THE CREATOR AND THE DISCOVERER

Mary McDermott Shideler

ABSTRACT

Using the conceptual resources and methodology of Descriptive Psychology, I compare the activity of creating Secondary Worlds, such as Tolkien's Middle-earth, with the normal and universal human activity of creating the Primary Worlds we live in, and inquire into how these Primary Worlds are related to the Real World. Further, I investigate how the activities of creation and discovery are related. My purpose is to clarify such practical problems as how we can live satisfactorily with persons who in some sense live in worlds other than ours.

For at least twenty years, I have been exercised by the question whether we discover or create the worlds we live in. I started from the fact that we do seem to live in different worlds, and this is so common an experience that we have stock phrases for speaking of it: "You're not living in the same world I am," "This is a whole new world to me," "It's out of this world," "He's living in a world of his own"; and there are dozens of others.

Obviously, writers of fiction, and most conspicuously writers of fantasy and science fiction like J. R. R. Tolkien, are creating imaginary worlds. Presumably scientists are discovering "what really is out there." But how about our own, ordinary worlds? Are we responsible for them as Tolkien is for Middle-earth? Or are we explorers and discoverers with no responsibility for what we find except for our seeking in one direction rather than another?

Four immediately practical, and indeed urgent, problems call for an analysis of world-making. First, how are we to treat persons who live in worlds markedly different from our own—to take an extreme example, a paranoid schizophrenic, or a less extreme but more frequent case, a close associate of another religious or political persuasion, or cultural background? Second, how does the change occur from living in one world to living in another? Third, what is our responsibility in either creating or discovering our worlds? And fourth, what distinguishes those achievements which we call "creative" from those which we consider to be not creative?

I am not attempting to answer all these questions in this one chapter, but to illustrate a way by which we can answer them. Specifically, I shall be exhibiting how Descriptive Psychology provides formal access to the activity of world-making.

I

No achievement of the human imagination is more impressive than the construction of what J. R. R. Tolkien (1947) calls "Secondary Worlds," such as his own Middle-earth, Austin Tappan Wright's Islandia (1942), and uncounted other fantasy realms, each with its own kind of creatures, social organizations, customs, history, language, neighbors, and problems. Some of them, like Middle-earth, display the extramundane quality of faërie. Others, like Islandia, are "of the earth, earthy." Some are so vivid and consistent as to capture our imaginations. We report that while we are reading those books, we are "living in those worlds." Others fail to stir us or probably anyone except their creators. But so universal— historically, geographically, and culturally—is the invention of Secondary Worlds that we can well begin our exploration of what is meant by "world-makers" with Tolkien's statement, "Fantasy is a natural human activity" (1947, p. 2), and with a similar statement by a psychologist, Peter G. Ossorio, "The starting point is that human beings intrinsically have the capacity to create and to reconstruct worlds, and it's that kind of achievement that you're talking about with this kind of language of imagination, creativity, and so on. You simply start with that kind of achievement as the norm, and worry about deficiencies, etc., later" (Ossorio, Note 1).

First, although it may sound so obvious as to be trivial, Secondary Worlds are created by persons. Middle-earth and Islandia, for example, are the products of individual genius. In contrast, untold numbers of persons have contributed to creating the world of King Arthur and his knights as we now have it. This does not mean, however, that the persons responsible for constructing or reconstructing those worlds made them up out of thin air as arbitrary or irrational formulations. Instead, as Tolkien describes the process in his admirable essay, "On fairy-stories":

> The human mind, endowed with the powers of generalization and abstraction, sees not only *green-grass,* discriminating it from other things . . . but sees that it is *green* as well as being *grass.* But how powerful, how stimulating to the very faculty that produced it, was the invention of the adjective: no spell or incantation in Faërie is more potent. . . . the mind that thought of *light, heavy, grey, yellow, still, swift,* also conceived of magic that would make heavy things light and able to fly, turn grey lead into yellow gold, and the still rock into swift water. If it could do the one, it could do the other; it inevitably did both. (1947, p. 50)

The builder of the most exotic world works with ingredients which are in principle available to everyone and which initially he (or she or they, this is to be understood throughout) learned from other people. Even more important than the ability to recombine elements, however, is the ability to generate new patterns, and since formally the range of possible patterns is infinite, there is no *a priori* limit to what the world-maker can originate: worlds like Middle-earth and Islandia, creatures such as hobbits and Ents, customs such as the Islandian tanrydoon.

