CHAPTER 4

A CONCEPTUAL CARTOGRAPHY OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION:

PARADIGMS AND PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATIONS

4.1 Introduction

As part of a conceptual historical analysis Chapter 3 explored the development of the concept of HRE; reflected on its rapport with associated pedagogical formations and explored the interrelationship with broader historical processes that shaped its meaning over time. Both the historical and spatial frames of meaning elucidation are thus employed in this study to provide for substantive conceptual engagement with the notion of HRE. This and consequent chapters will map the conceptual cartography of HRE (see section 2.6) as a way to explore how various paradigms, philosophical orientations, discourses and theoretical frameworks assign differentiated meanings to the concept of human rights and HRE (see section 4.7; Chapters 6 and 7).

The in-depth analysis of each of the major philosophical orientations within this chapter is necessitated by the importance of developing a solid conceptual cartography of HRE. As already demonstrated in section 2.6, the wide-ranging meanings of the concept of HRE and the relationships between them can only be illuminated through conceptual cartography which in turn requires a sound appreciation of how philosophical orientations and theoretical frameworks act as fundamental meaning-making influences. This chapter is essentially structured in the following way. It begins by analysing the basic propositions and critique of these paradigms and then extracts its conceptual implications for education and HRE.

Though the notion of 'paradigm' is mostly associated with world-views which, "within the domain of various scientific fields, facilitate the activity of study and research" (Edgar and Sedgwick, 2004:267), it also refers to conceptual models "as a set of concepts

and propositions that integrate them into a meaningful configuration" (Fawcett, 1989: 2). 'Paradigms' thus refers to both conceptual frameworks for research methodological considerations and general sociological perspectives. It further also refers to the philosophical backgrounds that shape the way in which phenomena are perceived and explained. HRE, as a phenomenon, is viewed differently within different conceptual frameworks. These frameworks can be mapped in various ways and are choreographed within diverse theoretical traditions. They include a range of possibilities stretching from the universal narratives of human rights instruments to the mini-narratives based on contextualised understanding. Moreover, it traverses various philosophical and theoretical orientations from Greek Stoicism to the various post-modern injunctions. Conceptual cartography is used as a tool to present the various conceptual frameworks that inform the meanings and shifts in meaning of HRE. Though a historical account of HRE is central to understanding the concept of HRE, it is not sufficient. Likewise, a typological and definitional analysis of HRE is only possible as a consequence of conceptual cartography. The various conceptual frameworks each presuppose a variety of meanings of HRE and these frameworks in essence represent the diverse habitats of the meaning of HRE.

The four broad conceptual frameworks, i.e. paradigms and philosophical orientations that will be discussed are positivism, interpretivism, critical theory and post modernism as they predominantly influence the meaning-making processes related to the concept of HRE. The pre-suppositions of these frameworks will be articulated in order to establish their implications for understanding the concept of HRE. Conceptual frameworks are presented in diverse ways and are known by bewildering designations and labels. They are sometimes referred to as paradigms (Kuhn, 1970), philosophical positions (Pring, 2000), views (Carr and Kemmis, 1986), rationalities (Giroux, 1981), theoretical frameworks (Henning, 2004) and models of social science (Fay, 1975: 13), all with their distinct meanings and framings. An even more puzzling array of perspectives derived from the feminist, religious and cultural frameworks engage with these broader philosophical "positions" in a multitude of ways in addition to theoretical constructs generated within the post-modern and postcolonialist embrace. For the purposes of this study, the terms paradigm, theoretical framework, conceptual framework and theory are

substantively synonymous though they only differ from one another as referents within the structural hierarchy of knowledge (see Fawcett, 1989).

4.2 Knowledge and Interest

Though the conception of the scientific endeavour in relation to human needs and interest has always tacitly been acknowledged, the most appropriate starting point for constructing and articulating these theoretical frameworks is found in Habermas's work on *Knowledge and Human Interest* (1972). In response and contributing to what has become known as the *Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (Adorno, 1976), Habermas argued that knowledge "was created in communities of inquiry, guided by sets of rules or conventions for warranting propositions and theories … expressive of three deep-seated anthropological interests of the human species, in control, in understanding and in freedom from dogma" (Young, R. 1990: 32). These interests inform our fixation with various branches of knowledge (Holub, 1991: 9) and influence our research-methodological approaches to inquiry. Moreover, they guide our thinking about education theory and practice. The technical interest correlates with "control", the practical with "understanding" and the emancipatory interest with "freedom from dogma". Subsequent to but not determined by Habermas's treatise on *Knowledge and Human Interest,* Fay (1975) explored the various models in relation to *Social Theory and Political Practice* focussing on the relationship between theory and practice. Giroux (1981) on the other hand, demonstrated the implications of these "rationalities" for education in *Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling.* Carr and Kemmis (1986), in similar vein, reinterpreted the knowledge-interest distinctions for the purposes of accentuating their bearing on educational theory and practice in *Becoming Critical.*

Essentially, for Habermas, all knowledge is constructed in terms of three fundamental "interests". The research theoretical frameworks that correlate with these "human interests" can be mapped as Positivism (technical interest: empirical-analytical sciences), Interpretivism (practical interest: historical-hermeneutic sciences) and Critical Theory (emancipatory interest) (Giddens, 1985: 127). Habermas's position on "knowledge

constitutive interests" did not go unchallenged and his difficulty in defending the "status" of these interests as *quasi-transcendental* in the Kantian sense, made him turn to the paradigm of language (Holub, 1991: 10) in his later work on a *Theory of Communicative Action.* His subsequent intellectual endeavours certainly exhibited shifts as he discarded some of the notions in *Knowledge and Interest* (Giddens, 1985: 137). However, his distinction of the aspects of societal life that generate "knowledge constitutive interest", remain a useful tool for categorising the various theoretical frameworks and their implications for HRE. The debates within the philosophy of science and sociological theories is of cardinal importance to human rights and human rights education since they posit diverse frameworks for analysing, understanding and practising human rights and HRE.

Despite the usefulness of Habermas's knowledge-interests mapping, Pring (2000:89) cautioned that "any map could have been drawn differently, making further distinctions and blurring others". In close comparison to Pring's sentiments, Paulston (Paulston and Liebman, 1993: 13-14) presents us with a 'postmodern' map that situates "paradigms and theories on the spatial surface of paper" where the boundaries are not fixed and the relationships are infinite (see section 2.6).

4.3 Positivism: The empirical-analytical framework[20]

4.3.1 The Origins of Positivism

Also referred to as the classical research paradigm, "Positivism" is not a very informative label and includes a variety of schools of thought that view experience and reason as the bedrock for epistemological claims. "Epistemology" refers to theories of knowledge and the basic tendency of positivism is the search for a foundation on which to justify knowledge claims. This resulted in an epistemological orientation called "Foundationalism" which essentially consists of two branches, Cartesian Rationalism and

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[20] Some of the ideas in this section were presented in my M.Ed thesis: Aksienavorsing en Positivisme: 'n Epistemologiese Bespreking (1996), University of the Western Cape.

Baconian Empiricism. Descartes and Bacon, though subscribing to different epistemological positions, laid the basis in the 17th century for the development of Comtean Positivism in the 19th century.

The early positivists' primary concerns were not confined to epistemological frameworks, but aimed at developing a unified method for science. Bacon for instance attempted a "reconstruction of philosophy" (Rohmann, 2000: 34) and was primarily concerned with advancing a "new methodology for the sciences" (Mouton, 1987: 3). He criticised Scholastic philosophy as theoretical and rejected the deductive model of scientific research. The goal of philosophy and science was to understand and control nature and the theoretical explanations necessary to achieve this goal are best developed by an inductive model of scientific research by which general hypotheses are derived from concrete observations and rigorous testing. This inductive reasoning, according to Bacon, should also form the basis for the methodology of the social sciences with the aim of social reform and progress (Mouton, 1987: 3). Subsequently, the ideal of the methodological unity of the social and natural sciences and the adherence to a foundationalist epistemology formed the bedrock of the development of Positivism in the 19th century.

The term "Positivism" was first coined by Claude Henri Saint-Simon in the early 19th century and later further developed by Auguste Comte. Saint-Simon believed that all sciences would become *positive*, i.e. based on a foundationalist epistemology capable of producing verified and empirically generated knowledge. Though Saint-Simon emphasized Empiricism as the primary epistemological framework, Comte, on the other hand, held the view that both Empiricism and Rationalism are crucial epistemological principles …"science depends upon reason and observation duly combined" (Bryant, 1985: 14). Comte also broadened the aim of science to produce general theories under which all phenomena can be explained as opposed to simply verifying facts. The work of Comte, known as the chief exponent of Positivism, can historically be placed between 1830 and 1842 and is sometimes regarded as simply a systemization of the existing positivist ideas of that time that include Rationalism and Empiricism (Bryant: 1985: 11).

However, it was only between 1907 and 1929, with the establishment of the Vienna Circle, that the different positivist trajectories were unified under Logical Positivism, later known as Logical Empiricism (Mouton, 1987: 11-12).

4.3.2 Epistemology: Knowledge, Certainty and Objectivity

The scientific credibility of Positivism rests on the scientific method to generate certainty about knowledge claims. This certainty is generated by a foundationalist epistemology which refers to the belief that in order for an item to be labelled "knowledge", it had to be securely established by showing that it has a *secure foundation* (Phillips and Burbules, 2000: 6). Rene Descartes claimed that "reason" (Rohnmann, 2000: 333) is this secure foundation and by using rational faculties argued "what could not possibly be rationally doubted and seemed indubitable true should be accepted as true" (Phillips and Burbules, 2000: 6). This rationalist position, adhered to by Spinoza and Leibniz as well, embraced mathematical logic as the only trustworthy method for obtaining truth. On the other hand, Francis Bacon argued that all knowledge derives from experience, i.e. the direct observation of phenomena. Locke and Hume have developed this epistemological explanation (Empiricism) further in the 17th and 18th centuries. Both Rationalism and Empiricism constitute foundationalist epistemological frameworks which is captured by Doniela (1984: 12) in the following statement:

> *Human cognitive powers are said to consist of two sources or faculties:* *reason (rationalism) as thinking or intuition, and the* *senses (empiricism) as* *they are involved in the perception of everyday visible, audible, touchable* *and so on objects. Rationalism claims that reason as a type of cognition is* *far superior to the senses. This claim of reason's superiority has been* *responsible, historically, for the conflict between rationalism on the one* *hand and empiricism on the other. Empiricism ... rejected the rationalist* *claim by asserting that all knowledge comes from sense experience.*

A foundationalist epistemology presupposes a particular observational stance for the researcher since it advocates that knowledge should be generated uncontaminated from the values and beliefs of the researcher. Observation cannot happen without theory though the knowledge generated should correspond with an empirical reality and be

tested against empirical facts before qualifying as scientific knowledge. This foundationalist epistemology is the basis on which knowledge claims are made, which confers the status of "certainty" onto these knowledge claims.

"Objectivity" in the positivist tradition, is derived from various levels. First, knowledge is "objective" because it correlates with an independent reality. Language, the medium in which knowledge is articulated, acts as a direct representation of this reality in a nominalist tradition i.e. reality is constituted by individual "facts" and "objects" autonomous from observer interpretation. Second, the qualities of the inquirers allow them to identify their value judgements by employing a methodology that can shield research from human interpretation. Fay (1975: 20-21) captured this positivist belief as follows:

> *One can grasp the laws which govern the world – social as well as natural – only if one throws off these adolescent habits of interpreting the world in terms of one's own needs and values, and adopts the mature stance of neutrality vis-à-vis one's social world, studying its workings as they are and not how one wishes them to be or how one thinks they ought to be. Only then will the mechanisms which determine this social world reveal themselves as they are. It is science and only science, which adopts this stance, and it does so because it only employs concepts which are rooted in intersubjectively evident observations, because it employs techniques of experimentation which are reproducible, because it utilises reasoning processes which are rigorous and uniformly applicable, and because it accepts explanations only when they predict outcomes which are publicly verifiable. But the usefulness of science lies not only in the fact that it provides an objectively true account of how the world functions, but also in the sort of account that it gives.*

"Neutrality" and "objectivity" are thus achieved through verification, or in the Popperian tradition, falsification. However, verifiability does not indicate "truthfulness". It simply puts forward a criterion to determine the scientific status and meaningfulness of knowledge i.e. a statement is scientific if it is empirically verifiable or a statement is meaningful only if it can be tested empirically. Since value judgements are not empirically verifiable, they are in fact meaningless and unscientific.

4.3.3 Ontology and Explanation

The "sort of account" that Fay refers to in the above quotation, became known as the "deductive-nomological" explanation, the "covering law model" and the "hypethetico-deductive model" of explanation (see Hempel, 1965; Popper, 1959; and Nagel, 1961). Central to this explanation is the assumption that the world is constituted by causal patterns which can be used to explain phenomena and occurrences.

In critically reflecting on this notion of scientific explanation, Fay (1975: 21) observed that scientific investigation…

> *gives us causal laws of the type, if C then E under situation X, in which C, E and X are variables which are specified in terms of observational properties or in terms of some relation to observational properties. Moreover, science fits these causal laws into a deductive chain of wider generality, so that a system of causal laws is formed wherein widely divergent variables are related to one another in a clearly specified and definite way. It is through such systems that one begins to grasp how apparently unrelated phenomena are intimately connected, such that through the manipulation of one variable a whole host of predictable outcomes will occur. It is this ability to predict results that is the basis of the power which scientific knowledge gives to men.*

The usefulness and meaningfulness of knowledge are thus determined by its potentiality and functionality for prediction and control which for Fay (1975) results in 'technological politics" and for Giroux (1981: 9) gave rise to "technocratic rationality" which takes as "its guiding interest the elements of control, prediction and certainty". Furthermore, positivism, in its quest for a unitary science, holds the view that the social sciences can be conceived as a body of knowledge comparable to that of the natural sciences. This tendency resulted in what Habermas (McCarthy, 1984: 41) described as "Scientism".

The ontological underpinnings of the covering law model assume a specific nature of reality as constituted by concrete atoms and granules which can be uncovered by empirical observations. This independent granular reality can be translated into precise

descriptions and explanations by employing language in a nominalist sense to present an atomistic world-view in law like hypotheses and generalizations.

