PART – I
This dissertation is organized into 8 chapters, besides, an Introduction and Conclusion. The first four chapters are grouped under Part I. They present various philosophies that have influenced education and, their merits and demerits. Next, we present certain dominant paradigms of the present day, which have come to be through some of these philosophies. We offer criticisms through citation of texts and/or logical, moral or ethical arguments.

Wisdom is not the preserve of a particular school of thought but is embodied by reasons that are convincing and efficacious for a line of argument. In keeping with the spirit of wisdom, we use reasonable ideas and arguments to support our thesis. Part I culminates in the proposition of an alternative educational model, the ACME or the ‘Anthropo-Centered Model of Education’.
CHAPTER I

COMPETING PHILOSOPHIES OF EDUCATION
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Every policy laden with educational meaning arises from some fundamental philosophical viewpoint (Peterson, 2001, p. 5). Whatever model of education we espouse, we can be sure that it is built upon a bedrock of philosophical principles. The major philosophies that have influenced education are Idealism, Naturalism, Thomistic Realism, Experimentalism, Existentialism, Philosophical Analysis and Postmodernism. The following is a brief outline of each of the above with regard to important educational questions on the nature of reality (metaphysics) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology).

1.1 IDEALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON EDUCATION: THE MIND ALONE

To the philosophical idealist, reality is composed only of the mind. It is the world of ideas that is the really real. All matter is just an illusion. Two fundamental principles are central in idealism:

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16 This first chapter lays out the topology of underlying philosophies. The book, *With All Your Mind*, by Michael Peterson, has been foundational for this chapter.

17 This thought is strongly echoed in Sankara’s dictum: *Brahma Satyam, Jagat Mitya, Jeevo Brahmaiva, Naa-para*, which means that the really real is in God alone; the creaturely soul perceives everything in a passing world that is subject to change. What is perceived, therefore, is not the absolute reality. The creature and the creator are one. This principle from ancient Indian philosophy has been very influential, and is also known as *advaita* or monism or non-duality.
(i) The human spirit takes precedence over all other entities; and
(ii) The essential reality of the universe is non-material.

Strange as it may sound at the outset, it has been held in some form or another by some of the great thinkers of the world like G.W. F. Hegel, George Berkeley and Immanuel Kant.\(^\text{18}\) Hegel would hold the view that there is absolutely nothing that remains beyond the reach of the mind. Give him a thesis, he will find the antithesis and finally create a synthesis to apprehend reality\(^\text{19}\). It is a dialectic process that proceeds in progression from one idea to another. Ideas are absolute and supreme for Hegel. Hegel has been accused of an ‘arrogance of reason.’ George Berkeley, the English philosopher, goes a step further and claims that the very existence of matter is a donation of the mind. He is famous for his dictum, “to be is to be perceived,”\(^\text{20}\) which means that thought is what contributes meaning to the objective world out there. For idealists, therefore, the world does not exist as objective entity by itself – it is only

\(^\text{18}\) In Hegel’s *Science of Logic* (1812–1814), he argued that finite qualities are not fully "real," because they depend on other finite qualities to determine them. Qualitative infinity, on the other hand, would be more self-determining, and hence would have a better claim to be called fully real. Hegel is considered the father of absolute idealism, whereas Berkeley subjective idealism and Kant, transcendental idealism.

\(^\text{19}\) The Hegelian Dialectic is a process that consists of three stages in the logical arrival at the truth: (a) the stage of affirmation or thesis; (b) the stage of negation or antithesis; and (c) the stage of synthesis, which is a union of the two earlier positions. See http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04770a.htm

\(^\text{20}\) Bishop George Berkeley predicated that “to be is to be perceived”, an affirmation that accords primacy to the mind, which perceives all reality. See http://www.britannica.com/topic/esse-est-percipi-doctrine
the mind that exists. It is important to note that the term ‘idealist’ here does not refer to the popular meaning of the term that qualifies a person with noble values but refers to a person who holds the primacy of ideas over matter. William Hocking declares that this philosophy is better called ‘ideaism’ rather than ‘idealism’ (Hocking, 1959, p. 152).

A direct implication of idealistic metaphysics is that the human person is essentially a spiritual or rational being (Peterson, 2001, p. 20). The human person is mind alone. The primacy of the mind is evident in the famous Cartesian Cogito, “I think. Therefore I am.”21 The human person is the *res cogitans*, or the “thinking thing.” Glimpses of this philosophical viewpoint are visible in ancient India. The *khandogya- upanishad* (quoted in Section 4.9) also gives precedence for the mind. The mind is seen as ether enclosed in the lotus of the heart, the palace, placed in the body, the city. Here the body counts for very less, as it can decay and is prone to passion and corruption. The Brahman is the essence of the human being – i.e., the mind – this is the idealist position and has been evident in ancient Indian scripture, where the primary ontic identity of the person is the mind.

In idealist metaphysics, the universe is made up of a super-mind (Brook & Stainton, 2001, p. 89) and humans are small parts of that super mind. There is only one mind. It may be understood through the following example: the truth that gravity attracts everything material to itself is a single idea, and it is understood by all people (minds) in the same manner. This suggests a commonality between all minds and by

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extrapolation, that there is a super mind that is the source of all knowledge.

For Immanuel Kant and other idealists, neither the body nor its physical attributes are relevant to the ultimate value of a human being (Peterson, 2001, p. 20). It is the soul or mind that truly constitutes our nature. Most Idealists say that the universe is a rational system (Peterson, 2001, p. 20), and argue that the rational structure of things in our sense experience is contributed by the structure of the mind (Kant, 1929, pp. 1-2). Kant’s ‘transcendental idealism’ proclaims that the human mind is the entity that makes meaning and is the unifying factor in all knowledge (Ziccardi, 2014, p. 15).

Historically, idealism came to the fore to fight skepticism²², which maintains that we cannot know anything with certainty. Idealism avows that we can successfully navigate the world of knowledge and acquire truth for the mind by internalization of deep convictions appropriated over a lifetime through exposure to real situations. Most idealists, including Kant, claim that there are universal and necessary truths anchored in consciousness, either human or divine (Peterson, 2001, p. 21).

The idealist theory of value (axiology) perfectly comports with the idealist view of reality (metaphysics) and knowledge (epistemology) (Peterson, 2001, p. 21). Idealists, take values to be absolute and eternal (unchanging). Kant articulates that these values originate in the structure of the rational mind and not in the infinite person of God (Peterson, 2001, p. 21). In the Kantian understanding, moral laws are grounded in the

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²² Scepticism essentially holds that certitude in knowledge is impossible. See http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/skepticism/
structure of rationality, they mean an objective absolute standard (Peterson, 2001, p. 21). He developed a general form of the moral law called “categorical imperative,” that demands our unconditional obedience and disregard of egocentric interests (Kant, 1969, pp. 38-39).

