



Understanding Intellectual Growth

Applying Perry's Scheme to Support Metacognition

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Warm-up Activity

- How would you rank the level of intellectual growth of each student?
- How would you help each student grow further?

Guiding Students to Awareness of Higher-level Thinking





The Perry Scheme

- **William Perry:**
 - head of counseling, Harvard, 1950s
- A framework for understanding how students approach learning
- College students “journey” through 9 “positions” in their intellectual development
- Has been replicated & adjusted
 - Cf. Belenky et al. (1986), *Women’s Ways of Knowing*
 - *Journal of Adult Development*, 2004



Dualism: Knowledge is black/white, right/wrong, good/bad.

- **1. Basic**

- All problems are solvable
- Authorities exist to give answers → Obey them
- Student's task = learn the right solution

- **2. Full**

- Some authorities (literature) disagree, others (Math) agree
- Non-believers are wrong, those who don't have clear-cut answers also wrong.
- Student's Task = learn the right solution and *ignore the others*
- "Teachers" who offer complexities are not to be trusted.
- Knows the answer but are holding it back to teach us something.

Transition point: If we have to search for answers, maybe the teachers do too??? Let's wait until they find the answers.



Multiplicity (Subjective Knowledge): Trust “inner voice”, not external authority

• 3. Early

- All questions have answers: some we know now, and some not yet
- Authorities don't have all the answers yet.
- Student's task = Learn how to find correct solution

Transition point: “Yet” can take a very long time, maybe never???





“I still don’t have all the answers, but I’m beginning to ask the right questions.”

