

## CHAPTER III

### THE EXPERIENTIAL WORLD OF A PRESCHOOL CHILD BECOMING A SCHOOL CHILD: A PSYCHOPEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the scientific approach followed and used to penetrate the research problem is justified. The theoretical foundation of the psychopedagogical perspective used to study the preschool child in his/her becoming a school child is discussed. The aim of this study is to concentrate on actualizing the potentialities of the psychic life that a child possesses. Making these potentialities a reality, i.e., the focus is on the learning and becoming that is realized via a child's self-actualization of them, and that are observable in his/her experiential world. In what follows, it is there is shown how the experiential world of this child appears, how he/she announces him/herself, which relationships he/she establishes and what appeals he/she directs to his/her educators. In this connection, it is kept in mind that this essentially involves penetrating his/her experiential world in terms of his/her own potentialities. The accompaniment to adequate self-actualization of this child by an educator is considered in chapter IV.

A phenomenological approach generally is used, and it must be kept in mind that person and world are found to be an inseparable unity. Also, a child is continually situated and announces him/herself in relation to his/her world. The following world relationships are discussed:

- 1.1 The child in relationship to him/herself as this shows itself in his/her: a) bodily-being-in-the-world, b) his/her play and c) his/her language.
- 1.2 The child in relationship with others as this appears in his/her: a) bodily-being-in-the-world, b) his/her play and c) his/her language.

- 1.3 The child in relationship to things, whether concrete or abstract, as this appears in his/her: a) bodily-being-in-the-world, b) his/her play and c) his/her language.
- 1.4 The child in relationship to a Superior Being.

## 2. THE SITUATEDNESS OF A CHILD: A PSYCHO PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

### 2.1 The child in relationship to him/herself

#### 2.1.1 *Bodily-being-in-the-world*

It does not fall within the scope of this study to discuss fully the physical growth that a child experiences from about three to seven years of age. Also, from a psychopedagogical perspective, this would serve little purpose. Consequently, there is only brief reference to those changes that influence a child's experiential potentialities during this phase, and that are different from the previous, lower levels of becoming and the subsequent higher ones.

A child dwells in and explores the world via his/her body and any bodily changes do not remain isolated events but encompass and touch the entire range of his/her becoming.

The results of the accelerations and adjustments in the ways a child dwells in the world via his/her body are found in his/her experiential world. Arnold Gesell points out that: "The 6-year-old proves not to be a bigger and better 5-year-old. He is a different child because he is a changing child."<sup>(1)</sup>

Below, attention is given to the following body parts of this child in the specific order in which they develop physically before and after birth, i.e., the head, the arms and hands, the trunk and finally the legs and feet.

#### a) *The head*

The most important facial feature is the eyes. Although a child of three months already can follow moving objects, it remains an arduous task until about 6-years of age. Muscle development and coordination now accelerate to such an extent that he/she no longer must move his/her head or entire body in keeping an eye on

something or someone. He/she can now participate with greater ease and success in group conversations and activities. He/she now masters his/her world visually in a more adequate way than in earlier toddler years. This awakens in him/her greater self-confidence and satisfaction because of the favorable lived experiences that this entails. To the extent that success is repeated, it stabilizes his/her lived experiences and is adequately imbued with meaning such that his/her possessed experience can be supplemented with the knowledge that "I can". This forms a favorable preformed field for additionally going out to the visual world, and thus he/she *wants to/will* emancipate further.

Unhappily, the opposite also is true, i.e., if a child is exposed to demands he/she is physically unable to meet, he/she is exposed to failure, and an awareness of inadequacy leads him/her to *not be willing* to linger and proceed to perceiving, thinking and remembering. The entire matter of attending can be harmed by the "negative" emotional significance that this momentary lived experiencing has brought about. Experiencing in the future possibly can be channelized in a different direction to try to ward off a repeat of the unpleasantness.

When a child repeatedly fails, these negative lived experienced emotions also congeal, and he/she interprets the matter as meaningless-for-me. Thus, he/she will not linger by it and take the plunge to a more ordered, gnostic-cognitive level of lived experiencing. Thus, a labile emotional lived experiencing not only is detrimental for emancipating to a gnostic-cognitive level of becoming, but such congealed negative lived experiences are lived experienced as meaningless. Gradually, these meaningless experiential residues accumulate in his/her possessed experience.

Possessed experience accumulates over a long period, and it is not a matter that changes easily. Especially in the case of a preschool child, who still primarily is emotionally in the world and to whom only a limited cognitive appeal can be directed, it is extremely difficult to replace or modify unfavorable moments from his/her possessed experience. Whittle agrees with this when he says: "When a specific attunement is systematically built up over the course of time, it is changeable with difficulty".<sup>(2)</sup>

Adequate physical mastery of the world, also through visual potentialities, is of cardinal importance for a favorable experience of the self. A child who is satisfied with his/her own adequate actualization of potentialities can distance him/herself to such an extent that he/she is able to differentiate and objectify, and, in doing so, to actualize his/her becoming.

An additional matter of importance that involves the increased visual potentialities because of changes in the neuro-motor system is that a child can make adequate use of the look as a human means of communicating. For example, now he/she can sit still in his/her place of play or on his/her little school chair and follow a fellow person with his/her eyes – an attribute that is of great value in a school situation where eye contact with teachers and the group of children is of cardinal importance. Eye contact is a non-verbal means of communicating, and a child often responds with a smile, whether of affection or embarrassment, according to the lived experienced valences [i.e., positive or negative] that the related experiencing brings forth.

A child smile also often reveals the first permanent teeth – a further physical change during roughly the sixth year. These first “big” teeth are for a child a tangible symbol of his/her own becoming. He/she sees and feels that he/she is becoming different. The first exchange of milk teeth for permanent sets of teeth is an experience of emotional intensity similar to what sometimes accompanies the physical changes of puberty. Also, a child cannot conceal this new manifestation of his/her accelerated becoming; it is continually under the scrutiny of others. If there is mocking reference to his/her teeth, he/she can feel that it is he/she who is being mocked and rejected, and this colors “negatively” his/her own attunement to his/her becoming.

Not only does a child have to struggle with changes in his/her teeth, but now he/she also shows an increased susceptibility for infections of the mucous membranes. Red and sore eyes, swollen ears and throat are general phenomena. Thus, he/she doesn't always look the same to him/herself and also often feels sulky. A child of this

age does not yet have the possibility of localizing pain and discomfort and, hence, can appear to be annoying and whiney.

b) *The arms and hands*

At approximately one year, a little child already can reach and grasp, but McGraw, as cited by Hurlock, believes these movements can be perfected only after the fourth year.<sup>(3)</sup> The experiential possibilities that touching and feeling offer a child are obvious. At seven years of age, a child already can control his/her arms, shoulders and wrists with ease, but the control of fine finger muscles, e.g., those used in typing, are delayed until about 12 years of age.

This muscle development results in a child having the possibility to move one limb at a time. For example, he/she no longer throws a ball with his/her whole body but only uses one arm.

Now the possibility exists that he/she can participate in the physical activities of older children. Depending on his/her intentional attunement and the direction given by his/her educators in the past, possibilities exist for a child to broaden his/her experiential horizon through the new grasp on reality that he/she now can acquire with his/her arms and hands.

A child takes the initiative to venture into the unknown world of the bigger child where he/she soon becomes aware that he/she no longer is considered a “baby”. The pleasurable “positive” lived experiencing that this entails awakens a desire to explore the world further via his/her body, to temporarily distance him/herself from his/her parents so that he/she continually can project a new vision of the surrounding landscape. Success with this independent exploration strengthens a positive view of his/her own human dignity; hence, a child has a preference for repeating any physical activity he/she can successfully master.

