

From Theory to Theorizing

by

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What does Theorizing Mean?

- (1) Theory is the end point of theorizing, typically embodied in a text.
- (2) Theorizing is the process that precedes the final text.
- (3) The two are organically united, but the emphasis today is typically on the text; while the process of theorizing is ignored and hence little known.
- (4) We need to specify and discuss the different skills that make up theorizing; the steps that need to be taken when you theorize...
- (5) A strong emphasis on theorizing makes for a much more alive and interesting theory. “Theory” may be replaced by “(Theorizing) Theory”

Teaching Theory versus Teaching Theorizing

TEACHING THEORY



STUDENTS LEARN WHAT THEORISTS
HAVE SAID



STUDENTS READ GREAT TEXTS BY
GREAT THEORISTS



TEACHER IS ENLIGHTENED GUIDE TO
COURSE LITERATURE

TEACHING THEORIZING



STUDENTS LEARN TO THEORIZE
THEMSELVES

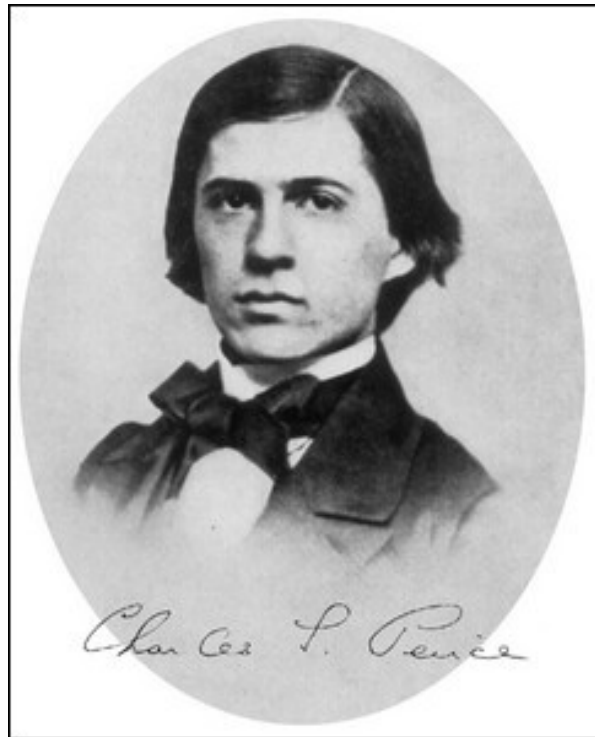


STUDENTS DO EXERCISES TO LEARN
TO THEORIZE



TEACHER GETS STUDENTS TO START
THEORIZING THEMSELVES

**Good Source of Inspiration for Theorizing, I:
C.S. Peirce (1839-1914)
Especially on abduction**



"Context of Discovery" - "Context of Justification" (Hans Reichenbach, Karl Popper)

Context of discovery = "the form in which [thinking processes] are subjectively performed" (Reichenbach)

Context of justification = "the form in which thinking processes are communicated to other persons" – Hans Reichenbach, *Experience and Prediction* (1938), p. 6.