Every Secondary World is somebody's world, and is therefore in principle accessible to other persons, just as any person's knowledge about anything is in principle accessible to any observer. Potentially if not actually, Secondary Worlds are in the public domain just as much as chess or the history of the American Revolution or Bach's B-Minor Mass. Anyone who chooses, and has the necessary capacity and opportunity, can learn to play chess, become a historian or musician or musicologist, or participate imaginatively in Frodo's or John Lang's adventures, even though only as a spectator whose presence has no effect on the outcome. In practice, of course, these worlds or domains may not be accessible to some people for historical, educational, or other reasons, and some people may choose not to take advantage of their opportunity to become acquainted with chess, Islandia, or whatever, for lack of time or interest. In principle however, these worlds are public worlds, not because we are aware of or actualize the same possibilities, but because the range of possible facts is the same for us all.

Second, as chess-players form a community, and historians and musicians other communities, so do the great numbers of people who have been enchanted by Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), and by

Wright's *Islandia* (1942) which I consider to be equally a masterpiece. These persons are joined in community not merely by shared enthusiasms, but more importantly, by shared competence in the use of concepts which designate elements in that domain, and the relationships for which those elements are eligible. We are initiated into such communities by becoming competent in the use of the concepts designating those elements and their relationships, and by the time we are adult, most of us are members of many such groups. We not only immerse ourselves upon occasion in Middle-earth or Islandia, but are also chess players, more or less at home in the worlds of cooking, business, politics, education, and so on down the line. Some worlds are mutually exclusive, like Middle-earth and Islandia, or opposing political parties, or football and chess. For example, there is no place in football for the concept "checkmate," or in solid-state physics for the concept "person." Other worlds, like those of art and fashion and typography, overlap because they share such basic concepts as beauty and proportion.

What connects these worlds, no matter how disparate—and in some instances the only thing that connects them—is that they all have a place in the Real World, the world in which we persons live and move and have our being, wherein persons create Secondary Worlds like Islandia, and become at home in domains like chess, and generate communities like families and political parties and schools of philosophers. It is the world in which we are not only spectators, but actors whose behaviors, observations, and appraisals affect the outcome of whatever is going on. More formally, the Real World is "the state of affairs which includes all other states of affairs" (Ossorio, 1971/1978b, p. 29), that is, the world in which each of those other worlds, from Middle-earth to football, has a place. The Real World, then, can be understood as a place-holder.

II

Having differentiated the Real World from Secondary Worlds, we should take a moment to consider what is meant by "world" as such. Still following Ossorio, we can take the concept of "world" to be the concept of a state of affairs, and a state of affairs is "a totality of related objects and/or processes and/or events and/or states of affairs" (Ossorio, 1971/1978b, p. 7), in which the relationships may be economic or historical or emotional or kinetic or geometric, or whatever else may be appropriate to the objects which have a place in that world (cf. Ossorio, 1971/1978a, p. 30). So, for example, the world of chess is a totality of objects—a board, pieces, players—related in ways which are specified by the rules of chess; the actual playing of a game is a process; to have played a game is an event; and that there is such a game is a state of affairs. The

world of Islandia is a totality comprising such states of affairs as its having the geography and past history it does, as well as objects such as persons, animals, buildings, and so on, and a great number of events which are related as belonging to the continuing history—the chronology—of that country. The Real World, as contrasted with "worlds," is that totality of related objects, processes, events, and/or states of affairs which includes all other totalities, that is, all Secondary Worlds and, as we shall see, all Primary Worlds as well.

