

## CHAPTER 4 IN RETROSPECT:

### THE RETARDED CHILD'S ACTUALIZATION OF INTELLIGENCE

#### A. SYNTHESIS OF THE INVESTIGATION

In current practice, there are views of the retarded child and of intelligence, in general, which are not scientifically accountable, but which are based on a natural science image of a person. Often, non-phenomenologically oriented studies which have appeared omit the nature and essence of intelligence, and what it means to be a retarded child. Further, they do not attain a realistic picture of the retarded child. Unfortunately, such a child is delivered to these misunderstandings.

These non-phenomenological studies are directed to **symptoms**, and certain **characteristics** are attributed to the retarded child, stereotyped **lists of causes** are compiled, and there is an exaggerated measurement of the intelligence of these children by which they are classified, especially with a view to their **formal instruction**, which also is not always carried out in accountable ways. In current practice, a child is **classified** as retarded with an IQ within the range of 65 to 80; even so, there are serious differences of opinion regarding the meaning of this classification.

One of the most striking errors of judgment regarding intelligence itself, undoubtedly is the value attached to an **IQ** as "measured" by **intelligence tests** with a disregard of the child as a person in communication with his/her world. Intelligence, thus, is approached as a **purely cognitive** matter, according to which attention is directed to the retarded child's practical training. Today there are many voices arguing for a more **qualitative evaluation** of intelligence and this, indeed, is praiseworthy; however, lost sight of is the fact that intelligence is merely a **potentiality** which must be actualized. To determine if a child

actualizes his/her intelligence responsibly, a **pedagogical evaluation** is also necessary.

Intelligence is an ontic given which is only fathomable phenomenologically. In this investigation, then, intelligence is viewed phenomenologically; to do so, the point of departure must be and is the child in his/her situational relationship to his/her world. From this perspective, it is evident that intelligence is a power to break through situations to insights; it is a mode of being, or a way in which a child comes forward to meet and constitute an experiential world by giving meaning to the world. Even so, intelligence always remains a potentiality which must be responsibly actualized through the pedagogical intervention of adults. Such responsible actualization will occur only if the child receives adequate **moral-normative educating** to **responsibly** actualize his/her intelligence, as well as adequate **affective educating** to achieve a **readiness** to actualize it.

Fathoming the retarded child's intelligence means obtaining an image of the ways he/she comes forward to meet his/her world (which also is cognitive in nature) and, as a child-becoming-adult, constitute an experiential world. This also means that, from understanding his/her experiential world, one acquires an image of his/her becoming, which implies an image of the ways he/she actualizes his/her intelligence as a potentiality. The distinguishable but inseparable modes of being which are closely examined (e.g., perceiving, remembering) are cognitive as well as affective in nature. Related to this, consideration is given to the retarded child's language, as a means of actualizing intelligence. Because of the intimate connection between language and thought, the latter also is understood as a mode of being.

Throughout this preliminary study, it is kept in mind that the retarded child, as a child with limited cognitive potentiality, is a restrained child. As such, the responsible actualization of the intelligence of this child, whose being is different, involves an orthopedagogic-orthodidactic task. Because the aim of this study is limited to fathoming the retarded child's experiential world to understand the ways he/she actualizes his/her intelligence, the mentioned orthopedagogic-orthodidactic task is left for a more comprehensive follow-up to this introductory one.

Because the stated aim is an explication of the ways the retarded child actualizes his/her intelligence, this is framed as a **problem of the psychology of becoming**. In this context, it is stated further that a child's coming forward to meet his/her world, his/her becoming, and his/her actualizing his/her intelligence change from a predominantly pathic (affective) to a predominantly gnostic (cognitive) disposition. Actualizing intelligence, then, means **distancing** from the pathic (affective) to the gnostic (cognitive), which also means **differentiating** how he/she conducts a dialogue with his/her world. This dialogue is either primarily pathic/affective (**sensing**) or gnostic/cognitive (**perceiving, thinking, remembering, actualizing intelligence**), and these changing pathic and gnostic moments can dominate imagining and fantasizing. Theoretically, it seems that the retarded child, in actualizing his/her intelligence, has difficulty taking a gnostic (cognitive) perspective, but takes a pathic one, which leads him/her to under actualize it.

In this introductory and preliminary study three retarded children are studied pedo-clinically; three are discussed in the original thesis and one here. As mentioned, the method of research is primarily phenomenological, and during the research, various pedo-diagnostic media (tests), viewed as media for actualizing intelligence, are implemented to obtain an image of the retarded child's actualization of his/her intelligence, as this is embodied in the constitution of his/her experiential world. In addition to the above, pedagogical conversation, observation and intuition play a central role. An image of actualization requires a pedagogical evaluation to determine whether a child is responsibly actualizing his/her intelligence within the framework of his/her potentialities.

