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INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PLACE OF NARRATIVE IN “BASIC” AND FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

To readers of the *Journal of Basic Writing*, it may seem that with Myra Kogen's "The Conventions of Expository Writing," Janice Hays' "Models of Intellectual Development," and finally Martinez and Martinez's "Reconsidering Cognition and the Basic Writer," enough has been said on the subject. But the last word has not been said and probably will not be for some time to come. The subject of intellectual development is one of great complexity; moreover, the stakes in the debate are high. Our valuation of our students' minds is an act that circumscribes the possibilities for student-teacher relationships—and many other relationships, both inside and outside of the classroom. It limits the possibilities of what we all can do with our minds. Limits there will always be, for adults as well as for children, for teachers as well as for "basic" and freshman writers. Part of our job as teachers of writing, it seems to me, is to probe at boundaries, alongside our students, and that is perhaps a different thing from providing them with an "intellectual rigor" of the sort that Hays and others advise.

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Before we try to determine which model of intellectual development we might use for teaching our students or even whether we should try at all to assess systematically their “cognitive maturity,” I would suggest a prior critical exercise, that of considering more closely the idea of intellectual development. As we do so, we are inevitably drawn into a project of self-definition and definition of “the other”—dangerous territory, according to the feminist theorist Luce Irigaray in *Speculum of the Other Woman*. The “difficult relation to the other” (361)—in any country, and between any two people: that is both the problem and the exciting possibility that confronts us as social beings. But throughout the centuries, those of us from supposedly “developed” parts of the world, and from the governing classes of our own society, have not been particularly adept or honorable at managing this challenge. “A man minus the possibility of (re)presenting oneself as a man = a normal woman” Irigaray says of Freud’s theory of femininity (27). Under this patriarchally imposed definition, woman as woman ceases to exist. Do our students, especially freshmen and “basic” writers, exist only as the negatives of ourselves, their teachers? Reflections of ourselves, but lesser, incompletely developed?

Under most developmental schema, we look almost exclusively at what *we* can do that *they* cannot. They can write narratively and descriptively, it is said, but not “in discourse that is hierarchically structured and divorced from concrete reality”; they cannot produce “balanced and carefully reasoned papers” (Hays, 23). They think dualistically (“with rigid adherence to absolutes”) or relativistically, not with “Committed Relativism” as we purportedly do (15). They have “difficulty applying contextual considerations to [their] writing decisions” (15) and do not have sufficient “sensitivity to their readers’ perspectives” (21).

Might we have difficulty doing some things that they do with ease? That question is never asked, because the differences cited above are situated within developmental schema, generally those of William Perry, whose work in turn derives from Piaget. Although Perry’s work features research on Harvard undergraduates of the 1960s and might seem a more natural focus for a discussion that concerns college writers, I have chosen Piaget’s work as a representation of developmentalism because I believe it to be mythically and conceptually richer than, as well as prior to, Perry’s. In any case, Perry’s description of the move from “Dualism” to “Committed Relativism” seems an extension of Piaget’s concept of the “egocentrism” of the child and his later gradual accommodation to the perspectives of others.

The kind of linear development we see in both Piaget’s and

Perry's model puts our students behind and beneath us: we have already passed through the stages of development they still find themselves within, thus, we can do everything that they can do, and more. The child is only the father of the man in the very limited sense that Piaget states: "If the child partly explains the adult, it can also be said that each period of his development partly explains the periods that follow" (1969, 3). Development for Piaget refers both to an individual's psychological changes and to changes in the history of epistemology. In both cases, the later stages are to be preferred to the earlier: "Epistemology is the theory of valid knowledge, and, even if this knowledge is always a process rather than a state, this process is in essence the change from a lesser to a greater validity" (1972, 6). Piaget is fascinated with child psychology finally because of its relationship to the grandest of human conceptions, such as Kant's and Einstein's notions of time and space (1972, 2, 10, and *passim*). Piaget's theory of development reflects a particular kind of intellectualist bias, and carries nothing of Wordsworth's sense of loss at the passing of childhood.