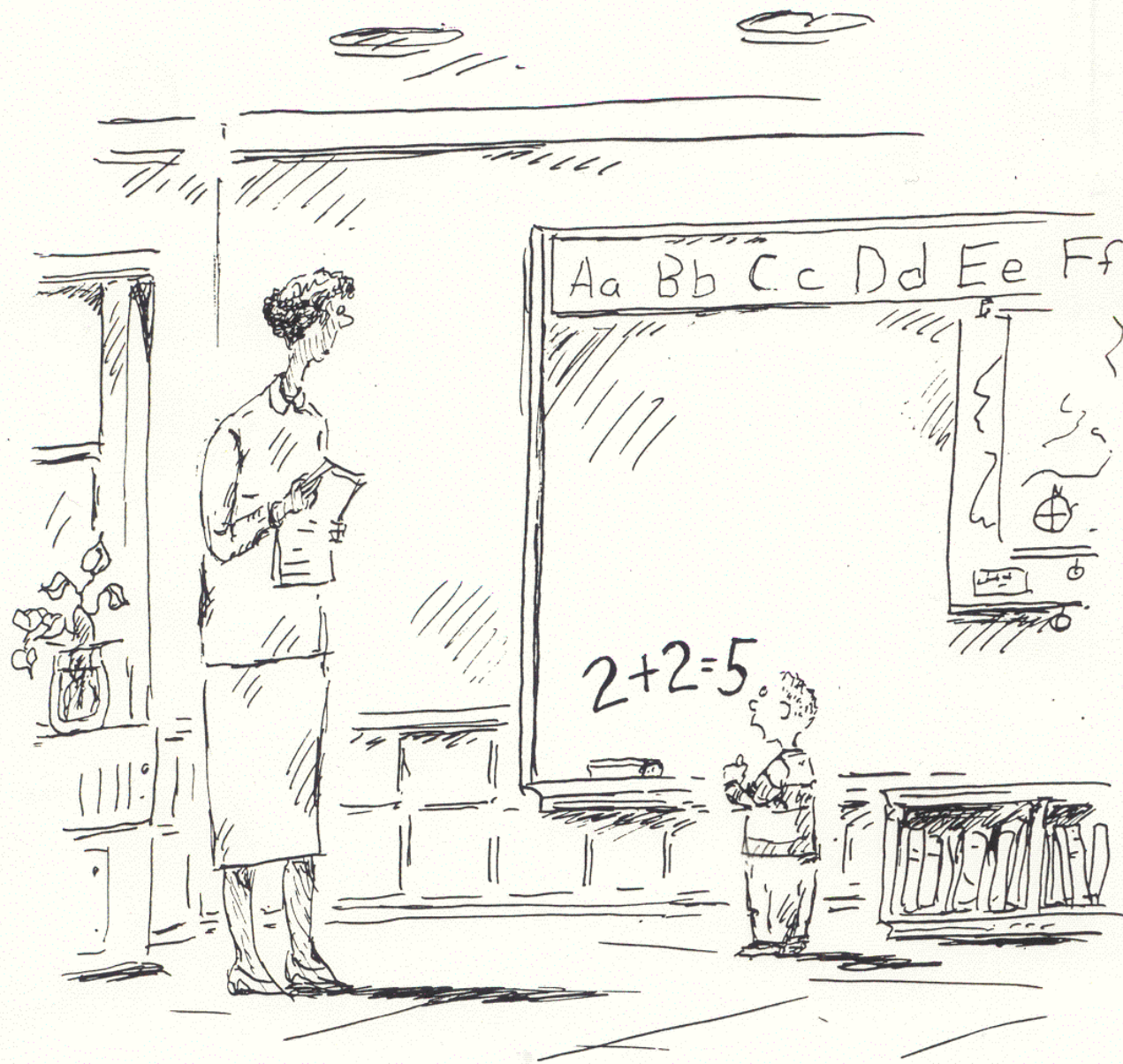


Multiplicity: “intuitions” but not explicit justifiable beliefs

• 4. Late

- Most problems’ answers haven’t been found yet or are unsolvable
- Authority is fallible → everyone’s opinion is valid
- It’s safe to make up your own answers → doesn’t have to true beyond personal experience → can’t prove I’m wrong
- Metacognition has not yet developed.
- **Alternate**
 - Tell the authorities what they want, parrot back even if you don’t believe it → Find out how they grade exam

Transition point: Authorities can no longer be counted on to provide any worthwhile answer.



B. Smaller



Possible Responses

Temporizing

(Apathy, Refusal to recognize ambiguity, reactive - not proactive)

Retreat

(“I’ll study math, not literature, because math has clear answers & not as much uncertainty”)

Escape

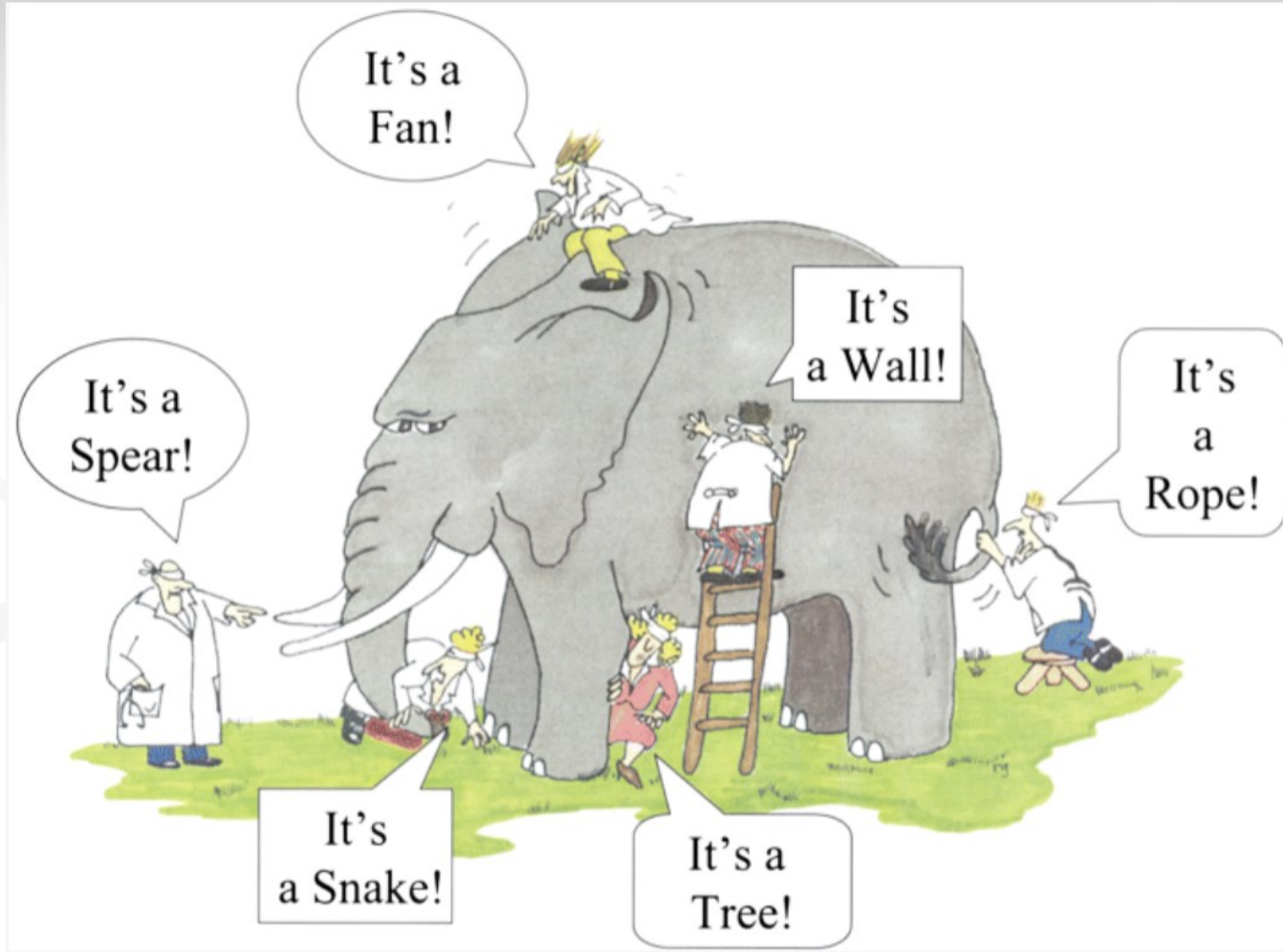
(“I can’t stand college; no one gives you the right answers”) or
(“I can’t stand college; all they want is right answers”)



