

## Chapter 2

# PSYCHOPEDAGOGICS AND THE PSYCHIC LIFE OF THE CHILD-IN-EDUCATION

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### 1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Psychopedagogics has as its field of study the psychic life of the child-in-education. Upbringing or educating is involved with the psychic life of the child because a child is always a child-in-education. That is, there is no doubt that a child grows up, but how he grows up and the extent to which this becoming takes a desired course in the direction of proper adulthood is clearly a matter of upbringing. Although it might be denied by some, from the perspective of Pedagogics and particularly Psychopedagogics, upbringing (education) is a condition for the child's becoming a proper adult.

The psychic life of a child is given with child-being. It is the child's wealth of possibilities which are there from the beginning. The child has the task of actualizing these possibilities, that is, of actualizing his psychic life.

This leads to the question of how the psychic life shows or manifests itself and how it is actualized? It is a dynamic event and manifests itself in two modes. These modes of the psychic life are *becoming* and *learning* which are inseparably bound to each other. Since the one is the condition for the other, we can say that a child becomes as he learns, and learns as he becomes.

The actualization of the child's psychic life involves the initiative of the child himself; that is, the child is someone who will learn and become; it also depends on upbringing for its proper actualization. This self initiative refers to the child's active participation in his learning and becoming and it immediately calls attention to the particular modes by which his becoming and learning are actualized. These modes of actualization, which display a profound reciprocal interconnectedness, and form an inseparable unity, are: *experiencing*, *willing*, *lived-experiencing*, *knowing*, and *being*. These modes of life represent the particular dynamics in



the child's psychic life by means of which becoming and learning are not only *actualized* but also in terms of which upbringing, as support for this actualization, takes its course.

How does Psychopedagogics study the actualization of the child's psychic life in the situation of education? The scientist takes the *essences* which he has seen in the life-world of the child, namely, experiencing, willing, lived-experiencing, knowing, and behaving and raises them to psychopedagogic *categories* on the basis of which he then *thoughtfully elucidates* and *describes* the actualization of the child's becoming and learning. This work of elucidation and description is what is meant by scientific practice and it results in psychopedagogic theory.

Before considering becoming and learning as modes of manifestation of the psychic life, it is necessary to elaborate further on the above-mentioned use of categories in Psychopedagogics.

Scientific thought is only possible if *reality* is taken as the *point of departure*. This means that any science has the task of *defining* its area of study within the greater whole of the human life-world. With this delimiting the scientist makes it his objective to thoroughly know or understand that which forms the *theme* of study by means of a particular method or methods. This is done with the aim of a radical thinking through of this area of study and an eventual description and interpretation of its essentials.

Any description and elucidation necessitates the use of concepts which bring to light the essentials of the theme of focus. These concepts form the basis for the scientist's thought and his discourse with other scientists, and they are the foundation for a particular scientific theory. The application and use of these concepts enables the scientist continually to thoughtfully elucidate and evaluate a particular phenomenon in the life-world (e.g., upbringing) by which not only new essences can arise but also by which the science can progress. In the practice of science, these concepts which *include, describe, and elucidate* the essences of one's theme of study are called *categories*. Thus, scientific thinking is necessarily *categorical thinking*.

In a radical (radix = root) or fundamental thinking through of human reality, modern (philosophical) anthropology, which originated along phenomenological lines, has already used such categories. Examples of this are that human being finds himself in the world, that he is openness, directedness, freedom, possibility,

bodiliness, etc. These fundamental concepts concerning the essentials of being human are called human or anthropological categories.

Categorical thinking in the practice of Pedagogics as a science is not new and it is particularly scientists such as Landman (Fundamental Pedagogics), Van der Stoep (Didactic Pedagogics), Sonnekus (Psychopedagogics) and many others who give expression to this in their scientific writings.