4.3.4 The Critical Rationalism of Karl Popper

Karl Popper is generally not viewed as a positivist and Phillips and Burbules (2000) are at pains to describe his orientation as postpositivist in *Postpositivism and Educational Research.* For others, like Fay (1975: 13), Habermas (1976: 203), Lloyd (1983: 13) and Gellner (1986: 58), Popper's theoretical positions were infused with a positivist residue. Though it is useful to treat his orientations as different from logical positivism and naïve empiricism, to my mind Popper represents the most sophisticated formulations of the positivist tradition, especially his efforts to retain empiricism as a determining facet of epistemology and the logical conclusion that "falsification" (replacing verification) is unworkable without "granular metaphysics" which is a positivist ontological position.

Popper's first contact with the Logical Positivist of the Vienna Circle was in 1926 and since then he has written a number of articles critiquing the Baconian variation of induction. He was (1976a: 88) certainly of the opinion that his treatise in *Logik der Forschung* in 1934 represented the death of positivism … an extinct philosophical species. According to Popper (1989b: 1) he solved the problem of induction, which is premised on the development of valid law-like statements based on accumulated observations and experiments, in 1927. The assumption that a series of observations of phenomena X causally result in phenomena Y does not necessarily mean that it will always be the case. Theories, accumulated law-like statements, can therefore not be inferred from observations and cannot rationally be justified by observations. Furthermore, for Popper (1976a: 80) there is a direct symmetry between induction and verification because both assume that theories can be unequivocally proved by observation and experimentation. Verifiable evidence thus serves the same purpose of induction, that is, to formulate law-like statements that are universal and able to explain past and future events.

Since the verification principle of logical positivism has been used as a demarcation criterion to distinguish between science and non- or quasi science as well as a criterion to determine the meaningfulness of scientific statements, it conflates the verifiability of a statement with its meaningfulness and scientific character. Popper (1989a: 40) rejects the verification principle as a crude demarcation criterion and a misplaced arbiter of meaningfulness. In rejecting the verification principle, Popper also discarded induction as a scientific method. He argued that a statement could not be inductively verified as a universal law because a singular observation to the contrary will falsify the statement. Scientific progress thus moves deductively.

> *Progress consisted in moving towards theories which tell us more and more - theories of greater content. But the more a theory says the more it excludes or forbids, and the greater are the opportunities for falsifying it ... Scientific progress turned out not to consist in the accumulation of observations but in the overthrow of less good theories and their replacement by better ones. This view implied that scientific theories, if they are not falsified, for ever remain hypotheses or conjectures (Popper, 1976a: 79).*

Popper built the deductive method of science around "conjectures and refutations" and falsification or testability.

> *The critical method, the method of trial and error, (consists of) proposing bold hypotheses, and exposing them to the severest criticism, in order to detect where we have erred. We start our investigation with problems. The solution, always tentative, consists in a theory, a hypothesis, a conjecture (1976a: 86).*

A hypothesis remains conjectural since the future holds the possibility for its falsification. Theories develop because scientists frame hypotheses (conjectures) in response to a problem-situation deductively. The scientist then sets off to falsity the conjecture and progressively eliminates shortcomings in the hypothesis through increased empirical content. If a hypothesis withstands various tests and efforts at falsification, it is conditionally accepted as a corroborated hypothesis. Empiricism, according to Popper can be retained because it differs from the naïve inductive empiricism of logical positivism. For Popper (1976b: 299), all observation is "theory-impregnated" in which

the scientist plays an "intensely active role" (1989b: 342). He thus rejects the value-free empirical observations of logical positivism and since hypothesis precedes observation, this method is deductive.

> *In science only observation and experiment may decide upon the acceptance or rejection of scientific statements, including laws and theories. The principle of empiricism can be fully preserved, since the fate of a theory, its acceptance or rejection, is decided by observation and experiment - by the result of tests. So as long as a theory stands up to the severest test we can design, it is accepted; if it does not, it is rejected. But it is never inferred, in any sense, from empirical evidence. Only the falsity of the theory can be inferred from empirical evidence, and this inference is a purely deductive one (Popper, 1989a: 54).*

Popper's "epistemology without a knowing subject" underpins his critical method of conjecture and refutations and the retention of deductive empiricism. Knowledge constitutes hypotheses and two competing hypotheses or theories which claim equal validity, are judged on the basis of their verisimilitude (level of truthfulness). The hypothesis (conjecture) which withstood the highest number of falsification efforts or refutations, has developed a higher verisimilitude because it offers, by implication, additional explanations. It thus represents a better estimation of the "truth" though never absolute…verisimilitude is a relative index of truth. Knowledge develops thus in an evolutionary way as the verisimilitude of hypotheses increase. The knowledge gained from this process is "objective" because it is derived from methodological objectivity.

> *The so-called objectivity of science lies in the objectivity of the critical method (conjectures and refutations). This means, above all, that no theory is beyond attack by criticism; and further, that the main instrument of logical criticism - the logical contradiction - is objective (Popper, 1976b: 90).*

Knowledge, for Popper, is essentially conjectural and never absolute though it can be objectively generated through the critical method. Within this Popperian version of an "anti-foundationalist" epistemology, "certainty" also becomes relative.

> *Absolute certainty is a limiting idea, and experienced or subjective certainty depends not merely upon degrees of belief and upon evidence, but also upon the situation - upon the importance of what is at stake (Popper,1989b: 79).*

Thus, as Popper will have it, absolute certainly is impossible but theories with high verisimilitude can exhibit practical functionality and usage because of their high level of certainty. Certainty, for him (1989b: 80), is a highly qualified notion.

> *There is no clash between the thesis that all objective knowledge is objectively conjectural, and the fact that we accept much of it (objective knowledge) not merely as "practically certain", but as certain in an extraordinarily highly qualified sense; that is, as much better tested than many theories we constantly trust our lives to.*

In arguing that there can "always be a certainty which is still more secure" (Popper, 1989b: 9), knowledge and certainty are forever conjectural. The teleological element of scientific endeavour is the search for "truth". For these purposes, according to Popper (1989b: 44) "truth is correspondence with the facts (or with reality); or more precisely, that a theory is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts". There is however, no criterion for truth.

> *We search for truth, but may not know when we have found it; we have no criterion of truth, but are nevertheless guided by the idea of truth as a regulative principle.*

Popper's notion of truth as a regulative principle provides for an acceptance that progression can be made towards truth through conjectures and refutations and the enhancement of the verisimilitude of theoretical hypotheses that will bring us closer to an "independent reality". The development of verisimilitude is a more realistic aim for science (Popper, 1989b: 57).

> *While we cannot ever have sufficiently good arguments in the empirical sciences for claiming that we have actually reached the truth, we can have strong and reasonably good arguments for claiming that we may have made progress towards the truth.*

These epistemological propositions of Popper are central to his ontological pluralism…his three world thesis. World 1 (the independent reality) interacts with world

3 (world of objective knowledge) through mediation by world 2 (world of consciousness). The world of objective knowledge, world 3, houses theories, hypotheses, scientific arguments and scientific problems and represents an estimation of world 1, the independent reality, through language and communication.

Since descriptions must fit the facts and are regulated by the principle of truth, Popper adheres to a "correspondence" theory of truth…descriptions must correspond with facts regulated by the principle of truth. His theory is also nominalist since language in world 3 can at least in theory accurately represent the independent reality of world 1 based on the progress relating to the verisimilitude of hypotheses.

Though Popper's ideas indeed represent a disjuncture with that of logical positivism, his ontological, epistemological and methodological presuppositions echo so many fundamental positivist assumptions, that it is probably more accurate to describe his work as a very sophisticated exposition of positivism, rather than anti-positivist or post-positivist. As Lloyd (1983:13) puts it:

> *Insofar as Popper defended (the) package of notions, which coalesced around the empirical testing of theories, the fact/value distinction within science, the unification of natural and social scientific methods, and the rejection of wholism, he can be considered as a kind of positivist.*

Therefore, Burbules and Phillip's (2000) treatise on post-positivism with Popper as the central actor represents a series of risks for educational research in the anti-positivist tradition. However, as discussed below, Popper's critical rationalism does break substantively with the fundamental doctrines of logical positivism though he is unable to escape positivist presuppositions in total.

In summation, though Popper has criticised all the basic tenets of positivism, his Critical Rationalism carts such fundamental positivist residue that it can be described as positivist. In Kuhnian terms and as paraphrased by Bernstein (1985: 21): "Evidence that may appear to falsify an existing paradigm may turn out to be accounted for by adjusting or modifying the paradigm without abandoning it". The project of Popper, instead of

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abandoning the positivist paradigm, ultimately resulted only in a refinement of its ontology, epistemology and methodology. Others, however, would suggest that Popper at least "saved what was valuable in the positivist tradition" (Morrow and Brown, 1994: 72).

4.3.5 Critique of Positivism

Though the above section alluded to a critique of positivism, this section will develop it further as a basis for discussing the concept of human rights education within a positivist frame. Since the early and mid 20th century, positivism came under increased attack for its exposition on the nature of science and its implications for social sciences which exhibited a diverse accumulation of anomalies in its discourse. The discussion on interpretivism and critical theory will articulate these anomalies further on the basis of the three arguments below:

First, Thomas Kuhn (1970) confirmed the misleading positivist notion of the nature of scientific progress. The replacement of one theory by another is not determined by the accumulation of facts or falsification and rational choice. The assumption that scientific knowledge is in a continuous state of accumulation and growth is erroneous since scientists exhibit irrational resistance towards new theories because of their vested interest in the given theory as normal science. Choices between theories are made on the basis of paradigmatically confined notions of knowledge, objectivity and truth that construct different scientific realities for different incommensurable paradigms. The application and meaning of these concepts are determined by its operational paradigm which in turn is informed by values, beliefs and assumptions. Therefore all facts are value and theory-laden and the positivist argument for objective knowledge cannot be sustained.

Second, in service of its project to uncover an independent and objective reality through deductive-nomological explanations, verification and falsification and conjectures and refutations, positivism must anchor knowledge and postulate "absolute and certain

grounds for truth" (Morrow, 1994: 65) as ways to "mirror" that reality. This foundationalist epistemology requires a commensurate atomistic (granular) ontological viewpoint and the presuppositions of the interrelationship between a foundationalist epistemology and a granular ontology has proven to be logically indefensible. Notions such as the methodological unity of the natural and social sciences, the existence of facts independent of theories, the confirmation of theories by appeal to facts and the ontological correspondence between facts and reality could no longer be sustained.

Third, positivism posits two problematic dualisms, these are the value-fact dualism and theory-practice dualism. In discussing the value-fact distinction in relation to the ends-means dualism, Fay (1975: 49) argues that "the choice of the ends to be pursued is thought to be a choice requiring a value judgement, but that the question as to the best means to a prescribed end is thought to be a factual question". Within the realm of technological politics, positivists will argue that means are neutral and value-free mechanisms for reaching an end. However, as Fay argues (1975: 52), if any course of action can be: "either a means or an end, then it must be the case that even so-called means reflect the values and life-commitments of the person who supports it". This point is also stated in Habermasian (Holub, 1991, 38) terms: "alternative means and ultimate ends are not applicable to social processes, since none of these terms can be isolated. In the realm of practical life technical parameters acquire meaning through life references". Knowledge is socially embedded and the dualism between facts and values is therefore erroneous and limiting. The implosion of this dualism also undermines the positivist theory-practice distinction.

In essence, the positivist project aimed at articulating an ontological, epistemological and methodological framework for application in all scientific inquiry, including social inquiry. This has resulted in the hegemonic positivist orientation in the social sciences and education such as functionalism and behaviourism. As will be discussed later, explaining the concept of "human action" requires a radical break from positivism and its fact-value, theory-practice and means-end dualisms and a rejection of the ontological, epistemological and methodological scaffolding of these dualisms.

4.3.6 Positivism, Education and HRE

In the preceding sections I have presented positivism and its Popperian variant as a paradigm that reflects a dominant world-view of social theory linked to the perceived successes achieved in scientific progress. This world-view has permeated most disciplines and educational theory itself became closely aligned to the positivist endeavour. Kemmis (1996: 204-206) for instance, points out how a "functionalist view of the task of education" resulted in curriculum configurations faithful to the positivist tradition whereas Griffiths (1998:46) argues that the "formulation of knowledge which corresponds to an external reality" within the fact-value dichotomy of positivism has trapped many educational researchers.

According to Giroux (1981: 9), the technical rationality of positivism has been the "major constitutive interest that has governed the underlying principles in educational theory, practice and research in the United Sates". This pattern was long in the making as the hegemony of the positivist theoretical framework took hold on the social sciences fuelled by the apparent scientific and technological progress so evident in our everyday lives. The temptation to model social theory on positivist principles became too great given the fact that positivism "took on the role of religion" (Pring, 2000: 90). A positivist temple was opened in 1867 in London to reflect the almost religious belief in the benefits which a "proper study of society could bring" (*ibid*, 91). It is therefore no surprise that many attempts were made to translate positivism into educational theory. O'Connor's *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* and Skinner's behaviourist theory of education (Ozmon and Craver, 1986: 175) are examples of positivist educational theory. Carr and Kemmis (1986: 55-61) also reflect on the pervasiveness of positivism in education as constituted by efforts to reconfigure education and an "applied science".

A positivist conception of educational theory argues that educational institutions can be studied scientifically because social facts exist as physical facts do, and people can be categorised into types from which verifiable generalisations can be generated. Further,

positivist educational theory propagates that the aims and values (ends) and the means of reaching those ends are logically distinguishable. The pervasiveness of such educational thinking is aptly described by Giroux (1981-37-41) as he shows how, by using a Gramscian analysis of hegemony, "technical rationality has become the prevailing cultural hegemony" in education and argues "that the way classroom teachers view knowledge, the way knowledge is mediated through specific classroom methodologies, and the way students are taught to view knowledge, structure classroom experiences in a way that is consistent with the principles of positivism" (*ibid*: 52). Michael Apple (1993) demonstrates how curricular form and the logic of technical control exhibit fundamental positivist tendencies in education. Young, R. (1990: 20) further explains how positivist notions led to a "view of pedagogy as manipulation, while curriculum was divided into value-free subjects and value-based subjects where values were located decisionistically". Positivist tendencies are exposed in Bowles and Gintes's (1976) research on the "correspondence principle" in *Schooling in Capitalist America,* and Maxine Green (1999: 24) aptly captures the technocratic model of teaching as "a discrete and scientific understanding …that often translates into the regulation and standardization of teacher practices and curricula".

