

THE HANDBOOK OF ADULT AND
CONTINUING EDUCATION
2020 Edition

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STERLING, VIRGINIA

A publication of the

AAACE

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education



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PUBLISHING, LLC.

Published by Stylus Publishing, LLC.
22883 Quicksilver Drive
Sterling, Virginia 20166-2019

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
The CIP for this text has been applied for.

13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-684-4 (cloth)

13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-686-8 (library
networkable e-edition)

13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-687-5 (consumer
e-edition)

Printed in the United States of America

All first editions printed on acid-free paper
that meets the American National Standards
Institute
Z39-48 Standard.

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First Edition, 2021

Philosophical Foundations of Adult and Continuing Education

Leodis Scott, Robert C. Mizzi, and Lisa R. Merriweather

Adult educators, practitioners, and scholars use philosophies for informing practice, teaching, and research when pursuing the purpose of educating the society and self. This chapter outlines the philosophical foundations in adult and continuing education (ACE) that have guided adult educators in their practices and throughout the theoretical development of the field. Over time, there have been several widely accepted Western philosophies of adult education, namely liberal, behaviorist, progressive, analytical, radical/critical, postmodern, and humanistic (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017; Zinn, 1998). Philosophers associated with the origins of these philosophies or philosophical orientations were predominantly White men representing Eurocentric values. These philosophies or philosophical orientations came to represent the purposes of educating the collective society and the individual self (i.e., society and self) and guided the practices within ACE. Merriam and Kim in 2008 interjected into the discourse the idea of non-Western philosophies as being present and paramount to understanding the purposes and practices of adult education, especially for non-White adult educators and adult learners. By highlighting the lack of universality of the Western philosophies that were permitted to function as canons, Merriam and Kim (2008) revealed how cultural hegemony influenced how those

purposes and practices were framed and demonstrated that they were not inclusive.

This chapter will focus mainly on those Western, Eurocentric philosophies in ACE, as they still dominate the field and are most often seen in the literature, but will also briefly describe other culturally informed philosophies such as Eastern, African, and Indigenous models that appear on the landscape of adult education philosophy. Historically, other approaches that acquaint readers with philosophy and its application to ACE are worth revisiting. Most notable are Powell and Benne (1960), who called for adult education to pay more attention to understanding the unspoken assumptions and implicit values of adult educational concepts and principles (Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). Toward this end, an alternative conceptualization rooted in larger essential philosophical ideals—metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics, and aesthetics—is proffered as a means to create a more inclusive philosophical framework for sculpting the field's purposes and practices. Thus, the final intention of this chapter is to place together the widely accepted philosophical foundations and the essential philosophical questions and terms into a connected framework for understanding the historical and contemporary theories/practices of the field. This framework can also help clarify other thought systems and scholarship practices that may advance ACE in subsequent years.

Western Philosophical Foundations and Concepts in ACE

From the beginning, philosophy in the context of education has addressed the challenges of its day, focusing on the society and self. Ancient Greek philosophers, including the Sophists, Sappho, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and, later, Roman contributors such as Cicero and Quintilian considered a philosophy of education in terms of human virtues, the liberal arts, and moral education. They considered knowledge of philosophy as essential for teaching public service, law, or civil administration (Gutek, 2010; Murphy, 2006). Still later, medieval and Christian educational philosophers—including Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Charlemagne—advanced the Holy Bible and classical liberal education as essential for developing intellect, preserving culture, and nurturing a moral life. These philosophers advanced the idea of the seven liberal arts that included the *trivium* (i.e., grammar, logic, rhetoric) and the *quadrivium* (i.e., arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music). Education and philosophy in the time of the Renaissance (ca. 1300–1600 AD) and the 16th-century Reformation started a rebirth of innovations in learning as a result of inventing the printing press, discovering the New World, and growing secular interests beyond classical Greco-Roman culture. The Enlightenment (ca. 1685–1815 AD) also brought about new ideas about education, scientific methods, and educational opportunities for wider classes of people (Gutek, 2010; Murphy, 2006).