This repeating or lingering with a matter that claims his/her attending provides an opportunity for a “second seeing” (in the language of Straus). What formerly only was a pleasant sensing, now intensifies to perceiving and provides room for fantasy, and,

via these modes of learning, a moving child also is able to actualize his/her gnostic-cognitive potentialities of lived experiencing.

In addition, already during the early preschool years, a child shows a preference for using a specific hand. By the time a preschooler becomes a school child, this preference ought to be acknowledged. A child no longer hesitates when a fine hand movement is required. He/she can confidently rely on his/her dexterity. The experiential importance of this can hardly be over-estimated. In a child there arises a knowing that “I can” – a gnostic-cognitive matter that brings about favorable pathic-affective lived experiencing. Each such giving meaning to a confrontation with the reality of physical life strengthens his/her self-image as a person-in-becoming who can help him/herself. Not only has he/she now distanced him/herself emotionally from his/her mother, but also he/she has genuinely emancipated him/herself. Now a child experiences: “I am someone” and this experiential residue is added to his/her possessed experience and this results in the fact that not only will he/she no longer remain what he/she is but *will become* further.

c. *Legs and feet*

On the average, a child learns to walk at 14 months but “... one seldom sees the flow and ease of movement which are referred to as grace in walking and running until the child is five”.<sup>(4)</sup>

During the late preschool years, drastic changes occur in bodily proportions such that a chubby preschool child turns into an agile school child.<sup>(5)</sup> It is during this phase that a child often must hear how “big” he/she has become. Recognition of his/her progress in becoming by an adult is a great source of happiness. Not only does this stabilize his/her pathic-affective disposition of lived experiencing, but this includes the cognitive side in that adults properly notice and grasp that he/she also is becoming adult.

Now a child not only can run and kick with grace and ease but can participate in games while he/she performs these skills. Once again, this opens new experiential possibilities for him/her. The whole sphere of adult sport now appears on his/her horizon, and he/she not only attempts to enter a new world of play with older

children, but he/she also attributes new meanings to his/her old toys. (This aspect is dealt with in greater detail below).

By exercising his/her mastery of gross muscle movements, he/she shows that he/she “is someone who gladly wants to become someone”. He/she is involved with mastering new life contents and as result is learning and becoming different from what he/she was – he/she emancipates to a higher level of becoming than where he/she was before acquiring such new possessed experience.

A child who can enter his/her world with an increasing degree of bodily control continually becomes less dependent on his/her fellow persons, his/her physical surroundings are less threatening and confusing and accordingly he/she has a favorable experience of him/herself as a person.

Each pleasant and successful attempt at physical activity is lived experienced as meaningful and results in an experiential residue that implies that, on further confrontation with similar situations, he/she will strive to master new heights.

Such an emotional attunement toward him/herself .and especially his/her physical potentialities,, implies that at school entry he/she can joyfully meet the greater demands placed on his/her physical skills. Motor play has a large role in the life of each child, but especially a school child, so that lived experienced successes in this area meaningfully supplements his/her experiential world and he/she daringly looks to the future. The favorable pathic-affective preformed field that thus has arisen makes it possible for him/her to enter the more gnostic-cognitive world of a school beginner.

In a Western culture, and specifically the contemporary South African milieu, a high premium is placed on motor skills of boys. It is expected of each boy that he shows an interest and certain skillfulness in sports. Also, sheer physical power is seen as an asset. Already from the preschool years, and to a continually increasing degree during the beginning of his school career, each boy is carefully watched for any signs of physical excellence.

Little girls, in contrast, can be less motor proficient without “negative” meaning being attributed to them or other girls. As long as they are within the limits of what is acceptable, they are accepted. Although a girl is under less societal pressure to communicate motor achievement, the value of a “positive” view of herself based on her-bodily-being-in-the-world is no less important. Hurlock cites Havighurst who says: “To an increasing extent, a child’s conception of himself is tied up with the skills he has. It is as though his acceptance of himself comes in part from his ability to master different forms of the world outside”.<sup>(6)</sup>

### 2.1.2 *Play*

Play is one of those phenomena of human existence that, because of its complexity, cannot readily be defined. There have been many<sup>(7)</sup> attempts at definitions and most are oversimplified or so broad and vague as to be meaningless. Discussions of the essence and nature of child play are not relevant here. In the following there is only reference to those aspects of child play that provide a preschool child with an opportunity to establish relationships with the self.

For a child, play clearly is a way in which he/she carries on a dialogue with his/her world. In playing, he/she makes his/her experiential world knowable and the extent to which he/she has actualized the potentialities of his/her psychic life; i.e., level of having become can be read from his/her play. Thus, in playing, a child also makes his/her experiential world knowable to his/her educators.

Play not only offers a child an opportunity to project his/her meanings but also to attribute new meanings and establish new relationships, including with him/herself. He/she has excellent opportunity, by re-experiencing them (in play) to assimilate those experiences that have been connected, e.g., to labile or even impulsive pathic-affective lived experiences and/or unordered gnostic-cognitive lived experiences and in doing so to add them to his/her possessed experience in what is to him/her a more acceptable form.

A child’s world of play is an unreal [i.e., fantasy] world that is established momentarily, and results in nothing resulting from the



play, but also it is decidedly bound to reality and is subject to limits. One of the factors that influences its limits is a child's potentialities and shortcomings.

Play offers a child an opportunity to arrive at self-knowledge, to become aware of what he/she can or cannot do.

Not only does he/she arrive at self-knowledge through play, but he/she also has an opportunity to acquire self-confidence because he/she is in the secure space of his/her world of play where he/she him/herself can determine the course, tempo and limits; he/she can risk venturing, exploring, distancing, differentiating, objectifying and eventually emancipating to a new level of becoming. In his/her world of play, he/she can, with security and at his/her own discretion, associate with those things that in the real world are still less known and possibly even appear threatening. This offers him/her an opportunity to put alternative solutions to the test without having to fear the consequences of failing. A child has an opportunity to take pride in the achievements that he/she attains in situations where he/she sets the demands him/herself. Play also offers excellent opportunity to supplement the awareness of his/her own dignity and worth.

A child in the transition phase from preschool to school is still in the world in a primarily emotional way,<sup>(8)</sup> and in his/her becoming has not yet reached the level where he/she can distance him/herself from his/her own emotions enough to distinguish and objectify them by verbalizing them. As soon as a child can differentiate and name his/her emotions, this shows that he/she has reached a level of becoming where he/she can attribute gnostic-cognitive sense and meaning. A child in this phase has not yet reached this level. Nevertheless, in his/her daily life, he/she is overcome by emotions of joy, anxiety, sorrow, rage, weariness, etc. Now play offers an opportunity to bring these vague, undefined feelings to expression by projecting them. Constructive play and illusive [fantasy] role play for which a child now shows a preference, superbly lends itself to self-expression: "Fantasy play is a very important form of learning because a child exerts himself and allows the play to progress such that it gives rise to a fruitful tension and inner rest [Het fantasiespel is een zeer belangrijke vorm van leren doordat het

kind zich inspannt en zijn spel zo te laten verlopen dat het vreugde ontspanning en innerlijke rust geeft]” according to Nijkamp.<sup>(9)</sup> In play, a child arrives at pathic-affective rest and equilibrium, and in such a way reestablishes self-respect and self-regard.

