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# A Nudge Is Best

## Helping Students through the Perry Scheme of Intellectual Development

Robert J. Kloss

"Most people would rather die than think, and most people do."

Bertrand Russell

In "Critical Issues in the Assessment of Student Development," Gary Hanson (1982) asserts that "our assessment of student development must be refined to become more diagnostic in nature. . . . A closer link must be made between the constructs of student development and their antecedent causes" (61). He then posits a concrete instance, that of an instructor aware of the Perry Scheme attempting to move students from a dualistic to a multiplicitic mode of knowing, noting that the teacher would find a half-dozen questions helpful. Among these, three stand out: "What teaching method or style challenges students who think in dualistic ways? What causes some students to adopt a more complex mode of thinking? How much change from one mode of thinking to another can be expected in a year, a semester, or a month?" (61)

As a teacher who has worked consciously and conscientiously with the Perry Scheme in the classroom for more than ten years, I have reached some tentative answers to Hanson's questions, which if not fully correct are

at least, in Robert Frost's charming phrase, "momentary stays against confusion."

Several of my conclusions at this point follow: (1) that the best subject matter within my discipline to challenge dualistic students and stimulate such movement is fiction and poetry, especially the latter, since it provides more possibilities for ambiguity, varied interpretations, and multiple perspectives, three of the challenges that constrain adoption of multiplicity and relativism; (2) that small group work used frequently fosters and reinforces the exchange and importance of multiple perspectives; (3) that free guided discussion—with the students talking 80–90 percent of the time—nurtures growth because it diminishes the instructor's authoritative role and increases reliance on peers' perspectives and contributions to creating knowledge; and (4) that expectations need be kept high that students *can* achieve understanding, and that without exception they be both encouraged and constrained to substantiate opinions, ideas, and hypotheses with evidence.

My first conclusion need not deter professors who do not teach fiction and poetry. With respect to content, though, no matter the discipline, what is necessary is that the students be exposed to ambiguity and multiple interpretations and perspectives, so that they can be stimulated to growth. As Perry (1968) himself points out, the

biological metaphor of growth implies that to grow is better than not to grow, a value held in "significant areas of our culture, finding their most concentrated expression in such institutions as colleges of liberal arts, mental health movements and the like" (44–45). My remaining conclusions apply more to technique than content and are directly applicable to any discipline.

William G. Perry's epistemological scheme was first set forth in his *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme* (1968). It is one of the few developmental schemes useful for teaching that has been proved by voluminous replication and has been more recently expanded in Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986) and Baxter, *Knowing and Reasoning in College* (1992). A brief summary at this point would be useful for those unfamiliar with the scheme.

### Perry's Phases of Development

Perry posits that students move, in their learning, through a series of fairly well-defined phases that can be delineated by detailing the ways in which they view themselves in relationship to what they believe knowledge to be: dualism, multiplicity, relativism, and commitment in relativism.

In *dualism*, students view knowledge as received truth. It is facts, correct theories, and right answers. In this naive epistemology, professors already

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know these things, and education consists of their revealing them to the students. Learning thus is simply taking notes, memorizing the revelations, and recapitulating them on demand, by way of tests or papers. Students are made uneasy by omission of portions of the text—another “infallible” authority—and by being asked to think independently, offer their own opinions, and draw their own conclusions. They believe that teachers, who have all the right answers, should simply disclose them instead of making the stu-

personal feelings are the criteria for judgment.

As more and more instructors demand evidence, support, substantiation for the students’ conclusions, however, students begin to temper their views and see that instructors are trying to help them learn a way of doing things, but their criticism now shifts to the instructors’ not making their evaluation criteria clear. They have clearly not yet learned to shoulder responsibility for their work. When they begin to learn how to argue, coun-

Perry’s final phase, *commitment in relativism*. This requires them to integrate the relatively objective, removed, and rational procedures of academia with their more empathic and experiential approaches to all other aspects of their lives.

The foregoing condensations do not capture the complexity or richness of the Perry Scheme, nor do they speak to the supports and challenges that must be provided to students during each phase. Once the epistemological stage of the students in the classroom becomes known, these supports and challenges do need to be provided, as I shall shortly show. But first teachers must become aware of the existence of developmental stages in growth such as Perry delineates.