But how exactly are differences in writing understood to reflect developmental models? We can see in Hays' words some strong links to Piaget's notions of cognitive development in the children he observed. He claimed to have seen a profoundly egocentric infant whose movements and sensations built mental schema that eventually allowed the child to make use of semiotic (linguistic) and symbolic (imagistic) functions. Piaget's story of development is one of gradual transformation of, and liberation from, an immediate material preoccupation, until, during adolescence, the person succeeds in "disconnecting" thought from objects (1969, 132) and enters a world of pure relations and classifications, exemplified by symbolic logic. Before this last "formal operations" stage, the child is capable only of "concrete operations."

But what if we were to read Piaget mythically, as Irigaray would, asking: what myth of the self does Piaget build in his description of the development of the child? As I read him, Piaget's is a myth of evolutionary development and individual effort. The individual infant begins life as an "organism [that] is never passive, but presents spontaneous and global activities whose form is rhythmic" (1969, 6). This rhythm might correspond to that of the sea, and sea animals (Piaget's dissertation—Neuchatel, 1918—was about molluscs). In *Psychology of the Child*, he actually compares the rhythm to the development of "the locomotive reflexes of the batrachians" (batrachians are amphibians). So, the infant begins life much as humankind is presumed to have begun in popular readings of evolution: a climb up from the oozy sludge of the primordial

seabed—which, as Irigaray would no doubt note, is reminiscent of the womb. Among other things, then, this is a story of origins. But it is the climbing, above all, that must interest us. The climb is an individual effort (the child scarcely seems to have a mother or father) that begins as “sensori-motor” activities, but progresses ever more “validly” to mental operations. At the final stage of development, the adult has overcome the hurdles of “disequilibrium” and has settled into a state of “relative equilibrium,” able now to separate sensation from intellect and to declare their relative value, the “concrete” from the “formal,” able to contemplate “pure relations” as exemplified by symbolic logic or algebra.

We should not be surprised to hear Platonic echoes in a work of high scientific repute. The fuller the description of the system, the better we can read the mythic strain. Piaget is a theorizing biologist, not (like so many social scientists) a mechanist, and he gives us a myth worth examining. In it, we see intellectual self-reliance, and an intelligence that must separate itself from mother and mother earth by reappropriating the early connections—rhythmic movements that respond to the seawaves, then becomes reflexes, then build to mental schema which eventually “liberate” him from his origin. He retains a fascination with that origin, and harnesses and directs that fascination so that origin can be explained and used for upward mobility, as it were.

Reading Piaget mythically can give us insight into why it is that we feel so strongly about students who write in narrative or who seem “lodged” in the concrete. It may help explain why we often find it at least faintly embarrassing to argue for personal narrative before our colleagues in the sciences, and why we are so eager to join with them in writing across-the-curriculum programs without requiring of them a reciprocal interest in narrative—personal, literary, or otherwise. It is possible, after all, to see narrative as core to many if not all academic disciplines. Reports of experiments might be seen as stories scientists tell themselves or, at least, as the result of such stories. Clifford Geertz’s notion of “blurred genres” applies not only to genres in the humanities. When teachers and theorists of composition rushed from “the pedagogy of personal style” (Bizzell, 53) toward “academic prose,” what were we rushing to, what from, and why? Most of us can produce answers that seem to make good pedagogical sense, but I would urge the adoption of answers that respond to some larger ethical questions currently being raised by many critics of the Western intellectual tradition.

How *do* we relate to the animal, the earthy, the concrete, or, to put it in Irigarayan feminist terms, the motherly? As a culture we have difficulty relating to such an “other,” except perhaps in the

idealizations of the Romantics, which only make the separation more acute. "Simple," "homely," "closer to the earth," women, children, and Third World peoples (correspondent perhaps to Wordsworth's peasants) are the objects of Romantic idealization and adulation. Simultaneously and by means of exactly the same descriptors, they are also objects of neoclassical and scientific denigration. Even Vygotsky, who corrected for Piaget's individualist bias, suggested that the Russian peasants he and Luria studied did not practice higher order thinking. A couple of decades after Vygotsky and Luria's study, A. B. Lord found that certain Eastern European peasants could do something we Western academics cannot, i.e., create on the spot long, complicated epic poems, reminiscent of Homer's.

