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Credits

Through Phantasia To Philosophy Review with Reminiscences

by Eva Brann

The Unending Story by Michael Ende is both literally and in several other ways the most wonderful book I’ve read in ages. I think it will be easily received into the canon—hitherto almost exclusively English—of great “children’s literature” along with the likes of Wind in the Willows and the Alices, (Die Unendliche Geschichte, Thiemenans Verlag, Stuttgart 1979. In English: The Neverending Story, Doubleday 1983, illustrated; G.K. Hall 1984, large print; Penguin 1984, paperback.)

But first a puzzlement, expressed in the raised eyebrow quotes above. What exactly makes “children’s literature” children’s literature?

Criteria close at hand are: who it is for or by or about (and assorted other prepositionally expressible relations.) Perhaps, first of all, children’s books are those written for children. However, one famous such book (I forget which) is dedicated to “children of all ages,” which rather ruins the category. What is more, at least one pair of very famous ostensible children’s books, the Alice books, is notoriously detested in childhood by the same people who later love them as children’s books, myself included. For one thing, I despised the simp of an author who seemed seriously to believe that sweet (albeit perky) innocence was an essential attribute of liter- fabrications with which children regale their peers (or at least used to), they also occasionally indite quite fancy and elaborate stories. By and large these productions are a lost corpus, of course, but there are Austen and Bronté juvenalia; C.S. Lewis in Surprised by Joy records in some detail the modes and motifs of his childhood works, and I can even cite one extant, purportedly genuine, child-written classic: Daisy Ashford’s nine-year-old summary judgment of the Victorian world, The Young Visiters (“To tell you the truth, my Lord,” says her socially shaky hero, Mr. Salteena, “I am not anyone of import and I am not a gentleman as they say he ended getting very red and hot.”)

No more is being about children a sufficient test, since, although, as far as I know, children’s books always have some children as heroes or assistant heroes, so do some eminently adult books, for instance the pitiful and spooky brother and sister pair which is in unholy cahoots with a corrupt ghost in James’ Turn of the Screw, and the juvenile perpetrators of all manner of un-innocent mischief in a good many little girls when I, an expert, knew that they constitute a considerable part of society’s criminal element. And for another, I was repelled by what I could sense, though not pinpoint, as a hidden agenda. For the Alice books, being among other things romans a clef, require a key, and an unpossessed key just alienates, in distinction from unplumbable depths which feel mysteriously homely.

Furthermore, whomever they might be written for, children’s books are, willy-nilly, largely read by coopted adults who would surely go crazy reading them to children if they didn’t develop their own sneaking attachment to them, as they certainly do. Just try shouting “Dr. Seuss” in the right adult company and back will come a chorus: “I do not like green eggs and ham! I do not like them, Sam-I-am.” (Incidentally, I’ve often wondered in how many children “Dr. Seuss,” by one of those homonymic misassociations that enrich infantile imaginative life, fosters friendly feelings toward the Greek “father of gods and men.”)

Nor are children’s tales exclusively written by adults. Besides the endless oral
Saki stories.

Nor are there topics and tones which are peculiarly suitable or unsuitable for children. Take supposed children’s modes like fantasy, fairy tales and magic, and there will be plenty of authors who can do that for grown-ups (somewhat heavy on the Irish, to be sure). W.B. Yeats, W.H. Hudson, H. Rider Haggard, James Stephens, George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, Walter de la Mare, Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien come helter-skelter to mind. Take, on the other hand, a topic to which it might be thought to be hard to recruit children: political philosophy, and I can name a children’s book which I recognize in retrospect as a childhood propaedeutic to the study of Plato’s Republic; it is Hugh Lofting’s Voyages of Doctor Dolittle in which the island Indians of Popsipetel force the Doctor to become their king, announcing Doctor John Dolittle as King Jong Thinkalot. “As for the poor Doctor, I never saw him so upset by anything. It was, in fact, the only time I have known him to get thoroughly fussed,” says Stubbins, the Doctor’s ten-year-old assistant and companion (compare Republic 347 and 520). In the morning the unwilling, but duty-bound philosopher king dispenses justice and in the afternoon he teaches school. “I have often thought,” Stubbins observes, “that Popsipetel under the reign of Jong Thinkalot was perhaps the best ruled state in the history of the world.” If asked nicely I might produce an article on the parallelism between the Popsipetelian and the Platonic paradigms, plus a comparison between Socrates and the Doctor.

The one tone which was thought, at least until recently, to be entirely taboo in children’s books, because children both shouldn’t and couldn’t be made to respond to it, was that of erotic passion. Now, Freud aside, the latter is surely false: In high-strung times especially, children are quite capable of sudden accesses of full-blown desire. Such an episode is described in Thomas Mann’s Depression story, “Disorder and Early Sorrow,” to the uncanny accuracy of which I can bear personal witness.

When I was four or so, about the fateful year of 1933, my parents took the waters (served in thick green glass mugs, tepid and metallic) at Muenster-am-Stein. Our Kurhotel sported liveried bell boys, kapi, purple fencing-jacket with gold piping, stripes down the trousers, and all. With one of these I fell in love one afternoon, defenselessly and shamelessly. He, evidently a kind—and buyable—boy was got upstairs to play with me. I remember as if it had happened yesterday: my first acquaintance with the peripety of passion: at the sign of his adolescent self in corpore I was suddenly seized by chilling embarrassment—and that was that for seven years at least.

As for the sense that children shouldn’t be subjected to explicitly erotic descriptions, some adults think that they shouldn’t be either. On the other hand there are plenty of children’s books that have a strong undertow of implicit passion, and quintessential passion too, the kind that possesses and tyrannies and even destroys—such, for example, as surfaces in the self-surrender of the lovable little clairvoyant boy, Charles Wallace, to the seduction of “It” in Madeleine L’Engle’s A Wrinkle in Time.

Nor does security and gentleness, in the manner of Mister Rogers’ relaxation exercises, universally obtain in children’s books. The Hauff fairy tales, which generations of German children grew up on, were smug and cruel at once with a kind of philistine sadism, and the children’s poem which was the gaudium of the nursery, Wilhelm Busch’s “Max and Moritz,” ended with the two bad boys being ground through the flour mill, their particles promptly forming two loaves shaped in the images of those holy terrors. This literature may have something to answer for, but that’s very much an undecided question in child psychology. Still, I do know that a modicum of suffering is the spice of a tale and that when I was little I always specified to my father that my goodnight story should be “very sad,” by which, I understand in retrospect, I meant that it should be as excruciating as possible right up to “and they lived happily ever after.” (German tales end, incidentally, with “and if they haven’t died before then on this day they’re living”—not exactly sweetness and light, either.) These unholy joys were encouraged in later childhood, in latency as they used to say, by the wildly popular adventure novels of Karl May, fat, satisfying green and gold tomes of Indian adventure, homoerotic sadism and missionary zeal. (The latter by-passed me, but completely, in my German-Jewish childhood—the white scout’s noble Indian intimate Winnetou—mine too, for a year or so—converts on his deathbed, and I never knew it until a recent re-reading: Karl May is now available in this country in translation.) And then came comic books, the American outlet for these tastes—two years of alternating greed and surfeit which started in my third week or so in this country, behind a vent on the roof of the YMA of Boro Park, Brooklyn. Consequently the first English word whose meaning I ever consciously sought and savored was “sinister.”

Comic books are, of course, read by adults as much as by children, with naive absorption as by soldiers stranded in barracks and with nostalgic sophistication by student connoisseurs in dorms. There are even upper class imported comics, the Tinin series. In fact, the earliest comics I know of, proto-comics really, the running caricatures of the aforementioned Wilhelm Busch (Victorian, in English periodization), are really meant for adults. The point this is ambling towards is that being in pictures isn’t confined to children’s books either—though I’ve never seen adult picture books as telling and discovery-rife as, say, Mitsumasa Anno’s Anna’s Journey.

Finally, trying to find some ideal characteristic of children’s literature, Clifton Fadiman (“The Child as Reader,” Great Books Today 1983) comes up with this: It supplies children with a sense of freedom enjoyed in security. True enough, but so does adult escape literature. And, come to think of it, what novel-reading isn’t escape—from the mundane to an enhanced world?

The long and the short of it seems to be that no set of criteria infallibly picks out “children’s literature.” One is thrown back on a purely extrinsic determination—who it’s meant for—and that’s easily subverted. Let but a well-disposed grown-up read a good children’s book and—presto!—it’s adult literature, wrong addressee notwith-
standing.

But that leads to a much deeper and trickier question: Do children read their books differently from the way an adult reads them? It doesn’t take much logical acumen to see that the answer is going to be bedevilled by a Cretan Liar type paradox: Those who argue for the otherness of childhood can’t claim to have much inside knowledge. That ought to be a stumbling block both to “child’s world” romantics and to epistemological geneticists. For suppose that children’s cognitive abilities do develop in stages that can neither be anticipated nor reversed, then each new stage effects a radical transformation in consciousness, which the fully developed adult (as exemplified in the experimenting scientist himself) can perhaps conceptually reconstruct but never empathetically recover. (As it happens, it does turn out that certain Piagetian experiments, when replicated under somewhat more empathetic conditions, come up showing children to have more cognitive capability at an earlier time than the geneticist staging predicts. In fact, I keep wondering if a case couldn’t be made for Piaget having shown that children are just natural Aristotelians: They apprehend motion as prior to time, they consider movements to be governed by their goals, they conceive place rather than coordinate space, and, in short, their cognitive ontology recapitulates the historical phylogeny of physics—a shift in perspective rather than in capability.)

One fall-out from the strict developmental view of children is the notion of “reading readiness.” And yet un-ready reading provides the windfall joys of a child’s life. I recall getting into one of my father’s medical reference books (streng verboten!), section: tropical diseases, and thrilling to the illicit attractions, depicted in glorious technicolor, of some burgeoning cases of elephantiasis. And that was quite a while before I was ready to decipher the text. (I was slow to learn to read, probably because I spent the first grade, God knows why, at Volksschule No. 4, homeroom teacher Fraulein Pfefferkorn, a young functionary of the BDM, the Nazi girls’ league, and our primer was all about an avuncular Fuehrer and a certain little brown Heinz who got to give him a pretty posy at a parade.)

On some Sunday mornings, ready or not, my father would break open a huge volume of the encyclopedia (Der Grosse Brockhaus) and read to me. My preferred course was to set out from the coolly scientific heading “Vulkan,” tracking references to doom-preparing “Vesuv” landing finally in panicky “Pompeji,” where a black cloud of sulphur fumes and pumice hail is preparing the great romance of archaeology. Incidentally, when a decade or so later I discovered Bulwer-Lytton’s classical-kitsch classic, The Last Days of Pompeii, it was sheer reminiscent magic, including a persistent illusion that that slender-columned Campanian villa idyl came to an end on a Sunday morning in a villa in Berlin-Dahlem. (Actually I have no idea what day of the week dawned, a silent blue scorcher—the birds had ceased to sing—on August 4, 79 A.D. The Berlin villa, having been legally stolen by an SS family, was destroyed in an Allied air raid probably as late as 1944.) Seven years more, and I was a declared classical archaeologist (though Greek rather than Roman, my taste having grown very pure in the meanwhile). Which goes to show how long-lived and far-working are such out-of-turn childhood experiences. And it isn’t only grownup wonders that children take to; perfectly mundane texts will also serve. I recall that just after I learned to read I acquired an avidity for the “Directions for Use” on boxes, bottles and cans. That taste too has stuck: I have a little collection of direction delights, among them the instruction booklet from an abacus (1947), touted as “the pet calculator of Japan,” “Which brings comfort and convenience on your life.”

The relation of childhood to adult reading has of course got a history. Louis XIII of France was born in 1601. As a little boy the Dauphin was told goodnight stories, for instance of Melusine, the tutelar fairy of the house
of Lusignan, who turned into a half-serpent on Saturdays. Just the same tale was told among adults at evening gatherings (Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*). In the course of the seventeenth century, adults turned increasingly to more sophisticated entertainments: "children's stories" are originally abandoned adult tales. Generalizing wildly, I have an inkling that modern views on the distinctiveness of childhood have less to do with "the discovery of the child" than with the construction of new ideas of maturity—and of adult diversion, for instance, that it fails to divert unless it reveals the true existential horror at the heart of things.

One test for continuity of consciousness is to read to yourself a book that was read to you when very little. I have tried it. There is a German nursery book, still in print and going strong in Germany, called *Little Peter's Moon Trip*. It concerns a cowardly cockchafer (of the melodious species Melolontha Melolontha, I've lately learned) whose hereditarily missing sixth leg must be recovered from the brute of a man-in-the-moon who keeps it hanging from a nail driven into a birch branch (broken from the birch in our garden, which I loved equally for its waving white and green grace and because it offered illicit bark-pulling, the most satisfying dismemberment there is). It has been over half a century, but the very cover wafted back into that bourgeois nursery midsummer night's dream (actually May, cockchafer time), with its character-crowded cosmos, its heavenly highway for secret excursions. But it also came back to me that at four I had been half-repelled by the book, and now I know explicitly what I then knew implicitly, namely, why: only unexceptionably good children were candidates for the moon mission, there was lots of piety in the sky and all the goodies were blond—which left me out on all counts; besides, the pictures were too broadstroked—you couldn't walk into them and discover details, and there was no wit at all.

On the other hand, Doctor Dolittle, who came into my life at about six, had from the first and still has my wholehearted allegiance, because I sensed then what I recognize now: that the books are an introduction to human excellence. It was to my moral advantage, I think, that for several years I was Tommy Stubbins and the Doctor was my own father got up in cutaway and top hat: the kindly physician who can't remember to collect his bills but can call on all the animals for help in their own language, the unfussed explorer who simply sails out of Puddleby-on-the-Marsh on a borrowed boat, who in a shipwreck secures first Stubbins but right after his beloved notebooks, the muddling master of the jury-rig who, in the words of the parrot Polynesia, the senior animal in his menagerie, always "gets there," the comfortable homey round gentleman whose rare righteous wrath shakes the earth, the world's most learned naturalist who never stands on his dignity and never loses it—a just and a wise, and in the opinion of his intimates (and in mine), a great man.

Antipathies and allegiances that survive so long unchanged surely do betoken a continuity of consciousness. In fact, judging from personal experience, the only stage to which childhood is really alien is adolescence. Quasi-adulthood is a time of such hot subjectivity, such excessively large and excessively particular passions that it devalues just those objective delights adults and children have in common.

Children's writers (except for a few who don't write but construct their books to satisfy a market, or what is worse, a theory) naturally work on the same-world hypothesis; indeed the highest praise they can hope for is that which Hugh Walpole gives the author of *Doctor Dolittle*: "Mr. Lofting believes in his story quite as much as he expects us to." If they do preach or pull their punches or wax sentimental it is because they have for a moment lost that inward mirror-vision by which a grown-up sees the child within observing the grown-up without. Meanwhile, just by descending, they acknowledge at least the commensurability of the worlds of children and adults.

The matter is worth dwelling on because it looks like a peculiarly accessible case of a set of problems, or rather of related impossibilities, that preoccupy contemporary philosophers: the impossibility of radical translation, translation utterly from scratch, of our language into another, the impossibility of entering empathetically into an alien or ancient culture, the impossibility of recovering the terms of a theoretical frame of reference after it has undergone a shift—and ultimately, the opacity of individual human beings to each other.

The relation of child to adult might seem to epitomize all four incommensurabilities. But there is the mitigating circumstance that while none of us can, in principle, have been members of a tribe that said "gavagai" while looking where we see a rabbit, or have seen the planets revolve about us as a Ptolemaic geocentrist, or have lived as "archaic" Greeks (situations considered by authors like Quine, Kuhn and Feyerabend), some of us, at least, have been children. I for one would, to be sure, wish to claim something more: When I was little I said "Hase" where I now say "rabbit" and I feel somehow confident that then and now I mean the same by both vocables: some such creature as the immortal Hazel of *Watership Down*. Somewhat later I spent four years studying intensely enough to see them dance in my dreams just those pots and pans on which said "archaic" Greeks depicted themselves in looming black shadows and which archeologists call "Geometric." And though they never lost their mystery for me (and I certainly couldn't do with the bizarre conceptual analyses so thoughtfully provided by proponents of the radical difference of the archaic mind) the satisfying way in which the glossy brown-black line ornament lay on the pot and the simple telling grandeur of the funeral scenes got to me. I knew that those pot-painters knew what they were doing and that, but for the least substantial of obstacles, the twenty-eight hundred or so years between us, I would know it too. Minimaly, at the time those Attic silhouettes felt closer than the non-objects of contemporary painting. And finally, living, like the rest of us, in a manifestly Ptolemaic world, ignorant of all astronomy, and happening to study Ptolemy's *Almagest* some time before Copernicus' *Revolutions*, I couldn't help but see the world Ptolemaically, or so I thought. Or, looking at it from the flip side, why dwell on the inaccessibility of former centuries and other cultures when one's own time
can be completely uncanny and one's intimates can be as the aliens from outer space?

But even suppose that my sense of secular solidarity is mere self-delusion, there is still that one case of crossing into another world which is not hopeless. I was never a Greek (I guess), but I, my personally identical I, was once, extensively and devotedly, a child, and it seems to me that in figuring out how one's childhood frame of mind is recovered one might also learn how other places and other times become accessible. Do we have a faculty for this project?

Of course we do: memory for the recovery of our own former self and imagination for entering into other worlds. These faculties (parenthetically: faculty psychology is back, see Jerry Fodor, Modularity of Mind) display a certain persistence and a certain evanescence, having to do, I suppose, with the character of their objects, which are not presentations but re-presentations, that is, not solid things that are there, but the see-through shades of their absent selves.

Now what I want to say about the road to recovery naturally concerns only full-blown childhood and doesn't reach into pre-linguistic babyhood. (Memory of and in infancy is a particularly fascinating but difficult chapter in cognitive developmental psychology.) Furthermore, since I'm thinking not about the daily coping of childhood but about its imaginative life, especially with respect to books, I'm not talking of adult memories of childhood existence, but rather of that remembrance of things past which is essentially memory of memories. What I mean is that as soon as a new book has been taken in it becomes part of the imaginative memory, there to begin its episodic afterlife, perhaps in the case of a goodnight story even in that very night's dream. (Incidentally, this kind of remembrance is pretty recalcitrant to investigation—glory be!—and for all the enormous amount of work done on memory recently, I haven't found much on it.)

In remembering one does, to be sure, sometimes come on oneself reading (A vivid memory: reading my first self-read book, Robinson Crusoe—recommended to the parents of Europe, as I later delightfully discovered, as the one and only book fit to be a child's first by Rousseau himself in the Emile. While securing my island in imagination, I simultaneously worked away at poking a hole in the plaster wall of the nursery, intended in time to be an escape route from the enforced after-mid-day-dinner rest hour. Hole discovered on brother's information. Scene and plaster job. Tremendous revenge on little beast.) But mostly the images we remember were already memory-images in childhood—and therein lies the recovery: we return through the imagination to the imagination, a hermetically sealed, secure depository.

Not really, someone might argue. Over time and growth the kaleidoscope of the mind has shifted out of all recognition and its image bits have entered new and transforming contexts. Well, I want to propose a figure which illustrates at least how it feels to live in both worlds.

In 1832, Necker, a student of perception, drew attention to a phenomenon which is now all over the literature. "Necker's Cube" is simply a perspective outline drawing of a solid. When observed, it flips, willy-nilly so that the front corner is suddenly, without transition, in back. It is impossible to see both positions at once, nearly impossible to fixate one position for long, very hard for those used to perspective drawing to see it as a flat picture. The so-called "perceptual paradox" associated with the figure is just this: that we cannot help seeing reversing cubes when the single stimulus itself is in fact a plane design.

The "interpretative paradox" is analogous. There is a common "flat" stimulus, the text itself, taken as mere material for make-believe. Children are, of course, fully aware that they can, with an effort, deflate the book, that there is a
For content, this is a big substantial book containing myriads of characters and sub-worlds. For Phantasia is both infinite and highly anisotropic; in each of its places dwells a different kind of being. What is more, Phantasia abounds in stories to be: "But that's a story for another time" is the neverending refrain, just as the book really starts when it seems to be ending. Here's its skeleton:

On a mundane morning, Bastian, running from his tormentors, finds himself on the inside of a glass door saying "Antiquariat" in mirror-writing. He feels compelled to steal a book bound in shimmering copper colored silk, entitled, of course, The Neverending Story, and bearing the sign of two snakes biting each other's tails (recognizable by affixations of the hermaphrodite as the double ouroboros, the symbol of cyclical endlessness.) With it he hides in the storage attic of his school where he makes camp and begins to read. The print turns green. He is looking into Phantasia, a threatened land. Its child empress is sick and her sickness is reflected in Phantasia's progressive piece-meal annihilation. There is only one cure: a human being must enter Phantasia and give the Infanta her new name. As the school-tower clock strikes the afternoon hours it comes to Bastian that he knows the name, that he is chosen to save Phantasia—and not only Phantasia, but also the real world, because in proportion as the former is swallowed by non-being, the latter is possessed by lies; their salvation is conjoined.

At two o'clock he slips out to pee and eats his lunch apple; at eleven he glimpses a monkish ancient in Phantasia who is writing the copper colored book Bastian is reading. Just before midnight he realizes that both realms will be caught in a treadmill of eternal return unless he acts. At the stroke of twelve he is in Phantasia, in the Night Wood of Perelin, and the print turns green until the end when Bastian tells his father the whole story—except for once, when he prominently strews his initials BBB in red sand over the Painted Desert Goab. It is the first clue of his coming corruption. Now, having grown beautiful in body, celebrated as the savior, he conducts a triumphal progress through the realm. He is wearing the amulet Auryn, the golden, the Glow. It bears the ouroboros on the obverse and on the reverse the legend, "Do as you will." Bastian misunderstands it as license to "Do as you wish," wherewith his desires become indefinite and destructive—the classical outline of a tyrant. As he goes, he falls deeper and deeper into self-forgetfulness.

