

# *The Kids of Harry*

## *The Embodiment of Philosophic World Views*

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**T**wo problems facing the beginning Philosophy for Children teacher are recognizing what is philosophic about a philosophic dialogue and determining what to do when a child expresses philosophic thought. Frequent reflection about these problems led me again and again to the same conclusion — teachers need to be supplied with a new way to listen to students in order to teach Philosophy for Children. A way of listening in which knowledge is viewed as the child's servant instead of the child being viewed as a servant to knowledge. In the world of conventional education, teachers tend to listen to students through a pre-fabricated epistemology. Right and wrong, correct and incorrect have already been determined within a framework called the curriculum. Statements which vary from the official knowledge of the text are greeted by corrections. There are many good reasons for this — the fact that the text and curriculum are supposed to represent established factual data of a discipline; that teachers need "objective" criteria with which to evaluate student progress; that teachers are instructed not to relinquish their intellectual authority; that the State and community want to be secure in knowing what teachers are teaching

children; and so on. Our purpose here is not to look into the reasons for the standard ways in which teachers listen but to suggest an alternate cognitive stance for the teacher of pre-college philosophy.

The world is a complex place and requires processing if we are not to be made helpless by the relentless bombardment of things and events in our environment. Experience with the world allows each person to develop a way of processing the world. We develop ways to organize and interpret our experiences so that they are meaningful. We create cognitive categories through which we select or emphasize various aspects of our environment and ignore others as unimportant based upon what our experience has taught us. Categories are modified, added, eliminated, telescoped, etc., as determined by our ongoing experience. This overall method of organization is called a world theory. We will have more to say about what world theories are and how they originate and develop in the next section. For now, suffice to say we are talking about a person's overall way of cognitively organizing and interpreting the world.

In the second section we will look at world theories and their relationship to the child's cognitive development. The third section will discuss the relationship between world theories and philosophic interaction. The last section will include analyses of four of the characters in *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* based upon the world the-

ory paradigm. We will also consider the intermingling of world theories in several episodes from the Philosophy for Children novels for the purpose of providing models of world theories and their interactions. I hope that these models will serve as guides to analysis based on the world-theory paradigm for the teacher who wishes to adopt the world-theories perspective as a premise for teaching.

### WORLD THEORIES

In everyday speech we often refer to a person's outlook on life or we say that an individual has this or that perspective. What we are talking about is the way a person generally organizes experience and finds meaning in the world. Steven Pepper calls these organizational and interpretive schemes **world theories**.

More specifically, a world theory is a set of cognitive categories derived from common-sense experience which allows an individual to make sense of his/her experience. World theories are not stagnant entities. They are continually refined in order to account for new experiences. Likewise, new experience is interpreted through an established world theory.

Pepper<sup>1</sup> provides the following account of the origin and development of a world theory:

*A man desiring to understand the world looks about for a clue to its comprehension. He pitches upon some area of common sense fact and tries if he cannot understand other areas in terms of this one. This original area then becomes his basic analogy or root metaphor. He describes as best he can the characteristics of this area or, if you will, discriminates its structure. A list of its structural characteristics becomes his basic concepts of explanation and description. We call them a set of categories. In terms of these categories he proceeds to study all other areas of fact whether uncriticized or previously criticized. He undertakes to interpret all facts in terms of these categories. As a result of these other facts upon his categories, he may qualify and readjust the categories, so that a set of categories commonly changes and develops. Since the basic analogy or root metaphor normally arises out of common sense, a great deal of development and refinement of a set of categories is re-*

*quired if they are to prove adequate for a hypothesis of unlimited scope.*

Pepper goes on to say that some world theories are more adequate than others. An adequate world theory must be able to account for all the data experience provides. Its scope must be wide enough to explain any fact brought before it.

Pepper argues that only four adequate world theories exist. He names them formism, mechanism, contextualism, and organicism. Each theory has its own root metaphor, its own categories, and is a distinct way to think about the world. I will not call into question whether Pepper is right in limiting the number of adequate world theories to four. As far as adult philosophers are concerned, he may be right. However, for our purposes, we will use Pepper's idea of the world theory as a method to understand a child's relationship to knowledge. In this way we put knowledge at the service of people rather than people at the service of knowledge. Knowledge becomes a tool for recognizing or creating alternatives and making choices instead of a force paralyzing thought and activity. Knowledge becomes a source of liberation instead of a source of constraint. A source of guidance and direction instead of a creator of deterministic tunnel-vision.

Pepper's thinking is important for teaching because it recognizes world theories as "objects in the world." If we can recognize world theories (even if not always with perfect clarity) then we can work with them.

We will shift the focus of Pepper's ideas from the passive classification of static world views to a more active orientation. This orientation recognizes particular world views as a dynamic yet identifying feature of the person. Growth of the person's world view is growth of the person.