Why must human difference, otherness (or "alterity" as literary critics are now fond of saying) be figured along these poles of adulation or denigration? Is the "other," as certain Lacanian psychoanalytic critics tell us, that which the dominant culture fears and represses? Does the "other" represent, deep in the recesses of memory, the meaningless, engulfing sensuality of the sea/womb? Is the fear of the "other" the fear of a loss of the differentiation of self, as it is in Irigaray's view, that gives it a hard, compact unity and allows it an economical straightforward projection into the future? Is that future a Piagetian future, away from origin and "other" and the "disequilibrium" that the "other" causes, a future of endless self-relation—though now a disinterested rather than an egocentric activity—through the manipulation of purely mental entities? "This final fundamental decentering, which occurs at the end of childhood, prepares for adolescence, whose principal characteristic is a similar liberation from the concrete in favor of interest oriented toward the non-present and the future" (130). However disciplined we might consider these mental operations to be, governed as they are by a systematic logic, we must remember that they offer the solace of predictability; the problems they present can be solved privately, without threat to one's sense of self, without recourse to an "other" who talks back.

To say then, as Hays does, that "basic" or freshman writers often ground their writing in the "concrete, material world" is perhaps to say more than might have been intended. On the literal level, the implication is that these students have not yet fully reached the formal operations stage. On the mythic level, a two-way critique is required, aimed at both our students and ourselves and situated within a larger culture of domination within which we both are sometimes implicated, sometimes made victim. Our problem at

present is that we hardly know, at times, which is which, and how we may proceed in an ethical way as educators and students.

If we step out of the mythic realm for awhile, some things do seem clear. One obvious consequence of Hays' and others' use of Piaget in composition theory (often, as I have said, via Perry) is that our students are figured as children rather than as adults. If we adopt developmentalism at all, we need to consider more closely these portrayals of childhood intelligence. Donaldson found children able to decenter and reason in the concrete-operational stage far earlier than did Piaget. Her critique does more than suggest a shifting of age boundaries for the stages; it causes one to wonder both about the premises under which Piaget researched and the methods he used. Can the purely cognitive ever be divorced from the affective and social, or, as phenomenologists would say, the experiential? In theory, Piaget himself thought not. But theory was in fact all that Piaget cared for. He wanted to further his understanding of universalizable forms of knowledge, not understand the fullest experience of children. Donaldson found that the children she worked with could perform tasks Piaget's "subjects" failed, when those tasks were better explained to them in terms that made sense to them in their world. Just what "their world" is we cannot know with finality, but phenomenological ethnographies about children's lives are now being published that evoke, in me at least, a sense of strangeness and wonder that alternates with the feeling that I do, at some level, understand their experiences. Valerie Polakow's article featuring interviews with children about how they learned to read is especially interesting to me as a writing teacher. What children can tell us about how to teach is not inconsequential.

Long before Donaldson, Vygotsky delivered a critique of Piaget that has achieved belated recognition among students of intellectual development. In his view, infants *begin* life as social beings. The development is not from the egocentered to the social, but from the social to a more interiorized individual consciousness. The phenomenon Piaget termed "egocentric speech"—a child's talking aloud to itself when playing or working alone—Vygotsky saw as the predecessor of inner speech, the silent, completely internal voice of problem-solving we adults experience throughout most of our waking hours. If anyone felt a remove from an audience, in Vygotsky's developmental model, it would more likely be the adult. Thus, if our students truly are more like children than adults, they would certainly be no less likely than we to lack "sensitivity to their reader's perspectives," as Hays says of freshman writers.

