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Chapter 1 : Postmodernism - Wikipedia

Postmodernism is a late 20th-century movement in philosophy and literary theory that generally questions the basic assumptions of Western philosophy in the modern period (roughly, the 17th century through the 19th century).

Ideas such as God, freedom, immortality, the world, first beginning, and final end have only a regulative function for knowledge, since they cannot find fulfilling instances among objects of experience. With Hegel, the immediacy of the subject-object relation itself is shown to be illusory. So-called immediate perception therefore lacks the certainty of immediacy itself, a certainty that must be deferred to the working out of a complete system of experience. The later nineteenth century is the age of modernity as an achieved reality, where science and technology, including networks of mass communication and transportation, reshape human perceptions. There is no clear distinction, then, between the natural and the artificial in experience. Indeed, many proponents of postmodernism challenge the viability of such a distinction tout court, seeing in achieved modernism the emergence of a problem the philosophical tradition has repressed. A consequence of achieved modernism is what postmodernists might refer to as de-realization. De-realization affects both the subject and the objects of experience, such that their sense of identity, constancy, and substance is upset or dissolved. Important precursors to this notion are found in Kierkegaard, Marx and Nietzsche. In this sense, society has become a realization of abstract thought, held together by an artificial and all-pervasive medium speaking for everyone and for no one. In Marx, on the other hand, we have an analysis of the fetishism of commodities Marx , " where objects lose the solidity of their use value and become spectral figures under the aspect of exchange value. Their ghostly nature results from their absorption into a network of social relations, where their values fluctuate independently of their corporeal being. Human subjects themselves experience this de-realization because commodities are products of their labor. Workers paradoxically lose their being in realizing themselves, and this becomes emblematic for those professing a postmodern sensibility. However, with the notion of the true world, he says, we have also done away with the apparent one. What is left is neither real nor apparent, but something in between, and therefore something akin to the virtual reality of more recent vintage. Where Apollo is the god of beautiful forms and images, Dionysus is the god of frenzy and intoxication, under whose sway the spell of individuated existence is broken in a moment of undifferentiated oneness with nature. While tragic art is life-affirming in joining these two impulses, logic and science are built upon Apollonian representations that have become frozen and lifeless. Hence, Nietzsche believes only a return of the Dionysian art impulse can save modern society from sterility and nihilism. In order to be responsible we must assume that we are the cause of our actions, and this cause must hold over time, retaining its identity, so that rewards and punishments are accepted as consequences for actions deemed beneficial or detrimental to others Nietzsche , ; , . Thus logic is born from the demand to adhere to common social norms which shape the human herd into a society of knowing and acting subjects. In this text, Nietzsche puts forward the hypothesis that scientific concepts are chains of metaphors hardened into accepted truths. On this account, metaphor begins when a nerve stimulus is copied as an image, which is then imitated in sound, giving rise, when repeated, to the word, which becomes a concept when the word is used to designate multiple instances of singular events. Conceptual metaphors are thus lies because they equate unequal things, just as the chain of metaphors moves from one level to another. There is no question, then, of reaching a standpoint outside of history or of conceiving past times as stages on the way to the present. Nietzsche presents this concept in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche [,], and in a more developed form in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche " , " Many have taken the concept to imply an endless, identical repetition of everything in the universe, such that nothing occurs that has not already occurred an infinite number of times before. However, others, including postmodernists, read these passages in conjunction with the notion that history is the repetition of an unhistorical moment, a moment that is always new in each case. In their view, Nietzsche can only mean that the new eternally repeats as new, and therefore recurrence is a matter of difference rather than identity.

Furthermore, postmodernists join the concept of eternal return with the loss of the distinction between the real and the apparent world. The distinction itself does not reappear, and what repeats is neither real nor apparent in the traditional sense, but is a phantasm or simulacrum. Nietzsche is a common interest between postmodern philosophers and Martin Heidegger, whose meditations on art, technology, and the withdrawal of being they regularly cite and comment upon. Heidegger sees modern technology as the fulfillment of Western metaphysics, which he characterizes as the metaphysics of presence. From the time of the earliest philosophers, but definitively with Plato, says Heidegger, Western thought has conceived of being as the presence of beings, which in the modern world has come to mean the availability of beings for use. In fact, as he writes in *Being and Time*, the presence of beings tends to disappear into the transparency of their usefulness as things ready-to-hand Heidegger [], Hence, the mountain is not a mountain but a standing supply of coal, the Rhine is not the Rhine but an engine for hydro-electric energy, and humans are not humans but reserves of manpower. However, humans are affected by this withdrawal in moments of anxiety or boredom, and therein lies the way to a possible return of being, which would be tantamount to a repetition of the experience of being opened up by Parmenides and Heraclitus. Heidegger sees this as the realization of the will to power, another Nietzschean conception, which, conjoined with the eternal return, represents the exhaustion of the metaphysical tradition Heidegger a, For Heidegger, the will to power is the eternal recurrence as becoming, and the permanence of becoming is the terminal moment of the metaphysics of presence. On this reading, becoming is the emerging and passing away of beings within and among other beings instead of an emergence from being. Thus, for Heidegger, Nietzsche marks the end of metaphysical thinking but not a passage beyond it, and therefore Heidegger sees him as the last metaphysician in whom the oblivion of being is complete Heidegger a, ; b, Many postmodern philosophers find in Heidegger a nostalgia for being they do not share. In this gathering, which follows the lineaments of an exclusively Greco-Christian-German tradition, something more original than being is forgotten, and that is the difference and alterity against which, and with which, the tradition composes itself. Here, being is the underlying ground of the being of beings, the subiectum that is enacted in modern philosophy as the subject of consciousness. But in *Being and Time* Heidegger conceives the human being as Dasein, which is not simply a present consciousness, but an event of ecstatic temporality that is open to a past Gewesensein that was never present its already being-there and a future Zu-kunft that is always yet to come the possibility of death. The finitude of Dasein therefore cannot be contained within the limits of consciousness, nor within the limits of the subject, whether it is conceived substantively or formally. In addition to the critiques of the subject offered by Nietzsche and Heidegger, many postmodernists also borrow heavily from the psycho-analytic theories of Jacques Lacan. For Lacan, the subject is always the subject of speech, and that means speech directed toward an other in relation to whom the subject differentiates and identifies itself. However, desire ultimately aims for something impossible: Insofar as the phallus is nothing but the signifying function as such, it does not exist. It is not an object to be possessed, but is that through which the subject and the other are brought into relation to begin with, and it thus imposes itself upon the subject as a fundamental absence or lack that is at once necessary and irremediable Lacan , Hence the subject is forever divided from itself and unable to achieve final unity or identity. He describes his text as a combination of two very different language games, that of the philosopher and that of the expert. Analysis of this knowledge calls for a pragmatics of communication insofar as the phrasing of messages, their transmission and reception, must follow rules in order to be accepted by those who judge them. However, as Lyotard points out, the position of judge or legislator is also a position within a language game, and this raises the question of legitimation. Science is therefore tightly interwoven with government and administration, especially in the information age, where enormous amounts of capital and large installations are needed for research. Science, however, plays the language game of denotation to the exclusion of all others, and in this respect it displaces narrative knowledge, including the meta-narratives of philosophy. This is due, in part, to what Lyotard characterizes as the rapid growth of technologies and techniques in the second half of the twentieth century, where the emphasis of knowledge has shifted from the

