's purely rational function ... to the long neglected practical side. The theory of evolution is mainly responsble for this. (1958, 33)

> I shall ask you now to adopt with me ... the biological conception ... and to lay your own emphasis on the fact that man, whatever else he may be, is primarily a practical being, whose mind is given him to aid in adapting him to this world's life. (1958, 34)

William James exerted an enormous and profound influence on American psychology and philosophy. One of his last books, *Pragmatism,* was published in 1907, the year of his retirement, and outlines the core of his beliefs. Let the following quotation serve as a synopsis and conclusion of James' philosophy which introduced later generations to the philosophy of pragmatism.

> Those very functions of the mind that do not refer directly to this world's environment, the ethical utopias, aesthetic visions, insights into eternal truth, and fanciful logical combinations, could never be carried on at all by a human individudal, unless the mind that produced them in him were also able to produce more practically useful products. The latter are thus the more essential. (1958, 35)

James was, like the earlier Greeks, a skeptic, who did not believe in absolutes or first principles. Truth was something we made happen, not something one looked for. We judged our ideas based on their results and on experience (Commager 1950, 95).

Maria Montessori (1870–1952)

> What does interest us directly as educators is the necessity of laying our course in accordance with the standard of social morality ... since it is our duty to prepare the conscience of the rising generation ... to consider whether the organisation of the schools and their methods is in conformity with such social progress. (Maria Montessori 1913).

Maria Montessori is an example of an educator trained like William James as a physician. She was the first woman to graduate from the University of Rome Medical School. Montessori practiced an experimental and pragmatic approach to schooling. She is not a formal theorist of the utilitarian philosophy, but her manner of educational operation makes her an experimental pragmatist in fact. She is one of the first major educators to find success working with mentally handicapped children.

She was made director of a school of mentally handicapped children in Rome, and found that through the use of certain techniques these children could learn as well as normal children, and even pass the regular school examinations. She reasoned that if these techniques were applied to regular schoolchildren, even more spectacular results might be attained. She created a system of schools in her native Italy, and soon her successful schools for mentally handicapped children and her ideas for letting children explore materials and activities by themselves spread throughout the world. She allowed the children to experiment with their senses with materials she had developed herself and with other equipment. In a sense, she permitted children's activities to be experiments in learning and she found that the children preferred learning with these materials more than just playing with toys (Lillard 1972, 5 ff.).

She wanted to have teachers study the reactions of the personality of the child while engaged in activities. It was thus necessary for teachers to receive training in observation skills, in the same way a doctor would observe before diagnosing a patient. She wrote: "this is the field, therefore, in which the culture of the human race can really and practically be undertaken; and the joint labour of physician and teacher can sow the seed of a future human hygiene, adapted to achieve perfection in man" (Montessori 1913, 37).

Maria Montessori is thus an educator who exemplifies the pragmatic method in education, whereby the child's brain improves because of sensory exploration and through discovery learning. In effect, the young student is in control of his or her own learning. The Montessori Method can be threatening to teachers who want to control the learning environment.

EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism is a modern philosophy born in the nineteenth century and nourished in the twentieth. It is a contemporary analysis of existence, particularly human existence. Existentialists attempt to answer the question: What does it mean to be human, and to look at the reality of humanity, a question that admittedly should be an integral part of an educational program and teaching package. Stephen Hawking, the British theoretical astrophyicist asks: "Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing?" (Hawking 1988, 174).

A typical response to the question, "What is your philosophy?" is "I am eclectic," which means choosing or selecting from several sources. It could also mean a lack of knowledge about any one particular philosophy. But the term *eclectic* is a part of the existentialist definition. Though one might be knowledgeable about all aspects of existentialism, defining a personal philosophy by picking and choosing from several philosophies is expressing the eclectic favorite.

Existential Emergence

The end of World War II in 1945 produced profound changes in Americans, in the way they saw themselves and the rest of the world. America had dropped the first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in August of 1945, and defeated the forces of militarism and totalitarianism in Japan and Germany. There was a new sense of national unity, and patriotism became public policy.

Europeans were literally devastated by World War II. Many of Germany's best intellects—Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Kurt Lewin, Werner von Braun, Erik Erikson, Henry Kissinger to name a few—had fled to America in the late 1930s escaping from Nazi terror. These immigrants were key contributors to education, psychology, and political and intellectual life in America. Because so many came to America in the aftermath of the war, Americans saw themselves and their country as the bastion of freedom and democracy in a completely destroyed Europe and Japan. Meanwhile, European and Japanese leaders looked to America to help restore broken economies, wrecked political systems, and ruined hopes for the future. Against this background, new philosophies and works of literature and art emerged which altered the values of teachers, educators, and the public at large. These changes in thinking modified curriculum content and altered the values of society which directly affected schools. Existentialism was one such philosophy, with its emphasis on existence and will.

What Existentialists Believe

> The first principles to which my existence is attached are all impenetrable.
> (Voltaire, *Notebooks*, 1956, 558)

Existentialists stress the freedom and responsibility of individuals. To exist is the first and last reality. Existentialists often emphasize the will (or volition) and emotions over reason and the intellect (Knight 1989, 73). The will is an expression of human choice. As with many newer philosophies, existentialism is a revolt against more traditional philosophies. Christian existentialists focus on the mystery of human and divine *being*.

Existentialists can be divided into two camps:

1. existentialists who describe the relationship of existence or *being* to other existences;
2. those who describe the absolute freedom of existence, or the *will* in human choice.

The expression of existentialist philosophy is also sometimes found in literature, art and the cinema, and not just in standard academic texts, imbuing many plays, novels, and poetry, and thus it becomes a part of literature and language arts in the curriculum. The novels of the Russian novelist Dostoyevsky, for example, show the futility of man's choices and the disaster people bring upon when choosing. Modern art has adopted the existentialist philosophy embodying guilt, anxiety and other human emotional themes. Thus, studying this philosophy can help teachers better understand some modern literature, movies and art.

We consider a few of the more famous of existentialist proponents, and begin with Kierkegaard, its earliest exponent.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855)

Søren Kierkegaard is considered the founder of the existentialist movement, and gave impetus to reformist Protestant theology, although he was largely ignored outside his native Denmark during his lifetime. He is a major spokesman for the active, existing individual and therefore in opposition to the idea of Hegel and Marx that man is trapped in history which determines destiny for him. He led an unconventional existence, almost like a hermit, and was thought of as an eccentric by his contemporaries (Ozman 1990, 234). He died when he was only forty-two.

Kierkegaard was one of the first modern philosophers to personalize philosophy. He is the opposite of a rationalist and believed that anxiety, despair, depression and other emotions tell us a good deal about ourselves and are not just abstract ideas. He spoke to moral and religious truths as a part of philosophical understanding.

He attended the University of Copenhagen for eight years but never took a degree despite his father's insistence. Finally, after ten years at the university he completed his dissertation on Socrates. He later attended lectures Karl Marx also attended in Berlin. By his late twenties he wrote *Either/Or*, one of the major works which launched the existentialist movement in Europe.