Others in the field of composition studies make arguments

similar to Hays'; Linda Flower does so on the authority of both Piaget and Vygotsky. In her highly influential essay "Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing" (originally published in *College English* in 1978, but citations here are to the 1981 reprint in Tate's anthology), Flower concludes that anyone (including adults) facing "cognitively demanding" tasks while attempting to write might lapse back into a kind of inner speech mode to produce what she terms "writer-based prose," since it communicates primarily to the writer herself. Such prose exhibits the highly elided characteristics of inner speech as described by Vygotsky, but also takes the form of the writer's "discovery process," which Flower thinks would be chronological narrative ("First I did this, then that"). It conspicuously lacks the kind of hierarchical ordering we writing teachers expect in analytical thinking and writing. Though the "tedious misdirection" of such prose might be produced by any of us in moments of cognitive stress—thus Flower claims her model is not developmental—it is hard not to notice that the article is written for the benefit of teachers of "basic" and freshman writers. If only we composition teachers can teach such writers that their writer-based prose drafts represent "underprocessed" thought and that the desirable reader-based prose is attainable through revision, Flower believes the problem can be solved. But before solving the problem, I suggest that we ask why one group of people (basic and freshman writers) would accept what is obviously an inferior product ("underprocessed"!), while another group (composition teachers, university professors, professionals outside the university) would not. Are these presumably younger writers "egocentric" and unable to decenter sufficiently to fully imagine an audience? If so, Vygotsky cannot be cited as support. Also, we should examine the characterizing of "discovery" and "narrative." Even if narrative is the first linguistic form one's ideas might take, why should it be evaluated as "underprocessed"? Is it "underprocessed" *because* it takes a narrative form, or for some other reason?

Questions about how the mind works as well as about the function of narrative are currently under debate. Social constructivists, who often cite Vygotsky, offer what seem to me better myths of intellectual development than does Piaget. Borrowing from social constructivism, we might form a different answer to one of the questions above: Why do "basic" and freshman writers accept prose of the sort that we writing teachers would reject? It may be that younger writers inhabit such different social worlds than their teachers that they are forced to learn quite different rules of discourse when they speak and write in college. That this is not a

problem of intellectual development would be clear to any teacher who tried to imagine how poorly he or she might fare linguistically among her or his students' peers, how much of an egghead or a phoney he or she might appear, despite her or his best efforts at fitting in. Yet, as I have already mentioned, Vygotsky's concern with the development of "scientific thinking" in schoolchildren and its link to literacy led him and Luria to suggest that higher-order thinking was only available to the literate adult. All of our students are literate in Vygotsky's sense of the term, we need not be concerned with that. But we should continue to interrogate representatives of developmental schema which privilege one kind of thinking or language use above another, particularly when it is "ours" that is better, "theirs" that is "underprocessed," "simple," or worse.

I do not believe that the interrogative stance I am advocating will necessarily leave us bereft of standards of evaluation, or clueless as to how to teach writing. I am suggesting that the teaching of writing might be a means of exploring different ways of thinking and writing, and that one important inroad might be an investigation of the uses of narrative. We might begin by remembering Hays' words: "Left to their own devices, the [dualistic students] feel most comfortable with narrative or descriptive writing—not because there is anything intrinsically dualistic about those modes but because they are anchored in the material, concrete world as organized by either space or time. (I am of course excluding higher-level description of abstract entities.) And in fact many freshman writers can produce good narrative and descriptive writing. It is when they move into discourse that is hierarchically structured and divorced from concrete reality that they run into difficulties writing balanced and carefully reasoned papers" (23).

We have already discussed egocentrism and found that wanting as an explanation for the production of "writer-based prose." We have considered some implications of an evolutionary myth that establishes and even celebrates a separation of "the material, concrete world" from the abstract. We may question whether the material is less valuable than the abstract and whether the two can be so easily separated. We may certainly question whether narrative is representative of "concrete" as opposed to abstract thinking. In all our questioning, it seems that we might be aided by consulting our students. Their preference for narrative might not always derive from an inability to write in other modes. When I asked an introductory composition class to write an "interesting" expository essay, one bright student quipped, "That's a contradiction in terms, isn't it?"