In addition to the above, a range of studies within the sociology of education and educational theory has shown that educational practice is permeated with positivist principles and that educational research struggles to rid itself of a positivist residue. Degenhardt (1984: 251) alerts us to the fact that positivist educational thinking "perpetuates anti-educational thinking … and discourages valuable ways of thinking about education" whilst Griffiths (1998: viii), referring to educational research, warns that the "positivist model, using experimental, scientific, quantitative methods, is definitely in the ascendancy once again". A recent case in point is Phillips and Burbules's (2000) account of educational research as a classic example of an adherence to positivist principles under the rubric of postpositivism with the ultimate aim of cataloguing or registering educational research as a "scientific" endeavour. One can safely say that in the broader schema, HRE as a pedagogical formulation, is profoundly influenced by positivist notions.

The genealogy of human rights and human rights education has been discussed in the preceding chapters. For now, two brief inferences on positivism, human rights and HRE are drawn. First, at the same historical juncture of 1830-1842 when Auguste Comte was systemising the positivist philosophy of science, John Austin (1790-1859) presented a view of law known as "legal positivism". In a radical break from a tradition that treated jurisprudence as a branch of moral or political philosophy, Austin offered a view of law as "an object of scientific study, dominated neither by prescription nor by moral evaluation" (Bix, 2003: 3). Austin's legal positivism asserts that it is possible to have a morally neutral descriptive theory of law. Prior to Austin, the work of Hobbes and Locke in 17th century England focuses essentially on natural law theory - their work is frequently quoted in treatise on the history of human rights. Legal positivism rejects all notions of a natural theory of law or naturalism and in the mould of positivism, argues that legal validity is independent of moral notions or constraints. Independent legal validity derives its authority from social convention, social facts and separation of law and morality. This line of reasoning posits human rights in particular ways and therefore represents far-reaching implications for human rights education. For instance, if the validity of rights as law-like codifications is seen as independent of moral notions and values, human rights education will become instrumentalist i.e. a means to a particular end. This dichotomy, as this study argues, reduces human rights education to simply being a mediator or conduit of human rights universals.

Second, if human rights are captured in a "morally neutral descriptive" theory of law, the experiences of human rights violations which invoke emotions and value judgements will be relegated to anonymity and the micro-politics of people's struggles will barely have an influence on the human rights discourse. Human rights education in this sense will either become nonsensical or redundant and at best will simply signify a popular form of legal education disseminating a "morally neutral descriptive" body of knowledge.

No doubt, there are an unsurprisingly high number of dominant forms of human rights education that operate on this positivist basis and this will be discussed in later chapters.

What is becoming clearer, is that notions of the nature of reality and truth and its epistemological underpinnings all, in one way or the other, inform our understanding of human rights and human rights education.

4.4 Interpretivism: The Historical-hermeneutical Framework

4.4.1 Introduction

The outcome of the positivist dispute in German sociology between Popper and Adorno and taken further between Habermas and Albert; and the convergence of the positivist critique elsewhere was a re-examination of the methodology of the social sciences (Holub, 1991: 46) brought about by the positivist critique inherent in hermeneutics. This convergence of critique against positivism which spans phenomenological, hermeneutical and analytic philosophical accounts of human actions, sought to replace scientific notions of prediction and control with interpretive notions of understanding, meaning and action. RJ Bernstein (1979: 113-114) captured this convergence aptly in the following passage:

> *From the philosophy of language we have learned to appreciate how language is embedded in practices and shaped by intersubjective constitutive rules and distinctions. From the theory of action we have learned that a proper analysis of human action involves references to those social practices and forms of life in which actions can be described and explained. From the analysis of social and political reality, we have come to see how this reality itself consists of practices and institutions that depend on the acceptance of norms about what is reasonable and acceptable behaviour. From the postempiricist philosophy and history of science, we have learned how misleading and simplistic the empiricist theories of science are, and how central are interpretation and understanding even in the hard natural sciences.*

Bernstein's articulation above refers to fundamental anomalies within positivism in relation to the notions of language and human action and represents a rejection of the positivist notions of objectivity and neutrality. In short, it rejects positivism as a framework to guide social theory and educational thinking and to explain human behaviour and points to the centrality of interpretation in social inquiry. The convergence

of critique against positivism was preceded by various traditions such as German hermeneutics, existentialism and phenomenology. This convergence was not only articulated from an anti-positivist stance, but represented a new intellectual orientation long in the making. The influence of continental philosophy, as the German tradition was also referred to, has initially been limited as the positivist tradition was dominant in Britain and elsewhere in the world for the most part of the 20th century. The exportation of the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle and its Popperian variant ensued in the wake of the Second World War and had major influences on Anglo-American philosophy which contributed to the hegemonic stature of positivism. Theoretical physicists of the Marburg school in Germany (such as Carnap and Einstein) who were exiled from Germany during the Second World War, contributed to this tendency and the authority of the positivist account of the social sciences stood firm. According to Skinner (1985: 5), Popper and his disciples "probably exercised the most powerful influence upon the conduct of the social disciplines". On the other hand, the isolation of the neo-Kantian philosophers of the South-West German school (such as Heidegger and Gadamer) meant that the positivist critique resident in hermeneutics and phenomenology as strands of interpretivism, was only fully appreciated in other parts of the world in the latter half of the 20th century and since then essentially undermined the positivist stronghold of English-speaking social philosophy (Skinner, 1985, 6).

Interpretivism has its roots in hermeneutics which refers to the "art of interpretation which aims to disclose an underlying coherence or sense in a text, or a text-analogue, whose meaning is in one way or another unclear" (Connerton, 1976: 102) and by extension uncovering the "meaning of social action and existence as a whole" (Rohmann, 2000: 174). Stated differently, hermeneutics denotes a "theory and method of interpreting human action and artefacts" (Morrow and Brown, 1994: 93). The term "hermeneutics" derives from the Greek word for "interpretation" associated with the tasks of Hermes, the winged figure in Greek mythology, who acted as messenger of Mount Olympus and interpreted the messages of the Oracle of Delphi (Rohmann, 2000: 174). He was thus the mediator between Zeus (God) and mortals. The field of hermeneutics began as an interpretation of biblical texts but was later also applied to secular text.

In the 19th century Wilhelm Dilthey (1976), in response to the positivist project, argued that the method of the natural sciences that focuses on deductive-nomological explanation *(erklaren)* could not be employed to that of the social sciences that focuses on understanding *(verstehen).* Understanding is a prerequisite for explanation in the social sciences and it is possible to develop reliable knowledge of historical experiences. Frederick Schleiermacher who preceded Dilthey in the 19th century, is generally known as the founder of modern hermeneutics and was the first to "universalise the question of understanding" (Holub, 1991: 51). Dilthey built on Schleiermacher's ideas and in his paper *The Rise of Hermeneutics* (1900, published in Connerton, 1976) traced the development of the formal hermeneutic method back to pre-Renaissance periods. According to Dilthey (1976: 106) understanding is the "process by which, from signals given as sense-data, we perceive a psychic structure whose expressions they are". On the other hand, "skilled understanding of permanently fixed expressions of life is called exegesis or interpretation" (Dilthey (1976: 106). Thus, the hermeneutic tradition is clustered under "interpretivism". However, interpretivism includes a variety of positions "ranging from German hermeneutics to British analytical philosophy" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 87).

The hegemonic nature of positivism pushed hermeneutics to the background but a succession of German social theorists including Dilthey, Rickert, Simmel and Weber "sought to extend and elaborate the idea of hermeneutic interpretation into an alternative epistemological basis for the social sciences" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 86) towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Hermeneutics were further developed by the work of Heidegger and Gadamer in the 20th century and Gadamer's work has subsequently been regarded as the "most important development in 20th century hermeneutics" (Holub, 1991: 50) since it provided for an ontological turn in hermeneutical sciences. Interpretivism, as a framework for inquiry, is however not confined to the hermeneutics of Heidegger, Gadamer and their predecessors but includes the analytic-philosophy of Wittgenstein and the works of Charles Taylor and Pitkin (see Bernstein, 1979: 112). Paul Ricoeur who shifted methodologically from existential

phenomenology to hermeneutic interpretation during the 1960s, is also a distinguished philosopher in the interpretivist mode (Dauenhauer, 2002: 1).

4.4.2 An Interpretive Theoretical Framework

The basic premise of interpretivism is that human action and social phenomena can best be explained by interpreting the subjective meaning of social actions. A social science of human actions can thus only proceed on the basis of interpretive categories with an unavoidable hermeneutic element. Hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation and understanding has moved through the romantic ideal of recovering the "true" meaning of the texts as expressed in the 19th century work of Schleiermacher and Dilthey towards understanding as fundamentally ontological, as exhibited in the work of Heidegger and Gadamar in the 20th century (see Holub, 1991). This has shifted the hermeneutical interest to include more than the written text or speech, swung its focus away from communication with the "other", and moderated the hermeneutical agenda of Dilthey that focused on the separation between the natural and social sciences. In essence, hermeneutics adopted "understanding" as our "way of being-in-the-world" (see Gadamer, 1976).

According to Gadamer (1976: 117) the basic hermeneutical rule is "that we understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole". This circular relationship conventionally resulted in forward and backwards movements within the hermeneutic circle with the aim to resolve what is strange about the text and to uncover its meaning. However, for Heidegger this circle describes understanding as the interplay "between the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter" (Gadamer, 1976: 119). This interplay is a process of education in which the interpreter produces tradition and therefore the circle of understanding "is not a methodological circle, but describes an ontological structural element in understanding" (Gadamer, 1976: 120). Stated differently by Holub (1991: 52): "we are not concerned with understanding something. Rather understanding is grasped as our way of being-in-the-world, as the fundamental way we exist prior to any cognition or intellectual activity". The enquiry

therefore shifts ontologically from "understanding as knowledge about the world" to "being-in-the-world".

The ontological direction given to "understanding" allows Heidegger and Gadamer to argue that temporal distance is not something that must be overcome since "time is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged, because it separates, but is actually supportive ground of process in which the present is rooted" (Gadamer, 1979: 122). This represents another break with conventional hermeneutics because the historicality of the interpreter is not seen as an obstacle to understanding. Instead, this historicality within which the notion of 'prejudice' is operational, allows 'prejudice' to be understood not as "a hindrance to understanding but [as] a condition for the possibility of understanding" (Holub, 1991: 57). According to Gadamer (1979: 132) our prejudices constitute the horizon of a particular present but this horizon is built upon historical horizons and "understanding is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine exist by themselves". This "fusion is the task of effective historical consciousness" (Gadamer, 1979: 132-133). Gadamer's views did not go unchallenged and Habermas (Holub, 1991: 66) criticized his notions as lacking a critical dimension where "agents appear as passive recipients caught in an endless stream of their heritage". Further as Skinner (1985: 5) has noted, Gadamer provided the basis for a conclusion that "we ought not to think of interpretation as a method of attaining truths at all, but ought rather - in the words of Paul Feyerabend's title – to be 'against method'".

The apparent divergence within theories of interpretation, led Ricoeur (1976: 194) to remark: "there is no general hermeneutics …but only disparate and opposed theories concerning the rules of interpretation". According to Ricoeur (1976: 194) it is useful to view these diverse and disparate theories within a framework of polarised opposition in hermeneutics styles. On the one pole, hermeneutics is understood as the manifestation and restoration of meaning, and on the other, it is "understood as a demystification, as a reduction of illusion". Stated differently, the first pole refers to the hermeneutics of faith to recover a meaning whilst the second refers to the hermeneutics of suspicion where

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interpretation systematically erodes the layers of deceptive realities to unmask false consciousness.

Ricoeur's distinction is useful since it presents the hermeneutical methodology from the perspective of the purpose of social inquiry in a dialectical interplay between the hermeneutics of faith and that of suspicion. In analysing Marx, Nietzche and Freud's notions of religion, Ricoeur came to the conclusion that these three masters of suspicion posited that while "religion was perceived to be a legitimate source of comfort and hope when one is faced with the difficulties of life, in reality religion was an illusion that merely expressed one's wish for a father-God" (Robinson, 1995: 2). The suspicion of religion and culture is then further applied to the act of communication "under the rubric of a hermeneutics of suspicion" (*ibid*). For Ricoeur (1979: 202) the three masters postulate "three convergent procedures of demystification" by the "invention of an art of interpreting" (*ibid*: 200).

Ricoeur's further work is aimed at setting forth the essential "constituents of all actions" (Dauenhauer, 2005: 4) as the "proper object of the social sciences" within the fold of interpretivism. To do so Ricoeur argues that discourse and action is analogous:

> *Action is analogous to discourse because, to make full sense of any action, one has to recognize that its meaning is distinguishable from its occurrence as a particular spatial-temporal event. Nevertheless, every genuine action is meaningful only because it is some specific person's doing at some particular moment. Second, action has 'illocutionary' characteristics that closely resemble the speech acts in discourse. Each type of action has constitutive 'rules', rules that make an action a specific type of action. (Dauenhauer, 2005: 5)*

Both action and discourse are inherently interactions and therefore subject to interpretation. Accordingly, what is applicable to the interpretation of discourse is also applicable to the interpretation of action. Through this argument Ricoeur brought together texts and actions as subjects of interpretive inquiry. From this follows the conviction that social actions are constituted by "the inter-subjective and common meanings embedded

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in social reality" (Charles Taylor, 1985: 52). These meanings need to be explored through an interpretive approach to social science with an unavoidable hermeneutical element.

Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur were primarily concerned with hermeneutics as a strand of interpretive social science whilst prior to their work Max Weber (1864-1920) postulated the whole ambit of sociological endeavour to be an interpretive one. For Weber, sociology is a "science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action" (Rohmann, 2002: 426) through interpretation in terms of their subjective meaning. Subsequently, and encompassing the developments within hermeneutics and sociological theory, the perennial debate about the applicability of positivism within the social sciences resulted in the consolidation of an interpretive social science as both an anti-positivist project as well as an alternative intellectual direction. This direction is demonstrated in Winch's *The Idea of Social Science (1958),* Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures (1973)* and Taylor's *Interpretation and the Sciences of Man (1985).*

4.4.3 Human Actions and Meaning

Fay (1975: 71) is of the opinion that the idea of an interpretive approach to social science from the viewpoint of analytic philosophy "starts with the fact that a large part of the vocabulary of the social sciences is comprised of action concepts". What humans do and say is largely constitutive of human behaviour and these actions have significance and meaning for those who perform them. To paraphrase Ricoeur, actions have an illocutionary character with constitutive rules that make it of a specific type. These rules, as Carr and Kemmis (1986: 88) put it, are "intelligible to others only by reference to the meaning that the individual actor attaches to them". Taylor (1976: 160) argued further that this meaning is different from linguistic meaning and the interpretive or hermeneutical necessity for social science resides in the axiom that a "certain notion of meaning has an essential place in the characterization of human behaviour".

"Action concepts", as used by Fay, refer to the terms we use to signify human behaviour as "doings" rather than "happenings" so that "jumping" is an action concept in contrast to

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"falling" (1975: 71). In this sense, actions, because the actors assign meaning to them, require us to go beyond observation so that through interpretation we are uncovering the actors' motives, reasons and intentions as a means to understand its subjective meaning. Taylor (1976: 162), in arguing for a meaning different from linguistic meaning, speaks of "experiential meaning … meaning for a subject, of something, in a field". Extrapolating from this, meaning is in relation to other meanings in a field in the same way that the constitutive rules of action determine the nature of the action in relation to a social context. Meaning is thus bedrocked by social practices and human actions and does not simply refer to a mental activity. Bloor (1983: 8) referring to Wittgenstein states that the real source of 'life' in a word or sentence is provided, "not by the individual mind, but by society, …they are animated with meaning because of the social practices of which they are an integral part". For Wittgenstein, with his "anti-positivist insistence that the meaning of an utterance is a matter of its use, and thus the understanding of any meaningful episode – whether an action or an utterance – always involves us placing it within its appropriate 'form of life'" (Skinner, 1985:7). Meanings and actions thus have a profound social character and describing actions necessitates allusion to social practices because the intention of an action can only be understood in relation to the practice constitutive to it.

The interplay between meanings and social practices brings forth another dimension which Fay (1975: 77) termed "constitutive meaning" with reference to the "shared assumptions, definitions and conceptions which … constitute the logical possibility of the existence of a certain social practice". Thus apart from uncovering the meaning actors assign to an action by discovering its motives and intentions, an interpretive social science also aims at grasping the constitutive meanings of a particular social practice.

4.4.4 Epistemological and ontological considerations

In an interesting article on agricultural education, Woods and Trexler (2001) explore the implication of an interpretive paradigm for agricultural education research that looks beyond the dominant mode of inquiry (positivism) that may "inhibit our innovation and

development of intellectual pursuits" (*ibid*: 68) because of its epistemological, ontological and methodological orientations. Whilst a positivist epistemology is foundationalist in either an empiricist or rationalist sense, aimed at explaining and presenting a reality that exists independently of human actions and is susceptible to understanding, interpretivism contends that reality is socially constructed. Taylor (1976: 157-159) argues that though the epistemological basis of positivism with its notion of 'unquestionable certainty' has lost credibility, the "machine criterion (of computer-influenced theories of intelligence) provides us with our assurance against an appeal to intuition or interpretation" as the most contemporary expression of a positivist epistemology. He further argues (*ibid*) that the appeal to model the "science of man" on this epistemology has been very attractive and was taken up in various forms in different sciences. However, this orientation, in essence, cannot make provision for an inquiry or understanding based on interpretation.

The epistemological and ontological basis of interpretivism is radically incompatible with that of positivism. Reality, for positivism, is fragmented, tangible, given and measurable, whilst for interpretivism it is multi-layered, holistic and constructed through human interaction. A positivist conception of knowledge regards facts as correspondence with the truth in law-like regularities as opposed to an interpretivist understanding of events through interpretation that is influenced by social context. For interpretivism, human actions are logically different from other events and are constituted through understanding and agency on the part of the actors themselves, which require a hermeneutical approach to inquiry. Gadamer (1976: 122) refers to understanding not as a "superior knowledge of the subject" but rather "understanding in a different way, if we understand at all" with the aim of "fusing the present with the historical horizon" as understanding evolves. As understanding evolves through interpretation and re-interpretation it captures human actions as descriptions at different levels and at different phases.

For Fay (1975: 72), these descriptions reveal elements of explanation since descriptions of actors' intentions refer to the meaning the acts have for the actors. Peters (1975: 3)

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refers to "his reason explanation" which is supported by Svenaeus (2002: 121-130) in his interesting notes on the relationship between explanation and understanding in the *Hermeneutics of Medicine.* Further, as Taylor (1976: 174) points out, descriptions of actions within a social reality are descriptions of practices and these "cannot be identified in abstraction from the language we use to describe them, or to invoke them, or carry them out". Therefore, no distinction exists between language and the social reality it describes since language is constitutive of reality and determines the nature of reality. The social construction of reality happens through and within language. This is in direct opposition to the nominalist view of language in positivism as a representation of reality.

The social construction of reality and language as constitutive of this reality, inverts the positivist notions of objectivity and neutrality since meaning is necessarily social. Rather meaning is linked to a consensus theory of "truth" where objectivity is derived as understanding of concurrence.

4.4.5   The inversion of dualisms

The dualisms of theory-practice, facts-values and means-end so central to positivism, are rejected within interpretivism. Theory and practice are conceptually linked since the aim of interpretivism is to gain understanding by interpreting the meanings of social actions assigned to actions by the actors themselves. A reduction of problems of communication between "those whose actions are being interpreted and those to whom the interpretive account is being made available" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 91) is at the heart of interpretivism and what can count "as truth is that which creates the possibility for increased communication" (Fay, 1975: 82). The meanings generated are meanings for the actors and the "agreement in the concepts used to describe and explain actions", is a "necessary, though obviously not a sufficient, condition for truth" (*ibid*: 83). The epistemological stance of interpretivism on a consensus theory of truth, creates the conceptual and dialectical link between theory and practice where "the validity of a theory is partially defined by its ability to remain intrinsically related to and compatible with the actor's own understanding" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 92). Further, there are no

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uninterpreted facts since we grasped their meaning through the concepts we employ to interpret them and thus the dualism of facts-values also disappear in view of the fact that interpretation brings along the beliefs and values that constitute our social reality. Similarly, means as technical mechanisms to achieve a value-based end, are decided upon through collective interpretation and consensus and consequently means can be ends and ends can be means, both subjected to interpretive categories and therefore this dichotomy also collapses.

4.4.6 Critique of Interpretivism

A few strands of critique of interpretivism are discernable from the literature. First, the unsurprising counter-arguments from a positivist perspective view the inability of interpretivism to generate generalizations as a fundamental weakness that negates the scientific notions of truth and objectivity and as such is of little scientific value. The relativism and subjectivism inherent in interpretivism are unable to generate "valid" knowledge.

The second strand of critique relates to an acceptance of the basic foundation of interpretivism but point to some inadequacies. The focus of interpretivism on understanding as opposed to explanation, "excludes from social scientific enquiries the explanation of certain features of social reality which are of the utmost importance" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 94). In essence, according to this argument, interpretivism assigns a limited purpose to social inquiry. But even understanding within interpretivism is restricted to uncovering the subjective meanings that construct social reality and neglects the exploration of social structure which is a result of these meanings " and in turn produces particular meanings … that limit the kinds of actions that it is reasonable for individuals to perform" (*ibid*: 95). Fay (1975: 83-85) further agues that interpretivism neglects quasi-causal accounts and functional explanations in addition to offering an inadequate account of structural conflict within a society and the nature of historical change.

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The third strand relates to the inherent conservatism of interpretivism since in a time of upheaval "the interpretive model would lead people to seek to change the way they think about what they or others are doing, rather than provide them with a theory by means of which they could change what they or others are doing, and in this way supports the status quo" (Fay, 1975: 91). Preceding Fay's critique of the conservatism of interpretivism, Habermas (Holub, 1991: 65-66) has argued that the ontological hermeneutics of Gadamer maintain "a dangerous pretension to superiority" and thus has limited potential for an emancipatory or anti-conservative interest. Stated differently, ontological hermeneutics presents an unquestionable order of existence for understanding as our way of being-in-the-world and as such does not allow for critical reflection with the ultimate result of adherence to tradition and authority.

4.4.7 Interpretivism, Education and HRE

What Sarup (1978: 13-23) refers to as the "new sociology of education" takes knowledge as socially constructed with the aim to challenge aspects of school-knowledge that "are treated as absolutes" by adopting an interpretive view of social science influenced by social phenomenology. Giroux (1981: 11-12) points out that this new sociological movement and the free school movement emerged after 1960 united in their opposition to positivist tendencies within education. For Giroux (*ibid*) the interpretive stance has a number of implications for education. First, educational institutions are not value-free but their organisation and practices are tied to the interests, perceptions and experiences of "those who produced and negotiated its meaning". Second, educators and students are viewed as "producers of values and truths". Third, modes of pedagogy were developed "that stressed experiences and interpersonal relations".

Carr and Kemmis (1986: 84-65) list Keddie's study "of the ways in which classroom knowledge is defined and organised in schools" as a prime example of interpretive research following the publication of Michael Young's *Knowledge and Control* in 1971. In essence an interpretive account of education differs radically from positivism on epistemological, ontological and methodological grounds. Interpretivism has made

inroads into educational thinking on the back of the new sociology of education since the 1970s and interpretive methods such as semiotics and hermeneutics took root in educational research. However, Giroux (1981:12) notes as a fundamental critique of interpretivism that "questions of power, ideology and the ethical nature of the existing society disappeared in a metaphysical mist fuelled by a rather naïve optimism in the power of consciousness to change social reality".

Despite the criticism levelled against interpretive educational theory, it provided the basis on which a radical or critical pedagogy was emerging in the same vein as Habermas's employment of hermeneutics for his emancipatory agenda.

The previous sections sketchily discussed natural law theory and the emergence of legal positivism within the broad development and establishment of positivism and its implications for human rights education. Human rights, conventionally housed within the discipline of law, have inevitability not escaped the paradigm debate between positivism and interpretivism. It is therefore no surprise that scholars such as Stavropoulos (2002) explore the implications of the debate and argue that Ronald Dworkin's work, which includes *Taking Rights Seriously* (1977), is the best elucidation of interpretivism[21] in the field of law.

Whereas natural law theory relies on humans' responsibility to God to observe the law of nature, legal positivism believes in a "morally neutral descriptive" theory of law which objectively captures these legal provisions. For natural law theory human rights are given whilst for legal positivism human rights are those "morally neutral" articulations that are captured in human rights law. Both these arguments are flawed. The first is flawed because human rights cannot be justified simply on a theological basis. The second is flawed because it fails to give account of the interpretive processes that generate human rights articulations.

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[21] See also Marmor (1995) on *Law and Interpretation.*

In contrast to these propositions interpretivism views human rights law as interpretive of human rights history. Following from this schema, HRE considers human rights as interpretive categories from the perspective of those claiming their rights and articulates the meaning that these actors assign to human rights. Human rights universals are merely representing a phase within interpretive cycles and are subjected to the understanding of social actors. HRE, in the interpretive mould, is aimed at uncovering the subjective meanings attached to human rights and its practices and attempts to explain the political and other processes that codify human rights in particular ways.

4.5 Critical Theory

4.5.1 Introduction

At more or less the same period that the various strands of positivism were brought together in the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle, the Institute of Social Research was founded in Germany in 1923. It became the home of the Frankfurt school whose scholars developed the most coherent and far-reaching critique of positivism. The institute was first headed by Carl Grunberg as director to develop a research programme focussing *inter alia* on the labour movements and the nature of the capitalist economy (see Bronner and Kellner, 1989 and Held, 1980) with Marxism as its theoretical basis. When Horkheimer became director in 1930 the institute undertook to develop a theory of society which culminated in 1937 in his programmatic statement for the institute when he set out the idea of a "Critical Theory" (Horkheimer, 1976: 206-224).

The term 'critical theory' has various meanings but loosely refers to the tradition of thinking of the Frankfurt school and the later work of Jurgen Habermas. Initially the school included Fromm, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Ardorno and others and dealt with a range of topics and issues that exhibited a reconstructed understanding of Marxism. The currency of the Frankfurt school thinking reached its height during the 1960s and 1970s (see Held, 1980: 1) because it offered an interesting reading of Marxism. However, since it was rarely studied in the Anglo-American world, misunderstandings of its fundamental

propositions were commonplace. The critical theorists employed a variety of intellectual strands including those associated with Kant and Hegel and the hermeneutics of the 19th and 20th century. In fact, Habermas used the hermeneutic tradition to formulate his critique against positivism and found in Gadamer an ally as far as his debate with positivism was concerned. The work of the institute was hampered by the turbulence and instability of the two world wars and the institute first moved to Geneva and later to Columbia University in New York. The historical context in which the Frankfurt School was founded – the Soviet revolution, its total degeneration and its influence on Europe; the collapse of the left wing political parties in Germany; the emergence of Stalinism, Nazism and Fascism; the repression of socialist movements; the capitalist crises; - directly and indirectly influenced the agenda of critical theory. As the leading contemporary exponent of critical theory, Habermas was not yet born when the institute was founded and joined as Ardorno's assistant in the 1950s after the institute was re-established in Frankfurt in 1953 during the post-war period. It was from this base that he was launched into his first major public debate known as the "Positivist Dispute in German Sociology". Subsequently he entered into debates with Gadamer, Lyotard and Luhman through which he formulated, in a remoulded way, his critical theory of society with the practical intention of emancipation.

Connerton (1976: 14) is of the view that the development of critical theory can be divided in two stages, i.e. "a creation of the early thirties" and "a discovery of the late sixties". The inaccessibility of critical theory to the English-speaking world was partly because of historical circumstances, language and the texts themselves and its influence in the English-speaking world only gained momentum in the 1960s. The re-discovery of critical theory in the post second world war era also heralded its "rejuvenation" most prominently through the work of Habermas (*ibid*: 15).