It is obvious that some worlds are more complex and more comprehensive than others. The domain of chess is simple and tightly circumscribed in comparison with, let us say, the daomin of science or of art, or even of Middle-earth, yet it is just as much a world as they are, as a tiny circle is as much a circle as a huge one, or in G. K. Chesterton's illustration, "A bullet is quite as round as the world, but it is not the world. There is such a thing as a narrow universality; there is such a thing as a small and cramped eternity; you may see it in many modern religions" (1908, p. 20).

For example, the world of Middle-earth is larger than the world of Islandia, in an important way. The novel *Islandia* is the tale of a young American, John Lang, in the early years of the twentieth century, who is the first of his countrymen to be allowed into the nation called Islandia, which is located somewhere in the Subantarctic. Islandia had previously been as closed to outsiders as Japan before the coming of Commodore Perry, and the central problem is whether Islandia shall continue closed to the rest of the world, and so retain its distinctive culture, or whether it should interact with other cultures at the risk of compromising its fundamental values. As presented in the book, the issues are cultural and personal—which are important enough, God knows. In contrast, the issue which is implicit in *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 1954), and explicit in *The Silmarillion* (Tolkien, 1977), is not the fate of a culture but the fate of a whole world, the survival not of a particular way of living but of ultimate good over ultimate evil. In Islandia, the destiny of something lovely and dear hangs in the balance. In Frodo's quest, something infinitely valuable is at stake. The conflict is not simply cultural, but cosmic.

To mark this difference between Islandia and Middle-earth, we might call the one "mundane" and the other "transcendental," because it is concerned with meanings and significances that transcend the merely earthly, the merely practical, and even the merely historical, in the direction of ultimate values and totalities. All manner of worlds can be so contrasted and compared. Some, like chess and economics and fashion, have no reference to what is ultimately significant for everything that is; in others, such ultimates have the highest priority; in still others,

ultimates have a peripheral place. Conceivably, for a finalist engaged in an international chess tournament, winning may be the equivalent of ultimate salvation and losing of ultimate damnation for him personally, but this has to do with the place of the domain of chess within that particular player's world, and has nothing whatsoever to do with the domain of chess per se. So far as the game of chess is concerned, victory is nothing but victory and defeat is nothing but defeat. Neither has any significance beyond that simple fact, and if players choose to bestow upon those outcomes a more extensive meaning—for example, national honor or personal pride—that has nothing to do with the world of chess. The players are then using the game as a means of accomplishing something other than what is of ultimate significance *in chess,* which is checkmate. The ultimate for a person is whatever it is, but if it be nothing more or other than checkmate, his is indeed "a small and cramped eternity."

A world or domain, conceived as a state of affairs, is a construct, and as such can be described, portrayed, mapped, analyzed, and understood. And it can be compared and contrasted with other worlds, all without reference to its status—its place—in the Real World. There is, however, a legitimate and important sense in which, for example, the domain of chess, the realm of Islandia, and the world of art have comparable places. The game is a game, the story is a story, the world of art is a world. They simply are what they are. We could indeed ask another order of questions, such as, "Is there really such a game as chess?" and "Is it true that the game we are now playing is chess?", or "Is it true that there is a place called Middle-earth?" and "Is there an actual story about Middle-earth?" To answer these, however, we must go beyond description to appraisals of reality and truth, but we must go further with simple description before we can discuss appraisals.