On the way, there are many wonderful characters and episodes. There is, for example, Atréju's conveyance and companion, Fuchur, the Dragon of Gladness (Gluecksdraehe) who floats and swoops through the air in joyous bows (just like my dragon kite), and has a voice like a bell. (Hermann Hesse has a little essay—1949—on the golden sonority of the vocable Glueck.) The episode closest to my heart comes late in the book at the nadir of Bastian's amnesia: his days with Yore, the Miner, who has charge of the "pit of pictures," and the "lode of dreams," where are deposited transparencies, tablets thin as a breath: our memories and dreams, for "a dream cannot come to nothing once it is dreamt." Bastian must search these image-archives for a familiar dream as a clue to guide him out of his oblivion. After several days of forlorn sorting he finds a dream tablet of a man in a lab coat holding up the impression of a denture, which fills him with enormous longing. This is the beginning of his ascent and return to his father (who is in fact a dentist.)

The Neverending Story is full of delights which an alert child may sense and an adult connoisseur may decipher. It is a real work of literature, meaning that it maintains far-flung connections with its kind, being full of allusions, borrowings, references: like Carroll's Alice, Bastian goes through the looking glass, like MacDonald's Fantastes, he finds the road to fairy-land, like Rabelais' Thelmites, he does as he will. And right in the middle of the book traces turn up of one previous Phantasia-traveler who made the song Bastian's knights sing all the time. Translated from German, it goes:

When that I was and a tiny little boy
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain... They recall his name as "Shexpir or the like." Evidently one adult who made it.
There is an age-old philosophical perplexity, the dream-wake confusion, propounded for instance by the Chinese sage Chuang-tzu on apparently awakening from a dream: "Who am I then? A butterfly dreaming that it is Chuang-tzu or Chuang-tzu dreaming that I am a butterfly?" (3rd century, B.C.), again by Descartes in the Meditations (17th century A.D.), and lately in The Bear That Wasn't (reviewed in Gareth Matthews' charming book, Philosophy and the Young Child.) Young children are, of course, very much alive to just such linguistic and philosophical puzzles. Parental anecdotes about their midget metaphysicians abound, always delightful, an occasional sense of oracular self-mystification notwithstanding. So out of the blue the aforementioned Tony said of God (who was not exactly the talk of his family): "He is sooo big, soooo big he's an idea"—Anselm-in-embryo! Indeed there is more to it than pleasure in puzzles. Not for nothing do we enter upon rational life enthralled to negativity, the metaphysical problem. I mean the "terrible twos," a condition whose essence a lovable little boy Peter whom I used to sit for (or rather, on) would express in the remarkable phrase he prefixed to his continual stream of objections: "Want not to want ... " Negativity first, and later existential panic: I recall awakening every night for some weeks to watch the darkly heaving ramification of the well-loved walnut outside the nursery window and to know that my mother could die.

Yet later, at seven or eight, my father succeeded in inducing in me the first conscious moment of philosophical wonder I can recall. He was taking a privasimum on the first Critique with his friend, Arthur Liebert, then the President of the Kantgesellschaft. On a Sunday morning walk through the spring woods he showed me that my hands were bewitched, that, though like as two peas in a pod, I couldn't bring them into congruence. A quarter century later, when I discovered his source in para. 13 of the Prolegomena, Kant's illustration of his claim that space is not a property of the things themselves but the form of their outer intuition, all the original amazement came back to me, and henceforth the pure material of the outer form of sensibility was permanently dyed spring-green.

All these approaches to philosophy—and, really, they're not peculiar to children—occur in The Neverending Story: playful puzzles, deep fear, serious questions. But literally the most wonderful mode is the predominant one: Here is a philosophical story book, a book of speculative myths, a working vacation for the imagination.

The grandes philosophes, those Socrates tells in the Platonic dialogues, are end-myths; they consummate the dialectical argument with the high of a cosmic vision. Now, in contemporary philosophy, grandeur being out of favor, mini-myths, flairless little thought-constructs, are placed throughout the logical argument: Martians, counter-earthlings, brains-in-a-vat and possible worlds inhabited by that one-and-only unicorn whose affliction is non-existence. Finally, there are the real myths, the ones that are not made but re-told, and these are good as preludes to philosophy: In the Metaphysics (I) Aristotle says: "Wonder is the beginning of philosophy," "myths are composed of wonders," and so "the myth lover (philomythos) is somehow a philosopher (philosophos)."

But he also says that wonder is really a sense of one's ignorance and that one takes to philosophy as "an escape from ignorance." And so he announces a slow-starting but irresistible development: the way of science is the way away from wonder. Two millenia later, a founding text in natural philosophy will bear the still wondering legend, "Wonder and is no Wonder" about its central diagram (the endless chain around the prism, Stevin 1605); four centuries later it will be the universal dogma that science and philosophy mean demythification. The myth-lover is a man to come to maturity; much of her
education is devised to sober us up. Yet there is also a sense, endlessly analyzed and bemoaned (and not only by those soft spirits who want to reimmerse themselves in magical murk), that something has been lost, that the world we hoped to gain by taking our two- and a-half-thousand year temperance pledge has somehow lost its shape and color. What is it that myths did for the world? They made it visible, I imagine, by—ugly but apt term—potentiating the appearances, that is to say, by making them significant. The Necker Cube shows that even the objects of mere perception depend on interpretative preconceptions to take shape. Myths might be thought of as analogous interpretative schemata for the human shaping of phenomena. They bring out in appearances just that depth and color from which measuring science and rational philosophy soberly abstract; hence they give them visibility—a word used here certainly in an extended, perhaps in a private sense: I call appearing objects “visible” when I do not look past them as being mere unsuggestive particulars, or through them as being mere representative instances, but at them as recalling through their very looks both themselves and something beyond. (This mode of significant appearing is usually called “symbolic,” but it shouldn’t be, since by long-standing usage a symbol mainly “stands for” something else.)

Genuine myths, the sort that are not composed and read but received and reenacted, are mostly extinct, and the notion of reviving them through deliberate acts of creation is a practical contradiction in terms. Yet all is not lost. A grand enough fairy tale can stand in for those by-gone world-frames. (So, come to think of it, can a great grown-up novel.) Such stories make something of the mundane world; they back it with a vibrant ground and bring it out with vivid contrasts.

Ende’s books, both *Momo* and *The Neverending Story*, do even more. They reflect on what they are doing while they are doing it—a feature they share with the finest speculative works. They tell wonderful tales and wonder about tale-telling. They represent the annihilation of the imaginative realm as the great emergency of contemporary life, and even as they tell the story of its peril they accomplish its restoration. Ende’s mythophilia is a beginning of philosophy which is not just to be left behind.

*Nol admirari* advises the Roman poet, follower of a latter-day philosophy; he means both “Wonder at nothing,” and “Think nothing wonderful.” *Omnia admirari,* “Wonder at everything and find everything wonderful” must be the Phantasia-traveller’s postulate. Its requirements determine both the kind and the mode of the thinking which begins in Phantasia. For first, certain questions can take on flesh and flourish there unashamedly which are skeletons in the logical closet. And second, the Phantastic mode of imagining is an unabashed reversal of the (pretended) order of rational investigation: Here the questions are candidly reached through the answers, since the imagination, for all its tolerance of the antic and the monstrous, is constitutionally partial to certain kinds of doing and being and imical to others.

I’ll come to an end with a small sampling of the neverending stream of questions which wells up in Phantasia.

Phantasia, the realm of the imagination, subsists independently of human attention—and yet its existence depends on a periodic human invocation, a timely Adamic re-naming. Bastian says: “I would like to know just what is going on in a book when it is closed?” And his discoveries speak to and, of course, contradict current solutions to long-debated problems such as: What is the nature of fictional, or possible, worlds? What is the standing of non-existent objects? How do they comport with “reality”?

Phantasia’s topography is infinite and yet centered. It has, as Bastian learns, a perilous port of entry (Perelin, the Night Wood) and a magical place of exit. He enters each of its places as a separate world and yet he progresses through the land of phantasy as through one empire. The layout of fictional worlds (their boundaries and compatibility) is treated—with severely averted eyes—in the logic of fiction (“deviant” logic, so-called!). Its doctrines, particularly concerning the question “Are all fictional worlds connected?” deny Bastian’s experience of the cohesion of all stories.

Phantasia is the realm into which nothingness first erupts; that is what Bastian is called on to deal with, and he learns that escape from the treadmill of mere recurrence, the revivifications of a sad daily existence and truth-telling itself depend on saving this realm of the imagination—a powerful though deviant answer to the question, endlessly revolved in contemporary philosophy, “What is the crisis of modernity?”

Phantasia can engulf and corrupt, too. As his sojourn loses its aim, as he forgets his daily shape and his human mission and tyrannizes the realm he has saved, it becomes a thicket of sophisticated un-meaning; here apes play aleatic compositional games, which when continued for all eternity will produce all stories and all stories of stories including the Neverending Story. Even Bastian in his pride is appalled at the insult this extreme of esthetic formalism offers his copper-colored book; he becomes a partisan in the great question of esthetics: “Does art have meaning over and above its form?”

And finally, as the Neverending Story ends, Bastian, emerged from Phantasia, tells his father the story of his reading of the story of his journey into the realm where the story of his journey is being written. He would like to know, Bastian says, “How could this book occur within itself?” He has found the fairy-form of a cluster of questions that are the fascination of present-day intellectual life: recursion and self-reference.

Enough said. The point’s been made: One way, a wonderful way, to philosophy passes through Phantasia.

**NOTES**

1. The day after I finished this *jeu d’esprit* I came on a multiply serendipitous reference—Clifford Geertz in “Found in Translation: On the Social History of the Moral Imagination” citing Lionel Trilling who in his last essay (on the ever-piquant theme of reading Jane Austen with American students) calls this “one of the significant mysteries of man’s life in culture: how it is that other people’s creations can be so utterly their own and so deeply part of us.”
On Being A Meaning-Maker
Young Children's Experiences of Reading

by Valerie Polakow

"Well, see," said five-year-old Sasha, "it just happened one day and suddenly it felt like "Yippee, I CAN READ," and he threw up his arms and laughed, "and it made me feel different inside my tummy. I felt kind of powerful."

"I remember when I knew I could read," six-year-old Toby told me, "it was when I first moved into this house—a couple of days after I moved here and I remember that day, it was in the middle of the day and I did like it—'cause it makes you feel confident—like you can do more things when you do it."

What does literacy mean to a young child and how can we come to understand the child's perspective of reading and the child's experience of stories? For a young child, the world is storied, peopled by dragons and witches, wizards and Hobbits; her lifeworld is filled with drama, infused with horizons that Yehudi Menuhin has called the place of the fourth dimension. Why then do we assume that reading begins with alphabetization; that it is a set of observational skills, to be developed in isolation from story, from engagement, from the drama of lived-experience?

Child-Life as Storied

In his essay, "The Storyteller," Walter Benjamin laments the decline of the communicability of experience and points out that dramatic narrative is gradually disappearing from living speech. Experience he tells us, has fallen in value, giving way to the rise of information which lays prompt claim to verifiability. Reading scores, grade level assessment, student-reader strategies, comprehension as measured by workbook decoding skills, all can be evaluated and debated within the input-output taxonomic models that swarm over our pedagogical landscape. But as Sartre pointed out years ago in his study...
of the emotions, fact-gathering leads to fact-gathering, and nothing more. A
taxonomy of reading skills or a meta-
analysis of reader strategies, tells us
about skills and objectives and strategies
but cannot tell us about the experiential
world of the child or the storied life-
world of childhood, which we vitiate as
we rob children of 'storyness' in their
school reading curricula; for “it is as if
something that seemed inalienable to us,
the securest amongst our possessions,
were taken from us: the ability to ex-
change experiences.”

It is the ability to exchange experiences with Dorothy and the Strawman, with the little boy and his
velveteen rabbit, with Tigerlily where “everything is turned around . . . Where nothing is the way it should
be or the way it once was.” Yet children,
who from earliest babbyhood have
struggled to name the world, are robbed
of the word and instead we present them
with tasks, objectives, and skills to be
mastered and we term that classroom
literacy! Yet how do children experience
reading? What do they think about their
world of words? What does reading
mean to a young child entering
kindergarten and encountering perhaps
for the first time, a formalized cur-
riculum designed to teach them the
Word?

I was curious, and at the same time
astonished, that I could find very little in
the reading literature that sought the
child's perspective of reading. There is a
 burgeoning literature of adultcentric
theories drawn from behavioral and
cognitive development traditions. There
are numerous studies dealing with how
and why children use certain strategies
to perform reading tasks—but nowhere
did I hear the child’s voice, articulating
his perspective on the question. I was
reminded of Husserl’s injunction, “Zu
den Zachen Zeltst,” (to the things
themselves), and so I began with four
five-year-old children—four friends who
became my informants. All the children
attend the same public school kindergar-
ten in the morning and the same child-
care center in the afternoon. Thus it is
with Sasha, Toby, Liz, and Laura that
another vision of lived-literacy begins.
As Gareth Matthews points out so wise-
ly in his Dialogues with Children, “What
has not been taken seriously, or even
widely conceived, is the possibility of

The Interview Setting

I arranged to speak with each of the
children at home, alone. The rituals that
we set up—of owning the tape, operating
the tape recorder and shaping the in-
terview were critical to the participatory
atmosphere. Each child wrote his or her
name on the cassette tape and carefully
dated it. The tape was theirs. I promised
to return what they made at a later date.
Toby, Liz and Laura all chose to be in-
terviewed in their own rooms. Sasha
chose the living room as we were alone
in the house and he wanted to eat snacks
during our interview. I began by
reading a story of their choice and then
asked them to read or tell me about one
of their favorite books. Each child took
the interview very seriously, thoughtfully
pausing to think about certain ques-
tions and philosophically reflecting on
others. Toby, perhaps, summed up our
interactions best when he told me at the
outlet, “I know what an interview is—it’s
when somebody tells someone more
about them than the other person
knows.” He was right. The children
were my “reading specialists.”

On Being A Reader:

Sasha and Toby were fluent readers
in the conventional sense, Liz and
Laura stood poised on the brink—iden-
tifying a selection of words and memo-
rizing long texts. Yet all four children
considered themselves readers. When I
asked them to read me their favorite
books—they all chose stories that they
could either read or tell; stories imbued
with humor, narrative power, and per-
sonal meaning. For Toby and Sasha
there is a reflective awareness of what
the world was like before and after
reading.

Toby, recollecting his own ex-
perience, as we read “The Wild Baby,”
tells me:

I can always figure out words
one way or another—I can
sound it out or I can just figure
out—before I couldn’t—See I
remember ’cause I know the
sounds of all these words now
(points to book).

Liz “reads” me several books during
our interview. She has Angelina Ballerina
virtually memorized and as I watch her
“read” the text, I notice that she draws
cues from the pictures as well as key
phrases such as “too busy doing curtsies
on the bed,” or “people came from far
and wide.” When I later ask her if she
can pick out words like “people” and
“curtsies,” she does so but has trouble
identifying simple words like “on,”
“the,” and “bed.” Her clues come
from the context of meaning as well as
the engaging sound of certain phrases
that are funny and out of the ordinary.
Similarly, in a Sesame Street book, Liz
picks out “Sesame,” and “Street,” and
“Bird,” but has trouble identifying
“big.” Her clues are derived from the
enjoyment of text and an astute memory
for interesting words.

Val: So you’d think in your head
how it sounded.

Sasha: uh-uh

Val: Is that the beginning of learning
to read?

Sasha: Well, see, when I was writing
like this I was learning to read
and I was spelling my own way
and I would only read the words in
the way I made them—not the
way books did.

Val: How did you change from spell-
ing your way to the book way?

Sasha: Oh, when I started getting used
to And and Bee and reading Ping
and Toad—then later, see, when
I saw book words I could just
break through and spell through the
words —like you know, a few
days ago I found out “difficult”
(smiles delightedly) which is a
very difficult word! Right?

Toby, recollecting his own ex-
perience, as we read “The Wild Baby,”
tells me:

I sound it out, and I hear
myself, like if I was deaf—like if
I need a hearing aid—and I tell
myself and then it sounds in my
head.

Val: But how do you figure out a
new word?

Toby: I couldn’t—See
I

I couldn’t—See
I

I couldn’t—See
I
Val: How do you know how to read that story, Liz?
Liz: Well, I read this book a lot of times and also I see the picture in my head and how it sounds in my ears—and also 'cause it's my favorite book. I always know the words in my favorite books.

Liz’s attraction to humor in story is born out in another conversation when she asks me to read her Big Foot. Every few pages of text, Big Foot makes a sound, “Kerlop, Kerlop.” Each time I read that, Liz laurens and tries to find the words on the page with her finger and correctly identifies them each time.

I notice a similar process occurring with Laura who tells me, “I got to read by listening to stories and also by writing words,” and she proceeds to draw up a list of rhyming “et” words—“net, vet, (that’s an animal doctor), set, bet. I can read them ‘cause I made them.”

Later, when Laura and I are reading stories, Laura fetches a book about Grandma and Daisies saying, “I think I know part of this one.” She proceeds to read the text, remembering key phrases like, “Mary calls them common old weeds.” When I ask her to find “Mary” and “weeds” and “common,” she correctly identifies them, but like Liz, has difficulty identifying simple words like “on,” and “to.”

Val: Laura, how do you know how to read these words like “daisy” and “weeds”?
Laura: Well, see, I just know, 'cause I like that book and it's in my brain.
Val: But how does your brain tell you how to know hard words like that?
Laura: I look at the first letter and the last letter and then I know what the word is.
Val: How about the middle of the word?
Laura: No, I don’t really bother about that!

As both Laura and Liz classify themselves as readers, I took their assumptions seriously. In reality, they were readers of texts that they liked and enjoyed. They could read the story to me, to themselves, to others, with vivid expression and full dramatic power. They could live the meaning of the story, or as Benjamin writes, they were sinking the thing into the life of the storyteller. Liz thought for a long time when I asked her when she began to read, and she replied:

I learnt a long time ago, at somebody’s house, and the somebody is my grandma—now I know how to read, but I used to not know—and now I know it feels different inside (pause) and now I also know how to tie a bow. (We discuss bow-tying, and then she continues): Reading stories makes me kind of happy and sad!

Empowerment and the Storied Lived-World

Being the teller and reader is an empowering act for these children. They are engaging with the text and, at the same time, transforming it and themselves in the telling. Themes of “feeling powerful,” “confidence,” “being happy or sad,” feeling an attraction to certain words and their representative lived-situations, give a sense of empowerment. As Toby remarked, “Now I can be the reader and someone else is the listener!” Feeling in charge of the text, turning the pages when you decide, showing the pictures, being the first to tell of a situation, all feature as important components of being the reader-teller of texts. Clearly these children’s experiences of literacy have a long history—a storied-history, where in their homes bedtime stories have been a consistent ritual. At daycare, storytime has been a daily experience for several years. They have led storied lives, experiencing creating and transforming meanings into worlds that transcend the dailyness of their everyday lives. Hence reading has long been part of their experience, tied to engagement and involvement with narrative, myth and fable. Now, reading the text involves a transformation from being a listener to an actor—to an agent of other’s storyness. “It’s different now, because I don’t have to pay attention to someone else reading it—I just pay attention to listening to myself and I get to be the chooser of the stories, too,” remarked Sasha.

The stories that the children choose to read are stories that are humorous, or “scarey,” dramatic narratives with complex plots, as well as those that speak to their lived-realities. Liz, for example, told me Angelina Ballerina was one of her favorites—and I suspect that part of her attraction to the story lies in her identification with ballet—as she herself takes ballet lessons, and frequently prances around her home in a leotard and tights. None of these themes described are different from the adult experience of text-engagement and should not surprise us. However, what does give cause for surprise is the violation of these live-storied experiences when the children confront behavioral skill-oriented textbooks in their classrooms. Consider one of the kindergarten reading series: Funny Little Ant. The instructions to the teacher suggest bringing in some ants, showing flashcards with clue pictures and “never have the child guess what the word is as a first impression can be a lasting one”!! The clue vocabulary is given at the beginning of the book:

ant hill
funny

and the text reads:
Little ant
Big ant
Walk, little ant, walk
Little ant hill
Big ant hill
Walk to little ant hill
Walt to big ant hill
Funny little ant
Funny big ant

If we examine this text as an example, we see how reading is reduced to word recognition separated from story engagement. The words are simple and the assumption is that giving a clue vocabulary with pictures will stimulate
The stories are too boring—they're so dumb and boring... and I hate those dopey books and the worksheets... We have to sit there and do this and do that and worksheets all the time.

Val: What do you think kids could tell the people who write those books?

Liz: Tell the teachers not to get those books anymore.

Val: What books should the teachers get?

Liz: Get the books that are more interesting so kids will like to read.

Sasha has similar criticisms and compares these books unfavorably to an engaging story series, Ant and Bee that he learned to read with:

Val: Sasha, if you were the boss of the class, what would you change?

Sasha: I'd get the Ant and Bee books—'cause the story is fun and the kid reads the red words and the big person reads the black words and you both read the story together. And it has much more pages. In kindergarten the books are dumb and there are little papers with the words on and you have to write them and it's so boring—I sit there and try and make up my own story out of the words so it's more interesting. (He pauses) You know what—I think it's boring to read so early—you know why?

Val: Why?

Sasha: Because then when the other kids are learning when they're five and you already know how to read, you have to wait and wait for everything that the teacher's trying to teach—

Val: What is the teacher trying to teach?

Sasha: To teach the kids to read—but I could do it better and so could other kids who know how to read. They should let the kids teach other kids.

Val: Do you think the kids need to be taught or will they learn it anyway?