Kierkegaard's main message is that faith is possible in everything. His psychological Christian masterpiece is *Sickness Unto Death*, a book which distinguishes religious forms of understandings from psychological ones. It is a book of despair in which the Christian believer sits at the deathbed of culture and spirit (Marino 1993, 112).

He rebelled early in his short life against two things. The first was the established Protestant Church of Denmark, even though he professed to be a devout Christian. He believed that the Church had strayed from its fundamental beliefs and was too worldly, and that a person had to live one's belief, not simply ascribe to its doctrines. He became very ascetic in his habits. This emphasis on the "lived" part of one's faith became the later existentialist creed, especially for the Christian existentialists. The important element in religion was the individual's relationship to truth, not truth in itself. As the individual advances through stages of an "existential dialectic" he becomes more aware of God, according to Kierkegaard, but this fills him with despair because he cannot leap the gap between mortality and eternal truth.

The second element Kierkegaard rebelled against was the systemization of the Hegelian philosophy, the dominant philosophy of the time, even avowed strongly by John Dewey in his early writings. Marx used Hegel exclusively as his model for historical determination.

Søren Kirkegaard is the acknowledged founder of existentialism and his themes of anguish, anxiety and doubt were to influence profoundly the twentieth-century writers, like John-Paul Sartre, who expanded on his insights into the humanizing role of the individual.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980)

Sartre was one who saw man as a lonely being in a meaningless universe, and his plays, novels and writings rework this existentialist theme. Sartre went to the finest prep schools as a young man, and after his graduation from the Sorbonne, he taught in secondary schools for over fourteen years (1931–1945), although this was punctuated by a year's study in Berlin and one year (1939–40) as a prisoner of the Germans in France because of his work in the Resistance movement against the German occupation of France.

His first novel *Nausea* describes in narrative form his philosophical existentialism and how a young man comes to grips with the experience of his own existence. But with the publication of his major work, *Being and Nothingness*, in 1943, he gained an international reputation. He proposed that human consciousness was in opposition to being. He said that consciousness is not matter, and that man is a "useless passion." In his play *No Exit*, he reiterates how man is trapped in his own existence and can find no meaningful way out of that existence.

Sartre's writings have a despairing quality, like Kierkegaard's, but seemed to fulfill a realistic sense of despair of the age. His themes force his readers to confront the darker side of human existence and to face up to the reality of depressing emotions. His theme of the futility of human existence led to the Theatre of the Absurb, plays by a group of writers in the post–World War II period which played with the idea of the meaninglessness of human existence, such as Samuel Beckett, in his play *Waiting for Godot*, and Eugene Ionesco. Man must make his own meaning, according to these existentialists.

Sartre was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1964 but refused it. His main contribution to education has been through literature and plays, and his ideas which influenced the cinema and contemporary culture toward existentialism. His plays and writings have become a standard part of the humanities curriculum in colleges and universities.

Albert Camus (1913–1960)

> Judging whether life is or is not not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest—whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories—come afterwards ... the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions. (Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*)

Sartre's writings influenced Albert Camus, his contemporary in French letters, who was born in Algeria but moved as a journalist to Paris just as World War II was beginning and before the German occupation of France in 1940. He was also a playwright and novelist. Camus, like other existentialists, found that a rational and scientific examination of the world shows that it is unintelligible and absurd. One can know meaning only through action, faith and commitment. One must transcend the world of appearances. Here we may recall the theme of the shadows in Plato's cave.

Camus denied allegiance to the existentialists, preferring instead to classify himself as a courageous humanist. Camus wrote a long essay on the myth of Sisyphus, the legendary figure from Greek mythology, reputedly the founder and king of Corinth, who dared to offend Zeus and was condemned to eternal punishment pushing a large rock up a steep hill, only to have the rock roll back once it was near the top (Bulfinch 1962, 310). Camus used this as a metaphor for man's existence, which he called absurd. This theme is carried out in his best novel, *The Stranger*. But the use of any Greek myth, a recurring theme in art, literature and drama, is an example of how modern authors structuring the current humanities (and the school's curriculum) get their ideas reshaped by their knowledge of the past.

Camus was also awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1957.

Erich Fromm (1900–1987)

Erich Fromm was an escapee from Nazi Germany in the 1930s. He received his doctorate from the University of Heidelberg in 1922, and taught at the University of Frankfurt before coming to the United States in 1934. Subsequently, he taught at the International Institute for Social Research, at Columbia, Yale, Bennington, the National University of Mexico, Michigan State, and New York University.

His writings, like those of other existentialists, reflect the trauma that affects those who saw the horror that was World War II in Europe. Fromm also writes in the existentialist mold, but as a psychoanalyst, about man's estrangement and sense of isolation. He says man must come to terms with his own sense of insignificance and doubt about the meaning of life.

He writes in *The Art of Loving*: "Man is gifted with reason; he is *life being aware of itself*; he has awareness of himself, of his fellow man, of his past, and of the possibilities of his future. This awareness of himself as a separate entity, the awareness of his own short life span … of his helplessness before the forces of nature and society, all this makes his separate, disunited existence an unbearable prison" (Fromm 1956, 6).

Martin Buber (1878–1965)

Martin Buber was a Jewish philosopher who is classified as an existentialist theologian because he believed that the most profound reality of human life involved a meaningful exchange between one being and another, chiefly between man and God.

He was born in Vienna and educated at German universities like Frankfurt where he taught religion and philosophy from 1924–33. He fled Germany as the Nazis came to power and from 1938 to 1951 was professor of social philosophy at Hebrew University.

His most influential book, *I and Thou*, expresses his belief that the relationship between God and man is a personal experience and a part of a direct and continual dialogue. Here is a quote about education:

> Education worthy of the name is essentially education of character. For the genuine educator does not merely consider individual functions of his pupil ... but his concern is always the person as a whole, both in the actuality in which he lives before you now and in his possibilities, what he can become. (Buber 1965, 104)

In this passage we can see several strands of philosophy in general and of existentialism in particular apropos of education. First, human development is spoken of in terms of potency and act, terms we now recognize as coming from Aristotle. Second, we notice the emphasis on the individual person. This theme has become of paramount interest in this century, part born from the existentialist movement, and translated into the humanist movement in schooling, and partly from the psychoanalytic movement created by Freud. Third, Buber's emphasis on the human dimension, and on human existence, projects the development of personality as both a philosophical and psychological force. Man is a part of nature and of being, but also a part of his own becoming. Man's existence is still being worked out through nature.

Man becomes the center of philosophical inquiry, and man must work out the question of what he is in the world. Buber writes: "What approaches you out of the world, hostile and terrifying, the mystery of its space and time, is the mystery of your own comprehension of the world and the mystery of your being. Your question 'What is Man?' is thus a genuine question to which you must seek the answer" (Buber 1965, 137). Buber influenced Christian theologians, and worked vigorously in his writings to improve Jewish and Arab relations.