III

Now for a change of pace. Let us suppose that a friend invites me to join her in a ball game. There are many games played with a ball, so before I commit myself, I ask her, "Which game?" She answers, "Jacks," which I enjoy, so we sit down and play. Since that is the game we are playing, we do not delimit a playing field, or set up goalposts or bases, or round up other players in order to have teams. We do not tackle or hit home runs or commit foot faults. Both of us are sufficiently familiar with other games to understand what is going on in them, and to appreciate the enthusiasm of those who are passionate about them. But the game *we* are playing is jacks. For the moment, we are committed to doing *that.*

In choosing which game to play, we take into account hedonic considerations—which ones we like and don't like—and practical considerations like having on hand the necessary equipment and number of players. Ethical considerations may be relevant. Ought we to be doing something less frivolous, like writing letters or washing dishes? And is there not something inappropriate, unseemly, about two intelligent, decorous, but unmistakably ancient ladies sitting on the ground and playing a children's game which we learned when we were children?

And now, let us suppose that we also learned, when we were children, that the world we are living in has certain rules (as games do), sometimes called physical or moral laws, that our living in it calls for our making certain distinctions and developing certain skills (as playing games does), and that this is *our* world, the one we are committed to living in by virtue of belonging within this society. As we grew older, we learned that in other cultures, people have lived by other rules and have partitioned the world in other ways, that is, made other distinctions, and acquired other skills. But just as we played our game, although we learned about others as well, so at least through our childhood, most of us were committed to the one world of our growing-up, although we knew something about various others.

All this while, however, both in playing games and living in the world, we were not only mastering the constructs which made them *these* games and worlds, but we were also reconstructing them. We reconstructed the games primarily by introducing our individual styles of playing, since most of them are governed by meticulously specified rules which all the players have agreed upon. We reconstructed our worlds by what we took to be important, intelligible, within our capacity, interesting, or satisfying in what we observed and experienced, and as well by what we disliked, could not comprehend, found dull or unfulfilling. Moreover, we could not do a great many things that we wanted to do unless we acquired new concepts, skills, and information, and these acquisitions resulted in further reconstructions, some of which have been so sudden and radical as to call forth the exclamation, "I'm living in a whole new world!" Throughout all this reconstruction, we were creating new forms just as Tolkien did in creating Middle-earth and Wright in creating Islandia, except that ours were not Secondary but Primary Worlds, in which what we did and observed and evaluated made a difference in what was going on. The process was the same and the achievement was the same: the creation of a world, a totality—whether transcendental or mundane—of related objects, processes, events, and/or states of affairs, which has a place within the state of affairs which includes all other states of affairs, the Real World—which, again, can be thought of as simply a place-holder.

We learn about the Real World by observing which of its possibilities are actual, are in fact the case; for example, whether here and now a game of chess is in progress, or whether a story portrays actual, historical persons and events rather than imaginary ones. All our observations are selected from Real World possibilities, and "the capacity to entertain these possibilities is primarily shown not in these fantastic creations, but in simple empirical observation" (Ossorio, Note 2).

As every observation constitutes a selection from the infinite range of Real World possibilities, so every behavior constitutes a selection from the range of behaviors which is possible for us, given our personal characteristics and circumstances. And in the course of inventing our behaviors, we create our Primary Worlds. As Ossorio has said, "Since . . . every behavior consists of treating the world as something or other, you create the behavior of treating it as that thing, and whatever you are treating it as is what it is for you. That's the sense in which in creating behaviors, you create the world" (Ossorio, Note 3). Later he goes on to say,

> It's basically a negative thing, reflecting the fact that there's no necessity holding between something and our seeing it that way. That's demonstrable. What you see one way, I don't have to see that way, and its being that way in no way forces me to see it that way, and in no way makes inevitable that I see it that way. Therefore it follows that if I do see it that way, something beyond inevitability has happened, and that's what we're getting at in saying "create." There was something that was non-necessary that got accomplished. (Ossorio, Note 4)

This understanding of creativity is a far cry from common notions of creation as being "out of the whole cloth," or strikingly original, or a mysterious process, or a special capacity which we can bring to fruition or extinguish more or less at will. In the place of these notions, we can conceptualize creativity as a natural human function which all of us exercise constantly. Even a casual conversation—passing the time of day—exemplifies selecting among possibilities (Do I greet you warmly or coldly? Do I take myself to be your friend or a mere acquaintance?), and inventing new behaviors (no two conversations are exactly alike). So to describe creativity in no way diminishes the achievements of Tolkien, Wright, and others of their stature. What it does is to show that we are engaged in the same exciting and important enterprise with them, and at an even more significant level. The creation of Secondary Worlds is a special case of creating worlds, and our first creations are of Primary Worlds.