Our shift in perspective requires that we alter what Pepper means by "common sense fact." Pepper gives the impression that there is a free choice of the root metaphor. In the quotation above he begins by speaking as if the desire to understand the world is not ever-present and ongoing but must be an intentional activity. A world view, like a set of religious beliefs, is initially given to us before we know there are choices. Later, when we become aware of alternatives, we are able to change our inherited beliefs. The root metaphor isn't a single, freely chosen fact. It is the internalization and generalization of the

complex structure of a person's environment. It is this internalized structure that gives shape to the root metaphor from which the world theory emanates. For example, if one grows up in an environment which is poverty stricken and desolate; when the language is that of hopelessness and despair, then the facts of the world, including one's view of oneself, will be interpreted accordingly. If there are no alternatives in a life, then alternatives probably will not occur in the structure of reasoning.<sup>2</sup> An educational perspective which emphasizes liberation will try to help people discover their world views so that they have a choice of perspectives. The result for a multi-cultural democracy is the empowerment of people to live intersubjectively. Understanding one's own world view permits one to recognize other world theories by analogy. Hence, tolerance and empathy are likely to result because communication may now take place on a world-view level.

The categories which compose a world theory may act together harmoniously. At other times they may be discordant. When well orchestrated and not challenged by experience, categories function habitually. Where there exists discord between categories or where experience finds the categories to be inadequate, thinking and re-evaluation are necessary. Either the data of experience must be re-interpreted or categories must be altered to be brought into accord with one another. Where many categories are in discord or where categories are no longer able to account for experience, then a new world theory may be called for. What I am describing is a simplified account of the reasoning process as it functions in the growth and development of the individual in terms of Pepper's idea of world theories. In reality, the process is not so clear cut. Reasoning is often more of a struggle and unstructured process if not viewed after the fact. After one has long mastered a task which was initially difficult to learn, one often looks back and wonders how it is was possible to have had difficulty in the first place.

Inconsistency between categories does not exist exclusively within an individual, but also between individuals. Not only may categories between individuals be in disagreement but so may their world theories. One of the identifying features of a truly philosophic discussion is the meeting and intertwining of various world views. An advantage of discussing a variety of

world views is that they may accelerate the process in which world theories change and develop. Participants may benefit from the world theories of others without having to always wait for chance experiential encounters with the world. I am not suggesting that meeting the world views of others be viewed as a substitute for experiences in the world, but that such meetings may enhance future experience, indeed, even permit for the accessibility of new experiences. (Care should be taken not to focus exclusively on the differences. Agreement between world theories also allows appreciation for shared experiences).

When participating in a philosophic discussion, the trained ear can hear world theories expressed, deconstructed, re-constructed, altered, and so on. The philosophy teacher who listens through the world-theory paradigm is in a better position to respond appropriately and philosophically to children, to know what questions to ask and when, to motivate participants to talk to one another, and when necessary, to effectively mediate exchanges between students. This is so because the teacher has a key to understand the student's experience of the world. The teacher also has a gateway into the child's world and is able to explore with the child, side by side, as co-adventurers in an ongoing philosophic journey.

## WORLD THEORIES AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Most children have significantly less experience with the world than adults. For this reason their world theories, to be adequate, do not need to be of the same scope as that of an adult. Recall that an adequate world theory must account for all the facts encountered in experience. Recall also that world theories are refinements of common sense explanations of experience based upon testing of the theory against future experiences. It then follows that a child may have an adequate world theory given his/her experience even though it may not be an adequate world theory for an adult. It also follows that given new and expanding experiences the child's world theory will be modified to account for new experience. Jerome Bruner<sup>3</sup> provides a similar description but with a more linguistic flavor:

*I am inclined to think of mental development as involving the construction of a model of the*

*world in the child's head, an internalized set of structures for representing the world around him. These structures are organized in terms of perfectly definite grammars or rules of their own, and in the course of development the structures change and the grammar that governs them also changes in certain systematic ways.*

It is in the dialectic between the world theory and experience that teacher intervention may be most effective. Where a child might encounter an experience which challenges his/her world theory the teacher can encourage and question so that rather than turning from the experience the child will approach the experience. The result may be a change in the world theory or the modification of an established world theory to account for the challenge. Said another way, the challenge may lead to philosophic growth for the child as well as a broadening of appreciation for the subtleties of experience. We may also be fostering the intellectual courage needed for philosophic growth.

If you ask many young children where they came from they will answer from their "mother's belly" or with some similar locution. An adult would recognize this account to be anatomically incorrect and such an explanation would be inadequate for the adult. But would a painfully anatomically correct explanation be suitable or add to the adequacy of a small child's world theory? Similarly, a layman's explanation of the birth process would be inadequate for the obstetrician, but must the adult have the same degree of knowledge as the obstetrician?

Bruner has made a similar point with regard to the teaching of mathematics.<sup>4</sup> He argues that children are often involved in mathematical thinking long before they enter a classroom. When children meet the formal language of mathematics class they are led to believe (albeit unintentionally) that they are encountering something new, foreign, and unrelated to anything they had previously done.