Jerry Gaff (1991), in his study of reform in general education, recalls evaluating the progress of a new interdisciplinary program at one college and asking the faculty how the students were responding. Faculty members replied that the students were passive and needed to be told what to do, they tended not to participate in the discussion of key texts, and they avoided drawing their own conclusions. Recognizing the behavior as characteristic of students at a particular level, Gaff inquired of the faculty if they had ever heard of the Perry Scheme. None had. After explaining it briefly, he found that faculty attitudes toward the student behavior had changed for the better (184–85). (I remember quite clearly my own initial exposure to the Perry Scheme and how stunned I was by its explanatory power. Much if not most of the bewildering student behavior I had been at a loss to understand fell into place on the scheme, and I then both understood them and judged them less harshly as a result.)

Gaff justifiably draws at least two implications for teaching from this experience with teachers unfamiliar with Perry’s work. First, college instructors should understand—perhaps even take it for granted—that the typical freshman student cannot perform sophisticated mental functioning. He or she is unable, for instance, to cope with two conflicting interpretations, both of

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## **We should attend to students’ needs for challenges, to stretch their cognitive powers, and for supports, to reduce the threat of failure and the insecurity of not knowing something with certainty.**

dents perform what to them seem senseless tasks.

For this same reason, peers as a source of knowledge are rejected out of hand. Dualistic students spend a great deal of time trying to figure out and are confused by “what it is that the instructor really wants.” Their most nerve-wracking confusion results when authorities disagree. Subsequently, as multiple interpretations and diverse opinions manifest themselves more and more in their classrooms, faith in authorities and right answers is worn away, and they conclude that, at least in some areas, no one knows the answers. They have now entered multiplicity.

In *multiplicity*, knowledge is simply a matter of opinion. Professors, then, are not authorities with the right answers; they’re just people with opinions. And, in this still-naïve stage, because “everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion,” the students’ are as good as the instructor’s or anyone else’s. All opinions, they adamantly declare from their vantage point, are equal. Consequently, they are baffled at instructors’ criticisms of their work, believing that prejudice, whim, and

terargue, consider alternatives, and offer several possible conclusions, they are entering relativism.

In *relativism*, they learn to weigh evidence and distinguish between weak and strong support. What has previously been just ritualistically pleasing the instructor by following abstract academic rules for argument now becomes a way of thinking, and students achieve new insights about what it means to know and to learn. They now understand—those few who reach this stage during a college career—that knowledge is contextual: What one “knows” about anything or concludes about something is colored by one’s perspective, assumptions, and methods of inquiry. Most questions and problems thus become more complex. Faculty members now become resources to help students learn disciplinary methods of analysis; learning itself becomes use of the methods to understand complexities.

Finally, when students recognize that they must eventually make choices and commitments, they transfer these understandings of complexities and diverse perspectives from academic pursuits to the creation of a personal world view. They have now reached

which may have some explanatory power. Second, teachers should attend to students' needs for challenges, to stretch their cognitive powers, and for supports, to reduce the threat of failure and help them cope with the insecurity of not knowing something with certainty (185-86).

Practical approaches to these matters have appeared in the literature in the past decade (Andrews 1981; Brookfield 1991; Hays 1990; Moore 1990; Rodgers 1983; Tiberius 1990). More recently, Toni-Lee Capossela (1993) has collected a dozen useful essays that foster critical thinking, a number of which (e.g., Capossela, Jones, and Zeigler) specifically employ the Perry Scheme in the construction of individual and sequential writing assignments typical of the freshman course in composition. Most, if not all, of these are adaptable to other disciplines. Libby Jones (1993), for instance, argues for moving students out of dualism through assignments that rely heavily upon dialectical thinking and writing. She builds upon Jack Meiland's (1981) argumentative essay structure in his *College Thinking*, which constrains students to assume multiple viewpoints and possibly recognize that truth can actually lie in more than one of them. William Zeiger (1993), too, follows this path, employing African folk tales as a vehicle for the journey. Meiland himself copiously demonstrates the writing of the multi-viewpoint paper with topics from education, politics, and sociology.