An act in accordance with moral law does not qualify it as moral for Kant – the motive must be proper, which is the “goodwill.” Sheer respect for duty is called the goodwill by Kant. This is problematic because it removes the motive of love in the moral act. Imagine that a friend is ill and is admitted to the hospital, and we go to visit him/her. Would that moral act arise out of duty towards our friend or because of love for our friend? Clearly, Kant would be in the former camp. Kant’s thesis of moral acts done from sheer duty’s sake breaks down. There is more than duty at work here. There is genuine concern about the interest of our friend and his/her welfare, his medical condition and indeed his survival.

Idealist ethics therefore have limited scope in understanding moral nature. In his book, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant maintains that God’s existence cannot be deduced through arguments of speculative theology (Peterson, 2001, p. 22), but that rationality must postulate God. This virtually reduces religion to morality (Peterson, 2001, p. 22). A Kantian thinker would say that the historical particulars of a religion like Christianity are not important and they can be reinterpreted or eliminated to provide primacy to the universal moral code (Kant, 1960, Book I). An example of this kind of abstraction could be the reduction of an ‘act of

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23 The goodwill is a will inspired by the thought of duty. See http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/
faith’ simply to an ‘optimistic outlook’ rather than trust in a benevolent, caring God.

Idealist axiology claims that an object, humanly or naturally occurring, is beautiful according to how well it expresses a transcendental ideal of beauty (Peterson, 2001, p. 22). Beauty is captured in art or sculpture if it reflects a larger ideal. Kant asserted that beauty is not particular and belonging to the eye of the beholder in a personal, subjective way, but that a thing, if called beautiful, must appeal to all humanity in an objective way.

The world is rational and purposeful according to many idealists. For them, the universe is deeply personal and loaded with meaning. In keeping with this view, the aim of education is to bring about the full intellectual and moral development of the student (Peterson, 2001, p. 23). Idealism professes an educational model that is overly intellectual, advancing only the cognitive element of the human being. It also misses out on important other dimensions of the person such as the affective, the conative, the embodied and the spiritual aspects of the human being. Idealist educational thinking thus lacks balance.

The idealist position of all reality being a donation of the mind is highly debatable. We generally make a distinction between the perceiver and the perceived, the world and the self, as distinct entities. Idealism

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24 Kant had written on the objective aspect in aesthetic judgment. Something is judged beautiful not because it is pleasurable to the beholder but that it would be judged so even by a disinterested person. Other conditions for something to qualify as aesthetic are the universal, the necessary and the purposive without purpose. See http://www.iep.utm.edu/kantaest/#SH2a
asserts that reality itself is somehow rooted in the processes of the mind. With great eloquence, Michael Peterson says: “By making all reality rely on mind one way or another, idealism devalues the external dimension of reality in which we find ourselves” (Peterson, 2001, p. 26). Such a view is very presumptuous of our own powers.

Another criticism of idealism is that it is designed to maintain the status quo (Peterson, 2001, p. 26). Idealists typically assert that values are ultimate. They do not emerge because of human will. Because idealists believe in unchanging absolute values (Urban, 1932, pp. 103-129), it tends to resist change and preserves traditions and the heritage of the past. The school then ceases to be a harbinger of change.

Departing from a different point, Rene Descartes also unwittingly contributed to a similar conception of the human person with his famous principle, “I think. Therefore, I am” (cogito ergo sum). Descartes was, as most of us are, a creature of his times. Skepticism was rife in Europe and suddenly, the certainty about God became questionable. He was looking for something like the Archimedean fulcrum, using which the whole universe could be turned. He found that in the only thing that could not be doubted – doubt itself, and made a creative use of doubt. That point of absolute certitude, or the ‘clear and distinct’ idea was found in the notion that he could doubt anything, but not doubt doubt itself. Since he was part of the one thing that was certain, he, the agent existed! And in answering the question, what am I, Descartes reached the clear and

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25 I think therefore I am (Latin: cogito ergo sum; French: je pense, donc je suis.) is the canonical formulation that does not arise in the Meditations First Philosophy. See http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes-epistemology/#4
distinct conclusion that I am ‘the thinking thing’ (Descartes, 1998, p. 69) or res cogitans. The anthropos was thus understood primarily in terms of just one dimension, i.e., his or her intellect or cognition. It became a strong paradigm and gave way to the great idealistic age, which was carried forward by Kant, Berkeley and others. We shall engage with more of Descartes in chapters 4 and 5.

1.2 NATURALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON EDUCATION: MATTER ALONE

Naturalism is the exact opposite of idealism. Matter is everything and nature is reality. God does not figure in the naturalist’s world. The cosmos are a closed self-existing system (Peterson, 2001, p. 28). The human being is a complex physical organism (Peterson, 2001, p. 28). The mind is a bio-chemical devise with processes in the brain and no room for reception of God. Human achievement and values are paramount. Death would mean personal extinction (Peterson, 2001, 28).

Naturalism, as a philosophical system, came to the fore in late 1600s in Europe, beginning with thoughts of Sir Francis Bacon. Naturalistic thought, as opposed to supernatural thought, became fashionable and seemed to provide an alternative to the troubled centuries when people fought each other over religious issues. Its proponents

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26 Francis Bacon, the English philosopher, originated the philosophy of naturalism, which holds that all reality can be deciphered by studying natural phenomena. He wrote *Novum Organum*, published in 1620, and is the developer of the *Instauratio Magna* (“Great Instauration”), a comprehensive plan to reorganize the sciences and to restore humanity to that mastery over nature, lost by the fall of Adam. See http://www.britannica.com/biography/Francis-Bacon-Viscount-Saint-Alban-Baron-Verulam

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include David Hume, Charles Darwin, Ernest Nagel and Richard Dawkins. Materialism is a kind of Naturalism, which professes that reality is the agglomeration of material components of the universe (Peterson, 2001, p. 28) and operates through cause-effect phenomena. The naturalistic belief that cause and effect govern the whole universe leads many to embrace determinism (Peterson, 2001, p. 28). Determinism holds that events within a given paradigm are bound by causality so that any state (of an object or event) is, to a large degree, determined by prior states. There is no or little room for human free will—there is total determinism (Peterson, 2001, p. 28). Evolutionary processes explain the change and development in the universe. There is no telos in the universe, which is to assert that there is no ultimate purpose and meaning to it. Jacques Monod states that the universe itself is “a game of pure chance”. Naturalists come together around a thought propounded by the astronomer, Carl Sagan: “The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be” (Sagan, 1980, p. 4).

