



Source: Hero Images/Getty Images

# 4

## Philosophy: Reflections on the Essence of Education

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading and studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1. List major philosophical questions associated with the three major branches of philosophy: metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology and describe different approaches to philosophical thinking. (InTASC 4: Content Knowledge)
2. Elaborate on the major tenets of idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism and relate philosophical concepts to teaching and learning. (InTASC 1: Learner Development; InTASC 3: Learning Environments; InTASC 8: Instructional Strategies)
3. Describe the characteristics of Eastern and Native North American ways of knowing. (InTASC 2: Learning Differences; InTASC 9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice)

## EDUCATION in the NEWS

### UK PARENTS WORRY SOCIAL MEDIA HINDERS KIDS' MORAL DEVELOPMENT

BY TRACI PEDERSEN

More than half of parents in the U.K. believe that popular social media sites, such as Facebook and Instagram, are hindering their children's moral development, according to a poll commissioned by researchers at the University of Birmingham.

The survey points to widespread parental anxieties regarding the influence of online networks on children as young as 11, who are often using the sites despite age limits.

The findings show that only 15 percent of parents think that popular social media sites offer a positive influence on young people's character. In contrast, 40 percent of parents said they were "concerned" or "extremely concerned" about the negative and potentially harmful impact of social media.

The U.K.-wide poll questioned over 1,700 parents of children aged 11 to 17. Researchers carried out this poll to investigate parents' perceptions around the influence of social media on children's character.

"There are some surprising findings in the poll, not the least the low level of agreement that social media can enhance or support a young person's character or moral development," said Dr. Blaire Morgan at the University of Birmingham.

Respondents pointed out a number of character strengths that they believed were lacking on social media: 24 percent said

forgiveness and self-control was least present, followed by honesty (21 percent), fairness (20 percent), and humility (18 percent).

However, a bleaker picture emerged when parents were asked to name the negative character traits, or vices, they saw on social media at least once a month: 60 percent of parents named anger and hostility as the most negative trait displayed, followed by arrogance (51 percent); ignorance (43 percent); bad judgment (41 percent); and hatred (36 percent).

Vanity, commonly perceived to be a major negative character trait in the "selfie" generation, came further down at ninth place in the league table of social media vices, comprising of 30 percent of respondents.

"Social media is not going away, so by learning more about this relationship we should be able to maximise the benefits of its use and avoid the pitfalls," said Morgan.

Although the negative aspects of social media got the most attention, the poll findings suggest some cause for optimism: 72 percent of responding parents said they saw content with a positive moral message at least once a day. (Of all responding parents, 93 percent said they were regular social media users.)

This figure is higher than the percentage of respondents who said they regularly saw negative moral messages, suggesting social media is not purely an environment for moral misconduct.

The top five character strengths promoted at least once a month on social media sites were identified as the following: humor (52 percent), appreciation of beauty (51 percent), creativity (44 percent), love (39 percent), and courage (39 percent).

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. UK parents cited anger, hostility, ignorance, bad judgment and hatred as vices that they saw at least once a month on social media. What classroom activity might you use that would help your learners recognize these negative traits within social media?

2. Philosophers study ethical behavior in light of big ideas such as goodness, justice, equity, and honesty. In what ways might you use social media to help students consider one or more of these big ideas?
3. Dr. Blaire Morgan contends that social media is not going away so parents and teachers need to maximize its benefits and avoid its pitfalls. How might you use media within your classroom so as to maximize its benefits?

Source: From UK Parents Worry Social Media Hinders Kids' Moral Development by copyright year © 2016. by PsychCentral.com. Reprinted with permission of The PsychCentral.com.

## STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY OF PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy provides a way to examine and interpret the world—to ask basic questions about human nature, beauty, principles of right and wrong, and how knowledge and reality are defined. Philosophical thinking helps to uncover the essentials—the basic principles that undergird teaching and learning.

The philosophical perspective is especially important because our personal philosophy of life is seldom explicit. Rather, philosophy resides in people's minds and hearts and is seldom expressed in words or specific ideas. Our personal philosophy becomes evident in the manner in which we respond to everyday problems and questions. The perspective of philosophy helps us to focus on the underlying issues and assumptions and beliefs that are not always evident to us in the hectic pace of contemporary life.

Because philosophy deals with underlying values and beliefs, it naturally pervades all aspects of education. The perspective of philosophy presents opposing views about human nature, knowledge, and the world in which we live. By examining these different, often opposing views, you will be able to identify your own philosophical position and state it in clear language and concepts.

Although philosophy can be defined in many different ways, it is best thought of as a passion to uncover and reflect on the underlying meaning of things. Derived from the Greek *philos*, which means "love," and *sophos*, which means "wisdom," the word *philosophy* means "love of wisdom." Early philosophers did not claim to be wise; rather, they viewed themselves as reflective thinkers in search of wisdom. To many contemporary philosophers, conveying information or wisdom is not as important as helping others in their own search for wisdom.

Education presupposes ideas and questions about the world in which we live, human nature, knowledge and how we know things, and ethics. Questions that focus on these big ideas are ultimately of a philosophical character. Teachers must constantly confront the underlying assumptions that guide conduct, determine values, and ultimately explain that which influences the direction of all existence. Philosophy reminds teachers to continue the search for truth and not be satisfied with pat answers, even answers that are provided by so-called experts. To a philosopher, an expert is not one who professes truth; an expert is one who searches, questions, and reflects. Hence, the study of philosophy is at the heart of education.

### The Branches of Philosophy

Philosophy includes branches that investigate large and difficult questions—questions about reality or being, about knowledge, and about goodness and beauty and living a good life. Throughout the centuries, entire branches of philosophy have evolved that specialize in and center on major questions. For example, questions about the nature of reality or existence are examined in metaphysics, questions about knowledge and truth are considered in epistemology, and questions about values and goodness are central to axiology.

**METAPHYSICS.** *Metaphysics* is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with questions about the nature of reality and the world in which we live. Literally, metaphysics means “beyond the physical.” It deals with such questions as “What is reality?” “What is existence?” and “Is the universe rationally designed or ultimately meaningless?” Metaphysics is a search for order and wholeness—a search applied not to particular items or experiences but to all reality and to all existence.

The questions in metaphysics, especially those about humanity and the universe, are extremely relevant to teachers and students of education. Theories about how the universe came to be and about what causes events in the universe are crucial if scholars are to interpret the physical sciences properly.

A teacher’s classroom approach will be linked to the teacher’s metaphysical beliefs. If, for example, the teacher believes that very specific basic knowledge is crucial to the child’s intellectual development, it is likely that this teacher will focus on the subject matter. If, on the other hand, the teacher holds that the child is more important than any specific subject matter, it is likely that this teacher will focus on the child and allow the child to provide clues as to how he or she should be instructed.

**EPISTEMOLOGY.** *Epistemology* is a branch of philosophy that examines questions about how and what we know. What knowledge is true, and how does knowledge take place? The epistemologist attempts to discover what is involved in the process of knowing: Is knowing a special sort of mental act? Is there a difference between knowledge and belief? Can people know anything beyond the objects with which their senses acquaint them? Does knowing make any difference to the object that is known?

Because epistemological questions deal with the essence of knowledge, they are central to education. Teachers must be able to assess what is knowledge to determine whether a particular piece of information should be included in the curriculum. How people know is of paramount importance to teachers because their beliefs about learning influence their classroom methods. Should teachers train students in scientific methods, deductive reasoning, or both? Should students study logic and fallacies or follow intuition? Teachers’ knowledge of how students learn influences how they will teach.

**AXIOLOGY.** *Axiology* is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of values. It includes such questions as “What is good?” and “What is beautiful?” Questions about what should be or what values we hold are highlighted in axiology. This study of values is divided into ethics (moral values and conduct) and aesthetics (values in the realm of beauty and art). Ethics deals with such questions as “What is the good life?” and “How should we behave?” One major question to be examined is “When does the end justify any means of achieving it?” Aesthetics deals with the theory of beauty and examines such questions as “Is art public and representative, or is it the product of private creative imagination?” Good citizenship, honesty, and correct human relations are all learned in schools. Sometimes these concepts are taught explicitly, but often students learn ethics from *who* the teacher is as well as from *what* the teacher says.

Both ethics and aesthetics are important issues in education. Should a system of ethics be taught in the public schools? If so, which system of ethics should be taught? Aesthetics questions in education involve deciding which artistic works should or should not be included in the curriculum and what kind of subject matter should be allowed or encouraged in a writing, drawing, or painting class. Should teachers compromise their own attitudes toward a piece of artwork if their opinion differs from that of a parent or a school board? Take a moment to consider the “Teaching in Challenging Times” feature regarding the complexities that surround teaching morals and values in public schools.

#### VIDEO NOTE 4.1



Teachers sometimes pose axiological questions as part of students reading. In this video, the teacher uses a lesson about character traits to pose questions about the nature of integrity. How might you pose axiological questions while teaching students academic content in your preferred grade level and subject area?

**Metaphysics:** A branch of philosophy that is concerned with questions about the nature of reality and the world in which we live.

**Epistemology:** A branch of philosophy that examines questions about how and what we know.

**Axiology:** A branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of values. It includes questions such as “What is good?” and “What is beautiful?”

## TEACHING IN CHALLENGING TIMES

### Teaching Morals and Values in Public School

So often we consider schools as a place where students learn to be good citizens. Even though this is a common assumption held by many, it is difficult to determine what values are the important ones. Living in a society that encourages diversity and free speech, the question of what values should be taught in public schools can be difficult to answer. Even more difficult is the question of how one would teach these values in a classroom setting.

One school of thought, influenced by the work of Lawrence Kohlberg (1981), suggests that there is a body of morals that spans all cultures. These morals can be taught through the use of dilemmas that children are asked to first consider and then discuss the reasoning behind their thinking. By so doing, students may develop increasingly more sophisticated understandings about the moral component of everyday dilemmas.

For example, a teacher could ask students to consider an incident on the playground where they witnessed her or his best friend laugh at another child because that child was obese. The teacher would then provide various responses to this event including, for example, reporting the incident to the teacher, talking directly to the friend, or ignoring the event. After students selected what action they would take, the teacher

would ask students to discuss why they chose their different responses. One reason that there is continued interest in having schools focus on developing morals is that children are faced with an increasingly more complex society and cannot be expected to simply absorb and develop values on their own.