4.5.2 What is Critical Theory?

Critical theory draws on a variety of philosophical and theoretical orientations and exhibits within itself diverse tendencies and inclinations. Though the members of the

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Frankfurt schools were many it is safe to regard Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas as the main figures within critical theory. Sourcing from a wide range of theoretical and philosophical positions such as Kant, Hegel, Marx, Weber, Lukacs, Heidegger and Gadamer and Anglo-American thought, especially linguistic philosophy (Held: 1980: 16), they aspire to develop a "critical perspective in the discussion of all social sciences". No doubt, Marx's *Critique of Political Economy* formed the theoretical bedrock for early critical theorists (see Held, 1980; Connerton, 1976; Morrow, 1994) and Marcuse is often credited as an original Marxist thinker (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2000: 378) influenced profoundly by Lukacs's interpretation of Marxism. In his later life he became the mentor to "the American and European New Left and the student protest movements of the 1960s" (Rohmann, 2002: 83).

Like most umbrella terms and designations, "critical theory" is resistant to being defined and a précis of its major strands is almost impossible. Connerton (1976: 13-38) provides a useful 4-phase framework within which to situate the critical theory phenomenon. *First,* the Frankfurt school argues that the power of ideology extends beyond the range of discursive propositions as a move away from Marxist analysis. Ideology-critique now also operates in social psychology and also within a critical sociology of the arts. For Marx ideology-critique was employed to challenge ideological concepts like labour and commodity as discursive propositions by focusing on the disjuncture between claim and reality. Critical theorists argued, against the background of German fascism, that social conditions are transferred to the individual creating an "authoritarian personality" with the family as psychological agents of society. Thus, ideology-critique is extended to the discipline of social psychology. *Second,* the self-reinforcing qualities of infra-structure indicates that the increase of the forces of production have become a means to justify the status quo, unlike Marx's anticipation of it as a "historically explosive force" (*ibid*: 26). The relationship between the forces of production and the relations of production has been reconfigured and instead of providing a critique of the power structure of society, "they provide a basis for its legitimation" (*ibid*: 26). Thus moving away from focusing on the contradictions between productive forces and productive relations, Horkheimer and Adorno, in response to positivism, moved their focus to instrumental reasoning which

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they see as a threat that might culminate in fascism. They therefore replaced the critique of political economy with the "critique of instrumental reason". *Third*, the disappearance of a revolutionary proletariat 'made' liberation 'redundant' in an affluent society and the focus on political economy is therefore ineffectual as a critique of society. The object of critique is therefore "not primarily late capitalism … but technical rationality" (*ibid*: 28) because a society fashioned on instrumental reason and technical efficiency is "potentially self-undermining" (*ibid*: 29). *Fourth,* Habermas employed hermeneutics to argue for communicative action as opposed to instrumental action since instrumental reason has the interest of control which is contradictory to a project that tries to eliminate communicative distortions. The theory of communicative competence assumes "that the anticipation of a form of social life in which autonomy and responsibility are possible are prefigured in the structure of speech itself" (*ibid*: 32).

The general trends of critical theory are somewhat discernable in the writings of main exponents of the Frankfurt school. Habermas (1989, *The Tasks of a Critical Theory of Society)* himself is of the view that the Frankfurt school was "essentially dominated by six themes until the early 1940s" (*ibid*: 292) viz. forms of integration of postliberal societies; family socialization and ego development; mass media and mass culture; the social psychology behind the cessation of protest; the theory of art; and the critique of positivism.

Horkheimer (1976) in *Traditional and Critical Theory* argues against the Cartesian (positivist) notion of "knowing" which dissects the purpose of science from science itself and argues for a critical theory of society which "has as its object men as producers of their own historical way of life in its totality" (*ibid*: 222). Pollock (1976) in *Empirical Research into Public Opinion* castigates the "positivistic-atomistic conception of public opinion" and suggests "that the nature of public opinion must not be defined, but studied" (235). Adorno (1976) in *Sociology and Empirical Research* posits that "ideologies, the necessary false consciousness, are an element of social reality, with which anyone who desires knowledge of the reality itself must become acquainted" (*ibid*: 256) but at the same time these ideologies must be criticized as truth claims. Further in *Cultural*

Criticism and Society (1976), Ardorno argues that "culture has become ideological not only as the quintessence of subjectively devised manifestations, but even more as a sphere of private life" (*ibid*: 271) but private life "drags on only as an appendage of social processes". In *Repressive Tolerance* (1976) Marcuse makes two salient points. First he forwards an argument that tolerance and protection from cruelty and aggression are pre-conditions for a humane society. However, progress towards it has been arrested by violence and suppression on a global scale and people "are educated to sustain such practices as necessary for the preservation of the status quo" (*ibid*: 302). Second, in arguing that the dialectical proposition of the whole, which determines the truth, can lead to progressive movements turning into that which they defy, he shows how the exercise of political rights such as voting in a society of total administration, serves to strengthen this administration "by testifying to the existence of democratic liberties which in reality, have changed their content and lost their effectiveness" (*ibid*: 303). Habermas (1976) contends that science has become a technological force and "research, technology, production and administration have coalesced into a system which cannot be surveyed as a whole, but in which they are functionally interdependent" (*ibid*: 333) in *Theory and Practice in a Scientific Civilization.* He, like others mentioned above insists on the critique of ideology in opposition to the deployment of technological rationality.

Held (1980: 379) is very critical of Connerton's (1976) 4-phase theory about the development of critical theory as comprising "a path of cumulative and progressive developments". In his *Introduction to Critical Theory* (1980) it is apparent that critical theorists of the Frankfurt school have engaged in class, class conflict and political economy; the culture industry; psychoanalysis; philosophy of history; critique of ideology; dialectics; historical materialism; discourse, science and society; knowledge, interest and action; and the hermeneutic sciences. He (*ibid*: 379) is however highly critical of commentators who do not appreciate the differences among the Frankfurt school theorists and the fundamental divergence inherent within the group.

In slight deviation from Connerton, Morrow and Brown (1994: 85-111) put forward a 3-tiered problem shift within the development of critical theory. First its interest in

explaining the lack of resistance by the German working class; second its interest in the nature of capitalism and society; and third the work associated with Habermas. However, they concur with Connerton in tracing the strands within critical theory through Hegelian-Marxism, hermeneutics, political economy, social psychology and cultural studies but provide a much broader framework of the influences on and of critical theory. These include linguistic philosophy; social phenomenology and ethnomethodology; pragmatism and symbolic interaction; the French traditions of structuralism and post-structuralism; and the French Social Theories of Touraine, Bourdieu and Foucault. This particular broad take on Critical Theory is now widespread as a

> *Catch-all phrase for a divergent set of theories that distinguish themselves from conventional or traditional theories. Critical theory designates a range of 'isms' including Maxism and post-Marxism, semiotics and discourse analysis, structuralism and post-structuralism, ideology-critique of all varieties, deconstruction, feminism, queer theory, psycho-analysis, postcolonialism, postmodernism, as well as successors of the Frankfurt School Critical Theory (Simons, 2004: 12)[22].*

Despite critical theory's recalcitrance towards summary, I will, in the following section, attempt to give an account of its major propositions of which there are ten. *First,* its eclectic approach drawing from a wide range of intellectual traditions not only for the purposes of constructing a critical theory of society but to signify and demonstrate the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach and providing a synthesis of political theory, psychology, sociology, cultural theory, anthropology, history and philosophy which can give rise to an interdisciplinary theory of society. *Second*, its grounding in Marx's critique of political economy, the critique of capitalism and the questioning of fundamental orthodox Marxist assumptions. *Third,* the central role assigned to the dialectical approach and the extension of the application of ideology critique. The dialectical tradition that had its genesis in Hegelian-Marxism projects critical theory as a self-critical endeavour, open to challenges and modifications.

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[22] It is almost impossible to categorise some thinkers in relation to Critical Theory and Postmodernism. The overlaps are evident in Bertens and Natoli (2002): *Postmodernism: The Key Figures* and Simons (2004): *Contemporary Critical Theorists.*

This dialectical tradition *fourthly* resulted in a unified opposition to instrumental reasoning that facilitated the emergence of a profound critique of positivism and scientism. *Fifth*, and related to the preceding point, technological administration and management manifested as a result of the coalition between science, technology, industry and administration in an "interlocking circular process" (Habermas, 1976: 331) that undermines rationality because of its ideological nature. *Sixth*, though Horkheimer and Adorno put forward a mode of critique in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Habermas rejected this notion and suggests a critique grounded in *Universal Pragmatics* whose task it is to "identify and reconstruct universal conditions of possible understanding" (Morrow and Brown, 1994: 151), i.e. communicative action through which emancipatory reason can develop. *Seventh*, against all the "relativistic and nihilistic excesses" associated with postmodernism, critical theory "maintains a nondogmatic perspective which is sustained by an interest" which seeks an "emancipatory alternative to the existing order" (Bronner and Kellner, 1989:2). *Eighth*, Ray (1993: xii) aptly describes the need for critical theory to grasp "the structures which make some outcomes (and struggles) more likely than others, which implies a focus which has always been central to critical theory, namely the relationship between social inequalities and the management or regulation of potentially destabilizing conflicts".

Ninth, the hegemonic nature of and organic contradictions within instrumental reasoning constitutes and produces 'a crisis' that can generally be described as the 'conspiracy' between science, politics and social administration that reproduces the status quo and legitimises the present social and economic order[23]. From this, critical theory derives its interest "in the liberation of mankind" which is bound to ancient truths such as the "materialist theory of society" whose impetus is generated by an "interest in the individual"[24]. *Tenth*, following Simons' (2004) line of reasoning in the preceding quotation on page 124, critical theory encompasses the concerns raised by postmodernism about the totalization of human experiences through grand narratives and foundationalism. French intellectual thinking thus combines with the Frankfurt school to

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[23] This line of argument is presented in Horkheimer's *Notes on Science and the Crises* (1989).
[24] See Marcuse (1989) in *Philosophy and Critical Theory*.

broaden the ambit of critical theory to include Kristeva, Cixous, Lyotard, Derrida, Baudrillard, Foucault and Bourdieu (Simons, 2004. 15) The most likely conclusion of this broadened ambit of critical theory coupled with a preponderance of continuities and discontinuities between modernism and postmodernism, is reflected in Giroux's and McLaren's attempts to argue for a Critical Postmodern Pedagogy. This will be discussed in later parts of this study. Also, many of the French thinkers mentioned will be discussed under the umbrella of postmodernism.

4.5.3 Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

Hegelian-Marxism provided the starting point for the epistemological and ontological considerations for critical theory. Hegel's main thesis is "that social reality is absolutely historical and can be understood only as a totality of contradictory elements" (Morrow and Brown, 1994: 94). In this sense hermeneutics plays a central role in methodology since determining social reality as rooted in history requires an interpretive mode of reasoning. Marxism thus becomes critical hermeneutics but for the reason that ideology masks social reality, ideology-critique became the central interpretive tool. As such Horkheimer insisted that "a critique of knowledge, presented as a dialectical critique of ideology, must locate all thought in historical context, uncover its rootedness in human interest and yet avoid relativism and be distinguished from scepticism" (Held: 1980: 176).

Held (1980) further expounds the ideas of the Frankfurt School exponents and argues that if dialectics is unconcluded it is therefore a critical method "for it reveals uncompleteness where completeness is claimed" (*ibid*: 177) i.e. it is a materialistic dialectic according to Horkheimer. Leaving its epistemic foundations unfinished, the dialectical method is a continuous reconceptualization of knowledge that replaces or transcends previous "moments of truth" by incorporating a rejuvenated and altered consciousness in a cyclical process. For Held (1980) the notion of ideology-critique is central to Horkheimer's epistemological stance since immanent criticism, i.e. "criticism that confronts the existent in its historical context" (*ibid*: 183), is aimed at an appraisal of the rift between ideas that

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operate on an ideological level and reality. Coupled with the notion of ideology-critique is the notion of praxis which simplistically refers to the fusion of theory and practice that is constitutive of Horkheimer's epistemological and ontological orientation. Truth claims can only reside in practice and theories are dependent on their truth claims with reference to it being tested and verified in practice. These theories, however, are historically determined and their correctness or incorrectness will be proven within history.

Held (1980) further contends that for Adorno "knowledge is embedded is tradition" (*ibid*: 214) and acts of interpreting and theorising are essential to unlock the meanings of objects in relation to history and its relation to other objects. As a deviation from Horkheimer, Adorno did not believe that history is capable of arbitration between knowledge and truth claims. Within his notion of "negative dialectics" he proposes that truth and knowledge claims reside within the relation between concept and object. i.e. assessing the level of commensurability between a concept and the reality it tries to capture. Marcuse argues further that critical theory seeks to grasp the world in its reified and fetishized immediacy (Held, 1980: 244) and truth claims are those endeavours that mediate between appearance and essence - their verification is dependent on historical struggles for its confirmation.

The linguistic turn in philosophy in the 20th century, which refers to the shift from the philosophy of consciousness to a philosophy of language, pushed forward the idea that consciousness is linguistically ordered with language operating as a structuring agent. The implications of this turn for critical theory have been explored in detail by Habermas, confirming the social construction of reality, albeit in a modified way. A critical realist ontological stance contends that social structures are produced by human agents and rejects a correspondence theory of truth. However, it is possible to identify causal mechanisms that gave rise to these structures and as such these structures represent a reality outside of discourse, partially knowable only through discourse which within language, creates a representation of this reality. Knowledge, as mediated by our interpretations and as socially constructed, points to a social ontological stance which

Morrow and Brown (1994: 154) assigned to both Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* and Giddens's *Theory of Structuration.*

A number of central concepts such as praxis, dialectics and reflexivity underpin the ontological and epistemological orientation of critical theory in addition to a particular understanding of the relationship between theory and practice which I discuss below by using Winter's (1987: 1989) formulations. Though Winter (1987; 1989) is primarily concerned with action research and is critical of Habermas's "ideal speech situation", he articulated a number of principles grounded in critical theory that refer to dialectic, reflexivity, praxis and theory and practice (research and action)[25]. Since Winter's earlier work, his principles for action-research are regarded as firmly rooted in an *emancipatory or critical* paradigm, "based on the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory" (Zuber-Skerrit, 1996: 1).