I mention these observations in order to suggest an appropriate attitude of the Philosophy for Children teacher. Often a teacher will filter children's conversation through his or her own world theories which are based upon a great deal more experience than the child's. In doing so, a theory meritorious in its own right may be ignored or dismissed. Or worse yet the theory is

wrenched from the child and they are left with only the teacher's world theory — a theory which has no foundation in the child's experience. The child is not educated but is made ignorant by such practices. In addition, it discourages the child from thinking on his/her own. If a child's world theory is discovered to be inadequate it is up to the individual child to alter his or her own world theory. Suggestions may be made by other participants in the community of inquiry but the child is not obliged to accept any of them. Just as in the process of scientific investigation, persons sometimes need to hold onto a theory even though it is not fully adequate until another suitable theory can be found.

### THE WORLD THEORY PARADIGM AND PHILOSOPHIC INTERACTION

When a person expresses a viewpoint they are expressing their experience of the world as it has been processed through their world theory. A listener may stand in relationship to the speaker in one of two ways. They may listen through the world theory of the speaker and in this case there is a communication and understanding between them. Or the listener may listen to the speaker through his/her own world theory in which case true listening has not occurred. Both the speaker and the listener are no better off than when they started. The response of the listener will not come forth from understanding but will be filtered through a solipsistic visor.

In a teacher-student relationship the teacher who listens through his/her own world theory without granting the merits of the child's world view discredits the child's statement and view of the world. The meaning of the child's experience is denied. I am even tempted to go so far as to say that the child's reality has been invalidated. Teachers must learn how to listen for the structure of the world theory expressed by the child in order to more completely understand the child and grant him/her full intellectual liberty and not dominate with their own world theory.<sup>5</sup>

Thinking may be thought of as a dialogue with oneself. Consider the account Plato gives in the *Theatetus*:<sup>6</sup>

*Socrates: ...do you accept my description of the process of thinking?*

*Theatetus: How do you describe it?*

*Socrates: As a discourse that the mind carries on with itself about any subject it is considering. . . . when the mind is thinking it is simply talking to itself, asking questions and answering them, saying yes or no. When it reaches a decision — which may come slowly or in a sudden rush — when doubt is over and the two voices confirm the same thing, then we call that its 'judgement'. So I should describe thinking as discourse, and judgement as a statement pronounced, not aloud to someone else, but silently to oneself.*

The teacher may think of himself/herself as being the other side of the dialogue for the student. What might be considered thought, two voices in one's head conversing in the language of a world theory, may be overtly manifest by the introduction of other voices. These voices being the voices engaged in philosophic dialogue.

On the surface, being "the other side of the dialogue" sounds like a simple task for the teacher. However, in practice, it is not always so easy. Our own world theories often assert themselves if not directly through speech then through our tone of voice or our bodily responses to a child's remarks. I am not suggesting that children ought not be challenged by the teacher. Neither do I suggest that the teacher browbeat and overwhelm the child with a personal world theory. What I am suggesting is that the teacher must become skilled at recognizing the total intellectual context of the child's statements and to respond to them within that context. The teacher should not bring another intellectual context to bear which, intercontextually, discredits the child's statement.

To elaborate, there is a dimension of historicity in the development of a person. From and within this history a world theory has emerged. Within the broader context of the world, the world theory of the child may, to an adult, appear inadequate. An adult responding to a child's remark bringing the whole of his/her world theory to bear upon the child is missing an appreciation of the person's history.

In this, the 20th century, it would be easy to laugh at the efforts of Thales or Empedocles. Yet the 20th century world view would not have emerged as it did if it were not for the efforts of Thales and Empedocles.

On the microcosmic level of the individual, we could say that the adult person's world view would not have emerged as it did if it were not for the foundational work of a "pre-socratic childhood."

Imagine a 20th century man abruptly appearing in ancient Athens. Even if the 20th century man could point to what we would understand today to be unwarranted assumptions and flawed premises, his observations would probably not be understood. With a radically different appreciation of the world based on a radically different set of experiences in an unimaginable (to the Athenians) environment, his remarks would be considered 'obscure' at best.

I would argue that a similar situation exists when an adult enters the world view of a child. The views and remarks expressed by adults must often seem foreign and mysterious to children just as the 20th century man's world would to the ancient Athenians.

Many misunderstandings exist about the nature of philosophy. Some people think of philosophy as argument in order to determine which world view is the "right" world view. Others believe it is simply argument for argument's sake. Rather, philosophy is the development of an idea through inquiry via dialogue in an environment of respect — it is not a practice of intellectual and political dominance. If people knew everything at birth, we could simply follow Rousseau's advice and let them grow up with as little meddling as possible. But people are not like that, so we must foster, nourish and encourage them to learn and develop. Likewise, ideas are not always born complete — in fact I would argue but few ideas are ever hatched 'fully grown.' So they, too, need work, nourishment, encouragement and development. Paulo Freire<sup>7</sup> writes:

*No one is ignorant of everything. No one knows everything. We all know something. We are all ignorant of something.*

Children come to the classroom with a legitimate world theory given their experience. In the context of that world theory they know things. In the context of their world theory and their experience they are ignorant of things. The teacher who begins with this idea as a premise for action will naturally act with respect for the child while

at the same time remaining sensitive to the needs of the child in the world and the challenging and modification of world view that may be necessary.