Carl Rogers (1902–1987)

> The assumption has been prevalent for so long that we all know what constitutes an "educated man," that the fact that this comfortable definition is now completely irrelevant to modern society is almost never faced. (Carl Rogers 1969, 296)

The modern humanist movement was accelerated by the influential writings of Carl Rogers, a clinical psychologist, in works like *Freedom to Learn* (1969). Rogers proposed that the school curriculum focus on the development of the *total person*, an expression of the philosophy of existentialism. We can now trace the progression of the existentialist notion of human existence to the psychological concept of personality, and thus to humanism in the curriculum throughout the twentieth century. Just as Martin Buber had stressed the I-Thou relationship between man and God, so Rogers stressed the I-Thou relationship in human interpersonal relations. Rogers also stressed the need for students to learn how to value themselves and others, and to find personal meaning in themselves and others.

Rogers is an expression of the existentialist in philosophy because of his emphasis on personal choice, such as in valuing. He stands in direct line with other influential writers, both in philosophy and literature, who discuss personal alienation of people from each other, a characteristic hallmark of modern society.

Rogers' work made educators look more carefully at the education of the total person, and at the need among children and youth for such personal feelings as approval, esteem and affection, which were not usually a part of the traditional school curriculum. Rogers issues this challenge to educators: "If my concept of the fully functioning person is abhorrent to you as the goal of education, then give *your* definition of the person who should emerge from modern day education" (Rogers 1969, 296).

The late 1960s were indeed a time for profound changes in the American psyche. It was a time of the Vietnam War (1964–74), of the civil rights movement, of the rebellion of college students against the war and authority, of the Black Panther movement among African Americans, and of a recognition of large pockets of poverty in America. In this century there has not been a more turbulent sense of social disorder and search for common societal ideals.

So was born again the movement to humanize, to find out who we were as individuals and as a people. Various institutes were founded to help people "get in touch with themselves," and curricula was a response to this national trend for collective affection, approval and sense of belonging. Humanistic educators do not deny that intellectual exercises need to be a part of schooling. What they point out is that the curriculum and teachers need to teach in a manner which is appropriate to children's personal needs.

Teaching Application: A Humanist Approach

Think about your own approach to a philosophy of teaching and see if you can describe it orally, even to yourself. If you cannot adequately describe what you believe is your essential belief, review a few key questions and then make a choice.

Let's start the concept of "critical thinking." Critical thinking can be a part of the rationalist belief in philosophy, and the cognitive point of view in psychology. In the existentialism view, however, critical thinking is an activity which involves man's inherent powers and not just his energies or merely his mind. Thinking critically involves a person's will and existence.

In a related example we can ask: How does society, or the teacher, help students realize their "potential"? Is one's "potential" something to be earned through choice, or does it come naturally with mature development? Is one simply fulfilled, or "actualized" to use Maslow's term, when one gets older? Walking through the essentials of existentialism will help define or refine your teaching philosophy.

Existentialism in the Classroom

Education is a liberating influence. In the Platonic sense, one became liberated from ignorance. In the existentialist sense, education, sometimes painful, is to be achieved by choosing it purposefully.

The philosophy of existialism has added the human dimension to philosophical concerns and this has impacted schooling and the way teachers view students.

Thus we see the the influence of existentialism in the companion disciplines of psychology, psychiatry and psychoanalysis. One of the most obvious influences has been on the humanist tradition and its contemporary emphasis on the emotional side of human behavior.

In the humanist tradition there is renewed interest in other people's existences, or "presences," as Gabriel Marcel, the French religious existentialist, describes it. Existentialists have invaded our cultural thinking and schooling programs with curricular emphases on interpersonal relationships and the need for their inclusion in schooling. We are aware of others' existences in a collective, multicultural and personal sense. Curricula which explore personal feeings, and which emphasize the individual as a participant in the learning process are borrowing from the philosophy of existentialism. A curriculum which stresses only the cognitive or intellectual side of a human being is not existentialist strictly speaking.

According to some existentialists, reason brought the horrors of war because philosophy did not look carefully enough at man's irrationality, his unconscious, to use the Freudian and Jungian term from psychology, his dark side, to focus on some of the existentialists' concern for anxiety and despair and doubt. For these post–World War II writers, Hitler and the Nazis had used reason to justify the killing of millions of people and therefore reason had to be reinvestigated as a tool for improving mankind. Existentialism, revisiting the concepts of existence and will, has had a profound influence on contemporary thought and culture by raising the consciousness about the human condition and the role of the individual in a complex society.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you every had a conscious sense of your own existence? Can you describe this personal event?
2. Can you describe a personal relationship with someone in terms of how you relate to that other person's existence?
3. Is it possible to raise the consciousness of one's personal existence? How?
4. How will you relate to the existences of your students?

POSTMODERN CULTURES AND AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL VALUES

In order that society should exist and prosper, it is required that all the minds of the citizens should be rallied and held together by certain predominate ideas; and this cannot be the case unless each of them sometimes draws his opinions from the common source, and consents to accept certain matters of belief already formed. (De Tocqueville 1956, 146.)

The history of ideas in each generation is a story of superceded, or at least revised, philosophies, recentered cultural and literary values, and alterations in methods of investigation for truths about the world. New philosphies and new interpretations of the culture are a part of the dynamism of a society and of educational thought. The postmodern era, partly a counter-Enlightenment movement in philosophy

and partly a quest for personal and social relevance, is no exception to this trend. There is disagreement over terms and concepts, methodology, and the rules of scholarly discourse of who postmoderns are and what constitutes their beliefs. But, following our theme of tracing ideas from the past, we can say that postmodernism is a movement reactionary to reason and knowledge.

An Introduction to Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a convenient label for a variety of social, political and intellectual movements and liberal and radical philosophies. In this section a few postmodern positions, postures and personnel will be clarified as well as a few observations and tentative conclusions gleaned from the rhetoric of discordant voices, linguistic misunderstandings, and philosophical ambiguities to show some educational implications. Postmodern views are derivative of other philosophies of revolution in the modernist tradition in analytic philosophy and are a part of the unfinished business of the Enlightenment and not a perverse new philosophy. There have been dynamic shifts in educational values towards cultural studies, feminist studies, gay and lesbian studies and postcolonial theory in higher education, all a part of the postmodern movement.

Postmodernism or deconstructionism, a movement which began in twentieth-century art, is a label for a variety of current ideological developments. Identity is often examined within the context of cultural oppression, where rights define personal experiences not legal status. One persistent postmodern theme is that subjective experiences take priority over abstract principles, as do ethnicity, class and culture over absolute principles. Philosophy in the postmodern mind has become a fluid interpretation of human understanding in theory, content and method, often with a pervasive bias against Eurocentric investigations and sometimes even history itself, an interpretation begun by John Dewey in *The Quest for Certainty* (1929), who sought to reconcile philosophy and science. Postmoderns propose new standards of knowledge production by rejecting expert opinions and by authenticating the oppression of the individual to construct new forms of representation. Postmoderns disrupt the convenient categories which traditionally have defined intellectual discourse and reject the theoretical underpinnings of the social sciences as vehicles of power.