## B. FINDINGS

1. From the three images of actualizing intelligence, the retarded child has difficulty adopting a gnostic/cognitive perspective—he/she mainly displays a **pathic** disposition which leads to **under actualizing his/her intelligence** as a potentiality. This being bound to the pathic is attributed to several factors:

- (a) From the beginning, he/she is of **limited intelligence**, and this predisposes him/her to a degree of pathic boundness from which he/she is unable to distance him/herself. This limitation is a primordial given and can't be changed.

(b) The fact that he/she **lived experiences** him/herself as **being different** (as intellectually deficient), and which also includes lived experiences of being blocked on more formal (gnostic/cognitive) tasks, contribute further to his/her being bound to the pathic (emotional).

(c) His/her being flooded pathically influences the quality of his/her **language**, which leads to a vicious circle. That is, his/her language is bound to the concrete and, consequently, it is not an adequate means for actualizing his/her intelligence.

(d) **Gnostic/cognitive moments of lived experiencing**, necessary support for actualizing intelligence, are mainly absent. Thus, this child pathically senses tasks (especially more formal, cognitive ones) rather than perceives them on a cognitive level. As a result, he/she seldom actualizes thinking, remembering, imagining, fantasizing, and the other modes of learning and lived experiencing on a cognitive level. Hence, he/she under actualizes his/her intelligence because of his/her pathic imprisonment.

From a qualitative evaluation of intelligence test performances, it is evident that an IQ is merely a **level of achievement**, and it reflects the under actualization of his/her intelligence; consequently, his/her **intelligence, as potentiality**, can be qualitatively higher than an obtained IQ would suggest. This means that many children who currently are labeled as retarded, based mainly on an obtained (achieved) IQ, would not be so labeled if their intelligence were evaluated as a potentiality.

2. From the pedagogical evaluations, the following are found:

(a) The retarded child in the **primary educative situation** (home) is not always seen by his/her parents as **being different**, and as **lived experiencing** this being different, which also includes lived experiences of being blocked by more formal (gnostic/cognitive) tasks. Thus, it is not surprising that such parents, because of unaccountable pedagogical intervention, contribute to the child's pathic disposition and the resulting under actualization of his/her intelligence.

(i) Insight into the child's experiential world and the corresponding affective educating by the parents possibly can lead the child, because of a greater

distance affective readiness, to participate in his/her world, to  
actualize his/her him/herself more from the pathic, and be able to  
intelligence more responsibly.  
(ii) Since the parents often unjustifiably accept that  
their child is more dependent on the practical because  
He/she is "dumb", they are indifferent to his/her "usual  
school work" or theoretical subjects. Thus, in providing  
normative educating to their child, the parents do not  
hold before or exemplify norms for more responsibly  
actualizing his/her intelligence.

(b) A parallel to the above is found in the **second order  
educative situation** (school):

(i) Although teachers are usually very sympathetic  
toward the retarded child, seldom are they qualified  
orthodidacticians and they do not always have insight  
into what being a retarded child really means. Thus,  
they do not have insight into the child's lived  
experiences as these are embodied in his/her  
experiential world; consequently, **affective**, as well as **normative**  
educating often miscarry. Regarding normative  
educating, it is worth mentioning that the excessive  
emphasis on practical subjects has the consequence that  
the retarded child is not given sufficient opportunity to  
actualize his/her intelligence via theoretical subjects.

The obvious absence of this very necessary opportunity  
contributes to a further under actualization of his/her  
intelligence. This amounts to the fact that the teacher,  
by offering attenuated (watered down) learning material  
to the child does not present norms to him/her to  
responsibly actualize the intellectual potentialities he/she **does**  
have.

(ii) A matter related to the above is the type of **course of  
study** appropriate for the retarded child. It is doubtful  
that existing courses of study are compiled  
accountably, i.e., by persons who are schooled in  
orthodidactics and, thus, have ascertained in advance

what being a retarded child really means. Because of the course of study followed, often, the retarded child is not given the opportunity to optimally actualize his/her intelligence.

(c) The fact that the retarded child under actualizes his/her intelligence because he/she is affectively-pathically bound, and that he/she does not actualize it responsibly because of unaccountable normative educating, as well as the fact that he/she does not adequately constitute a world by means of language, all indicate that his/her giving meaning to his/her world is damaged.

### C. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Adequately actualizing intelligence clearly requires a gnostic/cognitive perspective. From the present study, it is evident that the retarded child, because of his/her pathic imprisonment, under actualizes his/her intelligence. This pathic imprisonment can be attributed to several factors, e.g., to a limited intelligence, to lived experiencing being different, and being blocked by more formal (gnostic/cognitive) tasks, to the relative absence of cognitive lived experiences, such as thinking, perceiving, remembering, imagining, and fantasizing, needed to support the actualization of intelligence, and to the fact that his/her language is not adequate, as a means for actualizing his/her intelligence and thinking. An IQ only reflects a child's under actualization, and does not at all represent a child's intelligence, as a potentiality.