According to Nagel, humanity is a relatively temporary and insignificant phenomenon in a microcosm of the cosmos. He has said: “Human destiny [is] an episode between two oblivions” (Nagel, 1960, p. 496). That would mean that we do not know where we come from or where we are going—human existence is thus trivialized by naturalist philosophers. The physiological and physical conditions for human existence will some day cease to exist. Julian Huxley gives a unique position to human beings (Huxley, 1944, pp. 7-27) among all the living beings in the world. That unique identity comes from the capacity for conceptual thought, use of speech and possession of a set of cumulative
traditions and customs (Peterson, 2001, 29). He also declares that there is no transcendent power over the order of nature.

The epistemological position of naturalism matches its metaphysical stance. Most naturalists embrace empiricism, which asserts that all knowledge enters the mind through the senses. Notable in this context is the famous idea of tabula rasa\textsuperscript{27} or the mind being a blank slate by John Locke, who maintains that there is nothing in the mind that did not come in through the senses. The goal of empiricism is to discover repeating patterns in nature and to codify them into generalizations representing scientific laws. The empirical method is the only method to gain knowledge according to such naturalists.

Naturalists generally embrace relativism with respect to all values (Peterson, 2001, p. 30). No value can be absolute. It gives rise to moral relativism. This is asking for chaos in the social universe. Imagine that we are driving a car and have reached a four-way intersection with traffic signals to regulate vehicular movement. Relativism would say that each driver can make his/her own judgment about negotiating the crossways. S/he jumps the light whenever s/he feels like doing so. Absolutism, on the contrary, would say that s/he wait for the turn to pass according to

\textsuperscript{27} ‘Tabula Rasa’ is Latin for ‘Blank Slate’, and was held by John Locke in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century. The Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, 1979 defines it as, “the mind in its hypothetical primary blank or empty state before receiving outside information.” However, the idea goes back to the 13\textsuperscript{th} century Scholasticism. Saint Thomas Aquinas and contemporaries held it as ‘\textit{nihil est in intellectu quod non erat in sensu}’, which means, ‘nothing is in the intellect, which was not before in the senses’. 

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rules of common good. Such a person observes discipline of traffic management in a complex, well-organized setup.

We see that if the human being is merely a product of the natural world, then impersonal nature is the sole ground of value, for what is perceived is only that which enters through the senses, i.e., nature. There is no transcendent dimension to life at all. How impoverished such a life would be since it does not have the reassurance of reality, which cannot be seen or touched, but is nonetheless reality, to be experienced by being open to the ‘more than’.

Those who hold the naturalistic philosophy contend that education should produce people who understand the realities of the material world (Peterson, 2001, p. 31). Students should know how to exercise rational control over their natural environment. Such education produces people who lead orderly lives, draw accurate conclusions from observing nature and the social universe, deal effectively with their environment and find a channel for self-expression (Peterson, 2001, p. 31). A scientific bent of mind is encouraged and instructional procedures are of a logical nature. A naturalistic orientation promotes a school curriculum focusing on the study of physical entities and their basic principles. The basic ideas of the cosmos are most clearly observed in the fields of the hard sciences like physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics (Peterson, 2001, p. 31). Mathematics is especially important because it is a symbolic language that deals precisely with quantities and relationships in the material realm. Philosophical naturalists assume that subjects like psychology and sociology are valuable so long as they are not given to speculation and focus on formulating statistical generalizations about human behavior.
based on hard data (Peterson, 2001, p. 32). Some naturalists would disallow these subjects by arguing that they do not depend on hard facts, and hence do not qualify as knowledge per se. Other naturalists however, give such subjects a place in the curriculum (Peterson, 2001, p. 31).

Since the tangible world is all there is for naturalists, and the senses are the medium through which knowledge enters the mind, subjects must have methods that use multi-sensorial approach to teaching and learning. So, classroom activity, field trips, projects and audio-visual learning are encouraged. Unlike the idealist teacher who leads by example, projecting a particular personality and character traits, the naturalist teacher does not impose his or her own viewpoint on the student, but creates conditions where the student discovers truths for the self (Peterson, 2001, pp. 32-33).

B. F. Skinner is a proponent of the naturalistic philosophy of education. He rejects the traditional concept that psychology is the study of the immaterial mind because anything that is non-material is unimportant. Instead, he considers psychology as the science of observable human behavior\textsuperscript{28}. Skinner recommends that education be based on the technology of behavior. The current educational practice displays many signs of behaviorist thinking: computer teaching is in fashion, performance measures are given to teachers, incentives are measurable and competency based teacher certification is widely practiced.

Behaviorist thinking of education means more than developing skills and imparting knowledge. It is a methodology that shapes the students’ whole character. Other naturalists are not neutral about values

\textsuperscript{28} http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/behaviorism/
and assert a general theory of value for the educational venture. Some say that moral education is to be carried out by looking at the natural world – for example, the virtue of patience (Peterson, 2001, p. 34) may be learnt by observing the time it takes for a seedling to sprout into a tree. Similarly, love in the family may be understood by observing birds which look after their young ones.

Naturalists emphasize sensorial interaction with the medium, like painting, in contrast to idealists, who emphasize abstract, intellectual understanding of art. The popular TV program for children called MAD (Music Art Design) on the Pogo Channel in India invites children to make small knick-knacks and toys for themselves using simple things like old plastic bottles, newspaper, glue, marbles etc. This is typically the naturalist’s method of instruction calling together all the senses to create something new and innovative.

Some naturalists are critical of modern education and press for a total revamp. Karl Marx, for example, considered the educational systems of modern capitalistic culture as instruments for perpetuating the status quo of socio-economic segregation (Peterson, 2001, p. 35). He envisioned the demise of capitalism and birth of socialism in all countries in a non-violent way. But history has witnessed the opposite.

There are a number of positive elements in the Naturalistic philosophy of education. It endorses the scientific method as the correct method for solving problems (Peterson, 2001, p. 36). Using sheer will power it sets out to face the difficult questions of the material universe with courage and determination. Yet, naturalism does not explain all of reality (Peterson, 2001, p. 36). It goes to idealism’s opposite extreme and
asserts that the mind is of no consequence; all that matters is the physical stuff the universe is made of. It is therefore a matter-centered philosophy.

In the naturalist’s philosophy, we see determinism of cause and effect as a fundamental principle. This leaves no room for free, responsible action. If everything is already determined through cause and effect, there is very little room left for freedom and responsible action. C. S. Lewis identifies a great irony in naturalistic philosophy: if naturalism is true, then the belief that it is true cannot be rationally held\textsuperscript{29} because that belief is forced rather than free (Peterson, 2001, p. 37).