From my experience, I would like to detail the most useful challenges to undergraduates (mostly freshmen) in my literature, writing, and linguistics classes, those challenges that help them move from dualism at least to multiplicity and perhaps to incipient relativism. It is questionable that any further movement through the phases is either possible or desirable within the limits of one semester. As it is, students under the constraints of complex ways of thinking sometimes, in Perry's words, "retreat, temporize, or escape" as alternatives to growth (1968, 177 ff.) A nudge is better than a shove in these matters.

## Challenging Dualists

The example I will use is dualists, the phase of the typical freshman student. For this group, my goal is to create environments and tasks that invite right/wrong thinkers to change themselves. They should thus be helped to appreciate multiple points of view and accept them as legitimate. They should learn, especially, to perform basic analysis, compare and contrast, and justify their statements. I help them, for instance, by doing the following:

1. Providing copious experience—as concretely as possible—with two or three conflicting, alternative, or paradoxical points of view: "In these essays we have two conflicting, mutually exclusive ideas about the status of black vernacular English. What now?"

2. Structuring each point of view, breaking it up if necessary into smaller, more digestible units: "Let's take Mitchell's first point. What evidence does he offer for black vernacular English being 'ungrammatical,' as he puts it?"

3. Reinforcing repeatedly that alternative points of view may be legitimate: "So according to how we conceptualize this sentence—'He is taller than I/me'—and at least two ways are perfectly possible—the word *than* could be either a conjunction or a preposition and would change the case of the word that follows it?"

4. Requiring students to explain concretely the reasons for any point that they reject: "Scott, you say the poem is lousy, but you don't give the class any reasons beyond your statement. How about some?"

5. Responding to overgeneralizations, absolute statements, and blanket appeals to authority with questions about instances in which the authority might be challenged, the generalization not hold true: "I know what the editor of the text says about this poem in the paragraph that follows it, but I think he is dead wrong."

6. Reinforcing the legitimacy of students' personal views and experiences: "So something like this happened to you once, Maria, and you felt exactly the same way."

7. Reinforcing that even if one accepts rational arguments and copious evidence, it is still possible to change one's mind: "When the discussion started, Alice, you thought the opposite. What happened in the last half hour to change your mind?"

To create an environment in which these kinds of comments can be made, of course, an instructor should provide compassionate aid for the dualist in the form of supports. Among these should be a high degree of structure to operate comfortably within, plentiful concrete examples, and multiple opportunities to practice the skills of complex thinking.

It is usually helpful, as well, to determine at the outset of the semester the level of cognitive development upon which students are functioning. This information suggests which supports and which challenges one should offer to the group or to select individuals. For instance, if at all possible, instructors should have students in the first class write a short diagnostic essay on one of two topics: The Best Class I Ever Had, or How I Learn Best and How I Know That. Either of these topics will enable them to see that the students will fairly readily fall into the categories of the Perry Scheme with the vast majority responding as dualists, others scattered among the remaining levels. The following (Rodgers 1983) are typical examples of "Best Class" responses:

*Dualist:* "My best class was history last year. It was a class in world history. The teacher's lectures were clear and well-organized. He knew his stuff, and he would go over things till no questions remained. You knew what was expected and exactly how you would be graded. He was not vague and wandering all over the place like my English teacher."

*Multiplist:* "My favorite class taken in college was English 261. I enjoy reading novels and short stories and that is what this class involved. I also like the class because the teacher encouraged the students to participate and state their own ideas. I like a class where the teacher does not just tell you everything but lets you state your opinion. Whether he agreed or not never mattered because different meanings could be read into the stories. In the class I got to know a lot of

my classmates fairly well which made me feel more comfortable."

*Relativist*: "My best class was Genetics 3-002. Genetics is a relatively new discipline and those working in the field had proposed a lot of hypotheses to account for certain things but the teacher didn't even pretend that he had the answers. The course offered you a real chance to push yourself to think and try out new ideas. I suppose that you could have passed the tests even if you didn't read the book—it required that you solve problems, not memorize stuff."

Once instructors have a sense of the distribution of their class along the Perry Scheme, they are better prepared to adapt lessons, comments, and conferences to both that probable majority of dualists and to the minority who appear to be on other levels.