Postmodern beliefs are based not on the epistemological methods of faith, reason, senses, the will, or even biological determinism, but rather on personal and social consciousness and group identity. Reason and judgment are subordinate to subjective experiences and encounters, and historical legitimacy is questioned as the foundation for inquiry. Postmoderns often claim that they do not have any previous foundation in the Western intellectual experience. Thus they are without supporting literature from the past to enrich their cause. In fact, the emphasis on personal experiences, and even rejection of traditional epistemological concerns, is very much a legacy of Western philosophy derived from Descartes, Rousseau, Vico, Herder and twentieth-century existentialists, as we have seen.

Some claim that postmodern philosophies are influenced by Einstein's relative space/time view of the universe. The defense of absolutism or even modified forms

of idealism when faced with the theory of relativity in physics would appear absurd even in discredited philosophies. The notion that observers move in different directions at the speed of light with respect to events happening on earth has profoundly influenced subjective philosophies. All transformations, in this view, are reduced to observer status. The concept of substance in such a relative state is out, and matter, as a solid, impermeable entity, cannot survive. Even existence is questionable.

Moreover, postmodern advocates want to end human exploitation and needless suffering, oppression and domination and to expand the discourse about marginalized peoples. Some maintain that race, class, gender and ethnicity have not been included in western philosophical perspectives and are therefore useless because the western experience has not resolved social or economic inequalities. Advocates for *critical pedagogy*, or neo-Marxists, believe that knowledge is not something contained in books but needs to be constantly constructed according to social realities. An alternative but related term is constructivism, the belief that knowledge is temporary, culturally and socially mediated, fixed in subjective experiences, and thus without objective reality.

There are two major categories of contemporary postmoderns. One group tends towards separatism, of which there are both political and cultural groups with many ideological overlaps, and the other group toward social justice, and this latter category includes neo-Marxists and gender and diversity voices. We have studied diversity voices in other chapters but will explore neo-Marxism and gender voices here in this section.

The writings of postmoderns who advocate separate group identities have appeared to challenge all previously established norms of discourse, including multiculturalists, and forced a reexamination of the premises on which traditional Western philosophical persuasion has been established and its central beliefs and emotions anchored.

Political Separatism

Extreme individual separatists and militant groups seek a religious or political group identity outside democracy or legitimate government, often advocating their own brand of government. Their actual numbers may be small but they often tend to be violent. Their ideological Bible is often literally the Bible. Extremist religious separatists, like Japanese cultists, Islamic or Christian zealots, seek a doomsday identity built on personal and subjective revelation that discounts all history, certainly at the exclusion and often the death of others not of their persuasion. Political separatists, like the Freeman and antigovernment militia movements, seek political secession and disassociation from societal norms to form or maintain a separate political and cultural identity. Both religious and political separatism are in global and American ascendancy, and the zeal of fanaticism appears to be prevailing over the cold, slow, but democratic power of public policy formulation.

Separatists today often use the language of American revolutionaries, like phrases from Jefferson or Thomas Paine in *Common Sense* in 1776, when they

proclaim their own brand of contemporary independence. Ultranationalists prey on fears where a majority of citizens admit to racist feelings.

Group Identity as Cultural Separatism

There is a further distinction between political secession and cultural separatism. Cultural separatism, especially where it has been historically identified with a political entity as, for example, with indigenous Americans, is not in itself philosophically perverse unless it leads to war as a means of arriving at secession. Moreover cultural separation may be democratically healthy, and, like birth, an indispensable though painful part of life, creating independent persons and enlarging the meaning of family.

Group identity, if used to advocate ethnocentrism and not justice, has all the hallmarks of the herding mentality in which the individual bonds with the pack for defense and common cause. It is evident in immature adolescents who join gangs for group protection and strength, in extremist adults in alliance with militia groups for protection against perceived threats to safety or rights, or in a targeted guerilla war against all authority. In human history there is a separatist record of the people of choice versus the people of dishonor, the people of belief versus heretics. Group identity, in addition to the psychological bonding of the individual to other members of the group, also has the recognizeable trait of exclusion of other group members. Thus, some of the world's greatest myths and literature are filled with the tragedies of the Greeks and the Trojans, the Capulets and the Montagues, the Arabs and the Jews.

Seekers of Justice

A second group of postmoderns seeks justice or a related social virtue. Justice is citizen acceptance not only of an independent judiciary in government, but of the rule of law as the highest priority in the land, higher culturally than either self-interest or group identity. Justice does not include a search for a political separatist identity, although certain cultists groups may seek both justice and separatism. These individuals and groups do not see the role and responsibility of citizen as outweighing that of national origin. By accentuating the exclusiveness of group identity, whether because of religious, political or social motives, and by using the dialectic of exclusion and a history of selected harms, some postmodern philosophies have opened wide the axiological debate about equality, social virtue and justice.

If people do not actively seek to protect and promote multiple cultural differences beyond the mere passage of laws, they tend to revert to seminal ethnic, religious and cultural and social identity ties. Therefore the national identity, established to expand the space for individual self-realization, recedes into a kind of social orphanage abandoned by its citizens. This is already manifest in the exercise of the voting franchise in which cynicism about government, not mere apathy, beginning with Vietnam and Watergate and expanding to the president and the U.S. Congress, is one sign of a perceived decline of civic values. Government, however, should not be made a scapegoat for a society's defects in moral virtue.

Ideological Origins

There are two primary exponents of postmodern ideologies: the German Jürgen Habermas and the Frenchman Michel Foucault.

Jürgen Habermas

The contemporary ideological postmodern guru is the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. Habermas' analysis of social policies has widened philosophy's reach to current social problems. Habermas believes that the individual's "lifeworld" has been reduced to exploitation by societal norms of efficiency and utility which lead to deterioration in the life of the individual. Ordinary human discourse about what is good and evil, about what is true and not true, must yield to the goal-oriented normative actions of an impersonal bureaucracy based on power and money. This distances the individual from the rational decisions made by organizations who are indifferent to the needs of the culture, the society and the person. Bureaucracies contribute to the erosion of personal communication, and when the state intervenes it disregards personal relationships.

Habermas sees language in a social context. Language assures one of the objectivity of the world and the intersubjectivity of the individual's "lifeworld." Language for Foucault is only intelligible in relation to power and only meaningful in terms of ethical difficulties which result from knowledge's relation to power.

According to Habermas, the state also has thwarted rational human aims to maintain culture and intruded into family life because of excessive paternalism and welfarism. The state has blunted the common forms of identity, such as extended family and the tribe, by which individuals once used to socialize themselves. Ideological separatists are seeking cultural roots in which they once found their personal and collective cultural identity. Habermas contends in *Theory of Communicative Action* (v.1, 1984, v.II, 1987) that the bureaucracy of institutions, not economic exploitation or state fascism, has corroded social relationships.