Naturalism’s emphasis that empirical methods are the sole source of knowledge is absolutist. Metaphysics, theology and aesthetics are all disciplines that cannot be empirically valued and measured – yet they are a study of reality. For example, in the running of an organization, not everything is documented and explicit. Certain things are implicitly and tacitly understood. It is difficult to put a finger on the ultimate reasons for success of a firm – all that can be said is that there is something special about it. This over-reliance on empirical methods amounts to a kind of ‘intellectual imperialism’.

The merits of naturalism are not entirely clear because it does not explain the nature of value (axiology) anyway. Nagel believes that nothing is intrinsically good or evil (Peterson, 2001, p. 37). Values are simply tentative hypothesis that help guide decisions in self-interest. Also, “Metaphysically, it holds that non-empirical reality does not exist, epistemologically, it asserts that such realities cannot be known”

\textsuperscript{29} C. S. Lewis, \textit{Miracles}, 1946, chapter 3.
(Peterson, 2001, p. 38). Naturalism opposes any theological position that claims that there is a transcendent, supernatural God.

1.3 THOMISTIC REALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON EDUCATION: MIND AND MATTER

Saint Thomas Aquinas, a Catholic Dominican Priest of the 13th Century, produced a comprehensive Christian philosophy borrowing thoughts from the Greek Philosopher, Aristotle and combined it with Christian orthodoxy (Peterson, 2001, pp. 39-40). Aquinas’ metaphysics is based on the assertion that only individual things are real. This contradicts all forms of idealism. Idealism, as we have seen, holds that most real things are abstract rather than concrete. Aquinas expressed that a particular thing is real because it has existence and being (Peterson, 2001, p. 40). He calls it the ‘act of existing’ or the ‘act of being’ (Peterson, 2001, 40). Thomistic realism maintains that there is an objective world out there and there is subjective belief in each person. The intellect helps connect the two so that the belief must conform to objective reality.

Each thing has a definite nature that makes it the kind of thing it is. The universe contains mountains, seas, stars, plants, minerals, fish, people etc. The nature of any given thing is its essence, a combination of form and matter (Peterson, 2001, p. 40). A thing is completely defined by its existence and essence – that is the act of being united with a particular kind of nature. Aquinas has a hierarchical order of nature. A thing’s place in the hierarchy is dependent upon its proportion of actuality and potentiality. Actuality is the ‘portion of being’ accorded to a thing having a special kind of nature (Peterson, 2001, p. 40). Potentiality is the
capability to change in particular ways (Peterson, 2001, p. 40). Change occurs in the world when some potential within a thing becomes actual. What a thing can become is already in it as a potential. An actual child has the potential to become a mature person, but not a rock.

This hierarchy of creation has the following order: inorganic matter at the base level, then the plant kingdom, followed by the animal kingdom, going on to the human realm, and finally angels (Peterson, 2001, pp. 40-41). These are all finite beings. They are characterized by limitation and dependency, which means that there is always some unrealized potential within each of them. At the very top of this scale is God. For Aquinas, God has no matter, only form and is full actuality and no potentiality (Peterson, 2001, p. 41). He is the great “I AM” of Yahweh’s introduction of himself to Moses, seen in the book of Exodus. Ultimately, He is the source of all other existences.

The Thomistic worldview is one that has definite purpose, which means that the universe and everything in it is moving towards a destiny (Peterson, 2001, p. 41). Everything in the universe is moving to actualize its unique potential. Humanity has a special place in this motion. The traits of our physical nature are akin to those of the animal and plant kingdom, but our conative, cognitive and spiritual dimensions take us to our total personhood in relation to God.

The epistemology of Thomism is built upon its metaphysics. Since reality is a rationally apprehended system and the human person is by nature rational, humans are capable of understanding reality. Mortimer

30 The central aspects of the potential becoming actual are found in Saint Thomas Aquinas’ *Being and essence*, 2nd edition, 1968.
Adler says: “The human mind naturally tends to learn, acquire knowledge, just as the earth naturally tends to support vegetation” (Adler, 1942, p. 211). One to one correspondence with reality is truth for the Thomistic tradition. However, there are many kinds of truths. Sense experience leads to revisable, scientific knowledge and may be called empirical truths. Truths that are cognizable by the mind in everyday life lead to a certain kind of knowledge. These may be called abstract truths. And there is also intuition, or pure rational insight, which is unchangeable. It leaves its impression on a person as a deep conviction (for example, the realization of a call from the divine is too deep to express and resolutely affirms a person’s will). Such truths are far more important than empirically apprehended (scientific-sense) knowledge, which are revisable. Revelation can also help us apprehend truths that are not empirically graspable. An example would be the Trinitarian understanding of God. Aquinas believes that truths delivered by reason and revelation are compatible (Peterson, 2001, p. 42).

The Thomistic view of actuality and potentiality shapes its perspective on ethics and aesthetics. Just as human beings are attracted to truth, they are also drawn towards beauty and goodness. Attraction to the truth does not mean automatic compliance – there is falsehood and ugliness that one has to endure everywhere. However, there is potential for all human beings, waiting to emerge into actuality – that is when change for the better takes place. The task of the human person, who is moral and rational, is to understand the hierarchical pattern of things good and beautiful and to align his/her activities in synchrony with them.
Cognitive understanding of reality is the first step. The next one is to exercise the will to achieve that goodness. Morally, we are told “to do something,” but doing it is the challenge. According to Aquinas, the will can be trained to conform to the good. By consistently striving and acting on what we know to be good, we develop habits. These habits are inclinations or dispositions to act and react appropriately in certain circumstances. Cultivation of moral dispositions is called virtues by Aquinas (Peterson, 2001, p. 43). Although Aquinas recognizes an important level of morality to be realized by teaching, discussion and comportment, there is a deeper level of moral life that has to play itself out in everyday living. Virtues like justice and temperance and patience become a way of life (Saint Thomas Aquinas, 1948, pp. 586-589).

According to Jacques Maritain, the ultimate goal of education is to develop our essential nature as human beings (Maritain, 1943, pp. 1-2). And he considers the intellect to be the core of human nature and argues that education is primarily the nurturing of our mental powers (Peterson, 2001, pp. 44-45). We strongly disagree here. If mental powers are paramount, we would not have many intellectually strong individuals becoming educated terrorists, corrupt keepers of the law and Nobel Prize winners who are child molesters and white collar criminals. Intellect is not primary—the whole person is—all dimensions, the cognitive, corporeal, affective, conative and the spiritual have a share in forming the anthropos, and none can be underrated. An educational program that caters only to the intellect begets lopsided individuals. To explain ourselves simply through analogy, we could say that aiming to fashion the intellect in the human being, just one dimension, is like not eating a
balanced meal with all requisite food groups in it. There is disproportionate emphasis on the mind. In the clamor to gain intellectual ascendancy (mind) we may have left the heart (affective), the conscience (spiritual), the will (conative), the body, and the soul (spiritual) behind.