Last year I taught not freshman or "basic" writers, but mostly juniors and seniors in an upper-division writing course in an elite

university. About half were English majors. Some chose the class because they liked to write and needed another course in their schedules, others because they had been frustrated to greater or lesser degrees by professors' comments on their papers. They had received the general impression that they should improve their writing, but had little notion of how to go about doing that. I invited the students to write in any mode and on any topic that interested them, sometimes assigning projects tailored to a student's individual needs or preferences. Although most made a variety of choices throughout the course of the term, the overwhelming favorite was narrative. Many began with autobiography and moved to a fiction-writing close to their personal experiences; some ended in self-conscious attempts to move into fiction genres they had previously only read or seen performed. They wrote stories about the mysteries of the human psyche; the causes of love and violence; the powers of dreams, ESP, and meditation. Some wrote humorous pieces that chronicled the adventures of protagonists like themselves, and their friends. Far more often than I had expected, their stories questioned the values of their middle-class culture, a university life that demands intense competition from its students, and the professional occupations to which many were about to graduate.

Some might question whether the students chose narrative because it was "easier" than other modes and therefore more likely to get them higher grades. I do not, because I saw, through many intensive conferences, how hard they worked, how much they cared about what they had written, and how delighted they were to receive my critical attention. I began to realize that many of them had not chosen a course in creative writing because they had little interest in belles lettres or in being held to standards associated with "high" literature, though very few objected to my probing questions in conference. The standards were built by student and teacher together.

I wonder about their choices, especially about the movement from autobiography to fiction. Did fiction serve as a tool to allow them to move beyond the confines of their own experiences? To experiment with the different forms that language can shape? If so, is it an alternative mode of exploration to that of so-called dispassionate analysis? Since most of the students did write what Britton would term "transactional" pieces as well, their competence in the discourse preferred by the university was demonstrated. Yet few seemed enchanted by its possibilities. Most seemed to think that "the real world" may require it of them in some form, and that

persuaded a few to practice nonnarrative modes, but their hearts were not in them.

Perhaps we all ought to be alarmed by my experiment. The course was entitled “Intermediate Expository Writing.” Even if the students wrote what they wished, and worked hard on their revisions, was the university achieving its goals, which, though not made explicit, might be similar to Hays’: the production of “discourse that is hierarchically structured and divorced from concrete reality . . . balanced and carefully reasoned”? The best answer I can give at present is, I do not know. All I know is that I want my students to think and write well and to leave my class wanting to write more. When I try to consider how narrative may contribute to that goal, I think first of Britton’s belief that “expressive” writing (within which much of the narrative we have been discussing would fall) represents not only our earliest childish attempts at writing, but underlies the other later-achieved modes. The fact that narrative is prior would not necessarily imply that it is simpler or lesser in the sense that the concrete-operational cognitive stage is “less valid” than the formal operations stage in Piaget’s estimation. And no matter how we value a child’s early narratives, we ought not forget that the production of narrative does change, maturing and developing—yes, I think we can use those words!—over time.

Harold Rosen, one of Britton’s colleagues, decries the denigration of the story simply because it is something everybody—even children—can do. “You will not need reminding that in our society common property is suspect. What everyone possesses is scarcely worth possessing” (25). But we may be too quick to claim others’ “property” as our own. Some of my students’ stories seemed so strange to me! Yet even when I was not initially among them, there were always some genuine appreciators in the classroom who could often persuasively argue a story’s value. Some stories were irresistible to us all. Labov’s description of the stories told him by young inner-city Black men comes to mind:

Many of the narratives cited here rise to a very high level of competence; when they are quoted in the exact words of the speaker, they will command the total attention of an audience in a remarkable way, creating a deep and attentive silence that is found in academic or political discussion. (Rosen, 10)

So much for the claim that “basic” and freshman writers “have difficulty applying contextual considerations to [their] writing decisions” (Hays, 15) and lack “sensitivity to their readers’ perspectives” (Hays, 21)—if Labov’s informants are to be judged

dualistic, and if context and audience are concepts applicable to oral as well as written discourse.