Michel Foucault

Additionally, there is a radical shift in the understanding of knowledge and epistemology itself, and none represents this postmodern view better than Michel Foucault. Foucault, the French philosopher and intellectual follower of Nietzsche, has become the voice of postmodernism, a school of thought that also places claims to truth in language. Just as the Chinese classsification of animals as signs of one's birth differs from the Western view of calendar dates and even astrological signs, so does Foucault's proposal that all knowledge is contextual and manufactured and often the expression of a struggle for power.

Foucault questions how the human subject renounced humanity by assuming the form of an object in knowledge. He wants to reinstall the subject, and reason itself, into the knowledge domains. His three interweaving themes are knowledge, power and subjectivity. He equates these with the disciplines of archaeology, genealogy, and ethics respectively. He believes that power and knowledge are principles of will, and this places him in debt to Nietzsche and Sartre. There are numerous studies of Foucault's work applied to the humanities and social sciences.

His insistence on the inhumane uses of power in institutions (he worked for two years in a mental institution) underscores his belief that power and knowledge structures are aligned to repress feelings and make people objects in order to maintain domination over subordinate groups.

The history of ideas, according to Foucault in the *Archeology of Knowledge* (1972), unfolds in a discontinuous fashion. The conditions of the production of knowledge determine the strategies of that knowledge, its speakers, and the relationship of the speaker with the subject matter. Knowledge is never absolute and always unreliable as truth. For those who believe truth is absolute this creates an unrelieved sense of insecurity.

Knowledge is relatively sterile, Foucault claims, if it cannot be changed and the boundaries altered by which previous generations perceived what that knowledge entails. He writes: "We must question these ready-made syntheses ("tradition," "influence," "individuals," "theories," "spirit," etc.) before we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outset; we must oust those forms and obscure forces by which we usually link the discourse of one man with another; they must be driven out from the darkness in which they reign." In this passage Foucault appears to attack the process of language and the cultural meanings attached to knowledge's abstract terms.

He questions the disciplines and subject matter of structured knowledge and the arbitrary classification of the sciences and arts.

He writes: "I shall accept the groupings that history suggests only to subject them at once to interrogation; to break them up and then to see whether they can be legitimately reformed." What he would allow for is "a pure description of discursive events." And with this purely linguistic sequence he routs the conceptual coat-trees we have used for centuries to classify which bit of information goes where. Foucault sees order only in the variability of language and not in the supposed unity that historical organized knowledge prescribes.

Whatever one may believe about Foucault's skeptical discourse, no one should fault him for scrutinizing with new clarity claims or classification systems of knowledge, and the arbitrariness of judging human activities through only one set of eyes while ignoring other possible perspectives. Indeed, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his analysis *The Phenomenology of Perception*, had already made appearances relative and appeared to destroy the permanence and transcendence of things. But few, until Foucault, dared apply the idea of relativism to the whole structure of knowledge.

Educational Implications of Postmodernism

What are the implications of postmodern ideologies for a philosophy of education? According to Arcilla (1995), philosophy of education began as a quest for self-knowledge, for an "authentic understanding" of both self and cultural identity. The quest for self-fulfillment however was never, until perhaps Rousseau, a norm for a philosophy of education. Yet this view is everywhere assumed to be true and valid.

For Stone (1995) the study of philosophy has become more like literature. Stone (1995) says that "In postmodern, poststructural theory there is attention to the

societal context out of which individuals' experiences occur—to matters, for instance, of race, class and gender." Few postmodern philosophers of education mention justice, and hardly any the conditioning and subordination of the individual to societal goals. Moreover, spokespeople for women, minorities, or people coming from countries colonized by Western, European powers have also felt excluded from the intellectual conversation, and they also have begun to question the foundations and methods of Western thought because its basis was viewed as hierarchical even feudal.

On the one hand, the tradition of individualism and the personalized experience of twentieth century existentialism easily incorporates separatist views in the quest for authenticity. On the other hand, advocates for the purity of the Western experience believe they are witnessing the total flameout of Western thought. D. C. Phillips (1995), for example, sees "postmodernism pointing the road to disaster." Phillips sees these trends as evidence of relativism in which philosophy must be forced to answer for social inequities, a role it should investigate but not necessarily be called upon in order to repudiate the role of reason. It is not clear how Phillips sees philosophy as a legitimate discussant in the role of justice in an open society. Phillips sees most constructivism as extensions of progressivism.

Educational Experiences Contributing to Postmodern Views

Twentieth-century American educational experiences led to a series of literary encounters with group diversity that fostered a gradual social awakening and a flowering of critical consciousness contributing to postmodern views. James Bryant Conant's study, *Slums and Suburbs* (1961), was the first significant book to document the deep divisions in education in America between the social and economic cohesion in the suburban America and the disadvantaged school life in metropolitan areas. It was an eye-opening study repudiating the commonly accepted view that school was an equalizing institution that had apparently reduced class distinctions for previous generations of immigrants. Even worse, Conant conceded, "a caste system finds its clearest manifestation in an educational system," referring both to rich and poor socioeconomic distinctions and to segregated schools. Conant also concluded that community and family back-grounds of the low-income cities compared to the relatively high-income suburbs play a huge role in determining academic aptitude and achievement. Conant's conclusion in 1961 is as relevant now as it was then: "To improve the work of the slum schools requires an improvement in the lives of the families who inhabit slums, but without a drastic change in the employment prospects for urban Negro youth, relatively little can be accomplished."

Jonathan Kozol's book on radical schooling, *Death at an Early Age* (1968), also stunned educators because it argued for radical reform and demystified the codes of the traditional knowledge brokers and documented the exploitation of the poor by the rich. Based on America's experience in the late 1960s with two traumatic and converging social events, the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, a new psyche emerged that challenged previous assumptions about society, government and education, as Kozol did with traditional schooling and Asante (1987) did for African-based ideological and cultural perspectives.

In 1970 two books appeared which gave renewed impetus to social assumptions about formal education and seriously challenged conventional schooling standards. Ivan Illich, an Austrian Catholic priest who served in poor parishes in Puerto Rico and Mexico, wrote *Deschooling Society* (1970), a criticism of the capitalistic tendencies in schools which indoctrinated students without raising their social awareness of common human problems. He called for a "cultural revolution" to reexamine social institutions like schools which were increasingly mechanized and dehumanizing. Illich decried the yarksticks of progress, production, consumption and profit as inappropriate for measuring human development. Illich leaned toward communal social consciousness as a basis for schooling and contemporary postmoderns continue to call for a "cultural revolution" in the Illich vein.

Also in 1970, Paulo Freire, a Brazilian neo-Marxist educator, published *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a testimonial that the schooling establishment oppressed the poor. Freire's influence had been legendary because he was one of the few whose work in teaching literacy to impoverished peasants, beginning in the late 1940s, had won him countless converts throughout the world. Freire emphasized reading and literacy programs for poor adults based on words the peasants themselves wanted to learn. He was constantly at odds with the Brazilian educational establishment for his innovative teaching methods as well as his communist sympathies. He was arrested in Brazil in 1964 and exiled, living in Chile, America, and Switzerland, only to return to his native country in 1981. Freire's work leaned toward stricter Marxist theories of society regarding schooling, and he believed that poverty and illiteracy are directly related and that oppressive social structures keep individuals from realizing their full freedom.