Sasha: Well, you need help to know the sounds of letters and to have stories read to you so you remember... but then it just happens inside of you and suddenly you just know how to read!

The De-Meaning of Reading:
Reading curriculum specialists assume that breaking reading down into a set of skills involving word recognition, word-analysis, decoding, and comprehension mirrors the process of the child's development as a reader. But these children are telling us that complexity, narrative and text-engagement are the characteristics that shape their development as readers and which speak to their history of storyness. In some ways, the de-meaning of reading for children speaks to a larger issue, which Paulo Freire articulates in his radical pedagogy of literacy when he writes:

... acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words or syllables—lifeless objects disconnected to an existential universe—but rather is an act of creation and recreation, a self transformation producing a state of intervention in one's context. 4

When we consider Freire's work that he began in the late fifties in Brazil and continued beyond his exile after the 1964 coup d'état, several characteristics of his pedagogy become clear: his starting point is always the existential landscape of the people, who become co-learners together with him in the reconstruction of a reality to which their literacy can be put to practical and transformative use. By asking the peasants to describe and create in artistic form concrete images of their lived-worlds, a re-naming of reality begins, which leads to the formation of generative words grounded in the people's reality; hence literacy becomes a process of empowerment. As Freire has always been quick to point out, the peasants were not illiterate, rather they were de-alphabetized, marginalized from their society, residing in a culture of silence. Alphabetization, Freire argued, must be connected to a liberatory literacy, a socio-political and cultural transformative act for "to speak a true word is to transform the world." Naming the world is also reading the world—and while alphabetization skills are a necessary component for transformative action, they are also mere means to a greater end.

For a child then, who literally begins life naming the world to which she is born, reading the world is but a continuation of that transformative action. Alphabetization or the acquisition of such skills, are clearly secondary to the intentional meaning-making that the reading of a storied world involves.

Atmosphere and Mood
The storied experiences that many young children share, exemplified by these four children, have a quality, an essential atmosphere that is frequently tied to intimacy, warmth, and private time spent alone with an adult. I found it interesting that during our interviews, the children attempted to recreate a space and time that was ours. We sat together alone, in their private places. On two different occasions when the telephone rang, Toby and Liz answered the phone and abruptly informed the respective callers that they were doing something special and could not talk. The images that the children have of story-times are warm and engaging, memories of laps, of cuddling, of exclusive adult attention.

The mood of evocation that surrounds story—of smells, of touch, of sounds, of vivid images is abruptly compressed as the atmosphere of "storyness" is replaced by the atomism of words—words lost to the de-meaning landscape of objectives, outcomes, and grade level assessment. As Jan Dienkse points out, we live our entire lives in both a private and social atmosphere—what Heidegger has called an Existential. With the young child, this atmosphere is experienced in moving circles of meaning as story experiences are appropriated and transformed and become part of the life-world. How does this fundamental mood change when institutional reading begins?
Lived Literacy

Letters which previously have held the status of mysterious and intriguing identities now become flat undimensional characters. Consider this observation as illustrative:

At four years old, I observed Sasha experimenting with letters and numbers, frequently blending the two systems together. The multiple possibilities that he saw in letters extended across many dimensions of his perceptual world. When writing K for Kimberley (the name of a friend at daycare) Sasha turned K into X and said, "Now I have a railroad track crossing," and followed that with a drawing of a train.

The sign for a child, is also a signifier of a concrete set of images, where letters and numbers can graphically represent everyday objects. Do we as adults see the multiple possibilities in the letter K? In mastering literacy, we believe that letters must occupy a unidimensional plane—such as the graphic. But for a child, numbers and letters are open systems, capable of transformation. Letters and numbers dance and sing on Sesame Street, why not elsewhere? Indeed, letters have a life of their own. Consider Elizabeth Bishop’s memory of her own experience with numbers and letters as she reconstructs her childhood in Primer Class in Nova Scotia:

At first I could not get past the letter G, which for some time I felt was far enough to go. My alphabet made a satisfying short song, and I didn’t want to spoil it—It was wonderful to see that the letters each had different expressions, and that the same letter had different expressions at different times. Sometimes the two capitals of my name looked miserable, slumped down and sulky, but at others they turned fat and cheerful, almost with roses in their cheeks.9

Elizabeth Bishop, at five years old, creates a storied world for her letters, in much the same way that young children, experimenting with form shape and meaning, give life to theirs.

Yet, these critical moments of experimentation, of thoughtfulness, of engaging with living letters and living stories are frequently denied to children in a formalized reading curriculum. Unfortunately this erosion of lived literacy has its prologue in many childcare centers in North America, where the bureaucratization of experience extends not only to schooling, but to two and three year olds drilled in so-called reading readiness. Consider one typical example drawn from my field observations at a franchised childcare center in Michigan:

During storytime for the three-year-old day care children, the teacher showed the children a picture with a coffee-pot adjacent to a drum and asked, "Is the coffee pot a drum?" No one answered. The teacher replied, "No, is this (pointing to drum) a drum? Yes, Why? Because he pounds on it. Is a house a park bench? No. Why? Because you can’t sit on it."10

The above lesson continued where the teacher both asked and answered her own absurd questions. The lesson apparently was designed to teach children discrimination skills in matching object and function. For the fidgeting and inattentive children, storytime was clearly anathema to story.
they knew how to read the words that they made. This appropriation of words and the acts of transformation by the children are themes that echo in Michael Armstrong’s work done by Sylvia Ashton-Warner in which she and her students became co-creators of their existential life-texts in New Zealand.

Freire, in reconstructing his own childhood memories writes:

Deciphering the world flowed naturally from reading my particular world; it was not something super-imposed on it. I learned to read and write on the ground of the back-yard in my house, in the shade of the mango trees, with words from my world rather than the wider world of my parents. The earth was my blackboard, sticks my chalk. [As he later describes his experience with his teacher he fondly recollects:] Reading the word, the phrase, the sentence, never entailed a break with reading the world. With her, reading the word meant reading the world-world.

Lived-Literacy and Institutional Literacy

For Sasha, Toby, Liz and Laura, reading is a “word-world” experience, integrally tied to the storyness of their lives. They engage with narrative, they laugh at the “Wild Baby” and turn wide-eyed with fear when the Wicked Witch of the West appears. In short, they live their stories. At this point in their young lives, reading still remains a storied experience to be distinguished from “dopey readers,” and “dumb workbooks.” For now, they stand outside of institutional literacy—partly because of their home experience where stories feature prominently and too, because they attend an unusually open and flexible kindergarten and childcare center. But what of their child-brothers and sisters in other families, in other schools, in other childcare settings? How long can lived-literacy be maintained in the face of the institutionalization of the word-dominated by Houghton Mifflin, Holt Rinehart and Winston, and others of the corporate world? For it is in the bureaucratization of experience, the fragmentation of engagement with text, the coercive breakdown of lived-literacy that the child suffers the loss of the “word-world” and the transformative possibilities of meaning-making.

Perhaps Lewis Carroll foresaw this all long ago:

The question is, said Alice, whether you can make words mean so many different things. The question is, said Humpty-Dumpty, which is to be master that’s all.

REFERENCE NOTES

In order to think clearly about certain ethical questions in pediatric medicine, such as the legitimacy of proxy consent or the right of adolescents to make their own decisions about refusal of treatment, it is necessary to consider the more general question of the justification of treating children in a morally different way from the way we treat adults. What justifies parents and society in making decisions for children?

Presumably, a simple utilitarian argument could be given:

1. decisions need to be made concerning children;
2. children cannot make wise decisions for themselves;
3. therefore, decisions must be made for children by someone else.

Although Mill formulates the classical anti-paternalist position toward adults, he does not mean his theory of liberty to apply to those "not of ripe years"—"children, or . . . young persons below the age which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood." Mill cites only chronological age as set by law as the age of majority as the criterion of when it is justified to make decisions for others for their own benefit. However, spelling out a complete, plausible utilitarian defense makes it clear that the underlying justification of treating children differently must be their presumed lack of rationality or ability to make reasonable decisions.

If we follow Mill, then, justification of parents' and society's rights over children rests simply on their being minors who are assumed to be incapable of the degree of rationality required to be self-determining moral agents.

However, the claim that children, as a class, lack rationality and that therefore it is justified to make decisions for them, has met strong challenge recently both from the popular movements toward children's liberation and in the philosophical literature.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the arguments which challenge the claim that children lack rationality. Even if it is admitted that some children have rationality to the same degree as adults, it will be argued that the concept of rationality which is invoked is mostly irrelevant to moral decision-making. Responsible and wise decision-making is a matter of practical reasoning, and
Aristotle is right in thinking that this develops over a period of time and on the basis of life experience. This model of decision-making explains why children cannot be expected to be self-determining agents, and provides justification for parents and society to make decisions for them for their own benefit.

I. The Argument From Rationality
The argument that children are not rational or competent and therefore need parental authority has one of its sources in Locke:

The Freedom then of Man and Liberty of acting according to his own Will, is grounded on his having Reason . . . To turn him loose to an unrestrain'd Liberty, before he has Reason to guide him is . . . to thrust him out amongst Brutes, and abandon him to a state as wretched, and as much beneath that of a Man, as theirs. This is that which puts the Authority into the Parents hands to govern the Minority of their children. ¹

Bentham, too, bases the source of authority of parents over children on the child's immature status, both physical and intellectual:

The feebleness of infancy demands a continual protection. The complete development of its physical power takes many years; that of its intellectual faculties is still lower . . . Too sensitive to present impulses, too negligent of the future, such a being must be kept under an authority more immediate than that of the laws . . . ²

Since the child cannot care for himself, society (and in Locke's case, God) delegates to the parents the responsibility and duty to care for him. The authority of the parent over child extends only so far as he needs it to achieve what is in the child's best interest and what will enable the child to become a self-sufficient adult. As the child grows in reason, the jurisdiction of the parent weakens, and when the child reaches the age of reason, he is free of that jurisdiction. Locke clearly makes the legitimacy of the power of parent over child rest on the child's lack of reason, whereas Mill assumes that children are lacking in reason, but cites chronological age as a determining factor in parental control.

II. Challenges to the Rationality Argument
A strong challenge to the argument that it is justified to deny rights or liberties or freedom of action to children is made in a recent article by Laurence D. Houlgate, "Children, Paternalism, and Rights to Liberty," which was published by O'Neill and Ruddick, Having Children. ³ Houlgate considers two forms of this argument, one based on the premise that children are likely to do harm to themselves or fail to promote their own good, and the other based on the assumption that children do not have the capacity for rational choice. Houlgate rejects both of these claims, arguing that only very young children, those in the stages described by Inhelder and Piaget as the "sensorimotor" stage (0-2 years) and the early "preoperational" stage (2-7 years) are incapable of reasoned, i.e., thoughtful, choice. He argues on empirical grounds that older children have the cognitive capacity to understand when there is risk of harm, the capacity to defer immediate gratification, as in playing competitive games, and that children's lack of information about risks is likely due to their specific circumstances and education, e.g., city vs. farm children. Thus, they do have the ability to make reasonable i.e., "correct," choices. Houlgate then concludes that the justification for denying children the same rights as adults cannot be

Rationality, or the lack of it, per se, cannot justify different moral treatment of children and adults. ’’
based on their presumed lack of rationality.

A similar challenge is presented in an earlier article by Francis Schrag, "The Child in the Moral Order," which appeared in *Philosophy* in 1977. He notes that the fiercest opponents of paternalism, Mill, Berlin, and Nozick, do not hesitate to accept it for children, and that "an enormous philosophical weight is made to rest on the adult/child distinction." If we try to specify differences between adults and children morally relevant to the justification of paternalism, he claims, the only morally defensible system of classification is one based on degree of maturation as measured by chronological age.

As the most plausible candidate for explaining the morally relevant differences between the two groups distinguished by chronological age, Schrag examines the ability to make rational decisions, and considers remedying the otherwise impossibly vague conception of rationality by defining it in terms of Piaget's stages of human cognitive development. Schrag wisely argues against this, however, on two grounds: first, that although some children are precocious intellectually, their experience of people in the real world is too limited to make their independent survival likely, and secondly, that there are many adults who never reach the stage of formal operations. He also notes briefly that some people who can perform the appropriate logical operations nevertheless are impotent to act on their conclusions. Thus, the ability or inability to perform the "formal operations" described by Piaget serve as neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for justifying adopting paternalism for children only.

So, if the criterion of rationality is assumed to make the difference between children and adults, then the difference can in no way be correlated with chronological age. We can add to Schrag's example of the intellectually precocious child and the adult who never reaches the stage of formal operation, consideration of the profoundly retarded adult, comatose patient, and the senile elderly. There are too many clear counter-examples to attribute the difference between the two classes to the characteristic of rationality. Rationality, or the lack of it, *per se*, cannot justify different moral treatment of children and adults.

III. The Concept of Rationality: Rationality as Practical Reason

The real difficulty in defending the rationality criterion, however, is not the fact of counter-examples, but the concept of rationality itself. Houlgate seems satisfied to understand rationality as Piaget's cognitive abilities. Schrag displays some uneasiness with this interpretation, but still bases his rejection of rationality as a criterion on the fact of counter-examples.

There is, despite these arguments, a nagging intuition that children do lack something—which we refer to perhaps inexactly as rationality—and which does serve as the moral basis for the paternalistic treatment of children. I propose to examine here the relevant sense of rationality.

Rationality, according to the Piaget model, is basically the ability to reason, to draw conclusions from premises. This ability is seen at its clearest in the mathematical mind. Given certain information, the mathematician or logician, following certain rules which he has learned or deduced for himself, can see the implications and follow them out. Mathematical genius flowers early in life; the childhood prodigy is the lisping young-
Philosophers, in the Greek sense of wise men and women, mature later in life. Despite Wordsworth’s poetry, the innocent child is in no way a philosopher. Yet, isn’t rationality also the hallmark of the philosopher? What is different about the rationality of the mathematician and the rationality of the philosopher? I find the clue to answering the puzzle about rationality in Aristotle’s distinction between theoretical and practical reasoning. The mathematician reasons to knowledge in a theoretical sense—his data is given and unequivocal; the philosopher (in Plato and Aristotle’s sense) exercises practical reason, where the accepting of the premise itself is a matter of judgment, where the process is one of deliberation, of weighing of alternatives, and the conclusion is an action or a way of life. To put it in more modern dress, the mathematician reasons about facts; the philosopher reasons about values.

It is my thesis that the development of children from dependency to moral autonomy depends on the development of practical reasoning. Only after children have passed through this period, as it were, of moral apprenticeship and developed these characteristics, should they be accorded full moral status as adults. Practical reasoning involves experience in life, development of moral judgment, practice in conforming action to principle, and the development of character. The fact that children do not (and cannot) have practical wisdom provides the moral basis for treating them paternalistically.

There are three important components of moral decision-making, each of which helps to illuminate the nature of practical wisdom. The first is that one must know the value premises. Unless one follows a simple, prescribed, legalistic formula, such as the Ten Commandments purport to be, knowing which value premises to accept is in itself a matter of decision. In our pluralistic society, this must be seen as deciding which values to adopt, which life style and life goals to accept. Should one be a conservative or a liberal, preppie or punk?

Accepting moral principles is not a matter of intellectual exercise, but a commitment; accepting a moral principle is deciding to act in a certain way. Moreover, the values that we accept, when applied to concrete situations, tend to come into conflict with one another. Thus, another decision is called for in establishing a hierarchy of values; when and why one prima facie value overrides another is a matter of choice. Should one study for an exam or use that time to help a friend? All of the capacity to do what is involved in deciding upon moral values on principle, I will refer to as judgment.

A second requirement of decision-making is self-knowledge; one must know when the moral principles you have adopted actually apply to you. One might hold as a principle that all overweight people ought to diet, but fail to recognize oneself as overweight. Or, one might be clear that we should treat other people with dignity, but not recognize certain acts of one’s own as condescending or patronizing. The kind of self-knowledge discussed here requires trial and error in seeing the consequences of one’s own actions, understanding of the motivations and sensitivities of other people, a broad view of the physical and social world and one’s place in it: in short, experience in living.

The third component of moral decision-making involves the formation of habits of character that allow one to make his actions conform to his principles. If a person fails to act on his own principles in the appropriate circumstances, due to weakness of will or strength of powerful emotions, then he is not successful in his decision-making. If one decides to diet but then is tempted into eating dessert, something has gone wrong. The import of moral decision-making or practical reasoning as opposed to deduction of theoretical knowledge from given premises, is the eventual outcome in action. We may refer to this capacity as the development of character or strength of character.

Aristotle emphasizes the role of habit in developing moral virtue, and suggests that the novice develops the proper habits by acting as the man of practical wisdom does. He begins by merely copying what the role model does, but he gradually develops his own ability to choose an act correctly. When it is an established disposition of his soul—i.e., habit of character—and is done with pleasure, then he, too, is a man of practical wisdom.

On this analysis, then, there are no exact rules for moral decision-making; it is a matter of judgment, self-knowledge, and character, and this necessarily develops slowly over a period of time with guidance from those more experienced. The child must learn to make his own judgments, since he cannot merely imitate or memorize rules. Yet, there is a standard of morality which is not merely subjective. Developing one’s own judgment allows for the flexibility of meeting changes that the future might bring; yet it is an exercise of rationality and not either mere personal preference or moral skepticism.

Although there will still be differences in the age at which individuals reach the stage of practical wisdom, this concept of rationality does provide justification for a fairly long period of paternalistic treatment of children. Perhaps one could even justify autonomy in certain areas of decision-making which are areas in which the child has had more experience and more opportunity for developing skills. For example, it is claimed that children facing terminal illness "grow up" more quickly in their attitudes toward death and dying that do other children. Thus, it might be justified to allow these children quite a bit of autonomy in respect to decisions about refusal of treatment. On the other hand, if children begin to experience the emotions of adult sexuality only at puberty, then one might argue for a period of moral apprenticeship, i.e., paternalistic supervision over their sexual relationships, until an appropriate backlog of experience has made possible the development of judgment, self-knowledge, and character in respect to this specific area of behavior.

My criticism of those who would emphasize the cognitive difference between children and adults reflects the larger controversy between cognitive and non-cognitivist theories of metaethics. I think the argument is well made by Hare and others that moral language is essentially prescriptive. Moral judgments, according to this view, are not knowledge-claims and one’s acceptance...
of a moral principle is related to behavior in an internal, necessary way. Hare's original theory is perhaps extreme but clear; he says in his early book, "It is a tautology to say that we cannot sincerely assent to a second-person command addressed to ourselves, and at the same time not perform it, if now is the occasion . . . and it is in our power to do so . . . " Thus, moral education, Hare claims, in a more recent article, is not a matter of informing people of an appropriate moral principle, but of "their coming to accept it on their own." Morality does not come naturally to children, he continues, and must be taught by example. Hare also emphasizes the importance of motivation in role-modeling; the model must be not only someone who can set a good example, but someone who is admired, so that the child or adolescent will want to be like him.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the aims and methods of moral education, but it is clear that for those who are engaged in the practical aspects of education of children, there is emphasis on the non-cognitive and apprenticeship aspects of education, of training character and will. For example, Archambeault writes: "Traditionally, moral philosophers have held that moral training consists not only in leading the student to an intellectual apprehension of norms, but also in a training of the will."  

IV. Conclusion

I have argued that those who question the justification of the adult's power over children take too narrow a view of the kind of rationality which is required for mature and responsible decision-making. Locke emphasizes not only the power of the parent to make choices for the child, but the duty the parent has to care for and educate him. For Locke, the power of the parent over the child is derived from his duty to the child. Education of the child includes moral education as well as intellectual education, and moral education involves practical reasoning, i.e., judgment, self-knowledge, and character. These are characteristics which develop slowly over a period of time and in good part by trial and error and role-modeling. Thus, we can conclude that a fairly long period of moral apprenticeship or paternalistic intervention in the child's decision-making is both necessary and justified.

Although I have here provided only general guidelines for when, aside from some generally appropriate but ultimately arbitrary chronological determination, a child is competent to make, say, medical decisions for himself, this analysis should provide a needed counterbalance to those who advocate more and more liberty rights for children in the name of liberation.  

It might also be noted that the same kind of criterion of ability at practical reasoning is appropriate to use in determining the competency of adults to make decisions about refusal of medical treatment. When an adult begins to fail significantly in the skills of making judgments, appreciating consequences, and conforming action to principle, then he becomes a candidate for being declared incompetent and having decisions made for him by a court-appointed guardian.

FOOTNOTES

The Child As Craftsman

by David Henry Feldman

The image I have chosen . . . while certainly not the only possible [purpose]—is that of the child as craftsman. I will try to convey a general sense of what I mean by this image, and then consider some specific educational issues using this view as a guide.

To see the child as a craftsman means to see him or her as a person who wants to be good at something. It suggests that the child continually wishes to take pride in accomplishment and build a sense of integrity about his own work, regardless of the actual level of the work produced. The notion is somewhat akin to Robert White’s effectance motivation, except that White’s notion implies more of a need to feel mastery over what seem to be uncontrolled forces in the environment. The inclination toward craftsmanship no doubt is influenced by effectance motivation which leads to a sense of competence, but the craftsman image is intended to go beyond this to include a more direct link to specific fields of endeavor and to suggest why some activities are so much more compelling to a given child than others.

The image of the craftsman is not intended to suggest that young children are predestined to find satisfaction within a single, particular craft or field or discipline. It simply emphasizes that one of the aims, perhaps the principal aim of education, should be to engage the child in pursuit of mastery of a satisfying craft or crafts, and to find work to do that is likely to bring adult satisfaction, fulfillment and expression. This image also does not imply that each of us necessarily has some of the poet or artist in him; it leaves open the question of just what it is that will engage the interest and enthusiasm of a child at a given point in time. What it does suggest is that there are ways that children can be engaged in activities that bear directly on their future as workers in various fields.