When a child enters the school world (and in cases where he/she enters a preschool so much earlier), necessarily he/she encounters age mates. He/she then is given an opportunity for group play. True playing together such as occurs with puerile children is still alien to a preschool child. Rather, playing with mates entails more a playing next to each other than with each other. In this connection, Bladergroen mentions: “Real communication, even in conversations, is still only sporadically present; they carry on a monologue with each other [Werklijke communicatie, zelfs in de gesprekken, is nog maar aanwezig; ze houden monologen tegen elkaar].”<sup>(10)</sup> Nevertheless, a preschool child now has an opportunity to acquire his/her own standpoint in the group because now he/she can compare his/her own potentialities and achievements with those of his/her mates. In playing together, often for the first time, he/she is offered an opportunity to see his/her potentialities in perspective. Especially a youngest, oldest, only child and late additions to a family, incline to have a “distorted” view of their own excellences and shortcomings.

Thus, play is an outstanding medium by which a child acquires an opportunity for self-criticism, self-valuing and building up possessed experience regarding his/her own human dignity.

### 2.1.3 *Language*

As with play, language is a phenomenon difficult to define. Stander arrives at the following description: “*Language is then a multidimensional symbol-form system, intentional outcome of the psychic-spiritual dimension of being human and his dialoging with his world:* It is a phenomenon carried by one’s willing, affect and intelligence, and, as such, as a *human phenomenon*, it is a human being’s most subjective possession.”<sup>(11)</sup>

At birth a human being is a completely helpless being and is totally dependent on fellow persons. Each child is born with psychic life

potentialities. Within an adequate educative situation, it then is possible for him/her to realize and use these potentialities.

Since experiencing is the original way of being in the world, it is the first turning to and reaching knowledge about the surrounding life reality.<sup>(12)</sup> As soon as a child announces him/herself on earth, he/she begins to *learn* and to *become*, to the extent that he/she actualizes his/her primordially given intentionality.

Initially, a child lived experiences reality as being global-diffuse. His/her lived experiences, that still are primarily pathic, will be impulsive and that his/her initial gnostic lived experiences will appear extremely unordered because at birth there is no psychic possessed experience available. Systematically, to the extent that his/her pathic lived experiences are stabilized and the gnostic aspect becomes more ordered, experiential residues occur that are given meaning during moments of lived experiencing and that congeal in possessed experience. From this, Van der Stoep says that “childlike lived experiences essentially are congealed experiences”.<sup>(13)</sup>

With the actualization of a possessed experience, it is possible for a child to differentiate, to objectify, etc. and because of this, he/she gradually builds up a frame of reference in the form of a possessed experience against which he/she can evaluate new lived experiences, and he/she can also name them. When a child verbalizes something, i.e., uses language, this serves as evidence of the becoming that has occurred. A child not only reflects in his/her language his/her state of becoming and possessed knowledge, but also his/her experiential world. The relationships a child has established, also with him/herself, can be read from his/her language.

With a young child, language is going to be paired with physical activity; he/she provides a running commentary of his/her movements and play, he/she thinks aloud and his/her linguistic expressions have the character of a monologue. What he/she says is of great interest to him/herself because he/she doesn't really talk to others so much as he/she talks in the presence of others. Such a tendency lasts up to the late preschool years and then gradually

disappears. This seldom occurs before the beginning of the first year of school.

From his/her language, it seems that a child now links him/herself with his/her interests, and they are central themes of his/her thoughts: "Like the adult, the child talks about the things that are most important to him and thus we know what his dominant interests are".<sup>(14)</sup> And a preschool child seldom talks about subjects other than what he/she him/herself is involved with. For example, he/she cannot yet distance him/herself from and objectify to the extent that he/she readily can engage in abstract thinking. This latter tendency, i.e., a more cognitive signifying of reality, presents itself as a potentiality at or about the seventh year of age. A child then shows evidence of an increasing interest in acquiring knowledge in gnostic-cognitive ways. This directs a very specific appeal to his/her educators, a matter attended to in the following chapter.

Also, a young child hardly is in a position for accountable self-criticism, first because of his/her deficient possessed experience regarding his/her own and other person's potentialities, and second because he/she still signifies his/her world pathic-affectively to such an extent that he/she cannot sufficiently distance him/herself from his/her own involvement to make comparisons in gnostic-cognitive ways. He/she does not see his/her own failures as such, but attributes their origin to others. For example, he/she immediately blames another child when he/she him/herself has stumbled. The fact that such blaming cannot be rationally justified passes by the child. He/she does not yet signify the situation in an ordered cognitive way. His/her linguistic expressions give clear evidence of this. Thus, when he/she is tired and sleepy, he/she doesn't identify this, as such, but directs a stream of blame at others that they annoy him/her.<sup>(15)</sup>

On school entry there is a dramatic change in a child's interpretation of his/her own potentialities. Buhler cites the following finding of Pearl Greenberg: "Spontaneous negative self-criticism makes its first appearance at 6-7 years in 10 per cent of the cases in comparison with 70 per cent of self-praise".<sup>(16)</sup>

Owing to the more formal nature of his/her situation in a schoolroom, there is an increase in occasions for experiencing his/her own potentialities and shortcomings in comparison with those of age mates who are subjected to the same demands. It occurs commonly that children in the beginning classes provide negative verbal criticism of themselves and their attempts. A child expresses his/her alleged inability and makes his/her disapproval of his/her attempts known, e.g., by asking if he/she might turn the page and begin again or by erasing it – if need be, with his/her finger! Anything is no longer good or is simply beautiful because he/she has done it him/herself.

Very quickly a school beginner now acquires his/her own position within the group in connection with his/her own view of him/herself. He/she is ready to become involved in a serious argument when he/she thinks he/she is underestimated by others but can just as honestly say what he/she cannot do well. Now he/she no longer thinks and says that in all respects he/she is the most exemplary child.

Thus, there is a big change in the relationship established with him/herself during his/her becoming from a preschool to a school child. However, this is a transition or a leap that does not merely progress. All children do not manage this change without adversity. During this transition phase, there are far-reaching demands placed on the parents and teachers with respect to providing adequate support. (See chapter IV).

With school entry, a preschool child, by law, is separated from his/her parents for the first time and placed in a formally ordered group of age mates. His/her lifeworld is radically changed and with this, so are his/her possibilities for experiencing. A child now is confronted with situations he/she cannot avoid. A more cognitive attunement is expected of him/her as he/she proceeds in his/her school career. The quality of educating he/she has received previously and his/her own readiness for self-actualization are tested to the limit, but this also immediately creates a new need for his/her educators to support him/her in normative, affective and cognitive ways to make possible a safe passage through this phase of becoming.

Stander indicates that the acquisition of “literacy” opens a new area for experiencing.<sup>(17)</sup> Indeed, he says: “In his continuing discovery, acquisition and mastery of language, a developing child finds a level of security and new safe mobility that is difficult to overestimate”. To this, the author eagerly adds, specifically with respect to a child’s relationship to himself: *provided his/her educators identify his/her need and support him/her to adequate self-actualization.*

## **2.2 The child in relationship to others**

The relationships with fellow persons that a child finds him/herself in during his/her becoming from a preschool to a school child are complex. For the first time in his/her life, out of necessity he/she now is exposed to formal, artificially established relationships. Before proceeding to a penetration of a child’s actualization of his/her psychic life in relationship to other persons, as this is observed in his/her bodily-being-in-the-world, play and language, a framework is given of the scope of these relationships with fellow persons:

### **2.2.1 *The scope of relationships with fellow persons in which a child is involved***

The first is a child in relationship with adults, among which are:

- a) known adults, e.g., his/her parents, family and friends,
- b) unknown adults with whom he/she must establish a relatively permanent relationship, e.g., his/her preschool teachers, primary school teachers and possible others who are concerned about his/her transportation, supervision and care,
- c) unknown adults with whom he/she must establish a fleeting relationship, e.g., random visitors, shopkeepers, etc.