In contrast to this emphasis on teaching values, there is another school of thought that rejects direct instruction of values on the grounds that democracy demands that its citizens be free to clarify their own sets of values. This school of thought, influenced by the ideas of Syd Simon's text *Values Clarification*, encourages teachers to refrain from direct instruction of morals and asks teachers to help students define their own sets of individually selected values. The teacher's role is to simply assist students in the clarification of the consequences of selecting any one set of morals or values.

#### WHAT ARE MY CHALLENGES?

1. What values could you defend as worthy for all students to acquire across different cultures, religions, and so on?
2. How would you approach the teaching of values if required to do so by your school district?

### Thinking as a Philosopher

Philosophy provides the tools people need to think clearly. As with any discipline, philosophy has a style of thinking as well as a set of terms and methodologies that distinguish it from other disciplines. Philosophers spend much of their energy developing symbols or terms that are both abstract (apply to many individual cases) and precise (distinguish clearly). Developing ideas that embrace more and more instances (abstraction) while maintaining a clear and accurate meaning (precision) is difficult, but this tension is at the heart of the philosopher's task. The entire process is what is meant by *understanding*: uncovering the underlying, the foundational, and the essential principles of reality.

There is great variety in the ways philosophers think. Hence, it is difficult to set forth a simple set of rules or thinking steps that can accurately be labeled philosophical thinking. To give you a sense of philosophical thinking, it is easier (and more accurate) to describe two different thinking styles that philosophers use interchangeably as they wrestle with large, unstructured questions. The first way of thinking can be labeled **analytic thinking**. Philosophers employ this style when they attempt to examine questions of the "what seems to be" type. A second philosophical style of thinking is called prophetic thinking. This style focuses on questions of the "what ought to be" type.

**ANALYTIC WAYS OF THINKING IN PHILOSOPHY.** When philosophers encounter a contemporary problem, they often spend time analyzing it in an attempt to clarify or find the "real" problem, not just the surface issues. To do so, philosophers use abstraction, imagination, generalization, and logic. These analytic thinking processes help focus the problem clearly and precisely.

**Abstraction.** The notion of **abstraction** covers a multitude of meanings. The word *abstract* is derived from the Latin verb *abstrahere*, meaning to "draw away." Abstraction, then, involves

**Analytic Thinking:** A philosophical thinking strategy that focuses on questions of the "what seems to be" type; includes abstractions, imagination, generalization, and logic.

**Abstraction:** A thought process that involves drawing away from experiences to a conceptual plane.

drawing away from a concrete level of experience to a conceptual plane of principles or ideas. The process of abstraction can be thought of as a three-step process that moves thinking from singular concrete instances to more general, universal ideas. The three steps involve (1) focusing attention on some feature within one's experience, (2) examining the precise characteristics of the feature, and (3) remembering the feature and its characteristics later so as to apply them to other instances or combine them with other ideas.

When teachers are asked to examine a new textbook series, for example, they will often be presented with promotional material about the important subject matter and learning tools that the series contains. The process of abstraction helps teachers pull away from the "bells and whistles" or the concrete examples in the text. Abstraction enables teachers to consider the underlying themes that are implicit and that provide a cohesive structure to the entire text series. Abstraction helps teachers uncover hidden messages.



#### VIDEO ANALYSIS 4.1

Watch a second-grade teacher use a graphic organizer to teach students how to abstract the underlying sequence that is used to play a game of dominos in the classroom. Then answer the question that follows the video in your Pearson eText.

**Imagination and Generalization.** According to Herbert G. Alexander (1987), the second step of analytic thinking is the use of imagination. **Imagination** can be thought of as the altering of abstractions. In philosophy, the use of imagination assists the process of abstraction by filling in the details of an idea, selecting details, and relating ideas to one another.

Imaginative explorations occur in many different ways. Usually, they occur when a person first focuses on some abstraction or idea. Ideas come when one makes observations, reflects about past experiences, reads, views a dramatic work or piece of art, or converses with others. Once ideas are selected, imaginative explorations can be made about them. Basic assumptions about things can be examined, arguments can be justified or clarified, and ideas can be distinguished from or related to other ideas. Experiential evidence, logical consistency, and a host of other criteria can be employed. The outcome of the whole imaginative process is the development of a system of ideas that has greater clarity and more interrelationships to other ideas or sets of propositions. This last step of the imaginative exploration process is sometimes referred to as generalization because it ultimately results in the development of a comprehensive set of ideas.

Generalization sets ranges and limits to the abstractions that have been altered by imagination. As one's imagination relates more and more ideas to one another, the process of generalization determines which relationships should be emphasized or de-emphasized.

When teachers consider new ways to support student motivation, they can use these same processes. For example, teachers often imagine different types of mathematics contests or science Olympiads that might spur students' interests. As they imaginatively apply these contests to the classroom setting, teachers might abstract the competitiveness component as a necessary aspect of contests and Olympiads. Teachers might then wonder about the hidden messages of winning at the expense of others' losses. Teachers might generalize that the competitive approach could bring about knowledge wars, knowledge contests might make students less willing to share what they know with others. To complete this inquiry, teachers need to use logic.

**Logic.** Philosophy deals with the nature of reasoning and has designated a set of principles called logic. **Logic** examines and proposes reasoning principles that allow us to move from one argument to the next. There are many types of logic, but the two most commonly studied are deductive and inductive logic. **Deduction** is a type of reasoning that moves from a general statement to a specific conclusion. **Induction** is a type of reasoning that moves in the opposite direction, from the particular instance to a general conclusion.

Philosophy provides tools that help people think clearly. It is important for educators to have a philosophy, both as a means of developing their ability to think clearly about what they do

**Imagination & Generalization:** A thought process that alters abstractions by filling in the details of an idea, focusing on these details, and using these details to relate ideas to one another.

**Logic:** A thought process that focuses on reasoning principles that us to move from one argument to the next.

**Deduction:** A logical type of logical reasoning that moves from a general statement to a specific conclusion.

**Induction:** A logical type of logical reasoning that moves from the particular instance to a general conclusion.

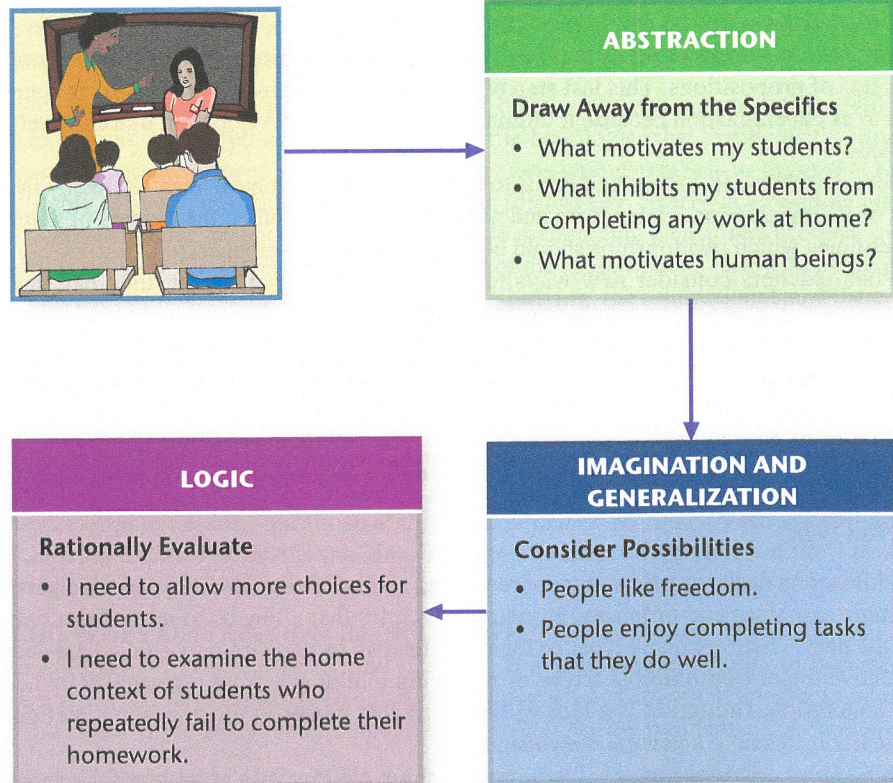
on a day-to-day basis and as a means of seeing how their workaday principles and values extend beyond the classroom to the whole of humanity and society. Figure 4.1 describes how analytic ways of thinking help teachers solve a classroom problem. Studying philosophy enables you to recognize the underlying assumptions and principles of things so you can determine what is significant.

**PROPHETIC WAYS OF THINKING IN PHILOSOPHY.** In contrast to the search for underlying universal principles that is the focus of an analytic way of thinking, **prophetic thinking** seeks to uncover multiple, even divergent realities or principles. Prophetic thinking has emerged as a counterpoint to the highly successful—but rigid—analytic thinking style. According to Cornel West (1993), a prophetic thinker is one who goes beyond abstraction. A prophetic thinker lives in multiple realities, feeling and touching these realities to such a degree that understanding is ultimately achieved. And a prophetic thinker understands multiple realities so well that bridges can be built between and among the multiple worlds. In his book *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times*, West identifies four basic components of prophetic thinking: discernment, connection, tracking hypocrisy, and hope. (Four Basic Components Of Prophetic Thinking: Discernment, Connection, Tracking Hypocrisy, And Hope from *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times*, Volume 1 by Cornel West. Published by Common Courage Press, © 1993.)

1. *Discernment.* Discernment is the capacity to develop a vision of “what should be” out of a sophisticated understanding of what has been and is. This first component of prophetic thought is quite different from the abstract approach of the analytic thinker. The prophetic thinker is more concerned with the concrete, specific aspects of reality. To discern a situation is to take the entire situation into account to get beyond abstract principles. A discerning teacher is one who sees beyond mere test scores, beyond simple classroom rules. A discerning teacher examines the total content of a child’s life and makes decisions based

**FIGURE 4.1 Analytic Ways of Thinking: Focus and Solve Problems Clearly and Precisely**  
Specific Problem Confronts a Teacher

“Why do some students in my classroom fail to complete their homework?”



**Prophetic Thinking:**

A thinking strategy that focuses on questions of the “what ought to be” type; includes discernment, connection, tracking hypocrisy, and hope.

on this content. An outsider could criticize a discerning teacher for bending rules or being inconsistent. Yet a prophetic thinker would applaud the teacher for being wise. The prophetic thinker is a bit of a historian, building the future on the best of the past and present.