Subsequently, evidence accumulated of social divisions in schooling like James Herndon's *How to Survive in Your Native Land* (1971), a description of the ghettoization of schooling and how teachers cope with students' social deprivations, and Martin Carnoy's *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (1974). Carnoy, a neo-Marxist, complained that "powerful economic and social groups acting in their common self-interest succeeded through legislation and influence to use schooling to further their own ends." (23) Carnoy presented evidence from Latin America of schooling as a form of capitalism attempting to preserve economic and social differences. Christopher Jencks' study in the United States (*Inequality*, 1972) of educational and social inequality based on data collected from the 1964 Civil Rights Act seemed to confirm the negative effect social divisions, including segregation in housing and schooling, had on academic achievement. These repeated conclusions showing how deep were educational class and racial divisions reconfirmed suspicions about the traditional role of schooling and encouraged the idea that traditional schooling philosophies were inadequate and ineffective in promoting social justice.

The revelation of the deep divisions in society contributed to educational postmoderns who generally fall into three general sets of voices: (1) neo-Marxist or critical theorists, and (2) gender groups, and (3) diversity groups, although many will fall equally in two or more of these groups. This modest review is not intended either to pigeonhole certain writers into any exclusively defined category, nor to exhaust the number of representative advocates, but only to serve as illustrations of the strands of postmodernism in education.

Critical Theory and Neo-Marxism

Current advocates of critical theory and pedagogy inquire into the relationship between curriculum and teaching and the unequal power projected through schooling. Neo-Marxists clearly want to "empower the powerless," according to Peter McLaren, who also seeks "enfleshment" (1988, 160), and to rectify social inequalities and injustices. Marxism theories have been swirling in political currents since Lenin, who knew Marx when both were radical revolutionaries in London, and who used Marx's economic theories as the basis for the establishment of totalitarianism in Russia.

Bowles and Gintis (1977) inaugurated radical Marxist educational inquiry and subsequent prescriptions with *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* in which they proclaimed a "mass-based organization of working people powerfully articulating a clear alternative to corporate capitalism as the bais for a progressive educational system." This was one of the first classical Marxist interpretations of education in the United States, projecting power struggles like class conflict in education.

Neo-Marxists address the question of justice and state ethics when they claim that the educational establishment links schooling to the corporate structures of American life and that these capitalistic interests are valued more than the interests of humanity. In such a view teachers become the unwilling victims of state power and accomplices in the exercise of power used to maintain social inequalities. Collectively, neo-Marxists see schooling as a form of cultural politics and, sometimes citing evidence from a decline in schooling achievement, as detrimental to public interests. They claim that actions like the reaffirming of the "traditional curriculum," cutting school budgets, and insisting on national goals that schools train for economic interests are all expressions of maintaining a class structure bereft of social justice. Neo-Marxist themes can be found in the writings of Henry Giroux, Michael Apple and Peter McLaren.

Henry Giroux would like to see a blend of modernism and postmodernism as a means of determining the purposes of education. He wants to retain human reasoning but also to include the politics of social differences. Giroux's task is to criticize education for maintaining the rigidity of power structures that reinforce inequalities, and to show how cultural studies and some popular movies can become descriptions of the limited power of dislocated youth but not the social conditions which have generated adolescent ennui, despair, indifference and sense of disconnectedness.

As a critical pedagogue, however, Giroux's overriding thesis is the capitalistic social system which governs all human motives, dreams and aspirations, where "corporate advertisers are attempting to theorize a pedagogy of consumption." For Giroux, society and its traditional power structures, not the individual, are at fault. Giroux is less concerned with traditional forms and procedures for generating knowledge, knowledge as textual content, than as the personal construction of values, desires and identities.

Michael Apple believes that class includes the politics of gender and race. Therefore he is closer to the Marxist interpretation of social equality than Giroux.

Apple wonders why teachers do not engage students in cultural studies, and conversely why those in cultural studies do not engage in pedagogy and challenge violent, racist and cultural stereotypes in the popular media. He cites the educational management and bureaucratic issues which take precedence over teaching for democractic principles. Apple (1979, 1982, 1987) has illustrated how relations of class structure, dominance, and exploitation in schooling exist and how we can become aware of these inequalities.

Peter McLaren (1994) criticizes the schools for failing to develop a truly democratic and egalitarian society according to the standard Western vision. In *Life in Schools* (1994) he recommends that education result in social empowerment for all, not just for the affluent in society and the privileged economic interests, but particularly for the oppressed poor. McLaren argues that schools serve the "corporate imperatives of the international marketplace," and the young have lost their "egalitarian impulses."

Critics have pointed out that the theoretical pronouncements that radical advocates make do not offer much practical advice for teachers or positively affirm anything teachers do, and that McLaren especially is still encumbered by patriarchal biases and claims (Doyle 1996). According to Doyle, McLaren contradicts himself by proposing a politics of resistance and "rupture, refusal and forms of the unacceptable," while attempting to change and reform "teaching into outrageous practice and a practice of outrage," in McLaren's words.

Gender Voices

There is a long history of the fight for the just rights of women in American history: Susan B. Anthony who campaigned all her life for women's voting rights, Jane Addams, the social activist who founded Hull House in Chicago, the valiant women who founded their own labor unions in defiance of other union members in the nineteenth century. Today, the voices of champions of women's rights echo in the land and resonate in academic journals. Women's studies have become institutionalized throughout higher education.

There are two main postmodern gender issues: the voices of feminism and gender equity, and the diverse voices of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identity. The voices of same-sex identity have awakened a new degree of social consciousness in an open society and search for justice and equity as they cope for recognition at the civic table. Gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgender advocates have polarized the national and state political debate and have been especially vilified by the religious right in America. The gender voices generally seek justice not separatism, but they have also altered the nature and tone of the debate by re-emphasizing virtues such as compassion.

Whether abortion rights or teenage pregancies, sexual harassment or job discrimination, child care or maternity leave, women's rights and issues have moved to the front of the domestic policy agenda. While we can applaud the social gains of women in the past few decades in schooling and employment opportunities, many believe that gender inequalities find their source in the retention of male power. The role of gender is also tied up with race and class divisions.

Women constitute the largest bloc of poverty employees, and their children the poorest of any identified group. Minority women experience poverty in addition to evidences of discrimination and prejudice in the work environment.

One such contemporary voice is that of Maxine Greene, who argues in *The Dialectic of Freedom* (1988) that it is necessary for women not only to resist the forces that oppress them, but to find freedom within a free society. Her vision has been shaped by the writings of Hannah Arendt and the existentialist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, both of whom she quotes abundantly. Indeed her lively quotations fluctuate between imaginative poetic writers like T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Walt Whitman, Dostoevsky, as well as philosophers like John Dewey, Sartre and Foucault. She uses narratives from novels and poetry to tell her story about the angst of the human condition. She writes with a healthy and invigorating blend of postmodern thought, feminism, existentialism, and as a literary critic and philosophical poet. Her poetic expressions tell of the discontented and the dislocated whom schooling does not and may never reach, and empower teachers with the ordering of their own existences.