ends of human action to its means Lyotard [], This has eroded the speculative game of philosophy and set each science free to develop independently of philosophical grounding or systematic organization. As a result, new, hybrid disciplines develop without connection to old epistemic traditions, especially philosophy, and this means science only plays its own game and cannot legitimate others, such as moral prescription. The compartmentalization of knowledge and the dissolution of epistemic coherence is a concern for researchers and philosophers alike. Furthermore, within each game the subject moves from position to position, now as sender, now as addressee, now as referent, and so on. The loss of a continuous meta-narrative therefore breaks the subject into heterogeneous moments of subjectivity that do not cohere into an identity. But as Lyotard points out, while the combinations we experience are not necessarily stable or communicable, we learn to move with a certain nimbleness among them. Postmodern sensibility does not lament the loss of narrative coherence any more than the loss of being. However, the dissolution of narrative leaves the field of legitimation to a new unifying criterion: Performative legitimation means maximizing the flow of information and minimizing static non-functional moves in the system, so whatever cannot be communicated as information must be eliminated. The performativity criterion threatens anything not meeting its requirements, such as speculative narratives, with de-legitimation and exclusion. In this regard, the modern paradigm of progress as new moves under established rules gives way to the postmodern paradigm of inventing new rules and changing the game. Inventing new codes and reshaping information is a large part of the production of knowledge, and in its inventive moment science does not adhere to performative efficiency. By the same token, the meta-prescriptives of science, its rules, are themselves objects of invention and experimentation for the sake of producing new statements. In this respect, says Lyotard, the model of knowledge as the progressive development of consensus is outmoded. In fact, attempts to retrieve the model of consensus can only repeat the standard of coherence demanded for functional efficiency, and they will thus lend themselves to the domination of capital. On the other hand, the paralogical inventiveness of science raises the possibility of a new sense of justice, as well as knowledge, as we move among the language games now entangling us. Without the formal unity of the subject, the faculties are set free to operate on their own. Where Kant insists that reason must assign domains and limits to the other faculties, its dependence upon the unity of the subject for the identity of concepts as laws or rules de-legitimizes its juridical authority in the postmodern age. As Lyotard argues, aesthetic judgment is the appropriate model for the problem of justice in postmodern experience because we are confronted with a plurality of games and rules without a concept under which to unify them. Judgment must therefore be reflective rather than determining. Furthermore, judgment must be aesthetic insofar as it does not produce denotative knowledge about a determinable state of affairs, but refers to the way our faculties interact with each other as we move from one mode of phrasing to another, i. In Kantian terms, this interaction registers as an aesthetic feeling. Where Kant emphasizes the feeling of the beautiful as a harmonious interaction between imagination and understanding, Lyotard stresses the mode in which faculties imagination and reason, are in disharmony, i. For Kant, the sublime occurs when our faculties of sensible presentation are overwhelmed by impressions of absolute power and magnitude, and reason is thrown back upon its own power to conceive Ideas such as the moral law which surpass the sensible world. For Lyotard, however, the postmodern sublime occurs when we are affected by a multitude of unrepresentables without reference to reason as their unifying origin. Justice, then, would not be a definable rule, but an ability to move and judge among rules in their heterogeneity and multiplicity. Modern art, he says, is emblematic of a sublime sensibility, that is, a sensibility that there is something non-presentable demanding to be put into sensible form and yet overwhelms all attempts to do so. But where modern art presents the unrepresentable as a missing content within a beautiful form, as in Marcel Proust, postmodern art, exemplified by James Joyce, puts forward the unrepresentable by forgoing beautiful form itself, thus denying what Kant would call the consensus of taste. Genealogy and Subjectivity The Nietzschean method of genealogy, in its application to modern subjectivity, is another facet of philosophical postmodernism. That is, genealogy studies the accidents and contingencies that converge at crucial moments, giving rise to new epochs, concepts, and institutions. In

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Nietzschean fashion, Foucault exposes history conceived as the origin and development of an identical subject, e. Underlying the fiction of modernity is a sense of temporality that excludes the elements of chance and contingency in play at every moment. In short, linear, progressive history covers up the discontinuities and interruptions that mark points of succession in historical time. This entails dissolving identity for the subject in history by using the materials and techniques of modern historical research. Just as Nietzsche postulates that the religious will to truth in Christianity results in the destruction of Christianity by science see Nietzsche [], 183 , Foucault postulates that genealogical research will result in the disintegration of the epistemic subject, as the continuity of the subject is broken up by the gaps and accidents that historical research uncovers. Here, Foucault gives an account of the historical beginnings of modern reason as it comes to define itself against madness in the seventeenth century. His thesis is that the practice of confining the mad is a transformation of the medieval practice of confining lepers in lazar houses. These institutions managed to survive long after the lepers disappeared, and thus an institutional structure of confinement was already in place when the modern concept of madness as a disease took shape. However, while institutions of confinement are held over from a previous time, the practice of confining the mad constitutes a break with the past. Foucault focuses upon the moment of transition, as modern reason begins to take shape in a confluence of concepts, institutions, and practices, or, as he would say, of knowledge and power. In its nascency, reason is a power that defines itself against an other, an other whose truth and identity is also assigned by reason, thus giving reason the sense of originating from itself.

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Chapter 2 : Social Research Methods - Knowledge Base - Positivism & Post-Positivism

Explore the research methods terrain, read definitions of key terminology, and discover content relevant to your research methods journey.

A new, radical form of skepticism emerged in the last half of the 20th century: This view questioned whether there can be any rational, objective framework for discussing intellectual problems, or whether instead the intellectual frameworks that people use are inherently determined by them. Postmodernism and modern philosophy Postmodernism is largely a reaction against the intellectual assumptions and values of the modern period in the history of Western philosophy roughly, the 17th through the 19th century. Indeed, many of the doctrines characteristically associated with postmodernism can fairly be described as the straightforward denial of general philosophical viewpoints that were taken for granted during the 18th-century Enlightenment, though they were not unique to that period. The most important of these viewpoints are the following. There is an objective natural reality, a reality whose existence and properties are logically independent of human beings—of their minds, their societies, their social practices, or their investigative techniques. Postmodernists dismiss this idea as a kind of naive realism. Such reality as there is, according to postmodernists, is a conceptual construct, an artifact of scientific practice and language. This point also applies to the investigation of past events by historians and to the description of social institutions, structures, or practices by social scientists. The descriptive and explanatory statements of scientists and historians can, in principle, be objectively true or false. The postmodern denial of this viewpoint—which follows from the rejection of an objective natural reality—is sometimes expressed by saying that there is no such thing as Truth. Through the use of reason and logic, and with the more specialized tools provided by science and technology, human beings are likely to change themselves and their societies for the better. It is reasonable to expect that future societies will be more humane, more just, more enlightened, and more prosperous than they are now. Postmodernists deny this Enlightenment faith in science and technology as instruments of human progress. Indeed, many postmodernists hold that the misguided or unguided pursuit of scientific and technological knowledge led to the development of technologies for killing on a massive scale in World War II. Some go so far as to say that science and technology—and even reason and logic—are inherently destructive and oppressive, because they have been used by evil people, especially during the 20th century, to destroy and oppress others. Reason and logic are universally valid. For postmodernists, reason and logic too are merely conceptual constructs and are therefore valid only within the established intellectual traditions in which they are used. There is such a thing as human nature; it consists of faculties, aptitudes, or dispositions that are in some sense present in human beings at birth rather than learned or instilled through social forces. Postmodernists insist that all, or nearly all, aspects of human psychology are completely socially determined. Language refers to and represents a reality outside itself. Inspired by the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, postmodernists claim that language is semantically self-contained, or self-referential: The postmodern view of language and discourse is due largely to the French philosopher and literary theorist Jacques Derrida, the originator and leading practitioner of deconstruction. Human beings can acquire knowledge about natural reality, and this knowledge can be justified ultimately on the basis of evidence or principles that are, or can be, known immediately, intuitively, or otherwise with certainty. It is possible, at least in principle, to construct general theories that explain many aspects of the natural or social world within a given domain of knowledge. Furthermore, it should be a goal of scientific and historical research to construct such theories, even if they are never perfectly attainable in practice. These theories are pernicious not merely because they are false but because they effectively impose conformity on other perspectives or discourses, thereby oppressing, marginalizing, or silencing them. Derrida himself equated the theoretical tendency toward totality with totalitarianism. Postmodernism and relativism As indicated in the preceding section, many of the characteristic doctrines of postmodernism constitute or imply some form of metaphysical

, epistemological , or ethical relativism. It should be noted, however, that some postmodernists vehemently reject the relativist label. Postmodernists deny that there are aspects of reality that are objective; that there are statements about reality that are objectively true or false; that it is possible to have knowledge of such statements objective knowledge ; that it is possible for human beings to know some things with certainty; and that there are objective, or absolute, moral values. Reality, knowledge, and value are constructed by discourses; hence they can vary with them. This means that the discourse of modern science, when considered apart from the evidential standards internal to it, has no greater purchase on the truth than do alternative perspectives, including for example astrology and witchcraft. If postmodernists are correct that reality, knowledge, and value are relative to discourse, then the established discourses of the Enlightenment are no more necessary or justified than alternative discourses. But this raises the question of how they came to be established in the first place. If it is never possible to evaluate a discourse according to whether it leads to objective Truth, how did the established discourses become part of the prevailing worldview of the modern era? Why were these discourses adopted or developed, whereas others were not? Part of the postmodern answer is that the prevailing discourses in any society reflect the interests and values, broadly speaking, of dominant or elite groups. Inspired by the historical research of the French philosopher Michel Foucault , some postmodernists defend the comparatively nuanced view that what counts as knowledge in a given era is always influenced, in complex and subtle ways, by considerations of power. There are others, however, who are willing to go even further than Marx. The French philosopher and literary theorist Luce Irigaray , for example, has argued that the science of solid mechanics is better developed than the science of fluid mechanics because the male-dominated institution of physics associates solidity and fluidity with the male and female sex organs, respectively. Thus postmodernists regard their theoretical position as uniquely inclusive and democratic, because it allows them to recognize the unjust hegemony of Enlightenment discourses over the equally valid perspectives of nonelite groups.