The second is a child’s relationship with other children among which are:

- d) his/her brothers and/or sisters older than him/herself,
- e) his/her brothers and/or sisters younger than him/herself,
- f) known mates older than him/herself,

- g) known mates younger than him/herself,
- h) unknown children older than him/herself,
- i) unknown children younger than him/herself.

When a child's bodily-being-in-the-world is discussed, the above interpersonal relationships continually must be kept in mind.

### *2.2.2 Bodily-being-in-the-world*

As shown in section 2.1.1, a child now experiences an accelerated increase in skillfulness regarding bodily control. Not only does he/she please him/herself with this but he/she eagerly demonstrates this skillfulness to adults, especially his/her parents. Ad nauseam, he/she will insist that his/her parents look at how fast he/she can run, how far he/she can jump on one leg or how high in a tree he/she can climb. This tendency reaches a highpoint by school entry. Then a child continually tries to get his/her teachers to pay individual attention to him/her by demonstrating his/her motor skills. He/she repeatedly will show how nicely he/she can draw or, in group singing, he/she will try to elevate his/her voice above the others. In doing so, he/she tries to win a teacher's affection. It is only with great difficulty that a school beginner suppresses this desire and learns to be still and proceed with his/her work. In a class context, he/she can compare his/her achievements with that of others and he/she continually harbors the fear that his/her individual excellence will go unnoticed. Not only does he/she want to listen to him/herself sing, but he/she wants to be sure that his/her teacher also listens to him/her. This awakens the sensing of a safe, secure learning space within which he/she can proceed to perceiving, thinking, imagining, fantasizing and remembering. When he/she pathic-affectively senses security, this enables him/her to actualize his/her intelligence on a more gnostic-cognitive level.

Also, a child not only claims the attention of his/her teachers via his/her body, but he/she also has a strong need for physical pampering and contact. A child will lived experience senso-pathically that his/her educators are devoted to, accept and cherish him/her. Only by building up such adequate possessed experience will he/she be so stable in his/her lived experiencing that he/she will emancipate from a predominantly senso-pathic to a more pathic and even affective level of giving meaning.

At the time a child reaches his/her second school year, it is a sufficient indication of a favorable relationship if his/her teachers only look at or smile at him/her. No longer does he/she need to be touched by him/her to be sure of his/her goodwill.

In the presence of unfamiliar adults, a young child is physically more distant because, at first glance, there is not an intuitive sensing of acceptance. For him/her it is even a source of confusion if a stranger physically touches him/her. However, he/she notices their height, teeth or skillfulness, and nevertheless, this remains a joy and it creates an emotionally favorable preformed field from which he/she dares to venture with self-confidence to explore this unknown relationship.

During this phase, he/she is so aware of an approving or disapproving look directed at him/her by adults that he/she even begins to pay attention to his/her personal appearance. He/she insists on dressing him/herself bathing and caring for his/her hair. Even a visit to a barbershop is no longer the struggle it was before. Girls especially are very fond of caring for their hair; ribbons, decorations and hair bands are a source of great pride for them.

A child also establishes relationships with other children via his/her body and they mutually explore their relationship by physically doing things with each other. Even though at this stage there is no genuine playing together [cooperating] or talking together [conversing], they are involved with each other and thus create a piece of common lifeworld. One chases the other around aimlessly. They climb in the same tree or ride on the same swing. For boys wrestling is extremely popular because of the sheer mutual physical contact and opportunity to exhibit decency. The outcome of the “combat” is entirely unimportant – rules are almost non-existent or merely improvised for the moment.

A child is not merely aware of his/her own body, but appraises his/her mates in the same light. Often there is disapproval expressed of another child because of his/her physical appearance. The opposite also is true: A child feels attracted to another who for him/her appears physically exquisite and acceptable.



This inclination is observed very clearly in contact with an unfamiliar child. If, at first glance, a strange person looks extremely unacceptable, he/she makes no attempt to establish a firm relationship. From this it seems clear of the importance of the pathic mode of learning *sensing* is for a preschool child and school beginner. If he/she attributes negative meaning on a pathic-affective level of lived experiencing, this leads to such possessed experience that he/she will not explore further, and the situation will not be given meaning on a more gnostic-cognitive level. Thus, the building up of more comprehensive, adequate, broader possessed experience in this respect becomes impeded. A five and-a-half year old remarked to this author that he would not like another child because he had warts, and with that the matter was settled.

Because a child places such a high premium on bodiliness and physical skillfulness, he/she has a great admiration for older children. Gender preferences are not expressed so clearly. At the onset of this phase, boys start to show a decided preference for being with older boys. From the beginning they even are inclined to play with older girls, provided they encounter them in their own characteristic physical ways. Young girls seldom turn to boy mates, but they try to get the attention and goodwill of an older girl. A school beginner experiences that she is accepted when an older schoolmate holds her hand or comes and sits next to her. During recess at school, grade I, girls often follow in a group behind any older girl who doesn't mind.

These ways of establishing relationships with other children, also with known mates of the same age, are clearly observable when children have an opportunity to establish relationships on their own initiative. During recesses on the playground or in the daytime at home, they do not pursue one of the traditional child games such as hide-and-seek, but rather run around with them, go drink water together, or spontaneously chase each other around. The pleasure of being together is found in being-physically-active together.

### 2.2.3 *Play*

It has been shown that a child learns to know him/herself by playing, but play also is an outstanding medium for establishing relationships with others: “A child develops himself while playing, discovers himself in his involvement in play, discovers the world and fellow persons in his playful contact with them [Het kind ontwikkelt zich al spelend, ontdekt zich zelf in het spelend bezig zijn, ontdekt de wereld en de medemens in het spelend contact].”<sup>(18)</sup>

Where the levels of becoming of a preschool child and a school beginner still are such that they are not yet able to establish relationships with others in their world primarily via language, play is the obvious means of communication: “From an early age there is a dialogue between child and world and play is one of its most meaningful forms”.<sup>(19)</sup>

During the transition phase from preschool to school child, individual play comes to the fore, but such a child shows a particular need for playmates. However, there is not yet any sign of group or team play.

This child often tries to play with his/her parents but one very quickly realizes that play between an adult and a child is of shorter duration and progresses differently than play between children. A child already is aware that there are definite limits with respect to the times and places that an adult becomes involved in play. When a child establishes a relationship with an adult via play, an adult sometimes is inclined to completely take the initiative and purposefully direct a child to certain discoveries. (Compare with the Montessori method of teaching).<sup>(20)</sup>

Milly Almy says: “... too often attempts at cooperative exploration of the implications of the idea that children really learn in nursery school have come to nothing or have ended in mutual distrust. Many different factors contributed to this state of affairs, but perhaps most crucial has been a lack of mutual understanding of the nature and function of play in the cognitive life of the young child”.<sup>(21)</sup> Many adults communicate further under the mistaken belief that they play with a child while informally giving them assignments. With genuine play, the outcome of the activity is always of minor importance, the co-players maintain mutual

initiative in changing the course of the play or ending it. Mutual enjoyment and goodwill are essences of true play.

