

ジャック・ドゥパイと児童文学

Jacques Dupuis and Children's Literature

ランドマーク レオナルド

Leonard LUNDMARK

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Introduction

As this paper is about Jacques Dupuis and children's literature, it would be good to ask who Jacques Dupuis is and what is his connection with children's literature. Jacques Dupuis (1923-2004) was a Belgian Jesuit priest and theologian who lived 36 years, most of his adult life, in India. The exposure he had in India to people who grew up in and lived other religious traditions had a great influence on his life, writing, and teaching. He developed a great respect and love for the culture and spirituality of India. His theological writings deal with pluralism, with questions of Christian and non-Christian spirituality.

On the face of it, none of his writings deal with children's literature. However, he does deal with the question of diversity and different religious traditions, and this is a central theme of much of children's and young adult literature. For example, the subtitle of his generally accessible *Christianity and the Religions* is *From Confrontation to Dialogue*. In the Introduction he says very bluntly that in order to have religious peace in the world we first have to have sympathy or empathy "that helps understand others as they understand themselves, not as we, often according to stubborn traditional prejudices, think we know who they are. In a word, it entails unrestricted acceptance of "others" even in their difference, in their irreducible personal identity." His attempts to deal with the questions of understanding and accepting people from other religious traditions brought him into great trouble with certain groups in the Catholic Church. So much so that his award-winning book on the subject of religious pluralism, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Plu-*

ralism, was denounced as heretical and investigated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the modern version of the Office of the Holy Inquisition.

This attempt to understand others as they understand themselves can put one on very dangerous ground, yet it is also a central point of children's and young adult literature. It is embedded in the title of Sharon Creech's Newbery Medal-winning novel *Walk Two Moons*: "Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins." As teacher and young adult writer Richard Peck describes young adult literature: "Their preoccupation is with human relationships and portrayals rather than sociology."¹ Most of Peck's own very extensive body of work deals with this question of understanding and accepting the other.²

Dupuis writes about very specific aspects of the interaction between Christianity and other religious traditions, so his writing is necessarily complex, even in such a popular book as *Christianity and the Religions*. Fortunately, Diana Eck's writing in the same area is much more accessible and will be cited more generally here. Like Dupuis, she is a Christian and a scholar who has spent considerable time in India (she is a professor of comparative religion and Indian studies at Harvard) and has great love and respect for its people and religious traditions. Her writings also deal with questions of pluralism and religious diversity. And we are also very fortunate to have Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins' tribute to the work of Jacques Dupuis, *In Many and Diverse Ways*, which shows the many different aspects and influence of his work on religious pluralism.³

If we will but take a minute (as Anthony de Mello says) and open our eyes, we can easily

see the religious diversity and pluralism all around us. Eck talks of it in terms of spiritual need and asks: "Why is there such a hunger for spiritual renewal these days?" She says she wrote *Encountering God*: "for ordinary people who do not think of themselves as theologians, but who struggle with real questions of faith in the world in which we live." If we can see children's and young adult literature as a literature for ordinary people who are struggling with real questions of faith in the world in which we live, we can see how useful religious pluralism can be as a paradigm or viewpoint for understanding that world. And we can then see its fundamental value for interpreting much of children's and young adult literature. This involves first looking at diversity and then at its related ideas of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism.

Diversity and Its Shades

If we are to talk about religious diversity and its three manifestations as exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism, let alone understanding and dialogue, we must first talk about the basic fact of difference and diversity. As Eck says: "The encounter of worlds and worldviews is the shared experience of our times." Our problem is: "What do we make of the encounter with a different world, a different worldview?" This has especially been brought into focus by the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Eck talks of her own family background and experience with diversity. Her ancestors came from Sweden and then moved in various ways through the Midwest to Montana and Washington. They encountered Italians, Poles, and Irish working in the copper mines of Butte and Anaconda and native Americans elsewhere. She talks of the friction between the different ethnic groups. Not far away, in the Pacific Northwest, there were Hindus, Chinese, Filipinos, and Japanese. According to the mood of the times, there were riots and beatings as well as the enactment of laws to exclude them. These were all matters of common experience to the native Americans and they became such to the Hindus, Chinese, Filipinos, and Japanese also.