The classical approach to the relationship between theory and practice either views it as a deterministic relationship such as those associated with an applied notion of science (positivist) or an evaluative relationship in Popper's version of positivism. Within the dialectical tradition, unity and complexity is theorised to highlight contradictions but for Popper a theory which "involves a contradiction is … entirely useless as a theory" (1989a: 319). For critical theory, the relationship between theory and practice can be described as a reflexive dialectic.

> *Theory and practice are not two distinct entities but two different and yet interdependent and complementary phases of the change process ...[The] mutual questioning between theory and practice is strictly unending. This means that practice cannot simply reject theory because it must recognize that practical decisions will always be open to question. Similarly, theoretical critique cannot simply confront practice with an authoritative interpretation of events because it must recognize that theory itself will always be open to question, that the outcome of one phase of practical development will be a need and opportunity for further theoretical work (Winter, 1989: 66-67).*

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[25] See Habermas' critique of action research in Young (1990: 149-151) where he argues that action-research is only one possible procedural realization of hermeneutic and critical insight, not *the* educational research paradigm.

Within critical theory, the ontological and epistemological stance questions the basis on which knowledge claims are made. For positivism this basis is foundationalist and language is employed to reflect an independent reality. But since critical theory adheres to the notion of the "social construction of reality" that is mediated through and assembled within language which at the same time constructs ideological concepts to capture a reified and fetishised reality, ideology-critique, reflexivity and dialectics must operate in tandem as epistemological as well as methodological principles, because it stops inquiry from becoming relativistic.

However, reflexivity is constrained by ideology if ideology is seen as epistemological and as such the space for reflexivity is closed down because ideology is overwhelming. But ideology operates through language and "is constitutive of what, in our societies, 'is real'" (Thompson, 1985: 5). Therefore, we cannot proceed without acknowledging that ideology stands in a dialectical relationship to theory in order to generate the operational space for reflexivity.

For dialectics, individuals are the products of their social world and this world is structured as a series of contradictions[26]. These contradictions are transplanted or duplicated within individual consciousness. It is thus these contradictions that are exposed by dialectics that allow people

> *creative space for their own interpretations and decision-making. When they act, therefore, they do not simply reproduce their environment; they change it. Hence, although we started by saying that individuals are the product of their social world, we can also say that the social world is created by individuals' actions. We can make both statements simultaneously because "action" is not "behaviour" (the effect of a cause) but "praxis" (the creative implementation of a purpose) (Winter, 1989: 51).*

Change or transformation, within the emancipatory agenda of critical theory, is thus axiomatic because contradiction (between thesis and anti-thesis) presupposes a new

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[26] This insight is derived from the numerous works of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse.

resolution or synthesis based on the interdependent epistemological and methodological principles of reflexivity, dialectic and ideology-critique. Ideology-critique for critical theory is modelled on Freudian psychoanalysis that requires depth hermeneutics to uncover the meanings individuals ascribe to their actions and situations and this self-understanding "is constitutive of social and political reality" (Bernstein, 1979: 200).

4.5.4 Critical Theory, Education and HRE

Since the 1980s critical theory not only provided the basis for the development of a critical theory of education, i.e. critical pedagogy, but its major tenets have been developed into a distinct educational discourse. Maxine Green (1999: 14) referring to Baudrillard's description of "the shadow of silent majorities in an administered and media-mystified world", deplores the political, economic and cultural dimensions that created this silence and provided the catalyst for educational thinkers to turn to neo-Marxist "scholarship for clues to a critical pedagogy" (*ibid*: 24). In an interesting analysis of Habermas' notions and its implications for education, Young, R. (1990: 99-125) tries to show how the theory of communicative action with its emphasis on minimising distortions in communication, presents a radically new approach to teaching and learning as a critical pedagogy. Morrow and Torres (2002: 2-3) provide us with a comparison between Freire, one of the most influential critical educators, and Habermas and conclude that "they share a conception of the human sciences, the crises of modern societies, theory of the subject, and pedagogical practice".

Rex Gibson (1986: 6) argues that teachers should be interested in critical theory not only because "it enlarges our understanding of how we may rationally justify educational action" but also because "it attempts to explain the origins of everyday practices and problems" and questions the organisation and configuration of education by asserting that people should be able to "determine their own destinies". He also argues (*ibid*: 16-18) that critical theory has not gained much currency in educational thinking, especially those of teachers because of its "threatening nature" in questioning authority, hierarchy, power and domination.

Critical pedagogy is not easy to define and in fact, no generic definition can be applied to the term. Though characterised by a multiplicity of approaches, critical pedagogy does exhibit a particular orientation to educational theory and practice that are interwoven with this array of approaches. Exploring the historical context of critical theory, Giroux and Freire (1986: xiii) argue that early forms of radical educational theorising almost exclusively focused on the reproductive link between schooling and work. Three sets of theories of reproduction are identifiable[27]. First the economic-reproductive model most commonly associated with Bowles and Gintis (1976; 1988) and Althusser (1971) which focuses on the relationship between schooling and the economy. Second, the cultural-reproductive model of Pierre Bourdieu wich focuses on the "mediating role of culture in reproducing class societies" (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986: 79). Third, the hegemonic-state reproductive model based on the work of Gramsci that directs its attention to the relationship "between the state and capitalism and …the state and schooling". These theories, though providing valuable insights, have been criticised for their deterministic view of ideological domination; lack of reflection on race and gender; the downplaying of human agency; concentration on overt resistance; limited attention given to the psychological processes that "reproduces itself in the psyche of human beings" (*ibid*: 104); failure to move beyond the language of critique (Giroux and Freire, 1986: xiii); and their contention that all forms of oppressions are necessarily class related (*ibid*: xiii).

In response to these shortcomings, Giroux and Freire (*ibid*: xiv-xvi) put forward the central positions of a critical pedagogy as follows. First, the scope of pedagogical practices resides in the broader notion of education, not only schooling, and the construction of meaning and social practices in popular culture, mass media, trade unions, the family and other structures are all subjected to pedagogical engagement and political analysis. Second, the voice, subjectivity, and experiences of subordinate groups are emphasised. Third, for Critical Pedagogy experiences are historical and constructed

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[27] See Aronowitz and Giroux (1986).

by gender-, race- and class- "specific ideologies" that interplay with systems of power "that point to both the persistence of oppressive structures and ideologies and the possibilities for struggle and social change". Fourth, theories of psychoanalysis and feminism employed within critical pedagogy point to cultural politics as inclusive of everyday experiences, interest, desires and needs which broadens critical pedagogy's interest in various forms of oppression and emancipation. Fifth, counter-hegemonic practices so crucial to the agenda of emancipation are identified through historical inquiry that challenges dominant ideologies and practices.

McLaren (1989: 159-191) also provides a useful overview of the foundational principles and major concepts of critical pedagogy. The principles include the relationship between schools and politics; schooling as cultural politics, the interplay between schools and economics and the centrality of social empowerment; the historicity of curriculum as experience; and curriculum as constituted by interests. The major concepts underpinning critical pedagogy are aligned to those that dominated the interest of critical theory such as the social construction of knowledge as the backdrop against which to employ understandings of knowledge-constitutive interests; class; culture; cultural forms; hegemony; ideology; and prejudice. In addition Foucault's notions of power-knowledge, discourse and cultural politics stand in proxy to explore the relationship between power and knowledge and the socio-cultural dimension of the curriculum. Critical theory further builds on reproduction and correspondence theory in a way that allows it to transcend its determinism by focusing on human agency as understood within resistance theory and an employment of the concept of cultural capital.

For Leistyna and Woodrum (1999: 3) "critical pedagogy is primarily concerned with the kinds of educational theories and practices that encourage both students and teachers to develop an understanding of the interconnecting relationship among ideology, power and culture". The institutional forms and practices which people on one hand constitute through their actions, are on the other hand influential in determining their lived experiences in an interconnecting web of ideology and power relations which ultimately shape culture. In this sense culture partially represents all forms and levels of

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vulnerability created by asymmetric power relations in terms of gender, class, race, age, HIV/AIDS status, sexual orientation and the other categories of discrimination articulated in human rights instruments. These arrangements are hegemonic in that they present the dominant framework through which a social reality that is masked by ideology is engaged. Schools and other educational institutions and pedagogical practices such as the electronic media, produce a certain typology of knowledge and configure educational practices in particular modes through which this culture is produced and historically developed. It is through praxis and critical reflection to which these patterns are exposed that ultimately lead to conscientization.

Morrow and Torres's (2002: 140) comparison of Habermas and Freire highlights a number of principles related to critical theory and Critical Pedagogy:

- The *thesis of critical literacy,* which argues that critical consciousness depends crucially on a form of literacy that facilitates "structural perspective" for understanding social reality, a process that formally parallels the notions of communicative competence and collective learning that underlie Habermas's theory of society.

- A *dialogical understanding of the pedagogical practices* required for acquiring critical communicative competence, as illustrated practically in Freire's account of the methodology of thematic investigation and illuminated by Habermas's account of the logical and linguistic character of the "general interpretations" involved in social knowledge.

- The *generalizability of the basic principles of Freirean pedagogy* to formal and nonformal settings in all types of societies…a suggestion consistent with Habermas's general distinction between reflexive and non-reflexive learning.

- The *intimate interrelationships between reflexive learning, the formation of critical citizenship and the potential revitalization of democratic public spheres* in diverse settings.

Though Morrow and Torres's account of Freire's and Habermas's orientations makes for interesting and useful analogies, the historical grounding of Freire (1972: 25) within the

working class in third world Brazil, prompted him to view the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as similar to a pedagogy of liberation which, despite fundamental parallels with Habermas's educational project, sets out pedagogical principles not envisaged by Habermas[28]. Freire, in his *Pedagogy of Hope* (1992: 9) captures one of the primary tasks of a progressive educator as unveiling "opportunities of hope" which in the context of critical theory, inhabits the space within contradictions that can only be exposed by a reflexive dialectic. This is necessary, according to Freire (1993: xi) because we have to "recognize multiple constructions of power and authority in a society riven by inequalities [and therefore] there must be a growing recognition of new forms of subjectivity and new strategies of emancipatory praxis which are derived from non-Western settings…" Furthermore, a strategy to change the structures of power radically, requires critical pedagogy to build networks across differences since the inability to do so only "serves to preserve the structures of domination and exploitation" (Darder, 2002: 27).

For the past two decades HRE practitioners attempted to provide a conceptual convergence between HRE and critical pedagogy (Flowers, 2004: 119). "HRE as Empowerment" and "HRE and Transformation" (Tibbitts, 2002) became popular phrases to signify the purpose and ultimate aims of HRE in alignment with the vision of critical pedagogy. In South Africa these developments are reflected in the configuration of the People's Education of the 1980s and early 1990s (Keet and Carrim, 2005). Elsewhere, Popular Education represented the precursors of contemporary HRE (Magendzo, 2002) as was the case in Latin America. The language of critical pedagogy, especially its Freirein version, has gradually permeated the thinking of at least a handful of HRE practitioners. Thus the formalised construction of HRE in recent normative frameworks includes the notions of empowerment and social justice (WPAHRE, 2005). As long as these formulations excluded the Freirein praxis of "conscientization", they were acceptable within the diplomatic arena of the United Nations. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that Freirein notions within HRE were to a large extent only 'misused' for their symbolic value in providing legitimacy for HRE to be accepted within informal and

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[28] See Morrow and Torres (2002).

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community-based educational practices. These Freirein notions are playing their role as a consciously constructed bridge between the intergovernmental diplomacy of HRE and its practical educational translation.

Abraham Magendzo (2002: 4), a leading HRE practitioner in Latin America, tried to make the first formalised effort to link HRE and critical pedagogy.

> *We could affirm with no doubt that Human Rights Education is one of the most concrete and tangible expressions of critical pedagogy. Both, Critical pedagogy and Human Rights Education are very much interested to observe power structures outside and inside the educational system. Critical pedagogy is mainly interested to examine how the educational structure and the curriculum interact and shape knowledge. Human Rights Education is essentially concerned with how educational structure and the curriculum has an effect on moulding the "subject of rights".*

Magendzo (2005) is further of the opinion that HRE is the "normative and ethical support for peace and citizenship education" and that HRE should be regarded as the ultimate configuration of political education. Critical pedagogy and HRE

> *… should and could contribute to change by integrating, penetrating and infusing education and curriculum with social justice, empowerment and with social, cultural and political issues such as poverty, discrimination, peace, gender, racism, etc. (Magendzo, 2002).*

If Magendzo is referring to the dominant formulations of HRE, his statements will require substantial qualification because the present formulations and practices of HRE will not meet the necessary critical pedagogical requirements. However, if he is referring to an alternative conception of HRE, his efforts can be registered as part of an emancipatory formulation of HRE. However, in the broader scheme of things such a formulation of HRE will remain conceptually questionable as long as the definitional structure of HRE is conceptually linked to human rights universals.

Stated differently, a declarationist construction of HRE renders an emancipatory and empowerment agenda impossible, despite Magendzo's (*ibid*) insistence. The "[im] possibility of HRE" is succinctly addressed in Baxi's (undated) "chaotic notes" and his critical treatise on human rights and HRE (1997, 2002). Baxi's critique of the contemporary "human rights hegemony" provides a useful starting point for considering a critical formulation of HRE that may have conceptual synergies with critical pedagogy. Claude (1996, 197-206), to some extent, entertained the critical stance towards human rights and HRE as reflected in the work of Magendzo (2002; 2005) and Baxi (1997, 2002). However, the critical pedagogical formulation of HRE has been arrested and negated by the formalization of a declarationist HRE across the world.