Movement through the Perry positions, if it occurs at all, can then be tracked in the responses of the students to the class, the instructor, and the content through the semester. One way to do this quickly and easily is by using the One-Minute Paper advocated by Angelo and Cross (1993; see also Light 1990; Kloss 1993). In this classroom assessment technique, the instructor reserves a few minutes at the end of class to allow students to write an anonymous one-minute response to a question or a statement on a 3" x 5" index card. Commonly used are, "What was the most important thing you learned in this class?" or "What one question still remains for you?" The cards are then collected, read, and responded to by the instructor in the next class.

During the first several weeks in my freshman courses when I ask them to simply tell me how things are going, responses like the following are most typical (emphases throughout, except where noted, are mine):

"You help us link these ideas together but I don't know if everything we said in class is correct and if it's everything we needed to know. *Can you say in class that we got all the points we were supposed to?*" "I would like you as the teacher to point out the more important topics from each chapter and ask the class questions." "I feel the class is going very well. However, I feel that there could be a little more input on the stories from the professor be-

cause *he knows more about the stories and points of the stories than the students.*" "*I think the stories would be easier to understand if you explained them.*" "Overall I think things are going well but I also think *you should participate or run the class a little more.*"

Here the distinct voices of dualists can be heard loud and clear, resonating in the anxiety about peers being a reliable source of knowledge and in the attribution of truth to a single authority,



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the teacher. At this point early in the semester, my challenges are simply to persist in "making them do it," to encourage and verbally reward diverse viewpoints, and to demonstrate that knowledge is neither proclaimed nor found, but created.

About a month to six weeks later, different types of responses begin to appear as students move into multiplicity: "This [group discussion] allows us to learn for ourselves and to discover the *many themes or ideas in the story* and then to use them to 'crack' the point of the story (Sort of like a detective!)." "It [discussion] always gives me new ideas and *different ways and views* to look at a story." "Once the class starts analyzing it together, the story seems to fall into focus. It seems as though *there are many different paths* you can take when analyzing a

story." "The stories are interesting and I seem to discover *different aspects* of them when discussed in class." Acceptance of multiple viewpoints and peers as legitimate sources of knowledge has begun to manifest itself.

Resistance to the complexities of thinking in a new way, however, occasionally surfaces through expressions of annoyance and a desire to cling to certainty: "It bothers me a little that everyone seems to read into the stories a lot. In a way, it's good because it

*gives me a view that I would never thought existed. I'd be interested in what you thought of the story also.*" "I enjoy having the different people's opinions, but I feel that there are aspects of the story which we, as students are not capable of fully understanding and therefore *I feel you should not hold back as much in directing us in the right direction.*"

Some dualists even become guardedly and obliquely hostile: "I do not feel that I'm learning to write better or think clearer thoughts as to what I'm reading. I find when we discuss a story *it takes on no direction and just sort of hangs there.*"

Comments like these last, though, are both expectable and justifiable. We as teachers need to remember that growth creates a sense of loss in students, the loss of a certainty that has

sustained them and been a refuge in an increasingly complex and confusing world. I shall return to this matter toward the end of this discussion.

The stage of multiplicity that most reach is laden, moreover, with new cognitive pitfalls: "I have learned that *everyone's opinion is alright*." "In this class I've learned that my opinion is valuable. Also that *no one is wrong in believing what they believe*." Because the world will never tolerate such innocence, however charming it may be in the young, I must bring new challenges to bear on naive beliefs. Especially useful in this regard are application of the rules of evidence and logical analyses of arguments supporting one literary interpretation rather than another.

### Critical Thinking

As students wrestle with the ambiguities of literature and as critical thinking succeeds in complicating what to them was once quite simple, they tend to employ metaphors or familiar phrases to explain the change to themselves and to register their discomfort and perplexity. Meaning has become elusive, covert, coded, foreign: "I like that you have gotten me to *read into* a story and not just read the story." "Not only are we learning to *read between the lines* of literature, but we're also learning about ourselves." "I can [now] figure out *the real meaning* behind the story." "I am still experiencing difficulty in *translating* the poetry." "[The class] is motivating my desire to understand and *decipher* short stories." "I've learned that some things are not as they seem. I also learned that behind almost everything there is a *hidden meaning*."

Such metaphorical expressions disclose that students are now struggling heroically with the ambiguities of literature, the complexities of art. Some become overtly exasperated at the difficulties of rigorous analysis and logical thought and discussion: "Why must we *totally over-analyze everything*??? It gets so *boring and monotonous*" (emphases in the original). Most struggle on.