The best expository writer in my class researched well and organized his ideas “in discourse that [was] hierarchically structured and divorced from concrete reality”; his arguments were “balanced and carefully reasoned.” But he could not, as Elbow urges, “breathe experience into words” (314). Composition teachers nearly always find common ground in complaining about the sad state of analytical prose in the social and natural sciences. Somehow, though, the failures of those writers do not count as much as those of our story-writing students, perhaps all the more now that writing-across-the-curriculum has claimed basic writing as part of its territory. Mike Rose’s 1983 essay, “Remedial Writing Courses: A Critique and a Proposal” called for less personal narrative and more “academic” writing in basic writing classrooms. David Schwalm, among others, heeded Rose’s call. He argued that “in writing, as in diving, there are degrees of difficulty,” first invoking the principle that there is some kind of hierarchical, programmatic model against which we can and should “diagnose” our students’ writing problems, and second, claiming that that model places some traditional version of “academic writing” at the top of its hierarchy. As expected, Schwalm wants to move students “from narrating and describing to solving problems,” “from informal to formal contexts and audiences,” “from narrower to broader sociocultural awareness,” “from concrete to abstract topics,” and “from experienced-based to data-based discourse” (636). But as all good cross-curricular programs must emphasize, abstractions mean nothing when divorced from experience, though it is true enough that abstractions divorced from experience can be used as dehumanizing tools. We might well wish to applaud the good sense of many students who turn away from some of the abstract reasoning promoted at the university, even if those students do not always give us balanced and carefully reasoned arguments for doing so. On the other hand, the stories themselves may constitute such arguments—if only we and our students could learn how to read them.

All abstractions and generalizations are, at however great a remove, rooted in a tissue of experience and every tale invites judgements and reasoning, and enfolded in its particularities are seductive invitations to penetrate its secrets, to lure us into values. . . . The resolute insistence on narrative in education in defiance of other priorities is then at the very

heart of the attempt to keep meaning itself at the centre of language education. (Rosen 12, 26)

Whether learning to read student stories more critically would help us to bridge the celebrated split between science and fiction, the expository/analytical/argumentative and the personal/experiential/expressive is debatable. For Jerome Bruner, science and formal logic belong to one mode of thought, stories to another: they are “fundamentally different” though “complementary” (12). Yet even in Bruner’s estimation both scientific and ordinary language are “forms of world making”—i.e., they constitute the stories we tell ourselves to explain the world (48). “The most that I can claim,” he says about his essay entitled “Two Modes of Thought,” “is that, as with the stereoscope, depth is better achieved by looking from two points at once” (10). But in order to achieve stereoscopic vision, Bruner finds himself correcting for bias, concentrating “almost entirely on the less understood of the pair: on narrative” (15).

We may not know exactly how these two modes of thought (and presumably two modes of discourse) work together or can be taught together, or even if narrative and analytical thinking are so separate from one another. A colleague of mine who teaches at an inner-city college told me his students’ belief in astrology indicated a lack of critical thinking. One of my “basic” writing students, who hailed from a similar inner-city environment, recently offered a rejoinder to an Army recruitment advertisement which said, “You may be flying one of these [airplanes]—if you’re cut out for it.” “Just think,” my student wrote, “if you’re not cut out for it, you may be washing that airplane instead of flying it.” Although they are not included in his rough draft for this “analytical” essay (he figured that anything personal would be unwelcome), there are doubtless many stories lurking within this critical retort. One that he told me in conference originated from a cousin who had witnessed two recruits receive harsh treatment in a Marines’ boot camp, then later discovered they had committed suicide together. Even so, my student knew others who had come out O.K.; thus, he concluded, “if you can take the pressure, it could be worth it.” What I often seem to do in conferences is tap a narrative root, listening for the stories that explain confusion and lacunae in their rough drafts. The relation of experience to knowledge and authority is crucial, as is the relation of narrative to analysis. These relations are not reducible to stages or steps in cognitive development or “critical thinking.” If there is some sort of hierarchy, I do not know what it would be, unless it were political.