For the world-theory paradigm to be effective a teacher needs to internalize the paradigm through practice. First, as stated in the introduction, teachers need to begin to listen to students with new cognitive ears. Rather than listening to student dialogue through the structure of one's own world theory and evaluating statements accordingly, the teacher should begin listening for the categories, assumptions and internal structures of the world theory from which the statement emanated. Sometimes, due to the frequent brevity of some student responses, further questioning and prodding may be necessary to elicit enough information to perceive the world theory. (Specific techniques of questioning may be found in *Philosophy in the Classroom*<sup>8</sup>. See especially chapters 6 and 7.).

Second, the teacher needs practice in responding to students' expressions. After a dialogue it is a good idea to immediately reflect upon responses made to students. Were the questions within the world theory of the student? Or did they reflect assumptions of the teacher's world theory? Did the dialogue take off in the direction set by a teacher question rather than following the direction set by student interest?

Taping discussions can be useful towards this end. It is possible that in trying to coordinate a discussion — a discussion that often moves quickly — a teacher is not always mindful of responses made to students. By replaying a discussion the teacher can become sensitive to inappropriate infringements upon a child's world theory and to the nature of appropriate responses.

The next section will provide analyses of world-theory interaction through dialogue. The purpose is to provide examples of analyses employing the world-theory paradigm so that the teacher who wishes to understand the progression of philosophic inquiry will have a few guideposts to work from.

### LISA, SUKI, HARRY, AND TONY: FOUR WORLD VIEWS<sup>9</sup>

Each of the children in *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* has a distinctive world theory — a distinctive way of experiencing and interpreting the

world. In different contexts each theory has particular strengths and weaknesses. When the children reason together one character's strength often compensates for a weakness in another character's theory.

It should be noted that the characters are not always consistent with their world theory. But neither are real people. There are always times and conditions which prompt variation from a dominant world theory.

The children in *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* are models of world theories in dialogue and action. We will first take a general look at what the world theories of Lisa, Suki, Harry, and Tony consist and the style of reasoning they produce. We will then look at specific instances from the novels *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* and *Suki* wherein the styles are illustrated and what happens when the theories encounter one another.

### GENERAL OVERVIEW OF FOUR WORLD THEORIES

**LISA:** Lisa's world view is one that allows the existence of contradictions. She does not defy logical principles (for example, holding that A and not A are both true in the same way at the same time.) Rather, she emphasizes the experiential world wherein contrary thoughts and feelings may be experienced at the same time (often to the discomfort of the experiencer) (Lisa; page 76, lines 20-26). Or occasions when there is freedom from the rules of logic. For example, in dreams. (HSD, pgs. 11&12) Or where logic stands in opposition to our feelings. How could her father die when she loved him so much? She would admit that if nothing died the world would be unlivable for anything — yet her feelings of sadness and pain are just as real as the necessity of death. (Lisa; pg 62, pg 66 : HSD pg 11, lines 11-16, pg 55, lines 21-27). She is also aware that rationality can sometimes be ridiculous and that trusting our senses and common sense experience may be the wiser course (Lisa, page 323, lines 3-21-Zeno's paradox.).

Intuition and holistic (or synthetic) reasoning play a large part in the way Lisa encounters her world. She is willing to trust "hunches" and admit flashes of insight as legitimate premises for action (HSD; pgs 89-90: Lisa; pg 83).

More generally, Lisa's reasoning is not dependent on formal rules. She is open to the world-as-

experienced. The strength of her theory is that she is able to admit more possibility. She can be more comprehensive in her thinking. However, she is more sensitive to moral issues. Moral problems often arise when our reason and our feelings disagree. My passion for the desirable but unaffordable object tempts me to steal it while my reason, perception of consequences, and moral fiber make me to hesitate.

Lisa's root metaphor could be called contradiction. She processes the world in terms of its experienced contradictions. She experiences the world more in terms of how it happens than in an idealized way — how it ought to happen.