A suckling, and even a toddler, are in a favorable position to genuinely play with their parents. However, when a child becomes a preschooler and stands at the threshold of school entry, parents often take a confusing attitude toward playing with their child. Play becomes seen as a golden opportunity for him/her to “learn a few things”.

Also, it is when a child is ready to put aside his/her playful attitude and can show for relatively long periods of time a more matter of fact attitude toward assignments that he/she continually shows school readiness.<sup>(22)</sup>

Initially, a school beginner, just as a preschooler, does at home or in a preschool, attempts to establish a relationship of play with his/her teachers. This presents a big task to both his/her parents and teachers.

Because a child, during his/her becoming from a preschool to a school child, so vigorously explores his/her world emotionally, and because *sensing* has an important place as a mode of learning, parents and other adults who do not genuinely play, seldom succeed in leading a child by the hand; emotionally, a child senses that “play” indeed is a sugar coated pill, and no matter how pleasant this might be, they continually yearn for true play and turn to mates. Even children whose parents often “play with him/her” still ask to go play with other children.

By playing with another child, he/she gradually learns to be charitable, to give and take turns and to respect the rights and dignity of another as much as his/her own: “At first, the nursery school child treats other children as things. Gradually he/she learns ‘what potential play contents can be admitted only to fantasy, and only to play by and with oneself, and what contents can be shared with others’”.<sup>(23)</sup>

The norms and values that are expressed in specific ways of behaving and that make ordered human co-existence possible are

tested by a child in his/her play. In their educative intervention with their child, parents hold certain norms before him/her as proper and play offers a child an opportunity to test them. If it is useful and true to life lessons that a parent has taught his/her child, he/she finds them useful in his/her play with mates and assimilates them. In play with mates, a child now also acquires an opportunity to test, in security and following his/her own initiative, those aspects of co-existential relationships that are going to promote his/her future entrance into a community and society. In play, he/she exercises those dispositions, actions, restrictions, etc. that he/she is going to exercise as an adult facing his/her fellow humans.

A preschooler who has experienced the joys and sorrows of fellow human contact has taken a step forward in his/her becoming a school child and has learned lessons of life that will serve him/her well in becoming adult.

#### 2.2.4 *Language*

A preschool child becoming a school child exhibits his/her experiential world in his/her language. A penetration of his/her verbal communication with fellow persons and his/her comments and observations about them give an observer an image of how he/she treats fellow persons and his/her relationships with them.<sup>(24)</sup>

His/her language acquisition is so fast and comprehensive that a closer differentiation within this phase is possible. The aim is not to draw watertight distinctions but the language of a child at the onset of his/her preschool phase differs so much from a child who has completed his/her first school year, especially with respect to interpersonal relationships, that a closer differentiation is meaningful.

Regarding a child's relationship to his/her parents during the beginning phase of the preschool year, from his/her language, it is clear that now he/she identifies him/herself with them.<sup>(25)</sup> He/she readily boasts to others about them and their possessions and quotes them as authorities. He/she eagerly pleases his/her parents with his/her verbal skills and plays with sounds by forming lists of rhyming words. At about 5 years of age he/she readily expresses

him/herself verbally and he/she will verbalize his/her feelings about his/her parents.<sup>(26)</sup>

Provided a child has received the needed pathic-affective stability to distance him/herself from his/her mother on school entry, he/she is able to assume a more cognitive attunement. Thus, he/she has reached such a level of becoming that he/she shows the potentialities of his/her psychic life in a form of being distanced. For example, he/she questions his/her mother's orders or refuses to carry them out. Apparently, he/she now has become impudent, contradictory and uncooperative with his/her mother.<sup>(27)</sup> Indeed, he/she experiences his/her emancipation to a more independent person. Now he/she continually becomes more someone him/herself, explores the world outside of the home and acquires knowledge and insights that lead to a new awareness of his/her own identity.

Consequently, he/she has arrived at a degree of differentiation where some distancing is possible. However, he/she has not yet reached the level of becoming where objectivity regarding his/her relationship with his/her mother is possible. A school beginner's habitual attunement to the reality he/she enters via experiencing it, remains primarily emotional: "Since a school beginner participates in his lifeworld mainly in a pathic way of lived experiencing, there is little fortification of the self via language as an emotional means of verbalization".<sup>(28)</sup>

This tendency does not appear toward his/her father.<sup>(29)</sup> For a child, mother personifies the familiar home situation, what he/she is trying to move away from, while father symbolizes the unfamiliar outer world. As he/she enters the world outside of the home by experiencing it and as he/she lived experiences more gnostic-cognitively, a child moves closer to his/her father.

That a child now is involved in making room for his/her own place to stand, and to acquire this within intimate groups,<sup>(30)</sup> he/she asks those interested in him/her about his/her family and origins. He/she especially asks his/her grandparents questions. His/her reference to them gives signs that he/she is aware that he/she is related to them in many ways, in contrast to other adults.

Regarding unfamiliar adults, his/her relationship with them remains something he/she explores with hesitation. His/her possessed experience indicates to him/her his/her own dependence, awkwardness and inability to communicate adequately verbally with unfamiliar adults without the help of a supporting adult. So often, while he/she was younger, unfamiliar adults did not understand him/her and his/her verbal expressions still are so inadequate that he/she will not converse readily with strangers. Under the look of an unfamiliar adult, he/she experiences this inability to such an extent on a pathic level that he/she falls back on his/her body, he/she bows his/her head, sucks his/her fingers and his/her voice dwindles.

Where a school beginner shows a willingness to enter the world of things on a more gnostic-cognitive level of attributing meaning, the world of relationships with adults remains, for a long time, on a much lower level of lived experiencing.

This propensity also is noticed in his/her linguistic expressions about his/her teachers. He/she is ready to greet and converse with him/her but shows a degree of reservation that is not found in his/her discussions with mates.

Although a school beginner (as does a preschool child in a preschool) communicates with age mates, continually he/she demands individual attention from his/her teacher and refers to him/her as "my teacher". He/she does not yet feel committed to the group. It is only at the beginning of the puerile phase (about 9 years) that he/she refers to the teacher as "our teacher".

In the presence of his/her mates, he/she talks with great ease, but *at* them rather than *with* them. Exceptions to this are when ill will arises or when a child tries to monopolize the attention of a friend. During the first school year, each child yearns for a "best friend". The fact that he/she does not yet feel self-assured about his/her own acceptability is an additional indication of deficient distancing and objectifying. Friendships seldom are enduring and continually change. If a child is asked about the reasons for this, his/her linguistic expressions are evidence of an extremely emotional

attunement. In this regard, in his/her linguistic expressions he/she seldom gives evidence of thinking or imagining as particularized ways of actualizing learning-as-experiencing. They usually remain limited to sensing and, at most, perceiving. Also, here the adults who have pedagogical responsibility for the child have a big task. (Also see chapter IV).

In a family context, a child's relationships with other children are no less tumultuous. Initially, he/she is disposed to let him/herself be "mothered" by older brothers and sisters but at about his/her fourth year, he/she teases them and shortly after he/she cheerfully fights with them. Although a child at this age possesses a relatively extensive vocabulary, arguments often result in merely repeating words or a phrase that is offensive. From this it is concluded that such a child is aware of his/her own place and rights within the family circle. Although he/she admires and strives to identify him/herself with them, he/she is still awkward in his/her interpersonal relationships.

Outside of the family it seldom happens that a child argues and fights with older children and rather seeks fellowship and befriends them.