Many of the historical novels of Laurence

Yep deal with these twin themes of difference and exclusion—both in China and in the United States—from the Han Dynasty all the way to the 1990s.⁴ In these books Yep tries to understand his own Chinese roots and he shows the many ways in which Chinese discriminated against each other: village against village, clan against clan, ethnic group against ethnic group. Yep's fantasy novels, such as his *Dragon* sequence, show the same ever-widening ripples of discrimination and exclusion too.⁵

Mildred Taylor deals with these issues too. Like Yep, she writes of her own family history in her novels.⁶ Unlike Yep, hers is an ethnic and racial mix of American Indian, white, and Negro. And it is complicated by the fact that her family owns land in Mississippi, land that used to belong to a white man. She documents what is basically colonialism: how her family and the other Negro families around her were systematically abused and excluded by the whites around them.

Linda Sue Park does the same with her autobiographical novel *When My Name Was Keoko*. It is the story of her family and neighbors in Korea when it was a colony of Japan. In it we can see almost exactly the same patterns of discrimination and exclusion that we see in Mildred Taylor's and Laurence Yep's stories. Although the Koreans are officially Japanese, they are treated and considered as something much less. Very much like the Logans (the model for Taylor's family) and the other black families she writes about, are treated as something much less than any of the white families around them.

We can see this problem of diversity and exclusivism in Michelle Paver's *Chronicles of Ancient Darkness* in which she writes of life in northwest Europe six thousand years ago.⁷ Being **included** as a member of a clan or being **excluded** as an outsider is often literally a matter of life and death. She deals with the questions of empathy and acceptance which Dupuis raises.

We can see it thousands of years in the future in Orson Scott Card's *Ender Cycle*.⁸ In that future the people of Earth are faced with annihilation by a race of ant-like creatures which they nickname the Buggers. It is only

after he has caused their complete destruction that the protagonist, Andrew "Ender" Wiggin, is able to understand that these creatures have a consciousness far beyond his own. The problem is repeated with a pig-like species called the pequeninos: they are not only discovered to be intelligent, but to be reborn in a tree-like form which nonetheless retains consciousness and the ability to communicate with its pig-like forms. The problem is complicated by the emergence of a completely non-material entity named Jane with godlike intelligence. At first Jane seems to be more or less the voice of a type of super-computer, but Ender learns that she is a person, a unique and distinct person. They learn to understand and accept each other.⁹

The perspective of Jacques Dupuis and the ideas of exclusion, inclusion, and religious pluralism are most helpful when looking at the massive *Redwall* series of Brian Jacques.¹⁰ Like Paver's *Chronicles of Ancient Darkness*, the *Redwall* series focuses on clans. Unlike Paver, however, Jacques writes only of animals (but animals that Jacques freely admits are drawn from people he has encountered). One of the central features of Redwall abbey is its open acceptance of all those who enter its gates without malice. This is the religious pluralism which Dupuis and Eck describe. One can also see the ideas of exclusion and inclusion in the different animal groups and clans, as well as the vicious gangs of marauders and pirates who have chosen a life of pillage and destruction. The peace-loving inhabitants of Redwall know they must at times fight to the death in order to protect the way of life they love. Jacques describes injury and death in battle with the graphic reality of *Beowulf* or the Icelandic sagas. There is nothing romantic about it.

Yet this perspective of exclusion, inclusion, and pluralism is also very helpful when looking at shorter works like E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* or Dick King-Smith's *The Sheep-Pig* (the story which was the basis of the movie "Babe"). At the micro level of an individual farm and its community of animals we can see this same set of principles: the animals exclude or include each other according to whether they are "stupid" or "intelligent" (as Fly the sheep

dog and the sheep both do in *The Sheep-Pig*). Each speaks slowly and simply to the other because "it is a well-known fact" that the other species is stupid "and nobody will ever persuade me/us otherwise." The prejudice which the animals have toward other species is a very deep-rooted thing, yet it is lessened by dialogue with and acceptance of the other. This is a thing which both Fly and the sheep learn. Babe, his counterpart Charlotte the spider, and Fern the human observer have no prejudice. They all invite us to understand that we are all part of a community. As Joan Chittister says: "We are people in relationship to the rest of the world. We are here for a purpose."¹¹