**HARRY:** In contrast with Lisa's world theory is that of Harry. Harry's style is analytic. He looks for rules and not their exceptions (HSD, pg 3: Suki, pg. 4); for patterns and symmetry; for algorithms to solve problems instead of relying on intuition and feelings (Lisa, pg 47: HSD, pg 57: Suki, pg. 126, lines 30-32). Harry is not comfortable with ambiguity (Ch. 15 - incident about fathers reason for smoking and the existential relationship of cause to effect.). Harry also tends to be a problem solver rather than a problem generator (HSD, pg 18 bttm - pg 19, pg 3: Lisa, pgs 75-76, esp. line 5 on pg. 76). He is more comfortable with facts (Lisa, pg 34, line 17) than with supposition. When it comes to action Harry is not a risk taker — he likes to know the outcome of actions before they happen (gist of Suki — Harry wants to write a perfect poem and to do so he must write something. There is a risk that it may not be perfect because he knows no formula to follow so he writes nothing at all). Harry sometimes neglects action in favor of predictability. His strength lies in precision, in creating and discovering ideals. Harry sees the forms of things as they should be. He is acquainted with logic — some would say the form of thought. This allows him to tell good reasoning from poor reasoning. (HSD, pg. 55-56).

Harry's root metaphor is language. He interprets the world in terms of the structure of language. How does what we say reflect the world of our experience? How are the rules of language related to the construction of reality?

**SUKI:** Suki is primarily concerned with proportion — the relationship of the parts to the whole. More specifically the rearrangement of those parts into a proportioned whole. Like Lisa,

the contrary nature of experience plays a role in her world theory. Her methods of dealing with contraries are not primarily manifest in the moral sphere, as are Lisa's, but in the aesthetic. She looks for the unity of experience in works of art — especially poetry.

Suki is partial to the temporal in her processing. She prefers the active language of poetry and the fluidity of music to the spacial expression of painting and drawing (HSD, pg. 69). Her thinking might be described as "symphonic" rather than "logical."<sup>10</sup> She experiences the world as it happens. Her thought is defined by the experience of unity one has in the experience of art.

She discovers her freedom in the novelty of expression; in the flow of change and the occurrence of surprise.

Suki's root metaphor is the aesthetic experience. The aesthetic experience is an appreciation of the relationship between parts and wholes. It is a compactness of expression; a unification of experience.<sup>11</sup>

**TONY:** In contrast to Suki is the mathematical approach Tony takes to the world. Tony seeks permanence and certainty. He, like Harry, does not feel comfortable with ambiguity and contradiction (HSD, pg 53, lines 14-18). He prefers the permanence of numbers to the changing world of things (Suki, pg 75, lines 15-21).

With regard to relationships he processes the word in terms of mathematical relationships which are universally generalizable. " $2+2=4$ " is a relationship which holds true anywhere in the physical universe whereas a statement like "what goes up must come down" is limited by the place and conditions of an ascending object and an understanding of the terms "up" and "down."

Tony's root metaphor(s) are numbers and mathematics. He would hold that where things in the world change numbers remain constant. (Whether he holds that numbers are things in the world is another question). Numbers are unambiguous. They do not disagree. Where words may have multiple meanings numbers are what they are.

## INTERACTION OF WORLD VIEWS

The first episode we will consider is the exchange between Harry and Lisa in chapter one of *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*.

Harry believes that he has discovered a rule to reverse any sentence which has two items in it. He now wants to share his discovery with classmate Lisa. He begs her to give him a sentence with two things in it. When she finally does come up with a sentence Harry makes a second discovery — his rule doesn't work.

It is at this point that Harry admits defeat...

*Harry couldn't understand why it hadn't worked. "It worked before..." he started to say aloud but couldn't finish the sentence.*

*Lisa looked at him wonderingly. Why had she given him such a stupid sentence, Harry thought with a flash of resentment. But then it occurred to him that, if he had really figured out a rule, it should have worked on stupid sentences as well as on sentences that weren't stupid. So, it really wasn't Lisa's fault.*

*For the second time that day, Harry felt that he had somehow failed. His only comfort was that Lisa wasn't laughing at him.*

*"I really thought I had it," he said to her. "I really thought I had it."*

*"You tried it out?" she asked. Her grey eyes, set wide apart, were clear and serious.*

*"Of course. I took sentences like 'All planets revolve about the sun,' and 'All model airplanes are toys,' and 'All cucumbers are vegetables,' and I found that when the last part was put first, the sentence was no longer true."*

*"But the sentence I gave you wasn't like yours," Lisa replied quickly. "Every one of your sentences began with the word 'All'. But my sentence began with the word 'No'."*

*Lisa was right! But could that have made the difference? There was only one thing to do: try some more sentences that begin with the word 'No.'*

*"If it's true that 'No submarines are kangaroos,' Harry began, "then what about 'No kangaroos are submarines'?"*

*"Also true," replied Lisa. "And if 'No mosquitoes are lollipops,' then it's true that 'No lollipops are mosquitoes'."*

*"That's it!" said Harry, excitedly, "That's it! If a true sentence begins with the word 'No,' then its reverse is also true. But if it begins with the word 'All' then its reverse is false."*

*Harry was so grateful to Lisa for her help that he hardly knew what to say. He wanted to thank her, but instead he just mumbled something and ran the rest of the way home. (pgs 3-4)*

Here we see Harry searching for a rule of linguistic import. He tries out his rule to himself

and is 'successful'. But when Harry encounters Lisa's counter example he feels like he failed. It appears that he is going to give up — that he hadn't really discovered a rule ("But then it occurred to him that if he had really discovered a rule, it should have worked on stupid sentences as well as on sentences that weren't stupid." The implication being that he had not discovered a rule). If Harry were left to himself, to only his own world theory, he probably would have given up. However, Harry meets the world view of Lisa — a view, as mentioned above, that is comfortable with contradictions. She is not ready to give up but persists in the inquiry. Lisa makes room for more than one rule. To Lisa, her counterexample did not necessarily mean the negation of Harry's rule. The end result of their exchange was the discovery of two related rules.