2. *Connection.* A prophetic thinker must relate to or connect with others. Rather than considering humankind in the abstract, prophetic thinkers value and have empathy for other human beings. They show empathy, the capacity to get in contact with the anxieties and frustrations of others.

Many teachers really do care and work hard to help students. However, they are often unable to make the connection that would complete caring relations with their students. Teachers' willingness to empathize with students is often thwarted by society's desire to establish teaching on a firm scientific footing. But to students, the failure to connect means that teachers sometimes look as though they simply do not care. According to Nel Noddings (1993, 2005) both teachers and students have become victims in the search for the one best method of instruction.

3. *Tracking Hypocrisy.* Although the relationship between empathy and teaching is important, it is equally important for the prophetic teacher to identify and make known "the gap between principles and practice, between promise and performance, between rhetoric and reality" (West, 1993, p. 5). Tracking hypocrisy ought to be done in a self-critical rather than in a self-righteous manner. It takes boldness as well as courage to point out inconsistencies between school policies and practices, but when doing so, a prophetic teacher remains open to others' points of view. New evidence might reveal that one's position is no longer valid, or it might enhance one's original thinking. Figure 4.2 describes how prophetic ways of thinking help teachers solve a classroom problem.
4. *Hope.* The fourth and perhaps most important component of prophetic thought is simply hope. West admits that given the numerous and horrific examples of people's inhumanity to one another, it is hard to take hope seriously. Still, without it, all thought is meaningless. He says:

To talk about human hope is to engage in an audacious attempt to galvanize and energize, to inspire and to invigorate world-weary people. Because that is what we are. We are world-weary; we are tired. For some of us there are misanthropic skeletons hanging in our closet. And by misanthropic I mean the notion that we have given up on the capacity to do anything right; the capacity of human communities to solve any problem. (From *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times*, Volume 1 by Cornel West. Published by Common Courage Press, © 1993.)

West challenges educators to see "skeletons" as challenges, not as conclusions. Even when confronted with educators' failures at creating a better community of scholars, the prophetic teacher must remember that the world is unfinished, that the future is open ended, and that what teachers think and do can make a difference.

## Technology and Philosophy

Most of the time, we think of technology as a tool that helps us work efficiently or improve the quality of a product. Philosophers of technology take a broader look at technology by asking questions about the consequences that technology has on the physical and human condition. For

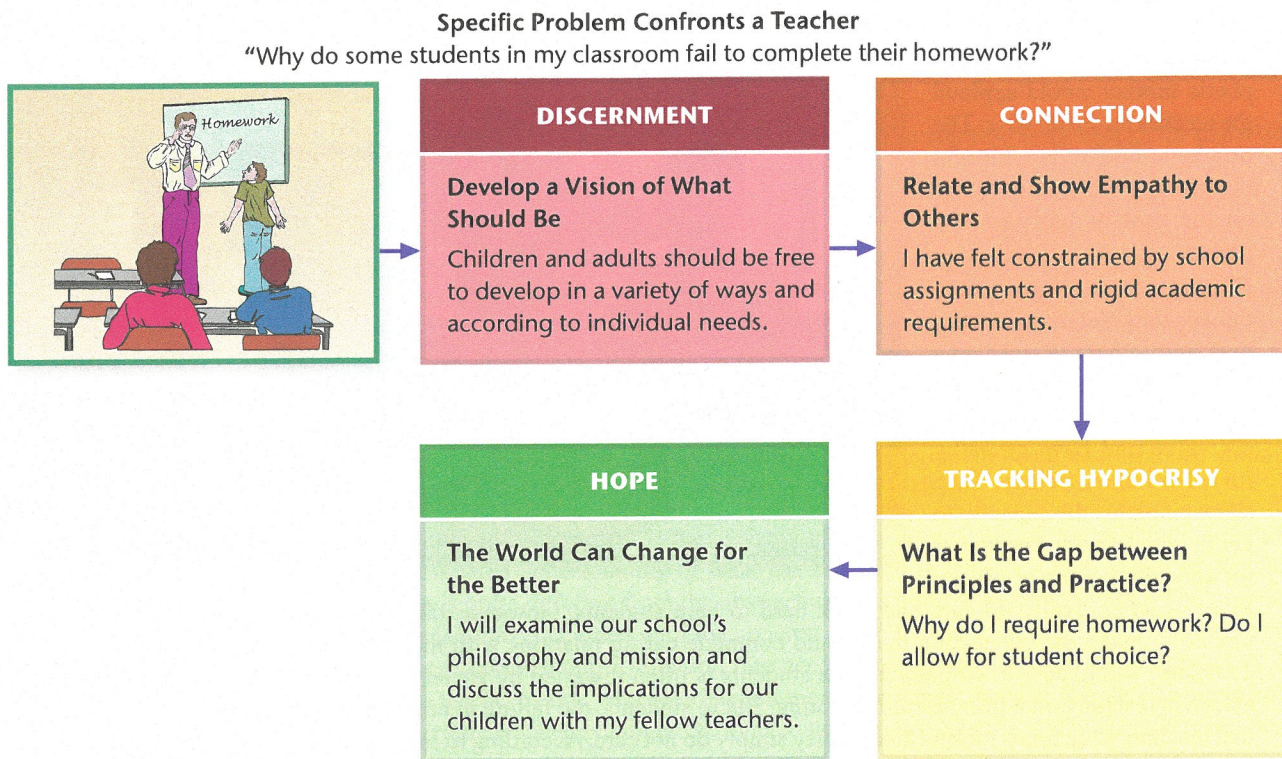


Source: Hero Images/Getty Images

Teacher and elementary students in laboratory. Teachers not only teach content but also find ways to help students seek connections to the world around them and apply ideas to their daily lives.



FIGURE 4.2 Prophetic Ways of Thinking: Uncover Multiple Realities or Principles



example, the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1993) believed technology provided the greatest danger yet the greatest possibility for humankind. Heidegger was concerned about technology because it has the power to present information by emphasizing the worth of an object while de-emphasizing its dangers. He called this power of technology *enframing*, and he was concerned that humans' ability to present things in a specific way could hide the actual essence of a thing.

With the release of new technologies increasing exponentially, other philosophers struggle to determine whether any one technology enhances or detracts from the essence of life and the natural order. Some philosophers contend that technology is developing so quickly that mankind no longer controls its direction. They contend that technology now has the power to develop autonomously because humans have become so dependent on it.

John Dewey considered technology a natural component of the changing world. Because change is natural, then technology is natural. The key is to use our rational minds and inquiry to determine the effects of a technology and use it in ways that enhance but do not detract from the needs of all members in society.

No matter what you may think about technology, it is here to stay. Using the analytic and prophetic tools of philosophy can help direct the use of technology in ways that nourish society and schools. By constantly asking broader questions and encouraging students to do the same, schools can provide a forum for controlling and encouraging the development of technology.

### The Teacher as Philosopher

Philosophic thinking can look daunting and out of reach. In our ever-expanding world, who has the time to reflect on such big ideas? Yet, when you consider that teachers are charged with the task of preparing students for life in this complex world, it would seem that they, more than any other member of society, are obligated to assume the role of philosopher. Even if teachers do not consciously reflect or discuss ideas about the nature of human existence, what knowledge is of most worth, how learning should be provided, and what values should direct behavior, they live

out their answers to these big questions. They answer these questions by the way they set up their classrooms, by the way they teach students, by the rules they impose, and by the way they relate to others. No teacher can escape the role of a philosopher because each lives out his or her personal philosophies every time he or she enters the classroom.

So, which is better? You can choose to ignore the need to reflect on your own views about the world, human nature, knowledge, and ethical behavior, or you can take the time to constantly examine these large questions and clarify your personal understanding. To do so takes courage because thinking about these bigger questions can sometimes clarify your own imperfections. Yet, is this not what learning is all about, constantly reconsidering what we do and how we do it in light of new information? Clearly the reflective teacher is a natural philosopher.

#### VIDEO NOTE 4.2



Teachers often think that philosophy is a subject that belongs to college-level learners. This video shows a different way of thinking about philosophy in the elementary classroom. In what ways do you think you could implement this approach to teaching philosophy to children?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tk\\_B32HtnWg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tk_B32HtnWg)

#### JOURNAL FOR REFLECTION 4.1

Classroom activities that deal with what is good (right) or evil (wrong) are in the realm of axiology. Prepare lists of the goods and the evils of the U.S. educational system. Then, propose recommendations for change that might counteract as many of the evils as possible.



#### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 4.1

Complete Check Your Understanding 4.1 to gauge your understanding of the concepts in this section.

## SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION

As philosophers attempt to answer questions, they develop answers that are clustered into different schools of thought. These schools of philosophical thought are somewhat contrived; they are merely labels developed by others who have attempted to show the similarities and differences among the many answers philosophers develop. As you examine the schools of thought described in this section, keep in mind that the individual philosophers who represent these schools are individual thinkers, like yourself, who do not limit their thinking to the characteristics of any one label or school of thought. The four well-known schools of thought that we discuss next are idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism. In addition to these, we will touch on Eastern thought and Native North American thought. Technically, these two final clusters of thought are not termed schools because they encompass greater diversity and often extend beyond the limits of philosophy into beliefs, customs, and group values.

### Idealism

Idealism's roots are found in the writings of Plato. **Idealism** is a school of philosophy that holds that ideas or concepts are the essence of all that is worth knowing. The physical world we know through our senses is only a manifestation or imperfect representation of the spiritual world. The spiritual world is everlasting and is not subject to change because it is perfect (metaphysics).

Idealists believe in the power of reasoning but de-emphasize both the scientific method and sense perception, which they hold suspect. Rather, idealists contend that the rational mind has the ability to reason its way to the underlying ideas that support the physical world. All that is necessary is for the individual, through introspection, to search for these universal ideas that are lodged deep in our minds (epistemology).

**Idealism:** A school of philosophy that considers ideas to be the only true reality. Physical entities are only shadows of the true reality.

Idealists search and value universal or absolute truths or ideas that remain constant throughout the centuries. Idealists contend that truth, goodness, and beauty transcend and connect all other ideas and, hence, they are important to all cultures and peoples. Idealists contend that values are unchanging because they underlie all aspects of existence and are perfect (axiology).

**EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF IDEALISM.** The educational philosophy of the idealist is idea centered rather than subject centered or child centered because the ideal, or the idea, is the foundation of all things. Knowledge is directed toward self-consciousness and self-direction and is centered in the growth of rational processes about big ideas. Some idealists note that the individual, who is created in God's image, has free will and that it is this free will that makes learning possible. The idealist believes that learning comes from within the individual rather than from without. Hence, real mental growth and spiritual growth do not occur until they are self-initiated.