Moving into the Modern Era, philosophy and education continued to share interest in both the society and self. According to Dewey (1910/1993), education connects to philosophy in addressing the experiences that “originate in the conflicts and difficulties of social life” (p. 324). Therefore, education and philosophy complement each other, leading Dewey to define *philosophy* as the general theory of education where education serves as the workshop of philosophy by which many philosophies and their philosophical distinctions “become concrete and . . . tested” (Dewey, 1916/1994; pp. 328–329). These historical goals of education and philosophy pertaining to both the society and self offer clarification about the contemporary philosophical positions of ACE.

Besides Dewey, there are other thought leaders even more central to understanding the philosophical

foundations of ACE. Chief among these are thinkers such as Eduard Lindeman (1926) and Paulo Freire (1972). In the founding of the ACE field, Lindeman proposed the field’s dual purpose of improving both the society and self in a democracy; likewise, Freire proposes social transformation and personal empowerment as inseparable processes in emancipatory practices (Merriam et al., 2007). Houle (1992) also lists authors who have put forward systematic philosophical approaches to ACE. Among these philosophical contributions are thoughts and ideas that also range from the society to the self and center on the importance of philosophy and ACE in addressing social and personal issues. In combination, these thought leaders helped to develop what is viewed as a common philosophical language of ACE.

Across the dual goals of society and self, thought leaders can be categorized within the philosophical foundations often highlighted in ACE. There are seven widely accepted philosophies of adult education: liberal, behaviorist, progressive, analytical, radical/critical, postmodern, and humanistic, which Zinn (1998) presents as a resource for adult educators to develop their own philosophical orientation. Table 1.1 attempts to make straightforward many of the diverse and complex ideas featured in the philosophical language of ACE. Each philosophy will be described later in the chapter.

According to Elias and Merriam (2005), liberal adult education highlights liberal learning and intellectual development while behaviorist adult education features learning objectives and performance measurement. The *liberal* philosophical foundation is general education with the concept of liberal learning promoted by thinkers such as Cyril Houle (1992), Horace Kallen (1962), and Mortimer Adler (1988). For example, Kallen (1962) considers philosophical issues and introduces an idea of *cultural pluralism* that allows for smaller groups in a larger society to maintain their cultural identities, beliefs, and values. The *behaviorist* philosophical foundation features the learning objectives with concepts such as competence, mastery, and performance based on contributions from Edward L. Thorndike (1927), B. F. Skinner (1971), and R. W. Tyler (2013). For example, Skinner (1971) noted that the goal of education is to bring about behavior that will ensure the survival of individuals, society, and the entire human species (Merriam et al., 2007).

TABLE 1.1. Philosophical Foundations, Purposes, Concepts, and Key Thinkers in ACE

	<i>Society</i>	<----->					<i>Self</i>
	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>Behaviorist</i>	<i>Radical-Critical</i>	<i>Analytical</i>	<i>Postmodern</i>	<i>Progressive</i>	<i>Humanistic</i>
<i>Purposes</i>	General Education	Learning Objectives	Social Action	Logical Reasoning	Social Practices	Practical Knowledge	Personal Growth
<i>Concepts</i>	Liberal Learning	Competence; Performance	Critical Thinking; Social Justice	Arguments; Decision-Making	Deconstruction; Cultural Practices	Experience; Problem-Solving	Autonomy; Self-Direction
<i>Key Thinkers</i>	Houle, Kallen, Adler	Thorndike, Skinner, Tyler	Freire, Brookfield	Lawson, Paterson	Usher, Bryant, Johnston	Lindeman, Dewey, Bergevin	Knowles, Tough, McKenzie

Progressive adult education, in contrast, advances experience, society, and democracy, and analytical adult education introduces concept clarification. The *progressive* philosophical foundation features the purpose of practical knowledge using concepts of experience and problem-solving from Eduard Lindeman (1926), John Dewey (1910/1993), and Paul Bergevin (1967). Bergevin articulates an entire philosophy of adult education for the purpose of explaining that adult education should be everyone’s concern and should be used for developing free, creative, and responsible people in every society. The *analytical* philosophical foundation includes logical reasoning for concepts of argumentation, decision-making, critical thinking, and rational thought from systematic philosophers such as K. H. Lawson (1975, 1998) and R.W.K. Paterson (1979). Paterson utilizes three concepts to conceptualize the philosophical essence of ACE: values, education, and the adult. This marks an important connection of considering one’s values within philosophy and education that can be both social and personal to the adult.