Relativism ≠ *Relativism is a concept understood in terms of interpretation and appreciations of one's own social reality and another group's social reality. As such, it is important to suspend judgment in favor of understanding, interpretation and appreciation of unique practices.*

Return to Emerging Church Section Postmodernism is not that simple to define because it is a word used in different areas of study: The term "postmodernism" can best be understood by relating it to modernism. It elevated human reason, human progress, and human authority. In contrast to this, postmodernism upholds a subjectivity regarding morality, social constructions, political movements, art, religion, and truth statements. In other words, to oversimplify perhaps what postmodernism is, it is relativism, the belief that truth is relative, that objective truth may not be knowable. It even undermines the construction of language by stating that words can be interpreted differently, that language is fluid, and that the Bible, written in ancient languages, is open to various interpretations of equal validity. Given this underlying idea that nothing is truly knowable a self-contradictory statement that is no problem for postmoderns, the very foundations of truth both moral and spiritual are suspect and open to re-evaluation - along with the Bible. We must move to the mystical. Their worldview is often naturalistic; that is, they perceive and interpret the world in light of natural principles often evolutionary, combined with relativism in the areas of morals and truth. Instead of an objective absolute truth, i. This means that different cultures and different individuals will interpret reality differently. In other words, what is true for one person may not be true for another. The study found that fewer Americans were embracing a traditional view of God and the Bible. Therefore, the Christian and the postmodern person often do not have sufficient common ground to allow proper dialogue on spiritual matters. The postmodern person might ask if there is any such thing as truth and whether or not truth can be known either experientially or rationally. The modernist would say, "Of course there is absolute truth! Asking if truth can be known is an absolute question! This sometimes means that some Emerging Churches will feature church services and emphasize relationship, community, common traditional values, while using visual methods, storytelling, and more expressive worship instead of absolute truth constructions derived from Scripture and delivered during preaching and teaching. In addition, they might show videos or television clips. Conclusion To repeat my oversimplification, postmodernism is relativism. Postmodernism is a reaction against the logical truth structures of modern thought that gave us absolute propositions about nature, time, space, mathematics, knowability, repeatability of experimentation, predictability, etc. As modernism developed the sciences, technology, and medicine, it has helped to produce a comfortable and predictable society -- wherein people tend to become complacent, comfortable, and predictable. But there are always people who ask questions rather than blindly follow the status quo. They look for different ways of expression, different interpretations of truth, teach the idea that truth is not necessarily absolute, and that reality can be reinterpreted. It is within the postmodern context that the Emerging Churches are seeking to work. It is a difficult venture to try and reach the hearts and minds of those who are less open to absolutes than previous generations. So, Instead of absolute truth propositions, Emerging Churches tend to focus on relationships, expressiveness, and new ways of trying to reach God. It is good only so far as it is consistent with Scripture. It is bad whenever it deviates from it. Gibbs, Eddie and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, , p. Gibbs and Bolger, p.

Chapter 4 : Relativism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Postmodernism is a broad movement that developed in the mid- to late 20th century across philosophy, the arts, architecture, and criticism and that marked a departure from modernism.

Indian religions tend to be naturally relativistic. Mahavira BC, the 24th Tirthankara of Jainism, developed an early philosophy regarding relativism and subjectivism known as Anekantavada. Hindu religion has no theological difficulties in accepting degrees of truth in other religions. A Rig Vedic hymn states that "Truth is One, though the sages know it variously. They have supported the view that proponents of all faiths can, by doing good and virtuous deeds and by remembering the Lord, certainly achieve salvation. The students of the Sikh faith are told to accept all leading faiths as possible vehicle for attaining spiritual enlightenment provided the faithful study, ponder and practice the teachings of their prophets and leaders. Those who do not contemplate them are false. Sophists

Sophists are considered the founding fathers of relativism in the Western World. Elements of relativism emerged among the Sophists in the 5th century BC. Notably, it was Protagoras who coined the phrase, "Man is the measure of all things: Bernard Crick

Another important advocate of relativism, Bernard Crick, a British political scientist, wrote the book *In Defence of Politics* first published in 1962, suggesting the inevitability of moral conflict between people. Crick stated that only ethics could resolve such conflict, and when that occurred in public it resulted in politics. Accordingly, Crick saw the process of dispute resolution, harms reduction, mediation or peacemaking as central to all of moral philosophy. He became an important influence on the feminists and later on the Greens.

Paul Feyerabend The philosopher-of-science Paul Feyerabend wholeheartedly embraced relativism, and even "epistemological anarchy". He claimed that as well as progressing steadily and incrementally "normal science", science undergoes periodic revolutions or "paradigm shifts", leaving scientists working in different paradigms with difficulty in even communicating. One contains constrained bodies that fall slowly, the other pendulums that repeat their motions again and again. In one, solutions are compounds, in the other mixtures. One is embedded in a flat, the other in a curved, matrix of space. Practicing in two different worlds, the two groups of scientists see different things when they look from the same point in the same direction. Again, that is not to say that they can see anything they please. Both are looking at the world, and what they look at has not changed. However in some areas they see different things and they see them in different relations one to the other. That is why a law that cannot even be demonstrated to one group of scientists may occasionally seem intuitively obvious to another. Equally, it is why, before they can hope to communicate fully, one group or the other must experience the conversion that we have been calling a paradigm shift. However, he was reluctant to fully embrace relativism. From these remarks, one thing is however certain: He very plainly says that they can be compared, and he reiterates this repeatedly in later work, in a mostly in vain effort to avert the crude and sometimes catastrophic misinterpretations he suffered from mainstream philosophers and post-modern relativists alike. In particular, Lakoff and Johnson characterize "objectivism" as a "straw man", and, to a lesser degree, criticize the views of Karl Popper, Kant and Aristotle. Robert Nozick

In his book *Invariances*, Robert Nozick expresses a complex set of theories about the absolute and the relative. He thinks it is coherent for truth to be relative, and speculates that it might vary with time. He thinks necessity is an unobtainable notion, but can be approximated by robust invariance across a variety of conditions—although we can never identify a proposition that is invariant with regard to everything. Finally, he is not particularly warm to one of the most famous forms of relativism, moral relativism, preferring an evolutionary account.

Joseph Margolis Edit Joseph Margolis advocates a view he calls "robust relativism" and defends it in his books: He opens his account by stating that our logics should depend on what we take to be the nature of the sphere to which we wish to apply our logics. Holding that there can be no distinctions which are not "privileged" between the alethic, the ontic, and the epistemic, he maintains that a many valued logic just might be the most apt for aesthetics or history since, because in these practices, we are loath to hold to simple

binary logic ; and he also holds that many-valued logic is relativistic. This is perhaps an unusual definition of "relativistic". Compare with his comments on "relationism". A many valued logic "apt", "reasonable", "likely", and so on "seems intuitively more applicable to Hamlet interpretation. Where apparent contradictions arise between such interpretations, we might call the interpretations "incongruent", rather than dubbing either "false". The problem with the standard two-valued logic is simply that it only ever applies to sentential formulas and not to interpreted sentences in use. The principle of non-contradiction can easily be made not to obtain by reinterpreting the terms involved, as is the case with the corpuscular versus the wave theory of light [How to reference and link to summary or text]. It was Aristotle who held that relativism implied we should, sticking with appearances only, end up contradicting ourselves somewhere if we could apply all attributes to all possible beings. Aristotle , however, made non-contradiction dependent upon his essentialism. If his essentialism is false, then so too is his ground for disallowing relativism. Subsequent philosophers have found other reasons for supporting the principle of non-contradiction. Plato and Aristotle merely attacked "relationalism"--the doctrine of true-for I or true for k, and the like, where I and k are different speakers or different worlds, or the something similar. Most philosophers would call this position "relativism". For Margolis "true" means true; that is, the alethic use of "true" remains untouched. However, in real world contexts, and context is ubiquitous in the real world, we must apply truth values. Here, in epistemic terms, we might retire "true" tout court as an evaluation and keep "false". The rest of our value-judgements could be graded from "extremely plausible" down to "false". Judgements which on a bivalent logic would be incompatible or contradictory are further seen as "incongruent", though one may well have more weight than the other. In short, relativistic logic is not, or need not be, the bugbear it is often presented to be. It may simply be the best type of logic to apply to certain very uncertain spheres of our real experiences in the world although some sort of logic needs to be applied to make that judgement. Those who swear by bivalent logic might simply be the ultimate keepers of the great fear of the flux. Richard Rorty

Philosopher Richard Rorty has a somewhat paradoxical role in the debate over relativism: No one holds this view. Except for the occasional cooperative freshman, one cannot find anybody who says that two incompatible opinions on an important topic are equally good. He also argues that the notion of warrant or justification can do most of the work traditionally assigned to the concept of truth, and that justification is relative; justification is justification to an audience, for Rorty. Thus his position, in the view of many commentators, adds up to relativism. Isaiah Berlin