***What Should We Teach?*** Idealists' educational beliefs include an emphasis on the study of ideas or great works that persist throughout the ages. They also emphasize the importance of great leaders as examples for us to imitate. For idealists, the teacher is the ideal model or example for the student. Teachers pass on the cultural heritage and the unchanging content of education, such as knowledge about great figures of the past, the humanities, and a rigorous curriculum.

***How Should We Teach?*** Idealists emphasize the methods of lecture, discussion, and imitation. They believe that thinking clearly and accurately is critical to uncovering the big ideas that account for the universe. So, there is an emphasis on asking questions that spark thought. No one philosopher is an idealist. Rather, philosophers answer questions, and some of their answers are similar. These similarities are what make up the different schools of philosophy. To describe adequately any one school of philosophy, such as idealism, one needs to go beyond these general similarities to examine the subtle differences posed by individual thinkers. Plato and Socrates, Immanuel Kant, and Jane Roland Martin represent different aspects of the idealist tradition.

***Matching Ideas from Philosophical Schools to Your Own.*** Studying the schools of philosophy can guide you in the development of your own philosophy of education. Throughout this chapter, simply jot down any ideas presented by a philosophical school (like idealism) that match your own. Then write down why these ideas make sense to you.

You will probably find that ideas from different philosophical schools match your own thinking. So keep track of the school that relates to each idea you select. Because you have just reviewed the ideas of idealism concerning what and how to teach, it would be wise to start recording your personal list based on these questions:

- What important knowledge and skills do I think should be taught?
- How should I teach these ideas and skills?

**PLATO AND SOCRATES.** According to Plato (427–347 BCE), truth is the central reality. Truth is perfect; it cannot, therefore, be found in the world of matter because the material world is both imperfect and constantly changing. Plato did not think that people create knowledge; rather, they discover it. In one of his dialogues, he conjectures that humanity once had true knowledge but lost it by being placed in a material body that distorts and corrupts that knowledge. Thus, humans have the arduous task of trying to remember what they once knew.

The modern world knows the philosophy of Socrates only through Plato, who wrote about him in a series of texts called *dialogues*. Socrates (470–399 BCE) spoke of himself as a midwife who found humans pregnant with knowledge—knowledge that had not been born or realized. This Socratic “Doctrine of Reminiscence” speaks directly to the role of the educator. Teachers need to question students in such a way as to help them remember what they have forgotten. In the dialogue *Meno*, Plato describes Socrates' meeting a slave boy and through skillful questions leading the boy to realize that he knows the Pythagorean theorem, even though he does not know that he knows it. This emphasis on bringing forth knowledge from students through artful questioning is sometimes called the Socratic method.

**IMMANUEL KANT.** The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), in the *Metaphysics of Morals and the Critique of Practical Reason*, spelled out his idealistic philosophy. Kant

believed in freedom, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. He wrote extensively on human reason and noted that the only way humankind can know things is through the process of reason. Hence, reality is not a thing unto itself but the interaction of reason and external sensations. Reason fits perceived objects into classes or categories according to similarities and differences. It is only through reason that we acquire knowledge of the world. Once again, it is the idea or the way that the mind works that precedes the understanding of reality.

**JANE ROLAND MARTIN.** Often labeled a feminist scholar, Jane Roland Martin (1929–) is a contemporary disciple of Plato’s dialogues. In *Reclaiming a Conversation*, Martin (1985) describes how women have historically been excluded from the “conversation” that constitutes Western educational thought. Martin advocates a return to Plato’s approach. Dialogues such as the *Apology*, the *Crito*, and the *Phaedo* illustrate educated persons—well-meaning people of good faith, people who trust and like one another, people who might even be called friends—getting together and trying to talk ideas through to a reasonable conclusion. They engage in conversation, learning something from one another and from the conversation itself.

For Martin, to be educated is to engage in a conversation that stretches back in time. Education is not simply something that occurs in a specific building at a specific time. Nor is it simply training or preparation for the next stage in life. Education is the development of the intellectual and moral habits, through the give-and-take of the conversation, that ultimately give “place and character to every human activity and utterance.” Education—the conversation—is the place where one comes to learn what it is to be a person.

**SOCRATIC DIALOGUE TO ENHANCE REFLECTIVE LEARNING.** The ancient philosophers Socrates and Plato believed that learning is best achieved through dialogue. When using Socratic dialogue, the teacher does not teach a subject by direct exposition. Instead, learners’ beliefs are challenged by the teacher through a series of questions that lead learners to reflect on their beliefs, induce general principles, and discover gaps and contradictions in their beliefs. Using this type of questioning strategy is difficult when attempting to teach precise mathematical, scientific relationships, so researchers set up a study in a science class to see if Socratic dialogue was effective in teaching science concepts (Kor, Self, & Tait, 2001).

In the Kor et al. (2001) study, students were asked to investigate a spring balance system on their own. The spring balance system models an experimental apparatus that verifies Archimedes’ principle in a physics laboratory. One group of students investigated the spring balance system with the help of a teacher who assumed the role of a Socratic tutor and who prescribed immediate and intelligent feedback based on the Socratic questioning method. A second group of students investigated the spring balance system with the help of a Socratic tutor as well as the assistance of an articulation tool that provided direct instruction about problems similar to the spring balance system problem. After both groups of students investigated the spring balance system, students were post-tested. Results showed that all students improved their understanding of Archimedes’ principle. However, students who received only the help of Socratic dialogue improved their understanding on a surface level and did not achieve a more abstract understanding of critical attributes. In contrast, students who were assisted by both Socratic dialogue and carefully structured problems significantly improved both surface level and abstract understanding concerning Archimedes’ principle.

This research shows that Socratic dialogue is an effective teaching tool even in science. When teachers guide the development of students’ understandings, learning occurs. However, when teachers wish to help students understand technical, abstract principles, Socratic dialogue needs to be enhanced by carefully structured, supporting problems that are designed to make explicit to the learner underlying critical entities that might be missed.

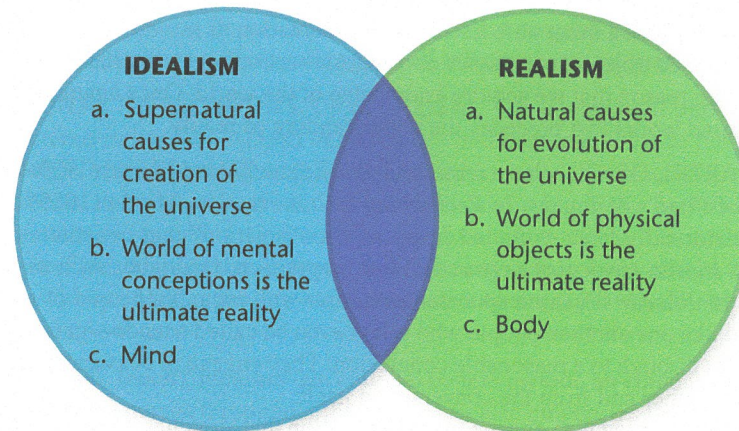
## Realism

Realism’s roots lie in the thinking of Aristotle. **Realism** is a school of philosophy that holds that reality, knowledge, and value exist independently of the human mind. In other words, realists reject the idealist notion that ideas are the ultimate reality. Figure 4.3 illustrates the dualistic positions of idealism and realism.

Every piece of the physical world is composed of matter. Matter takes on many forms or structures, and this is what accounts for the different components that compose the world.

**Realism:** A school of philosophy that holds that reality, knowledge, and value exist independently of the human mind. In contrast to the idealist, the realist contends that physical entities are the true reality.

FIGURE 4.3 Dualistic Positions of Idealism and Realism



The reason things look different from one another is due to the form that structures their matter (metaphysics).

Realists endorse the use of the senses and scientific investigation (reason) to find truth in the physical world. Knowing involves both sensation (taking in information through the senses) and abstraction (pulling out the underlying principles). By pulling out these underlying characteristics or principles, one can then classify things into different groups. Aristotle claims that the art of thinking well is to be able to distinguish things based on essential differences (epistemology).

Values and norms come from rights and responsibilities that derive from rational thinking. Because human beings have the ability to reason, their values and norms are those that are logical and consistent with the physical nature of the world. By studying the world logically, natural laws can be uncovered and values are derived from these natural laws (axiology).

**EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF REALISM.** Contemporary realists emphasize the importance of scientific research and development. Curriculum has reflected the impact of these realist thinkers through the appearance of standardized tests, serialized textbooks, and a specialized curriculum in which the disciplines are seen as separate areas of investigation.

**What Should We Teach?** Realists contend that the ultimate goal of education is advancement of human rationality. Schools can promote rationality by requiring students to study organized bodies of knowledge, by teaching methods of arriving at this knowledge, and by assisting students to reason critically through observation and experimentation. Teachers must have specific knowledge about a subject so that they can order it in such a way as to teach it rationally. They must also have a broad background to show relationships that exist among all fields of knowledge. Thus, the realist curriculum would be a subject-centered curriculum and would include natural science, social science, humanities, and instrumental subjects such as logic and inductive reasoning.

**How Should We Teach?** Realists place considerable importance on the role of the teacher in the educational process. The teacher should be a person who presents content in a systematic and organized way and should promote the idea that there are clearly defined criteria one can use in making judgments (axiology). Realist teachers would emphasize the importance of teaching students to use experimental and observational techniques. In the school setting, they would teach logical, clear content and clarify how things differ from one another by classifying them. Realists would support careful testing of students' knowledge.

**Matching Ideas from Realism to Your Own.** As noted earlier in this chapter, studying the schools of philosophy can guide you in the development of your own philosophy of education. As you review the educational implications for realism, you will see that there are similarities between what realists say is important and what idealists also say is important. What differs is that realists recognize that ideas change, whereas idealists contend that ideas remain the same. Therefore,

when it comes to teaching thinking skills, realists value experimental and observational thinking more than idealists would. Take time to reflect on realism and select from it what you think is worth teaching and how it should be taught.

Keep in mind that although we have described a number of general characteristics of realism, they can never fully capture the thinking of the individual philosophers who compose the school. It is important to examine the ideas of individual realist thinkers, Aristotle, Locke, and Whitehead.