Relativism (Procedural Knowledge): Express intuitions in language and seek justification

- There are different perspectives with different amounts of validity → Discipline-specific
- Knowledge can be “connected”
 - Why do you believe X?
- Knowledge can be “separated”
 - “objective” analysis
- 5. Contextual Relativism
 - All solutions are supported by evidence and reasoning (“relative to”)
 - Some solutions are better than others
 - Student’s task = learn to evaluate solutions







Commitment (Constructed Knowledge)

- **6. Pre-Commitment (appreciate ambiguity as a legitimate quality of many issues)**
 - use evidence to explore alternatives
 - Students see necessity of:
 - Making choices, Committing, Narrowing down
 - Autonomy → Inner strength
- **7. Commitment - beliefs are individualized**
 - Has thought about an issue, recognizes other perspectives, can tolerate other viewpoints given evidence
 - incorporate metacognitive reflection in their reasoning
 - “This is what is right for me”



Next Steps

- **8. Challenges to Commitment**
 - Experience consequence
 - Explores issues of responsibility
- **9. Post-Commitment**
 - Recognize commitment as an ongoing, evolving process



What teachers say vs. What students hear

- **Teacher:** Today we'll discuss 3 different ways to solve this Math problem
- **Dualist:** “Which is the correct one”, “Why bother with the wrong ones?”
- **Multiplist:** “Only 3? Heck, I can think of a dozen?”
- **Contextual Relativist:** “What principles underlie each of them”, “Which is most efficient”
- **Commitment:** “Which one should I use”, “What would be the implication of ‘my’ interpretation”?



What teachers say vs. What students hear

- **Teacher:** Today I'll show you how to solve these types of problems
- **Dualist:** "Great! I'll learn them"
- **Multiplist:** "Boring! I'll learn them anyway...", "Nah! I won't bother learning"
- **Contextual Relativist:** "Why are these problems important", "How do they fit in the bigger picture"



Conflicts

- **Dualistic teacher, Multiplistic student:**
 - boredom, alienation
 - to be successful in the sciences, do I need to adapt to the cognitive style of Dualism?
- **Multiplistic teacher, Dualistic student:**
 - no understanding
 - to be successful in the arts/humanities, do I need to reject Dualism and/or adapt (only) to Multiplism/Contextual Relativism?



Student's Assumption about Teachers

- **Contextual Relativist:**
 - There are a number of answers to my question, depending on how you look at it; maybe this teacher can help me see the alternatives more clearly.
- **Commitment:**
 - There are a number of answers to my question, depending on how I look at it; maybe this teacher can help me decide what I should believe (commit to).



Dualism → Multiplism

- If student rejects a view, have student be concrete (support) about basis for rejection (challenge)
- If student appeals to authority or overgeneralizes, ask about instances when authority's opinion might be challenged or generalization might not hold.
- Draw out student's own views/ experiences; reinforce student's legitimacy
 - structured discussions, small groups
 - responses from teacher on written work
- After evidence and rational arguments are presented, reinforce possibility of changing mind

Multiplism → Contextual Relativism

Support:

- Have students encounter several views.
- Reinforce that authorities can/do disagree
- Emphasize non-absolute criteria for generating evidence of support or criticism
- Use low degree of structure - Let students take responsibility for structuring own learning:
 - negotiate syllabus, course content, due dates
 - individual contracts; teacher as resource

Challenge:

- Evaluate relative merits - via non-absolute or imaginative criteria (support)
- own experiences (via biographies, stories)
- others' experiences (small groups)
- Explicitly identify bases for disagreements among authorities/views
- Identify and evaluate assumptions



Practical Strategies for Fostering Intellectual Growth

1. Encouraging students to question their own thinking
2. Foster Open-Ended Discussions
3. Use Case Studies and Real-World Examples
4. Model Your own Thought Process
5. Encourage Peer Review and Feedback
6. Error Analysis Exercises
7. Scaffold Decision-Making Skills
8. Guided Practice with Immediate Feedback
9. Promote Reflection on Learning Strategies
10. Incorporate Real-Life Analogies



The Meta Slide

- **Dualist:**
 - The Perry scheme is the best way of thinking about college students. Someone has finally told us how to make students change in the right ways.
- **Multiplist:**
 - Well, it's some people's way of talking about student growth and development, and they have a right to their own opinion, I suppose.
- **Contextual Relativist:**
 - It is one of a relatively few student-development models based on data collected in a fairly unbiased manner over many years.
- **Commitment:**
 - I have found the Perry scheme, integrated with other theories, extremely helpful to me as I try to interpret the behavior of people around me, as I think of my goals as an educator, and, especially, as I interact with my students.



Thank you!

References:

- Perry, W. G., Jr. (1999). *Forms of intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years*. (Reprint of the original 1968 1st edition with introduction by L. Knefelkamp). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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