The conative element of the person can be developed by showing approval or disapproval, rewarding and punishing, delaying gratification, taking up small sacrifices for the other etc.

One objection to Thomism is that its purposive or teleological universe has no room for genuine freedom (Peterson, 2001, p. 46). Critics say that if everything is determined and moves towards a destiny, human choice is impossible. However, Aquinas argues that human nature is endowed with free will to act on the directives of the intellect. This means that human beings can do and undo things to change the course of their life. Free will also includes the liberty to go against the moral order (Peterson, 2001, p. 46).

Thomistic epistemology is on sounder footing than both idealism and naturalism as it recognizes both the empirical experience and the cognition of abstract truths rather than subscribing to only one of the two (Peterson, 2001, p. 47). Thomism also insists that there are universal, unchangeable values rooted in the stable and enduring nature of things. There is a relationship between the conceptual and the empirical, between the absolute and the relative (Peterson, 2001, p. 47). Through this, we find abstract and universal principles working in concrete life situations. Maritain hits the mark by saying that the idealist’s imitation of the absolute mind is “hopelessly romantic” and the naturalist’s conformity to nature is “utterly dehumanizing” (Peterson, 2001, p. 47). Maritain holds
that cultivation of the intellect for intelligent self-direction is the key to human dignity (Peterson, 2001, p. 48) as opposed to the naturalist’s view that humans are merely like animals living in groups and are capable of displaying desired behavior by right conditioning.

Some critics have pointed out that Thomists are given to the “callisthenic theory of learning” and the “spinach theory of education” (Peterson, 2001, p. 48). The former is like a situation where the student is given an intellectually demanding program of study and the teacher becomes the strict drill master. The spinach image suggests that there should be toughening of the will by self-discipline and the taking up of challenges, which are most distasteful for the student. This means that a student gets the greatest benefit out of subjects that are most disagreeable (Peterson, 2001, p. 48). Maritain is of the opposite view, and wants to encourage creative and free expressions of children because of sheer delight in learning that enables them to actualize their potentials (Peterson, 2001, p. 48). Maritain points out that the classroom should be learner-centered rather than teacher-centered. This is also the philosophy of the Montessori Method for children in kindergarten.

Thomistic moral theory stresses objective character of values, the need for rational perception of moral principles and the priority of developing virtues as the very core of life (Peterson, 2001, p. 49). Defenders of Thomism claim that genuine moral living is not just knowing abstractly about the good, but acting according to those principles to ultimately become a certain kind of person (Peterson, 2001, p. 49).
Thomistic realism asserts that there is an objective reality to which our beliefs must conform and that our intellectual processes are well suited for this purpose (Peterson, 2001, p. 52).

1.4 EXPERIMENTALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON EDUCATION: EXPERIENCE ALONE

John Dewey, the American philosopher, made a fundamental contribution to educational philosophy by emphasizing the importance of the practical element in education. Although Rousseau was credited to being the first to bring in the idea of vocational education by stressing the sharpening of the senses and use of the body and getting things done, it was Dewey who articulated that there should be an integrative approach to academic work, where learning happens when different subjects are simultaneously pulled together – for example, he called for teaching mathematics while cooking and engaging in carpentry and sewing. He advocated the co-mingling of ideas from different disciplines and having an integrated approach to education. A blending of theoretical and practical subjects was envisioned, besides, drawing parallels from the humanities to be applied in the sciences and vice-versa. Dewey calls this inter-ramification of subjects, ‘Cross-Fertilization’ (Dewey, 2009, p. 231). Teaching mathematics is not restricted to some abstraction, but is taught through everyday life examples with implications that are immediately apparent and those the student can relate to. Both Rousseau and Dewey de-emphasize books and leave it to the individual to use his or her ingenuity to find ways and means to solve the problem at hand, and thus gave birth to the idea of ‘learning by doing’. It brings the whole person
into the educational activity and offers the counter view to mere cognitive focus in education.

Experimentalism, also called pragmatism and instrumentalism, was in vogue in the early 20th Century with the work of Dewey. Experimentalism rejects any concept of a transcendent, ultimate reality (Peterson, 2001, p. 52). All traditional, other worldly views are based on faulty metaphysical assumptions, claims experimentalism. Experience is the only basis for this philosophy (Peterson, 2001, p. 52). Since experience is constantly changing, experimentalists think about how we can modify, adapt ourselves and control our environment. Whatever lies beyond immediate human experience is better left to itself. Faith has no place in Dewey’s cosmology. Dewey offers an experimentally oriented epistemology rather than an intellectually oriented one. Experience is the locus of reality and there is nothing like the objective world and the subjective belief like Thomism in Dewey’s philosophy. Knowledge is not an entity for passive reflection, but for active doing and managing in a world that is always in flux (Peterson, 2001, p. 53).

The collective experience of all human beings constitutes experience. The private inner feelings of isolated individuals are not experience for Dewey (Peterson, 2001, p. 53). According to Dewey, reality is in a state of continuous becoming. The real value of a hypothesis is understood when it is put into practice, and if it is practically effective, it can be verified to be true (Peterson, 2001, p. 53). Public consensus about what works or what best solves empirical problems is the only criterion of truth. According to experimentalism, we are all in a great dialectic with our world, where we make meaning out of everyday
events, arrive at conclusions and revise our ideas constantly as new experiences leave their impression on us (Peterson, 2001, p. 54).

Experimentalism applies scientific methodology to ethical and aesthetic experiences and does away with the view that moral and ethical absolutes are based on some eternal principle; instead, values must be grounded in experiences (Peterson, 2001, p. 54).

When we deal with the ethical question about what one should do, we need to ponder the ends of our actions. The dictum “what works is good” refers not just to individual good, but the good of the community. Actions that appear to bring the good to the individual may bring bad upon the community. Hence, they are not good after all. The final test of values is when they are tested in the environment, both social and material.

In aesthetics, it is the social and community experience that matters. A piece of art that is vivid to one person will not be labeled as aesthetic unless the larger community testifies to its ability to feel, inspire and produce change in values. For Dewey, the constant flux (Peterson, 2001, p. 53) of change in the community is the site where ultimate reality is to be found. We must locate our reality within the collective feelings, hopes, problems and pains of the community.