I am not implying that Lisa's world theory is better than Harry's. The point is that it took both world theories to make the discovery thus pointing to the social dimension of learning and knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

There is an important implication here for the structure of classroom dialogue. Children quickly become adept at providing counter-examples for one another. The counter examples, if simply allowed to negate another idea or opinion, are only destructive. Like Harry, the children may feel that they have failed in some sense. This is often indicated by a complaint like "We never seem to get anywhere."

Counter-examples often indicate that a larger perspective is needed to account for them. The teacher, in such instances, can point to the need for a more comprehensive perspective by asking questions which look for the commonalities between the examples instead of the differences. A question like, "What is common to all these examples?" is often effective.

Sometimes an issue gets lost in the examples and counter examples. The teacher might want to direct the discussion back to the issue from which the examples stemmed. A question like "What are Bill and Mary giving examples of?"

More generally, the teacher should try to ask questions which direct discussion participants to 'step back' from what they are discussing. To try to get them to see the 'big picture.'

This episode is instructive for another reason. Harry twice makes the point that Lisa did not laugh at him. According to the world theory paradigm his relief is indicative of an appreciation



that his world theory was not insulted. Lisa doesn't question the value of what Harry is doing as Tony does in chapter two (discussed below). Instead, she enters into his world theory of linguistic construction and, while influencing Harry's thinking with the application of her own world theory, she does not insult the integrity of his world theory. She doesn't say "Oh, Harry, why don't you see there are more possibilities here than the one you are fixated on. You should open your mind to a variety of possibilities!" Her influence is active. She opens up the possibility ("But the sentence I gave you wasn't like yours..."). By the same token, the rules would not have been formalized had it not been for Harry's world theory.

Let's consider another episode. In chapter 2 of HSD Tony is confronted with an existential problem. His father wants him to become an engineer because engineers are people who are good at math. Tony is good at math, reasons Tony's father, so Tony will become an engineer. Tony has no interest in becoming an engineer but he cannot argue with his father's reasoning. At least not until he and Harry converse. He tells Harry his problem...

*Tony looked as if he were going to turn away, but then he shrugged and sat down on the steps. "My father always talks as though, when I grow up, I'm going to be an engineer, just like him. When I tell him that maybe I'll want to do something else, he gets mad at me."*

*Why does he think you'd make a good engineer?" Harry asked.*

*"Because I always get good grades in math. He says to me, 'All engineers are good in math, and your good in math, so figure it out for yourself."*

*For a moment, Harry didn't reply. He was repeating Tony's words, turning them over in his mind. Then suddenly he exclaimed, "Tony, it's not right!"*

*"I know," replied Tony, frowning, "it sure ain't."*

*"I mean," said Harry, "your father said, 'All engineers are good in math, right? But that's one of those statements which can't be turned around. So it doesn't follow that all people who're good in math are engineers. And I'm sure that's so. I'm sure there are lots of doctors who're good in math, and airplane pilots who're good in math, and all sorts of people who aren't engineers who are good in math. So it doesn't follow that just because you're good in math, you have to become an engineer!"*

*Tony said, "That's right! Even if it's true that all*

*engineers are good in math, it doesn't follow that only engineers are good in math." He stood up, gave Harry a very snappy salute, and raced off home. (pg. 8)*

Tony's emphasis on the abstractness of mathematics would make it easy for him to detect fallacious relationships between numbers. He would immediately spot trouble with a relationship like " $2 \times 6 = 12$ " therefore " $12 \times 6 = 2$ ." Yet, when it comes to a real-life situation he is not able to transfer his reasoning abilities to the situation himself.

Harry comes to the rescue. Recall that Harry's world theory is rooted in the relationship of language to the world. He is able to show Tony the fallacy in his father's reasoning because that is exactly where the problem lies (albeit the logical relationship is similar in the mathematical relationship mentioned above).

However, were it not for an episode prior to this one, Tony might be an engineer today. When Harry tells Tony about the rules he and Lisa had discovered the day before Tony says (to paraphrase) "So what? What's the good of your rule? And besides, how many sentences begin with 'All' or 'No'?" Harry agrees — not many sentences begin with 'All' or 'No.'