Edit The late Sir Isaiah Berlin expressed relativist views when he stated that, to "confuse our own constructions with eternal laws or divine decrees is one of the most fatal delusions of men. Against Relativism and Constructivism. In Science and Relativism, Larry Laudan writes "The displacement of the idea that facts and evidence matter by the idea that everything boils down to subjective interest and perspectives, is "second only to American political campaigns" the most prominent and pernicious manifestation of relativism of our time. He is an expert on postmodern thought, particularly deconstruction , and argues that deconstruction, properly understood, does not equate to relativism. Plato was the first great critic of relativism. He criticizes the views of the sophist Protagoras in his dialogue Thaetetus. Physicist Alan Sokal initiated the science wars in with his hoax paper entitled " Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity". He later co-authored the book Fashionable Nonsense also known as Intellectual Impostures with Jean Bricmont , which criticises the postmodernist use and what they perceived to be abuse of science. Richard Dawkins and the Roman Catholic Church. Interestingly, they seem to lambast against each other as much as against relativism. Critics of these perspectives often identify advocates with the label "relativism. Similarly, deconstruction is often termed a relativist perspective because of the ways it locates the meaning of a text in its appropriation and reading, implying that there is no "true" reading of a text and no text apart from its reading. Stanley Fish has defended postmodernism and relativism. Nevertheless, the term is useful to differentiate them from realists who believe that the purpose of philosophy, science, or literary critique is to locate externally true meanings. Important philosophers and theorists such as Michel Foucault , Max Stirner and Friedrich Nietzsche , political movements such as post-anarchism or post-left anarchy can

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also be considered as relativist in this sense - though a better term might be social constructivist. The spread and popularity of this kind of "soft" relativism varies between academic disciplines. It has wide support in anthropology and has a majority following in cultural studies. It also has advocates in political theory and political science, sociology, and continental philosophy as distinct from Anglo-American analytical philosophy. It has inspired empirical studies of the social construction of meaning such as those associated with labelling theory, which defenders can point to as evidence of the validity of their theories albeit risking accusations of performative contradiction in the process. However, many scientists who use these methods continue to identify as realist or post-positivist , and some sharply criticize the association [28] [29] See also.

Chapter 5 : Postmodern Relativism and Truth - Reality

In recent years, research in the social sciences has been dominated by the debate on the merits of qualitative method versus quantitative methodology. Until recently, the debate appeared to have been won by those promoting the qualitative approach, but then postmodern theory appeared on the scene, challenging all our preconceptions about research method.

Forms of relativism[edit] Anthropological versus philosophical relativism[edit] Anthropological relativism refers to a methodological stance, in which the researcher suspends or brackets his or her own cultural biases while attempting to understand beliefs and behaviors in their local contexts. An etic or outsider account is a description of a society by an observer, in terms that can be applied to other cultures; that is, an etic account is culturally neutral, and typically refers to the conceptual framework of the social scientist. This is complicated when it is scientific research itself that is under study, or when there is theoretical or terminological disagreement within the social sciences. Philosophical relativism , in contrast, asserts that the truth of a proposition depends on the metaphysical, or theoretical frame, or the instrumental method, or the context in which the proposition is expressed, or on the person, groups, or culture who interpret the proposition. In general, anthropologists engage in descriptive relativism "how things are" or "how things seem" , whereas philosophers engage in normative relativism "how things ought to be" , although there is some overlap for example, descriptive relativism can pertain to concepts, normative relativism to truth. It is possible for an anthropologist in his or her fieldwork to be a descriptive relativist about some things that typically concern the philosopher e. First, some philosophers, notably Kant, argue that certain sorts of cognitive differences between human beings or even all rational beings are impossible, so such differences could never be found to obtain in fact, an argument that places a priori limits on what empirical inquiry could discover and on what versions of descriptive relativism could be true. Second, claims about actual differences between groups play a central role in some arguments for normative relativism for example, arguments for normative ethical relativism often begin with claims that different groups in fact have different moral codes or ideals. Normative relativism concerns normative or evaluative claims that modes of thought, standards of reasoning, or the like are only right or wrong relative to a framework. This does not mean, of course, that framework-relative correctness or truth is always clear, the first challenge being to explain what it amounts to in any given case e. Normative relativism say, in regard to normative ethical relativism therefore implies that things say, ethical claims are not simply true in themselves, but only have truth values relative to broader frameworks say, moral codes. Many normative ethical relativist arguments run from premises about ethics to conclusions that assert the relativity of truth values, bypassing general claims about the nature of truth, but it is often more illuminating to consider the type of relativism under question directly. Critics of these perspectives often identify advocates with the label "relativism". For example, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is often considered a relativist view because it posits that linguistic categories and structures shape the way people view the world. Stanley Fish has defended postmodernism and relativism. Nevertheless, the term is useful to differentiate them from realists who believe that the purpose of philosophy, science, or literary critique is to locate externally true meanings. Important philosophers and theorists such as Michel Foucault , Max Stirner , political movements such as post-anarchism or post-Marxism can also be considered as relativist in this sense - though a better term might be social constructivist. The spread and popularity of this kind of "soft" relativism varies between academic disciplines. It has wide support in anthropology and has a majority following in cultural studies. It also has advocates in political theory and political science, sociology, and continental philosophy as distinct from Anglo-American analytical philosophy. It has inspired empirical studies of the social construction of meaning such as those associated with labelling theory, which defenders can point to as evidence of the validity of their theories albeit risking accusations of performative contradiction in the process. However, many scientists who use these methods continue to identify as realist or post-positivist , and some sharply criticize the association.

Despite the similarity in name, it is held by some to be a position distinct from relativism—for instance, because "statements about relational properties [Relativism is not skepticism , which superficially resembles relativism, because they both doubt absolute notions of truth. However, whereas skeptics go on to doubt all notions of truth, relativists replace absolute truth with a positive theory of many equally valid relative truths. For the relativist, there is no more to truth than the right context, or the right personal or cultural belief, so there is a lot of truth in the world. Whether moral or epistemological, relativism constitutes a denial of the capacity of the human mind and reason to arrive at truth. Truth, according to Catholic theologians and philosophers following Aristotle consists of *adequatio rei et intellectus*, the correspondence of the mind and reality. Another way of putting it states that the mind has the same form as reality. This means when the form of the computer in front of someone the type, color, shape, capacity, etc. The denial of an absolute reference, of an *axis mundi*, denies God, who equates to Absolute Truth, according to these Christian theologians. They link relativism to secularism , an obstruction of religion in human life. Leo XIII condemned Freemasonry and claimed that its philosophical and political system was largely based on relativism. Once the idea of a universal truth about the good, knowable by human reason, is lost, inevitably the notion of conscience also changes. Instead, there is a tendency to grant to the individual conscience the prerogative of independently determining the criteria of good and evil and then acting accordingly. Such an outlook is quite congenial to an individualist ethic, wherein each individual is faced with his own truth, different from the truth of others. Taken to its extreme consequences, this individualism leads to a denial of the very idea of human nature. Freedom negates and destroys itself, and becomes a factor leading to the destruction of others, when it no longer recognizes and respects its essential link with the truth. When freedom, out of a desire to emancipate itself from all forms of tradition and authority, shuts out even the most obvious evidence of an objective and universal truth, which is the foundation of personal and social life, then the person ends up by no longer taking as the sole and indisputable point of reference for his own choices the truth about good and evil, but only his subjective and changeable opinion or, indeed, his selfish interest and whim. Benedict XVI[edit] In April , in his homily [19] during Mass prior to the conclave which would elect him as Pope , then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger talked about the world "moving towards a dictatorship of relativism": How many winds of doctrine we have known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking. The small boat of thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves — thrown from one extreme to the other: Every day new sects are created and what Saint Paul says about human trickery comes true, with cunning which tries to draw those into error cf Ephesians 4, Having a clear Faith, based on the Creed of the Church, is often labeled today as a fundamentalism. However, we have a different goal: He is the measure of true humanism. A faith which is deeply rooted in friendship with Christ is adult and mature. It is this friendship which opens us up to all that is good and gives us the knowledge to judge true from false, and deceit from truth. Today, a particularly insidious obstacle to the task of education is the massive presence in our society and culture of that relativism which, recognizing nothing as definitive, leaves as the ultimate criterion only the self with its desires. And this, as we saw, meant that a human and partial point of view was always taken as an absolute guiding principle. Absolutizing what is not absolute but relative is called totalitarianism. It does not liberate man, but takes away his dignity and enslaves him. It is not ideologies that save the world, but only a return to the living God, our Creator, the Guarantor of our freedom, the Guarantor of what is really good and true. Criticisms[edit] A common argument [22] [23] [24] [25] against relativism suggests that it inherently contradicts, refutes, or stultifies itself: If it is relative, then this statement does not rule out absolutes. If the statement is absolute , on the other hand, then it provides an example of an absolute statement, proving that not all truths are relative. However, this argument against relativism only applies to relativism that positions truth as relative—i. More specifically, it is only extreme forms of epistemological relativism that can come in for this criticism as there are many epistemological relativists[who? Another argument against relativism posits a Natural Law. Simply put, the physical universe works under basic principles: Lewis in " Mere Christianity " A related criticism is that relativizing truth to individuals destroys