The students having reached the threshold of relativism, it is now time

to re-introduce and emphasize evaluation of literary interpretations by means of non-absolute criteria such as one particular analysis being more persuasive, stimulating, enlightening, or coherent than another. Here I stress, as much as possible, the result being an organic whole. Words, metaphors, images, behavior of characters—all these tightly connect to express a theme.

Again, it is only fair to note that I have here highly oversimplified this progression, and any given class is almost always a mix of levels at any given time. Various students meet various challenges, however well supported, easily, willy-nilly, or not at all. Eternal dualists sometimes remain. Consider this response from middle to late in the semester of my upper level linguistics course: "It's a different [difficult?] course, I'm not sure why you have to take it, because people are set in their ways and probably won't use much of what we learned. I just want to get a 'B.' I don't like the book at all. It's impossible for me to get anything out of it. I would like basically for our classes to contain what we need to know for tests since the book is no help." It is hard to know where or how to begin extricating this upperclassman from this academic agony, but it is undoubtedly safe to say that, the credentialing system being what it is, dualists receive baccalaureates, just like everyone else.

Just as such mixed levels in a classroom raise important questions for planning and for teaching, so they do for evaluating. Some questions about evaluation include: How can I devise evaluation that helps students understand the complexity of knowledge? How can I assess their ability to identify parts of the whole, to compare and contrast, and to learn to explain abstractly the reasons they hold their views? How can I construct tests that are not merely reading or vocabulary exercises, but true assessments of the analytical skills of the students?

One possibility among many suggests itself here. Expose your criteria to students in this way: provide them with a set of sample questions that deal with the same content at different levels of intellectual skill (Bloom's taxonomy, of

course, comes to mind immediately). Hold a discussion of the differences in the nature of the questions. If possible, provide as well sample answers and discuss those in detail. This last will be especially fruitful for dualists—who feel supported by models—if comparison and contrast of both appropriate and inappropriate answers is made, demonstrating the presence or absence of complex thinking.

As the many student references above to the pleasure and benefits of open discussion demonstrate, peer groups in the classroom become invaluable in moving students through the scheme, even if only used briefly. Positing a question to open a class and letting groups exchange answers for ten minutes before open discussion can be a most worthwhile use of that time. A simple question such as, "What is the most important word in the opening paragraph?" when written on for five minutes constrains use of higher cognitive skills: analysis in interpretation of the part related to the whole, evaluation in making a judgment of value, and synthesis in composing a written answer. Exchanging responses with others further involves all students in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

All levels of students, as Capossella (1993, 58) has noted, profit from such exchanges; dualists see that intelligent peers disagree on important issues; multiplists observe that diversity is more than the idea that "everyone has a right to their own opinion," and they begin to distinguish well-supported from poorly-supported ideas; and relativists gain by listening to others speak of difficulties of reaching decisions, of commitment, and of questions that still remain.

Over the years, I have also learned to make more use of a highly undervalued teaching skill, something I like to call creative silence. I have learned to talk less in class, and my students have responded accordingly and learned to talk more. As David Perkins (1993) in his continuing studies of the cognitive aspects of teaching and learning has recently declared, "Teaching is less about what the teacher does than what

the teacher gets the students to do” (31). Getting students to talk more is usually a simple matter of waiting. Or, rather, a complex matter of balancing their needs with yours. They need to find their own voices, to develop their own perspectives, to create with the others around them knowledge that is more firmly theirs for *their* having made it. As one of my freshmen put it, “You allow the students to be open and run the class. You don’t stand up

in my opinion.” “When I come to class I don’t know what to think, but after we discuss the story, I understand it much better and I think this helps me very much.” “Occasionally I will be surprised by the progress of a classmate and realize that I, too, have benefited in proportion to my contributions. I do hope that those students who have remained silent will loosen up a bit for all our sakes.” “Class is fun and the way we learn about the sto-

ured out that *I* was the one that was anxious, I was okay.” Frequently we need do no more than overcome our anxiety, silently count to three to lengthen the wait-time for a response, and sit tight. Mary Budd Rowe (1987) points out that by increasing wait-time from the typical one second to as little as three seconds, the effects on students are many and beneficial. Among other things, they increase the variety and number of their responses, increase the length of their responses from 300 to 700 percent, are more speculative about alternatives, offer support with more logic and evidence, increase their questions, and increase their confidence and sense of control in the classroom (97-98).