Ironically, Tony inadvertently develops the discovery. He is talking with Timmy Samuels and describing the various ways of making the same number. Harry reasons that the same may be true of the quantifiers 'All' and 'No'. So Harry courageously asks the class for help. How many different ways are there of saying 'All' and 'No'? The class comes up with a respectful variety of ways.

Once again, it is because of the meeting of world theories that discoveries are made, problems are solved, and the reasoning of all becomes more precise and effective.

After Tony's 'shrugging off' of the discovery, Harry feels that his discovery "didn't amount to much after all." But notice how Tony's response is different from the one made by Lisa in the episode discussed above. He doesn't say "Harry, I don't see the application of your discovery. Where could it be used?" or in the operationalized way Lisa asserts her world view. Tony could have asked, "Harry, what other situations does this apply to? Can it work in mathematics?"

Tony's abrupt criticism and dismissal of Harry's world theory echos the response of many teachers to student reasoning (which is where

Tony may very well have learned his response). If a child's expression is erroneous within the confines of the curriculum, it is greeted with a correction. One world theory dominates making the child subservient to the curriculum. The child may be offering a unique insight about a question or issue but it will be squelched if 'vetoed' by "official knowledge".<sup>13</sup> Not only will the insight be squelched but so will future efforts of children to reason for themselves.

Sometimes children are way off base with their reasoning. A correctional checkmark only invalidates the reasoning but does not correct it. Questioning to help the child discover the error will not only lead to an understanding through discovery which, some would agree, is the preferable method<sup>14</sup>, but may also lead to a discovery of the types of errors which may occur in reasoning. The child is then in a position to recognize these errors in future reasonings. Attention is also directed to the mental activities themselves thus engaging the child in meta-cognitive processing.

### HARRY ENCOUNTERS THE SUKIAN WORLD VIEW

Throughout the novel *Suki*, Harry has been suffering over a poetry assignment for his English class. He insists that he cannot write poetry. He often discusses his problem with Suki. Suki tries to get him to see alternatives — to make meaning instead of discovering meaning; to view facts as they are experienced and not as they are in an idealized form; to sensitize him to the active manipulation of facts and language rather than passively categorizing them; to look at the specific as frequently as the general.

In the episode we are going to consider, Harry has finally produced a couple of lines of poetry. He shows them to Suki who wants to help Harry improve on them...

*"Do you have it with you?"*

*Harry fished out the now well-smudged piece of paper:*

*Beside my bed my shoes  
Await my faithless feet;  
They themselves are inseparable,  
And almost touching.*

*After studying the poem for a minute, Suki said, as*

*gently as she could, "Harry, you can't turn it in like this. You just can't. I told you last time I thought it needed more work, and now I'm sure that's so."*

*Harry looked at her aghast. "But Mr. Newberry said he'd accept it if I just made a few changes in it!"*

*"Well—" Suki hesitated, then plunged ahead. "Harry, please let me help. You'll see, you can do better."*

*"If there's a formula for writing a poem, I'd sure like to know what it is."*

*"There's no formula. Poems are written by hard work, not by magic."*

*"Yeah," said Harry ruefully. "And not by logic, either!"*

*"Still," Suki persisted, "there are some things you need to take into consideration, and I can remind you of them."*

*"Okay," he replied tonelessly, and he shrugged. "What can I say?" (pg. 127)*

Soon after Harry does have some success at writing a poem. So what has happened here?

Harry understands consistency in reasoning. He simply isn't experienced in applying the principle of consistency to different contexts. Suki, on the other hand, is especially good at understanding how consistency can be internal to a specific composition. Harry claims that poems are not written by logic but Suki doesn't fully agree. True, a poem isn't written according to the rules of formal logic — which are internally consistent — but the poem, to have meaning, must contain its own internally consistent logic. Said another way, the poem creates its own logic (see *Suki* page 41, lines 5-19) Harry, being more the discoverer than the inventor, has trouble understanding this.

But why should Harry come to an understanding after this conversation? Suki has been telling him the same thing throughout the novel.

I believe she was successful in this case because she speaks in the language of Harry's world theory. But also that Harry was **ready** to hear her.

In earlier episodes, Suki speaks in the language of the aesthetic — something which seems foreign to Harry. In chapter 2, episode iv, Harry and Suki discuss different ways of turning sentences around. To try to precede the noun with the verb so that the order of expression matches the order of experiential occurrence. However, Harry listens in terms of literal meaning while Suki is speaking in terms of poetic meaning. After prac-

ting turning sentences around, he believes he has discovered a rule which might be stated: "When writing poetry, precede the noun with the verb to describe the actual occurrence of events."

He thinks he has discovered another rule until he talks to his father who is suspicious of "tricks" in writing. Saying things directly can sometimes be just as good as turning them around. It all depends on what one is trying to do when writing. So Harry is in the dark again. Or is he?