The school curriculum must represent the nature of reality in a world that is constantly changing. The purpose of schooling is not to impart knowledge that is unchanging and broken down into water tight compartments (Peterson, 2001, p. 56). The basic aim of schooling instead is to enable students to solve problems which confront them in their experience. Dewey encourages a curricular program of deep involvement
through procedure-oriented courses instead of being a spectator (Peterson, 2001, p. 56) in the classroom.

Instead of giving students pre-digested information, teachers should arouse their curiosity to motivate interest in study. The teacher discovers the interests of the student and builds upon it by invoking his / her curiosity. Dewey’s theory is problem-oriented, learner-centered (Ertmer, 2015, p. 5) and activity-based (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004, p. 141). The problems the student comes up against must be actively confronted. The learner must deeply involve with the topic s/he has selected, grasping its peculiarities as well as general skills of problem solving – that’s essential nature of ‘learning by doing’.

Dewey presses for value education, character building and cultivation of aesthetic taste, all within the context of community. There is an African proverb: “It takes a village to raise a child” (Clinton, 2006, p. xii). Dewey does not draw upon abstractions to teach children values, but lays emphasis on the creation and maintenance of the right environment for education. He calls education a social function and underlines the importance of the maintenance of a special environment. He predicated thus, “We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment” (Dewey, 2009, p. 19). Children should be in their own society, for example, the extended family of cousins and relatives helps children to grow socially. The problems and pressures of real life, with their interests and satisfactions, in addition to didactic classroom instruction can teach in superior ways.

Learning values also has a communitarian dimension in Dewey’s thought. For example, cooperation in society can be learnt on the
playground, where all players are given a chance to bat in a game of cricket, rather than only letting the bully monopolize the crease. Similarly, cooperative research with common goals can be taken up rather than engaging in splintered, competitive efforts (Radin, 1996, p. 172).

Dewey is for unity in the context of secular humanism, where the school is the grand melting pot, with people from all cultures, religions and walks of life come together to learn.

Experimentalists emphasize a pragmatic approach to life with democracy, human freedom and a progressive outlook. However, the experimentalist’s claim that the human being cannot grasp reality through the mind weakens its appeal (Peterson, 2001, p. 59). Dewey’s substitution of traditional basis for ultimate reality with the notion of ‘world as experienced’ (Peterson, 2001, p. 59) is just another new philosophy of old wine in new bottles. His naturalization of experience is nothing but Naturalism in a new guise. Experimentalists do not adequately confront the metaphysical issues that support their own position (Peterson, 2001, p. 59).

Truth, in the experimentalist’s position, is always relative and with reference to some individual or group (Peterson, 2001, p. 59). According to experimentalists, we cannot expect truths that are held in medieval times to be true for us today. William James puts it as, “True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot” (James, 1959, p. 201).

Experimentalism is on shaky ground when subjected to its own relativism (Peterson, 2001, p. 60). Because of its relativism, experimentalism is true for some and not for others. Similarly, the
abstraction of subjects like logic and higher mathematics are true regardless of their spatio-temporal context.

Experimentalist’s standard of morality is also suspect. What is immoral for one person may be the absolute standard for another. Although ethical codes and perspectives may differ among various people and groups, it does not follow that universal moral principles do not exist (Peterson, 2001, p. 60).

The educational implications of experimentalism are quite controversial. For example, nobody would deny that stirring the interest of the student and arousing his/her curiosity is a positive thing. However, it is disastrous to give students the impression that their desires are the centre of the educational enterprise, and that they are lords of the educational process (Sun & Joy, 2005, p. 622). This does nothing to rein in the selfish nature in students who will then be preoccupied with their own immediate needs and desires. Without the right guidance, students may fail to come to understand the larger perspectives of our world, life and history.

Also, problematic about experimentalist educational thinking is its core belief that the school is the ‘mirror of society’ (Peterson, 2001, p. 62) as well as an agent of change. The problem here is that society itself may have faulty values (Heine, 2010, p. 1423). For example, the media today is lurid with images that set the tone for sexual promiscuity and violence in the young unformed mind. Second, there are no means to check the hidden agenda of teachers who want to advance their own view about morality in the classroom.
Experimentalist philosophy denies the existence of God and understands all moral principles as relative.

1.5 EXISTENTIALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON EDUCATION: THE INDIVIDUAL

Existentialist thought does not accept absolute reality such as the idealist’s mind or the naturalist’s nature. They reject all concepts of a rationally ordered universe and shun all intellectual systems that seem to agree with them. All the existentialist asserts about reality is that there is the solitary individual, standing out to be heard. Existentialist thinking does not sympathize with social goals or shared experience – it is the individual that is paramount. Issues which have been considered objective have deep subjective significance and are influential in the individual’s search for meaning (Flynn, 2009, p. 11).

The French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, reverses the traditional metaphysical paradigm from “Essence precedes Existence,” to “Existence precedes Essence.” No human being ever had a say in taking birth – we are simply here on earth one fine day. From this starting point, we commence the long and patient work of understanding ourselves, of who we are, and what we will make of ourselves. Sartre says: “Man is nothing but what he makes of himself” (Sartre, 1975, p. 447).

Choosing who I am and what I will be is the inescapable burden of every person.31 The concept of choice is a definitive feature of Existentialism. Existentialist philosophers may be broadly divided into two categories: theistic existentialists and atheistic existentialists. Soren Kierkegaard saw Hegel’s philosophy of extreme rationality as limiting the

human condition, which is richly distinct in individuals and their personal stories; Kierkegaard is considered the father of ‘Existentialism’. Many philosophers like Gabriel Marcel, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Martin Buber etc. contributed greatly to existentialist thinking from a religious perspective. The atheistic group of existentialists are Jean Paul Sartre, Friedrich Nietzsche and Albert Camus among others.

Existentialist philosophy starts with the human being and the risky nature of his/her condition in the world because of the choices s/he makes and the inevitable consequences that follow. The aspect of free personal choice with responsibility is one of the most fundamental features of existentialist thought (Flynn, 2009, p. 11). What is emphasized is the objective knowledge of facts, quantity and data, just as in the scientific realm.