the distinction between truth and belief. Indian religions[edit] Indian religions tend to view the perceivable universe and cosmos as relativistic. Hindu religion has no theological difficulties in accepting degrees of truth in other religions. A Rig Vedic hymn states that "Truth is One, though the sages tell it variously. The two truths doctrine states that there is Relative or common-sense truth, which describes our daily experience of a concrete world, and Ultimate truth, which describes the ultimate reality as sunyata , empty of concrete and inherent characteristics. The conventional truth may be interpreted as "obscurative truth" or "that which obscures the true nature" as a result. It is constituted by the appearances of mistaken awareness. Conventional truth would be the appearance that includes a duality of apprehender and apprehended, and objects perceived within that. Ultimate truths, are phenomena free from the duality of apprehender and apprehended. They have supported the view that proponents of all faiths can, by doing good and virtuous deeds and by remembering the Lord , certainly achieve salvation. The students of the Sikh faith are told to accept all leading faiths as possible vehicles for attaining spiritual enlightenment provided the faithful study, ponder and practice the teachings of their prophets and leaders. Those who do not contemplate them are false. Sophists[edit] Sophists are considered the founding fathers of relativism in the Western World. Elements of relativism emerged among the Sophists in the 5th century BC. Notably, it was Protagoras who coined the phrase, "Man is the measure of all things: In a well known paraphrased dialogue with Socrates, Protagoras said: Crick stated that only ethics could resolve such conflict, and when that occurred in public it resulted in politics. Accordingly, Crick saw the process of dispute resolution , harms reduction , mediation or peacemaking as central to all of moral philosophy. He became an important influence on the feminists and later on the Greens. Paul Feyerabend[edit] The philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend is often considered to be a relativist, though he denied being one. This is intended to convey that world views are not hermetically closed, since their leading concepts have an "ambiguity" - better, an open-endedness - which enables people from other cultures to engage with them. The former encourages that unsavoury brand of political correctness which takes the refusal to criticise "other cultures" to the extreme of condoning murderous dictatorship and barbaric practices. He claimed that as well as progressing steadily and incrementally " normal science " , science undergoes periodic revolutions or " paradigm shifts " , leaving scientists working in different paradigms with difficulty in even communicating. Thus the truth of a claim, or the existence of a posited entity is relative to the paradigm employed. This leads to there being a fundamental, incremental, and referential structure of development which is not relative but again, fundamental. From these remarks, one thing is however certain: He very plainly says that they can be compared, and he reiterates this repeatedly in later work, in a mostly in vain effort to avert the crude and sometimes catastrophic misinterpretations he suffered from mainstream philosophers and post-modern relativists alike. Latter scientific theories are better than earlier ones for solving puzzles However, a number of passages in Structures do indeed appear to be distinctly relativist, and to directly challenge the notion of an objective reality and the ability of science to progress towards an ever-greater grasp of it, particularly through the process of paradigm change. In the sciences there need not be progress of another sort. We may, to be more precise, have to relinquish the notion, explicit or implicit, that changes of paradigm carry scientists and those who learn from them closer and closer to the truth. But need there be any such goal? Does it really help to imagine that there is some one full, objective, true account of nature and that the proper measure of scientific achievement is the extent to which it brings us closer to that ultimate goal? In particular, Lakoff and Johnson characterize "objectivism" as a " straw man " , and, to a lesser degree, criticize the views of Karl Popper , Kant and Aristotle. He thinks it is coherent for truth to be relative, and speculates that it might vary with time. He thinks necessity is an unobtainable notion, but can be approximated by robust invariance across a variety of conditionsâ€”although we can never identify a proposition that is invariant with regard to everything. Finally, he is not particularly warm to one of the most famous forms of relativism, moral relativism , preferring an evolutionary account. Joseph Margolis[edit] Joseph Margolis advocates a view he calls "robust relativism" and defends it in his books:

Chapter 6 : Relativism - Wikipedia

Relativism does not refer to a unitary doctrine but rather announces a cluster of viewpoints. There are, however, two deeply interrelated points central to all discussions of relativism.

Introduction Reality is an appropriate title because: Reality “ Truth and Truth-Claims What is truth? With a correspondence definition of truth, the truth is what actually is happening in reality, or what actually did happen in reality. When we make claims based on a theory by assuming the theory is true, and using "if Between when almost everyone believed that the sun and planets revolved around the earth and when almost every educated person believed that the earth and planets revolved around the sun , what changed and what did not change? Did the reality change? Did the motions of planets change from earth-centered in to sun-centered in ? Did the truth change? Because truth is determined by reality, what was true in the earth and planets really moved around the sun was also true in Did our truth-claims change? Our humanly constructed beliefs about the motions were different in and Thus, there were changes in the realities of humanly-constructed science, philosophy, religion, and culture, as explained below. Two Types of Reality During the years between and , some aspects of reality did change. For example, in scientists said "of course" when a scholar stated that everything revolves around the earth, but in they laughed at a scholar making the same statement. This change in response, from acceptance to ridicule, was due to a real change in a humanly constructed theory, which produced a real change in a humanly constructed social context. By contrast, another aspect of reality involving the motions of earth, sun, and planets was not humanly constructed. This "solar system reality" was independent of humans, and it did not change when we changed. There is an important difference between humanly-constructed reality and human-independent reality. A modern example of humanly constructed reality is the societal agreement, adopted by consensus and institutionalized in traffic laws, that we will stop at a red light, and that in America and in continental Europe but not Britain or Japan we will drive on the right side of the road. But if there is a collision, due to someone running a red light or driving on the wrong side or making some other mistake, humans do not construct the laws of physics that determine what happens during the collision. Yes, we can minimize the harmful results of a collision by constructing cars with air bags, collapsible bumpers, and other safety features. But we achieve this humanly-constructed reality in which we have safer cars by acknowledging and understanding a human-independent reality involving the physics of collisions. We can build safer cars by cooperating with reality, by designing cars within the context of the physics that really exists. If we recognize the existence of two types of reality “ independent and constructed “ our worldview is less simple than if we ignore this distinction and lump everything together into one category. But a view that "splits" instead of "lumping" will see things in a way that is more accurate, and will avoid the confusions that occur when we try to think about both types of reality in the same way. Our thinking and communicating should be different for the two types of reality. Some ideas about "beliefs creating reality" are rational for humanly constructed realities for example, deciding whether to praise or ridicule a scholar, or deciding whether to drive through an intersection or stop but these ideas are ludicrous for independent realities such as the motions in our solar system in which reality is not affected by belief or social agreement. This distinction will also help us understand the correct causal relationships. Yes, our thoughts and actions do cause consequences when "what we think and do" is converted into constructed reality. But for independent reality, our believing that something is true does not cause it to be true. Some highly speculative interpretations of quantum mechanics claim that human observation or human consciousness can directly affect reality. But in a page about quantum physics and reality I use principles of quantum physics to explain why these "mystical physics" claims are not supported by science and why, at the quantum level and everyday level, human actions can affect some aspects of reality but not other aspects. This distinction is also helpful when we ask, "Are scientific theories constructed or discovered? Yes, between and our theories about the solar system were constructed and they did change. But our theories improved because we discovered more about an