I would argue that there has been some progress made. Harry is encountering instances where universal rules do not apply. Given enough of these occurrences he may form a category for them. This category may make him sensitive to further like situations. As the category is applied and grows it becomes a new perspective, a new root metaphor or structure. This root metaphor may then supply him with the necessary cognitive apparatus to understand creative writing and poetry — not as a direct one to one correspondence (for he would then still be within his original world theory)—but as a thought structure which will give structure to his experience. He is then made ready to understand Suki when she describes the process of writing in the episode discussed above.

Ryle recognized that learning is often a germinating process. In his essay *Thinking and Self-Teaching*<sup>15</sup> Ryle states:

*... the fact that a pupil has shown no sign of progress yesterday or today is quite compatible with his coming on fast next week or next term. Seeds often do germinate slowly. Muscles are always slow to harden up. Did you succeed in swimming your first lesson? If not, had you learned nothing at all in that first lesson?*

In the process of helping Harry, Suki also discovers more about poetry. In order to explain to Harry the workings of poetry, Suki is forced to represent to herself what she is doing when writing poetry. This grants her more control over the thinking tools that she uses when writing poetry. Once again we see an orderly building of thinking skills which eventually moves to a meta-cognitive level but which is kept tied to a lived experience. This progression might not have occurred if there was not an intertwining of world theories.

## SUMMARY

There are overall ways people have of experiencing and interpreting the world. We called these ways world theories — a term we borrowed from the work of Steven Pepper. A world theory is a categorical structure which makes possible an understanding of the world. The categories are derived from "common sense fact" and are modified by subsequent experience. A world theory is adequate if its scope is broad enough to account for any experience.

Two modifications were made to Pepper's idea of the world theory. First, we considered world theories not as the property of adult philosophers who attempt to account for experience generally. Rather, we considered world theories as they develop and function within the individual. The meaning of adequate then becomes determined by the experience of the individual person.

Second, rather than viewing the choice of common sense fact as a free choice from which world theories emanate, we assigned it to the internalization and generalization of one's formative environment.

We then applied the modified world theories paradigm to a pedagogical framework. Philosophic interaction was then viewed as the intermingling of world theories. These interminglings were then illustrated by discussions of three episodes from the *Philosophy for Children* novels.

I hope that this article will help provide the teacher with a method of philosophic listening which may then lead to a clearer view of the way philosophy functions in the classroom.

## NOTES

1. Pepper, S. *World Hypotheses—A Study in Evidence*. Pg. 91 Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1961.
2. For an extended discussion about the relationship between the language and structure of the environment and the perception of the self and the world see the writings of Paulo Freire. Especially *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1984) and *Literacy* (with Macedo, D. Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey, 1987).
3. Bruner, J. *On Knowing—Essays for the Left Hand* Pg. 103. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982.

4. *Ibid.* Pages 103-104.  
L. Vygotsky makes the same point in the now classic *Mind in Society* (Harvard University Press, 1978. ). He writes:

That children's learning begins long before they attend school is the starting point of this discussion [between learning and development.] Any learning a child encounters in school always has a previous history. For example, children begin to study arithmetic in school, but long beforehand they have had some experience with quantity - they have had to deal with operations of division, addition, subtraction, and determination of size. Consequently, children have their own pre-school arithmetic ... (pg 84).

- 5 Recall that an objective of Philosophy for Children is to get the children to talk to each other. I am referring here to teacher student interaction since I am assuming that at the early stage of the community much of the interaction comes between the students and the teacher. I posit the teacher as a model of inquiry and dialogue. If the teacher models dialogue which demonstrates respect for other world views then when more student interaction occurs the students will have internalized, to some extent, the modeling of the teacher. For more about the stages of development of a community of inquiry see Dr. Ann Margaret Sharp's *What is a 'Community of Inquiry?'* (Available from the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, Montclair State College, Upper Montclair, N.J. 07043).
6. Plato *Theaetetus* (Trans. Cornford, F.M.) in *Plato: Collected Dialogues* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980.
7. Freire, P. & Macedo, D. *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World.* Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1987.
8. Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyon *Philosophy in the Classroom.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980.
9. The notes in this section refer to the novels *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery (HSD)*, *Lisa*, and *Suki* (Lipman, M. New Jersey: First Mountain Foundation, 1971, 1983 & 1978, respectively). References are made by page and line number. I recommend the reader refer to these passages for examples of the world theories of the characters in question.
10. For a discussion of art as a means of knowledge see Jerome Bruner's essay "Art as a Mode of Knowing" in *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 1982.
11. *Ibid.*

12. Dewey argues that intelligence is social. Progress in technology and science are not the work of isolated individuals but the result of co-ordinated thought and action on the socio-cultural level.
13. Friere, P. & Shor, I. *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (Esp. pgs. 8-10) Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc. 1987.
14. Bruner, J. *The Act of Discovery in On Knowing -Essays for the Left Hand.* Pgs. 81-96.
15. Ryle, G. *Thinking and Self-Teaching.* Re-printed in *Thinking - The Journal of Philosophy for Children.* Volume 1, Nos.3 & 4, 1979.

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