The same issues arise when we consider argumentative writing,

which is supposed to require the taking on of others' perspectives in a way that narrative apparently does not. However, when Hays writes: "I should add that I suspect the particular adversative audience situation given subjects in our research study was too difficult for dualistic thinkers and that they would do better with an audience more like a group of peers—perhaps teenagers with a history of drunk driving" (24), is the issue really that an "adversative audience" makes writing "too difficult"? I suppose a peer audience would correspond to Schwalm's "informal" audience; perhaps "dualistic" thinking (often referred to as dogmatic) corresponds to Schwalm's "narrower sociocultural awareness." But why should we academics think we are the only "formal audience" that counts? And why is our "sociocultural awareness" "broader" than that of others? Bernstein's working-class English schoolboys and Heath's "Roadville" children come from backgrounds where the authorized discourse is bound by rules far different from those rules which the university uses and respects; their thought and language may seem dogmatic and provincial to us but, so far, we have not thought much about how ours strikes them.

Similarly, what are we to make of the kind of dogmatism one hears among liberationists within academia? I am thinking right now of a feminist literary critic speaking about a Hemingway story at the 1988 4Cs: "If I am honest, I have to say that there is only one correct reading—mine." I can recall no audible gasps from the audience. Dogmatic assertions serve a function both within academia and without. Black-power advocates of the mid- and late-sixties deliberately chose a dogmatic and confrontational rhetoric. Even suburban young people of today might have reasons for taking what we would call dogmatic stands, bolstering their own shaky sense of adult self-confidence by reinvoking their parents' truisms or by making the equally staunch pronouncements of independence. Breaking away from, or acquiring for oneself, authority of whatever sort may be very difficult, but I do not think we want to call such difficulty cognitive, or even linguistic, in the way that Schwalm means it, for if we do, how do we describe some of our own colleagues, or the parents of the children in Bernstein's and Heath's studies? Are they stuck in some stage of lower cognitive or linguistic development too? If so, whose "adult" development are we describing? That of Perry's Harvard graduates only, or of mainstream university graduates generally? Figures of ourselves, or of the leaders of the dominant culture?

With researchers like Hays we are clearly far from the invidious deficit developmental model of the 1960s which described inner-city Black children as "cut down at the very trunk of

academic aptitude” (Bereiter and Englemann, 39). As Martinez and Martinez make clear, developmental psychology has come a long way. Bruner is an eminent example: “Human culture simply provides ways of development among the many that are made possible by our plastic genetic inheritance. . . . To say, then, that a theory of development is “culture free” is to make not a wrong claim, but an absurd one” (135). Perhaps now we need to expand our notion of difference and critique our own more subtle positions of hegemony. More than likely, the change from dualism to relativism that Perry saw is not so much a cognitive progression as a movement toward greater socialization into a particular academic culture, a culture which is not monolithic, though it may seem so in Rose’s, Schwalm’s, and others’ representations, and which ought not to be immune from criticism any more than our students’ writing and, by implication, their cultural backgrounds should be.

When Peter Elbow and others say they are writing first for themselves, rather than an audience, we do not accuse them of writing writer-based prose. The “self” that they are writing for is a self socialized within an academic community, a self that shares many values with its audience. Some of our students are building an academic self but most, I think, are probably not. Most would prefer a different audience with values closer to theirs. One of the many questions that faces us is whether we can ever be that audience and how, if we can, we can be of aid to our students.

Listening to what our students say about their preference for narrative may help us help them and simultaneously teach us more about human differences and development, intellectual and otherwise. Are stories interesting because they are generally about people? Are my students so successful at writing narratives that reflect upon the writer’s past or upon fiction that follows a character’s development because they enjoy changes in perspectives, contrary to what they are supposed to enjoy as “dualists”? Does most academic writing, by contrast, seem static, assertive, absolute—reports of hard facts and impenetrable theories? Surely our students do not see, as we do, how ideas change with time and through debate and how they are reflective of scholars’ personalities and interests. They might see these things if we invited them to share more actively in our scholarship, as some composition teachers are now doing. But they do have a right to pursue their own interests, to choose differently than we. It would be better for us all if they could do so without being labelled as somehow intellectually lacking.