4.5.5 Critique of Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy

The educational formulations derived from critical theory are captured in the development of critical pedagogy whose central exponents such as Dewey, Freire, Giroux, Apple, McLaren, Torres, Shor, Macedo, Aronowitz and others, have written extensively on the subject. For now it is useful to note that the theses of critical theory did not go uncontested. These contestations are captured by Morrow and Torres (2002: 163) who identify five types of attack against critical theory and critical pedagogy:

> *(1) From the direction of positivist educational theory, it has been rejected as impractical, romantic, and without any empirical basis;*
> *(2) From the Marxist left, it has been condemned for idealism, subjectivism, and romanticism, a perspective most common in Latin America;*
> *(3) From the direction of conservative hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches, it has been received with ambivalence because of its 'Westernizing' politicisation of education at the expense of the lifeworld and tradition;*
> *(4) In the name of radical environmental critiques it has been charged with normative anthropomorphism; and*
> *(5) Under the labels of postmodernist, poststructuralist, and postcolonial theory, it has been questioned for its modernist rationalist bias, normative universalism, conception of an autonomous subject, and lack of attention to questions of difference.*

4.6 Postmodernism

4.6.1 Introduction

Lyotard, the French thinker "most readily associated" (Tormey, 2004: 152) with the term 'postmodernism' uses the term 'modern' to designate "any science that legimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse …an explicit appeal to some grand narrative" (Lyotard, 1999: xxiii). He describes the 'postmodern' as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (*ibid*, xxiv). The designation 'postmodernism' was first use in the 1870s (Appignanesi and Garratt, 2003: 3) and later on found currency in the fields of architecture, art and literature. Despite the fact that postmodernist links can be traced to the work of Nietzsche in the 19th century, especially those associated with *genealogy,* the "sea-change in cultural as well as in political-economic practices" (Harvey, 1990: vii) under the rubric of postmodernism occured around 1972.

Postmodernism has been defined as a "body of thought" and "a way of practising" (Usher and Edwards, 1994: 1); a "historical condition" (Harvey, 1990: viii); a philosophical movement and a cultural phenomenon with features such as:

> *The challenging of convention, the mixing of styles, tolerance of ambiguity, emphasis on diversity, acceptance of innovation and change, and stress on the constructedness of reality (Beck, 1993: 1).*

Lyotard (1999: 79-82) is of the view that the postmodern is part of the modern and needs to be understood according to "the paradox of the future (post) anterior (modo)". But postmodernism is also against modernism, and thus in "cohabitation with its sworn enemy (modernism) as a room-mate" (Bauman, 2002: 355). Jameson (1999: xvi), in his foreword to Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition,* indeed argues that Lyotard sees postmodernism not as that "which follows modernism, but rather as a cyclical moment that returns before the emergence of the ever new modernisms in the stricter sense", which is not that different from the notion of *high modernism* of the Frankfurt school.

Apart from Lyotard, thinkers associated with postmodernism include Derrida, Foucault and Rorty but this stable may include Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, Kuhn and even Habermas. A range of theoretical constructs are employed within postmodernism such as poststructuralism, deconstructionism, neopragmatism, perspectivalism, postanalytic philosophy and hermeneutics (see Beck, 1993: 2; Edgar and Sedgwick, 2004: 294-297; and Rohmann, 2002: 310-311).

4.6.2 What is Postmodernism?

> *Postmodernity is a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation. Against these Enlightenment norms, it sees the world as contingent, ungrounded, diverse, unstable, indeterminate, a set of disunified cultures or interpretations which breed a degree of scepticism about the objectivity of truth, history and norms, the givenness of natures and the coherence of identities. This way of seeing, so some would claim, has real material conditions: it springs from an historic shift in the West to a new form of capitalism – to the ephemeral, decentralized world of technology, consumerism and the culture industry, in which the service, finance and information industries triumph over traditional manufacture, and classical class politics yield ground to a diffuse range of identity politics. Postmodernism is a style of culture which reflects something of this epochal change, in a depthless, decentred, ungrounded, self-reflexive, playful, derivative, eclectic, pluralistic art which blurs the boundaries between 'high' and 'popular 'culture', as well as between art and every-day experience (Eagleton, 1996: vii).*

Though Eagleton makes an interesting distinction between postmodernity and postmodernism, these two terms will be used interchangeably in this study. Postmodernism is a widely used term that connects with poststructuralism and postindustrialism in a powerful configuration of sentiments and thoughts that "determined the standards of debate, defined the manner of 'discourse' and set parameters on cultural, political and intellectual criticism" (Harvey, 1990: viii). Since the

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constitutive meaning of 'postmodernism' resides within an understanding of 'modernity' and 'modernism', the need to explore the meaning of 'modernity' and 'modernism' is inevitable.

'Modernity' refers to the period that captured the advances in scientific progress from the 17th century onwards and "enlightenment" thinking that placed the conditions of human progress within the sphere of rationality and technological development. Autonomous thinking and intellectualization became the hallmark of the practices of scientists, philosophers and scholars and these constituted the intellectual framework of the nascent modernity with 'modernism' as its cultural expression. Holub (1991: 136) argues that modernity for Habermas means the development of the enlightenment ideals of objective science with cognitive-instrumental rationality; universal morality with moral-practical rationality; and autonomous art with aesthetic-expressive rationality.

Thus 'modernity' represents a particular era in historical development with enlightenment thinking as its catalyst and technological and industrial development as its consequences. In similar ephocal vein, 'postmodernity' refers to a historical era that is associated with the contemporary developments of the information explosion, economic and cultural globalization, global communication, advanced media technology, total media practices and dramatic developments in information and communication technology. Though 'modernity' and 'postmodernity' may be described in epochal terms, 'modernism and 'postmodernism' are oppositional attitudes in any epoch (Usher and Edwards, 1994: 9; Lyotard, 1999: 79-82).

The advances associated with 'modernity' and 'enlightenment' such as the industrial developments did not translate into a political and moral framework for the emancipation of humanity as promised within the enlightenment discourse. Instead increased militarism, the subjugation and oppression of people across the world and the increase in social and economic inequality in the 20th century, provided credence to the notion that the enlightenment is driven by a "logic of domination and oppression" (Harvey, 1990: 13

referring to Horkheimer and Ardorno, *The Dialectic of Enlighthenment.* 1972) that is embodied in technical-instrumental rationality.

The surface order created by instrumental rationality's knowledge and science was expressed in an ontological adherence to a single reality as expressed through modernism's art, literature and architecture. The development of modernity based on instrumental rationality entrenched capitalism as an economic arrangement and shifts within the internal arrangement of capitalist production only resulted in swings within modernism. Thus, in the aftermath of the Second World War, high modernism presented a reality through art, literature, architecture and high culture that coalesced neatly with a capitalist version of the enlightenment. The enlightenment dream of human emancipation disappeared as social organisation and economic practices increasingly resembled the managed arrangements and un-freedoms of capitalism.

> *It was in this context that the various counter-cultural and anti-modernist movements of the 1960s sprang to life. Antagonistic to the oppressive qualities of scientifically grounded technical-bureaucratic rationality as purveyed through monolithic corporate, state, and other forms of institutionalised power, the counter-cultures explored the realms of individualised self-realization through a distinctive 'new left' politics, through the embrace of anti-authoritarian gestures, iconoclastic habits, and the critique of everyday life (Harvey, 1990: 38).*

The above passage describes some forms of anti-modernist and pro postmodernist expressions. These developments marked the beginning of the shift from modernism to postmodernism. Postmodernism, against this background, refers to a combination of philosophical orientations, theoretical frameworks and practices that challenge the legitimating power of the meta-narratives of the enlightenment; rejects the exclusionary tendency associated with notions that underscore the hierarchy of knowledge; and question the possibility of a uniform epistemological and ontological framework. Philosophical frameworks and paradigms such as positivism and Marxism are premised on their distinct epistemological and ontological orientations that represent the variations to the "meta-narratives" against which postmodernism defines its stance. Though difficult

to summarise because of its diverse meanings, there are some features of postmodernism that can contribute to a definitional framework.

First, for Lyotard (1999: xxiii) 'postmodernism' refers to the "condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies". The term 'postmodernism' designates "the state of our culture following transformation which, since the end of the 19th century, have altered the game rules for science literature, and the arts" (*ibid*: xxiii). The prime catalyst for altering these game rules is the decline of the meta-narratives which can no longer be the appeal-structure for the legitimation of knowledge claims. Bauman (2002: 351) refers to these narratives as modernity's quest for an "incontestable authority" with the aim to "install an artificial order". Rohmann (2002: 310) describes postmodernism as an artistic and critical tendency "characterised by eclecticism, relativism and scepticism, the rejection of intrinsic meaning and reality, the repudiation of progress and cultural cohesion, and an ironic embrace of ambiguity".

Second, depthlessness and play are significant features of the postmodern condition with the "breaking down of the hierarchical barriers between high and popular culture, art and everyday life leading to a stylistic promiscuity favouring eclecticism and the mixing of codes; parody, pastiche and irony" (Usher and Edwards, 1994: 12).

Third, Baudrillard (2002: 362-365) views the consumer society as a postmodern condition that favours consumption over production.

> *The phenomenology of consumption, the general climatization of life, of goods, objects, services, behaviors, and social relations represents the perfected, "consummated," stage of evolution which, through articulated networks of objects, ascends from pure and simple abundance to a complete conditioning of action and time, and finally to the systematic organization of ambiance which is characteristic of the drugstores, the shopping malls, or the modern airports in our futuristic cities.*

On a broader level, Smith (1995: 2) describes the postmodern condition as material circumstances "marked by communications technology, changes in the global economy and the commodification of culture" whilst Vattimo (2002: 367) links the 'postmodern'

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to "a society of generalized communication … a society of the mass media". In addition, the mass-consumer society drives "the mobilization of fashion, pop art, television and other forms of media image … that have become part and parcel of daily life under capitalism" (Harvey, 1990: 63). It is thus the hegemony of the market economy that determined postmodernism's trajectory into the arena of cultural production. It is within this context that Jameson pronounced on postmodernism as the "cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson, 1991).

Kemmis (1996: 2002) provides a useful set of key transformations that designate the postmodern condition. First, the transformation of the "content and forms of contemporary *culture* – including dramatic changes in the nature of the media" reflects the anti-modernist stance of various contemporary cultural expressions. Second, a shift occurred in the *"content and form of economic structures and interrelationships"* that are reflected in the ascendancy of the production of information and culture over the production of goods and the global "control of the means of production". Third, the form and content of *"political life"* has changed and these changes relate to the "decline of the nation-state with the rise of transnational economic structures" and the "emergence of social movements".

Pring (2000: 110) uses the characteristics of modernism as a possible way of explaining postmodernism. He argues that postmodernism is against the following modernist assumptions:

> *First,…there is the ideal of a complete and scientific explanation of physical and social reality. Second, in pursuit of this ideal, the progressive development of knowledge can be divided into its intellectual disciplines, based on their distinctive concepts, verification procedures and modes of enquiry. Through such diverse and disciplined study and research, bodies of knowledge are built up from indisputable premises. Third, these bodies of knowledge provide the secure knowledge-base for social action and improvement. Fourth, there is thus a 'grand narrative' which we have subscribed to, namely, the 'enlightenment' view that reason, in the light of systematically researched evidence, will provide the solutions to the various problems we are confronted with. Fifth, the*

educational system is crucial to the initiation of young people into these different bodies of knowledge and forms of rationality.

Thus, juxtaposing modernism and postmodernism with one another became a standard way of defining their premises. In *Postmodernism and Feminism,* Waugh (1998: 178) provides a comprehensive account of the various meanings of postmodernism that include: the "new kinds of literary meanings arising out of but moving beyond those of cultural modernism"; "a range of aesthetic practices involving playful irony, parody, self-consciousness and fragmentation"; the "pervasive cynicism about the progressivist ideals of the Enlightenment"; and "repudiations of foundationalism".

Another valuable description is that of McLaren (1995: 187) who views 'postmodernism' as simultaneously referring to "the state of consumer culture, complexes of metropolitan moods, and new trends in contemporary theories of the social subject". It is these "new trends in contemporary theories of the social subject" that will be referred to in the ensuing discussion on ontological and epistemological considerations which in turn frame a critical postmodern understanding of HRE and its possibilities.

4.6.3 Postmodernism: Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

Ontological and epistemological discourses are the kind of constructions against which postmodernism rebels since it assumes a "fix, universal reality and method of inquiry" (Beck, 1993: 5). However, it would be useful to explore the postmodernist stance in relation to these questions comparative to the theoretical frameworks that were discussed earlier. Anderson's (2003: 12) articulation of the postmodernist epistemology in a *Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science* is a useful starting point.

> *It embodies a sceptical sensibility that questions attempts to transcend our situatedness by appeal to such ideas as universality, necessity, objectivity, rationality, essence, unity, totality, foundations, and ultimate Truth and Reality. Its stresses the locality, partiality, contingency, instability, uncertainly, ambiguity and essential contestability of any particular account of the world, the self, and the good.*

Postmodernism logically views reality as an incredibly complex construction that does not exist independently of human activity. Reality is constructed through our cultural norms, interests and needs. This social construction of reality "relativizes claims to knowledge and authority" (Smith, 1995: 2) and the meta-narratives are but one expression of knowledge claims amongst a sea of equal claimants. Reality thus consists of an infinite number of macro and mini narratives that represent contextualised experiences within the context of ephemerality. For postmodernists there are no perpetual, universal, collective or consensus truths. Meta-narratives cannot provide the habitat for truth claims since they invariably screen out the possibility of the construction of mini-narratives and as such are totalising. Postmodernists therefore "insist on the plurality of 'power-discourse' formations (Foucault), or of 'language games' (Lyotard)" (Harvey, 1990: 45) within a context of flux, fragments, difference, and chaos (Best, undated: 1).

Postmodernism subscribes to the ambiguity and ambivalence of meaning and promotes tolerance and diversity but the postmodern "celebration of difference and contingency has not displaced the modern lust for uniformity and certainty" (Bauman, 2002: 354).

Thus postmodernism is all-inclusive … all claim of truths and knowledge are accepted. Deconstructing the framework that operated as an arbiter of truth claims within the discourse of the enlightenment is one of the key epistemological positions of post-modernism. Foucault, for instance, deconstructed this discourse through the notion of the "political production of truth" (Cherryholmes, 1988: 33) and through an exploration of the relationship between truth telling, truth and power (Foucault, 2001: 170). This he does by arguing that a discursive practice, "as a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined…the conditions of operation of the enunciative function" (Foucault, 1972: 117). A discursive practice thus "govern (s) what may be said, in what mode, what is considered valid, what is considered appropriate to be circulated and who may say what in a given setting" (Simons, 2004: 188). These conditions, since they are determined by rules, are thus permeated with the notion and operation of power.