Postmodern adult education proposes further questioning and deconstruction of ideas. The *postmodern* philosophical foundation argues for social practices using deconstruction and attention to cultural practices. For example, Usher et al. (1997) explain the unparalleled importance of ACE in both personal and social life. These authors further explain that in post-modern times, the field has become a part of a “culture

market” that excludes as well as includes adults, also becoming a “cultural producer” with fewer distinctions among education, leisure, and entertainment, resulting in less intellectual and practical relevance (Usher et al., 1997, p. xv).

The *radical* or *critical* philosophical foundation advances the purpose of social action through concepts of social justice and critical thinking, most notably by thinkers like Paulo Freire (1972) and Stephen D. Brookfield (2010, 2019). Brookfield (2010) explains how crucial radical/critical thinking is in penetrating hegemony and realizing corporate agendas that displace individual and social well-being. Radical/critical adult education also promotes social action. Elias and Merriam (2005) describe the radical/critical philosophy of adult education as focusing on social justice and transformation-oriented education.

The radical/critical philosophical foundation is growing in prominence within ACE. For example, Bierema (2010) describes the goals of society and self concerning social justice and professional identity in adult education by embracing its diversity across multiple contexts. Tisdell and Taylor (2001) reframe the radical/critical philosophical foundation into critical-emancipatory and critical-humanistic foundations for acquiring and questioning new forms of abilities and identities. Brookfield (2010) adds to this philosophical foundation by including critical race theory, feminism, Afrocentrism, and queer theory that address race, gender, and sexual orientation by confronting

social justice, identity, inequality, discrimination, and marginalization. Further, Isaac et al. (2010) consider contemporary race-based theories regarding multiculturalism and Black feminist thought, which offer philosophical positions and techniques for how cultural and racial diversity are reflected in a pluralistic society. Alhadeff-Jones (2017) also expresses the goals of the society and self through complexities of emancipation and education.

Humanistic adult education introduces freedom, autonomy, and self-direction, highlighting the role of individuality and self-actualization. The *humanistic* philosophical foundation focuses on purposes of personal growth through concepts of autonomy and self-direction from thought leaders such as Malcolm Knowles (1980), Allen Tough (1971), and Leon McKenzie (1978, 1991). For example, McKenzie (1978) considers how adult education should foster a courageous spirit in individual learners while developing understandings of self, others, and the world.

These foundational philosophies serve as a starting point for orientating adult educators to the philosophical/educational goals pertaining to society and the self. Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) explain these goals as specific aims and objectives related to social transformation, organizational effectiveness, personal/social improvement, intellectual cultivation, and individual self-actualization. Similarly, Ross-Gordon et al. (2017) suggest the need for a useful tool in working through many of the confusing philosophical orientations, dimensions, and worlds of “isms” (i.e., idealism, realism, pragmatism, instrumentalism, existentialism, feminism, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism) while Zinn (1998) focuses on how these philosophies can help adult educators identify a philosophical orientation that guides their effective practice and instruction.

Houle (1992) acknowledges other thinkers who have contributed broadly “philosophical” approaches to adult learning, which Ross-Gordon et al. (2017) later describe as the “philosophical enterprise” of ACE. It is important to note that the individual work, collaboration, and philosophical contributions of such thinkers are numerous and remarkable, yet rarely researched for their philosophical impact on ACE. Reasonably, this can be explained through the absence of a philosophical language, accessible framework,

or useful tool by which their contributions can be assessed, compared, and evaluated—which could be provided by these widely accepted foundations. While a turn toward these foundations is necessary, it is also necessary to acknowledge that those thinkers primarily were White and represented Western, Eurocentric ideals and values. Any framework built from those alone would further perpetuate presumed cultural neutrality in the philosophizing of the field.

This is important because, as Ross-Gordon et al. (2017) suggest, “Philosophy can clarify both our own actions and those of others . . . [it] can help us understand the foundations . . . while also allowing us a chance to develop a common language” (p. 164). Ross-Gordon et al. also recognize the importance of philosophy in helping adult educators and practitioners understand the important impact of philosophy to educational practices. These philosophical foundations can provide a common language for any learner, cluster of learners, community, or society. This philosophical common language should be for everyone, especially adult educators, philosophers, professors—even common folks interested in both social and personal practices through education and learning—but failure to appreciate the detrimental impact of relying solely on values and ideas from primarily one cultural vantage point will limit the roles that philosophy can play in ACE frameworks and language.