For the question persists: if we are not nudging our students beyond some developmental stage (like dualism), what can we do?

How *can* we understand development? I find students usually welcome challenge when it does not undercut their self-esteem and when they themselves are invited to challenge us and one another. If we must think of learning as development, let us at least remove it from the Piagetian-Perry stage model. I would argue that Klaus Riegel's theory of human development suggests some possibilities. Hays cites Riegel but does not mention his sharp critique of Piaget's formal operations stages:

Piaget's theory describes thought in its alienation from its creative, dialectic basis. It represents a prototype reflecting the goals of our higher educational system which, in turn, are reflecting the nonartistic and noncreative aspects in the intellectual history of western man. (1973, 363)

Riegel prefers what he calls modes of "dialectical operations" which correspond to the modes Piaget describes in his stages. But for Riegel, such modes are not necessarily hierarchically related.

Persons might reach dialectic maturity without ever having passed through the period of formal operations or even through that of concrete operations. This provision also introduces intra-individual variation. The skills and competence in one area of concern, for instance in the sciences, might be of the type of formal dialectic operations; those in a second area, for instance in everyday business transactions, might be of the type of concrete dialectic operations; those in a third area, for instance in artistic activities, might be of the type of preoperational dialectic intelligence; finally, those of intimate personal interactions might be of the sensory-motor and therefore of the original dialectic type. (1973, 365-366)

Riegel bases his developmental model in a later essay (1976) on a series of dialogic encounters which guarantee change in every person's life until the moment of death. What I like about Riegel's dialogic notion of development is that reciprocity is assumed. Riegel argues that "an analysis that not only searches for answers but also for the questions includes at a minimum two individuals, both operating interactively over time and thus growing and developing together, for example, a mother and her child" (689). Again, "But development neither lies in the individual alone nor in the social group but in the dialectical interactions of both" (694).

Riegel seems to suggest that change, or development of some kind, will occur regardless of anyone's plan to teach or learn. However, we ought not to believe that such "development" will always be positive in the way that, say, the biological development

of our bodies in adolescence is a positive step toward reproductive adulthood. Our students may be changed through their relationships with us such that they decide to reject certain avenues of learning entirely, as I believe may now often be the case. We may be changed by our associations with them, such that we take our new knowledge and invest it in descriptions of them that make a healthy dialogical relationship impossible or that create an “asymmetry” that can only be corrected under pressure of vast social change (see Riegel’s description of liberation movement development—1976, 694).

Vast social change may in fact be called for, though there is only so much that we can do within our classrooms even if we assent to that. We can, however, question our own assumptions about those people whose difference confronts us every Monday morning. What we stand to lose is the comfortable belief in our own superiority and in the superiority of certain types of knowledge and discourse that we, as conservators of the Western intellectual tradition, have long privileged but perhaps with too little scrutiny. We may have to consider whether reading an E. B. White or a Lewis Thomas essay is a “better” way to spend one’s time than watching Oprah Winfrey or “The Twilight Zone” or reading a Stephen King novel—discourse genres which my students say they drew upon last year in their writing. Acceptance of our students’ differing interests and backgrounds is not a prescription for intellectual sloth; indeed, it may make possible new challenges, ones that will arise out of the variety of thinking and writing that takes place both within and outside of academia. The prospect is not an easy one; we cannot harken back uncritically to those advocating the “personal style.” We may draw sustenance (again, not uncritically) from the “mother” of basic writing, Mina Shaughnessy, who, while calling for more research in developmentalism, took ironic note of a reciprocal need.

But I have created a fourth stage in my developmental scheme, which I am calling *Diving In* in order to suggest that the teacher who has come this far must now make a decision that demands professional courage—the decision to remediate himself, to become a student of new disciplines and of his students themselves. . . . (68)

We will need to inquire more thoroughly than ever before into the resources of narrative, as well as into the richness of our students’ individual talents and experiences. Respect for the dialogic partner’s otherness may leave us searching “for answers but also for

the questions.” Recalling both Riegel and Irigaray, might we say that wonder about the (m)other is the basis of all knowledge?

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