The novels of Richard Peck show us the same themes of exclusion, inclusion, and pluralism in his young adult novels. As a former junior high school and high school teacher, he often writes about elementary, junior high school, and high school aged people. The cliques and clubs are no less prejudiced than we have seen in either barnyard or clan. Yet here there is a focus on human relationships. As Herbert Alphonso reminds us: "A person becomes a person only within community; but equally to be stressed is...that a 'community' is a genuine community only if it is made up of living, responsible persons who, each of them, make the community goals and tasks responsibly their own."¹² As Doris Donnelly reminds us: "Relationship is not a technique...The fundamental non-negotiable requirements of a relationship in the context of interreligious dialogue include a sense of self so that one is not dominated by the other...It assumes reciprocity—a natural give and take that leads to understanding that inevitably leads to wider horizons, enhanced perspectives, and sometimes to an altered world view and a change of mind and heart."¹³

Exclusion, Inclusion, and Pluralism

Eck reminds us that there are three ways of dealing with diversity in any religious tradition: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Very simply put (and quoting Eck), according to the exclusivist: "our tradition, our understanding of reality, our encounter with God is the

one and only truth, excluding all others.” According to the inclusivist, although there are many communities, traditions, and truths, “our way of seeing things is the culmination of the others, superior to the others, or at least wide enough to include the others under our universal canopy and in our own terms.” According to the pluralist “Truth is not the exclusive or inclusive possession of any one tradition or community. Therefore the diversity of communities, traditions, understandings of the truth, and visions of God is not an obstacle for us to overcome but an opportunity for our energetic engagement and dialogue with one another.” As she continues: “It does not mean giving up our commitments, rather, it means opening up those commitments to the give-and-take of mutual discovery, understanding, and, indeed, transformation.”

If we think back to all of the different authors and works mentioned, we can see how central this last idea of commitment to openness and acceptance is. Each of the authors mentioned challenges us to accept responsibility and along with it the task of transformation and growth.

Conclusion

It has been the intention of this paper to look at children’s and young adult literature from the perspective of diversity and guided by the three theological principles of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. The emphasis has been on the work of Jacques Dupuis and Diana Eck. It has been argued that looking at this literature from the perspective of diversity and using the three principles of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism gives a generally powerful way to deal with that literature and to connect it with the experience of life.

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Notes

- 1 *Invitations to the World*.
- 2 A list is given at the end of *Invitations to the World*.
- 3 The volume, edited by Kendall and O’Collins, includes contributions by twenty people.
- 4 Refer to Leonard Lundmark “Crossing Cultures : The Worlds of Laurence Yep” in *Bulletin of the Faculty of Education, Wakayama University (Humanities)*, No. 55, 2005 for an incomplete list of Yep’s books.
- 5 *Dragon of the Lost Sea, Dragon Steel, Dragon Cauldron, and Dragon War*.
- 6 Her four major novels are : *The Land, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Let the Circle Be Unbroken*, and *The Road to Memphis*.
- 7 To date the series is *Wolf Brother, Spirit Walker, and Soul Eater*.
- 8 The Cycle includes *Ender’s Game, Speaker for the Dead, Xenocide, Children of the Mind, Ender’s Shadow, Shadow of the Hegemon, Shadow Puppets, and Shadow of the Giant*.
- 9 The ideas here are dealt with in Leonard Lundmark “On Orson Scott Card’s *Speaker for the Dead*”, *Bulletin of the Faculty of Education, Wakayama University (Humanities)*, No. 56, 2005.
- 10 To date the series contains 18 books : *Redwall, Mossflower, Mattimeo, Mariel of Redwall, Salamandastron, Martin the Warrior, The Bellmaker, Outcast of Redwall, Pearls of Lutra, The Long Patrol, Marlfox, The Legend of Luke, Lord Brocktree, Taggerung, Triss, Loamhedge, Rakkety Tam, and High Rhulain*.
- 11 *Songs of Joy*, p. 15, January 18.
- 12 “Authentic Spiritual Experience”, *In Many and Diverse Ways*.
- 13 “On Relationship as a Key to Interreligious Dialogue”, *In Many and Diverse Ways*.