HARRY STOTTLEMEIER'S DISCOVERY: A TEACHER'S VIEW

As a child on nights too sultry to sleep, I would gaze at the sky as thousands of fiery specks wheeled over my head. My imagination soared toward those distant worlds. "Why are there stars." I wondered, like all children. "What is Truth, or Good? What does it all mean?" In succeeding years I learned about quasars, quarks and black holes. Yet on cloudless nights, I am still a ten year old child filled with awe and with questions unanswered by science: what is the nature of knowledge, of right conduct, of being?

While such questions can not be answered by inductive reasoning, many people view the scientific method as the only legitimate way of discovering truth. Thus Harry Stottlemeier's discovery of logic while sitting in science class is an ironic, if happy, reversal of modern attitudes; it demonstrates that to make sense of modern life we still need philosophy as well as science.

I and many other teachers want students to meld both disciplines into a coherent way of looking at the world. However, we who teach often know little about philosophy or the Philosophy for Children program; more over we are often too busy to learn more. Is *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* so written that by using it even we, who lack special training, can effedctively teach philosophy?

Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery introduces readers to formal logic. Chapter 1 opens with Mr. Bradley asking, "What is it that has a long tail and revolves around the sun every 77 years?" Harry thinks to himself, "All planets revolve around the sun (therefore) . . . A planet?" he asks. When the class' laughter alerts Harry to his mistake, he examines how he arrived at his sentence patterns. During the subsequent chapters, Harry and his classmates discover other principles of logic.

Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery also acquaints readers with the subject matter of philosophy; using logic Harry and his friends have discovered they investigate questions involves metaphysic, esthetics, epistemology, and ethics. Did God create the universe? What separates man from animals? Which phenomena are "causes" and which "effects"? Are both reason and intuition ways of knowing? Does creative thought have value? As citizens, ought we to emphasize duties or rights? Which is the more civilized economic system, capitalism or socialism? What separates art from nature?

Children will identify with Harry and his friends. Much of the story takes place in school; the time span covers a single semester, teachers are fairly believable, if idealized. Aside from a concern with logic, the kids have normal interest and problems. These similarities promote a climate of empathy through which the mental and emotional development of the book's characters is likely to become internalized by readers. In this way students may develop greater curiosity, rationality, reflectivity, sensitivity, and tolerance.

Teachers can encourage this internalization through typical instructional techniques. For example, in discussion they can model the behaviors of rational inquiry themselves and reinforce similar behaviors among their students; together teachers and students; together teachers and students can question and listen, clarify and classify. Or pupils can solidify and integrate their beliefs through activities involving the making of charts, pictures, poems, stories, and plays.

However, this book has the potential to be even more effective than it is. A smaller size, more attractive cover and a few illustrations would increase student interest. While the book's language is clear, even elegant, a word like "fink" clearly dates it. The text does not distinguish between the meanings of "true" and "valid"; won't students become confused when they create sentences from which they can draw false but valid inferences? An introduction would orient students to the aims and format of the book and to the Philosophy for Children series. There are inaccuracies in history and science that require correction: many educated people in Columbus's day thought the earth was

world (Eratosthenes had developed the concept seventeen hundred years before); snow monkeys and chimpanzees teach their offspring rudimentary culture. It may be valid to deduce that having been vaccinated against smallpox you won't contract it, but the contrary is more likely to prove true today. Finally Richard Wilbur's wonderful poem "The Mind" deserve to be printed in full. But these are minor quibbles.

By any measure *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* is a success. It introduces young readers to philosophy, furnishes them with some of the tools with which they can begin to draw valid inferences, exposes them to some major issues of debate. Moreover, it does this within a fictional framework that engages their interest and empathy, while modeling for them the kinds of behavioral changes those same readers must exhibit as they develop more reflective attitudes. In these ways, story and teacher reinforce the book's central message: Rational speculation about the nature of the world--even in an age of scientific analysis--is an important and useful process. With this message in mind, children will continue to gaze upward in wonder on clear nights; they will still ask themselves about the nature of knowledge, conduct and being. However, they will now have both tools and inclination to fashion and, when necessary, modify a consistent set of beliefs by which to live in a changing world.

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