In the practice of Psychopedagogics, an autonomous perspective of Pedagogics, scientists such as Sonnekus (lived-experience and knowing), Pretorius (lived-experience), Van der Merwe (willing), Bondesio and Botha (behaving), and Ferreira (experiencing) have thrown light on the use of categories to study these essentials of the psychic life. Their aim is to elucidate and describe the psychic life of the child within the broader framework of the world of education in order to formulate a scientific theory that will clarify (elucidate) the actualization of the child's becoming and learning. This scientific work is not only aimed at theory forming but also at the possibility of improving the practice of upbringing. By this latter is meant that our scientific insights about the actualization of the psychic life of the child-in-education, especially as this acquires form in his becoming and learning, can be usefully applied to instruction-learning events (e.g., in all school phases) not only to better understand them, but also possibly to be more effectively plan and allow for their progress. A task of this nature requires the concerted efforts of the different pedagogic perspectives.

## 2. THE ACTUALIZATION OF THE PSYCHIC LIFE OF THE CHILD-IN-EDUCATION: A FUNDAMENTAL VIEW

### 2.1 Becoming and learning

From the first moments of the child's existence in the world, he announces that he is someone who will take part in the life-world, a taking part which continues to the end of his life. This participation has the form of a question-and-answer involvement with that which surrounds the child. Because of the child's openness and directedness to the world, from the beginning he is actively



busy *actualizing* his given *possibilities* and this implies that he is busy *changing*. This changing, i.e., *becoming*, is observable in the child's conduct, actions, and behaviour. This becoming involves a progressive and continuous movement in the direction of the life-world of the adult. Becoming, as the necessary change which must arise in the child's life, is directed to becoming a proper adult. This means that a child must and should become different.

From a psychopedagogic perspective, the questions arise regarding the basis for and the "how" of this event of becoming different? The question of the basis can be answered in two ways. First, because the child is a human being, he is someone who himself will be and become (change). As given possibilities, the structure of his psychic life disposes the child to become grown-up. Because of this, the child is able to take an active part in his becoming. Second, it is also an irrefutable fact that a child, because of his essential nature, needs the help and support of an adult. Without upbringing the child cannot become a proper grown-up. For this reason, upbringing is the necessary "other side" of the child's becoming. Indeed, Langeveid says that without upbringing, a child cannot come to fulfillment as a person. By this he means that it is simply unthinkable that a child can actualize his life in accordance with the demands of properly without education. The child's *becoming adult* implies the necessity for education.

When becoming is described as a change which the child undergoes, especially on the basis of education, the question still remains *how* is this actualized? What makes this change possible? The answer is *learning*. Learning (as is becoming) is an original mode by which a human being finds himself in the world. The child learns because he *is a person*, and he learns as a *person*. In becoming, the child shows himself also as someone who *himself will learn*. This initiative to learn has its origin in human openness for and directedness to the world (i.e., intentionality). As an authentic human phenomenon, learning as possibility is given with the psychic life of the child and shows itself in the original life relationship between child and world.

Learning by the child is the basis for his becoming and changing since, in essence, becoming cannot be actualized without learning. Although a child himself becomes and learns, this event

of changing is not a matter of course in the life of the child. The child is disposed by his potentialities to change, but the proper actualization of these potentialities is, *par excellence*, a matter of upbringing. So, indeed, the child doesn't learn because he is brought up, but rather, the child is brought up precisely because he can learn. In this light, the child is educated by an adult to change, thus to learn, from an early age. The relationship of upbringing between adult and child is carried by the adult's educative instruction and by the child's readiness to learn. Instruction and learning, as essentials of the course of upbringing, are aimed at the child's *increasingly becoming* a proper adult. It is the educator's responsibility to accompany the child so that he progressively lives as an adult. Thus, by instruction, the situation of education must offer the child the opportunity to *learn* and to make his own the norms, worthwhile dispositions, and skills of the adult life-world. In this way, the child increasingly is given more responsibility, choices and decisions all of which indicate that he is moving nearer to proper adulthood.

Thus, education (instruction), *becoming*, and learning are meaningfully connected as far as the child's *becoming an adult* is concerned. To understand this connection from a psychopedagogic view, it is necessary briefly to discuss three questions: what does upbringing have to be like to support the child in his becoming; where is the change in the child's becoming noticeable; and, how is the change in the child's becoming brought about?