From these historical and contemporary goals, both philosophy and education have complemented each other relating to concerns for the society and self. ACE has distinctively contributed further questions and viewpoints in developing its own unique philosophical language. Thus, the seven widely accepted philosophies of adult education align to the historical and contemporary goals of educating the society and self, but stop short of being inclusive of the diverse societies and selves participating in adult education. Merriam and Kim (2008) write, “Anchored in classical Greek thought, the dominance of Western knowledge has resulted in nonattention to, if not outright dismissal of, other systems, cosmologies, and understandings about learning and knowing” (p. 72). These widely accepted philosophies can serve as one point of reference for adult educators to understand philosophical practices within ACE but must not be framed as the only point of reference.

“Othered” Philosophical Foundations

Merriam and Kim (2008) reiterate the connection between what we believe (our philosophy) and what we do (our practice). Being aware of other philosophies broadens how we practice adult education. Merriam and Kim use the term *non-Western*—which they recognize as problematic—to reference “systems of thought different from what we in the West have come to assume about the knowledge base of adult learning theory” (p. 72). Highlighting the communal, informal, lifelong, and holistic nature of most philosophies originating from outside of Western, Eurocentric hegemony, Merriam and Kim provide a bird’s-eye view of what other philosophical frameworks include and offer an understanding of practice and theory informed by these differing ideological locations.

Eastern Philosophy

Like the Western approach, there is no one single Eastern philosophy to draw from, but rather a plethora of perspectives that are insightful for informing practice. A cursory review of some Eastern philosophies suggests little distinction between adults and youth, unlike Western philosophies, which have produced sharper lines between the two types of learners. In Thailand, *khit-pen* (know how to think) is grounded in Buddhism and encourages individuals to think carefully, take initiative, and be self-reliant in their communities. People need to relate to information about the self, society, or literature before solving the problem or making a decision. If the problem is unsolved, then *khit-pen* is started again (Sungsri, 2018). Another philosophy is both-ways education, which is rooted in Australian Indigenous tradition. Both-ways education expects all contributors to the educational setting to recognize different knowledge traditions are in the same space, causing a convergence of different epistemologies (Campbell & Christie, 2016).

Further, in China, Neo-Confucianism is about developing self-conscious reflection. As Wang and King (2008) explain, “Westerners believe exploration should precede the development of skill, whereas Chinese educators believe skills should be developed first (which requires repetitive learning), which provides a basis to be creative with” (p. 139). Inner experience develops self-knowledge, which leads to creativity in Neo-Confucianism. Last, Rabindranath Tagore, the

Indian Nobel laureate, supported the notion of free mind, free knowledge, and a free nation, leading to self-realization. His educational ideas are gleaned through his various writings rather than a single, primary text. Through self-realization, people are better able to self-educate based on three principles: independence (harmony with one’s relationships and society), perfection (develop all aspects of the self), and universality (rebirth of an individual above their limitations). The goal of education, therefore, is for self-realization. The curriculum is situated in the local surroundings, and through this interaction, students write, create, and dream their ideas (O’Connell, 2003; Pushpanathan, 2013). Each of these perspectives help distinguish an Eastern philosophy of ACE.

African Philosophy

Within African philosophies, hints of Merriam and Kim’s (2008) characterizations are evident. Mutamba (2012) reminds us that Africa is not monolithic, but while variations across regions and people exist, some salient philosophical concepts are present. In particular, within a traditional African philosophical framework are the two concepts of Ubuntu and communalism. Both reflect the significance of community uplift and sustenance. “Community and belonging to a community of people constitute the very fabric of traditional African life. Unlike the Western liberal notion of the individual as some sort of entity that is capable of existing and flourishing on its own” (Mutamba, 2012, pp. 5–6). Fordjor et al. (2003) highlight that within Ghanaian philosophy, virtue and character underlie the importance of community and one’s social responsibility within it. Such a philosophy is more concerned with developing the individual for the benefit of the community, as opposed to developing the individual for the benefit of that individual.

