

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ORTHOPEDAGOGIC EVALUATIVE SITUATION

#### 1. ESTABLISHING A MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP

In an orthopedagogic evaluative (diagnostic) conversation, an **adult** faces a person who is **not-yet-adult**. Thus, the orthopedagogue involves the child in an educative situation in terms of an accountable relationship which involves his/her eventually becoming an adult. The aim, according to Ter Horst (258, 104 [in Dutch]) is that, "the [vicious] circular movements of the problematic educative situation be made linear, the obscure perspective be made clear; the disturbed dialogue be repaired."

Because there is a disturbed dialogue in the child's everyday educative situation, it is necessary that the fundamental pedagogical relationship, sequence, activity, and aim structures be adequately implemented when the evaluator and child are together. Thus, as Van Gelder says, the orthopedagogic situation of evaluation (diagnosis) "... is not acquiring the sum of medical-psychological facts, and it also is not another form of gathering additional facts about the child, but it is a bit of educating, a careful consideration of the way the educator must move with the child" (286, 81 [in Dutch]).

The orthopedagogic evaluator communicates with the child by establishing a situation of pedagogic association, an association aimed at learning to know him/her so he/she can be helped. There is mention of a pedagogic association because it is a **personal** relationship between the **evaluator (diagnoser)** and the child during which the orthopedagogue's purest intention, the intention of love (as Binswanger calls it) is present and which gives him/her room to be him/herself while being held responsible for his/her deeds without forcing a fixed image on him/her (see 302, 255).

This pedagogic association enables the child to relax and be him/herself in a natural sphere of associating, by which he/she

begins to open him/herself for the adult's entry into his/her experiential world, and by which the adult can perceive something of his/her intentionality or directedness to the world. He/she should also feel and know that the orthopedagogue, in their associating with each other, has **time** for him/her and "listens" to him/her. Zijlstra says, "To listen is to have time, and to have time is one form of love" (322 [in Dutch]).

Lubbers says that if something has happened which the child cannot assimilate, which he/she cannot integrate into his/her life, it can have a lasting impression on him/her. It can be traumatizing when he/she "dares not bring it into view, and it recedes from what announces itself as content in his life" (150 [in Dutch]). The child does not want to be confronted with the meaning of an unacceptable experience, and wards it off, "and he continues to think it will appear again in everything which is unknown or unfamiliar. He lives in constant concern and tension to keep away what is anxiety provoking. The trauma deprives him of his freedom to be" (114, 82 [in Dutch]).

The orthopedagogic evaluator must let the pedagogic association flourish in such a way that the child feels secure because he/she must be confronted with what is avoided, but now **indirectly**. As an orthopedagogue, the evaluator knows that if the child is confronted directly with what is avoided, he/she is only confronted with him/herself: "then he sees the reflection of his feelings about the world. He is imprisoned in himself. He needs someone to accept him, who can make him secure; someone to sympathized with him, in a literal sense, to participate in his world with him and reconcile him with the world" (114, 83 [in Dutch]).

Because the core of orthopedagogic evaluation has the **character of an encounter** (see 174, 56), the orthopedagogue aims to establish a pedagogic **encounter** with the child, where the **personal** relationship of association deepens to an **interpersonal** relationship of encounter, a precondition for learning to know the child in his/her true personal depth. Nel says, "**To encounter a child means to discover him in the heart of his existence**" (174, 78-79 [in Afrikaans]).

In such a relationship of encounter, the child feels and knows he/she can **trust** the adult to help him/her. This is the foundation for his/her **readiness** to reveal him/herself to the orthopedagogue

in his/her experiential world. In the encounter, there is a first bridging of the gap in the **isolation** of the child restrained in becoming adult. Breaking this isolation is necessary because self-actualization cannot occur if he/she interacts with life contents in "isolation" (243, 83).

Several authors have given insightful comments about a relationship of encounter (see 19, 27; 42; 119; 128; 184, 8, 13, 15-16; 183).

During this encounter, the orthopedagogue discovers the directedness of a child's intentionality to the world, the quality and nature of the modes of his/her psychic life, his/her feelings and thoughts, his/her willing, his/her sense of responsibility, his/her conscience, his/her religious sense, the meanings he/she gives to the world and things, his/her relationships with people, with his/her parents, sisters, brothers, with his/her teachers; during an **encounter**, the orthopedagogue arrives at a person-image of the child restrained in his/her being-on-the-way to adulthood.