The Prestudy and The Main Study

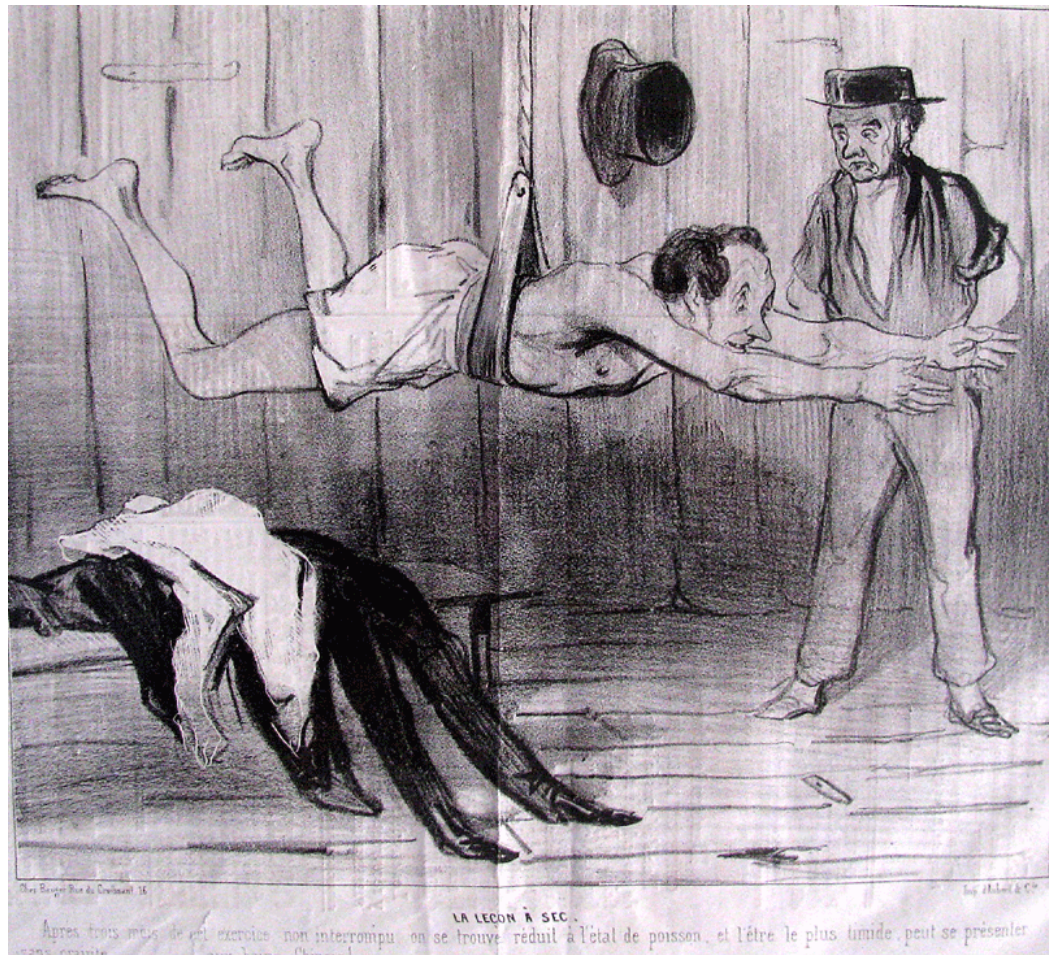
Phase # 1: The Prestudy or The Theorizing and Early Discovery Phase

Phase # 2: The Main Study

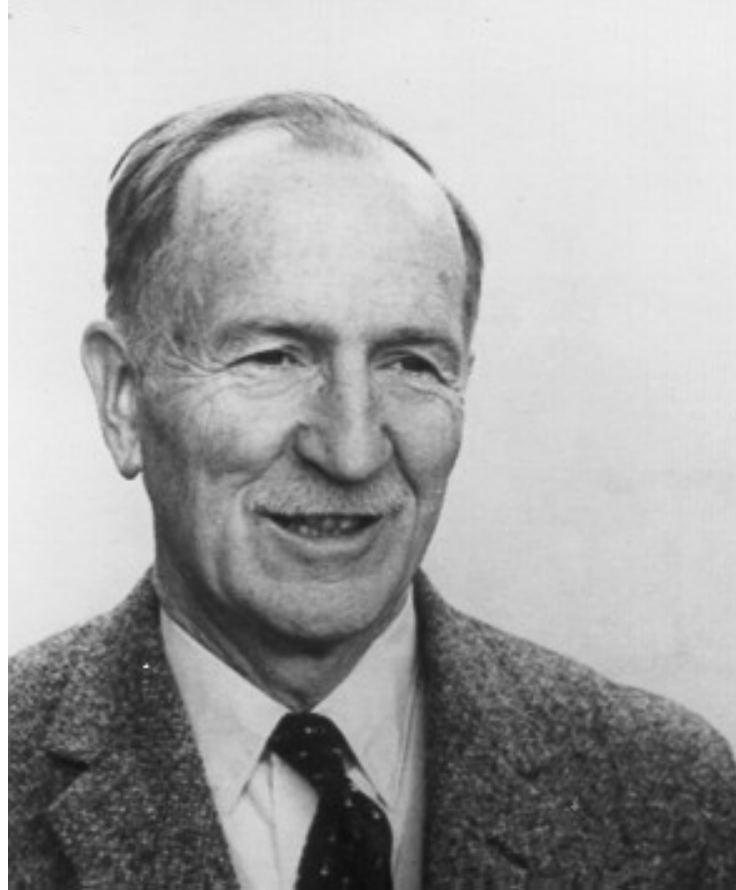
- Draw up the Research Design
- Execute the Research Design
- Write up the Results