It should be obvious that the selection of a lifetime’s work may be a dangerous one to make too early. And this is not at
I suggest the image primarily as a way to think about the child and his relationship to knowledge at any point during his educational life. By thinking of the child as actively trying to find satisfying work to do and trying to become good at something, the current aims of the educator and the educational process become somewhat altered. The image includes the recognition that, at his own level, the school-aged child is already intent on becoming a craftsman, even if he is not yet sure of what his life’s work will eventually be. Perhaps the most important implication of this image is to suggest that the main purpose of education may well be to provide conditions under which each child can pursue and achieve more advanced levels of mastery within a chosen field or fields of work.

I should point out that my conception of the variety of possible crafts that one might pursue is a very inclusive one. Edgar Friedenberg has written that “You have to be really good in America to make it for long as a physicist, a rock musician or a parent; but for the rest, Spiro T. Agnew is probably good enough.” While Mr. Agnew’s fall from power may raise some questions about the currency of Friedenberg’s remark, the sense of it is clear and still is true—few fields in this culture seem to genuinely demand excellence and still fewer really value it. When I use the term “craft” in the present context, I mean it to include as many kinds of work as society offers to its members: basket-weaving, oratory, mathematics, chess, mechanics, salesmanship, pantomime—the full range of activities that enrich and sustain social and intellectual life. And I would also hope that the idea of craftsmanship leads to greater valuing of diverse occupations as well as standards of excellence that tend to bring forth the best efforts of each of us. To me, valuing excellence and appreciating diversity are two swatches cut from the same cloth.

The notion of the child-as-craftsman includes the view that the child has the capability (although not unlimited) to choose his or her own pursuits. This is similar to, but not the same as, the assumption of Piagetian theory that the child possesses self-regulatory mechanisms which govern development. The decision to master a particular craft or to become involved in activities that might lead to such mastery is not the same as exercising or even constructing universal cognitive structures, although self-regulatory mechanisms are no doubt involved in both. To try to master a craft is a many layered task, and making the choice to study a particular body of knowledge means meeting a series of challenges linked to the specific content and structure of the field. Often times the student is not even aware of these links. Indeed, the craftsman idea suggests that the sensitive eye of the teacher must direct and help select the activities of the child, because the teacher can often better appreciate the relationship between a specific activity the child is exploring and a more general domain of knowledge and skill.

The concept of engagement is intended to capture the intensity of the relationship that should exist between student and subject matter; it demands that the final arbiter of an educational decision is the enthusiasm, commitment, and productivity of the child at his work. Thus, educators might in the future become detectives, sleuths who, armed with the knowledge of the structure and levels of various fields, search for activities that engage the energies of the child and lead to sustained effort. I am obviously simplifying a very subtle and demanding process by this characterization; frankly, we know little about how such sleuthing can be done successfully, except, of course, we know that great teachers have been doing it for generations. However, if the child-as-craftsman image strikes a responsive cord, then the likelihood of learning more about the processes of engagement and of the structure and sequence of levels of mastery increases, because this knowledge would become instrumental to the achievement of valued educational objectives.

Curriculum

What would be the implications of the child-as-craftsman idea for curriculum formation? First, a renewed emphasis on subject matter would be called for, although not because the study of certain classical subjects “disciplines” the mind; the return to an emphasis on subject matter would not be with the idea that everyone ought to study any particular subject. The emphasis follows instead from the fact that introduction to and guidance within a field is a prerequisite to real engagement. Rather than introducing a “general” sort of mental discipline, the child-as-craftsman view leads to a notion of discipline through the acquisition and mastery of challenging work in a field. It is implied in the view here that specific ways of thinking are acquired as part of learning a craft and that a “generally disciplined” mind is not necessarily a desirable, or at least a preeminent goal for education.

Little is actually known about the psychological demands that various
fields make on those who aspire to practice them. The curriculum reform movement of the late '50s and '60s represented one attempt to clarify these issues. This movement was inspired by Jerome Bruner’s call to learn better how to transmit what we know:

Perhaps the task of converting knowledge into a form fit for transmission is, after all, the final step in our codification of knowledge. Perhaps the task is to go beyond the learned scholarship, scientific research, and the exercise of disciplined sensibility in the arts to the transmission of what we have discovered. Surely no culture will reach its full potential unless it invents ever better means for doing so.

With the enhanced acuity of hindsight we know now that attempts to reform curricula confused the logic of a discipline with its developmental levels. Thus, physics and biology and mathematics were broken down into their principles and theories, but not studied in terms of the ways in which individuals move from initial encounter to engagement, from engagement to mastery of early levels, from apprentice to journeyman, and so on. In other words, the developmental aspects of these fields were generally not incorporated into the curricula. Nor were relationships between the capabilities of children and the demands of these disciplines transmitted to teachers in ways they could use.

To see the child as a budding craftsman leads to formal consideration of the relationship of the proclivities of a child to the structure and sequence of knowledge acquisition in a field, particularly to the levels of mastery of that field. Curriculum formation becomes a joint function of child, field, and their continuing relationship under the guidance of teachers who understand development within domains.

Cultural Versus Individual Choice

We are led to consider an important distinction between those skills and knowledge required of all individuals in a society versus those which are more optional. To the extent possible, we might hope that the former will be acquired through pursuit of the latter, but, of course, this cannot be guaranteed. It is legitimate for society to expect its citizens to read, to write, to be able to count, to perform basic arithmetic functions, and to have some sense of the system of government and proper codes of behavior.

It must be acknowledged that the goal of craftsmanship tends to shift the current emphasis on “basic skills” as the “core” of curriculum to a somewhat more peripheral role. Some might argue that if students are encouraged to pursue their own interests to a much greater extent that they do now, at some point these interests may conflict with the crucial task of preparation for adult life in society, i.e., students would not learn the basic skills. The view here suggests that the balance could be shifted substantially in the direction of work within a field without seriously jeopardizing the stability of the social order. Presumably, children would be asked to demonstrate their mastery of culturally required skills and knowledge through some form of competency testing. A premise of the craftsman image is that much of what is required of a citizen for full participation in the social life of the culture would be acquired naturally and as a matter of course as one moved through the levels of one’s craft. For example, an architect who is successful must be able to deal with people effectively, understand business, comprehend government regulations, etc., in addition to designing buildings.

Instruction

Another distinction which has been implicit in the discussion until now should be made explicit. This is the distinction between the stages of general cognitive developmental theory and the processes it postulates to account for developmental change; this distinction is particularly critical when considering instruction. When I argue that the Piagetian notion of developmental stage is useful but inadequate for guiding educational theory and practice, I make this argument only for the systems of thought represented by each of the stages. The processes by which one achieves any developmental advance may well be similar for all developmental changes, including those that are much more fine grained and specific than the broad Piagetian levels. Since instruction is intended to facilitate developmental advance, the process of instruction seems well guided by the developmental framework. In contrast to most curricular decisions which lack a formal basis in theory, the instructional process I envision to encourage crafts-
manship is one that has richly elaborated underpinnings drawn from developmentalists such as Piaget. The child-as-craftsman notion may add to but does not replace existing guides to instruction. Still, there are some aspects of instruction that seem somewhat altered when this new image is invoked.

The matter, for example, of how much a child can learn is not a meaningful issue unless considered (a) in relation to a field of endeavor and (b) in relation to the extent to which the child and the field are well matched. The implication is that a fair estimate of a child's capability makes sense only after he or she has become engaged in serious attempts at mastery of a domain. Prior to the presence of clear evidence of such engagement, it is as likely that a poor match of child to field accounts for variable performance as much as the presence or absence of a set of qualities in the child. For example, a child who is believed to have a "poor memory" in school may be able to remember enormous amounts of technical information about engines and engine parts if his passion is automobiles. While it is no doubt true that some individuals have good "general memory" abilities, the craftsman idea implies that this may not matter all that much for most purposes. "Can the child remember the lines from Act III?" may be a more fruitful question to ask than "Does the child have a large digit span?"

Related issues concern when and how teachers introduce the child to various fields. The idea of the child-as-craftsman, as mentioned earlier, suggests that the primary role of the teacher is to discover the propensities and proclivities that the child exhibits, then to organize resources to further the child's mastery of these interests. During the very early years this would of course be a less specialized process (except for child prodigies). Many of the same preschool activities are applicable to several fields of endeavor, but the decisions would be expected to become more focused with time.

I would argue that if the goal of craftsmanship is to be applied to early education we will have to pay closer attention to how to help children get beyond surface encounters so that they may experience the sense of satisfaction from mastery which the image implies. Products which arise out of brief encounters with materials are not likely by themselves to contribute to a feeling of craftsmanship, since they involve primarily exploring the novel aspects of experience. Initially getting to know something is only a first and a prior step to the process of deep engagement.

It follows that we need to study how children become engaged once the initial novelty of an experience or material has worn off, and how educators can foster such extended involvement. Deep engagement is unlikely to occur in a completely open or unstructured school situation, since engagement occurs only when continuous, sustained, supervised participation in a field is available. But while we know something about the conditions which do not regularly stimulate such commitment to work, we know very little about the conditions which do. What sorts of mentors or models, for example, are appropriate for young children? How beneficial is exposure to great works of art or brilliant musical works? For child prodigies, early exposure to great works in one's field seems to be a catalyst to engagement; is this also true for other children? Obviously we have only begun to consider the many issues that are raised, but not resolved, by the craftsman image.

As the child reaches the elementary school years channeling of effort into fewer activities pursued with more intensity would seem to be a sensible educational strategy. Presumably at this time the child will begin to seek greater skill and depth in instruction within a field, and teachers cannot be experts at everything. This in turn leads to the possibility that expert practitioners be available as mentors for providing needed sophistication in instruction. What I have in mind is not, strictly speaking, an apprentice relationship between novice and master. This relationship implies too little choice on the part of the student and too much power on the part of the expert. There is an apprenticelike quality to the educational relationship I have in mind, but mentor seems to express this relationship better than master.

**Progress and the Future**

Changing lenses to a wider angle, we must ask if the child-as-craftsman view leads to a conception of educational progress that makes sense for an uncertain future. The image does draw attention to the fact that achieving mastery of basic cultural tools alone leaves too much undone, and that it is not sufficient to expound maxims like "every
child should be able to achieve his or her unique potential." Without a clear sense of the manner in which that uniqueness is to be identified, nurtured and expressed, perhaps the traditional educational aim of "preparation for adulthood" is as precise an expression of educational purpose as we can muster; the child-as-craftsman view, though, leads me to suggest a plausible notion of how progress in education may be measured.

Assuming for the sake of discussion that the primary aim of education is to be engagement which leads to some sort of apprenticeship for students who aspire to master a field, how might progress toward these valued goals be assessed? We have accepted that the future is unknowable in any precise sense, yet the idea of progress seems to demand a clear vision of the future. Given that we would accept the basic idea of the child-as-craftsman image, under what circumstances, then, could we judge education to be successful?

The craftsman notion suggests to me that progress be gauged in terms of two criteria. The first is simply a restatement of the educational aims of engagement in a more precise form: to the extent that greater numbers of individuals find fields to pursue, find work that engages their energies and through which they derive satisfaction, education can be considered to be making "progress." The matter of how "satisfaction" and "fulfillment" are to be measured is of course a problem of great difficulty, but in principle it seems to me no more so than the problem of devising, say, economic indicators. Indeed, some have suggested "quality of life indicators" are not so very different from this first criterion of educational progress. In any event, if the criterion of engagement makes sense, I think it is only a technical problem—although a most challenging one—to produce ways of measuring it.

The second criterion of educational progress follows from my thoughts about creativity. This way of looking at creativity suggests that if education is done well, creative contributions will tend to take care of themselves. In other words, an education which fosters sustained commitment, satisfaction and joy in accomplishment will naturally lead to occasions that require one to go beyond the limits of one's craft. To reach the limits and find yet another problem to be solved, a goal to be achieved, an idea to be expressed, a technique to be worked out—these are the conditions which favor creativity.

Therefore, I submit that the twin signs of progress toward a fruitful education for the future are: (1) an increasing number of individuals engaged and committed to pursuit of mastery of their fields, and (2) the number of novel, unprecedented, or unique contributions that occur in these fields. This notion of progress does not specify in detailed terms just what the ends of education should be, nor does it require a certain body of knowledge to be acquired at a certain pace. It is a notion of educational progress which is appropriate for a world in which basic assumptions have been challenged and where uncertainty about the goals of education is very deep. It is also consistent with the broader view of development presented in earlier chapters in this book.

Individuality

I would like to close this chapter with a note about individuality. The importance of expressing one's uniqueness as a human being is something that the traditional stage developmental view has seemed to all but ignore. Perhaps more than anything else the craftsman image speaks to that desire in each of us to leave our mark, to have done something that is of lasting value. It should be clear by now that developmentalists have of late been almost exclusively concerned with those aspects of change that make us all part of the human family. This emphasis has certainly been beneficial for many purposes, but it has also become clear that it has severe limitations.

Knowing that each person shares certain universal qualities and that each of us will experience certain developmental achievements does not satisfy the need to express our singularity in some way. There have never been two human beings with identical physical characteristics. It may also be that each unique human organism has something to express that has never been expressed in quite the same way before.

The idea of craftsmanship seems to capture the desire for individual expression that is a part of the heritage of every human being. I am not suggesting that the desire for expression implies that young children be given totally free rein to do whatever they please. This is not what I mean by individuality at all. I do believe, however, that those who are responsible for preparing children to enter society should recognize that a substantial challenge lies in being able to help each child acquire the attitudes and skills of craftsmanship in a domain pleasing to them and valuable to their culture.

At the risk of being repetitious, let me say once more that the craftsman image does not imply that each person will necessarily do what is conventionally called "creative work" in a field. But simply because major new contributions to knowledge cannot be produced by everyone does not mean that we should all despair of leaving some mark in our chosen fields of endeavor. All of us can contribute our best efforts to our work—whatever it may be—in a way which carries the stamp of our own individuality. If young children were prepared for a future of craftsmanship it might be possible to strike a better balance between the inculcation of basic skills and the encouragement of human expression; a balance, I hope, that does full justice to the universal and to the unique in each of us.
Edison's analogical thinking

Insights into the creative genius of Thomas Alva Edison, one of the most prolific inventors of all time, are emerging from a 20-year, $6 million study of his vast collection of personal papers.

The new portrait of Edison is marked by his powerful ability—never fully recognized until now—to reason through analogy. It was perhaps this trait more than any flashes of brilliance or cries of "Eureka!" that accounted for his great inventiveness. It is now thought that this hidden ability is what transformed one successful invention into another, eventually producing the phonograph, the incandescent light bulb, systems of electric power generation and motion pictures.

"These documents give you entry into the mind of one of the world's most creative people," said Dr. Reese V. Jenkins, a historian and director of the Thomas A. Edison Papers at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J. "In fact," he added, "they tell a lot about the very essence of invention itself."

Edison's inventions were often much more closely related in their origins than anyone ever suspected, according to clues being gathered by Dr. Jenkins and his colleagues. For example, early drawings of his kinetoscope, a prototype motion-picture machine, reveal that it evolved from Edison's already successful phonograph.

In an interview, Dr. Jenkins said that no historian, on the basis of the visual resemblance alone, would dare suggest that Edison had been inspired by this earlier work. However, Edison also left a written record. The first page of Edison's motion picture caveat begins: "I am experimenting upon an instrument which does for the eye what the phonograph does for the ear." A few lines later: "The invention consists in photographing continuously a series of pictures ... in a continuous spiral on a cylinder or plate in the same manner as sound is recorded on the phonograph."

"If we didn't have the earliest sketches and notes," Dr. Jenkins said, "we wouldn't be able to see the genesis. This is what I mean by being able to get into the creative mind, watching it work by analogy from one very successful invention to another. Edison didn't ultimately solve the problem that way. The finished kinetoscope looked very different. But you can see the creative process."

According to Dr. Jenkins, the papers have already provided other insights into Edison's inventive process in addition to his powerful ability to reason by analogy. "We have this image of Edison as the lone inventor," said Dr. Jenkins. "That's not the case at all. One of his real talents and insights was that he saw he could accomplish so much more by working with a group. He's really a pioneer of team research. That's probably one of the most important things he did."


A strange following

Were Socrates and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden both present in any company, and Socrates to say, "Follow me, and hear a lecture on philosophy"; and Charles, laying his hand on his sword, to say, "Follow me, and dethrone the Czar"; a man would be ashamed to follow Socrates. Sir, the impression is universal; yet it is strange.


Are logicians like accountants?

I think logicians have an all-purpose utility, as accountants have for all kinds of business; and resentment at an accountant's inquiries is not a healthy sign in any business. When a philosopher manifests annoyance at someone's seeking counter examples to a theory that runs smoothly enough for the philosopher's own chosen examples, he acts like a delinquent clerk: "Why should the accountant meddle with that book, when these other books are all right?"

But logicians, like accountants, are paid to look out for discrepancies.


Should teachers ever err deliberately?

As to how to teach, I will say only a word: if students were more aware of the weariness of their teachers, they could bear their own much better. It would be better for the teachers to study and work with their students, rather than pretend to having superior knowledge. Thus the teachers, in the course of learning, could familiarize the students with the art of demonstration.

For example: a teacher solving a problem in arithmetic or geometry for his students makes a false supposition; let him recognize it; let him start the problem over again; let him work it out and let him finally discover the truth he was searching for. I think that in this fashion he will instruct his student much better than had he done it in a rapid, sure and unhesitating fashion.

There is quite a difference between an error due to ignorance or inadvertence and a planned error. A planned error keeps the student on his guard; if he notices it, his petty vanity will be satisfied. The deliberate error accustoms the student to question; he is trained, without being aware of it, to search out the truth; it inspires the spirit of invention in him. The other type of error is a waste of time and breeds only contempt on the part of the student. Deliberate errors can occasionally compensate for involuntary errors, and thereby avoid embarrassment for the teacher.

This method of teaching, seemingly so confused, dubious and shaky, is altogether Socratic.

—from Denis Diderot, "Of Teachers," in Plan for a University.
The culture of critical discourse

The culture of critical discourse (CCD) is an historically evolved set of rules, a grammar of discourse, which (1) is concerned to justify its assertions, but (2) whose mode of justification does not proceed by invoking authorities, and (3) prefers to elicit the voluntary consent of those addressed solely on the basis of arguments adduced. CCD is centered on a specific speech act: justification. It is a culture of discourse in which there is nothing that speakers will on principle permanently refuse to discuss or make problematic; indeed, they are even willing to talk about the value of talk itself and its possible inferiority to silence or to practice. This grammar is the deep structure of the common ideology shared by the New Class. The shared ideology of the intellectuals and intelligentsia is thus an ideology about discourse. Apart from and underlying the various technical languages (or sociolects) spoken by specialized professions, intellectuals and intelligentsia are commonly committed to a culture of critical discourse (CCD). CCD is the latent but mobilizable infrastructure of modern "technical" languages.

Being pattern-and-principle-oriented, CCD implies that that which is said may not be correct, and may be wrong. It recognizes that "What Is" may be mistaken or inadequate and is therefore open to alternatives. CCD is also relatively more reflexive, self-monitoring, capable of more meta-communication, that is, of talk about talk; it is able to make its own speech problematic, and to edit it with respect to is lexical and grammatical features, as well as making problematic the validity of its assertions. CCD thus requires considerable "expressive discipline," not to speak of "instinctual renunciation. . .".

Most importantly, the culture of critical speech forbids reliance upon the speaker's person, authority, or status in society to justify his claims. As a result, CCD de-authorizes all speech grounded in traditional societal authority, while it authorizes itself, the elaborated speech variant of the culture of critical discourse, as the standard of all "serious" speech. From now on, persons and their social positions must not be visible in their speech. Speech becomes impersonal. Speakers hide behind their speech. Speech seems to be disembody'd, de-contextualized and self-grounded. (This is especially so for the speech of intellectuals and somewhat less so for technical intelligentsia who may not invoke CCD except when their paradigms break down.) The New Class becomes the guild masters of an invisible pedagogy.


Education and Democracy

To bring such people out, to help develop them into a community, you must surround your students with models of straightforward conduct, clarified character, and open reasonableness, for I believe it is in the hope of seeing such models that many serious people go to lectures rather than more conveniently reading books. If there are not such men and women on your faculties, you will not attract those who are potential rallying points for the genuine liberal public. In the end, all talk of liberal education, of personnel and curriculum and programming and the rest of it, is nonsense if you do not have such men and women on your faculties. For in the end, liberal education is the result of the liberating and self-sustaining touch of such people.

And their existence in a community as a creative minority is, in the end, the only force that might prevail against the ascendancy of the mass society, and all the men and apparatus that make for it. For in the end, it is around them and through them that liberated and liberating publics come to articulate form and democratic action.

I have not yet discussed the relation of the school with other organizations in the metropolitan community, the third point of importance to the Center. It is a complicated issue that I cannot adequately cover in the time available. Let me say only that I doubt that education, for adults or for adolescents, is the strategic factor in the building of a democratic polity. I think it is in the picture and must be, but given its present personnel and administration, and its generally powerless position among other politically relevant organizations, it cannot and will not get the job done. Only if it were to become the framework within which more general movements that were under way—movements with more direct political relevance—were going on, only then would it have the chance to take the place in American political life that it ought to. Only then could it in fact do fully what I have suggested it ought nevertheless to try now to do. For men and women cannot develop and use their highest potentiality in and through educational institutions: they can do that only within and through all of their institutions. And educational work cannot be the sole preparation for such a humane and political life; it can only be part of it, helping it, to be sure, once it is part of the general movement of American civilization.