## **G**etting students to talk more is usually a simple matter of waiting. Or, rather, a complex matter of balancing their needs with yours. They need to create with others knowledge that is more firmly theirs for *their* having made it.

in front of the class and throw the chapters back to us. One interprets and understands more this way.” Though I still lecture on occasion, I more often than not follow Wilbert McKeachie’s advice: “I lecture only when I’m convinced it will do more good than harm.”

Marsha Magolda Baxter (1992), in her study of student development, *Knowing and Reasoning in College*, points out that allowing students their voices focuses on their emerging knowledge and not ours. “Being careful to balance confirmation and contradiction, the teacher introduces her or his knowledge in the context of the students’ evolving thinking” creating instead of a monologue a *dialogue* of authority. To accomplish this, “We need to be silent and suspend the authority automatically ceded to us by the students, the classroom structure, and the academic system” (276).

When we trust and respect them, students can learn to speak for themselves. Listen: “In the beginning, I really didn’t like the class at all. But after a few weeks I’ve gained an interest in the class. I think it’s good that we have a discussion every class on the stories that we read to find out each other’s interpretations and viewpoints of the story. So the class is improving

ries is fun, but beyond that it is a great way to gain knowledge. I remember more when we do the discussions.” “What’s also good is that we figure it out ourselves, it’s not handed to us, or rammed down our throat like lima beans.”

(This last parent/child simile serves to remind me of how often students reveal themselves and their perceptions of us in implied metaphors. Another example: “Maybe if you would threaten us in some way to speak up in class there would be more people talking. You encourage us a lot but a threat here and there wouldn’t hurt either.” And I can’t begin to count the times I have read in literature essays “analyze” misspelled as “analize,” confirming for me once again that on some deep level students see themselves as regularly producing from their guts a praiseworthy product to parental specifications.)

Students’ growth—their creation of knowledge for themselves—is virtually impossible in a classroom where the instructor does all or most of the talking. A frustrated colleague once asked me what I do when students don’t respond, and I said, “I just wait a little longer.” Two weeks later, she reported that things were going better in her class. As she phrased it, “Once I fig-

### **Alternatives to Questioning**

J. T. Dillon (1988, 1990), who has probably done the best empirical research on questioning both within and without the classroom, convincingly argues the value of the instructor’s silence and of other alternatives to questioning in the classroom. He demonstrates that, like many professionals who elicit information from others (e.g., psychiatrists, pollsters), we as teachers—Socrates to the contrary notwithstanding—would probably do better to ask *fewer* questions and let the respondents—in our case, students—talk more. Dillon (1990, 179-81) suggests at least nine alternatives to questioning, an adequate repertory for teachers who wish to involve students more actively:

1. Make a declarative or factual statement: “Huck is in a dilemma here; he must choose between turning Jim in and eternal damnation.” (Expects elaboration)

2. Make a reflective statement: “So, Dana, you think Hamlet still doesn’t have enough evidence at this point.” (Shows attention; invites further response)

3. Describe the student’s state of mind: “Jerry, you seem to feel strongly that Miss Emily was simply ‘crazy,’ as you put it.” (Probes for reflective analysis)

4. Describe your own state of mind:

"I'm confused; five minutes ago you said exactly the opposite." (Expresses feeling; invites clarification, resolution)

5. Invite student to elaborate on a statement: "Sandy, convince me that what you said about Atticus is true." (Probes for further evidence)

6. Encourage the student to ask a question: "You might ask me why I think Miss Emily's behavior was perfectly predictable." (Suggests over-looking of important idea)

7. Encourage students to ask questions of one another: "It is possible, as Harry implies, that Hamlet loves his mother too much, in the wrong way." (Provokes controversy)

8. Describe your own status: "I think 'The Road Not Taken' is definitely not about taking a difficult or unusual path through life. There's no evidence for that." (May provoke controversy; encourages further probing)

9. Maintain a deliberate silence: \_\_\_\_\_. (This encourages reflection. We can't require them to think and not allow them time to do it.)