Likewise, functionalism and lifelong learning as philosophical ideas are driven by the imperative of developing and sustaining community. The question becomes, “What does the community need and how are community members developed to meet those needs?” Within this viewpoint, it is people that are developed, not workers, as they need not only skill-based knowledge but also understanding of the inter-relatedness between and within people and with the environment. Essential knowledge develops throughout one’s lifetime and is not compartmentalized or limited by age (Fordjor et al., 2003).

In the traditional Ghanaian philosophy, knowledge is viewed as any competence that the individual possesses that can be used to solve societal problems Knowledge, therefore, is comprehensive and seen as an embodiment of all virtues in society. These include technical or vocational knowledge, intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic powers, the ability to speak in proverbs and interpret them accordingly and the ability to use words of wisdom. (Fordjor et al., 2003, p. 191)

Semali (2009) recognizes the import of African philosophy being informed by Indigenous ways of knowing and the cultural context of Black Africans and frames an African philosophy as viewing knowledge holistically, meaning “knowledge is continuous and contextual” (p. 40). Because of the history and the contemporary legacy and manifestation of colonialism, African philosophy necessarily speaks to the political, economic, and sociocultural manifestations of Black African personhood. Contemporary African philosophy “has to do with valuing and (re)valuing African heritage” (Semali, 2009, p. 46), spirituality, holistic knowledge, and community well-being (Fordjor et al., 2003; Semali, 2009). Philosophical imperatives are invoked in proverbs and in stories like that of Ananse, the spider, to communicate what matters and is valued the most.

Indigenous Philosophy

Morcom (2017) has explored Indigenous philosophy within the context of Indigenous people in Eastern Canada. Morcom noted that although, as in Africa, there is no one Indigenous philosophy, there are some similarities among them. Key concepts include holism, personalism, subjectivism, spiritualism, and transformativism. *Holism*, according to Morcom,

at one level . . . refers to the various elements that make up the self. At another level, it refers to a connection to the community, other living things, the earth, and the spiritual, and reflects Indigenous concepts of the nature of the divine. (p. 123)

The holistic self encompasses all aspects of the learner’s personhood: feelings and thoughts, as well as spirit and physicality. The “medicine wheel” is often used to visually depict these dimensions of self and functions as the foundation for an Indigenous-rooted philosophy, placing learners and their contexts at the center

of all learning. In Indigenous philosophy, teaching is always aimed at the “whole learner” (Morcom, 2017, p. 125). Further, learners are intimately connected and responsible to each other and the instructor as well as the community, human, and nonhuman (e.g., land, animals) and are situated nonhierarchically and collectively. Indigenous philosophy promotes egalitarianism. A final aspect highlights the importance of the spiritual. The spiritual, as Morcom explains,

ties in closely with relationships to the land; as people with millennia of history and knowledge based in specific territories, connection to place and land, as well as connection to one’s ancestors and the teachings that have been passed down from them This focus on interrelationships between all things is fundamental to Indigenous ways of making sense and finding meaning. (p. 127)

Essential Philosophical Questions and Terms

The philosophical foundations of ACE are embedded within larger essential philosophical questions. These questions are:

- From metaphysics: *What is universal?*
- From epistemology: *What is knowledge?*
- From logic: *What is reasonable?*
- From ethics: *What is good or just?*
- From aesthetics: *What is art, spirit, or beauty?*

These essential questions correspond to the problems of philosophy that Dewey outlined (1910/1993, 1916/1994) relating the individual to the universal/social; to physical nature/humanity; of mind/matter; to the object of knowledge (extent/limitation); and, last, of knowing (theory)/doing (practice). These questions stem from terms—*metaphysics*, *epistemology*, *logic*, *ethics*, and *aesthetics*—that Elias and Merriam (2005) refer to as subdisciplines of philosophy representing divergent viewpoints, systems, and schools of thought. Elias and Merriam assumed that such questions and terms would become apparent to adult educators, but they acknowledged that scholars and practitioners interested in the philosophy of adult (continuing) education have been attacked for being “too theoretical,” “irrelevant to practice,” and “far removed from educational issues” (p. 6). Their claims further support

TABLE 1.2. Essential Philosophical Questions and Terms With Related Adult-Educational Purposes

<i>Terms</i>	<i>Metaphysics</i>	<i>Epistemology</i>	<i>Logic</i>	<i>Ethics</i>	<i>Aesthetics</i>
<i>Questions</i>	What is universal?	What is knowledge?	What is reasonable?	What is good or just?	What is art, spirit, or beauty?
<i>Purposes Related to Adult Education</i>	General Education	Learning Objectives; Practical Knowledge	Logical Reasoning	Social Action	Personal Growth; Cultural Practices

the need to clarify these essential questions and terms and explain their practical relevance to the ACE field.