Judgments of fact and of value

What finally is the relation between value judgments and judgments of reality? From the foregoing we have seen that there is no difference in nature. A value judgment expresses the relation of a thing to an ideal. The ideal is, like the thing, a given reality itself although of different order. The relation expressed unites two given terms as in a judgment of reality. No distinction arises here because of the bringing into play of ideals, for this is, in fact, common to both kinds of judgment. Concepts are equally constructions of the mind, and consequently ideals. It would not be difficult to demonstrate that these concepts are collective ideals, since concepts are formed in and through language, which is a collective thing. The elements of judgment are then the same on both sides. This is not to say that they can be reduced to each other; they are similar because they are the products of the same faculty. There is not one way of thinking and judging for dealing with existence and another for estimating value. All judgment is necessarily based upon given fact; even judgments of the future are related materially to the present or to the past. On the other hand, all judgment brings ideals into play. There cannot then be more than one faculty of judgment.

We have, nevertheless, indicated a difference that still persists. If all judgments involve ideals we have different species of ideals. The function of some is to express the reality to which they adhere. These are properly called concepts. The function of others is, on the contrary, to transfigure the realities to which they relate, and these are the ideals of value. In the first instance the ideal is a symbol of a thing and makes it an object of understanding. In the second the thing itself symbolizes the ideal and acts as the medium through which the ideal becomes capable of being understood. Naturally the judgments vary according to the ideals involved. Judgments of the first order are limited to the faithful analysis and representation of reality, while those of the second order express that novel aspect of the object with which it is endowed by the ideal. This aspect is itself real, but not real in the same way that the inherent properties of the object are real. An object may lose its value or gain a different one without changing its nature; only the ideal need change. A value judgment, then, adds to the given fact in a sense, even though what is added has been borrowed from another fact of a different order. Thus the faculty of judgment functions differently according to the circumstances, but these differences do not impair the essential unity of the function.


Nothing but the truth

It is often wrong or misleading in certain circumstances to say something that is unquestionably true. The boy who, having taken two jam tarts answers the question, "How many have you had?" by saying, "One," has told the truth but not the whole truth.

—Anthony Quinton, in "Knowledge and Belief"

Is the aim of philosophy to terminate disagreement?

In the rhetorical situation, disagreement exists only to be overcome through the exploitation of an initial agreement, and the desire of an audience to reach its own conclusions must be circumvented. In philosophical discussions, on the other hand, whether there is an initial agreement or not, it cannot be exploited to overcome disagreement, since the latter is radical, permitting no compromise. What must be exploited is just the desire of each participant to reach his own conclusions. A conclusion has no philosophical use if it is not reached freely. To be philosophically useful, it must represent the unconstrained attempt on the part of its advocate to fulfill his obligation to defend and clarify his position. Thus philosophical discussion is, in effect, a collaborative effort to maintain the conditions under which disagreement is possible.

—Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., in Philosophy and Argument

Have we a horror of "education in breadth"?

Education in breadth, with its implications of categories, arouses in educational guardians an abhorrence and disgust like the sentiments aroused by incest. This is understandable because education in breadth arouses fears of the dissolution of the principles of social order. Education in depth, the palpable expression of purity of categories, creates monolithic authority systems serving elitist functions; education in breadth weakens authority systems or renders them pluralistic, and it is apparently consensual in function. One origin of the purity and mixing of categories may be in the general social principles regulating the mixing of diverse groups in society. But monolithic societies are unlikely to develop education in breadth, in school systems with pronounced principles of organic solidarity. Such forms of social integration are inadequate to transmit collective beliefs and values.

Teacher: What's the difference between a mystery and a problem?
New Jersey 4th-grader: Well if I were to find myself on the moon, it'd be a mystery how I got there, and it'd be a problem how to get back!

Caring and moral reasoning
What then is my point of going on about the immoralist and "Why be moral?" The point is that there is an important philosophical lesson here, which perhaps also has human import. The point is this: pure practical reason, even with a good knowledge of the facts, will not take you to morality. You cannot reason or even bargain yourself into a moral commitment such that you will come clearly and correctly to acknowledge that there must have been some failing of reason on your part if you are not a person of good will, a person of genuine moral integrity. Underlying morality, for it to be what it purports to be, there must be a pervasive attitude of disinterested caring for all human life (and perhaps for all sentient creatures) —the smallest as well as the greatest of us. Morality has not always had that feature but it has come to have it. But it is not reason or the facts, either singly or in conjunction, which will logically compel us to come to favor such an attitude of disinterested concern or caring.

From the childhood of Giordano Bruno
Bruno gives in his greatest Latin work, De immenso, a description of an episode in childhood, which made a deep impression on him. His home was in a hamlet just outside Nola, on the lower slopes of Cicada, a foot-hill of the Appenines some twenty miles east of Naples. He tells with affectionate detail of the beauty and fertility of the land around, overlooked from afar by the seemingly stern bare steeps of Vesuvius. One day a suspicion of the deceptiveness of appearances dawned on the boy. Mount Cicada, he tells us, assured him that "brother Vesuvius" was no less beautiful and fertile. So, girding his loins, he climbed the opposite mountain. "Look now," said Brother Vesuvius, "look at Brother Cicada, dark and drear against the sky." The boy assured Vesuvius that such also was his appearance viewed from Cicada. "Thus did his parents [the two mountains] first teach the lad to doubt, and revealed to him how distance changes the face of things." So in after-life he interprets the experience and continues: "In whatever region of the globe I may be, I shall realize that both time and place are similarly distant from me."
—In Dorothy Waley Singer, Giordano Bruno: His Life and Thought.
Reasoning Skills: An Overview

by Dale Cannon and Mark Weinstein

I. Four Dimensions of Reasoning
Reasoning may be thought of as having four dimensions: formal, informal, interpersonal, and philosophical. The order in which they are given here indicates progressively higher, broader, less mechanistic, and in some ways more sophisticated levels of thinking. The order, however, does not represent a developmental sequence of abilities or skills; nor does it represent a sequencing of curricula or class lessons. Much actual reasoning manifests some aspects of each in combination. This is as true of the thinking of children at early elementary grades as well as of adults—sometimes moreso. Although the four dimensions seldom occur in isolation, we focus on each separately for reasons of clarity.

FORMAL REASONING
Formal reasoning consists in following patterns of logical inference without regard to subject matter. It is concerned with obtaining definite results by applying explicit rules to clearly defined concepts and statements, as in mathematics. Practice in formal reasoning develops an awareness of the need for consistency and offers tools that reinforce the careful use of valid reasoning patterns, whatever the subject matter.

Formal reasoning, when used correctly, guarantees true conclusions if we start with true premises.

INFORMAL REASONING
Informal reasoning includes skills of critical inquiry, problem-solving, and rational evaluation in connection with concrete subject matters. It is concerned with obtaining results from inquiries that do not lend themselves to a strict application of formal logic but require reasoned interpretation, clarification, and evaluation before formal principles can be applied, if they can be applied at all. Principles of justification in informal reasoning vary depending on subject matter. Practice in it develops an awareness of the need for clarity, relevance, coherence, and truth.

INTERPERSONAL REASONING
Interpersonal reasoning involves reasoning in the context of other persons and different points of view and in a manner that is responsible to them. It is concerned with arriving at a position that, taking into account the various points of view involved, will in turn merit their respect, if not their agreement. Practice in interpersonal reasoning develops the attitudes of a reasonable person: the willingness to offer and respond to reasons, the impartial search for truth, a respect for one’s opinions and the opinions of others, and a commitment to making common sense.
PHILOSOPHICAL REASONING

Philosophical reasoning is a matter of thinking about thinking, of clarifying and improving the tools with which one thinks and reasons about other things. It is concerned with obtaining a more satisfying version of one's own thinking or of the thinking practiced in a given subject area: a version that is more thoughtful and sensible, more fully examined and clear, more comprehensive, more impartial, free from presumption—what some have called wisdom. It includes thoughtful exploration of the most basic ideas and principles of the various subject areas, including reasoning itself in each of its dimensions.

The development of a sense of responsibility for reasoning well in young people requires, of course, that they be able to distinguish good reasoning from poor reasoning. But it is just as important for them to be held responsible for reasoning well by others with whom they identify—namely, their peers. At the same time and partly by this manner, they should be encouraged to exercise the ability they have to monitor their own thinking and inquiry. Moreover, in teaching any specific reasoning skill, it is important that the student be given opportunity to gain a sense for how that skill may be employed in real life interactions with others. These things require that all four dimensions of reasoning be developed more or less together. In our judgment, nothing accomplishes this more effectively than open-ended, peer group discussions of ideas which the young people are interested in clarifying philosophically and where each is held responsible to the group for making good sense and reasoning well.

Taken in this global way, with priority placed on helping each student realize sovereignty over his own thinking, philosophical reasoning reveals itself to be the most appropriate foundation for the development of other reasoning skills. Philosophical issues are open ended, philosophical thinking is self-reflective, and philosophical concepts are, for the most part, distinct from those areas within the curriculum in which teachers have didactic authority. This affords the possibility of a truly democratic classroom procedure: a community of inquiry where each member and each view is present for the analysis, criticism, and synthesis of the group.

That is not to say that exercises that enhance some specific or more limited part of the total spectrum of reasoning skills ought not be assigned. It is rather to highlight the role of philosophical inquiry as the central core around which critical and evaluative thinking can best take place.

II. Representative Examples of Each Dimension

FORMAL REASONING

1. Relational Logic
   a. Serial Relationships: reasoning about sequences in time or space.
   b. Symmetric, Asymmetric, and Non-symmetric Relationships: reasoning about relationships to determine what would be true if they were reversed.
   c. Transitive, Intransitive and Non-transitive Relationships: reasoning to see if relationships will carry over and remain true.

2. Categorical Logic:
   reasoning about relationships of class inclusion; e.g., syllogisms which draw a conclusion from two premises of the form "All... are...," "Some... are...," "Some... are not..." and/or, "No... are..."

3. Conditional Logic:
   reasoning on the basis of hypothetical conditions; e.g., reasoning which draws a conclusion from two premises, one of which states a hypothetical "If... then..." conditional generalization, and the other states an "instance" to which it may or may not apply.

4. Sentential or Propositional Logic:
   reasoning which draws a conclusion from one or more premises which compound whole sentences together using connectives such as "and," "or," "no," "implies," etc.

5. Arithmetic:
   reasoning which draws conclusions concerning relationships between integers.

6. Geometry:
   reasoning which draws conclusions concerning relationships among spatial configurations.
7. Proof Construction: derivation of logical truths from fundamental axioms and definitions.
8. In general, any pattern of logical inference for which formally explicit rules can be devised for manipulating clearly-defined concepts or statements, including combinations of the above.

INFORMAL REASONING
1. Recognizing patterns of identical and similar structure, as well as patterns of difference and change, among things and situations.
2. Classifying objects, relationships, events—including resolving ambiguities, vagueness, and borderline cases, and carrying out classification activities prerequisite to formal reasoning such as identifying sentences of the same logical type and translating them into a standard form.
3. Applying abstract principles, including formal logic, to concrete situations and contexts.
4. Interpreting written and spoken language—including detecting and handling ambiguity, vagueness, and multiple levels of meaning; identifying underlying assumptions; tracing implications; and adding missing premises.
5. Identifying and exploring different perspectives—including the detection and interpretation of motivations, personal orientation, social bias, and world view.
6. Exploring and making use of analogies, models, and metaphors.
7. Making determinations of relevance.
8. Identifying and using criteria.
9. Analyzing and evaluating arguments, including identifying conclusions and supporting reasons or premises, outlining argument structure, assessing evidence and appeals to authority, etc.
10. Constructing sound arguments.
12. Proposing and criticizing causal explanations.
15. Solving problems of various kinds.
16. Determining responsibility and evaluating conduct using purposes, ideals, and obligations, and weighing consequences.
17. Considering contextual factors in evaluating conduct or achievement, such as similarities and differences between situations, background information, prior knowledge, and extenuating circumstances.
18. Exploring and interpreting meaning in experience, in art, and in literature.
19. Constructing complex structures of meaning, such as stories, poems, plays, paintings, drawings, songs, etc.

INTERPERSONAL REASONING
1. Knowing how to and being ready to reason—i.e., respond thoughtfully to reason with reason—when circumstances call for it: offering and asking for reasons, reflecting, analyzing, criticizing, inquiring further, etc.
2. Knowing how to and being willing to engage with others in rational discussion: giving the other person the benefit of doubt, clarifying what was said, exploring the motivation and perspective of others, empathizing with other points of view, coming to an understanding of one another's position, making common sense, etc.
3. Critically reflecting on one's own opinions and reasoning in relation to others: weighing just how good an argument one happens to have, giving serious consideration to other persons' criticisms, entertaining counterarguments, considering how one may be coming across to other persons and other frames of reference, etc.
4. Sticking to one's own position in the face of challenges: demanding strong and relevant arguments before changing one's mind.
5. Knowing how to go about engaging in cooperative group inquiry: speaking clearly, listening carefully, being willing to clarify and analyze, giving and accepting constructive criticism, integrating different points of view, controlling frustration, being patient, disagreeing in productive ways, etc.

PHILOSOPHICAL REASONING
1. Taking responsibility for the concepts and principles with which one thinks to insure that they make good sense, with the awareness that it is possible to think in more or less sensible, more or less thoughtful ways.
2. Pursuing understanding for its own intrinsic value, independently of external purposes and rewards.
3. Sustaining a dialectical inquiry, that is, a pursuit of a progressively more adequate understanding of things through the critical interplay of differing perspectives and, so far as it contributes to this end, changing the terms and direction of the inquiry itself as it proceeds.
4. Identifying, exploring, and critically applying principles of sound reasoning in relation to actual instances of formal, informal, and interpersonal reasoning.
5. Critically exploring and clarifying basic concepts and their relations to one another, in general and within given subject areas, including evaluating competing analyses of given concepts.
6. Critically exploring and clarifying basic criteria for rational evaluation in any area of human judgment—such as conduct, the fine arts, and the practical arts—including evaluating competing accounts of criteria for a given kind of thing to be evaluated.
7. Identifying and critically exploring the fundamental assumptions and world view implicit in a given intellectual position or cultural expression, and assessing alternative assumptions and
worldviews in relation to one another.

8. Constructing conceptual frameworks or worldviews adequate to comprehend reality and human experience as a whole or in part.

9. Recognizing, exploring, and comprehending the historical-cultural context of ideas and of philosophical reflection upon them—e.g., tracing the influence of one thinker or tradition of thinking upon another and how a given thinker develops his thought in relation to others.

III. The Four Dimensions of Reasoning and the Traditional Discipline of Philosophy

Philosophical inquiry can be defined, in a broad sense, as thinking about thinking, clarifying and improving for oneself the tools with which one thinks and reasons about things. Accordingly, philosophy potentially bears upon the practice of reasoning wherever it is found, whether in specific subject disciplines or generally in human life and conversation. Philosophy arises or is found whenever people become concerned with clarifying and improving the tools with which they think and reason. This conception fits well with the recent characterization of philosophy by the American Philosophical Association in its pamphlet, "The Field of Philosophy," (1982):

"Philosophy pursues questions in every dimension of human life, and its techniques apply to problems in any field of study or endeavor. No brief definition expresses the richness and variety of philosophy. It may be described in many ways. It is a reasoned pursuit of fundamental truths, a quest for understanding, a study of principles of conduct. It seeks to establish standards of evidence, to provide rational methods of resolving conflicts, and to create techniques for evaluating ideas and arguments. Philosophy develops the capacity to see the world from the perspective of other individuals and other cultures; it enhances one's ability to perceive the relationships among the various fields of study; and it deepens one's sense of the meaning and varieties of human experience."

Topical Divisions of Philosophy

The topics of philosophical reasoning include issues dealt with in the writings of the major historical philosophers. New topics for philosophical clarification are constantly being added to the topics philosophers discuss from virtually every subject area. The broadest subfields of philosophy are commonly taken to be:

LOGIC, which aims to provide sound methods for distinguishing good from bad reasoning;
ETHICS, which critically analyzes the meanings of our moral concepts—such as right action, obligation, and justice—and formulates principles to guide moral decisions, whether in private or public life; METAPHYSICS, which critically analyzes the most basic concepts we have for conceiving reality, whether of specific things or of the world as a whole—including space, time, substance, and causality—and competing worldviews; EPISTEMOLOGY, which is concerned to determine the nature and scope of knowledge; and THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY, which studies both the work of major philosophers and entire periods in the historical development of systematic philosophical reflection.

Other branches of philosophy have grown from these traditional subfields, including Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Mathematics, Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Art (or Aesthetics), and Philosophy of Language.

Philosophy as an Academic Discipline
What tends to distinguish Philosophy as an academic discipline from philosophy pursued elsewhere is the systematic clarification of concepts involving whole sectors of human experience, a professional community of scholars dedicated to that end, and a history laden with significant examples of that endeavor.

Like members of most academic communities, the professional philosopher has a characteristic style, a lexicon of technical terms and special usage, and a body of classical texts that define the issues and furnish a common basis for approaches and solutions. This often intimidates the casual reader or hearer of Philosophy, especially since professional philosophers generally write for each other, without taking into account the desirability of their work reaching to a wider audience.

Since Philosophy for Children wants to involve non-professionals in the philosophical dialogue, the professional attitudes often represented in philosophical journals seem to us to manifest a breakdown in interpersonal reasoning. If, as we maintain, the primary function of Philosophy is to enable the thoughtful person to clarify and improve his own thinking for himself and if, as we further maintain, the development of a community of inquiry is the best device for coming to such a clarification, then it is crucial that professional philosophers make an effort to make the issues accessible and clear to the non-professional. Indeed, Philosophy for Children, unlike other areas of professional Philosophy, has an absolute responsibility to use concepts and styles that are accessible to virtually anyone. We take as a necessary condition for philosophical inquiry the demands of interpersonal reasoning: mutual consideration, mutual clarity, mutual criticism, cooperative inquiry, and common sense.

A Note on Moral Reasoning
Moral reasoning is often thought of as being separate from other sorts of reasoning. This view has been enshrined in the "fact-value" distinction, a common view that places moral thought outside of the arena of rational discussion and within the realm of subjective opinion. We believe this to be an inadequate view of moral reasoning for at least two reasons.

First, moral reasoning includes all other elements of reasoning. Reasoning about moral issues requires formal reasoning, insofar as rule-governed patterns of inference are used; informal reasoning, since application of principles to concrete instances, appeal to criteria, and the evaluation of alternatives are all at the heart of moral argument (see also examples 15 and 16 of "Informal Reasoning" given above); interpersonal reasoning, inasmuch as we develop our positions within a community and justify our positions in the light of the opinions and perspectives of others; and philosophical reasoning, since moral reasoning often includes the re-assessment of fundamental concepts and principles.

But there is an even more crucial issue. Although moral reasoning includes its own particular concern: questions of human value, considerations of the universality of claims, and the good-making characteristics of actions—moral reasoning is more than just another domain of rational inquiry. Globally understood, moral reasoning permeates the entire rational enterprise. The heart of rationality is surely an appeal to a mutual recognition of independent minds. And a rational person is surely one who regards others as capable of raising considerations that deserve to be taken seriously into account and answered, considerations which otherwise might fail to be raised at all. In this respect, rationality itself requires that other persons be treated as ends to whom one must be answerable. It follows that moral considerations, far from being tangential, are of the essence of rationality. Thus, the notion of an interpersonal dimension of reasoning as we have presented implies that reasoning includes an essentially moral component.

To engage in rational inquiry that in principle encompasses all four dimensions (or at least the first three) is thus to assume that each individual is responsible for his own position as well as to the perspectives and criticisms of others and that, whatever position is maintained, it is maintained with personal integrity, with a sense of the urgency of the issue, and with an openness to changing one's mind as good reasons for doing so come to light. For this reason, we believe that competence in interpersonal—hence moral—reasoning is at the very heart of what education in good reasoning is all about. And that is why education in good reasoning is so necessary to prepare young people for responsible citizenship in a democracy. To accomplish this end, the most effective curriculum developed thus far, in our judgment, is Philosophy for Children.
During December of 1983, I was approached by Paul Green, the coordinator of the gifted and talented programs for the White Plains School District, to plan a pilot program in Philosophy for two classes of third-graders in the district's MASP program (More Able Student Program), whose motto is "BE A CREATIVE CREATURE."

BE A CREATIVE
DARE to change
CHALLENGE assumptions
SEE IN A NEW WAY
IDENTIFY new patterns
MAKE Connections
BUILD Networks
TAKE Risks

and

IMAGINE for anything can be!
One of the means previously used to encourage creativity was the successful introduction of courses in critical thinking and formal logic in 1979 and 1981. To further encourage it, a course in philosophy per se was planned for 1983-84, hence my invitation.

On December 22, I met Bonnie Ackerman and Nancy Gumbiner, the teachers with whom I would be working at the Ridgeway and Post Road Schools. I explained the Philosophy for Children Program to them, and during our next meeting began planning a course of studies for the rest of the school year. By December, the children had met with a storyteller and chess master. They had begun the study of fables, and were to take trips to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Cloisters as well as simulate a meeting of the Greek gods and goddesses on Mount Olympus. Since my interest in the Philosophy for Children program is primarily methodological, i.e., the emergence of a community of dialogically critical inquirers regardless of the content of their inquiry, and since we were working within an already established structure, we decided to introduce the children to Philosophy as another subject. We would use Pixie as a text. I would select exercises for Chapters One through Six of Pixie, from Looking For Meaning, meet with Bonnie and Nancy and their students, have Bonnie and Nancy work with the selected exercises when they had discussions with the children in between my visits, and correlate the children’s other subjects with Philosophy by comparing their trips to the museums and the simulations they would create for their parents with Pixie’s trip to the zoo and the puppet plays put on for her.

The number of sessions we would have to accomplish, twelve for each class, would be limited by my University teaching schedule and the six-day modular schedule the district was on.