**ARISTOTLE.** Aristotle (384–322 BCE) thought that ideas (forms) are found through the study of the world of matter. He believed that one could acquire knowledge of ideas or forms by investigating matter. To understand an object, one must understand its absolute form, which is unchanging. To the realist, the trees of the forest exist whether or not there is a human mind to perceive them. This is an example of an independent reality. Although the idea of a flower can exist without matter, matter cannot exist without form. Hence, each tulip shares universal properties with every other tulip and every other flower. However, the particular properties of a tulip differentiate it from all other flowers. Aristotle’s writings are known for their analytic approach. In contrast to Plato, whose writings are in the form of a conversation, Aristotle took great care to write with precision.

**JOHN LOCKE.** John Locke (1632–1704) believed in the *tabula rasa* (blank tablet) view of the mind. Locke stated that the mind of a person is blank at birth and that the person’s sensory experiences make impressions on this blank tablet. Locke distinguished between sense data and the objects they represent. The objects, or things people know, are independent of the mind or the knower insofar as thought refers to them and not merely to sense data. Ideas (round, square, tall) represent objects. Locke claimed that primary qualities (such as shapes) represent the world, whereas secondary qualities (such as colors) have a basis in the world but do not represent it.

The little or almost insensible impressions on our tender infancies have very important and lasting consequences: and there it is, as in the fountains of some rivers, where a gentle application of the hand turns the flexible waters into channels, that make them at first, in the source, they receive different tendencies, and arrive at last at very remote and distant places.

I imagine the minds of children as easily turned, this or that way, as water itself; and though this be the principal part and our main care should be about the inside yet the clay cottage is not to be neglected. (From *The Works of John Locke*, Volume 5 by John Locke. Published by W. Otridge and Son, © 1812.)

**ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD.** Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947), a philosopher and mathematician, attempted to reconcile some conflicting tenets of idealism and realism. He proposed “process” to be the central aspect of realism. Unlike Locke, Whitehead did not see objective reality and subjective mind as separate. He saw them as an organic unity that operates by its own principles. The universe is characterized by patterns, and these patterns can be verified and analyzed through mathematics.

Culture is activity of thought and receptiveness to beauty and humane feelings. Scraps of information have nothing to do with it . . . In training a child to activity of thought, above all things we must beware of what I will call “inert ideas”—that is to say, ideas that are merely received into the mind without being used, or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations.

In the history of education, the most striking phenomenon is the schools of learning, which at one epoch are alive with a ferment of genius, in a succeeding generation exhibit merely pedantry and routine. The reason is that they are overlaid with inert ideas. Education with inert ideas is not only useless: it is, above all things, harmful—*Corruptio optimi, pessima*. (From *The Aims of Education & Other Essays* by Alfred North Whitehead. Published by Free Press, © 1929.)

#### VIDEO ANALYSIS 4.2



Watch this video, which shows a teacher presenting a concept lesson about rectangles, area, and perimeter. Take note of ways the teacher’s instructional emphasis on concepts match the philosophy of Idealism and note the ways the teacher’s problem-solving approach match the philosophy of realism. Then answer the questions that follow the video in your Pearson eText.

## Pragmatism

Pragmatism's roots come from the thinking of a number of nineteenth-century American philosophers including Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914), William James (1842–1910), and John Dewey (1859–1952). **Pragmatism** is a process philosophy that stresses evolving and change rather than being. It differs from most forms of idealism and realism by a belief in an open universe that is dynamic, evolving, and in a state of becoming. There are no unchanging ideas (idealism) nor are there universal laws (realism). Because the underlying principle that explains the universe is change, many pragmatists claim that a metaphysical foundation for their thinking is unverifiable.

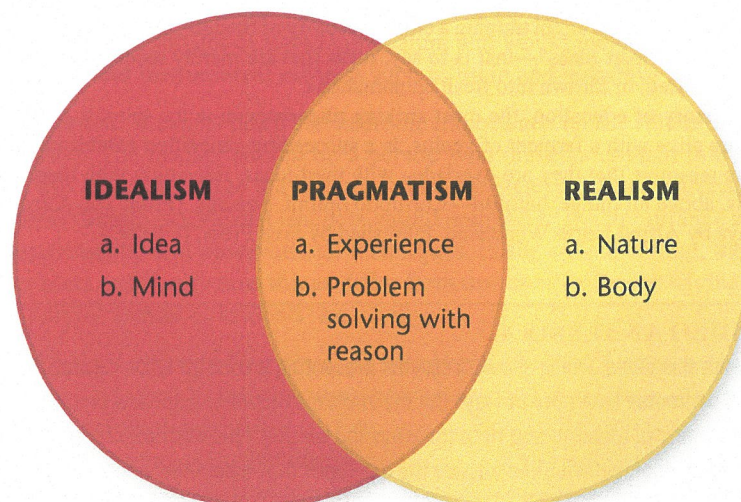
Because change is so important, pragmatists place a great deal of emphasis on the importance of understanding what it means to know. To the pragmatist, knowing is a transaction or a conversation between the learner and the environment. This transaction or conversation between learner and environment alters or changes both the learner and the world. Like the realist, the pragmatist believes that we learn best through experience, but pragmatists believe that the experience changes both the knower and the world. Whereas realists are concerned with passing organized bodies of knowledge from one generation to the next, pragmatists stress applying knowledge—that is, using ideas as instruments for problem solving (epistemology).

Wedded as they are to change and adaptation, pragmatists do not believe in absolute and unchanging truth or values. Because we live in a constantly changing universe, values change too. What contributes to personal and social growth is the only underlying principle. We can clarify values by testing them and reconstructing them as needed. Values that work at one time or in one place or in one society might not work in another (axiology).

**EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF PRAGMATISM.** Pragmatists stress the changing nature of reality. There are no absolutes and hence the teacher needs to help students learn to question what is and solve problems as they naturally occur. Realists and idealists call for a curriculum centered on academic disciplines, but pragmatists prefer a curriculum that draws the disciplines together to solve problems—an interdisciplinary approach. Pragmatists emphasize that truth is found in the real world, which is always changing. So, it is critical to present concepts as they relate to contemporary problems and questions. Figure 4.4 illustrates the relationships among realism, idealism, and pragmatism.

*What Should We Teach?* Because the world is always in flux, knowledge is subject to revision, so it is more important to know how to construct, use, and test knowledge claims. For pragmatists, the most important thing to know is how to question what we know and how to reconstruct what we know to match the changing world. Therefore, pragmatists are less interested in transmitting

FIGURE 4.4 Relationship of Realism, Idealism, and Pragmatism



**Pragmatism:** A late nineteenth-century U.S. school of philosophy that stresses becoming rather than being.

large bodies of information; rather, they favor solving problems through interacting with the environment in an intelligent and reflective manner. Teaching students to use methods of scientific inquiry is a high priority.

**How Should We Teach?** Pragmatists view the school as a community of learners. Cultural diversity enriches society just as physical diversity enriches the universe. So, schools should use integrated and democratic teaching and learning approaches. Because the process of problem solving is more important than teaching specific subject matter, pragmatists prefer the use of learner-centered problems as a teaching focus. Facilitating student investigations and activities, providing technology and other resources, and encouraging students to collaborate as a learning community are the key characteristics of a worthy teaching approach.

**Matching Ideas from Pragmatism to Your Own.** Now take a moment to record the key ideas from pragmatism that match your own. You will find that pragmatism has components of both idealism and realism. For example, pragmatists value the development of theories or ideas (like idealism); they also note that ideas change and are subject to experimental and observational techniques (like realism). However, pragmatists contend that there are no underlying principles that account for the world other than the concept of change. This notion is not held by either realists or idealists.

**CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE.** Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) is one of the earliest pragmatist thinkers. He introduced the principle that belief is a habit of action undertaken to overcome indecisiveness. He believed that the purpose of thought is to produce action and that the meaning of a thought is the collection of results of actions. For example, to say that steel is “hard” is to mean that when the operation of scratch testing is performed on steel, it will not be scratched by most substances. The aims of Peirce’s pragmatic method are to supply a procedure for constructing and clarifying meanings and to facilitate communication.

**JOHN DEWEY.** Early in his philosophical development, John Dewey (1859–1952) related pragmatism to evolution by explaining that human beings are creatures who have to adapt to one another and to their environments. Dewey viewed life as a series of overlapping and interpenetrating experiences and situations, each of which has its own complete identity. The primary unit of life is the individual experience.

Dewey wrote the following passage early in his career. In it he shows his zeal for education as a social force in human affairs.

I believe that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. This process begins unconsciously almost at birth, and is continually shaping the individual’s powers, saturating his consciousness, forming his habits, training his ideas, and arousing his feelings and emotions.

In sum, I believe that the individual is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual factor from society, we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass. (From “My Pedagogic Creed”, by John Dewey in *School Journal*, Volume 54, pp. 77–80. Published by E.L. Kellogg, © 1897.)

**RICHARD RORTY.** Richard Rorty (1931–2007) was a contemporary pragmatist philosopher who spent much of his life reinventing the work of John Dewey in light of the chaotic, ever-changing nature of the world. Rorty contended that reality is not fixed, and it is the task of thinkers to come up with a procedure for correctly describing the nature of reality. He argued that reality is the outcome of inquiry, and as human inquiry shifts, so too will the nature of what we call *real*. Rorty contended that different disciplines have different avenues for studying the world and therefore these avenues of inquiry create different realities. The way an artist looks at the world and creates a work of art and the way a chemist looks at the world and develops a new way of looking at molecules both affect the very nature of what *is*. Essential to this point of view is the understanding that disciplines such as science, mathematics, art, and history are not rooted in a fixed reality but are constructed by groups of people who are trying to make sense of the world. Hence, disciplines are arbitrary contrivances, and one discipline is as good as another. Also, because disciplines are created by persons, they are subject to all the foibles, limitations, and prejudices of any human convention.

Although Rorty did not speak directly to the field of education, his work provides a significant challenge to teachers. No longer can teachers represent expert knowledge as accurate or as



true. Rather, expert knowledge is the current agreement of scholars at this point in time. Expert knowledge is simply a set of ideas and procedures that have been found to be useful. Rorty contended that a thinker should no longer be represented as a discoverer; rather, a thinker is more of a maker or cobbler who crafts meaning. People come together, agree on certain things, and then try to talk or reason their way to a sensible conclusion. Expertise is more a matter of “usefulness” than truth.