independent reality that was not constructed by us. In order to construct accurate theories about a human-independent reality like the solar system our theory construction must be constrained and guided by what we discover about this reality. By contrast, if sociologists are constructing theories about a society that is a humanly-constructed reality, there will be interactions between theories they are constructing and the reality they are describing-and-explaining, which if the sociologists and their theories are influential in society will let them help "construct the reality" of the society. But they can do this only because society is a humanly-constructed reality, not a human-independent reality Does it matter? Yes, the distinction between independent reality and constructed reality is extremely important. A failure to make this distinction, or a stubborn refusal to make it, will cause confusion. Therefore, if we want our thinking to be more precise and less confused, we will always ask "Which type of reality is it? But in the new non-correspondence "relativist" definitions, truth is determined by human decisions based on human criteria, not by reality: In a consensus definition of truth, a truth-claim is considered to be true within a community if it is accepted by most people in this community. With a pragmatic definition of truth, a statement is true if it produces satisfactory results when it is used as a basis for decisions and actions. To avoid confusion, I think the word "truth" should be reserved for a correspondence definition of truth. We should not use the word "truth" in any other way, and when other people do use "truth" in another way, we should challenge them, gently and logically. The non-correspondence definitions of truth – with defining by consensus truth is a majority opinion , coherence truth is a logically coherent system of beliefs , pragmatism truth is a useful principle , or in other ways – are humanly constructed claims about what is true, so they should be called truth-claims or theories, beliefs, principles, Just call it a truth-claim and explain that when you say "truth" you mean correspondence-based truth which is reality-determined truth. We should distinguish between absolute truth which certainly does exist if we use a correspondence definition of truth and absolute knowledge which seems impossible for humans to attain. Because "absolute truth" is overpopulated with potential meanings, which can lead to confusion and misunderstanding, we should avoid this term by replacing it with terms whose meaning is more precise or clearly explain the intended meaning. And this pair of terms has an extra disadvantage, because "truth" is used in a way that, in my opinion, it should never be used. Similarly, the meaning of a Biblical truth is not clear. It would be more accurate to say that you think the Bible makes this truth-claim about reality about some aspect of the spiritual realm, or human history, or a Bible-based principle for living, Why is proof impossible, and how can scientists develop confidence? This is discussed in *The Limits of Logic* , which explains why modern science has given up the quest for certainty, and has decided to aim for a high degree of plausibility, for a rational way to determine "what is a good way to bet. But in science, and for the important questions in life, proof is impossible. If status is extremely high or low, we can choose to accept or reject a theory. But we have options because, in addition to this binary yes-or-no choice, we can also think in terms of a status a degree of confidence that can vary along a continuum ranging from high to low, from yes to no, with varying degrees of confidence between these extremes. An appropriate humility recognizes that, based on evidence and logic, in some situations only a low level of confidence is justifiable, while in other situations a high degree of confidence which is almost a certainty is justified. Is relativism illogical and self-refuting? Some of its critics make this claim, but I disagree. Yes, "proof is impossible" but rationally justified confidence is possible, and sometimes "a high degree of confidence which is almost a certainty is justified. I think serious flaws do exist, but they are not simple and obvious, so careful thinking is required. In , based on the best available evidence and logic, a sun-centered theory deserved an intermediate status, and it received a mixed reception. Some scholars argued for it, others were against it, and everyone was able to support their view with evidence, logic, and philosophy. During a year period, from to , the human consensus changed from almost-certainty but with a mismatch between confidence and truth, due to widespread belief in a theory that was wrong to intermediate levels of confidence that gradually, due to new evidence and improved analysis, shifted in favor of a sun-centered theory back to almost-certainty with belief in a theory that we now claim, with a high degree of confidence that approaches certainty, actually is true. But during these changes in

humanly constructed theories about truth, the actual truth " which was determined by human-independent reality, by the actual motions of the earth, planets, and sun " remained what it was, unchanged by human debates. Based on the Bible, Christians claim that God created the universe, and Jesus was resurrected from the dead. This depends only on reality, on what actually happened in history. Because these claims are about independent reality, their truth or falsity does not depend on what you or I choose to believe. But each of us has a worldview, which includes our beliefs about claims made in the Bible, and this "personally constructed internal reality" does influence our attitudes and actions. These claims about "science in the Bible" are discussed in Science-Religion Conflict? Can we prove God? Truth does exist, even though we cannot know with absolute certainty what this truth is. Despite the impossibility of proof, evidence [historical, scientific, personal, interpersonal] can affect our estimates for the plausibility of various worldviews. God wants us to live by faith A strong faith is consistent with a humble recognition that other people, thinking rationally, can reach different conclusions about the worldview they have chosen to "live by faith. Are we thinking about the truth which is determined by reality or a truth-claim which is a human theory about reality? Is the reality analogous to movements in the solar system human-independent reality or is it like driving on a specified side of the road humanly constructed reality? These two types of reality have different characteristics, and claims that are rational for one type can be silly for the other type. For either type of reality, the certainty of logically rigorous proof is impossible, but logically justifiable confidence is possible. For human-independent reality, a high level of confidence in a theory cannot make it true. But even though we cannot control the independent reality of our solar system, we individually and in groups do "construct our reality" when we construct our worldviews and partially construct our situations. The questions, "does God exist? But another question, "should we use the standards of God as described in the Bible as the basis for our individual and societal behavior? Reflections on Postmodernism and Modernism Postmodernism and Language Postmodernists emphasize the importance of language, which affects how we think and how we interact with each other. Yes, language is important in our thinking, communicating, and constructing of theories, as discussed in "Using Precise Language" above. Postmodernists are skillfully using language to support their views and increase their influence. Non-postmodernists should pay more attention to the uses of language in society. When people ask "Where is the proof? Unfortunately, the use of an unreasonably high standard if we demand proof tends to reinforce the skepticism of relativism and postmodernism, as discussed below. Modernism and Confidence appropriate humility is not the same as maximum humility: Sometimes the evidence for a truth-claim is so strong that, for practical purposes, it seems rational to adopt a feeling of certainty about the truth of this claim, to consider it "proved beyond a reasonable doubt. For these claims, it is appropriate to say "there is very little rational justification for humility. A reason for caution is the recognition that some theories we once thought were correct re: Similarly, some of our current theories could also be wrong. A potential source of error is the widespread assumption of methodological naturalism in science, which guarantees that " no matter what is being studied, or what is the evidence " the scientific conclusion must always be that "it happened due to natural causes. Coexistence and Partial Agreement Currently, postmodernism supplements modernism, but has not replaced it. Both perspectives exert strong influence.

relativism which would render any research project self-destructive. Researching in such a domain puts one on an intellectual see-saw, struggling, on the one hand, to try not to be 'essentialist' in the research.

Martin Heidegger[edit] Martin Heidegger rejected the philosophical basis of the concepts of "subjectivity" and "objectivity" and asserted that similar grounding oppositions in logic ultimately refer to one another. Instead of resisting the admission of this paradox in the search for understanding, Heidegger requires that we embrace it through an active process of elucidation he called the " hermeneutic circle ". He stressed the historicity and cultural construction of concepts while simultaneously advocating the necessity of an atemporal and immanent apprehension of them. In this vein, he asserted that it was the task of contemporary philosophy to recover the original question of or "openness to" Dasein translated as Being or Being-there present in the Presocratic philosophers but normalized, neutered, and standardized since Plato. To do this, however, a non-historical and, to a degree, self-referential engagement with whatever set of ideas, feelings or practices would permit both the non-fixed concept and reality of such a continuity was requiredâ€”a continuity permitting the possible experience, possible existence indeed not only of beings but of all differences as they appeared and tended to develop. Such a conclusion led Heidegger to depart from the phenomenology of his teacher Husserl and prompt instead an ironically anachronistic return to the yet-unasked questions of Ontology , a return that in general did not acknowledge an intrinsic distinction between phenomena and noumena or between things in themselves de re and things as they appear see qualia: In this latter premise, Heidegger shares an affinity with the late Romantic philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche , another principal forerunner of post-structuralist and postmodernist thought. In direct contradiction to what have been typified as modernist perspectives on epistemology , Foucault asserted that rational judgment, social practice, and what he called " biopower " are not only inseparable but co-determinant. Instead, Foucault focused on the ways in which such constructs can foster cultural hegemony , violence, and exclusion. His writings have had a major influence on the larger body of postmodern academic literature. This crisis, insofar as it pertains to academia, concerns both the motivations and justification procedures for making research claims: As formal conjecture about real-world issues becomes inextricably linked to automated calculation, information storage, and retrieval, such knowledge becomes increasingly "exteriorised" from its knowers in the form of information. Knowledge thus becomes materialized and made into a commodity exchanged between producers and consumers; it ceases to be either an idealistic end-in-itself or a tool capable of bringing about liberty or social benefit; it is stripped of its humanistic and spiritual associations, its connection with education, teaching, and human development, being simply rendered as "data"â€”omnipresent, material, unending, and without any contexts or pre-requisites. The value-premises upholding academic research have been maintained by what Lyotard considers to be quasi-mythological beliefs about human purpose, human reason, and human progressâ€”large, background constructs he calls " metanarratives ". These metanarratives still remain in Western society but are now being undermined by rapid Informatization and the commercialization of the university and its functions. We are now controlled not by binding extra-linguistic value paradigms defining notions of collective identity and ultimate purpose, but rather by our automatic responses to different species of "language games" a concept Lyotard imports from J. Richard Rorty[edit] Richard Rorty argues in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* that contemporary analytic philosophy mistakenly imitates scientific methods. In addition, he denounces the traditional epistemological perspectives of representationalism and correspondence theory that rely upon the independence of knowers and observers from phenomena and the passivity of natural phenomena in relation to consciousness. As a proponent of anti-foundationalism and anti-essentialism within a pragmatist framework, he echoes the postmodern strain of conventionalism and relativism , but opposes much of postmodern thinking with his commitment to social liberalism. Jean Baudrillard[edit] Jean Baudrillard , in *Simulacra and Simulation* , introduced the concept that reality or the principle of " The Real " is short-circuited by the