Traditional philosophy claims that social and behavioral sciences are now objectified like a physical science. Sartre, the existentialist, points out that such an approach is faulty—we can never know human beings like we know atoms and molecules at the elemental level. Truth has a different metaphysical meaning when compared to its traditional understanding. Traditionally, truth is the correspondence with the way things are (Thomistic Philosophy). For example, when a person testifies in court and gives evidence, s/he is speaking the truth if reality corresponds with his statement. However, Sartre would remark that a person is true when s/he has cast off sham and inauthentic nature (Flynn, 2006, p. 64) and has embarked on an earnest search for personal integrity (Peterson, 2001, p. 66). Essence is a question of meaning, which is not

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32 http://www.theartstory.org/definition-existentialism.htm
innately provided, but is rather achieved through a persevering quest for personal significance. Lived experiences are to be deciphered and interpreted. Meaning has to be derived by the individual.

Moral choices made by the individual are not based on absolutes because they take away our freedom. Existentialists see each ethical choice as an element in the larger context of one’s life (Peterson, 2001, p. 68). When we make choices, we are implicitly living out our own value system; the cumulative effect of our choices make us the person we become. Theistic existentialists look up to transcendent values although they cannot be objectively verified. Atheistic existentialists say that accepting to make decisions in a world marked by finitudes and limitations is the noblest and most heroic way of being human (Peterson, 2001, p. 67). They say that decisions ought to be made in the full awareness of one’s freedom and responsibility. Again, a very Sartrean idea!

The curriculum designed by existentialist philosophers for education is one that emphasizes freedom and responsibility in the student rather than the learning of objective truths of science, math and history. Sartre suggests that great literature and art for self-expression are vehicles for inculcating freedom and responsibility. Underscoring the importance of selfhood, he says: “Courses in the sciences, which deal with objective facts and quantifiable data, are of secondary importance to those courses that encourage growth of selfhood in the student” (Peterson, 2001, p. 67). Social sciences provide opportunities to react to important issues and problems. Courses in the existentialist curriculum are not static, but are in a process of dynamic interchange with the world where the student is
brought face to face with his or her own existence (Peterson, 2001, p. 68). There should be opportunity for self-knowledge, which leads to inward growth, besides the ability to take decisions and stand by them. Peterson (2001, p. 68) says: “One must appropriate knowledge for oneself”. This way, an individual will attain personal wholeness.

According to George Kneller, the Socratic Method (Kneller, 1958, pp. 134-135) is very useful for helping the student attain self-understanding. Learners must confront life’s hard questions in a personal manner with deep involvement. Sartre holds that character formation is aided by helping the student discover that s/he is the sole judge of what is valuable and disregard absolute values brought in by theistic metaphysics. Existentialism would predicate that development of the individual perspective in the student requires teachers to use a non-directive approach (Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 1995, p. 101) and offer an environment that is sensitive to individual feelings.

The individual is paramount—this awakens us to responsibility, which is good for us. On the other hand, it places too much in the hands of the individual, who is a law unto himself/herself. Reciprocal relationships (Peterson, 2001, p. 70) are not to be found in the existentialist scheme of things—there is no room for community feeling and sacrificing love for the other in existentialist thinking. Extreme forms of self-expression may lead to a rebellious nature and nihilism, which are a total disregard for traditions and customs that humanity has learnt over the centuries. For most existentialist individuals, values like self-control, self-correcting, self-denial and self-giving in relation to others are taboos (Peterson, 2001, p. 70). Absolute and total focus on the individual who is
disconnected with the heritage of humanity can send the wrong message to students about participating in our shared civilization and culture. It can lead to a worldview where the individual is the centre of the universe and plays God. This kind of monstrosity can develop sociopaths who arrogate all rights for themselves and have no concern for others.

Sartre would assert that the existentialist makes an important contribution on the need to struggle for personal meaning (Peterson, 2001, p. 71), and he is emphatic that the individual must appropriate knowledge for the self. Reason is not effectual in matters relating to God and religious commitment should be rooted in a passionate choice, conclude the theistic existentialists (Peterson, 2001, p. 71). Offering a negation to this, Michael Peterson says: “Although the recognition that there are limitations to reason is good in certain regards, a view that reason is impotent and ineffective in matter of faith excludes a vital human quality from one of the most important areas of life” (Peterson, 2001, p. 71). In searching for the intuitive dimension of religious life, some theistic existentialists consider faith a highly personal and subjective affair that must produce “personal truth” and “existential meaning” behind historical narratives or theological formulations (Peterson, 2001, p. 71). Faith is disconnected from valid faith traditions. On the other hand, atheistic existentialists look only to science and philosophy to make sense of the world. It is not a wonder that they are prone to meaninglessness because the world they investigate is created by a holy and loving God that science and philosophy cannot validate. Both camps of existentialists thus denigrate the life of simple faith.
1.6 PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS AND ITS IMPACT ON EDUCATION: ANALYSIS OF TEXTS

Analytic philosophers do not work on building philosophical premises, and thereafter draw educational goals from them. Analytic Philosophy works to clarify precise meanings of concepts, terms etc. by sorting the language used for philosophical discourse. The analyst, R. S Peters professes that the call of the analytic philosophers is to put their basic ideas “under the analytic guillotine” (Peters, 1966, p. 15). Analytical philosophers look at statements generated by other philosophies and subject them to scrutiny. For example, the proposal, “the school must provide an environment for holistic education of students,” would be of interest to analytic philosophers. They would seek to clarify terms like school, environment, holistic education etc.

Analytic philosophy can be grouped into two major clusters: ‘ideal language analysis’ and ‘ordinary language analysis’. Ludwig Wittgenstein is considered the pioneer of the ideal language project. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, he asserts the nature of philosophical analysis and the ideal language: analysis does not produce any new proposition, but seeks only to clarify existing propositions:

Philosophy is aimed at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity. A philosophical work consists primarily of elucidations. Philosophy does not consist in “philosophical propositions,” but rather in clarification of propositions. Without philosophy, thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and give them sharp boundaries (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 49).
He was critical of the use of ordinary language in philosophical discourse and claimed that such language is not useful in marking the sharp contours of thoughts. Logical positivism is an especially influential method of analysis. Positivists held that if a thought does not stand the scrutiny of the scientific method of empirical verification, it is meaningless (Ayer, 1966, p. 113ff). All thoughts about God, theology and ethics then become difficult to face. After its time in the early 20th century, logical positivism was superseded by the ordinary language approach.

Ordinary language analysts also followed Wittgenstein (later). Philosophers like Peter Strawson and John Wisdom assert that ordinary language is sufficient for human purposes; we simply need to understand its structure and functions better (Peterson, 2001, p. 74).

Analytical philosophers say that we need to clarify the ways in which we think and speak about educational matters. William Frankena claims that philosophy should map the overall logic of educational concerns. This conceptual mapping will help us understand various normative philosophies of education and equips us with clear, useful concepts for building our own philosophy of education (Frankena, 1965, pp. 7-9).