## Existentialism

One way of understanding the heart of existentialism is to ponder a quote from Jean-Paul Sartre: “Existence precedes essence.” **Existentialism** contends that reality is nothing more than lived existence and the final reality resides within each individual. There is nothing absolute, not even change. There is no ultimate principle or meaning.

Existentialists believe that we live an alien, meaningless existence on a small planet in an unimportant galaxy in an indifferent universe. Each individual is the creator of her or his essence; each individual is the creator of her or his meaning. Whereas some people might be paralyzed by this view, existentialists are energized by their quest to clarify their identity and create meaning. You might say that the very meaninglessness of life compels us to instill life with meaning (metaphysics).

To existentialists, knowing is a personal reflective process. Existentialists accept the usefulness of scientific knowledge about the physical and psychological world, but they contend that this knowledge is limited. The most significant knowledge is personal and nonscientific. Knowledge is about the human condition and the personal choices that each human makes (epistemology).

The key value for the existentialist is that human beings are free to make choices. However, this freedom is wrapped up in a search for meaning. We define ourselves; that is, we make meaning in our world by the choices we make. In effect, we are what we choose. We can choose to give up our freedom and allow others to define us or we can choose to be inner directed and authentic (axiology).

**EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF EXISTENTIALISM.** The existentialist believes that most schools, like other corporate symbols, de-emphasize the individual and the relationship between the teacher and the student. Existentialists claim that when educators attempt to predict the behavior of students, they turn individuals into objects to be measured, quantified, and processed. Existentialists tend to feel that tracking, measurement, and standardization militate against the creation of opportunities for self-direction and personal choice.

**What Should We Teach?** According to the existentialist, education ought to be a process of developing a free, self-actualizing person—a process centered on the feelings of the student. Therefore, proper education does not start with the nature of the world and with humankind but with the human individual or self. At school, students should be encouraged to discuss their lives and the choices they are making. Because we all live in the same meaningless predicament, we can learn by asking questions of one another, suggesting answers to concerns, and engaging in dialogue.

**How Should We Teach?** The existentialist educator would be a free personality engaged in projects that treat students as free personalities. The highest educational goal is to search for oneself. Teachers and students experience existential crises; each such crisis involves an examination of oneself and one’s life purposes. Education helps to fill in the gaps with understanding that the student needs in order to fulfill those purposes; it is not a mold to which the student must be fitted. Students define themselves by their choices.

The existentialist student would have a questioning attitude and would be involved in a continuing search for self and for the reasons for existence. The existentialist teacher would help students become what they themselves want to become, not what outside forces such as society, other teachers, or parents want them to become.

### Existentialism:

A school of philosophy that focuses on the importance of the individual rather than on external standards.



#### VIDEO ANALYSIS 4.3

Watch how the teacher carefully distinguishes between facts and opinions. Then answer the question that follows the video in your Pearson eText.

**Matching Ideas from Existentialism to Your Own.** The ideas of existentialism are more difficult to apply to education in that they focus so much on the individual development of a person rather than on the transmittal of ideas and concepts about the world. However, existentialism does provide a perspective about the importance of responding to individual ways of thinking and understanding that is not evident in realism, idealism, or pragmatism. So, take a moment to consider the ideas of existentialism and those that match your own. Then write down why these ideas make sense to you. Remember to organize your personal list based on these questions:

- What important knowledge and skills do I think should be taught?
- How should I teach these ideas and skills?

Existentialist thinkers are as varied as the notions of individual thought and self-defined meaning would suggest. There are atheistic existentialists as represented by Jean-Paul Sartre, critical existentialists as exemplified by Friedrich Nietzsche, and humanistic existentialists such as Maxine Greene.

**JEAN-PAUL SARTRE.** Modern existentialism was born amidst the pain and disillusionment of World War II. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) broke with previous philosophers and asserted that existence (being) comes before essence (meaning).

Sartre saw no difference between being free and being human. This view opens great possibilities, yet it also creates feelings of dread and nausea as one recognizes the reality of nonbeing and death as well as the great responsibilities that accompany such radical freedom to shape oneself out of one's choices. The process of answering the question "Who are we?" begins at a crucial event in the lives of young people called the existential moment—that point somewhere toward the end of youth when individuals realize for the first time that they exist as independent agents.

**FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE.** Friedrich Nietzsche<sup>1</sup> (1844–1900) was an existential philosopher who stressed the importance of the individuality of persons. Throughout his writings, Nietzsche indicts the supremacy of herd values in modern democratic social systems. He criticizes the way social systems such as modern educational institutions foster a spirit of capitalistic greed. When Nietzsche turns his attention primarily to social systems, human beings are portrayed much more as victims of social dynamics than as inferior or superior beings.

In Nietzsche's texts there is a strategy to liberate people from the oppression of feeling inferior within themselves, a teaching of how not to judge what one is in relation to what one should be. Although Nietzsche did not author a comprehensive teaching methodology, he teaches how to cultivate a healthy love of self-care, a taste for solitude, literacy as a vital capacity, and an overall gratitude for one's existence (Sassone, 2002). Nietzsche observed that most teachers and parents

hammer even into children that what matters is something quite different: the salvation of the soul, the service of the state, the advancement of science, or the accumulation of reputation and possessions, all as the means of doing service to mankind as a whole; while the requirements of the individual, his great and small needs within the twenty-four hours of the day, are to be regarded as something contemptible or a matter of indifference. (From *Human, All too Human*. Published by Friedrich Nietzsche.)

**MAXINE GREENE.** A theme that permeates most of Maxine Greene's work is her unyielding faith in human beings' willingness to build and transcend their lived worlds. To Greene (1917–), philosophy is a deeply personal and aesthetic experience. Her writing blurs the distinction between philosophy and literature. This is appropriate because Greene contends that living is philosophy. Greene (1988) asserts that schools must be places that offer "an authentic public space where diverse human beings can appear before one another as best they know to be."

The existentialist philosophy is one that supports the importance of humans developing their personal identities and determining what is and is not significant and worthy. In the preceding quote, Maxine Green states that schools are a place where diverse human beings can appear before others as they authentically see themselves.

Many schools have policies about personal attire. The "Differing Perspectives" feature explores the issue of requiring teachers to wear business attire in the classroom. Given that schools should be a place where diverse human beings can appear as they authentically see themselves, what is your perspective on this issue?

<sup>1</sup>This section on the writings of Nietzsche was developed in 2008 by Dr. Leslie Sassone from the Foundations of Education at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb Illinois.

## DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

### SHOULD TEACHERS WEAR BUSINESS ATTIRE TO SCHOOL?

School districts differ in their policies regarding what type of attire teachers must wear. Because clothing is often considered a symbol of one's identity, the issue of wearing business attire is controversial.

#### YES

**Ray Waters** teaches English at Gulf Breeze High School in Gulf Breeze, Florida.

If educators want to be paid and treated as professionals, we should carry ourselves as professionals. An already tarnished image of public education is further sullied by teachers who choose to enter a classroom dressed for a day at the beach or for yard work.

Business attire in the classroom portrays an image of an educator who is proud of the work he or she does. What degree of respect can teachers expect to receive if they don't dress like adult role models intent on providing the very best education for their students? Would a doctor see patients in shorts and a T-shirt? Would an attorney enter a courtroom with flip-flops and Capri pants? Would a businessperson attend a corporate board meeting in a warm-up suit?

Our school, as with most high schools, has theme days—pep rally Fridays and homecoming week—when casual, or even bizarre, dress is encouraged. However, when the “fun” is over, school administrators should ensure that the faculty dress appropriately for the classroom. The job of an administrator is to create a culture at a school that accepts nothing short of the most professional behavior. Appropriate dress is not the only quality of professionalism, but it is the most conspicuous.

Evaluation instruments should include sections on professional dress. Warm-up suits, jeans, Birkenstocks, T-shirts, and Hawaiian print shirts are the daily attire of a few members of our faculty. High school students are mature enough to see hypocrisy. If students are required to meet an appropriate standard of dress, why aren't educators?

If educators are ever to enjoy the respect of the public and the compensation we deserve, let's start with something we can control. Let's outwardly show our pride in our profession by implementing dress codes for teachers.

#### NO

**Eileen Elrod** is a guidance counselor for Grayson County Schools in Virginia.

Form follows function and never is that more true than in defining “professional attire” in a school setting. Our duties are as varied as our job descriptions and attire must follow accordingly.

I will not forget the day I smugly walked down the hall after breakfast duty, proudly wearing my new dress pants and blouse, only to look down to see the label from a student's breakfast syrup container stuck to my pants. I've also learned that the red paint used in lower grades bonds permanently to better clothing.

My vest of bright green fabric depicting construction tractors might not portray the most professional air, but it stimulates children to talk. The merits of each tractor and brand have been described at length by even the quietest child. These were students who had been shy and uncertain of themselves. The vest got them talking.

Weaving dog and cat buttons into my shoelaces would not make a favorable impression in the corporate world, but it entertains young children who sit on the rug for a story.

My winter coat must lie either on a chair or on the floor because no closet or coat rack is available. Even those fortunate enough to have closets find them so full the doors won't close. Therefore, we wear washable work jackets.

I allow school spirit to override stereotyped professionalism when I wear the sweatshirts that are gifts from the wrestling team and coach. The gift of popular clothing is priceless and wearing these items tells team members, “You are important.”

When choosing how we will dress our primary thought must be for our children and the tasks we do. We should not select clothing to make a fashion statement. Clothing is part of our curriculum.

#### WHAT IS YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON THIS ISSUE?

Source: From “Should Teachers Wear Business Attire to School?”. Copyright © 2006 by NEA Today.

### The Dynamic Relationship of Philosophy and Education

We have carefully discussed four different schools of philosophy and shown how they influence teaching and learning. Educational philosophy develops from the application of philosophy to classroom life. The way curriculum is organized, the manner in which instruction is delivered, the character of school environments, and the processes used in testing and grading are informed by the philosophical views held by educators, parents, and legislators. Such views vary greatly among school districts and states.