interchangeability of signs in an era whose communicative and semantic acts are dominated by electronic media and digital technologies. Baudrillard proposes the notion that, in such a state, where subjects are detached from the outcomes of events political, literary, artistic, personal, or otherwise, events no longer hold any particular sway on the subject nor have any identifiable context; they therefore have the effect of producing widespread indifference, detachment, and passivity in industrialized populations. He claimed that a constant stream of appearances and references without any direct consequences to viewers or readers could eventually render the division between appearance and object indiscernible, resulting, ironically, in the "disappearance" of mankind in what is, in effect, a virtual or holographic state, composed only of appearances. For Baudrillard, "simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or a reality: Eclectic in his methodology, Jameson has continued a sustained examination of the role that periodization continues to play as a grounding assumption of critical methodologies in humanities disciplines. He has contributed extensive effort to explicating the importance of concepts of Utopia and Utopianism as driving forces in the cultural and intellectual movements of modernity, and outlining the political and existential uncertainties that may result from the decline or suspension of this trend in the theorized state of postmodernity. Like Susan Sontag, Jameson served to introduce a wide audience of American readers to key figures of the 20th century continental European intellectual left, particularly those associated with the Frankfurt School, structuralism, and post-structuralism. Thus, his importance as a "translator" of their ideas to the common vocabularies of a variety of disciplines in the Anglo-American academic complex is equally as important as his own critical engagement with them. Douglas Kellner [edit] In *Analysis of the Journey*, a journal birthed from postmodernism, Douglas Kellner insists that the "assumptions and procedures of modern theory" must be forgotten. His terms defined in the depth of postmodernism are based on advancement, innovation, and adaptation. Extensively, Kellner analyzes the terms of this theory in real-life experiences and examples. Kellner used science and technology studies as a major part of his analysis; he urged that the theory is incomplete without it. The scale was larger than just postmodernism alone; it must be interpreted through cultural studies where science and technology studies play a huge role. The reality of the September 11 attacks on the United States of America is the catalyst for his explanation. This catalyst is used as a great representation due to the mere fact of the planned ambush and destruction of "symbols of globalization", insinuating the World Trade Center. One of the numerous yet appropriate definitions of postmodernism and the qualm aspect aids this attribute to seem perfectly accurate. He questions if the attacks are only able to be understood in a limited form of postmodern theory due to the level of irony. Similar to the act of September 11 and the symbols that were interpreted through this postmodern ideal, he continues to even describe this as "semiotic systems" that people use to make sense of their lives and the events that occur in them. He finds strength in theorist Baudrillard and his idea of Marxism. The conclusion he depicts is simple:

Chapter 8 : Relativism - SAGE Research Methods

Therefore, the choice of research methods in education is more than a technical exercise but is concerned with understanding how the researcher views the world (Cohen et al,).

The idea that norms and values are born out of conventions can be traced back to the Greek historian Herodotus c. Franz Boas, responsible for the founding of social anthropology in the U. Since those early days, social anthropologists have come to develop more nuanced approaches to cultural relativism see for instance Geertz ; however, its core tenet, a claim to the equal standing of all cultural perspectives and values which co-vary with their cultural and social background, has remained constant. Cultural relativists justify their position by recourse to a combination of empirical, conceptual and normative considerations: Claims a "d are open to a variety of objections. Some anthropologists and biologists have argued against the empirical assumption of the variability of cultures and have disputed its extent. Kinship, death and its attendant rituals of mourning, birth, the experience of empathy, expressions of sympathy and fear, and the biological needs that give rise to these, are some of the constant elements of human experience that belie the seeming diversity reported by ethnographers Brown Moreover, Moody-Adams , among others, has argued that cultures are not integrated wholes that could determine uni-directionally the beliefs and experiences of their members; they are porous, riddled with inconsistencies and amenable to change. Finally, d is under pressure from the very relativism it advocates. An influential form of descriptive cultural relativism owes its genesis to linguistics. In the case of the Hopi, the claim was that their language imposes a conception of time very different from that of the speakers of the Indo-European languages. However, the empirical work by the psychologists Berlin and Key and later by Eleanor Rosch pointed to the universality of color terms. The linguistic theories of Noam Chomsky regarding the universality of grammar were also widely taken to have discredited linguistic relativity. Similar claims have been made about emotions, object representation, and memory. Historical relativism, or historicism, is the diachronic version of cultural relativism. Historicism originated in reaction to the universalist tendencies of the Enlightenment but proved most influential in the social sciences, particularly in the hands of 19th century theorists such as Karl Marx and Max Weber. Oswald Spengler, the then-influential turn-of-the-century German historian and philosopher, also declared that: Karl Mannheim, to whom we owe the sub-discipline of sociology of knowledge, pronounced that historicism is a significant intellectual force that epitomizes our worldview Weltanschauung. The historicist principle not only organizes, like an invisible hand, the work of the cultural sciences Geisteswissenschaften , but also permeates everyday thinking. In this sense, conceptual relativism is often characterized as a metaphysical doctrine rather than as variant of epistemic or cultural relativism. The underlying rationale for this form of relativism is the anti-realist thesis that the world does not present itself to us ready-made or ready-carved; rather we supply different, and at times incompatible, ways of categorizing and conceptualizing it. Reflection on the connections between mind and the world, rather than empirical observations of historic and cultural diversity, is the primary engine driving various forms of conceptual relativism, but data from anthropology and linguistics are also used in its support. The conceptual relativist adds, as Kant did not, that human beings may construct the real in different ways thanks to differences in language or culture. In the 20th century, a variety of positions sympathetic to conceptual relativism were developed. But his thesis of the indeterminacy of translation makes the stronger claim that different incompatible manuals of translation, or conceptual schemes, can account for one and the same verbal behavior and the indeterminacy resides at the level of facts rather than our knowledge, a position that leads to unavoidable ontological relativity. According to Putnam, our most basic metaphysical categories, e. What counts as an object itself, he argues, is determined by and hence is relative to the ontological framework we opt for. The key difficulty facing conceptual relativism is that of formulating the position in a coherent but non-trivial manner. Trivial versions allow that the world can be described in different ways, but make no claims to the incompatibility of these descriptions. The charge of

incoherence arises from the claim that there could be genuinely conflicting and equally true accounts or descriptions of one and the same phenomenon. In circumstances where a Carnapian counts three objects A, B and C, a mereologist will count seven: As Putnam puts it: The suggestion is that what is by commonsense standards the same situation can be described in many different ways, depending on how we use the words. Relativists respond that both answers are correct, each relative to the conceptual scheme it invokes. So, once we accept the insight that there is no Archimedean vantage point for choosing among conflicting frameworks, we no longer face a genuine contradiction. The response invokes, often implicitly, a relativized conception of truth, which as we shall see below, faces its own difficulties. What is true or false is always relative to a conceptual, cultural, or linguistic framework. For instance, relativism about logic may be restated as a view according to which the standing of logical truths including truths about consequence relations is relative to cultures or cognitive schemes. Ethical relativism can be seen as the claim that the truth of ethical judgments, if such truths exist, is relative to context or culture. If truth is to be seen as equally applicable to all areas of discourse and also unitary, rather than domain specific or plural, then alethic relativism is not only a strong form of global relativism but it also entails the denial of the possibility of more local forms of relativism because all localized relativistic claims are also attempts at relativizing truth seemingly in a particular domain of discourse. For instance, should relative truth be understood as a modification on an already familiar strategy for thinking about truth? The strongest and most persistent charge leveled against all types of relativism, but global alethic relativism in particular, is the accusation of self-refutation. Here is for instance Harvey Siegel: This incoherence charge is by far the most difficult problem facing the relativist. It is worth noting that attempts to overcome the problem by appealing to the notion of relative truth appear not to succeed. Many versions of relativism rely on such a notion, but it is very difficult to make sense of it. Protagoras, on the other hand, believes his doctrine to be true. Therefore, Protagoras must believe that his own doctrine is false see Theaetetus: On this view, Plato begs the question on behalf of an absolutist conception of truth Burnyeat a: Protagoras, the relativists counter, could indeed accept that his own doctrine is false for those who accept absolutism but continue believing that his doctrine is true for him. He could also try to persuade others to become the sort of thinker for whom relativism is true without being entangled in self-contradiction. Such an effort at persuasions, however, could involve Protagoras in a performative contradiction as the relativist cannot assume that her arguments are good for persuading others. Ordinarily, the very act of defending a philosophical position commits us to the dialectical move of attempting to convince our interlocutors of the superior value of what we are arguing for. The relativist cannot make such a commitment and therefore his attempts to persuade others to accept his position may be pragmatically self-refuting. The relativist can avoid the standard charge of self-refutation by accepting that relativism cannot be proven true in any non-relative sense—viz. In other words, if Protagoras really believes in relativism why would he bother to argue for it? This form of alethic relativism allows for argument and persuasion among people who initially disagree, for despite their disagreement they may share or come to share a framework. Protagoras may, on this reinterpretation, be trying to persuade his interlocutor that if she were to reason cogently by her own standards from their shared framework, she would accept relativism. However, it is not clear how the relativist could share a framework with the absolutist on the nature of truth or what argumentative strategies he can use to convert the absolutist without presupposing a shared relativist or absolutist conceptions of truth. A second strand of the self-refutation argument focuses on the nature and role of truth. But the relativists reject the quick move that presupposes the very conception of truth they are at pains to undermine and have offered sophisticated approaches of defense. Shogenji for a criticism of Hales on this point. It has also been claimed that alethic relativism gives rise to what J. One version of the argument, advanced most notably by Gareth Evans As Evans puts it, a theory that permits a subject to deduce merely that a particular utterance is now correct but later will be incorrect cannot assist the subject in deciding what to say, nor in interpreting the remarks of others. What should we aim at, or take others to be aiming at?. The relativists however, could respond that truth is relative to a group conceptual scheme, framework and they take speakers to be aiming a