## 2. ENTERING AN EDUCATIVE CONVERSATION

During the diagnostic evaluation, mutual **trust** is required. Since the restrained child generally cannot share his/her anxiety with his/her parents (see 150), often he/she enters the evaluative situation with a habitual **conflict of trust** toward the situation. Thus, his/her readiness to **want** to communicate must first be ensured by creating a situation within which he/she can feel safe and secure. Feeling accepted and confident breaks through his/her feeling of loneliness. Hence, as soon as possible, the evaluator must determine the degree and ways the restrained child is ready to establish a relationship with an adult and, particularly, is ready to enter a relationship with the orthopedagogue directed to his/her adulthood (see 243, 79).

An adequate relationship of trust ensures that he/she is emotionally ready to venture with the evaluator and explore his/her problem area. For this reason, a positive emotional bonding between the orthopedagogic evaluator and the restrained child is necessary so the emotional no-man's land (197, 64) in which the child finds him/herself can be disclosed. Thus, in the first place, the orthopedagogue must win his/her trust, especially by showing trust in him/her, and allowing him/her to lived experience that he/she is unconditionally accepted. Hence, he/she must generally show

respect for his/her dignity as a person, allow him/her to feel secure by also showing concern and sympathy. He/she must establish a stable emotional relationship with him/her (also see 121, 7-11) and allow him/her to lived experience emotional security, and allow him/her to **feel** he/she is **understood**.

To accomplish all this, the orthopedagogic evaluator must be a spontaneous counterplayer, says Van Strien (302, 256). "We should not suppress the appeal the other makes to us but allow it to speak in our behavior. This occurs naturally and freely so we are the counterplayer, the mirror in which the play of the concerned person can remain undistorted when we not only view his exteriority, but also his living, free interiority. Emotional appreciation must be continually embedded in the totality of everyday behaving with another", says Van Strien (302, 256 [in Dutch]).

If the pedagogical relationship is damaged, e.g., by a thoughtless remark or look, then the child withdraws him/herself because then he/she distrusts the polyvalent world of the adult. The look of the orthopedagogue must be such that the child feels secure. Therefore, he/she must continually keep in mind that the restrained child can easily interpret his/her look as hostile (see 219). He/she also must purposefully strive for the child to lived experience his/her look as kindly, lenient, and loving (see 151, 181-192; 142, 75, 79-85). Equally, the child withdraws if the adult involves him/her too directly in meanings regarding adulthood with which he/she has problems.

A few of the many guidelines presented by Perquin (189, 169-175) regarding a successful pedagogic conversation also serve as guidelines for an orthopedagogic evaluative (diagnostic) conversation: The conversational space must be arranged so the child is disposed to trust. A cozy atmosphere should be created, e.g., with books, prints, etc. The room must not be "empty", because then he/she lived experiences a lack which he/she must fill. The room should have a personal character because neutral space fills him/her with uncertainty. He/she should not feel **he/she** is under expectations because then he/she feels compelled to **have to** do something. He/she must find the orthopedagogue to be downright meaningfully occupied, and that he/she is invited and welcome.

When the importance of orthopedagogic evaluation, as an educative event, is considered, the evaluator him/herself takes responsibility

for the pedagogic accountability of his/her actions, as judged by pedagogical criteria used to evaluate the implementation of educative actions.

### 3. THE FOUNDATIONAL FORMS OF THE ORTHOPEDAGOGIC EVALUATIVE CONVERSATION

Before considering some of the ways an orthopedagogic evaluative (diagnostic) conversation is put into practice, Van der Stoep (280) is enlisted regarding the four basic forms of living he postulates as **ground forms** of teaching. **Play, conversation, example, and assignment** should also be viewed as ground forms of orthopedagogic evaluation. They emanate from practices of living, such as are **manifested** in the primordial family situation of educating. The ground forms are everyday **forms of living** which, as primordial activities of learning to know which one uses for the sake of evaluating, and for creating a practical, exploratory situation which involves the explicit implementation of these forms of living to attain a preestablished aim (see 280, 139).

In reflecting on the primordial ways in which a person communicates with contents, he/she does this by **speaking, playing, and working**. It is noted that the essential aim of exploring the child restrained in becoming adult is to establish an image of his/her unique experiential world. This experiential world is constituted by the child's relevant meanings, as possessed experience. The evaluator strives to learn to know this possessed experience in its relevance, especially to gauge his/her feelings, dispositions, dislikes, likes, norms, values, life attitudes, knowledge, etc. Such knowledge can only be available to the evaluator in terms of contents and, thus, he/she must find ways for making the contents observable to him/her.

**Speaking** is a human form of living. By means of **language**, it is possible to talk to a child about anything he/she feels, is aware of, what he/she knows (thus, has verbalized). By careful attention to the contextual integration of his/her language usage, the meaning life contents have for him/her can be gauged. Thus, conversation is a form of actualizing the event of orthopedagogic evaluation.