In thinking about the relation of Primary Worlds to the Real World, it may be of value to keep in mind the rules of chess, which at once limit what the players can do and still be playing chess, and provide the

opportunity to play that game. Without the rules, there would be no game of chess at all. The rules, however, do not prescribe what move a player shall make in any situation; they prescribe only what the possibilities are, and he selects from among those possibilities, play by play. Likewise, the Real World provides us with limits (e.g., boundary conditions) and opportunities, but it does not compel us to see or treat it as this rather than that. Nor is it, more passively, a given which we have only to receive. Still less is it an arbitrary construct of our whimsical minds, because it does limit—restrain—us. I can look through a window but not through a wall, write letters using a typewriter but not using a mop. More elaborately, I have on my desk an object which I can treat as a paperweight, an ashtray, a template for drawing a circle, or a missile, but I cannot get away with treating it as fuel for my fireplace because it will not burn at fireplace temperatures. Nor can I successfully use it as a microphone, a telephone, or a chair; these represent boundary conditions on my possible behavior in relation to it. And since I cannot successfully treat it as, for example, a chair, neither can I successfully treat what I *do* do with it as "successfully treating it as a chair."

"Ah," you say, looking over my shoulder, "what it *really* is, is a small, round, metal box." And so it is, but the description "small, round, metal box" is no more definitive than "ashtray," "paperweight," "template," or "missile." Because I use it as an ashtray, it *is* an ashtray. Because I throw it at a marauding cat, it *is* a missile. Because I put things in it, it *is* a box. But size, shape, and composition do not have to be a primary or favored description of it any more than ashtray or missile or box has to be. When we define or describe it as any of these, we are simply formulating a set of opportunities for possible behaviors relative to it, as well as a set of constraints. The characteristics of that object which make it possible to treat it successfully as an ashtray are not incompatible with, and may overlap, those that make it possible to treat it successfully as a missile and as a box, but none of these behaviors or descriptions in itself takes precedence over any of the others.

Given that what we see when we look around us provides limits and opportunities rather than coercions, the fact that different people see and treat things differently does not represent a deviation from an ideal of unanimity on what it *really* is, but is itself the norm of knowledge and behavior. All knowledge is somebody's knowledge and all behavior is somebody's behavior, and in neither case is there a necessary connection between any given state of affairs and how we see or treat it, any more than there is a necessary connection between what we are taught and what we learn. Grading examination papers is a salutary exercise in seeing how differently individuals respond to the same textbooks, lectures, and discussions. The student is an active participant in

what he learns, not merely a passive recipient, and this is not an exceptional but a universal situation. Because "the world provides us with opportunities but not unlimited ones" (Ossorio, Note 5), we *choose* how we shall treat what we see when we look around us. We *choose* how we shall behave. We *choose* among the Real World possibilities, and by so choosing we create our own behavioral, Primary Worlds, worlds that are non-necessary and new, and in principle are public.

The most complete and complex instances of world-creations are to be found in communities of persons who are committed to talking and acting in well-established, agreed-upon ways—for example, as if the world were simply and transcendentally "out there" waiting to be "discovered," or as forcibly imposing its categories upon us. As this community sees it, the alternative to its being simply and transcendentally "out there" is its being "in here," merely in our minds, inviolably private. (My apologies for so brutally oversimplifying this.) All of us who are inheritors of Western culture have been initiated into that community, where we remain full-fledged members as long as we are willing to ring the illimitable changes on those themes. Some, indeed, have opted out in favor of talking and acting in Eastern ways, and some for assimilating one to the other or for amalgamating them—which in certain cases looks like the effort to amalgamate chess and jacks. Then there are those who recognize that neither the concept of the world as being transcendentally "out there" nor that of its being "all in our minds" is relevant to our behavior as persons—except within the domain of philosophy, just as the specification of how the king, in chess, can move is irrelevant to the behavior of actual, historical kings.