Our first sessions were held during the third week of January and went well. The children were excited, if only because they did not know what to expect. We sat around tables arranged in the form of a square and U. We introduced ourselves to one another. And I told them that, in a way, we are all philosophers since we all think about things that are important to us and can think about our thinking about them. It is this aspect of thinking reflectively and critically about our thinking that enables us to be philosophers and separates parrots, who just repeat what they hear, from owls, who think about what they will say and even think about their own thinking. The way in which parrots are turned into owls is not by kissing but by developing their thinking ability. The way in which we would do this is by reading parts of a story, asking questions about what we read and doing exercises to help us better understand what we read and questioned. The reading and questioning would not be done by the teacher with students who raised their hands, but by all of us. We would all take turns reading and questioning, and, when we began discussing our questions, we would watch one another to see when someone had finished or needed help and then add to what was said or change the direction of the conversation.

We then reach Chapter One of Pixie and formulated questions which I put on the board. In answering the questions, we did the exercises “Thinking and Having Thoughts,” and “Associations,” so that the children could realize that thoughts can have boundaries, lead to one another and be thought about. Even though the children had some difficulty in not raising their hands or all talking at once, the give and take in the session was lively. And the hour and a half we spent together went quickly.

For our second meeting, we re-read page one of Pixie and, in discussing it, focused in on similies and exact comparions. While the classes were satisfactory, the children were beginning to get restless. They were not used to watching, listening and responding to what was said, and they fell back into raising their hands and calling out. During these meetings, Bonnie and Nancy began to take an active part in the discussions by elaborating on what was said and/or calling on specific students whom they knew better than I.

After both meetings were over, we evaluated what we had done and decided to change two things. First, we would change the seating so that the children would be closer together and perhaps less fidgety. Secondly, and more importantly, we would change the program’s content but not its form. Our originally planned twelve-session-per-class format would not be possible due to the district’s modular schedule, my University teaching schedule, as well as the utilization of some planned meeting days for district-wide testing. I would only be able to meet with each group six or seven times. Given this temporal limitation, we would not be able to cover a significant amount of Pixie even with Bonnie and Nancy conducting sessions on their own. Since the children were already working with fables and would be working with Greek mythology, we decided to introduce them to early Greek Philosophy.

I would introduce the children to the Pre-Socratics, Socrates and Plato by enabling them to formulate a definition for “myth” from the myths they would study, compare it with that for “fable” which they had already formulated and, after discussing some of the early Greek Philosophers, formulate a definition for “Philosophy” and compare it with “myth” and “fable.” Working with what the children had already done, and for this article incorporating what we would eventually do, I prepared the following:

FABLE—a (1) short story (2) about animals (3) who have problems, (4) solve them and (5) learn something, the moral.

MYTH—a (1) long story (2) about immortals, gods, (3) who may have and cause problems (4) may or may not solve them and, (5) may or may not learn anything. They may be about (6) relationships between the gods or between the gods and humans and (7) may explain the beginning, make up and working of the world, its inhabitants and events.

PHILOSOPHY—an (1) explanation in (2) natural, i.e., non-animal, non-god terms of (3) the world: its beginning, make up and workings, and (4) people: how they are made up, how they work, how they know themselves and the world, and (5) how they relate to one another.

Philosophy involves thinking about something and thinking about our thinking about what we thought, a story about a story, using the tools we have begun to work with, relationships, similes, metaphors, and analogies.

Between our second and third meetings as well as between the remaining sessions, Bonnie and Nancy conducted discussions of their own. It was
during these sessions that some of the most significant work occurred. In Bonnie's class, a discussion of "Parts of You" from *Looking For Meaning* lead the children to make a distinction between inside and outside as well as formulate a criterion for differentiating between things. They decided that your breath is only temporarily part of you when it is inside you in your lungs. Once it is outside you, it mixes with the air and doesn't belong to anyone. But, your memories, thoughts and feelings are always a part of you because only you have them in the way in which you do inside of you. And finally, thoughts and feelings are more like one another than memories because memories are only how you saw things in the past. During another discussion of "Imagine, Wonder, Suppose," the children decided that what all these activities had in common was their reality. They were all real and thus their (the children's) relationships with one another were sometimes real when the other person liked you back.

In Nancy's class, a discussion of "Family Relationships" led the children to the realization that a group of people could be a family even if they did not have a mother or father. And a discussion of "Parts of You" lead to a consideration of whether you are or are only what people say you are.

During our third sessions, we reviewed the work the children had done on fables and myths, formulated a definition for myth and began to compare the two. For homework, the children were asked to draw one of the gods or goddesses or a scene from one of the myths they had been working on.

I began Bonnie's next class by comparing the children's drawings. Were we dealing with exact comparisons or similes? Could the relationship between two pictures be both or neither depending upon how we looked at them? At first, most of the children were reluctant to show their drawings, but after Bonnie reminded them of one of the aspects of the MASP motto, take risks, we had a lively discussion. When one of the children said that the drawings were different because of the different ideas that the children had in mind when they made them, I used her comment to introduce them to the Pre-Socratics.

I brought in pictures of paintings and statues of the Pre-Socratics found in Dagobert Runes' *Pictorial History of Philosophy* and spoke to the children about Thales, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Empedocles and Anaxagorus. Not only did I tell them what we know about what these men said, I also tried to enable them to see the questions that we may suppose these men had asked themselves. What is everything made of? How does it all work? Is everything the same or different? If the same, why do things appear different? If different, how can there be two of the same kind of thing? And finally, how, if at all, do things change? The difficulty and success I would have in enabling them to understand these subtle points only became apparent during our next meeting. However, after their initial bewilderment at the apparent foolish-
ness of these men's ideas, and after they realized that the early philosophers did not possess the amount or kind of information we have today, they began to try to see how they could explain things if they were Thales, Anaximenes, etc. For homework, I asked them to reconsider what these men had said and see if it could make more sense to them.

I did not meet with Nancy's class because of a family illness, and I was not able to meet with her group again for our following arranged session because of a series of district-wide exams that were being held. When we did meet, I reviewed the work they had done with fables, listened to what they had done during their simulation of a meeting of the Greek gods and goddesses on Mount Olympus, helped formulate a definition for "myth" and began to speak with them about the Pre-Socratics.

When I again met Bonnie's class, I reviewed the work we had done with the Pre-Socratics and helped them formulate a definition for "Philosophy." I tried to enable them to understand why it might have been that these men thought what they did and may have raised the questions we spoke about the last time by asking them to imagine what may happen when we take a drive on a hot summer's day.

We may seem to see water on the road in front of us, but when we get to where the water should be, it is not there. I suggested that sometimes things are not the way they appear to us to be, and just as during our first meeting we noticed how one of our thoughts can lead to another, perhaps these men had experiences where what they thought to be so was not and as a result wondered whether the world is always the way it appears to them to be. Maybe things that appear to be different are the same. Maybe not. If they are not different, if they are the same, what enables them to appear different? If they are different, what enables anything to appear like something else, i.e., the same. Perhaps we cannot just use our senses to enable us to understand what our senses do not make us aware of.

I reminded them that the Greeks had also done something similar to this in their mythology when they accounted for what they saw in terms of what they could not see. For example, they saw the sun "rise and set" and accounted for what they saw by saying that Apollo drove his fiery chariot from the Eastern to the Western stables, something that they did not see. After this rather lengthy and much-questioned introduction, we spent the remainder of the hour and a half we had that day role-playing the gods, goddesses and philosophers.

I presented the children with the following situation. Suppose you are walking home from school one warm afternoon eating an ice cream cone which is beginning to melt, and you notice that it is getting dark. It is lighting and thundering and even beginning to rain. You begin to run home. The ice cream falls from the cone, and you get into your house just before the downpour. We divided the group into three parts: the gods and goddesses, the philosophers and the jury. The gods and goddesses included Zeus, Athene, Poseidon, Demeter, Hercules, etc. The Philosophers included Thales, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Empedocles and Anaxagorous.

At first, it was difficult for the children to overcome the attraction that the concrete, immediately real elements had for them. But when they were reminded that what the Greeks saw when the sun "rose and set" was not the same as what they said happened in their mythology, they were able to work with the scenario I had given them. It was difficult for the single gods and goddesses as well as the early philosophers to be comprehensive, and when one would say something, he or she would be refuted. The gods and goddesses decided to collaborate, and the philosopher who won the day was Anaxagorous.

The Jury decided that it was easier to understand the explanations given by the gods and goddesses, since each god or goddess seemed to be responsible for one thing. However, they did think that the philosophers got progressively better and that the distinction between something that changes and a force that accounts for the change was important since that is "something like what we think today." The children also began to wonder about the truth of what we think today. Maybe what we say has to be true today may be seen not to be true tomorrow, since some of what others in the past said was true is seen not to be true today. What is important, they decided, is not only what you say but the reasons you give for saying it. It was at this point that I felt the program was beginning to work.

When I met Nancy's class, we continued discussing the Pre-Socratics, and one of the children asked, "Where did the water come from?" Another said, "God." Another asked, "Where did God come from?" The topic of origins was changed when another child said, "Water doesn't wash water, and it puts out fire, and..." She was interrupted by another child who said, "If everything is fire, how can water, if it is fire, put out fire? It should add to it." Just as the children became excited, involved and critical of what they were discussing, our time was up, and for homework I gave them the same scenario I had given Bonnie's class.

When we met for our next session, the children were not interested in working with the assignment I had given them. They wanted to talk about which philosopher was right. One child said everyone was partly right. Another said that the last one, Anaxagorous, was the best. Another claimed that they all couldn't be right or partly right because if the last was the best, then how could the others be right. Anaxagorous agreed with the others but put more into it. Another child disagreed and said that the others could be partly right because you could partly agree with them and still think there is more. I then asked them, if they had to decide who, if any of the philosophers, was right, how would they decide.

At that point, due to a scheduling change, some of the children had to leave. Nancy thought that we should not require any of the remaining children to stay but offered to continue the discussion with any of them who wanted to stay. All of the children decided to remain, and we continued for a while. I returned
to the discussion by asking, “If Anaxagorus were correct in saying that in everything there is a portion of everything else with one kind of thing predominating, how could we tell if he was correct? Suppose we had a tree, how could we tell if what Anaxagorus said was true?” The children talked about this for a while and began to get restless.

I sensed that we should stop, but rather than leave, I remained with Nancy for a while. We began to speak together, and while we did, the children formed two groups, initiated and carried on their own discussions.

One group, who eventually worked with Nancy, began to consider when it was appropriate to call something a punishment. A girl had been told by her mother that she could not bring friends home if they were going to put oil paint on the bathroom wall. Was this or was this not a punishment? The children decided that this was a punishment because when you can’t do what you want to do, that’s a punishment. The other group who eventually gathered around me again took up the question of how we can tell if someone is right. After going back to the example of the tree, one boy said, “If everything has a little bit of everything in it, then if we cut the tree open, we should find parts of hair, bone, dirt and aluminum but we won’t so it is not right. If it’s right and you check it out and it isn’t like he said, it isn’t right.” It was then that I felt the program was working for these children. They were discussing things that were important to them, listening to one another and criticizing what they said in a spontaneous, informal and eventually quite structured way.

After this session, the artist in residence, several parents and I accompanied the children on a field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see an exhibit of Greek art. During the day I had a chance to work more closely with students who both asked to be and were selected to be in a group I lead to identify statues of the gods and goddesses we had talked about. One student said it was difficult to figure out which statue represented which god since many statues had no heads. You had to use something else to identify them like wings or a bow and arrow. Another said it didn’t make any difference since those with heads all looked alike anyway.

For our final session, we decided that I would speak with the children about Socrates and provide them with an introduction to the topic of “values” which they would continue to discuss after I was gone. In preparation for this, I reviewed the section of values, “What is a Value?” in Philosophical Inquiry. I prepared three exercises: “What is it that makes you you?” “Parts of you,” and “Do we own our bodies?” for Chapter One of Pixie from Looking For Meaning. And I adapted an exercise from Philosophical Inquiry, “Who are you?” With an orientation towards values as aspects of our life that people critically
and uncritically think are important, I wanted the children to consider the following:

1. Who am I?
2. What do I think is important? Why?
3. What do I think is most important? Why?
4. How have I dealt in my daily life with what I think is important?

Since values are often shared, I wanted the children to work with one another by doing the following exercises:

- Working with the person on your right
  1. List five words or phrases that you would use to describe yourself.
  2. List five words or phrases that tell what you think is important and then ask yourself why you think they are important.
  3. Rank what you have listed in the order of their importance for you and then ask yourself why you have ranked them the way you have.
  4. Take your first personal description and add ranked matter of importance and ask yourself, “In what recent situation did these come up?” and, “What do I think about these now in relation to how I see myself now?”
  5. Working with the person on your right, list three things that you think they would use to describe you and what you think is important. Then ask them, “Would you have said this?” “Why?”
  6. Using what your partner has said, ask yourself, “Do I agree with what was said?” “Why?”
  7. Reverse the situation in 5 and 6 with your partner.

In Bonnie’s class, I spoke about Socrates, and what happened to him as a result of the exercise engendered so much conversation interspersed with “What?” and “Why did you say that?” the time went very quickly. When I told the children that we had to stop and asked them what else we might have done, one boy said, “Do you agree or disagree with what your partner said?” To which I added, “And Why?”

We finished the term’s work with my telling the children how much I enjoyed spending time with them, how I would miss them over the summer, how I hoped that they enjoyed doing philosophy and would keep on doing it themselves.

In Nancy’s class, I also spoke about Socrates, but since during the previous session some of the children were interested in thinking about how we could find out whether something is true or not, I started our discussion with “Parts of you,” and “Do we own our bodies?” The children made an interesting connection between the two exercises. One child said that you could own yourself. Another said you can’t. A third said you can because you can own your feelings and share them. The remark sparked an excellent, spontaneous discussion about shared feelings. One child said you can’t share feelings because you can’t give them to someone. Another said that when you hear what someone says, you feel the same feeling he does when he says it. Still another child said no. You feel your own feelings. He shares his ideas about his feelings. I asked, “If I have a toothache and tell you about it, can you feel my toothache?” Nancy added, “Can your thoughts make you feel a certain way, if so can you change how you feel by changing how you think?” And on the discussion went until we had to stop.

As with Bonnie’s class, I told the children how much I enjoyed working with them, would miss them and hoped that they would continue to do philosophy. They responded by inviting me to return next year.

In reviewing the time that the children, Bonnie, Nancy and I spent actually doing philosophy, I think our pilot program was a success. We began with what I eventually came to see was a tremendous scheduling difficulty. Ideally, the children should have met three times a week for fifty-minute sessions, realistically once a week. We met, generally, for one hour, once a week for the first two weeks and then every other or third week for the remainder of the year with Bonnie and Nancy doing several sessions in between my visits. The time handicap necessitated a content change since initially we intended to do sections from Pixie that would have amounted to half of the novel, relate Pixie’s trip to the zoo with the trip the children would take to the museums and correlate the plays in Pixie with the sketches the children would put on for their parents.

The content change placed a burden on me to organize subject matter, formulate questions and develop exercises to largely replace the progressive and sequential development of ideas fostered by Pixie and enhanced by the manual exercises.

I was concerned that the absence of sustained exposure to the models of philosophically sound thinking provided by Pixie and the manual exercises would be detrimental to enabling the children to engage in good philosophical discussions. My concern proved to be unwarranted. However, I do not think that the goal of the Philosophy for Children program, the emergence of a community of inquiry through the modeling of a trained philosophically-oriented facilitator, would have been achieved at all if it were not for my background in philosophy, the training I received with Matt Lipman and Ann Sharp, and the extraordinary competency and commitment of Bonnie and Nancy. I would not encourage others to undertake what we did. I would encourage them to do what we originally planned to do, since I can see how, even in the short period of time we spend doing Philosophy, it is eminently possible to integrate Philosophy into an already-established curriculum and extend its methodological orientation beyond the classroom into other scholastic, familial and social situations.

Throughout the program, many interesting, significant and personally rewarding events occurred. From a parental standpoint, one of Bonnie’s students was the son of the president of the P.T.A., who was a former pupil of mine. She was delighted to see that her
son could do philosophy in grade school and not have to wait until college. The mother of one of Nancy’s students came to class with her son when we were considering the Pre-Socratics. She was enthralled by the children’s discussion of the question of origins. It reminded her of work she had done in college, and she was also delighted to see that this kind of philosophical thinking could be done in grade school.

Lastly, the parents of one of Bonnie’s students had the foresight to name one of their children Thales. From an academic standpoint, two students, one from each school, initially had difficulty with the program. One from Bonnie’s group was so reticent that on several occasions she arranged the seating so that he would be close to me. When he realized what she had been doing, he jokingly suggested that she sit where he was sitting, and he became an active participant. In fact, it was he who closed his class’ program by suggesting we could finish the “Who am I?” exercise. Another student from Nancy’s group refused to come to our second session. It was her mother who sat in on our class about origins. And it was he who closed his class’ program by speaking about whether or not it is possible to hurt another’s feelings. Finally, from a personal standpoint, it was heartening to receive the following:

Dear Gerard,

Thank you for everything you’ve done. We hope you will be back next year. We really liked the conversations we had with you. We also liked listening to ourselves on the tape recorder. We hope you have a wonderful summer.

Love,
the MASP children from Post Road.

Considering the time restraint we began with and the difficulties we encountered along the way, the success of the pilot program was a great credit to the inherent workability of the IAPC material, the foresight and encouragement of the district’s coordinator, the extraordinary dedication of the teachers and the inquisitive and ebullient nature of the children. As a result of our success, plans have been proposed to expand the third-grade program and initiate a sixth-grade program using Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery as a basic text. Whether and how this will be done remains to be seen. As to whether parrots were turned into owls, I think all began to be and some actually were. For, as one of Bonnie’s students who at first hated to define terms said, “You can say it the way you see it and test it with other people’s ideas. When yours holds up, it feels great.” What better hoot can you have than that?

I wish to thank Dean Joseph Houl, the White Plains Keenan Trust Committee and Doctor Marygold Nash for the funds and encouragement that enabled me to write this article.

Critical thinking skills being developed at EVES

A group of third graders had just read a story about a difference in how we feel about family pets and farm animals, and about endangered species. At the end of the story, Grandmother said that man was the most endangered species of all, should there be a nuclear war.

Their teacher, Miss Beisel, closed the book and asked if any of the children wanted to talk about any portion of the story. The sentences are numbered.

A little girl giggled and raised her hand. "I like sentence 19," she said. "It makes me laugh. It's where all the chickens are sleeping."

Miss Beisel asked if anyone had ever seen a chicken sleep, and a little boy said chickens put their heads under their wings when they sleep.

"Maybe they weren't sleeping," said one young man. "Maybe they're dead and we're just being told they're sleeping. Sometimes they tell kids that people are sleeping when they're really dead."

"I wonder why they do that," Miss Beisel said.

"So they won't be scared," Dennis said. "Maybe it's their dad or someone like that. It would scare you if it was your dad. If they didn't tell you, you'd forget about him after a while."

Some little faces became animated...

"I disagree with Dennis," said another. "You should tell children what happens, or when they get older they'll be looking all around the world for their dad."

Then Damien had something to say: "My dad died and I still remember him. If my mom said he was sleeping, I wouldn't have believed it. What's going to happen—there's a terrible car accident and somebody's sleeping? That would be stupid. Nobody could tell you that. It was in the paper and we had to go to the funeral home. I didn't cry when they told me, but I did when I saw my dad at..."

"Yes, but how old were you?" asked Dennis.

"Six," answered Damien, "three years ago."

"You couldn't read the paper if you were only six, you wouldn't have known about it," Dennis said.

"Yes, I would have," answered Damien.

"I disagree with Dennis," said Michael. "You should tell children the truth even if it does make them feel terrible."

"How can they forget about a parent?" asked another.

Dennis gave in. "I change my mind," he said.

"What made you change your mind?" asked Miss Beisel.

"All these kids," said Dennis, with a sweep of his hand.

"But, I agree with Dennis," said one little girl. "If they told you your dad died, you'd cry and cry and then you'd get sick, and maybe you'd stay sick for a real long time because you couldn't stop crying."

"That's something we haven't talked about. What can you do about crying? How can you stop crying?" Miss Beisel asked.

Silence... then a child raised his hand and said quietly, "You can try to remember that if you're crying all the time, it wouldn't make the person who's dead very happy, if he could see you."

"You could try to remember the happy things about the person who's dead," said a little girl.

It was time for the Girard School Board to get on with other business. Miss Beisel thanked them for allowing the demonstration of how "Philosophy for Children" works, and said they never know where a discussion will lead. The teacher only gently nudges the way.

"It shows," she said, "that we're learning that just because we disagree with each other, doesn't mean we don't like each other."

Philosophy for Children teaches children critical thinking skills and is now part of the curriculum in grades one through four at Elk Valley Elementary School. Next year, grades five through eight will be included in the program, with phase-in at the high school the year after that.

Superintendent Lydia Axelrod is also pleased with the progress of the program. "It teaches students the process by which independent judgments can be made with the data at hand," she said.
In science, truth and error are related like the past and the future. Scientific theories are recognized as "outmoded" or "past" precisely insofar as they are acknowledged as false. The theories which are still regarded as true do not lie in the past. On the contrary, they are included within the inventory of contemporary science, even though aspects of these theories may become "outmoded" or "past" at some future point. It is inescapable that the contemporary stage of the development of any science seems to embody the objective truth. Every earlier stage which diverges from the present appears to have "only an historical interest."

Philosophy, however, does not follow this general rule of scientific development. It constitutes the exclusive exception to this model. From the perspective of the ultimate and most comprehensive problems of philosophy, the definitive philosophical criterion for truth entails that the philosophical theories of the past cannot be refuted or transcended in the same way that the geocentric theory was refuted or transcended by the heliocentric theory. This is because truth in philosophy cannot be objectively resolved.