truth relative to the scheme that they and their interlocutors are presumed to share. The difficulty with this approach is that it seems to make communication across frameworks impossible. Such a response, however, will be answerable to the charge of incoherence raised by Donald Davidson against both alethic and conceptual relativism. According to Davidson, the principle of charity—the assumption that other speakers by and large speak truly by our lights—is a pre-requisite of all interpretation. He takes this to imply that there could not be languages or conceptual schemes that we cannot in principle understand and interpret, in other words, if a system of signs L is not recognizable as a language by us then L is not a language. Languages are either inter-translatable and hence not radically different from ours, or incommensurable and beyond our ability to recognize them as languages. Davidson The relativist, in effect, places other speakers and their languages beyond our recognitional reach and thereby undermines the initial claim that they could be radically different or incommensurable. Epistemic relativism is the thesis that cognitive norms that determine what counts as knowledge, or whether a belief is rational, justifiable, etc. The three key assumptions underlying epistemic relativism are: It makes no sense to ask whether a belief is justified simpliciter; we can only ask questions about justification relative to an epistemic system, which casts doubts on the very possibility of objectivity. One crucial question facing epistemic relativism is how to identify and individuate alternative epistemic systems. A simple and quite commonly used example is the contrast between scientific and religious belief systems. Boghossian has been criticized however for his characterization of epistemic relativism. And on this basis, Boghossian concludes that there is no coherent way to formulate the position because the relativist in formulating his position and setting up the opposition between two or more alternative non-convergent epistemic systems cannot but assume the universality of at least some epistemic principles, including deduction, induction, warrant through empirical evidence, etc. Conceptions of rationality, and its key components of logic and justification, are some of the principles that are often used to differentiate between epistemic systems. Below we look at attempts at relativizing each. Rationality traditionally is seen as a cognitive virtue as well as a hallmark of the scientific method. The complex notion of rationality is intimately tied to requirements of consistency, justification, warrant and evidence for beliefs. Relativists about rationality cast doubt on the universal applicability of one or more of these features of rational thought, and deem them merely local epistemic values. Winch had argued that since standards of rationality in different societies do not always coincide, we should use only contextually and internally given criteria of rationality in our assessment of the systems of belief of other cultures and societies. Under the influence of the later Wittgenstein, he maintained that it does not make sense to speak of a universal standard of rationality because what is rational is decided by a backdrop of norms governing a given language and form of life. As outside observers, we are not in a position to impute irrationality or illogicality to the Azande or any other group whose practices and language-games may differ from ours. They, thereby, conclude that an all-out or strong relativism about rationality is not tenable. The weaker claim is that some elements of rationality, for instance what counts as good evidence or a better style of reasoning, could vary with historic conditions and traditions of enquiry and therefore a degree of relativization of such norms, without succumbing to irrationalism, is acceptable see Hacking and MacIntyre. Epistemic relativists maintain that the legitimacy of a justificatory system and the presumed strength of epistemic warrants are decided locally. Richard Rorty has made the influential claim that there is nothing to be said about either truth or rationality apart from descriptions of the familiar procedures of justification which a given society—ours—uses in one or another area of inquiry. Barry Barnes and David Bloor, for instance, have argued that different societies may have incompatible but internally coherent systems of logic because validity and rules of inference are defined by, and hence are relative to, the practices of a given community, rather than a priori universal restrictions on all thought. According to Bloor, The Azande have the same psychology as us but radically different institutions. If we relate logic to the psychology of reasoning we shall be inclined to say that they have the same logic; if we relate logic more closely to the institutional framework of thought then we shall incline to the view that the two cultures have different logics. The Azande, according to Evans-Prichard, believe that it is possible to

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identify a witch by examining the contents of his intestine through the use of a poison oracle. They also believe that Witchhood is inherited patrilineally. Since the Azande clan members are related to each other through the male line, it follows that if one person is shown to be a witch, then all the members of his clan must also be witches. Evans-Pritchard tells us that although the Azande see the sense of this argument they do not accept the conclusion; they seem to side-step the contradiction in their belief-system.

Chapter 9 : Postmodernist Epistemology - Relativism Unleashed? - SAGE Research Methods

Thus, surely, postmodernism can be, at least sometimes, the basis of moral and ethical relativism. Surely relativism (moral and cultural) is very widespread, and surely one can note that this is so without being hysterical.?

What began in the 1960s as an architectural movement has now influenced nearly every academic discipline in the humanities, from literary analysis to anthropology to education. Despite its far-reaching impact, postmodernism is difficult to define, largely because postmodernists themselves reject the idea that any phenomenon can be understood in just one way. Nonetheless, the following will attempt to introduce some of the core ideas of postmodernism, first by outlining its development in response to modernism, and then by looking at the work of several key postmodernist philosophers, including Lacan, Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida. The impact of postmodernism on education, in terms of student-teacher relationships, research, and curriculum development is discussed. Finally, because postmodernism is one of the most widely contested recent developments in academia, some of its criticism is also presented. What began in the early 1960s as an architectural movement has now touched nearly every academic discipline in the humanities, from literary analysis to anthropology to educational theory. In addition to its far-reaching impact, however, there are two other characteristics of the postmodern movement that deserve equal attention: Indeed, postmodernism has spawned disagreements within universities and academic departments that have no rivals in modern times. As Bloland explains, these disagreements often deteriorate into "bitter word warfare" p. It may seem surprising that a movement so pervasive and so contentious is also one that has yet to be clearly defined, as any attempt to provide a unitary definition would be antithetical to postmodernism itself. A promising place to begin might be with a brief discussion of what postmodernism is certainly not. And what it is against, as its name suggests, is modernism. Modernity defines a period of time beginning with the Enlightenment in the late eighteenth century; modernism refers, in part, to the central organizing principles of the Enlightenment itself. These principles are typically delineated as: And education as we know it, Usher and Edwards argue, is largely founded on these very same beliefs. If postmodernism is against modernity, and education itself is modeled upon modern principles, one might wonder how postmodernism and education can be reconciled? What does education look like in a postmodern world? Postmodernism resists universal, all-encompassing, fixed understandings of phenomena and thus attempting to provide a singular or totalizing understanding of postmodernism is necessarily a contradiction. Many individuals have contributed to postmodern thought, but particular names appear in the literature more than others. What happens when grand narratives are abandoned? According to Lyotard, in the absence of universals and totalizing theories, small narratives take their place and small narratives - given the mere fact that they are innumerable, yet each legitimate in its own right - create room for multiplicity of meaning Blake, et al. As Usher explains, "Performativity is a critical feature of incredulity where the questions asked of knowledge become not just - is it true? Therefore, text might refer to a theory of learning, rules of a game, a conversation, a film or a performance. Deconstruction aims to turn the logic of a text upon itself, "showing that there is an inherent contradiction concealed at the rational heart of Others argue that deconstruction is also affirmative and that Derrida is clear about what he wants to affirm. For Derrida, deconstruction brings into focus what has been excluded from the text, or otherness. Like Freud, Lacan agreed that subjectivity is largely determined by the unconscious and human desire. Unlike Freud, however, Lacan rejects the notion that desire can be explained by biology, or reduced to the idea of instincts or drives. Rather, desire is human, relational, constituted through language and unconscious. Rather, as Usher and Edwards explain, "If the self is always constructed through the way others see it, then it cannot be autonomous and coherent Kilgore emphasizes the decentered subject in relation to the educational setting when she describes the postmodern learner as "always becoming, always in process, always situated in a context that also is always becoming" p. Power Discussing key ideas of postmodernism in relation to a single scholar is somewhat arbitrary and an obvious oversimplification. Foucault, for example,

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talked about multiple The entire section is 4, words.