To take a short detour—just as firmly embedded in our culture is the truism that we cannot think without assuming something (which is itself an assumption). Of course we can think without assuming anything, and we frequently do. Distinguishing colors, articulating the concept "color" into its aspects of hue, saturation, and brilliance, associating phenomena into groups, reaching for a pencil—none of these requires that we assume anything whatsoever. All that is required is that we make distinctions and act on them. When I reach for the pencil, I do not need to assume that it is a "real" pencil and that it "really is" where it appears to be. I observe it, and being competent in the use of the concept "pencil," I take it to be a pencil. Wanting to use it and being competent to move in the appropriate ways, I reach for it and succeed in taking it into my hand. For everyday (and most other) behavior, we need observation and competence; assumptions are entirely extraneous. They are not even the cherry on top, except that once we deny the special place of assumptions as basic to thinking, our place in the academic world may be jeopardized.

In answer to those who would insist that all I have been saying is

flagrantly based on assumptions, "making assumptions" is one way to describe what I am doing, and there is a philosophical point in talking that way. But what I am doing can also be described in a very different way, and I am proposing that there is a behavioral point in talking this other way, that is, without assuming that we cannot think without assuming something, because behaviorally, that assumption is not only superfluous but encumbering.

IV

So far, I have taken great pains to avoid references to "reality" and "truth." Both are words which are loaded with so heavy a freight of theories, explanations, connotations, and confusions that I would abandon them if I could. Unhappily, I do not see how I can. The danger is too immediate that questions will arise—have already arisen—concerning truth and reality which, if not dealt with, would derail my entire presentation. Almost invariably, in the course of discussing this conceptual formulation, I am asked, "Which of these worlds is the *real* world, yours or mine?" The answer is quite simple: the world which has a place for both of them. Conceptually, the Real World is the state of affairs which includes all other states of affairs, including all possibilities, and our having the different Primary Worlds that we do represents a selection from among those possibilities. Observationally, the Real World is what we see when we look around us, and since each of us sees it with his own eyes, and from his own viewing point, of course we see it differently. And seeing it differently is not merely one of the Real World possibilities; it is one of the Real World necessities.

If, for example, my world has no place for how you see a chair and you see it differently from the way I do, then my world *cannot* be the Real World, because the Real World, as a place-holder, *does* have a place for both the way you see it and the way I see it, as well as a place for both of us having mastered the concept "chair" so that we both see it to be a chair. Moreover, the Real World has a place for persons who, seeing that object, do not see it to be a chair because that concept is not part of their repertoire of knowledge—an infant, perhaps, or a nomad. So we come back to the concept of the Real World as the state of affairs that includes all other states of affairs, the world that includes your Primary World, and mine, and theirs.

An obdurate questioner will go on to ask, "But what is the 'it' which we see differently? What is it in itself, independent of our different views of it?" In reply, I should like first to consider what is the point of postulating an "independent it"—a *ding an sich*—at all. Could it be that we suppose that unless there is a transcendental "it," we are condemned

to a relativity which gives us no firm ground on which to stand, much less walk or dance? As Ossorio points out, however,

> The relativity problem [can be approached] as a variation on a disageement problem. As soon as you have the problem, you know that you have a framework which enables you to formulate that as a problem. And in that framework, these things are not incoherent. That framework has to include in it the possibility of just such disagreement. So disagreement is not somewhere you can begin from; behind it is something more fundamental, i.e., what is shared, and what is shared will turn out to be concepts, including the concept of just such a disagreement. So the solution is inherent in the problem. You couldn't have the problem were there not such a solution. (Ossorio, 1977, p. 184)