*First question: What does upbringing have to be like to support the child in his becoming?*

This giving of support by the adult to the child in his becoming necessarily takes place within the framework of the situation of education in terms of the different relationships (authority, understanding, trust) so this situation can take a particular course (association, encounter, etc.) and, by particular activities of upbringing (giving meaning with increasing responsibility, norm exemplification and emulation, etc.), it can aim at proper adulthood as its purpose. However, instead of giving a detailed answer in this Fundamental Pedagogic connection, the basis of discussion will be the Psychopedagogic distinction of three dimensions of upbringing, namely, affective, cognitive, and normative



education (Sonnexus). For several reasons these three interrelated modes of upbringing are indispensable for the adequate becoming of the child.

*Affective education*, which is the emotional accompaniment of the child by the adult (parent, teacher, etc.), provides the basis on which the child's becoming can adequately take its course. It is characterised by a warm and intimate atmosphere underlying the upbringing relationship between educator and educand. The child and the adult experience a feeling of mutual trust which, with love and understanding, the adult inspires in the child and which makes the child ready to open himself to upbringing. This affective education strengthens and forms the child's emotional life such that he shows a progressive readiness, willingness, and self-confidence to explore his world. This provides a fruitful and stable basis for educative intervention and it insures that the child himself actively will work more at the actualization of his becoming.

*Cognitive education*, also known as understanding or knowing accompaniment, rests on the stable emotional base provided by affective education or accompaniment. This relationship of upbringing is characterized by a purposeful striving by both the adult and the child to come to better know and to unconditionally accept each other. The adult accepts the responsibility for understanding the child in his child being, and, in light of this knowledge, supports his becoming in the direction of adulthood. An example of this mode of upbringing is the adult's readiness to continually provide answers to the child's questions, which are a search for clarity and certainty with respect to his involvement in reality. Here support and intervention also come into play during which the adult explains to the child why certain actions are worthy and approvable while others are viewed as improper. It is important to keep in mind that in cognitive education, the adult always must take into account the child's level of becoming so that the child can make the content of education his own (learn). Such upbringing supports the child in his knowing life (cognitive becoming) and guides him to continually actualize his becoming on a higher level.

The necessity for *normative education* arises because the child's course of becoming also manifests itself with respect to the demands of propriety and the values of a view of life which must

be obeyed. It is *primarily* affective and cognitive upbringing which lay the foundation for this. These contents of propriety, etc. are presented to the child daily through instruction (at home, in school, in church) in such a way that the child not only becomes especially sensitive to values but also so he can purposefully give expression to these necessary life contents in his behaviour. The child's *experiencing* the meaningfulness of values and norms is indispensable for the totality of his becoming adult.

It ought to be obvious that the above three interconnected modes of education are essential for the unfolding of the child's psychic life.

*Second question: Where is the change in the child's becoming noticeable?*

The answer to this question points clearly to an *evaluation* of the child's becoming. This means an evaluation of the *effect* of the adult's educative instruction as well as of the level of becoming on which the child finds himself.

To keep the above in perspective, it is necessary to take the child's life-world as our point of departure in deciding to what extent the child's psychic life is actualized in terms of his becoming and learning.

In a search for criteria for judging this, it is clear from the child's directedness to and involvement with the life-world that there will be a *change* in the child's becoming only if he *learns* or has *learned*. This learning activity of the child and the effect that it has finds its sentimentalization in and shows a connection with particular modes by which the child manifests his *becoming different* to us, namely, a progressive and sustained exploiting, signs of emancipation, more distantiation and objectification in his behaving, and a marked differentiation concerning his possibilities as well as activities of his own choosing. These *modes of becoming*, by which the child shows himself becoming *different*, eventually can be used as criteria to determine the effect of his learning activities on the quality of his becoming. In other words, exploration, emancipation, distantiation, differentiation, and objectification are the criteria for judging if the child's becoming is progressively elevated in the direction of proper adulthood.

The question now arises as to what is understood by each of