Table 1.2 explains connections to ACE’s common purposes, which originate from its philosophical foundations. Understanding the essential philosophical terms will help adult educators and practitioners value the philosophical impact of contributions from various authors and researchers in the ACE field.

Metaphysics

ACE engages questions of metaphysics related to universal worldviews. Metaphysics, composed of the terms *meta* (meaning *after*) and *physics* (meaning *natural science*), defines exploration beyond the sciences, paying attention to the fundamental nature of reality and existence. McKenzie (1978, 1991) describes metaphysics as a more contemplative construction called *worldview*, defining social norms and values. Elias and Merriam (2005) describe metaphysics as searching out “the most general principles of reality” (p. 3). The point here is that metaphysics addresses the general claims of reality or unifying worldviews. Metaphysics also deals with questions about the philosophy of nature and humanity regarding the values people share toward humanity, the environment, and the world. An example of metaphysics within ACE comes from Lindeman’s view of adult education as equivalent to life itself, meaning that ACE is universal to all of life and not merely a course subject. Another example can be situated within Tagore’s view of education as being organically informed by the local environment (O’Connell, 2003).

Epistemology

Epistemology (from *episteme*, meaning *knowledge*) concerns the origins of knowledge or an understanding of how knowledge develops. This philosophical term is concerned with what we know and how we come to know. Others are familiar with the term in determining research paradigms in education such as postpositivism

or constructivism (Paul, 2005). Bagnall and Hodge (2018) conduct an epistemological analysis of contemporary adult education that identifies an outline of “competing educational epistemologies” (p. 13). Bagnall and Hodge explain these four epistemologies as theories of knowledge: disciplinary, constructivist, emancipatory, and instrumental (situational) (Illeris, 2018). *Disciplinary epistemology* defines knowledge as truth. *Constructivist epistemology* expresses knowledge as authentic commitment, which can also be argued to be close to *khit-pen* in Thai adult education philosophy (see Sungsi, 2018). *Emancipatory epistemology* views knowledge as power. Finally, *instrumental (situational) epistemology* views knowledge as effective practice. Bagnall and Hodge’s outline serves as an example of epistemology in ACE by explaining ways that adult learners come to learn and the ways adult educators’ knowledge contributes to such learning.

Logic

Logic (from *logos*, meaning *reason, idea, or word*) explores the science of drawing conclusions and reasoning from information. It investigates language (propositions) as basic units of thought. In other definitions, the aim of logic is to make explicit the rules whereby interpretations can be drawn. There are four general types of logic: deductive, inductive, traditional, and modern (Blackburn, 2005). Doing the work of logic involves both analytic and critical examination of arguments. From exploring premises and conclusions, the practice of logic raises questions for the sake of clarity and understanding, pointing out contradictions from conclusions, and providing definitions, analogies, and counterarguments (Bedau, 2002; Noddings, 2015). Examples of logic in ACE can be traced to Lawson (1998), who applies logic by reaching conclusions about the concept of adult education and its reasonable use in ordinary language. Elias and Merriam (2005) encourage adult educators to achieve

the work of logic for assisting the field with “language clarity, precision, and vigor” (p. 215).

Ethics

Ethics (from *ethos*, meaning *nature, disposition, or customs*) represents a broad area of concerns including values, morality, and action for doing what is right, fair, or just to oneself and others. If *logic* is a philosophical term with limited examination, *ethics* is undoubtedly more widely discussed and dominant in ACE. Jarvis (1997) believes ethics to be the “underlying principle of all morally good actions” (p. 15). Brockett (1988) explains that ethics has a place in ACE for ethical decision-making and clarifying questions of practice. Sheared et al. (2010) and Brookfield (2019) address concerns of race, racism, and adult education, and they challenge adult educators to “practice what they preach” (Brookfield, 2019, p. 147) and adult learners to “unmask” (Brookfield et al., 2019, p. 38) by engaging in critically reflective practices, examining their racial identities, and contemplating worldviews shaped through race, racism, and racial identity (Sheared et al., 2010). Another example of ethics in ACE comes from Paterson (1979), who explains ethics through moral education and developing “moral awareness” (pp. 143–144).