From his/her relationship with younger children, his/her deficient potentialities for differentiating and distancing appear. He/she often demands the same behavioral privileges from his/her parents as younger children enjoy. However, shortly before beginning school, he/she can be protective of and affectionate toward a younger child, but when he/she has become a school child, there is a drastic change because now he/she is domineering and bossy toward young ones. This phenomenon has to do with the *new life knowledge he/she has acquired through his/her experiencing outside of the home situation*. He/she now entertains a conscious knowing of his/her richer possessed experience and continually tries to elevate his/her own human dignity by disparaging a younger child.

The linguistic expressions of a preschool child who is becoming a school child offer a sympathetic listener a way of penetrating his/her experiential world.

## 2.3 The child in relationship to things

### 2.3.1 *Introduction*

For the purpose of this study, the following organization of the world-of-“things” is offered as it makes itself knowable in the everyday lifeworld of a child.

a) **Concrete things**, including the following:

- (i) His/her own possessions such as toys, books, clothing and other useful objects,
- (ii) shared possessions such as family furniture, pet animals, plants, etc. as well as public things,
- (iii) possessions of strangers such as other children’s books, pencils, toys or other adult’s belongings.

b) **Abstract things** in the lifeworld with which a child comes into contact, including the following:

- (i) concepts such as love, rage, sorrow and other feelings,
- (ii) norms and values that are addressed to him/her from his/her specific cultural heritage, e.g., obedience, loyalty, civility,
- (iii) sound-, number- and music-symbols that also are culture-bound.

The purpose of this structuring only is to order the terrain of things in a child’s lifeworld to such an extent that it is feasible to accommodate it within the limited scope of this study.

In what follows, the “thing”-world of a child is penetrated in terms of bodily-being-in-the-world, play and language as was done with the other relationships:

### 2.3.2 *Bodily-being-in-the-world*

Experiencing by way of exploring the physical environment via the body is one of the most conspicuous activities of a young child. It is a way of being that continually is present in a child’s becoming, but



particularly so in a phase within which he/she does not yet signify his/her world in a habitually cognitive way.

A preschool child becoming a school child is, as already shown, primarily in the world emotionally. The more cognitive modes of learning such as thinking, imagining and fantasizing indeed are used in his/her becoming via experiencing, but not primarily. He/she is still strongly inclined to vacillate between a pathic-affective and a senso-pathic level of lived experiencing in giving meaning to things and, thus, establishing relationships via bodiliness, is of cardinal importance for a preschool child becoming a school child: "They want to touch, smell, taste, see and hear everything. The more they learn, the more they want to learn".<sup>(31)</sup>

Sensory experiencing is of obvious importance via sensing, perceiving and observing, as particularized ways of actualizing psychic life potentialities. This does not involve "describing the sense organs as 'channels' or points of contact by which a child receives stimuli from the outer world. This view of sensing is nothing more than a focus on the physiological side of sensorial processes. More particularly, the question is how does a child, in his/her child being, lived experience when he/she contacts his/her world via his/her sense organs".<sup>(32)</sup> Of further importance is which experiential residues does he/she add to his/her possessed experience. For a discussion of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, grasping, reaching and pointing, as experienced bodiliness, there is reference to the work of Sonnekus.<sup>(33)</sup>

Rich possessed experience from associating bodily with concrete objects in the lifeworld are necessary for giving adequate meaning to these objects on a continually higher level of becoming. In other words, to actualize becoming by way of exploring, differentiating, distancing, objectifying and emancipating, it is necessary that a child learn about concrete things in his/her lifeworld. Only when his/her possessed experience is enriched by sensing, perceiving and viewing is a child able to adequately actualize thinking, fantasizing, imagining and remembering. The latter modes of learning make a strong appeal to a child's potentiality for abstraction: "For a child to understand the concept of 'roundness' he must first have experiences with real round things".<sup>(34)</sup> That abstract thinking

follows thinking on schematic and on concrete levels is generally accepted. (See the theory of layers or levels of consciousness of the Cologne school of the psychology of thinking.)<sup>(35)</sup>

The connections and coherence among the contents of a rich possessed experience, and willing as a direction-giving intentionality, as well as lived experiencing, in the light of previous experiences, which result in attaining further knowledge, are so close that Piaget even views intelligence as an accumulation of experiences. According to him, experiencing is one of the ways in which “intellectual growth” is promoted.<sup>(36)</sup>

This point of view cannot be agreed with, mainly because it testifies to a naturalistically oriented [philosophical] child anthropology and that it amounts to an oversimplification of the phenomena of experiencing and intelligence. Important aspects such as a child’s own openness, directedness and intentionality, i.e., his/her own role in becoming, are ignored. However, it is agreed that adequate possessed experience that shows affective stability and cognitive order create a favorable preformed field for actualizing intelligence. (See C. A. van der Merwe’s work in this regard.)<sup>(37)</sup>

Currently, particular emphasis is placed on sensory perception as a basis for learning. In this connection, Lowenfeld says: “It is only through the senses that learning can take place”, and further on, “Schools have done little to educate the senses that are our only avenue of learning”.<sup>(38)</sup> Also, Grove agrees with this: “The method used to educate pupils to school readiness amounts mainly to developing the perceptual skills of a child”.<sup>(39)</sup>

This standpoint also points to an oversimplification of learning and becoming in that it absolutizes the importance of establishing bodily relationships with the world and assumes that child becoming actualizes itself because sensory perception occurs. With this, perceiving via the body is absolutized. As Armstrong<sup>(40)</sup> shows, there are more ways of perceiving than only sensory perceiving. He mentions a “higher” type of perceiving that he calls categorical perceiving or viewing.<sup>(42)</sup>

That more modes of learning can be distinguished as well as the importance of emotional stability as a precondition for the adequate actualization of learning are stated clearly by Sonnekus and his co-workers.<sup>(43)</sup>

That a child actualizes his/her psychic life potentialities further can be inferred from the fact that he/she learns and thus becomes (different). The real act of perceiving, as a way of learning, cannot be studied individually. Thus, Coetzee says, with reference to Brentano, that: "each psychological act is accompanied by knowing, being conscious that we perform the act. When we hear a sound, then we are aware that we hear, but we only perceive the sound, not the process of hearing".<sup>(44)</sup> Then Coetzee also points out that lived experiencing is a momentary event within the stream of experiencing: "Through reflecting, however, it is possible to subsequently select out the lived experiencing of hearing from the whole of experiencing and attend to it".<sup>(45)</sup>

The same holds for the other modes of learning. It is not possible for us to determine how the events of thinking, fantasizing, etc. are actualized. It can be said on which level they are actualized and what their quality is. However, that a child actualizes these modes of learning appears in the fact that he/she becomes.

What can be said is that a child's experiencing via bodily-being-in-the-world, is the way in which he/she establishes relationships with concrete objects in his/her lifeworld. The quality of the sense and meaning given to these concrete things, whether the attribution of open or personal meaning, largely is influenced by the normative education in which a child is involved.

Because of a preschool child's propensity for physical activity, he/she takes an interest in toys where he/she can use gross muscle movements. A climbing pole, a swing, a scooter, a rope ladder, pushcart and tricycle are preferred toys: "His exploration of his own skills and power can give rise to a child venturing into dangerous situations".<sup>(46)</sup>

By his/her fifth year a child is reasonably well acquainted with the immediate surroundings, provided his/her pedagogical situation

looks favorable. For a short time, he/she is satisfied to assimilate the experiential residues he/she has undergone to his/her ordered possessed experience. A child finds much delight in the familiar and known. He/she is attached to his/her own bed, own chair [or place at the table] and a favorite toy.