But Greene's definition of freedom is ambiguous if poetic and existential. She inadequately distinguishes between what one might consider political or legal freedom—it was different for African Americans prior to the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution for example—from existential freedom where the individual must choose to define one's destiny. She writes: "freedom developed by human beings who have acted to make a space for themselves in the presence of others."

This ambiguity in meaning between legal freedom and what she calls "personal space" is axiomatic of postmodern thought. She writes: "We are now going to consider some of the predicaments and life stories of persons who could never take freedom for granted in this country: women, members of minority groups, immigrants, newcomers." It is only at the end of the book where she says that "liberty may be conceived of in social or political terms." But actually freedom, the title of this book, must also be seen in the light of legal statutes, and this is not incidental or an after-thought to the debate, but is illustrative of the postmodern expression.

Clearly, prejudice and discrimination existed in American history, especially for minorities, women and immigrants. But one could also argue that freedom, as Greene defines it in a postmodern perspective, has been extended in America generously to all immigrants because neither the Constitution nor Congress has adequately defined American citizenship, certainly not by blood birth as happens in many other countries. Greene writes: "The matter of freedom, then, in a diverse society is also a matter of power, as it involves the issue of a public space" (36) This is postmodern existential freedom without defining the law which makes the individual politically free.

Other voices have arisen and speak to the special concerns of women. Carol Gilligan (1981) says that women speak in a different voice from men because their experiences are different and are more aligned with responsibility, group cooperation and caring than with competition (37). For example, Gilligan (1977), based on interviews with women on the issue of abortion, reported on the importance of care and responsibility in women's lives in the moral domain. She

argued for the role of the feminine voice in the role of the full, mature, adult development model, and repudiated the single model of Kohlberg for a unified form of moral development. Gilligan was careful to point out that she was interested in care as a theme and not specifically as a sex difference in moral development.

Similarly, Noddings (1984, 1992) offers an alternative approach to education through the value of caring. She argues that academics are misplaced as the school's highest priority, that liberal education is "dangerous for today's young" who need to become morally responsive and "to promote the growth of students as healthy, competent, moral people." A caring relation, she says, is "a connection or encounter between two human beings." She places emphasis on the relational aspect of caring because she does not want it thought of as a virtue or individual attribute. Caring in this context is a form of social, not just personal development, or as an aspect of emotional development distinct from knowledge and understanding. However, it may well be that the construct of caring approximates Maslow's developmental need of belonging perceived in a different way for each gender, of the need to feel and interact with others, and not just as the presumed opposite of the construct of justice.

Other feminist writers use symbolic terminology such as Gloria Anzaldúa's "borderlands," to describe their continuing quest for feminine identity in a foreign culture, of never quite fitting in to the job culture or of going back easily to the home culture. For example, being an Indian Hindu vegetarian, a professional woman and mother makes one an oddity living in a religiously fundamentalist, conservative community where acceptance and adaptation are never granted easily if at all, according to Elsey and Kumar. The feminist, cultural questions often turn on the perennial questions of classical philosophy about identity: about who one is in a culture, why one makes decisions, where one should live, and how one should adapt to a culture.

The chief moral concern of females, it is said, is to maintain friendships and relationships, and to minimize hurt and provide care, according to Garrod and Beal. They cite some differences among males and females across age differences which show that, although there are major gender similarities for males to be more justice-oriented and females care-oriented, there are no exact conformities to the model for moral orientation. Whereas boys tended to reach moral judgments on the basis of rules (justice, and the concept of inequality), girls would reach such decisions on the needs of people (care, or attachment). Flanagan (1991) makes a similar criticism of any moral development model based on twin, opposing themes, or the two-voice model.

Kathryn Addelson (1991) in *Impure Thoughts, Essays on Philosophy, Feminism and Ethics*, describes the anger and risk involved in the feminist struggle for recognition of feminist activism and the overthrow of the philosophy of reason derived from the Enlightenment. Constance Nathanson (1991) has written an illuminating study about the public policy process of social control in the sexuality of women's adolescence, and examines how Americans handle deviant social behavior where women are concerned.

Should ethics and morality be held hostage to the concept of gender? Are there real differences in moral virtues which male writers have ignored because of

gender differences? Are such differences the result of power struggles and the conscious attempt to dominate female virtues and values? Are there too many similarities in human nature to differentiate and ascribe precise moral derivatives between genders? If there are gender differences in moral development and orientation, in reactions to how males and females resolve moral conflicts, is it possible the origin is largely genetically determined and not environmentally prescribed? If males tend to gravitate towards the construct of justice and females to that of care, as it is claimed, are these differences not the result of genetic bias rather than cultural ignorance and imposition?

Diversity Voices

Diversity values, in second-language instruction, ethnic studies and curricular units, have substantially impacted all educational institutions and programs. Diversity means a condition for differences, and in today's society, it invariably refers to cultural, ethnic or racial and gender differences.

There is a scholarly abundance of ethnic diversity. Much of it overlaps a philosophy and sociology of education, but almost all is devoted to an understanding of a particular ethnic or cultural group. The metaphors used to describe the immigrant experience, from the "melting pot" in which diverse national, ethnic and linguistic groups came together to form a national unity, to the "salad bowl" in which individual groups retained their identity while sharing a common national unity, imperfectly define how people felt about their origins in a country in which all except Natives have been immigrants, and many, like slaves and indentured servants, unwillingly. But there is a third analogy from Plato in Book VIII of *The Republic*, which I find helpful, that of the "embroidered robe which is spangled with every sort of flower." Most diversity voices I have read, with a few exceptions, seek cultural identity and not cultural separatism within the boundaries of democracy.

Consult chapters Nine to Twelve for additional information about specific ethnic groups in America.

Conclusion

It is not clear if new and more dynamic philosophies of inclusion might inform thought and action clarifing future civic experiences and forming new and stronger bonds of unity and assimilation. There is now a systemic disequilibrium between the state's expression of rationalism and the search for the authentic self and cultural awareness on the part of ordinary citizens who can no longer identify with the disconnections of institutionalized and politicized life in government. Democracy is fundamentally disassociated from the idea of popular sovereignty promulgated in an early era.

To interpret each of the postmodern perspectives from the traditionalist perspective, one might look to the branches of traditional philosophy, the axiological purposes and epistemological content for satisfaction. What one often finds is not a logical contrast with a existing view, but hostility to an historical event or trend.

Except for the lone assassin, American Nazis, ultranationalists, white separatists, anarchists, and the paramilitary and sociopathological fringe group members intent on bombing governments, buildings and people, the assertive voices speaking on behalf of specific group identities seem to be fragmenting the cohesion of national unity and, some, claim perverting the idea of justice in a democratic state. What is especially frightening and even more dangerous than totalitatarianism is the idea of a pure, ethnically clean state which would negate and possibly destroy the struggle for pluralism in the nation.