We do not need to ground ourselves on elaborate speculations about some transcendental realm that undergirds our varying Primary Worlds. We can start instead from the indubitable fact that we *do* stand and walk and occasionally dance. We are persons not only being-in-the-world, as the Existentialists have frequently reminded us, but also, as they have said less frequently, behaving-in-the-world. Our Primary, that is, behavioral, Worlds are those we *can* behave in. The behavioral world needs no such speculative undergirding, even though there is a place in it for the behavior of speculating about such ideas, just as the behavioral world has a place for playing chess and running experiments in physics and doing theology and cooking dinner. For behaving in the world, all we need is to make distinctions and act on them. If we want to *know* what we are doing, or to know *what* we are doing, then we shall need to exploit the fact that we have language, but we do not need to *be* anything other than persons in the world in order to be what we unquestionably are—unquestionably, because only a person behaving in a world could deny that he was a person behaving in a world, so that in the very act of denying it, he would be exemplifying what he denied.

The truth question arises in a particularly acute and obstinate form with respect to religions, because it seems all too obvious that if one religion is true, then the others must be false, unless we take up some form of relativism which predicates that all are true or all are false, so that any choice among them is arbitrary if not capricious. This framing of the situation, however, reflects a disabling conceptual confusion, because religions are not just bodies of doctrine consisting of statements that are eligible for verification or falsification, proof or disproof. They are worlds, domains of ultimate significance, and thus as much more than our doctrinal descriptions as a game of chess is more than the book containing the rules. As worlds, religions simply are what they are, and we can live in one of those worlds or none of them, just as we can play jacks or chess or neither. Far more will be at stake in the commitment

to a religious world than in the choice among games: in the one case, a way of life, in the other a specific activity or domain within a way of life. But the principle is the same, that worlds of whatever size—a game, an imaginary world, a religion—are not eligible to be either true or false, so that to say that a religion is true is to utter nonsense. It would be like saying that a table is true or false. Our religious doctrines are statements that do or do not represent accurately ("tell the truth about") the nature of that world, but worlds are appraised on other bases. Skipping over several steps, in the end our religion is a manifestation of who we are.

Here also it is important to keep in mind that anything which can be described in one way can also be described in another—remember the paperweight-ashtray-missile-box—and that there is no primary or favored description of that object as it might be independently of someone's knowing it. There and here, our first question must be not whether one description is true and the others false, but what is the point in describing it in one way rather than another? For that matter, what is the point of giving descriptions, whether of a single object or of a world, at all? We give descriptions when we are engaged in forms of behavior which call for them, and when we have a way of treating something as this rather than that—for example, when somebody asks us, "What's that thing on your desk?" Or when we ask ourselves, "What kind of a world am I living in?" Or when we say, "This is the world I am committed to. This is *my* way of life—subject to reconstruction, of course."

What is the point of our claiming that the statements we make in describing the world are "true?" Much the same as the point of postulating a world which is simply "out there"—it provides a transcendental guard against relativism—and, be it noted, against responsibility. But even if there were a guaranteed way to achieve truth—and there is not, any more than there is a guaranteed way to write a literary masterpiece—what could we do with such irrefragible truths? Truths can only be known and articulated by persons; each person would view them from his own viewpoint and articulate them in his own language; and so behaviorally, our last state would be neither worse nor better than, but exactly the same as, our first.

We need the concept of truth as an anchor, so that our statements will be statements and not merely sentences, and so that our statements will be about things—that is, because we have forms of behavior which call for distinguishing truth from error. Even so, there is an alternative to Aristotle's dictum that to speak the truth is to say of what is, *that* it is. That alternative is, in Stanley Cavell's words, "saying of what is *what* it is" (1959, p. 32), which is to say, describing it.