Table 4.1 compares the answers that idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism provide when you use the concepts that underlie each of these philosophies and apply them to educational questions. As you examine this table, you will notice that two of the philosophies are categorized as teacher centered. The reason for this is that because one applies realism and idealism

TABLE 4.1

## Educational Implications of Philosophy

| Educational Questions                                   | TEACHER-CENTERED PHILOSOPHIES  |   | STUDENT-CENTERED PHILOSOPHIES   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
|   | Idealism   | Realism   | Pragmatism  | Existentialism  |
| What should students learn?<br>(metaphysics)            | Big ideas that remain important throughout time: intellectual history, literature, philosophy, mathematics | Ideas that result from careful investigations about the physical world: science, technology, engineering, mathematics | Change is constant and what we know is learned through inquiry that involves human interaction in society | Existence is the only constant and what is learned is determined by the unique needs of individuals |
| What is the proper curriculum goal?<br>(human nature)   | The same big ideas should be understood and appreciated by all   | Mastery of the laws of the universe   | Ongoing creation of new ideas about the physical and social world based on the unending process of change | Personal freedom and development for each individual  |
| What is the proper teaching approach?<br>(epistemology) | Teaching for understanding of key ideas: lecture, discussion, questioning                                  | Teaching for mastery of information and skills: demonstration, inquiry, critical thinking                             | Teaching for problem solving through inquiry projects, hands-on learning, product development             | Teaching for meaning: Individual exploration, discovery methods, and authentic pedagogy             |
| How should character development occur?<br>(axiology)   | Imitation of exemplars, heroes   | Training in rules of conduct that relate to ethical inquiry   | Group decision making in light of consequences  | Development of individual responsibility for decisions and preferences                              |

to educational questions, the answers they provide tend to be teacher centered. In this context, *teacher centered* means that the responsibility for learning weighs heavily on the teacher rather than the student. The student is more of a receiver of knowledge and the teacher is the provider.

On the other hand, the answers provided by pragmatism and existentialism are categorized as student centered. The reason for this is that as one applies the idea of pragmatism and existentialism to education, the responsibility for learning falls on the learner's shoulders. The learner is more active in creating the learned knowledge, and the teacher is more of a coach or mentor who helps the learner create her or his knowledge and skills.

Take a moment to consider how a classroom would look if it were guided by the ideas of a single philosophical school. You will find that by doing this for each of the four philosophies, your image of classroom life will look and feel quite different.

### JOURNAL FOR REFLECTION 4.2

Now that you have developed a list of those ideas from each of the classical philosophical schools that match your own, write a paragraph that analyzes which philosophies tend to include the most similarities and the fewest to your own thinking.



#### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 4.2

Complete Check Your Understanding 4.2 to gauge your understanding of the concepts in this section.

## EASTERN AND NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN WAYS OF KNOWING

Most studies of Western philosophy typically begin with the Greek philosophers. Yet there is evidence that Platonic philosophy owed much of its development to Eastern thinkers who emphasized the illusory quality of the physical world. In addition, native peoples from many lands have developed a way of thinking about life and education that extends and reorganizes the writing of Western thinkers. To ignore such ways of knowing would violate the very nature of philosophy, which, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, is a search for truth.

### Eastern Ways of Knowing

Although there are differences among the writings of the Far Eastern and Near Eastern philosophers, **Eastern ways of knowing**, as a group, stress inner peace, tranquility, attitudinal development, and mysticism. In general, Eastern ways of knowing emphasize order, regularity, and patience that are both proportional to and in harmony with the laws of nature.

Western philosophy tends to emphasize logic and materialism; Eastern ways of knowing, on the other hand, stress the inner rather than the outer world, intuition rather than sense, and mysticism rather than scientific discoveries. Western philosophers tend to begin with the outer, material world and abstract to concepts and underlying principles; Eastern ways of knowing begin with the inner world and then reach to the outer world of phenomena.

It is sometimes charged that Eastern ways of knowing are not philosophies but religions. Because the Eastern ways of knowing have such early beginnings and maintain a strong bent toward the spiritual side of nature, their stories maintain a language of gods and goddesses, much like Greek mythology. Unlike the Greeks, who tried to separate philosophy from religion, Eastern thinkers intertwined religious doctrines with philosophical views about the nature of the world and humans' interactions with it.

Eastern thinkers have always concerned themselves with education, which they view as a way of achieving wisdom, maintaining family structure, establishing law, and providing for social and economic concerns. Instruction includes the things that one must do to achieve the good life, and education is viewed as necessary not only for this life but also for achievement of the good life hereafter.

One good reason to study Eastern ways of knowing is that they offer vantage points from which to examine Western thought. Eastern ideas encourage one to seriously question the Western world's most basic commitments to science, materialism, and reason. Although we could analyze many more different types of Eastern thinking, we focus here on the ideas of the Far East or Eastern Asia, including India, China, and Japan, because of their long, relatively stable traditions, enormous land area, and immense population. Consider the implications that Eastern ways of knowing have for curriculum in the "Perspectives on Diversity" feature.

**INDIAN THOUGHT.** Far Eastern Indian thought has a long, complex history and is permeated by opposites. To Western philosophers, opposites need to be reconciled, but to the Eastern mind, this need for consistency is unimportant. For example, great emphasis is placed on a search for wisdom, but this does not mean a rejection of worldly pleasures. Although speculation is emphasized, it has a practical character. Far Eastern Indian thinkers insist that knowledge be used to improve both social and communal life and that people should live according to their ideals. In Far Eastern Indian thought, there is a prevailing sense of universal moral justice, according to which individuals are responsible for what they are and what they become (Ozman & Craver, 2008).

**CHINESE THOUGHT.** The emphasis of Far Eastern Chinese philosophy is on harmony; correct thinking should help one achieve harmony with life. This harmony of government, business, and family should then lead toward a higher synthesis. Confucianism and Taoism provide two major contexts for Chinese thought.

For more than two thousand years, Confucian thought has influenced education, government, and culture in China. Confucius (551–479 BCE) believed that people need standards for all of life, so rules were developed for a wide range of activities. Confucian thought gives education a high place but stresses building moral character more than merely teaching skills or imparting information. This moral approach has a practical component. Children should obey and defer to parents and respect the wisdom adults have gained in their journey through life. Following these

**Eastern Ways of Knowing:** A varied set of ideas, beliefs, and values from the Far and Near East that stresses inner peace, tranquility, attitudinal development, and mysticism.

## PERSPECTIVES on DIVERSITY

### Curriculum and Eastern Ways of Knowing

Chi Mae Lin was thrilled to find out that she had been selected to participate in the curriculum committee at her rural high school in southern Nevada. She had been working as a Junior–Senior English teacher for only two years, and she knew that this appointment was a sign that her teaching and professional conduct were making a difference in the minds of her colleagues. At the first meeting, committee members were asked to develop required reading lists for specific courses in an effort to keep the curriculum current and compatible with academic standards. Chi Mae was asked to prepare the reading list for Junior English.

After reviewing the current required reading list, Chi Mae noticed that all of the readings were written by American and European authors. So, she selected two new readings, one written by an author from Japan and another written by an author from Tibet. Her rationale for this change was based on the importance of expanding the students' perspectives about the nature of the world and humans' relationship to it.

On the day that Chi Mae made this proposal to the curriculum committee, she was surprised to find that the committee members

were unimpressed with her selection—in fact, the committee's response to her proposal seemed to generate hostility rather than debate. One committee member, with a rising voice, shouted at her: "Why did you select two authors from the Middle East? Don't you know you are working with rural students living in the United States? The original documents are translations and were not even written in English."

#### WHAT IS YOUR PERSPECTIVE?

1. Why do you think Chi Mae thought that the Japanese and Tibetan authors might expand students' perspectives about the nature of the world?
2. What did the committee member mean by reminding Chi Mae that she was working with rural students in the United States?
3. In what way would ideas from a piece of literature written in a different language offer students a new perspective?
4. Would it have been better if Chi Mae had suggested writings that were originally written in English by an American author with a Japanese or Tibetan background? Why or why not?

principles enables children to become *chun-tzu*, persons distinguished by faithfulness, diligence, and modesty.

The central concept of Taoism is that of the *Tao*, meaning "the Way" or "the Path." The Tao is the way the universe moves, the way of perfection and harmony. It is conformity with nature. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the Tao is letting things alone, not forcing personal desires onto the natural course of events. It is a noncompetitive approach to life. Taoists believe that conflict and war represent basic failures in society, for they bring ruin to states and disrespect for life.

**JAPANESE THOUGHT.** Japanese thought is rooted in Shinto, a way of thinking that recognizes the significance of the natural world. This respect for all nature permeates Japanese thought and life. Shinto accepts the phenomenal world (the world people apprehend through their senses) as absolute; this acceptance leads to a disposition to place greater emphasis on intuitive, sensible, concrete events rather than on universal ideas. On the social level, the Japanese express this focus on the natural world through many artifacts, including the patterns of traditional kimonos. Within the house, flowers are arranged in vases and dwarf trees placed in alcoves, flowers and birds are engraved on lintels, and nature scenes are painted on sliding screens.

**EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF EASTERN WAYS OF KNOWING.** Eastern educational thought places great emphasis on the teacher–student relationship. Change springs from this relationship; that is, the student is changed as a result of contact with the guru, master, or prophet. Eastern educational thought emphasizes transformation: The individual must be transformed to face life. Attitude shaping is important because the attitude a person holds toward life will determine the individual's levels of goodness and wisdom.

A recurring educational aim in Eastern ways of knowing is to put humanity in tune with nature. There is great emphasis on observing nature and learning through wanderings and pilgrimages. The importance of achieving wisdom, *satori*, enlightenment, or nirvana is supreme. All paths must lead to this, and from this wisdom spring virtue, right living, and correct behavior.

**NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN WAYS OF KNOWING.** Just as the rich past and diverse cultures make it difficult to summarize Eastern thought, Native North American ways of knowing are equally difficult to synthesize. **Native North American ways of knowing** include a varied set of beliefs, positions, and customs that span the different tribes in North America. These beliefs, positions, and customs center on the relationship of humans to all of nature, including the earth, the sun, the sky, and beyond. Because Native North American ways of knowing center on the relationship of humans to all of nature, it is sometimes difficult to separate knowing from a way of life. In fact, to understand is to live and to develop an ever closer, more profound human-to-nature relationship. The types of relationships and the symbols that inform these human-to-nature relationships differ widely among tribes.

Although Native North American ways of knowing differ across the 400-plus tribes in North America, these ways of knowing do have similar elements. They all include traditional stories and beliefs that dictate a way of knowing and living. All include a reverence for nature and a sense of humans' responsibility to nature. And all groups make reference to a supreme being—although the names are different, the relationships vary, and the expectations of some supreme beings are interpreted through natural elements. Thus, the Black Hills are sacred to the Lakota, the turtle is revered as Mother Earth by the Ojibwa, and so on. Native North American ways of knowing are orally developed rather than written. Hence, they change slightly from age to age. Additionally, the ways of knowing are subject to interpretation by the shaman, or holy one.