To the extent that he/she is school ready and experiences a greater skillfulness of hands and wrists, he/she also shows an interest in paper, pencil, scissors and paste. His/her creations, however, attest to the concreteness of his/her thinking.

By now a child has emancipated to such an extent that he/she no longer primarily is attuned to exploring the world of concrete things senso-pathically, and now can look at something without also wanting to grasp and taste it. However, his/her lived experiencing is unstable or if he/she is emotionally shocked, he/she immediately falls back on a lower level of lived experiencing and often is thrown back to his/her body. Thus, many parents find that their child complains of stomachaches or fatigue when he/she cannot meet the demands of the moment. If a classroom in the beginning school year is full of tension, pencils, bows and hankies are chewed on and crumpled up irrespective of the original aim. Then a child gives sense and meaning to “objects-for-me” in a highly personal way and this dominates giving any open meaning to which he/she has already come.

If, however, his/her pedagogical situation is so favorable that he/she can lived experience it in an emotionally stable way, his/her attribution of open meaning to concrete objects shows a rise in level—he/she then carries on a dialogue with his/her world on a higher level. Now his/her ball no longer merely is an object with which he/she amuses him/herself, but from his/her physical association with it, an understanding arises of the place a ball assumes in the adult world. The same holds for a pair of scissors, a pen and other familiar objects.

Toward the end of this phase, i.e., during the first year of school, there is a decrease in physical activity and a child can explore the world of things in such a cognitively distanced way that he/she can use imagining and fantasizing as particularized ways of actualizing

the potentialities of his/her psychic life. Now he/she also can experience adequately in other ways than bodily to an extent that his/her teachers can increasingly lead him/her into the world of abstract symbols.

### 2.3.3 *Play*

One of the essences of child play is that it is free from obligations. The pleasure of playing is in the activity itself and not so much in its result. If specific knowledge is acquired in this way, it occurs in an unplanned way. As soon as one or another of the participants directs play so that certain discoveries are made necessary, the play[fullness] is violated and it is changed into a task that is carried out informally.

Now the question arises if genuine play, as a way of teaching, can be done justice in a primary school where a child must acquire specific knowledge in a specific amount of time. Bladergroen bluntly says: “the activities carried out in the sphere of play, however, are free from any obligations (De handelinge in de spelsfeer verricht, zijn echter vrij van elke plicht)”.<sup>(47)</sup>

A person always plays with *something* (however, the something can be another person): “Playing is being active with things and with fellow persons (Spelen is actief zijn, met de dingend, met de medemens)”.<sup>(48)</sup> Play provides enjoyment and a positive emotional attunement arises in a child. If given the opportunity for uninterrupted playing to explore, this stabilizes his/her pathic-affective giving meaning to his/her experiencing such that he/she creates a favorable preformed field for actualizing his/her more gnostic-cognitive modes of learning. A child attends to, lingers by what his/her wondering awakens.<sup>(49)</sup>

In this light, it is understood why play is such a serious situation for a playing child. It has many implications for his/her educators, both parents and teachers. (See chapter IV).

Bladergroen mentions that the transition from preschool to school child clearly is a phase within which a child, by experiencing, explores the world via playing experimentally. This progresses on the following levels<sup>(50)</sup>

- a) Acquaintance with the characteristics of things. No symbolic values are ascribed.
- b) The changeableness of things. Sand, clay, paper, etc. assume different forms when rolled, pressed or squeezed. Even the form of structured play materials can be changed by “breaking” them; “A human child discovers something fundamental: the changeableness of the world (Het mensankind ontdekt dn iets fundamenteels: de veranderlijkheid van de wereld)”.<sup>(51)</sup> It is unique to a human being, and thus a child, that he/she continually tries to change his/her surroundings by creating or transforming something according to his/her own needs. In this light, “breaking” and “creating” are opposite sides of the same form of play.
- c) Constructive play has the unmistakable character of imitating. From unstructured material such as sand, clay and paper or structured material such as cardboard boxes, small boards and blocks, a child builds something. To actualize imagining as a mode of learning, a child must be so emotionally stable that he/she dares to explore and wants to test and use the possibilities of the play material. If he/she is confronted with the limitations of his/her own possibilities or those of the play material, he/she must once again resort to imaginative improvising to make it available to him/her. This directs a strong appeal to his/her potentialities for giving cognitive meaning. Actualizing his/her fantasizing, as a mode of learning, in constructive play means he/she once again experiences in gnostic-cognitive ways because he/she brings about something new, something with which he/she had not yet been familiar. The imitative character has now abated.
- d) Imitative play: Here the following forms are distinguished:
  - (i) Self-imitation occurs when a child is pleased and satisfied with his/her own attempts and repeats them.
  - (ii) Imitating others, whether a person, an animal or a moving object. This has a symbolic character and shows that a child has progressed in his/her

becoming such that he/she differentiates and objectifies. In this, a child shows a potential for abstract thinking. Bladergroen says: “In imitating, one of the arsenals of experiencing is consolidated into knowledge of a thing and its function (In de imitatie word een arsenal van ervaringen geconsolideerd tot kennis van de dingen en hun functie)”.<sup>(52)</sup> In imitating, a child gives evidence of his/her lived experiences and with their consolidation in his/her possessed experience, he/she arrives at knowledge. Thus, he/she has learned and genuinely experienced something.

- (iii) Fantasy play: In this form of play a child creates a world according to his/her own desires. He/she creates an unreal [fantasy] world that is controllable, one in which he/she rules and is master. In fantasy play, a child not only creates new relationships with things but gives signs of existing relationships. In his/her fantasy world, nonetheless, he/she is aware of limits of the real world. He/she will not really eat a piece of cardboard under the fancy that it is chocolate. He/she practices handling, ordering, grouping and manipulating things that in the real world are inaccessible to him/her.

Vermeer makes the following divisions of child play<sup>(53)</sup>

- a) The world of play as bodily world
- b) The world of play as manipulable world
- c) The world of play as esthetic world
- d) The world of play as illusive (make believe) world

Van Wyk<sup>(54)</sup> implies that there is an elevation of level from a) to d), and the ideal is that (pathic-affectively) stable children in favorable pedagogical situations will play on the illusive level. However, there cannot be agreement with this standpoint since such a view does not take into consideration a child's level of becoming. A toddler and a

puerile child seldom engage in illusive play. Illusive play is not necessarily of a high quality. In the form of anthropomorphic play, it can be qualitatively extremely poor, while senso-pathic play, that progresses on level a), can be so high qualitatively that a child, via gnostic-cognitive lived experiencing, can bring about new knowledge about the form and structure of things that he/she comes forward to meet in experiencing them. Vermeer's division must be seen as an indication of the different forms in which child play appears, with qualitative differences within each form.

Vedder<sup>(55)</sup> has done an empirical survey of the ages in which children of different ages give preference to specific forms of play. Accordingly, preschool children becoming school children clearly prefer constructive play with illusive play as the second most popular form. Bladergroen's<sup>(56)</sup> findings agree with this.

Whichever form or quality of play a child adopts, it remains the most obvious way of experiencing by which he/she learns to know the things in his/her world. In playing, he/she senses, perceives, thinks, fantasizes and remembers, and in imagining he/she arrives at ways in which he/she actualizes his/her becoming via exploring, differentiating, distancing, objectifying and emancipating.