- Dr. Watson: "This is indeed a mystery," I remarked. "What do you imagine that it means?"
- Sherlock Holmes: "I have no data yet. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts."
- – Conan Doyle, "A Scandal in Bohemia"

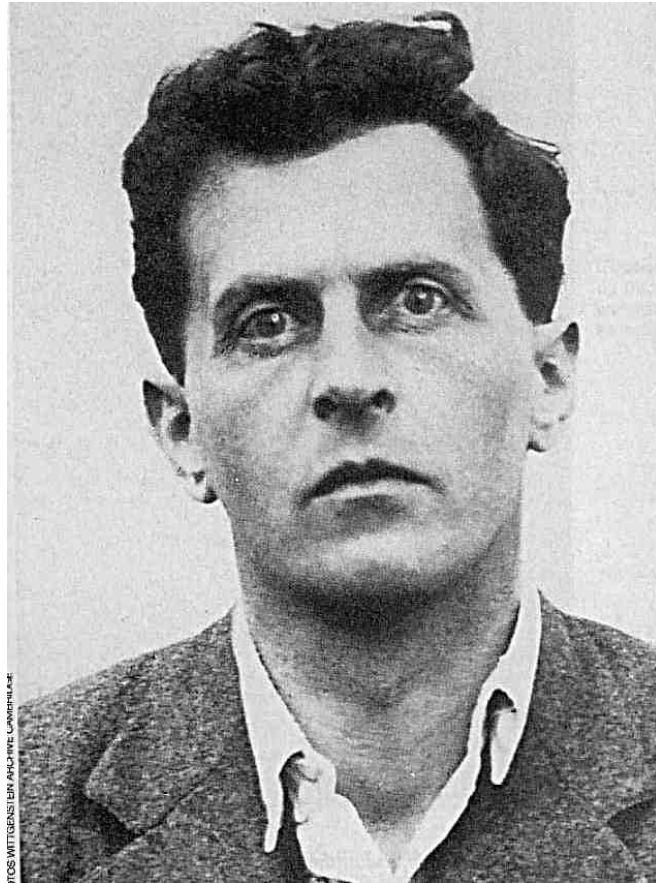
“Learning to Swim on Land” (“La leçon à sec” – Daumier, 1841)



**Good Source of Inspiration for Theorizing, II: Everett C.
Hughes (1897-1983)
Especially on Free Association**



Good Source of Inspiration for Theorizing, III: Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) Especially on description & language



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNE WITTENBERG

**Good Source of Inspiration for Theorizing, IV:
C. Wright Mills (1916-1962)
Especially on imagination**



How to Theorize

(A Few Basic Steps or Rules)

- **Step # 1:** Observe! Submerge yourself totally in what you want to study (“*Look - do not think!*” - Wittgenstein)
- **Step # 2:** Find a name for your phenomenon
- **Step # 3:** Develop one/several concepts
- **Step # 4:** Push further - perhaps develop a metaphor, an analogy, a typology, a classification...
- **Step # 5:** Suggest an explanation

- Source: Swedberg, “Theorizing in Sociology and Social Science,” *Theory and Society* 2012

How Charles Peirce Caught a Thief through Abduction (from “The Hound and Horn”, 1929)

1879 travelling to New York, CP's watch and coat were stolen. Inspecting the suspects, CP says: “ *Not the least scintilla of truth have I got to go upon*”. *But thereupon my other self (for our communings are always in dialogues), said to me, “But you simply must put your finger on the man. No matter if you have no reason, you must say whom you will think to be the thief”. I made a little loop in my walk, which had not taken a minute, and as I turned toward them, all shadow of doubt had vanished.*”

CP pointed out the man, who denied. A few days later a pawnbroker identified this man as having pawned the watch. CP goes to his apartment to retrieve the chain and his coat. The wife and a neighbor scream and claim these are not here.

CP walks in, sees a trunk and says, “*Now my chain is at the bottom of that trunk under the clothes*”. Which it was. The woman now said, feel free to look for your coat! CP sensed it wasn't there and left the apartment. He sensed it was in the neighbor's apartment, knocked on the door and when he saw a bundle, over the shoulders of the neighbor, he said, “*I have called because there is a bundle here belonging to me*”.

Source: Thomas and Jean Sebeok, ‘You Know My Method’ in *The Sign of Three* (Eco and Sebeok, 1983).

**“Let every man be his own
methodologist; let every man be
his own theorist; let theory and
method again become part of the
practice of a craft.”**

- **C. Wright Mills**, “On Intellectual Craftmanship”,
p. 224 in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959)