Analytic procedures improve educational philosophy by clarifying key terms and concepts, educational theories and the implications of philosophical statements (Peterson, 2001, p. 78). Analysis sharpens our logic and makes us more perspicacious, whereas the normative approach gives a more comprehensive vision of education (Soltis, 1978, p. 82).
Although analytical philosophers take a neutral stand in matters, there is a
tendency in most to subscribe to some primary philosophy or the other.

Faith cannot always be validated. When analytic philosophers
make their criterion too empirical, themes like the transcendent purpose of
life and the inherent worth of students as persons cannot be seriously
considered. As a technique to scrutinize matters of faith, analysis should
not be rejected outright because it helps develop an enlightened, well-
reasoned faith.

An interaction between the materialistic influence in education (part
of our thesis statement) and the Socratic Method, used below, are
highlighted in the dialog between Socrates (4th Century BC) and Cephalus
in Plato’s Republic. Socrates is the leading questioner, who acts ignorant,
and Cephalus is the thought partner from whom Socrates elicits logically
correct answers, occasionally adverting to analogies to show him that he
is in error. The conversation, between the two, discusses wealth in old
age. Socrates asks what is essential for old age. Cephalus initially seems
to say that upright moral values of a person make sure that old age is easy
to endure. But Socrates wants to probe further and articulates that old age
has been easy on Cephalus because he is wealthy and takes that for
granted. Socrates turns the argument around so that Cephalus finally
says: “to the good poor man, old age cannot be a light burden, nor can a
bad rich man ever have peace with himself,”33 which seems to be a truism,
and culmination of the Socratic interrogation. Wealth and materialism,
even for the philosopher Socrates, seem to be necessary to keep body and

33 Plato’s The republic, translated by Benjamin Jowett. Online eBook. See
classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html
soul together, although personally, Socrates has nothing but appreciation to give. Socrates says: “Money I have none, and therefore I pay in praise.”34 The foregoing is an example of analysis using the Socratic Method. This short elenchus has shown a materialistic tendency evident in intellectual circles in ancient Greece, and is a minor issue in our thesis statement.

1.7 POSTMODERNISM AND ITS IMPACT ON EDUCATION: RADICAL REINTERPRETATION OF TEXTS

Postmodernism grew as an influential philosophical school in the 20th Century with the work of Jacques Derrida. It basically holds that there are no objective realities and that all that the world calls reality is just what our language says it is. What we have are only linguistic descriptors that masquerade as reality (Peterson, 2001, p. 80). There is a serious disconnect between reality and our structures of language. If we can talk about any reality, it is only the use of language, which is very fluid (Peterson, 2001, p. 80). There is no ultimate truth because all meta-narratives have ceased to exist. Everything is relativized and norms that get established are simply those that the social or political powers want them to be. For postmodernists, even fables and stories of people without scientific basis are valid forms of knowledge (Peterson, 2001, p. 81).

If no theory has pre-eminence, how is that over centuries some theories have come to be dominant while others have not even seen the light of day? Postmodernists point to the political powers that have ruled and acquiesced to those theories at a particular time. In other words, it

34 Ibid
was simply due to the play of power that some theories have remained influential while others have perished.

Postmodernists want to expose this social power mechanism by deconstructing language systems (Abbinnett, 1998, p. 126). This disconnection between reality and language system is the stuff of deconstruction for Derrida.

Its epistemology is relativistic. There is no objective truth35. Its axiology matches its epistemological relativism. There is no absolute standard of beauty. What comes to be accepted as beautiful is because a particular social group in power pronounces it to be so. To counter the influence of this kind of power, Michel Foucault wants all students to be rebellious and think against the grain, and hence embraces anarchy (Peterson, 2001, p. 83). Interpretation of a piece of text is not what the author intended it to be, but the reader must develop meaning in interaction with his/her own expectations, projections and assumptions (Peterson, 2001, p. 84).

Students should not be taught by authoritarian teachers who claim to know the truth and are in charge of disseminating it. Like in existential philosophy, students are encouraged to make their own meaning and see and feel the truth for themselves (Peterson, 2001, pp. 84-85). Moral education for students is to encourage in them a feeling of personal anarchy, questioning the legitimacy of everyone and everything. Students are to live out their own narrative. This is brought about by an extreme obsession with one’s own ideas. A postmodern student is on the road to extreme self-possession. Nietzsche is probably the first post-modern

35 http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1908/mec/two4.htm
voice that spoke up claiming that we ought to put aside all social mores and norms and create norms for ourselves. Each one has a unique story to tell (Silverman, 2010, p. 1). Anarchy in the classroom is considered a radical theory of education.\footnote{Judith Suissa, ‘Anarchy in the classroom’. \textit{New humanist}, 14 June, 2007. See \url{https://newhumanist.org.uk/1288/anarchy-in-the-classroom}}

The author E. D. Hirsh (1964, pp. 244-52) had maintained that in literary works, the traditional way of scholarship was to understand the author’s own intention to communicate meaning but postmodernists simply reject that. This includes understanding the author’s cultural and social background, the political climate of his / her time, personal influences and worldview commitments etc. On the other hand, the postmodern student is told to deconstruct that literary work: how to uncover contradictions and reveal power hierarchies entrenched in texts. Deconstructing a text destroys meaning that the author wanted to communicate, and substitutes it with the interpretation of the student in a totally free way that appeals to him or her in the strongest manner.

To claim that knowledge is nothing but a linguistic construct is to deny that there is any truth at all. Posing the same wager to the postmodern thinkers reveals a great inconsistency in their philosophy: Is the postmodernist’s view of the failure of linguistic constructs all there is to the truth? If the postmodernist replies in the affirmative, s/he goes against his/her own dictum that there are no meta-narratives, while implicitly assuming one for the self. To be consistent, the postmodernist must agree that his/her own theory is just another system brought about by
the political power play of the times aimed at getting the upper hand for his/her point of view, while marginalizing all others.

The postmodernist’s rejection of grand narratives has one silver lining for all of us, and that is to be tentative about our claims of the truth. We ought not to be over-zealous for our own viewpoint but must admit that our own search for meaning and truth is progressive, fallible and partial.\(^{37}\)

In epistemology, the postmodernist reduces some exact sciences like mathematics, grammar, logic, physics etc. to mere matters of opinion. Postmodernism also fosters a lack of humility in students as they take up a portion for study. It breeds a sort of learnt arrogance and nihilism that disregards all foundations of historic knowledge.

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\(^{37}\) The *Internet encyclopaedia of philosophy* discusses the fallible nature of our truth claims. See Fallibilism in [http://www.iep.utm.edu/fallibil/](http://www.iep.utm.edu/fallibil/)