#### 2.3.4 *Language*

The state of becoming and relationships to things a preschool child becoming a school child has established, continues to establish and future expectations in this regard also are reflected in his/her language:

"Research indicates that the active vocabulary shows the largest percentage of increase during the third to fifth year of age."<sup>(57)</sup> Thus, language acquisition has taken on such a momentum that by school entry a child is able to carry forward his/her thinking in an understandable, grammatically correct way.<sup>(58)</sup> His/her language already shows a degree of flexibility and suppleness. At this stage most children have at their disposal an extensive vocabulary of "taboo" words. Also, they are well-aware of their shock value without necessarily understanding their specific meaning. The use of descriptive words such as adjectives indicates that a child, in his/her perceiving things in his/her world, no longer works in a



global-diffuse way. In his/her going out to things in the world via experiencing, he/she already actualizes differentiation as a mode of becoming. Consequently, his/her experiential residues are more refined, variegated and nuanced than they were at the beginning of this phase. The deficient awareness of norms of this child in transition can be read from his/her verbal expressions. He/she is still deficient in actualizing objectifying as a *form* of realizing his/her becoming. Very seldom does a child in this phase provide evidence in his/her linguistic expressions of concern regarding things such as fairness, loyalty and sense of responsibility. His/her concerns are much more in a puerile child's sphere of interest. If a young child complains about something, this springs from the emotional meaning he/she gives to the matter or object. He/she will say something makes him/her angry or sore, but the underlying demands of propriety, e.g., if it is fair or just, pass by him/her so that, on his/her own initiative, he/she has nothing to say about it.

With school entry, a child is taught in a group context. When he/she is introduced to the number and letter symbol systems that result in skillfulness in reading, writing and arithmetic, a teacher of beginners assumes certain foreknowledge as possessed experience. The most efficient way in which he/she can determine the contents of a child's possessed experience is to make an appeal to his/her potentialities for imagining through language.

Among other things, language is a sound-symbol system and in using it, he/she gives evidence of his/her level of becoming, but also of the quality of his/her lived experiences of things in the lifeworld. If a teacher wants a child to learn to read a particular word, it is not always feasible first to bring forth foreknowledge about the concrete thing. Via language he/she appeals to a child to actualize his/her psychic life by means of imagining and fantasizing. Thus, before he/she proceeds to teach the new abstract symbol system, he/she must explore, through language, the adequacy of a child's experiencing the concrete.

In language expressions of a preschool child becoming a school child, his/her giving sense and meaning to things in his/her world are detectable, but even further, the qualitative deepening and enriching of his/her possessed experience also are knowable.

## 2.4 The child in relationship to God

Which content a child gives to his/her relationship with the Creator is read from his/her language and behaviors. A child's questions especially throw light on the ways and quality of his/her experiencing his/her relationship to God.

Here this does not have to do with the extent a child participates in religious practice. Attending church services, reciting text verses and prayers, or using clichés occur in some communities at a relatively young age. In other communities, religious instruction is delayed until the onset of adolescence. Be that as it may, the aim of this study is to show what religious predispositions appear in a preschool child becoming a school child and, more specifically: How does this child actualize his/her psychic life potentialities in experiencing his/her relationship to God.

Religion is one of the cultural *universalia* of being human and the importance and form its practice takes with a young child largely depends on his/her normative educating and the example of his/her parents. Snijders-Oomen believes there are three aspects that co-influence child religious experiences:

1. The meaning attributed to religion in his/her community.
2. The quality of the situation of educating.
3. The importance of religion in the lives of his/her educators themselves.<sup>59)</sup>

Between three and four years of age, a child emancipates to the extent that he/she shows an interest in facts regarding his/her own identity. Via language, he/she explores the terrains of his/her past and future. Provided he/she communicates with his/her educators in a trusting relationship, he/she asks questions about where he/she came from, his/her birth, death, the hereafter and God. Out of this relationship of trust, and because of his/her primordial openness, a young child accepts whichever answer or explanation is provided him/her: "He has no difficulty with it (Zij hebben er geen moeite mee)"!<sup>(60)</sup> The explanation offers pathic-affective calm and stability, he/she is satisfied and explores no further on a cognitive level. What he/she believes is the answers given to his/her

questions, i.e., the way in which he/she gives meaning to the new experience and integrates it into his/her existing possessed experience.

A child who has experienced safety and security in his/her pedagogical situation, readily signifies God as a source of protection and safety. However, if his/her possessed experience is attenuated, impulsive and unordered, he/she finds it difficult to give adequate meaning to the new knowledge in the light of his/her possessed experience:

“Typically the religion of little children is egocentric and self-seeking.”<sup>(61)</sup> From their linguistic expressions in this regard, it seems that a child in this phase mainly views God as the giver of good gifts – specific material things. It does not occur to him/her that there is a *quid pro quo* expected from him/her. A child follows certain behavioral codes because of the personal gain he/she expects from doing so.

Also, this attunement leads back to a child’s pedagogical situation. His/her experiences with his/her educators point to an unconditional acceptance of him/her as a child. He/she is fed, clothed and of necessity provided with means of living by his/her parents, without any *quid pro quo* from him/her. Gratitude for security is an essence of a pedagogical situation that still is slumbering with a preschool child becoming a school child. Thus, a young child signifies Christmas as a time for receiving. To give, or the deeper-lying symbolic significance of presents, escapes him/her: “As he is accustomed to having things done for him by adults, just so he visualizes God as a person who will do things for him”.<sup>(62)</sup>

The emotional value of a child’s lived experiencing of God seldom is intense. Its superficiality can be attributed to the abstractness of the concept and the fact that this child hardly realizes objectifying as a form of actualizing his/her becoming. In this context, at most he/she arrives at differentiation.

Hurlock says that during the preschool phase, children signify God in the same way they do fairytale characters. It is worth pointing out that there is a pathic [emotional] as well as a gnostic [knowing]

difference in these lived experiences. In his/her language and behavior, a child gives evidence of lived experiencing God with awe: this is different from the case of fantasy characters. With the opposite, gnostic illuminative side of lived experiencing, there is the knowledge a child acquires of the serious and awesome treatment of God, as well as the sublime above daily life, as adults also treat these matters.

In addition, Hurlock says with *school entry* a *change* appears in a child's signifying of God. He/she now distinguishes clearly between fantasy figures and God and attributes great value to symbols. In terms of actualizing his/her psychic life, this indicates an increased degree of actualizing the gnostic-cognitive potentialities of lived experiencing. In his/her exploration of his/her lifeworld, a child arrives at knowledge of the existence of a Supernatural Power. His/her lived experiences in this regard still are gnostic-cognitively unordered and without structure. A child will become, will emancipate but because of his/her deficient possessed experience, he/she cannot yet distance and objectify, although there already is a degree of differentiation. He/she uses his/her evolving cognitive potentialities by establishing a symbol, e.g., a cross, a star, an old man with a long beard, etc. Genuine thinking is still beyond his/her ability and, in an attempt to order his/her experiential residues into possessed experience, his/her thinking progresses on a beginning schematic level.

The implication of this for his/her educators is attended to in the next chapter.

### 3. SYNTHESIS

This chapter penetrates the actualization of the potentialities of the psychic life of a preschool child becoming a school child in terms of the psychopedagogical category of *experiencing* as it emerges in the relationships in which a child is involved. The emphasis is on a child as he/she announces him/herself or appears in a favorable pedagogical situation. Psycho-orthopedagogical phenomena [e.g., dysfunctional parenting] are not touched upon because they do not fall within the scope of this study. Only the "usual", the adequate actualization of the potentialities of the psychic life are addressed.

However, a preschool child becoming a school child, in his/her becoming adult, addresses a strong appeal to his/her educators for support. The nature and scope of such support is penetrated in chapter IV.

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