There is a nonabsolute sense in which there is a point in claiming that the statements we make in describing the world are true. Tolkien ex-

pressed this in his comment that the successful story maker creates a Secondary World within which "what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world" (1947, p. 60), that is, there is a domain within which those statements *are* true. Thus within the domain of Euclidean geometry, it is true that parallel lines never meet. Within the domain of my activities, it is true that this object on my desk is a paperweight, but within other domains—for example, chess, biology, ballistics—it would not be true that it is a paperweight, because in those domains there is no place for paperweights. There is no domain, however, in which *anything* goes in the way of description, because a domain is a totality of *related* objects and/or processes, and so forth, and those relationships limit what can be true within that domain.

"But," I can well believe somebody is objecting, "obviously you have been enunciating throughout what you take to be true." No. I have presented a set of distinctions; explicated a concept, "world"; described three major kinds of world, the Real World, Primary Worlds, and Secondary Worlds; all this because it seems to me unmistakable that there is a point in talking this way and in seeing what that point is. I have repeatedly directed attention to the fact that whatever can be described in one way can also be described in other ways, and that there is no primary or favored description, not even the behavioral one I am presenting here, although the fact that we can give behavioral descriptions makes all the difference. A world in which behavioral descriptions were not possible and relevant would be very different from the actual world that we are familiar with.

It may be worth adding that there is a point in talking in technical ways only within technical domains, such as chess or mathematics, or within very limited realms such as Islandia or Middle-earth, but, whereas all human activities and knowledge and creations are subsumed under persons-behaving-in-the-world, talking behaviorally will have a point at some stage in considering whatever persons do or are involved in. "Questions about the truth of any statement presuppose the Person Concept or some equivalent thereof, since it is only within such a framework that any such question can be formulated, understood, reacted to, or acted upon" (Ossorio, 1971/1978b, p. xiii).

V

From Middle-earth and Islandia to the concepts of truth and reality may seem like a long and circuitous road, so now at the end, let me try to map out where we have been. Beginning with the recognition that the creation of those Secondary Worlds is an astonishing imaginative achievement, we explored the possibility that for those with eyes to see,

our creation of Primary Worlds is an achievement of essentially the same kind, the creation of a world, and an even more impressive one because we actually live in our Primary Worlds, but not even Tolkien has actually ever set foot in Middle-earth. A "world" was conceived as a totality of related objects and/or processes and/or events and/or states of affairs, and Primary and Secondary Worlds were compared with each other, and with the Real World which is the state of affairs which includes all other states of affairs, including our Primary Worlds. Because we are not compelled to take any aspect of the world—any object, process, event, or state of affairs—in one way rather than another, how we *do* take it eventuates in our creation of our Primary Worlds and our responsibility for our creation. Finally, to forestall, if possible, certain common misunderstandings of this portrayal of world-making, I examined what point there might be in describing any of these worlds as "real" or "true," and proposed that as those words are commonly used, they have only limited meaning when applied to worlds.

My conclusion, then, is that we need to speak in terms of both discovery and creation to describe adequately what in fact we do: we discover the boundary conditions and other limits on our possible behaviors, and we create our actual behaviors. Our achievements may be Primary or Secondary Worlds, may be coherent masterpieces like Aristotle's and Tolkien's, or incoherent, small, and cramped like some that we all have known. The essential difference between them is that in our Primary Worlds, we participate as actors, observers, and appraisers, but we are only spectators of Secondary Worlds.

If by inventing our behaviors, we create our worlds, it follows that we can recreate them by inventing other behaviors, and this not as an exceptional process requiring exceptional abilities, but in the natural course of living. And because we choose the behaviors by which we create our worlds, we are responsible for whether those creations are increasingly or decreasingly coherent, inclusive, and elegant, whether we are moving toward or away from integrity, community, and joy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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1. Ossorio, Peter G. Personal communication, June 17, 1975, transcript #112:2.
2. *Ibid.*, October 12, 1978, transcript #221:4.

3. *Ibid.*, June 22, 1977, transcript #227:14.
4. *Ibid.*, July 6, 1977, transcript #178:4.
5. *Ibid.*, October 4, 1978, transcript #220:10.

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