Aesthetics

Aesthetics (from *aisthetikos*, meaning *of sense perception*) is a philosophical term rooted in the study of beauty and art. Runes (1963) explains that the term was first used about 1750 to imply the “science of sensuous knowledge, whose aim is beauty, as contrasted with logic, whose aim is truth” (p. 6). Over time, many philosophers have viewed aesthetics as including the study of feelings, emotions, concepts, and judgments from an appreciation of the arts and the wider class of the “beautiful” or “sublime” (Barton, 1964; Blackburn, 2005; More, 1964; O’Connell, 2003). From the viewpoint of ACE, aesthetics represents learners’ cultures in artful ways that advance ideals and culture. Another connection to aesthetics in ACE can be derived from Tisdell (2003), who connects culture to transformative learning experiences and advances the aesthetic, beautiful, and artful role of “spirituality” in ACE through art, music, symbols, and images.

Connected Framework for Philosophical Foundations and Essential Terms

Ross-Gordon et al. (2017) express the absence of a philosophical language, accessible framework, or

useful tool in ACE where philosophical contributions can be assessed, compared, and evaluated. A connected framework, as presented in Figure 1.1, serves to link the seven widely accepted philosophies to the essential philosophical questions and terms. This connected framework serves as a response to this absence.

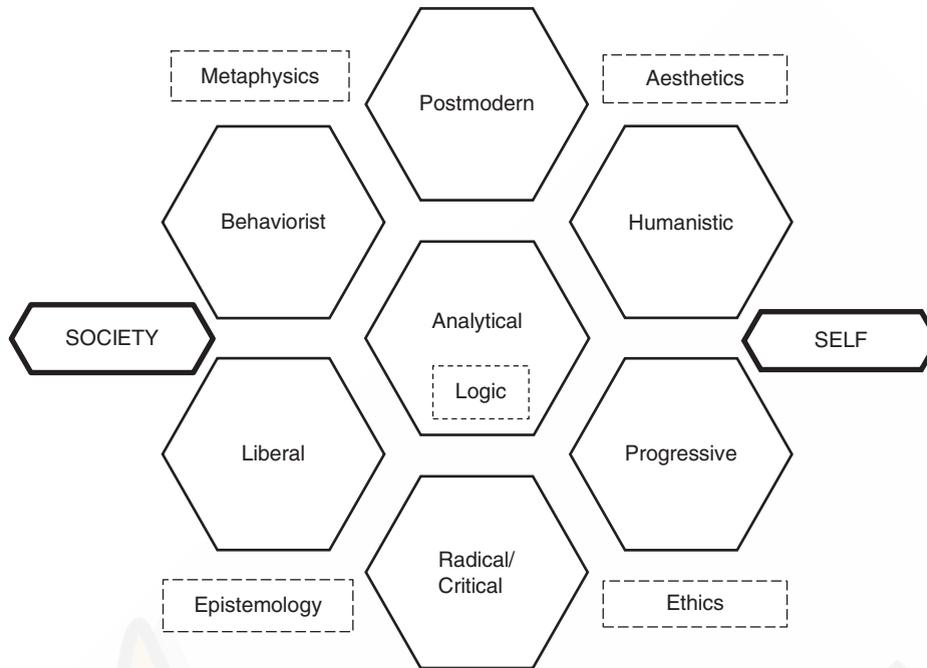
The explanation of this framework starts with ACE’s purpose of educating the collective society and the individual self, as represented by the two continuum goals (in bold). Next, the positions of the seven widely accepted philosophies represent their relationship to the goals of the society and self. At the center of the framework is the analytical philosophy of adult education for its potential and promise in ACE. Elias and Merriam (2005) advocate for an analytical philosophy of adult education that goes beyond mere conceptual analysis to a “rational reconstruction of educational enterprise in its full dimension” (p. 215), concluding that analytical philosophy of adult education “may well provide the strongest philosophical basis for contemporary philosophy of adult education” (p. 215).

