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**EDUC 800 Ways of Knowing**

**Journal Entry 5**

**Instructor: Dr. Sturtevant**

**How does Bruner’s work fit into your own way of knowing? How does Bruner compare to Descartes and Kuhn?**

Bruner’s work fit into my own way of knowing in that I agree with Bruner on the fact that culture shapes who we are as individuals. I also agree with Bruner in chapter four, when he argues that cultures have always been in the process of change, and the rate of change becomes greater as our fates become increasingly intermingled through migration, trade, and the rapid exchange of information (Bruner, 1996). In recent times, international migration is on the rise due to globalization. There are lots of immigrants in our nation today and the issue of diversity is one to consider. I think that there are so many people from different cultures everywhere and in my day to day encounters their perspectives have influenced me in the way I perceive culture. Their perspectives have provided different points of view and has set the stage for me to incorporate some of these views in my pursuit for knowledge in that I am able to form a representation of the world from what I learn about it through others.

In order to compare Bruner to Descartes and Kuhn, I will begin by providing some similarities and differences between Bruner, Descartes and Kuhn. According to Bruner (1996), the computationalist’s approach to education takes certain forms. Old theories of learning are reformulated in computable form in the hope that the reformulation will yield surplus power. I think that Bruner and Descartes had similar ideas in that Descartes depended on his previous knowledge and experience as he acquired knowledge. However Kuhn had a different point of view which was completely opposite of this because Kuhn focuses on the fact that previous theories are basically of no use due to the revolution that they go through as a result of a paradigm shift thus resulting in new theories. However, I think that Kuhn and Bruner both refer to paradigm shifts in that Bruner (1996), argues that there is a crucial shift from naïve realism to an understanding of the role of beliefs, occurring in the early school years. Whereas Kuhn focused on paradigm shifts in science, Bruner focus on paradigm shifts in education.

Descartes had to conduct his thoughts in an orderly fashion in order to know something by beginning with those thoughts that were simplest and easiest to know, in order to ascend little by little, as by degrees, to the knowledge of the most composite things, and by supposing an order even among things that do not naturally precede one another (Descartes, 1998). However, Bruner states that “grasping abstractly is a start towards appreciating that seemingly complicated knowledge can often be derivationally reduced to simpler forms of knowledge that one already possess” (Bruner, 1996). This is interesting because whereas Descartes believed that in order to acquire knowledge there is the need to begin with the simplest, Bruner argued that complicated knowledge could be reduced to simpler forms.

In chapter one, Bruner (1996) states that “but the rightness of particular interpretations, while dependent on perspective, also reflects on rules of evidence, consistency, and coherence.” This is very similar to Descartes in that Descartes was very methodological and systematic and formulated four rules that he followed in his quest for knowledge.

In chapter six Bruner states that the process of science is narrative and entails creating of anomalies, finding puzzle forms that can eventually lead to solving problems. This argument is consistent with Kuhn’s structure of scientific revolution. Descartes favorite quote “I think therefore I am” sums up the process of thinking. Descartes believed that understanding is based on the intuitive needs of individuals. This somehow contradicts with Bruner’s view on the theory of the mind because even though Bruner suggests that thinking is an internal conversation, he further postulates that understanding is based on our interaction and experiences with others and that the “theory of thinking” is embedded in cultural conversations which in turn shapes our experiences.

Whereas Kuhn focused on science and the role of history in transforming science, Bruner’s focus was on education. When Bruner talked about narrative methods, he was referring to the past and at some point he mentioned that the narrative methods of history and social studies can be used to explain science. In this respect, Bruner and Kuhn shared some similarities. Bruner focused on an interdisciplinary approach in which he related different disciplines such as psychology when he referred to the culture of education. Descartes on the other hand focused on philosophy.

**References**

Bruner, J. (1996). *The Culture of Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Descartes, R. (1998). *Discourse on method and meditations on first philosophy* (4th ed.). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.