It seems to be characteristic of any cognitive synthesis which, at least in principle, constitutes a necessary or a sufficient condition for objective truth, that it can only comprehend superficial or external properties or individual facts about the world. It seems that only individual strata of the mind respond to the total character of existence, the question of the source of becoming, and the question of the meaning of life. These individual strata of the mind seem to deny themselves access to a general understanding and the objective truth. The philosopher, however, is not like most men. His mind does not consciously respond to this or that detail. On the contrary, it constitutes a conscious response to the totality of existence. It is a response to an integrated whole. However the answer which the philosopher offers to the question of total existence possesses a kind of super-individuality that is not really susceptible to a precise theoretical description. This form of super-individuality is not a species of universal validity. On the contrary, it is comparable to the super-individuality of works of art. In addition to their extremely subjective nature, they can also exhibit this property.

Insofar as philosophy expresses this sort of response, its truth does not really constitute a form of correspondence with the object of the philosophical theory. On the contrary, it reproduces the properties of the subject, the philosopher. If a philosophy is considered as a set of propositions which refer to objective reality, then it is grounded on the historical process which replaces the errors of the past with the truths of the present. On the other hand, suppose that a philosophy is regarded as a world view: an expression of the existential relationship between a mind and the cosmos as a whole. In this latter case, the truth of a philosophical theory is immanent. It is
grounded in the faithfulness or the integrity with which this mental facticity—the response of the philosopher's mind to the cosmos as a whole—is embodied in the philosophical theory. From this perspective, the significance of a philosophical theory lies in the dimensions and the profundity of this mind itself. If a work of art is "a fragment of the cosmos seen from the perspective of a certain personality," then philosophy is the cosmos as a whole seen from the perspective of a certain personality. Like the landscape, it is a "État d'âme."

Philosophies, therefore, are not true in the same sense that the propositions of other sciences are true. It also follows that they cannot be false in the same sense that the propositions of other sciences are false. There are still minds today that find in Socrates and Plato, Thomas Aquinas and Giordano Bruno, Spinoza and Leibniz the decisions and the modes of release that bear upon their relationship to the world. Viewed from a more comprehensive or abstract perspective, these philosophical accomplishments of the past lie on the same plane as the philosophical activity of the present. This is precisely the reason why philosophy is constituted by its history. The history of philosophy gradually realizes the timeless domain of possible philosophical positions.

However it is necessary to counter the thesis that the history of philosophy is the only legitimate subject matter of philosophy and the claim that philosophers can only be understood "historically." Both ideas are products of the excesses of historicism, exaggerations that can be encountered in every intellectual domain today. Philosophy, however, may be the paradigmatic domain in which the splendor and ostentation of the trappings of this doctrine conceal its utter impotence. The concept of history has become an idol. Now it has acquired the status that was once occupied by the concept of nature: reality can be exhaustively structured within the form of history. The process and the interaction of individual and social causes and motives appear as the cause and motive itself. Historicism has been pushed to such excesses that today serious attention to the substantive problems of philosophy is regarded as an expression of confusion. This confusion can be resolved only if we turn to history, which can resolve all the problems of philosophy itself.

In reality, however, each progressive moment of every historical development has only been possible through emancipation from history; through dissatisfaction with the historically given conditions and the courage to begin anew, even if with intellectual techniques that are improved by degrees. In the absence of a present level of development, therefore, it is clear that anyone who wants to become acquainted with philosophy must have recourse to its history. It is not possible to learn philosophy substantively or objectively—by mastering its content—in the same way that it is possible to learn physics. However whoever undertakes to philosophize cannot allow himself to be limited by the history of philosophy, in quite the same way that it would be impossible to understand Phidias and Michelangelo, Dante and Goethe in exclusively historical terms. The consequences of this historicist thesis may be compared to a closed container which is passed from hand to hand without its contents ever being divulged. In other words, the genesis and development of the subject matter is understood, but not the substance of the subject matter itself. Suppose that every philosopher is conceived exclusively by reference to his location within an historical sequence: in other words, exclusively in terms of an inquiry into his predecessors and successors. This sort of account distorts our perspective. Such an account may be valid for the development of objective types of knowledge. However, suppose that we understand all propositions about things as the form or the garb which conceals the mind of the philosopher that stands behind this external form. The mind of the philosopher—insofar as it embodies within itself the image and sense of existence—expresses the genuine essence of things. It follows that every great philosopher, like every artist, represents a beginning and an end in himself. From this perspective, it is of no consequence whether his historically determined techniques are quite primitive—like the methods of Heraclitus and Giotto—or subtle and refined, like those of Schelling and Whistler.

Even the manner in which philosophy and art are related to the general culture is not quite so important as the relationship between the general culture and other products of the human spirit. This is because philosophy and art are more a function of the personality. Compared to the predominance of the element of creativity in philosophy and art, the element of tradition plays a relatively modest role. Consider all the human capacities which, ultimately, are only formed by the influence of historical and societal conditions, structured in such a way that their style and expression are defined. In philosophy and art, these are the decisive capacities.

In the final analysis, these claims are all logical consequences of the individualistic character of philosophy. We may
have rejected the individualistic conception of culture in other provinces. However the history of philosophy is the history of the great philosophers. The history of philosophy is a form of hero worship.

Moreover, the heroic character of the history of philosophy is transposed onto the elements of philosophical theories. Philosophy is exclusively concerned with the small number of genuinely great ideas within every philosophical system. Suppose that in the history of philosophy it is philosophy itself which is stressed. In that case, the essential purpose of the history of philosophy is to exhibit the ultimate and elemental root of philosophical systems, the ultimate ground of the system which is sometimes not expressed in the system itself. This is the basic rhythm and the fundamental motive force of a philosophical system. It transcends all the details of the system, the specifics which can only be developed on the basis of this foundation.

Under these conditions, of course, a certain subjectivity of conception is inevitable, and this should be acknowledged from the very outset. This subjective perspective is not a deficiency that can be eliminated. On the contrary, it is the form and the necessary condition for constituting the raw material of given philosophies as a new structure: the history of philosophy. History is not a mechanical reproduction of the real properties of given data. Just to the contrary. It forms these data in conformity with the theoretical purposes of knowledge. History is an interpretation which satisfies a priori conditions. This same point also holds for the history of philosophy. As a province of the discipline of history, the history of philosophy cannot qualify as a mere reproduction. "Historical truth" is an intellectual activity or function. It transforms the object of historical investigation into something new, something that did not yet exist. This process of transformation is not simply a consequence of the fact that specific details are outlined and summarized. On the contrary, the history of philosophy confronts its raw material with questions. Like the other provinces of history, it comprehends the singular fact in a sense that often was simply not present in the consciousness of its "hero." The history of philosophy unearths meanings and values in its raw material. These meanings and values transform the data of the past into a structure which satisfies the criteria that we impose upon it.

However, this personal character of every great philosophy is completely consistent with the following position: every consideration of the so-called personal life of the philosopher should be eliminated from the history of philosophy. This position is based on the consideration that biographical anecdotes concern precisely the impersonal characteristics of the philosopher. That someone may be rich or poor, handsome or ugly, English or German, married or single is a purely general fact which does not differentiate the philosopher from countless other persons. The springs of philosophy flow much deeper than this. On the view which is rejected here, philosophy can be derived from the currents which flow along the surface of life. It can be derived from "circumstances" of one sort or another, "conditions which are only circumstantial to life itself and which do not coincide with its innermost dynamic and destiny of its nature."

The personal characteristics of the philosopher insofar as we have a legitimate interest in them in this context lie exclusively in his philosophy. For it is only his philosophy that makes him unique and absolutely individual. This is the only feature that is peculiar to him. Suppose that we infer the innermost properties of the personality of the philosopher from his philosophical accomplishments. And suppose that we
also interpret his philosophical accomplishments as a consequence of these features of his personality. This sort of reasoning may seem to be circular. However it is one of those circular forms of logic that is indispensable to our thought. It only represents the total homogeneity of the phenomenon which it expresses: each of the elements into which this phenomenon is analyzed can only be understood by reference to all the other elements. The personality which is at stake here is exclusively the person who appears in this work, the author of these ideas. We understand the philosopher insofar as we understand his philosophy.

All these adventurers of the human spirit, these marvelous saints and sinners, have, of course, set down their most intimate and profound reflections in the form of objective images of the world. Consider the subjective passion with which life, the relationships between the mind and the foundation of all things, and the value and significance of the real and the unreal are experienced. On the other hand, consider the cool and passionless conceptuality, the sublimated abstraction in which this passion is formatively structured. It is exactly in such a form that this feeling makes a generally valid claim to represent what is most personal and intimate to each of us. One of the chief attractions of every significant philosophy lies in precisely this tension. The genius lives in a form of productive subjectivity which completely transcends his existence in the domestic, bourgeois sense. Our task is to extract this productive form of subjectivity from the crystallizations and the frequently abstruse settings in which it is embedded until each philosophy can be understood as the objectification of a certain type of human being. This is the point at which each philosophy reveals the human psyche that is embodied in it. Every such philosophical structure represents the response of a certain type of human being to the total impression of the universe.

"... each philosophy reveals the human psyche that is embodied in it. Every such philosophical structure represents the response of a certain type of human being to the total impression of the universe."
Children Discuss
Knowledge, Belief and Reality

by Maynard Saunders

In Chapter Four, Episode One of *Pixie*, Pixie makes the statement that: "If you can't see or touch something it can't be real." This statement reflects the views of many philosophers and scientists who have presented certain elaborate models toward a theory of knowledge. The purpose of this paper is to present one such model and to then present a transcript where the view given by Pixie paved the way for a third-grade discussion on a theory of knowledge.

The following transcript was originally recorded on tape after a small group of third graders had read the first episode of Chapter Four of *Pixie*. The discussion was less than ten minutes in length, yet it shows an honest attempt to deal with a philosophical issue of extreme complexity.

Teacher: Okay, look over what we just read. Then I'll take any questions, or we'll see what ever happens. [Approximately one minute pause] Okay, any questions? Anything worth discussing? Any thing interesting? Speak now or forever hold your peace, well, not forever.

Teacher: Pam?
Pam: Is it for real that if you can't see or touch something then it isn't real?

Teacher: Robert?
Robert: They talked about relationships, about Pixie wanted Isabel to be her sister and not Miranda.

Teacher: Robert, would you like to form a question out of that or what?

Robert: No, I just think... like what you say... it's enresting.

Teacher: "Interesting." (correcting Robert.)
Teacher: Audra?
Audra: Why does Pixie say she doesn't want to be Miranda's sister?

Teacher: Any more questions?
Robert: (Spreads arms open on top of desk, palms slanted upward, moves both hands in an up and down motion, jerky but slight) You can't work yourself up to believe in God. You don't have to learn. That doesn't have anything to do with it. You just say, "I believe," and He is there. You don't need to go to church and learn. If you believe, you believe.

Pam: (interrupts) No, Robert! It's like . . . like smoking. Other people will tell you to stop and stop, but you won't just stop because they tell you to. You have to do it yourself. If people just tell you to believe, that don't tell you anything. If you don't believe in God, then it's just a myth, a fairy tale like Unicorns. Preaching doesn't make them believe. If you don't want to believe in God, you just don't. If you find out about God and still don't believe, then you still don't believe . . . it doesn't help. If you didn't believe in God in the beginning, you just can't. See, so it's like smoking . . . knowing and learning don't help you to stop.

Tara: It's not about knowing or learnin' . . . it's about believin' in Him. You have to believe in yourself before you can believe in anything. You have to just believe . . . not . . . and if you know that's not believing. You just know and learn and that's what people who don't believe are doing when they're in church.

[Another teacher who has stopped grading papers to listen walks over to shake Tara's hand. I am not sure if I agree with this action, however, I am too late to stop her.]

Vanessa: But Tara . . . Some people, when they're born . . . they're born . . . they don't know about God. And people and God help them know . . .

Orlando: My father is a preacher and we go every night but Monday and stay till 11:30 or 11:00 and if you go to church and you don't believe, then you may testify after you learn and after you know about God . . . !

(To Pam) Like you say? About that lady? You just don't go to church and learn about God and then believe in the next two minutes . . . so I agree with Tara. Knowing about . . . it's not like that . . . it's not like believing.

David: My mother keeps on telling me if you want to believe in God, read the Bible from the beginning to the end and then you will believe in Him . . .
A few years ago I conducted a summer course for elementary and middle school teachers on philosophy for children. As the course progressed, I came to realize that few of the teachers had a deep or abiding interest in philosophical questions or inquiry. But they all seemed to think that philosophy might be important for their students and they wanted a number of tips and techniques for incorporating it into their teaching. At the time, I doubted whether a person could effectively teach philosophy to children if he or she did not genuinely enjoy talking philosophically with children and with other adults.

All of the exercises, teaching tips, and techniques in the world, I thought, would be of little value to the teacher who was not alive to the sense of wonder, puzzlement, and doubt that is the wellspring of philosophical reflection.

I still think this is true and I was therefore pleased to find that in this book Gareth Matthews says that his "first aim is to interest adults in a range of fascinating questions that they can profitably reflect on with children, questions that should not be considered the exclusive province of professional philosophers" (p. 3). The emphasis is on the questions as well as the children. And in the chapters that follow he presents accounts of dialogues he had with children about such topics as the nature of happiness, whether plants can be happy or have desires, what exactly bravery and knowledge are, whether a ship that has all but a few of its parts replaced is still the original ship, the relationship between words and the world, the logical possibility of time travel, fairness and the relevance of moral rules to moral judgment, and the extent to which animals may be said to have a concept of the future. Even professional philosophers will find these dialogues fresh and lively, largely because of the perspectives that children, ranging in age from eight to eleven, can bring to them.

Matthews' second aim, he writes, "is to portray as attractively as I can the possibility of having a relationship with children that is different from any my readers are likely to be used to. This relationship is one without condescension —without the condescension of experimenter to subject, or of instructor to neophyte, or of loving provider to recipient of care. (p.3)

And in this, too, he admirably succeeds.

The dialogues reproduced and discussed in this book took place at St. Mary's Music School in Edinburgh, Scotland during the academic year 1982-83. Matthews' usual method was to initiate discussion by presenting the first part of a story, either specially made up by him or taken from children's literature, that raised an interesting philosophical question. An open-ended, surprisingly insightful and mature dialogue then ensued. The following week Matthews would usually bring in a draft of a concluding section of the story that incorporated many of the questions and comments of the previous week's discussion, and this too was discussed. Readers looking for teaching tips and techniques will find much of value in Matthews' method.

But most important—the centerpiece of the book—are the multi-dimensional, profoundly stimulating philosophical questions themselves and the infectious delight that Matthews and his young colleagues take in discussing them. Time and again Matthews' own philosophical puzzlement, his belief that the questions are genuinely open, his intellectual playfulness and whimsical sense of humor, as well as his respect for the children, are what underlie his success. Matthews is participating in these dialogues not only because it is stimulating for the children and they seem to enjoy it, but also because the very same things that stimulate and delight them stimulate and delight him.

Toward the end of the book, Matthews steps back and wonders why "No widely accepted theory of developmental psychology makes any real place for philosophical thinking in preadolescents." Although he says that a fully adequate account of why this is so would be very complex, he mentions three points that would probably have to be included. First, developmental psychologists are usually concerned with capacities that are widely prized in our society; and the capacity for philosophical inquiry and conversation is generally ignored. Second, developmental psychology is usually conceived on a biological model where a mature specimen is set out as the standard toward which the immature individual develops; and we do not have a well defined comparable notion of philosophical maturity. And third, Jean Piaget, the most well-known figure in developmental psychology was influenced by Swiss and French conceptions of philosophy which are much more academic and "pretentious" than the prevailing conceptions in English-speaking countries which are much more receptive to playful, open-ended inquiry.

Matthews does not, however, explicitly consider why educators place so much weight on developmental psychology. What underlies this preoccupation? Part of the answer is that many of them
believe a developmental account of philosophical thinking would make possible routinized, step-by-step teaching materials that could be followed by almost any teacher, regardless of his or her interest or competence in philosophical reflection. The assumption is that "teacher proof" texts, workbooks, and teacher's guides based on the correct developmental principles would be able to overcome teacher indifference and incompetence in philosophy.

On the one hand, my egalitarian leanings find this attractive. I would be pleased if all children, and not simply those who happen to luck into philosophically interested and talented teachers or parents, could have the opportunity to participate in the sort of dialogues described here by Matthews. But on the other hand, I think this sort of thinking demeans the practice of teaching and woefully misunderstands the nature of philosophy. As the dialogues in Matthews' book so eloquently show, there is no substitute for a teacher who understands, respects, and cares about the subject matter as much as he or she understands, respects, and cares about children.

Philosophical criticisms of Kohlberg's developmental account of moral reasoning, have, I believe, shown that moral philosophy is much less simple than a preoccupation with linear developmental trajectories would lead us to believe. And what is true of moral philosophy in particular is true of philosophy in general.

I was recently reminded of the danger of widespread, uncritical acceptance of "developmentalism" by an account of how some nurses are being taught to apply Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's conception of dying as a five-stage process (1. denial and isolation; 2. anger; 3. bargaining; 4. depression; and 5. acceptance). Even though her theory has yet to be confirmed by systematic research, in at least one nursing school, and observer reports, "the junior nurses were given a half-hour lecture on the Kubler-Ross five, and were then sent to the bedside of terminally ill patients with the instructions to 'get them through to acceptance' in an hour" (President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, Deciding to Forego Life-Sustaining Treatment, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983, p. 59.). This, I hope is the exception and not the rule. Yet I am afraid that the same sort of thing can and does happen in education (e.g., "Let's see if we can get them to Kohlberg's stage four by the end of the marking period"). It would, in my view, be a serious mistake if those with a penchant for cookbook solutions to all of life's problems were to treat the problems of philosophy in the same way. Thus the fact that developmental psychology has made no real place for philosophical thinking in preadolescents may not, in the present educational climate, be an entirely bad thing.

Still we must, as Matthews suggests, combat the prevailing notion that if a capacity cannot be accommodated to a developmentalist's oversimplified research strategy, then it is not worth cultivating. If adults continue to think this way about the ability of children to engage in open-ended philosophical discussion, Matthews maintains,

"Then neither . . . adults nor . . . children will have any acquaintance with that wonderfully strange mode of inquiry in which grown-ups cannot control the outcome or rely on the advantage of age and experience to maintain their position. And neither children nor adults will be able to enjoy the special thrill that comes when insight bursts unexpectedly on shared puzzlement and miraculously clears it away." The philosophical benefits of dialogues with children, as Matthews so clearly shows, will often go both ways.

Martin Benjamin
Department of Philosophy
Michigan State University

Education has not only been an integral part of, but has also made possible Japan's rapid industrialization and modernization in this century. The advent of student unrest in Japan in the 1960's, particularly at Tokyo University in 1968, which quickly spread to other universities, however, was diagnosed to be the result of problems inherent in the structure of higher education. This precipitated a thorough re-examination of the entire educational system spearheaded by the Ministry of Education.

Of particular interest was the resulting analysis and debate concerning the basic characteristics of the Japanese educational system itself, i.e., its rigidity and uniformity, aspects that represented carry-overs from earlier days in the modernization process. Japan's educational system was controlled by the central government and covered not only the establishment of schools, curricula and textbooks, but staff qualifications and training as well, such that the basic aim of any development in education was standardization. The report goes on to point out that this standardized and inflexible educational system was incapable of adapting itself to a rapidly changing society encompassing diverse values in a now post-industrial or mature society.

Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's paean to her mentor and savior, Sosaku Kobayashi, the founder of Tomoe-Gakuen, must be assessed within the context of an educational system that while extremely efficient stressed control over freedom and uniformity over diversity, and, as a result, gave birth to various tensions in society. Given the wide diversity of persons and their attendant learning styles, such an educational system must inevitably create its own drop-outs. The story told by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, voted Japan’s most popular TV personality for 5 years running and best known as the hostess of “Tetsuko’s Room,” Japan’s first daily TV talk show, constitutes a case in point. In her own words, Kuroyanagi says, “Had I not entered Tomoe and had I never met Mr. Kobayashi, I would probably have been labeled a ‘bad girl,’ becoming ‘complex-ridden and confused’ after being expelled from first grade in my first elementary school.”

Totto-chan: The Little Girl At The Window, translated by Dorothy Britton and appropriately illustrated with drawings of children by the late Chihiro Iwasaki, is simultaneously an indictment of the sterility of an educational system which does not make children its highest priority and a picture of what education in the best sense of the word ought to be. It is also the portrait of a remarkable man and educator, Sosaku Kobayashi, who believed that “all children are born with an innate good nature, which can be easily damaged by their environment and the wrong adult influences.” His aim was to uncover their ‘good nature’ and develop it, so that the children would grow into people with individuality. Kobayashi valued naturalness and wanted to let children’s characters develop as naturally as possible. Not surprisingly, Tomoe’s curriculum and customs of eurhythmics, meal-time speeches, lunch time songs, nature walks, camping trips in the gymnasium, swimming in the nude, tea parties, sports days, music lessons, farming classes, field kitchens, bravery tests and numerous excursions reflect his beliefs concerning the innate goodness of man as well as those ideas he encountered during his sojourns in Europe as a young man.

Moreover, Sosaku Kobayashi had a way of expressing thoughts and maxims simply and effectively, for as T.S. Elliot said, “Great simplicity is only won by an intense moment or years of intelligent effort, or both. It represents one of the most arduous conquests of the human spirit: the triumph of feeling and thought over the natural sins of language.” For example, instead of the usual admonition, “Train your children to eat everything,” and “Please see that they bring a nutritious lunch,” parents were asked to include “something from the ocean and something from the hills” in their children’s lunch boxes. In this way, no one would even think of what a fine lunch so and so has or what a miserable poor one so and so always brings. The children’s only concern was whether they satisfied two requirements—ocean and hills.