The essential philosophical term directly related to the analytical philosophy of adult education is *logic*. Lawson (1998) advocates for the importance of logic in analyzing philosophical issues, such as different concepts of adult education and the daily practices of educating adults. Ross-Gordon et al. (2017) noted that the analytical philosophy of adult education “is by far the most common philosophical approach today” (p. 162). Analytical philosophy and logic should be the start for all philosophical theory and practice, serving as the educational enterprise of ACE in its full dimension (Scott, 2015).

The other widely accepted Western philosophies—liberal, behaviorist, progressive, radical/critical, postmodern, and humanistic—also align to the goals of society and self in varying degrees. For example, liberal and behaviorist philosophies are most aligned to the society goal and the essential terms of metaphysics and epistemology, addressing general education, learning objectives, universality, reality, and knowledge; whereas the progressive and humanistic philosophies are most aligned to the self goal and the essential terms of ethics and aesthetics, addressing experience, self-direction, art, beauty, and spirituality.

The radical/critical and postmodern philosophies are most aligned to both the society goal and the self goal and are placed in the center of this figure for their convergence with educating both society and self. The radical/critical philosophy aligns closer to the essential

Figure 1.1 Connected framework of ACE philosophical foundations and essential terms.



terms of epistemology and ethics; the postmodern philosophy aligns closer to the essential terms of metaphysics and aesthetics. Elias and Merriam (2005) believe that radical/critical philosophy has had a limited impact on the practice of adult education. However, Brookfield and Holst (2011) provide examples of radical/critical adult education including participatory action research and its principles of epistemology and ethics. Usher et al. (1997) explain postmodernism as a decline in universal ideals and grand narratives (metaphysics) alongside the cultures (aesthetics) that pervade everyday life, although some proponents of postmodernism would likely argue against representing this philosophical foundation between metaphysics and aesthetics terms (or even being structurally represented at all). The higher placement of the postmodern foundation supports Elias and Merriam's (2005) explanation that it "raises crucial questions about the world we live in, and the enterprise that engages us" (p. 246).

In short, the alignment of widely accepted philosophies and essential philosophical terms is helpful for simplifying how to apply specific philosophies and terms to educational goals, such as the goal of educating the collective society or of educating the individual self. For ACE scholars and practitioners interested in educating society, the philosophies of liberalism and behaviorism should be primarily considered, along with

metaphysics and epistemology. For those interested in educating the self, the philosophies of progressivism and humanism should be primarily considered, along with ethics and aesthetics. Lastly, those equally interested in educating the society and self should primarily start with the radical/critical and postmodern philosophies and the essential terms of epistemology and ethics, and metaphysics and aesthetics, respectively. This connected framework represents a start but fails to incorporate "othered" philosophies such as Eastern, African, and Indigenous, to name only a few. Further development of the connected framework is needed and welcomed.

Conclusion

In searching the extant literature during this past decade, literature focused on or using "other"-informed philosophies in education, especially adult education, was scarce. The widely accepted philosophies of ACE involve understanding the essential philosophical questions and terms that undergird, strengthen, and bind the field together. As framed, the seven commonly accepted philosophies of adult education collectively fail to allow space for philosophical orientations not rooted in a Western value and belief system. These philosophies are essentially othered within the context of

adult education philosophy. The essential philosophical terms (and purposes) described in this chapter—metaphysics (universality), epistemology (knowledge), logic (reasoning), ethics (goodness/justice), and aesthetics (art/spirit/beauty)—should be looked at more broadly and from multiple cultural–historical locations to create space for “othered” philosophies. When this is done, these essential terms can be aligned specifically to the widely accepted philosophies of ACE as well as “othered” philosophies forming a framework for understanding adult learning and practice in ways that authentically honor and engage the diversity among adult learners. This chapter considered how philosophy, and the adult-educational contributions to philosophy, can be more relevant and more efficiently researched through using a connected framework. Although the focus of this chapter was mainly Western in scope, including Eastern, African, and Indigenous philosophies of education provides a broader range of insights and questions that can inform ACE practice.

In all, these philosophical foundations and essential terms may serve as the common language for the goals of educating society and self within the enterprise of ACE. Such an enterprise will invite, for decades to come, all learners, clusters, or communities of learners. Hopefully, this enterprise will also summon teachers, researchers, and professors, and equip them for better practice, teaching, and research in the societal and solitary interplay—of our continued adult educational philosophy.

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