Because a child can recount **how** he/she feels, **what** he/she knows, **what**he/she believes, his/her attribution of meaning to life

contents also is expressed in what he/she talks about with others, **about what** and **how** he/she argues, debates, etc.

It serves no purpose to ask the restrained child why, e.g., he/she wets the bed; rather, life contents themselves, are discussed. Because the orthopedagogic evaluator uses conversation as a ground form in such a way that relevant meanings figure in the discussion, knowledge is acquired about the child's possessed experience.

To be in the world **playing** is also a primordial way a person enters a dialogue with the world. In his/her playing, a child also manifests, in unique ways, the meaning of life contents to him/her. Especially with a younger child, his/her involvement with things seems so much clearer in his/her playing. Because play is still such a part of a child's habitual going out to the world, just when the younger restrained child actively plays, he/she is not so consciously attuned to "avoiding" the problematic in his/her educative situation. His/her playing involvement with things and others in the lifeworld gives an indication of what these matters mean to him/her. However, the evaluator has the task of not allowing him/her to play **aimlessly**, but of directing his/her playing so conclusions are drawn about his/her relationships with life which appear there. With this aim in mind, a variety of play media are designed to explore the actualization of the child's psychic life-in-education; and playing is indispensable for the orthopedagogic evaluation of the toddler and young child.

Since, in this work, special attention is given to the practical evaluation of the older child, this mode of exploring is not considered further, and it suffices to refer the reader to some authoritative publications in the area of play, e.g., Moor (162), Vermeer (307), Scheurl (221), Fink (63), Plattel (195), Buytendijk (30), Van der Zeyde (284), Faure (61, 62), and Van Wyk (303, 304).

As are **conversation** and **play**, **work** is an original human form of living. It also is evident that the orthopedagogic evaluator is confronted with the task of giving assignments (work) to the child. By giving an assignment, the conversation with the child, and his/her play activities are directed to specific contents, as constituents of his/her experiential world. By careful deliberation and planning, a child's intentional involvement is directed to a particular possessed experience by the assignment.

An additional ground form is **example**. Because of its characteristic form, the exemplar is differentiated from the other ground forms. The example has to do with the relationship of particulars to the general, and the fact that it reflects characteristics of a field of knowledge, making its general structure penetrable (see 284, 81). By offering an example from the child's experiential world, its reality is made directly and immediately perceptible to the orthopedagogic evaluator.

Thus, by means of conversation, play, work, and assignment, the child restrained in becoming adult can communicate with life contents, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to the orthopedagogue, what they mean for him/her.

The child's possessed experience, as the sense and meaning of his/her actions via play, conversation, example, and assignment, are closely related, indeed, even to ways of associating between person and reality about what is generally present (see 280, 141).

That all play, conversations, examples, and assignments are not matters of learning to know the child is evident, but they can be, if the orthopedagogue engages in evaluative (diagnostic) actions with the aim of learning to know the restrained child with whom he/she ventures by means of these modes.

As far as evaluating is concerned, these ground forms presume that the event involves **contents** (meaningfully possessed experience) (see 280, 141).

How the evaluator is going to use these ground forms is not determined by the forms themselves, because the situation, the child's level of becoming, his/her historicity, and other matters influence the choice. The preference for one ground form or another also is determined by considering the unique child, as a **person**, in his/her problematic educative situation. Thus, the choice is not bound by fixed prescriptions, but always rests on a personal, somewhat intuitive choice. He/she also must select one or more of these forms to enter a dialogue with the child about his/her experiential world during the orthopedagogic evaluative event.

#### 4. SYNTHESIS

The orthopedagogic evaluative situation is described as that situation which is created at the initiative of the orthopedagogue in terms of ground forms of establishing a relationship between him/herself and the child restrained in becoming adult. Here, the pedagogical relationship structures are implemented. The child's attained pedagogic level, in terms of the meanings he/she attributes to educative contents, is gauged and evaluated in terms of his/her pedagogically attainable level, in connection with which the **discrepancy** in becoming adult, its **nature**, and **causes** are revealed. In an encounter with the child, his/her experiential world is explored, and the structure of his/her **different** meanings are gauged, more particularly in terms of disturbed experiencing, willing, lived experiencing, knowing, and behaving.

The orthopedagogic evaluative (diagnostic) situation is established when an orthopedagogue tries to understand a child, as a person, restrained in becoming adult, who finds him/herself in a problematic educative situation.

Because the child also is a **subject**, he/she cannot be disclosed by means of standardized techniques or methods; rather, a fundamental relationship of communication is required with the child, as a person, in free, spontaneous ways, at each moment in each situation, with forms which continually vary, depending on the situation (see 312, 218).