Intelligence, as potentiality, of which a qualitative image can be obtained, however, can be adequately actualized through the pedagogical intervention of adults, which especially includes the parents and teachers. It seems, however, that these adults seldom notice the child in his/her being different, and his/her lived experience of this, as well as the lived experience of blockage with formal tasks. Without this awareness, the retarded child cannot be affectively and normatively educated accountably and will not actualize his/her intelligence most optimally within the framework of his/her limited cognitive potentialities.

As an existential matter, under actualizing intelligence leads to the fact that the retarded child's giving meaning to his/her world is also

touched. The entire course of his/her becoming is touched, and this amounts to an unaccountable actualization of Dasein.

#### D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The mere "measurement" by tests of the retarded child's intelligence, as if it were an isolated matter, is untenable. This entire matter should be viewed from a phenomenological standpoint as a much broader and comprehensive issue. A qualitative analysis of performance on an intelligence test, and a pedagogical evaluation of that performance are urgent necessities and can only be done by recognizing the retarded child as a unique child in a unique situation. In other words, the retarded child continually constitutes an experiential world, and an understanding of his/her intelligence can only be gotten by studying phenomenologically the differentiated ways he/she actualizes his/her intelligence, as this is embodied in the constitution of his/her experiential world.

The mere intelligence test score (IQ), with a few additional vague factors considered, as the basis for classifying the retarded child, is unacceptable. Not only is this basis unacceptable, but so is the classification itself, especially regarding borderline cases. In current practice, often, a child is stigmatized merely by his/her IQ, and by attributing characteristics and stereotyped causes to him/her and, thus, he/she is surrendered to the label of being a "retarded child".

Before decisive decisions are made about the future of an alleged retarded child--such as transferring him/her to a special school or classroom--the investigator should first ascertain what intelligence and being a retarded child essentially are, and only then make these decisions after an accountable phenomenological investigation has been done with each child--such as the study described here.

That there is a need in practice for such an approach cannot be doubted. Any person who studies a retarded child, or rather a possibly retarded child and who makes the final decision, ought primarily to be a psychopedagogue, i.e., an orthopedagogue.

2. The retarded child's being bound to the pathic because of his/her limited cognitive potential cannot be abandoned. However, where such a child is bound to the pathic because of other distinguishable factors, it is evident from research that, by means of educating and re-educating, to a degree, the retarded child can

distance him/herself from the pathic to the gnostic/cognitive, which not only can elevate actualizing his/her intelligence to a higher level, but also elevate his/her general involvement in and giving meaning to his/her world. This is an area in need of further research, i.e., an orthopedagogic investigation of the elevation of the dialogue the retarded child conducts with his/her world and, more particularly, of a more adequate actualization of his/her intelligence through engaging in a series of pedotherapeutic sessions.

3. Although there is acknowledgment of the unselfish work done by teachers in practice, still it is doubtful that these persons are always pedagogically (orthopedagogically) schooled and, thus, are equal to their task. Normally, the retarded child is not noticed in his/her being different, his/her experiencing him/herself as being different, his/her lived experienced blockage on more formal tasks. Consequently, often, he/she is not affectively and normatively guided in accountable ways to actualize his/her potentialities on his/her way to becoming an adult. Ideally, each teacher of a retarded child should be a qualified orthopedagogue (orthodidactician).

This also means that the classes should be as small as feasible so each unique child in his/her unique situation can receive optimal attention. Where nowadays there are other restrained children in special schools, e.g., children with minimal brain damage, physical handicaps, it is recommended that this situation be avoided as far as possible.

4. (a) Each retarded child ought first to receive a complete didactic-pedagogical evaluation before he/she receives formal instruction in school. This means the retarded child should not receive "remedial" teaching, as a treatment of symptoms, but that he/she be recognized as a **person** who must responsibly actualize his/her intelligence, as potentiality, as a child-in-becoming on the way to adulthood.

(b) With respect to each retarded child, a primary emphasis should not merely be placed on practical subjects, in which the child also can be retarded. Theoretical subjects gradually ought to receive more attention since the child has to be given this opportunity to actualize his/her intelligence responsibly.



(c) The question is asked if the courses of study followed by the retarded child, and in terms of which he/she must actualize his/her intelligence, are not merely a "marking time." Qualified orthodidacticians, who do not see the child in his/her "inferiority", but in his/her **being different**, ought to have the responsibility for assembling the courses of study to be offered the retarded child.

5. In addition to the need for a comprehensive orthopedagogic study, it seems clear from the above recommendations that there is a need for a didactic study concerning the retarded child, in which matters such as the planning of a curriculum (course of study), ordering, and presenting the learning content, orthodidactic assistance (in place of "remedial" teaching) are given attention.

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