Perseverance over time produces results. Sometimes even the negative responses have their positive side: "The only not so good thing about this course is being afraid to speak aloud. It's scary having to 'debate' your thoughts." The overwhelming majority of responses, however, are purely favorable: "I have learned to question, doubt, analyze, and reread. I can't take things in stride any longer. I tend to question their credibility." "Being able to ask questions about what we don't understand is great but the best part is when you make us prove what we think. That makes us learn and *understand*." And one I especially prize: "I have begun to learn how to ask questions and what questions to ask. I just have a problem with the answers."

### Grief in the Process of Growth

To which I echo, Me Too. Thinking people are often troubled by answers to questions they ask. Like psychoanaly-

sis, education helps to make you more rational, not necessarily happier, helps you to struggle better, if not always to succeed. I am frequently ambivalent about the "good" I have done these students by stimulating them to think. The alienating effects of complex thinking are often seen in freshmen as they progress in their quest for knowledge. Where certainty once reigned supreme in the eighteen-year-old, confusion and dismay hold sway less than a

a springboard to begin examining with students what they surrender when embarking upon the educational journey. Among other things, they leave behind, often forever, friends who didn't go to college from whom they will soon become alienated; perhaps even family who may become more and more ambivalent about the student's growing independence, changing and differing values, and novel, possibly outrageous, ideas picked up at "that place."

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**When students object to analysis of a story because "it makes it lose its meaning," they are showing a deeply felt sense of loss and, if I am not pressing the point too far, some sense of betrayal. We would do well to reflect on this.**

year later. I suggest that this is the result of a serious and occasionally devastating sense of loss.

I have saved two responses for last to illustrate this point. The first plaintive query comes from an upperclassman in my linguistics class after several sessions in the middle of the year during which I rectified long-held misconceptions about grammar and language for the class as a whole: "The one remaining question I have is how can we be taught one thing as children and it not be true?" The second—a response I receive every single semester—is from a first-semester freshman in an Introduction to Literature course: "I don't like the way we go deep into the story because it makes it lose its meaning." What these have in common, of course, is a deeply felt sense of loss and, if I am not pressing the point too far, some sense of betrayal. We teachers would do well to reflect on this.

Somewhere in the last decade I picked up a quotation, the source long lost, that I use occasionally for writing assignments. "At each stage of learning we must give up something even if it is a way of life that we have always known." Attributed only to "Ginivee, an Australian aboriginal woman," these words provide

Perry (1989) himself has long been concerned with this matter. Reconsidering his scheme recently he declared that "every step involves not only the joy of realization but also a loss of certainty and an altered sense of self." And somewhat earlier (1985) he made a poignant plea for teachers, advisers, counselors, all who work with college students to allow for grief in the process of growth, "especially in the rapid movement from the limitless potentials of youth to the particular realities of adulthood. Each of the upheavals of cognitive growth threatens the balance between vitality and depression, hope, and despair. It may be a great joy to discover a new and more complex way of thinking and seeing; but yesterday one thought in simpler ways, and hope and aspiration were embedded in those ways. Now that those ways are to be left behind, must hope be abandoned too?"

"It appears that it takes a little time for the guts to catch up with such leaps of the mind. The untangling of hope from innocence, for example, when innocence is 'lost,' may require more than a few moments in which to move from desperation through sadness to a wry nostalgia. Like all mourning, it is

less costly when 'known' by another. When a sense of loss is accorded the honor of acknowledgment, movement is more rapid and the risk of getting stuck in apathy, alienation, or depression is reduced. One thing seemed clear: Students who have just taken a major step will be unlikely to take another until they have come to terms with the losses attendant on the first" (1985, 108).

I have quoted Perry at length because of the wisdom of his words and the deeply felt humanity of his tone. We who have chosen to make our life's work the growth of others would do well to recall that literal biological growth occurs willy-nilly. No redwood resists becoming gigantic. But we have all repeatedly witnessed students resist learning, refusing—it would appear—to grow. The biological metaphor applied to education cannot adequately account for the complexity of our species. We must keep in mind that we are asking students to exit voluntarily an idyllic life of certainty where the locus of authority is clear—a Garden of Eden—and to assume the heavy burden of remaking the world anew day after day after day, a Sisyphean task at best. If we remember this, we will have a better perspective on how drastically uneven and unfair an exchange it may seem to them, and we can understand better the wisdom of their resistance.

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