### Native North American Ways of Knowing:

A varied set of beliefs, philosophical positions, and customs that span the different tribes in North America and is anchored in a reverence for nature and a sense of humans' responsibility to nature.

**NAVAJO THOUGHT: HARMONY AND INNER FORMS.** The Navajo nation is the largest Native North American tribe in the United States. The Navajos' early history was nomadic, and their thoughts and customs are known for their unique ability to assimilate with and adapt to the thought and customs of other tribes. As with most Native North American cultures, the Navajo universe is an all-inclusive unity viewed as an orderly system of interrelated elements. At the basis of Navajo teachings and traditions is the value of a life lived in harmony with the natural world. Such a view enables one to "walk in beauty." To understand the Navajo worldview, one must note the teachings of the "inner forms" of things. These inner forms were set in place by First Man and First Woman. The concept of inner form is similar to the concept of a spirit or soul; without it, the Navajos say, the outer forms would be dead (Wilson, 1994a).



Source: Paul Chesley/The Image Bank/Getty Images

### LAKOTA THOUGHT: ONENESS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT.

The Native North American culture of the Great Plains, of which the Lakota form a part, is based on mystical participation with the environment. All aspects of this ecosystem, including earth, sky, night, day, sun, and moon, are elements of the oneness within which life was undertaken. The Lakota celebrate the "sacred hoop of life" and observe seven sacred rites toward the goal of ultimate communion with Wakan-Tanka, the Great Spirit (Wilson, 1994b).

Native North American ways of knowing provide a perspective that connect knowledge to the earth that surrounds us and of which we are a part.

**HOPÍ THOUGHT: PATH OF PEACE.** The Hopi follow the path of peace, which they believe is a pure and perfect pattern of humankind's evolutionary journey. The Road of Life of the Hopi is represented as a journey through seven universes created at the beginning. At death, the conduct of a person in accordance with the Creator's plan determines when and where the next step on the road will be taken. Each of the Hopi clans has a unique role to play, and each role is an essential part of the whole. Hopis must live in harmony with one another, with nature, and with the plan.

Out of this complex interplay, then, the plan is both created and allowed to unfold. The following quotation from Albert Yava, whose Hopi name translates to Big Falling Snow, captures this close connection of humans to nature.

We feel that the world is good. We are grateful to be alive. We are conscious that all men are brothers. We sense that we are related to other creatures . . . . When you go out of your house in the morning and see the sun rising, pause a moment to think about it. . . . When you take water from a spring, be aware that it is a gift of nature. (From *Hopi: Native American Wisdom Series: Following the Path of Peace*. Published by Chronicle Books, © 1994.)

### EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN WAYS OF KNOWING.

Native North American educational thought emphasizes the importance of nature. The pursuit of knowledge and happiness must be subordinate to a respect for the whole universe. To know is to understand one's place in the natural order of things. To be is to celebrate through ritual and stories the spirit that informs all reality. These principles encourage educators to study the physical and social world by examining the natural relationships that exist among things, animals, and humans. Studying ideas in the abstract or as independent entities is not as important as understanding the relationships among ideas and the physical reality. Native North American thought supports the use of hands-on learning, making connections, holding discussions, and celebrating the moment. In fact, these very educational approaches are supported by many best practice educational research studies (BIBBransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Donovan & Bransford, 2005).



#### VIDEO ANALYSIS 4.4

Watch this video and focus on the two learning tasks that students may choose to complete. Notice the different ways students may approach the learning tasks as well. Then answer the questions that follow the video in your Pearson eText.

### Matching Ideas from Eastern and Native North American Ways of Knowing to Your Own

The ideas of Eastern and Native North American ways of knowing share a number of similarities. They both show a reverence for the world in which we live and value the importance of harmony with nature and each other. However, there are many different nuances to this theme based on the geographical location of writers (India, China, and Japan) as well as the tribe to which Native writers belong (Cherokee, Lakota, and Hopi).

So, take a moment to consider the ideas of Eastern and Native North American thinkers and determine which ones match your own. Then, write down why these ideas make sense to you. Remember to organize your personal list based on these questions:

- What important knowledge and skills do I think should be taught?
- How should I teach these ideas and skills?

#### JOURNAL FOR REFLECTION 4.3

Consider the four components of analytic and prophetic thinking as described in the first part of this chapter. Then, describe which aspects of these types of Western thinking fit Eastern and Native North American ways of knowing.



#### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 4.3

Complete Check Your Understanding 4.3 to gauge your understanding of the concepts in this section.



## SUMMARY

### STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY OF PHILOSOPHY

- The study of philosophy permeates every aspect of the teacher's role and provides the underpinning for every decision. Teachers are natural philosophers in that they live out their personal answers to the big questions of philosophy by the way they set up their classrooms, by the way they teach students, by the rules they impose, and by the way they relate to others.
- Philosophy revolves around three major types of questions: those that deal with the nature of reality (metaphysics), those that deal with knowledge and truth (epistemology), and those that deal with values (axiology).
- Decisions about the subject matter emphasized in a curriculum are metaphysical in that they deal with the nature of reality or what is worth knowing—questions related to what is true and how we know are epistemological. Classroom methods are practices that aim to assist learners in acquiring knowledge and truth in the subject area. Classroom activities that deal with ethics (what is right or wrong), beauty, and character are in the realm of axiology (values).
- Analytic and prophetic thinking provide two approaches to the process of philosophy. Analytic thinking provides clarity and precision, whereas prophetic thinking fosters breadth and sensitivity.

### SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION

- Idealism is a school of philosophy that holds that ideas or concepts are the essence of all that is worth knowing. The physical world we know through our senses is only a manifestation or imperfect representation of the spiritual world.
  - Realism is a school of philosophy that holds that reality, knowledge, and value exist independently of the human mind. In other words, realists reject the idealist notion that ideas are the ultimate reality.
  - Pragmatism is a process philosophy that stresses evolving and changing rather than being. It differs from most forms of idealism and realism by a belief in an open universe that is dynamic, evolving, and in a state of becoming.
- Existentialism contends that reality is nothing more than lived existence, and the final reality resides within each individual. There is nothing absolute, not even change. There is no ultimate principle or meaning.
  - The way the curriculum is organized, the manner in which instruction is delivered, the character of school environments, and the processes used in testing and grading are informed by the philosophical views held by educators, parents, and legislators.
  - Idealism and realism reflect a teacher-centered approach to education because they place greater responsibility on teachers to teach specific content and thinking skills. Pragmatism and existentialism reflect a student-centered approach to education because they provide greater opportunity for students to create their own meaning.

### EASTERN AND NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN WAYS OF KNOWING

- Eastern ways of knowing stress the inner rather than the outer world, intuition rather than sense, and mysticism rather than scientific discoveries. Order, regularity, and patience that are proportional to and in harmony with the laws of nature are key to a good life.
- Native North American ways of knowing include a varied set of beliefs, positions, and customs that span more than 400 different tribes in North America. Beliefs, positions, and customs center on the relationship of humans to all of nature, including the earth, the sun, the sky, and beyond. To understand is to live and to develop an ever closer, more profound human-to-nature relationship.
- Both Eastern and Native North American ways of knowing share an underlying sensitivity to nature and an emphasis on wisdom, virtue, spirituality, and harmony within the larger universe.
- The educational implications of these ways of knowing include the importance of teaching respect for the earth and awareness of the interrelationships among all things.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How would you describe philosophy to a young child?
2. In your opinion, which is the most important aspect of a given philosophy (for the teacher): the metaphysical

component, the epistemological component, or the axiological component? State the rationale for your choice.

3. Early Greek philosophers suggest that all knowledge is based on experience. Discuss the implications of this statement for teaching methodology.
4. Describe the ways that Eastern and Native North American ways of knowing might influence what and how you teach.

## SCHOOL-BASED OBSERVATIONS

1. As you visit schools and classrooms, be alert for indications of philosophical concepts and different philosophical views. Examine the lesson plans that teachers have developed and consider whether their focus is on subject matter acquisition, the development of character, or the development of skills. These emphases can be a clue to the type of philosophy that a teacher endorses. You might wish to talk with teachers about their educational ideas.
2. Many schools have written statements describing their philosophy of education. Ask several schools to send you a copy of their philosophy of education. When you receive them, look for similarities and differences among the philosophical statements.
3. As you visit schools and classrooms, focus on the approaches to discipline that teachers employ. What do these approaches imply about teachers' views of human nature?

## PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

1. According to idealistic philosophy, character education can be enhanced through study and imitation of exemplars/heroes in the historical record. Identify an exemplary educator from history and describe how you could teach character through that person's example. Place your essay in your folio as an example of your teaching methodology.
2. Assist a student as a mentor or tutor. Before beginning, gather samples of the student's thinking and schoolwork. Try to think like the student and by so doing uncover areas in which the student needs help. Develop a diagnosis that details what changes will be beneficial. Place these ideas in your folio as an example of your diagnostic and metacognitive skills.

## WEB SOLUTIONS

You have been invited to make a presentation to the school board about the professional responsibilities of public school teachers that extend beyond classroom teaching. As part of your presentation, you want to include the idea that teachers are committed to ask difficult questions about the justice and equity within educational trends and practices. The following websites provide insights about some of these critical questions and reflective practices:

### **Philosophy of Education Society**

The Philosophy of Education Society (PES) comprises educators who are committed to the critical normative and interpretive aspects of education. The mission of PES is to encourage scholarship in the field of philosophy of education; to discuss curricular, methodological, and institutional issues in the field; and to offer educators at large a forum for the philosophical analysis of educational issues. The site provides Internet resources, papers, and discussions that help teachers

understand questions and concerns that flow from a philosophical perspective on education.

### **Philosophy Documentation Center**

The Philosophy Documentation Center (PDC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing affordable access to the widest possible range of philosophical materials. Established in 1966, the PDC provides access to scholarly journals, reference materials, conference proceedings, and instructional software. This site provides easy access to the ideas and writings of a wide variety of philosophers of education.

### **Center for World Indigenous Studies**

The Center for World Indigenous Studies (CWIS) fosters and promotes understanding the experiences, ideas, and knowledge of indigenous peoples around the world. It promotes and reports new knowledge concerning issues such as globalization, empowerment, tribal sovereignty, ethnic and legal identity, social injustice, traditional beliefs, languages, public health, and human rights.