> *If truth is discursive and discourses are historically situated, then truth cannot be spoken in the absence of power and each historical arrangement of power has its own truths (Cherryholmes, 1988: 34).*

The discursivity of 'truth' makes it "a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and the operations of statements" (Foucault quoted in Simons, 2004: 188). For Foucault, power, truth and knowledge stand in a particular relationship with one another and in the final passage of *Discipline and Punish* (1979: 308) he states that he "end (s) a book that must serve as a historical background to various studies of the power of normalization and the formation of knowledge in the modern era". Power, "those asymmetries by which some people are rewarded and indulged or deprived and sanctioned by others" (Cherryholmes, 1988: 35), is everywhere and "permeates the entirety of reality and thereby becomes its essence"[29]. Power is thus "constitutive of reality" and "discourses of knowledge are in fact an expression of power relations and themselves embodiments of power"[30]. Power passes through people and institutional practices such as those associated with the prison and the judiciary (Foucault, 1999: 136). In fact, power and knowledge do not merely constitute a relationship with one another. They are constitutive of each other because:

> *… they imply one another…there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time a power relation (Foucault quoted in Simons, 2004: 190).*

Knowledge and the trajectory of rationality are thus determined by the power relations in society which constrain the expression and articulation of micro-political concerns as constructed within a range of perspectives or mini-narratives. Whilst Foucault concentrated on the power/knowledge relation as an epistemological concern, Derrida emphasized:

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[29] See Edgar and Sedgwick (2004: 305) on Nietzsche's view of power.
[30] See Edgar and Sedgwick (2004: 305) on Foucault's notion of power.

> *… that meaning is not centered or fixed because it is caught in a play of references between words and definitions where texts only give the appearance of stability but have no centre, no transcendental signified, no transcendental semantic meaning (Cherryholmes, 1988: 36).*

Derrida's 'deconstruction' does not undermine the notion of truth but problematized its operations within broader, "more powerful, larger, more stratified contexts" that include questions of an "ethical, socio-political and institutional import" (Norris, 1992: 35). The meaning of 'meaning' within postmodernism is much more complex than the modernist conception of a representational relationship between sign and reality.

> *Postmodernism problematises this relationship by not only questioning the very notion of representation, the relationship between sign and reality, but also arguing that because the word/image (signifier) is no longer attached to fixed signifieds, the sign becomes the signifier and therefore becomes its own 'reality' (Usher and Edwards, 1994: 14).*

Thus, for postmodernists "reality is constructed by representations and therefore of multiple perspectives where representations become reality and reality is always, necessarily, represented" (*ibid*: 14). This particular ontological stance directs an epistemological position of a "plural understanding of truth; that all knowledge is contextual, historical and discursive" (*ibid*: 24). In a sense 'multiple realities' are constructed through different discourses and practices and thus "difference can be seen in 'reality'" (*ibid*: 28). Thus, researchers do not represent a pre-existing reality but rather contribute to constituting a highly tentative reality through representation.

4.6.4 Postmodernism, Education and HRE

After postmodernism, Education, Politics and Identity edited by Smith and Wexler (1995) and *Postmodernism and Education* by Usher and Bryant (1994) represent two comprehensive accounts of rethinking education in a postmodern age. This rethinking is however challenged by three problems (*ibid*: 1-2). First, "the task …, of seeing education in a postmodern perspective is rendered particularly difficult if the very notion of the postmodern is itself problematic". Second, the standard definitional structure of

postmodernism focuses on what it is against. Third, "educational theory and practice is founded on the discourse of modernity" and this makes the postmodern reflection on education very challenging. Whatever these challenges may entail, education must respond to the conditions that gave rise to postmodernity as well as the postmodern condition itself.

Pring (2000: 112-113) is of the view that postmodernism questions the "authority of educational establishments"; challenges the "organisation of teaching into traditional subjects"; disputes the "location of knowledge in schools, colleges and universities; and resists the grand narrative of "performativity"[31]. In *Emancipatory Aspirations in a Postmodern Era (1996)* Kemmis analysed the possible implications of postmodernism for critical pedagogy and called for "re-conceptualising emancipation" (*ibid*: 230) and the development of better theories that "engage, challenge and develop people's actual understandings and interpretations of their circumstances" in order for us "to reproduce those aspects of our social lives that are of value, and transform those that contribute to our difficulties" (*ibid*: 233).

In the concluding chapter this study will employ Giroux's notion of 'Critical Postmodern Pedagogy' and McLaren's notion of 'Postcolonial Pedogogy' as a convergence of "various tendencies within modernism, postmodernism, and postmodern feminism, (Giroux, 1997: 218-225). This is done to "retain modernism's (i.e. critical theory) commitment to critical reason, agency and the power of human beings to overcome human suffering" as well as engaging with postmodernism's "powerful challenge to all totalizing discourses" (*ibid*: 218). In the next chapter this study also develops the proposition that the postmodernist critique of human rights has already resulted in an emergent postmodernist critique of dominant forms of HRE.

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[31] See also Ball (2003) on *The State, Performativity and Authenticity*

4.6.5 Critique of Postmodernism

Norris's (1992) polemical essay *Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War* is a derisive attack on the theoretical accesses of postmodernism, especially those tendencies that represent a high level of "moral and political nihilism" (*ibid*: 194) or "intellectual and political bankruptcy" (*ibid*: 196). Norris reacted in particular to Baudrillard's conception and prediction that the Gulf War would not happen and his contention afterwards that the Gulf War has indeed not taken place. The war, in Baudrillard terms, was a "simulated event, a charade with a forgone conclusion enacted on television to satisfy both sides' need for self-justifying images" (Rohmann, 2002: 39). Using Chomsky as an example of an intellectual that has achieved a degree of correspondence between his philosophic principles and socio-political beliefs, Norris (1992: 102) argues that most postmodernist commentators such as Baudrillard and Foucault use the 'non-existence of truth' as a justification for not 'speaking truth to power'. Baudrillard's simulacra and simulation may constitute his hyperreality, but the essence of Norris's (1992: 110) essay is that there are factual truths such as human suffering outside this hyperreality which "don not come down to a mere disagreement between rival viewpoints, language-games or discourses".

Norris (1992: 52) further shows "how the real world became a fable" through postmodernist thinking and with reference to the domestic and foreign policies of the "Reagans, Bushes, Thatchers, Bothas and Pinochets" contends how often "bad philosophy has gone along with bad politics" (*ibid*: 191). Through an exposé of the notions of the "political economy of truth" (*ibid*: 110), "consensus reality" and "manufactured truth" (*ibid*: 159), Norris argues against the irrational collapse of the truth/falsehood distinction within postmodernism since it can only result in an ethos of "enlightened false consciousness" (*ibid*: 190) which renders effective political action impossible.

Habermas (Ray, 1993: 20-21) associates postmodernism with young conservativism as an "aesthetic abandonment of reason". Habermas believes that rational debate and accord

are present in the "socio-linguistic rules of communication" and that this rationality is "pre-figured in all struggles for justice, civic rights, participation, or freedom from exploitation" *(ibid)*. For Habermas, the central mistake of postmodernists is to equate instrumental reasoning, against which the Frankfurt school and Critical Theory argued, with modernity and as such "throws out the baby of critical reason with the bathwater of instrumental rationality" (*ibid*). Habermas tries to circumvent the postmodernist critique against totalising and dominating narratives by arguing that the theory of communicative action allows for the "counterfactual imagination in critique" that enables us to "engage in an ethic of care for the other through communicative respect – one which tackles both obstacles to autonomy and to solidarity" (Young, R. 1995: 17). Whereas Habermas tries to bridge the communicative gap between the self and the other, "Derrida honours the other, Foucault honours the self, both effectively stumble when they reach towards the possibility of bridging the gap between persons" (*ibid*: 17). Thus, R. Young's (*ibid*: 21) comparison between Habermas, Foucault and Derrida represents a palatable précis of a critique of postmodernism:

> *Foucault's failure is that he has construed the macro-problem as a problem of power, not difference, and Derrida's failure is that he has construed the micro-problem (of texts, authorship and meaning) as a problem of difference, not power. Habermas's virtue is that he has not made either mistake, thus sharing Foucault critique of Derrida and Derrida's critique of Foucault.*

R. Young (*ibid*: 18-19) hints at the fact that Derrida and Foucault retreated from the maropolitical and created "conceptual windmills" by "aggrandizing that against which they fight, they also elevate the status of their own assertions". That is, Derrida chose particular texts to fit his notion of deconstruction and to prove its assumptions whilst Foucault operated at the extreme of "knowledge as warranted true belief" to construct his notion of power-knowledge. And further, fellow postmodernist, Baudrillard, has criticised Foucault's discourse itself as a "discourse of power, a mirror of the powers he is describing" (Macey, 1993: 359).

Giroux, (1997: 183-228) in his effort to straddle the boundaries between critical pedagogy and various postmodernisms, agrees with Habermas's critique of postmodernism's rejection of the emancipatory interest but disagrees with Habermas' dismissal of all forms of postmodernism as "antimodernist and neo-conservative" (*ibid*: 191). Kemmis (1996: 231) on the other hand agrees with Habermas's argument on the "quietism or conservatism of some postmodernism" and argues in favour of 'a continuing commitment to emancipatory-critical perspectives. The limited critical potential of postmodernism is also a concern for Sanbonmatsu (2003) who also deplores the postmodernist emphasis on difference and non-universality as a trend that undermines the notion of solidarity and thus political action. Chapter 7 of this study deals with Giroux and McLaren's attempts to respond to these criticisms of postmodernism that relate to its conservatism, negation of the notion of solidarity and the undermining of the possibilities for political action.

In *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (1996) Eagleton provides a sustained and comprehensive critique of the fallacies and contradictions of postmodernism which cannot be entertained in this study. These contradictions seem to undermine the methodological validity of postmodern approaches to gender, sex and sexuality. On this score Standing (2003: 1), referring to Chomsky's critique of postmodernism, argues that postmodern approaches:

> *Frequently take the form of vague critiques favouring obfuscation or hyperbole (sometimes both) to clear and reasoned argument, and adopt either an unjustified level of epistemological scepticism leading to radical conclusions that are not supported by any substantial evidence, or to the production of facile rhetoric and jargon-filled texts that constitute 'a sort of masturbation fantasy in which the world of fact hardly matters', if at all.*

Evading the world of 'fact' or 'reason' is the hallmark of the postmodern demeanour that has played into the hands of the consumer culture generators according to Eagleton (1996). And further as Simpson (2005: 2) has noted, Eagleton, in *After Theory* (2004), also chides postmodernism's latent conservatism in its bias towards micro-scaled

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analysis. Colon's (undated: 2) review of *After Theory* summarises Eagleton's position as follows:

> *For Eagleton, the grave problem with postmodern thought is that it has given up on asking the big question. Instead, it has celebrated difference (and différance) to such an extent that we cannot see ourselves as being part of any unified whole. Instead, we cultivate our small groups and consider primarily the questions that are important to our unique selves. This abandonment of engaging the big social questions has led to an increasing interest in the humanities on the body or vampires or porn; perhaps these topics are worthy of serious intellectual thought, but what they represent to Eagleton is a white flag that English majors are waving at the world. We know that we cannot engage the questions that are relevant to most of the world, so we will work on the margins and impress a very small audience. This reminds me of Martin McQuillan's introduction to 'Deconstruction: A Reader' wherein he writes that "a definition (if we really must have such things) of deconstruction might be that deconstruction is an act of reading which allows the other to speak". Eagleton scoffs at the fascination with the Other in contemporary literary studies, preferring to remind us that the situation of what we normally define as the Other is really the situation of most of the world's population. They are not exotic and our study of their differences merely serves to highlight our need to congratulate ourselves on having taken them seriously enough to write a paper on their problems. Eagleton challenges us to see that their problems are our problems and we must begin to behave knowing that as an immutable fact.*

Thus for Eagleton postmodernism is either creating straw tigers, i.e. fallacies as a basis of critique against the modernist project or erroneously presenting itself as a unique, innovative and creative social and political theory. He (1999:121) is however, also in agreement with what he regards as crucial achievements within postmodernism. The abandonment of the big question is closely tied to the postmodernist anti-agency conception of human agency. As Burke (2000: 1) has noted, some postmodernists have been

> *… distinctively uneasy about the ability of human beings to affect the world we live in. They see us as corks being tossed about in a turbulent sea of change, being pushed one way then another with no ability to affect the direction we want to go in.*

Challenging postmodernism's claims that it represents a radical break from modernism, Jameson (1991) urges us to consider that postmodernism "is in itself little more than one more stage of modernism proper" (in *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism).* Likewise, Harvey (1989: 42) asked whether "postmodernism represents a radical break with modernism?"; "does it have a revolutionary potential by virtue of its opposition to all forms meta-narratives?"; and does it "undermine or integrate with neo-conservative politics?".

4.7 General Paradigmatic Implications for HRE

The preceding discussion on the four major theoretical frameworks highlights some fundamental conceptual implications for human rights education as discussed in the various sections. Tables 9 and 10 in Chapter 6 present these implications in a different format. For now, the following trends are deduced.

- First, the way is which the nature of social reality is perceived with its congruent epistemological assumptions, determines the notion of human rights and impacts profoundly on human rights education as a pedagogical endeavour.

- Second, understanding these frameworks and the way they influence our educational thinking and practices are prerequisites for appraising and critically analysing HRE. It may urge us to consider why HRE is configured in particular ways; whose interests are served by such configurations; and what the possibilities residing within HRE are.

- Third, we are presented with choices insofar as the meaning and application of HRE is concerned and need to explore how we can employ these theoretical orientations to unlock the promises that are inhabited by HRE.

- Fourth, questions of power, domination and interest are brought to the fore. These questions challenge us to consider the ideological and hegemonic nature of human rights and HRE which may either inhibit or advance a critical agenda for human rights.

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4.8 Conclusion

The meaning of and approaches to HRE are certainly shaped by various world-views that are dominant in time and space. The location and relations of a particular world-view amongst a multitude of others on a social map thus influences the configurations and meanings of HRE. This chapter has dealt with some of these narratives as part of the broader conceptual cartography of HRE as a tool for a conceptual analysis of HRE. The following chapter is meant to broaden the conceptual cartography since HRE is immersed in various discourses closely related to the field of human rights. It will demonstrate how the meanings of HRE are constructed within these discourses.