But nationalism at the expense of other civic virtues is not the most just cause either. Rather, multiethnic identities in a people's experiences as an expression of community justice in a democracy is the more legitimate claimant. The national experience embodied in history is not an easy or reliable substitute for pluralistic identities distinct from the national identity.

Axiologically, the state and all its citizens should assiduously seek the maintenance of diverse group identities as a just value, and fight to preserve a multiple set of ethnic identities within a national experience as an expresion of justice and equity. Epistemologically, knowledge must flow to and from multicultural sources, enriching the national experience. The serviceable metaphor is the body in which separate but essential organs provide distinct but necessary functions to maintain the vitality of the whole organism.

Postmodern thought or methodology should not alarm or panic the traditionalist as even a cursory knowledge of history will reveal that emerging philosophies have often come as a repudiation of the prevailing philosophy, of realism over idealism, of faith over philosophy and secular knowledge, of reason over faith, of empiricism over reason, of will and personal choice over the senses, of matter over mind, and of group identity over personal choice.

Choosing group or ethnic membership, such as joining a new religious affiliation or becoming a Marxist, means that one must first be a group member to qualify for participation. But if one is not a member of any group, there is further exclusion. The skeptic, the disbeliever, the lone soul who does not pay allegiance to any designated group will be excluded from attendance at the table. This exclusion elevates group identity and status upon which all philosophy should be displayed and allegiance judged.

Glenn Loury (1995) reminds us: "The most important challenges and opportunities confronting any person arise not from his racial condition but from his human condition." It is the human condition, not the secondary effects of physical properties, language, dress, sexual identity, or cultural inheritance we must participate in reinvigorating.

Finally, in the welter of urgent and conflicting fanaticisms, one of the few unifying themes is tentative belief in scientific certainty and by implication some certitude in the procedures for clarifying knowledge in the social sciences in order to reduce bias and subjectivity. Certainly philosophy with its manifest applications to education goals and practices needs to divest itself of dogmatism. But just as certainly it must beware of replacing its limited virtues with new and untested forms of literary self-aborption without the guarantees of defined and disciplined methods.

Summary and Implications

Philosophies build upon several key ideas and usually emphasize one idea prominently. The Middle Ages reluctantly accepted reason as the overriding philosophy necessary for the advancement of knowledge and as the human avenue for salvation in the established Church, and the Enlightenement gave reason an even higher elevated status combined with science and math. The Renaissance and Enlightenment, having witnessed the faults of excessive reason, proposed that experimentation was the main path of human knowledge, and that the senses were supreme. The existentialists returned to the primary theme of all philosophy, that of existence. The commercialization of the modern economy seemed to favor a more practical approach to the speculations of philosophy. In the end, many modern philosophies were simply echoing themes that had been proposed centuries earlier by the Greeks.

This chapter outlines a few of the main tenets of modern philosophies, including ethical and moral philosophies, and some key figures and proponents, and the postmodern philosphers. It is difficult to pigeonhole writers on philosophical issues and argue persuasively for their falling in one philosohical camp or another exclusively, especially when some refuse to be so categorized. The utilitarian philosophy stressed certrain basic human instincts, like the feeling for pleasure and pain, as criteria for developing a moral philosophy. Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer were among the more notable of this group.

Even though few students formally study philosophy as an academic pursuit, philosophical ideas have nevertheless crept into the school's thinking and curriculum. This, in turn, has influenced the way teachers teach. We tend to blame the liberalizing influences of the 1960s for much that was wrong with American schools in the 1990s, perhaps without understanding that liberalization was closely associated with the philosophy of choice or will, of choosing one's own personal existence, and of the humanistic movement in the curriculum with its emphasis on the emotions of the student. Existentialism was the philosophy of choice (to turn a phrase) in colleges and universities in the 1960s. It was expressed in the humanities, literature, cinema, and art.

Subsequent decades turned against the excesses of the practices of the age, and returned to the basics of education, as they were called, and thus to a much more practical philosophy for schooling objectives. Other postmoderns called a complete revolution in thinking and specified an orientation toward ethnic, gender or racial identification. American education will continue to explore for a balance between excesses in philosophical traditions, careful not to give to much initiative to the student, for example, nor too much credence to the state in its legislated guidelines, and to balance parental and perhaps uninformed participation with professional advice in teaching and curriculum.

Field Experience

Visit a courtroom when a criminal trial is in session with classmates if possible. Pretend you are a member of the jury even if it is not a jury trial and only the judge has to make a decision. You do not have the benefit of professional

knowledge of the law, but you can apply your common sense and a philosophical point of view.

Do you believe that the defendant is guilty of the crime as charged? If so, do you also believe that he or she commited the crime voluntarily, of his or her own free will, and was not coerced? Or do you believe that this person might have a chemical imbalance in the brain that might impair judgment, and perhaps even turn him or her to violence, and that therefore this mitigating circumstance should lessen the sentence, if one is to be given?

In other words, do you favor determinism in human affairs, even in the judgments about people possibly to be sent to prison, or do you believe in absolute human freedom of will to choose what course of action is most responsible in life?

Case Study

A woman's headdress catches fire; water is at hand: a man, instead of assisting to quench the fire, looks on and laughs at it. A drunken man, falling with his face downward into a puddle, is in danger of suffocation; lifting his head a little on one side would save him; another man sees this and lets him lie. A quantity of gunpowder lies scattered about a room: a man is going into it with a lighted candle: another, knowing this, lets him go in without warning. Who is there that in any of this cases would think punishment misapplied? (Bentham, 852)

Bentham discusses extensively the difference between private ethics and public legislation and concludes that an individual has an obligation to demonstrate "beneficence and probity." A person must consult that merely his own motives in his private actions. There is also a social motive he must consult. Legislation, like private ethics, has happiness for its end.

Case Study

Larry is a Vietnam War veteran who has been permanently brain damaged by the war. He lives on a residential street in your hometown, and sometimes gets high on alcohol and drugs. He has been in and out of mental hospitals for misdemeanors such as throwing garbage on the street and as a public nuisance. He has occasionally harassed people walking on the street. But everyone has dismissed him as basically harmless because of his military service and mental incompetence. He has often been to jail, but has been quickly released because he has not harmed anyone. The laws protecting the rights of the mentally handicapped do not include incarceration, and Larry has not commited any serious crime.

But lately his behavior has turned more nasty. He has accosted people without warning from behind cars and bushes and has done some vandalism. The community residents have become universally concerned and want him off the streets. The police admit he is a ticking psychological time bomb waiting for violence to happen, but are powerless to prevent his presence on the street until he actually commits a felony.

This example could be in any city. But the ethical question is, whose rights

should prevail in this situation and why? Larry is merely claiming his right as a citizen to be happy and free where he chooses. The community wants to feel safe and secure without a potential menace. What is the prominent philosophy you espouse for the resolution of this case? What would you propose as a citizen? Would you advocate any new laws, and if so what is the basis for your reasoning?