While the concept of individuality differs East and West, the concept of naturalness so valued by Kobayashi is quintessentially Japanese. Rousseau’s Emile,

read as a treatise on education, however, comes to mind as a tempting Western counterpart for comparison with regard to questions of nature, human nature, freedom and naturalness taken as educational norms and the best way to educate and cultivate what is best in children. According to Rousseau, a progressive education would take into account a child’s special needs and attempt to treat him/her as being in his/her own right. Moreover, childhood has its own distinctive ways of seeing, thinking and feeling. Kobayashi would agree with Rousseau that that education is best which allows for properly controlled freedom, allowing each child to exercise his/her particular powers within the limits prescribed for him/her by nature. To give up this freedom would be to relinquish one’s humanity.

In countries like Japan, where Confucianism has held sway for centuries due to its wholesome adoption for pragmatic reasons by the Tokugawa Shogunate and Bakufu, the concept of individuality is inseparable from that of one’s family and clan. The Western concept of the individual, on the other hand, as is well-known, derives primarily from the Judaic-Christian tradition with its concept of a unique, personal immortal soul. To insist on the bifurcation between the virtues of individuality versus harmony or getting along with others is to perpetuate a falsehood, for whether Easterner or Westerner, each of us must negotiate our own path between two extremes within the context of our own specific cultures. How well our educational systems help us to accomplish this is one of the major questions raised by Kuroyanagi’s book.

In particular, Totto-chan raises the issue of education for those who are “over by the window,” or who, in Thoreau’s words, “step to a different drummer,” i.e., those who for one reason or another “exist on the fringe,” find themselves “out in the cold” or to use an even more hackneyed albeit philosophical expression, are “alienated” from competitive society.

Totto-chan had a curious habit. Ever since she was small, whenever she went to the bathroom, she made it a point to peer down the hole after she had finished. Toilets in those days had no flush systems, only a sort of cesspool underneath. As a result of this peculiar habit, she had already lost several hats before she even started going to elementary school. When she dropped her favorite purse down the toilet before school started one day, Totto-chan refused to shed tears or give up the purse as lost. Instead, she proceeded to the janitor’s shed and equipped herself with a large, long-handled ladle and began shoveling out the contents of the cesspool, emptying her ladle out onto the ground, when the headmaster happened by and stopped to inquire as to what she was doing. “I dropped my purse,” she replied as she went on ladling, not wanting to waste a moment. “I see,” was all the headmaster said as he walked away. Time went by and the pile got higher and fouler smelling when the headmaster again came by to inquire, “Have you found it?” “No,” replied Totto-chan from the center of the pile. The headmaster came closer and said in a friendly tone, “You’ll put it all back when you’re finished, won’t you?” Totto-chan never did find her favorite purse, but she was satisfied just the same because she had done all she could. Doubtless her satisfaction was due in part to the self-respect the headmaster made her feel by not scolding her and by trusting her.

All this still does not explain why Totto-chan became such a best seller in Japan. Japanese media took up just this question in earnest, and the Asahi Shin-bun carried a series of articles on “The Totto-chan Syndrome” discussing various aspects of the book’s impact. Subsequently an entire book on the subject was published by an entirely different publisher, Totto-chan: The Story of a Best Seller. Two obvious reasons for its phenomenal success both in Japan and America come to mind, namely its timing—it appeared just about the time when the problem of education in Japan became crucial, and everyone was wondering what to do about it; and its ability, because of its simplicity and innocence, to appeal to people of widely differing ages and viewpoints.

The English translation of Totto-chan also appears in the wake of a recent report of the President's Commission on Education entitled, A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (1983). Schools across America are filled with bored, resentful, rebellious students, generally turned-off by learning. In this regard Totto-chan articulates an attractive alternative based on the cultivation of what Kobayashi termed a “rhythmic personality that is beautiful and strong, conforming to and obeying the laws of nature” based on his profound understanding and appreciation of children on their own terms.

The tomoe, that ancient comma-shaped symbol, one white and one black united to form a perfect circle, symbolizes Headmaster Kobayashi’s educational aim: body and mind equally developed and in perfect harmony.

Karen J. Lee
University of Hawaii

Several years ago, a four-year-old friend of ours informed us of her ultimate decision on a topic she had been vacillating over for several weeks. "I bet God doesn't exist," Sharon concluded. When asked why, she explained, "If God created everything, then who created God? You tell me that!"

There is much that we have learned from that brief encounter—more in retrospect than at the time. Sharon's episode is surely support for the belief that even very young children are capable not only of dealing with abstractions imposed by adults, but of generating (and being plagued by) such abstractions on their own. But by formulating the question in the way she does, Sharon goes beyond an effort to try to understand the mystery of beginnings. What she demonstrates is an intuitive appreciation for a very deep logical construct—that of self-referentiality, a construct in which something refers to or calls upon itself. A mild and amusing form of self-referentiality would be:

"This sentence has five words."

A much more perplexing form would be:

"This sentence is false."

A no less perplexing, but more humorous form might be the line from a Tom Lehrer's song,

"I know there are people in this world who do not love their fellow human beings, and I hate such people like that."

These kinds of remarks are more than merely cute diversions. It was precisely paradoxical forms of this sort that threatened efforts at the turn of this century to put mathematics on a firm foundation. Analysis of near relatives of these "jokes" led Bertrand Russell to fill in the dikes by developing his "theory of types." Around 1940, Kurt Goedel used self-referential thinking to demonstrate that, filled in or not, the dikes were paper maché. He showed, by using cold deductive logic, that mathematics—the epitome of cold deductive logic—was more vulnerable than we had suspected. By its very nature it hides "truths" that are unprovable no matter how hard-working and brilliant one might be.

A Bigger Story

Choosing self-referentiality as one among many categories, Allen Paulos weaves a fabric that connects mathematics with humor. Most people would find the juxtaposition of mathematics and humor to be something of an oxymoron—sort of like uncovering all the humor that can be mustered by working ti out to 3,000,000 places. In Paulos' Mathematics and Humor, however, this is clearly not the case.

In this short, vibrant, essentially philosophical work, Paulos manages to draw some original connections between humor and mathematics, and does so in a playful and humorous manner. Mathematics and Humor begins with a brief and fascinating chronological account of what philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists, linguists and others have said about humor.

Though disparate points of view regarding the nature of humor are expressed by people such as Aristotle, Hobbes, Kant, Bergson, Freud and Koestler, Paulos finds commonality in a conception of humor as "perceived incongruity with a point and an appropriate emotional climate" (p. 9). Though difficult for him to spell out with precision, the emotional climate appears to involve some sort of subdued aggression or self-satisfaction—leading to the reasonable hypothesis that we would not expect computers to appreciate humor.

Not only does his own humor sprinkle throughout (on occasion delightfully appearing in irrelevant places) provide a source of comic relief, but a great deal of the humor marvelously exhibits the self-referential quality we discussed earlier. Consider the following:

Classifying the structure of every possible chiasmus is an unrewarding if not impossible job, since almost any statement can be re-arranged to yield an intelligible chiasmus (except maybe this one) . . .

Nonsense sounds are still another form of verbal humor. Here the contrast between the seemingly meaningful and suggestive sounds and their complete lack of meaning is very pouse to purk of the tumor (p. 63).

Now what does all of this add up to, or somewhat equivalently stated, what are the connections with mathematics? Is it that mathematics really is funny—and that we have been missing the punch line all along? Or, on the other hand, is it the case that our inability to understand a joke is rooted in our mathematical incapacity? While neither of these claims is what this book is about, it is difficult to summarize just what the nature of the relationship is. Roughly stated, the author makes a case for

1) What it is the two fields have in common;
2) What the structural similarities are between the fields (even if they may not have elements
in common;
3) The use of a particular mathematical model (catastrophe theory) to explain how it is that humor is influenced by such variables as sequencing and timing.

In addition there is one chapter (Chapter 4) which, while quite fascinating, appears to link humor more with philosophy than with mathematics—pointing out how it is that the kinds of reversals and ambiguities found in humor are the very stuff that plague analytic philosophers such as Wittgenstein or Hempel.

The Details

What Paulos locates as common to both fields are those things that he characterizes as intellectual play—characteristics such as ingenuity, cleverness, combinatorial feats, economy and elegance. Both these categories and accompanying examples remind us that there are alternatives—even at a fairly elementary level—to a view of math as tedious, technical and essentially algorithmic in spirit.

Consider the following problem (paraphrased from p. 13 and following). A checkerboard has sixty-four squares. You can imagine covering those sixty-four squares with thirty-two dominoes. Now remove two diagonally opposite corners of the board. It would seem that thirty-one squares would cover the new board. Will they?

This problem at first appears trivial. If you have not played with it before, however, you are in store for a treat, for after a while it likely will seem unbearable—a problem requiring numerous trials that lead to failure, with the accompanying need to maintain detailed records of your efforts. As in good poetry, a clever twist in the way you perceive the problem will unlock it with essentially no bookkeeping requirements. (Hint at end of this essay.)

The structural connections between mathematics and humor are ones that are less obvious than the ones of intellectual play.

Humorphiles may be reluctant to think of something as frivolous and enjoyable as humor in terms of logic and structural patterns, characteristic of mathematics. But as Paulos points out, one must keep in mind that comedy without some degree of orderliness would not be funny, just peculiar. Steve Martin, known in the world of comedy as a “wild and crazy guy,” once stated: “There’s got to be order for my comedy to work, because chaos in the midst of chaos isn’t funny, but chaos in the midst of order is.” (Martin, incidentally, was a philosophy major in college.) As we indicated earlier, Paulos not only analyzes this relationship, but he exemplifies it as a means of enlivening potentially lackluster sections of the book.

One particularly clever connection that of the role of absurdity in both humor and math. In humor, taking a premise to its logical extreme frequently creates a sense of absurdity thus producing laughter (if done well). We realize we’ve been “taken.” In mathematics, if done well, the production of an absurd (meaning contradictory) conclusion leads to a proof—that form of logic known as reductio ad absurdum.

A complete chapter (Chapter 2) is devoted to another structural connection—that of the role of axiomatic thinking. This is one of two chapters (the other one being Chapter 5 on catastrophe theory) in which, contrary to the author’s claim, special background in mathematics would surely be helpful. Here the relationship between an axiom system and a model for that axiom system is developed—a concept that was refined only in the past century or so with the emergence of non-Euclidean geometry. While the application to mathematics may be cloudy for those who have not thought about it before, the analogy with humor is an easy one to grasp. It is frequently a consequence of the fact that an abstraction can be applied to two different models (one of which involves a connection the recipient has not made until the punchline) that a joke has its effect.

His chapter on catastrophe theory is the only one for which it makes sense to think of the mathematics as a model for humor. Here he creates some interesting hypotheses for why it is that order and timing are important in humor, and why it is that explaining a joke frequently destroys its impact (something we most likely will exhibit in the next section).

The chapter on grammar provides a nice analysis of the role of reversal, ambiguity and the deep and surface structure of language in relationship to humor, and then examines the role played by some of these concepts in logic. Hempel’s “raven” paradox is an example of a very simple logical type of reversal that has generated much analysis among logicians. The paradox derives from the simple observation that since “all ravens are black” is logically equivalent to “all non-black objects are nonravens,” then it ought to follow that we confirm the former by accumulating a large number of nonblack objects and observing that they are not ravens. Thus by sitting in a study and observing a green pen, a red chair and a white paper, we conclude that we have greater confidence in the proposition that all ravens are black—something that appears to hold up logically but has a ring of absurdity as well.

Some Derails

While Paulos has performed a highly creative act in connecting mathematics and humor, it is not clear (despite our summary) what the nature of that connection is. Contrary to our oxymoronic remark at the beginning, much of what he has said could legitimately connect any two disciplines. Nevertheless, in focusing on two ostensibly disparate
fields, he has located and isolated many features that each possesses that we might not have noticed.

This is particularly useful in the case of mathematics, for in so doing, he has certainly uncovered not only the logical but the human nature of the discipline—something of its history, its ambiguities, its debates, its uncertainties. This is surely a view of mathematics that might not have been noticed. For example, his meaning-free discussion of axiomatics in Chapter Two surely suggests that he believes that mathematical thinking derives from the belief that there is some meaningful association with all mathematical objects regardless of how abstract they may be. This leads us to search for the place of concepts that are analogous to meaningfulness in different schools of philosophy of humor as well.

Despite its confusions (or maybe because of them), Paulos has isolated wonderful areas to investigate in attempting to establish commonalities. Surprisingly enough, there is another connection that would probably be considered absurd at first glance that Paulos has apparently overlooked, but which seems to have a grain of truth to it. It is one that we ourselves appeared to discount in the introduction, namely:

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24 = 5 + 19 = 7 + 17 = 11 + 13
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Though many positive instances of the conjecture have been supplied (as above), no one has yet proven whether or not it is true for all even numbers. One counter-example would be enough to destroy the conjecture; yet to date none has been found. For a period of two hundred years, no headway was made with the problem. In 1931, a Russian mathematician, Schnirleman, provided the first crack. Recall Goldbach wanted to show you needed to add exactly two primes to get an even number. Schnirleman came along and proved that while he could not show that two would always work, he could with no doubt at all demonstrate that you would never need more than 300,000!!!

One more funny theorem dealing with prime numbers. Knowing what some of the primes were (2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17,...), but not seeing any obvious patterns, mathematicians tried for years to come up with a formula that would generate only prime numbers (and an infinite number of them). One famous effort by Euler was:

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n^2 - n + 41
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for 

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n = 1, 2, 3, 4, ....
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That formula generates primes for a long time, but it breaks down eventually. Can you see where? In 1947 (after hundreds of years of searching for a formula to generate primes), Mills came up with one that works!

Setting the stage, \([X]\) is meant to denote the greatest integer less than or equal to \(X\). Thus \([7.9]\) = 7, \([10.1]\) = 10. Mills showed that there is a real number \(A\) having the property that, if you plug in values of \(n\) sequentially, \([A^n]\) will always give you a new prime number.

That's a magnificent find! Now what is the value of \(A\) that works? Answer: No one knows, because Mills' proof cannot answer that question. The proof only demonstrates that such an \(A\) exists!! It might be between 1 and 10, or it could be larger than the number of the stars in the universe.

Now why are these two examples so funny? With some reflection, we can probably locate an interesting incongruity. The incongruity is not only between what we want and what we get;

It is also an incongruity between what satisfies the common man in the street vs. a research mathematician. A "discipline" is, after all, an isolated branch of knowledge connected to the tree that is life—a trite metaphor, yes, but the idea that all disciplines are somehow interrelated is frequently lost both by practitioners in a field and ultimately by students who are led to believe that each "subject" is independent.

Even Gödel's work on the essential unprovability of many mathematical truths embodies more humor than we are led to believe in Paulos' discussion. We know that there are some truths that must be unprovable in any "interesting" system. How much frustration can we bear? Would it be asking too much to be provided with at least a list of the unprovable propositions so that lifetimes are not wasted in trying to prove the unprovable. Sharon's deity slyly responds, "I ain't disclosin' nothin',"

Implications For Schooling

Though not concerned frontally with issues of education, this book has embedded some enormous implications for re-directing schooling.

One possibility, of course, would be to conclude an appropriately dulled-down version of this book (perhaps accompanied by teachers' commentary, graded exercises, behavioral objectives) as part of the mathematics curriculum at the secondary school level. Paulos' loose connections between mathematics and humor would be tightened or eliminated (e.g., the chapter on humor, grammar and philosophy); all of the off-color jokes would be expunged; the difficult mathematical references (e.g., to non-Euclidean geometry and catastrophe theory) would be appropriately watered-down. Minimal competency tests could be created in order to assess how well students understand the five ways in which mathematics and humor resemble each other.

Though such a program might be a cut above much of what presently passes for mathematical activity, surely we can do better than ready Paulos' book for the fate of watered-down plagiarism suffered by most school texts. It could be used in its original unexpurgated version as an elective course for sophisticated secondary school students who wish to understand not only how mathematical thinking shares much in common with what is vibrant in almost any intellectual endeavor, but also how it is that a creative mind such as Paulos' takes a first rough and inaccurate step in a program that most people would have dismissed as foolish and irrelevant.

Short of incorporating either version of the book in the school curriculum, there are a number of potentially interesting paths set by its analysis. Many of the ideas Paulos raises about the relationship between mathematics and humor could easily be used to spark classroom discussion with students as young as elementary school. For instance:

1. Might someone attempt to program a computer to create jokes?
2. Might someone attempt to program a computer to appreciate jokes?
3. What is the difference between creating and appreciating?
4. What are the differences among various humor genres like puns, riddles, shaggy dog stories, and what are the different ways in which these forms relate to mathematics?
5. What are other seemingly unrelated disciplines?
6. What do they have in common? Paulos' discussion of the intellectual qualities that math and humor share suggest an important and neglected dimension for curriculum. Qualities such as brevity, elegance, combinational ingenuity, playfulness and other suggest incorporation of the following kinds of questions in the curriculum:
7. What do I find elegant and playful here?
8. How does my conception of elegance compare with yours?
9. How might I expand my conception of playfulness?

Paulos has discussed Euclid's proof of the infinitude of primes as a source for observing some of these intellectual qualities. As with virtually any proof, not only the whole, but the pieces themselves provide numerous opportunities for such reflection as well.

For example, in order to demonstrate that there are an infinite number of primes, Euclid creates a new number out of any supposedly finite list. So if we have listed:

2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13,...p, where p is the last prime.

Euclid creates \( N = 2 \cdot 3 \cdot 5 \cdot 7 \cdot 11 \cdot 13 \cdot \ldots \cdot p + 1 \). The production of such an N guarantees (through a brief argument we omit here) that there must be some new prime other than those listed.

But, what magnificent irony we cross in the creation of N, for if we back up one step in its construction and delete the "+1", we bump up against one of the most non-prime numbers we can meet since that number is divisible by everything in sight. Just adding 1—the smallest thing possible—to that mega non-prime number brings the house tumbling down (something we could relate nicely to Paulos' discussion of catastrophe theory).

One can imagine a great deal more to be discussed of personal value based upon this alleged proof. All of them, however, require that we make use not only of object language but of meta-language (and as Will Rogers said, "I've never meta language I didn't like"). Such stepping back not only enables us to see an "it" in perspective, but encourages us to see ourselves in perspective as well.

Even Paulos' analysis of the relationship of humor to philosophy (rather than mathematics) has some wonderful implications for raising a new kind of question in disciplines unrelated to humor or philosophy. For example, his discussion of the different ways in which the concept of reversal functions in humor could be applied to new areas. Look again at Goldbach's conjecture. It has been around for over 250 years and is still a source of much research though the problem has not been solved. The concept of reversal itself, however, suggests an answer to an intriguing ques-
tion: How might Goldbach have come up with his conjectures in the first place? Though the answer is not known, it is not an unreasonable hypothesis that Goldbach merely reversed the direction of a trivial question to arrive at his unsolved problem. That is, if you look back at Goldbach's conjecture and move along the equalities from right to left rather than from left to right, you will probably come upon something that can be proven with virtually no calculation. The reversal suggested is: "The sum of two primes is an even number," a statement which is almost always true, and easily proved.

Within many of the above suggestions is embedded something that is both more general and more educationally interesting. It is not that we need yet a new book (watered-down or not) or a new course in the school curriculum. It is not that we need a new curriculum that is more sophisticated from the perspective of the disciplines (as is "the new math"), or more accessible to the masses (as is "back to basics"). It is not even (as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics would have us believe) that our primary problem is that we are lacking good ways of teaching problem solving in some technical sense. Rather, it is the case that most curriculum innovations in mathematics (and other areas as well), in drawing sharp boundaries around their taken-for-granted discipline (even if accompanied by a search for applications as in the case of applying mathematics to music, to physics or to consumer concerns) have neglected to invite students to understand that ideas evolve, that they were created by people who were influenced by their culture as well as their own temerity and courage, and that both creating and learning anything requires that one search not only for clarity but appropriate levels of confusion as well. In short, what we see Paulos' book suggesting is a mind-set that might profitably pervade the educational scene in a way that would lead us all to re-examine what a mind is and how one mind can influence another for the better. Most fundamentally, such a mind-set picks out the notion of locating and changing of perspective as an essential ingredient in coming to understand the world.

Challenging "the given" is at the heart of creative and critical thinking in all areas. Paulos' Math and Humor brilliantly locates some of those dimensions that can enable us to bring a new perspective to any of the infinite things (e.g., definitions, theorems, pictures, ideas, sounds) that are foisted upon us in educational settings with the ubiquitous but erroneous message that we travel along the royal road to understanding by accepting things as if they could not be otherwise. It is perhaps not appropriate to end this review with the pun that Paulos' book is at bottom an orgy of otherwise.

[Hint for checkerboard: Look at the colors of the boxes.]

Stephen I. Brown
State University of New York at Buffalo
Jordan D. Brown
Oberlin College

Footnotes
"I am cherry alive,"
the little girl sang,
"Each morning I am something new:
I am apple, I am plum, I am just as excited
As the boys who made the Hallowe'en bang:
I am tree, I am cat, I am blossom too:
When I like, if I like, I can be someone new,
Someone very old, a witch in a zoo:
I can be someone else whenever I think who,
And I want it to be everything sometimes too:
And the peach has a pit and I know that too,
and I put it in along with everything
To make the grown-ups laugh whenever I sing:
and I sing: It is true; It is untrue;
I know, I know, the true is untrue,
The peach has a pit, the pit has a peach:
And both may be wrong when I sing my song,
but I don't tell the grown-ups: because it is sad,
And I want them to laugh just like I do
Because they grew up and forgot what they knew
And they are sure I will forget it some day too.
They are wrong. They are wrong. When I sang my song,
I knew, I knew!
I am red, I am gold, I am green, I am blue,
I will always be me, I will always be new!"

—From Delmore Schwartz, Selected Poems