

CHAPTER ONE

A PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MOTHERLINESS

1. INTRODUCTION

When there is talk of “educating” one immediately thinks of the persons who make this human event possible and necessary. The child, as someone who has a need for educating, immediately comes to mind but also do those who can respond to his childlike need in adequate ways by providing support, namely his educators. Thus, being-a-child and being-an-educator are the first preconditions for educative situations to be designed. The childliness of the child who gradually and increasingly must become an adult makes educating possible and necessary. The adulthood of the adult serves as an appeal to a child to gradually and with increasing responsibility live the norm-image of adulthood. Because adulthood has this pedagogical appeal, particular demands must be made.

Also, the question is who represents this adulthood to the child-in-becoming and who are the adults who, in adequate ways, refer the child to adulthood? Who are the adults who by their real presence can enter into authentic communication with the child and in doing so establish an educative relationship with him? Who are the adults who can give a particular sequence or course to the educative event? Which adults are able to stand with the child in pedagogical care? Which adults are able to encounter the child in a pedagogical look in order to address and listen to him in pedagogically accountable ways? With what adults can he venture on the difficult journey to adulthood? What adults are ready and in a position to take responsibility for the necessary educative relationships? To what adults will he be able to show gratitude for the security that is offered him? Which adults have particular respect for his dignity as a person involved in his becoming?

These and many other questions that can be asked indicate that the persons who can answer positively to pedagogical questions must be particular adults. They must be adults that the child, as child-in-education, can accept. This means that they must be able and show

a readiness to accept the child in pedagogically accountable ways with the purpose of supporting him in acquiring his adulthood. This also means that these adults aim at what is intended in order to care pedagogically for a child-in-education by, among other ways, making a home (dwelling) for him, by creating a closeness to him and being accessible to him.¹ These adults are authentic educators who are in a position to accept responsibility for children-in-education. Authentic educators carry out their being-educators, in the first place, in a primary educative situation (family situation) and also in a second-order educative situation (school).

The following question now arises: If a pedagogician wants to study being-an-authentic-educator, where must he *begin* such a study? It is justifiable to say that his study begins there where educative relationships begin. These relationships begin in the primary educative situation (family). One can now ask about the first educator-person in this primary situation and no one can deny that here there is reference to the *mother*. The pedagogician, thus, will involve himself in pedagogically meaningful work when he places being-a-mother and its pedagogical significance under his scientific spotlight. The aim of this study is implied by its title, namely, a phenomenological disclosure of “A Pedagogical Perspective on Motherliness”. The critical reader will now immediately ask about the meaning of a term such as motherliness, about what is meant by a pedagogical perspective and about what significance the phenomenological method might have in this connection. These and other relevant matters are examined in the following pages.

2. THE SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS

The scientist will, by thinking, penetrate those phenomena in the life world that have stimulated his wonder and compelled his admiration so he can understand them. A person is a questioning being and through interrogating reality he will arrive at an understanding of it. As a scientist, he is a radically questioning person and he will ask questions such as What? How? Where? Why? Thus, he questions in a thinking search for the being of a particular reality and its meaning because he wants to determine how this particular reality *really essentially* is. Only he who knows real essences understands.

The whole or full reality is not comprehensible to one person; therefore, the various sciences have the diversity of possible perspectives on reality to thank for their distinctness. For the pedagogician who wonders about the phenomenon of educating in scientifically accountable ways, the pedagogical perspective is of fundamental importance and the science that he practices is education or pedagogics; i.e., from the reality of life he has demarcated the phenomenon of educating as phenomenon for himself and he thus now inquires about the being of educating and its meaning against the background of universal reality. The pedagogician can now further demarcate by describing and explicating a particular aspect of the educative event such as, for example, the role of the mother in actualizing the reality of the educative event. And additional demarcations are possible; for example, the role of the mother in the becoming of the pre-school child can be investigated phenomenologically. Indeed, this also is what the author will attempt to do in the present study.

Because the pedagogue is a scientist, is a pedagogician, he must be able to justify himself and thus be able to practice his science as an authentic science, as a universal and radical reflection so that what he has to say will appear unambiguously.

The first question now is: How will the scientist announce that he will be involved with reality itself in a scientifically justifiable way and not with fantasies from the realm of ideas? He must be accountable to his view of “science” and “reality”. Pedagogics is a form of science and is thus no idle talk, even less a superficial curiosity and also not ambiguity (Heidegger). On the contrary, science and scientific practice and thus also Pedagogics involve reflecting, as authentic effort at radical and systematic reflection. It is thought-work that flows from wondering about and admiring events in life reality such as, e.g., the educative event.

This study involves a search for the being and meaning of motherliness in educative situations:

First, there is the radical and systematic penetration of motherliness that flows from the author’s wondering about and admiration of it.

Second, the unambiguous description of the real-essentials of motherliness as the opposite to being ambiguous and flamboyant about motherliness that can conceal, obscure or distort it so that it appears to be something that motherliness necessarily and in a generally valid sense is not.

If the pedagogician searches for real essences, for general and necessarily valid universalities, for constitutive uniformities then he cannot begin his search anywhere else than at the beginning, that is with reality itself. Here it is the educative event itself in the actual educative situations in which the educator (in this case the mother) finds herself from time to time with a child who is committed to being educated, where the educative relationships are realized, in other words, where there is child becoming through motherly support. Briefly, the point of departure of the pedagogician must be the reality of educating itself because he wants to find the real essentials and invariants of motherliness in educative situations.

Consequently, the pedagogician's work can be *nothing other* than phenomenological-ontological—it is only phenomenologically that the essential reality is disclosed because this method, which also is scientific, is the only one that leads the scientist to the matters themselves.² Reality is *there*, but the real essentials are not fully observable. There must be an active thinking search for them without prejudgment or bias, otherwise the reality of motherliness will not show itself as it *is* in its real essentiality but rather as the “scientist” wants it to appear according to his own prejudiced conception of it.

With this, now a second key concept is dealt with in addition to science, namely, the concepts “reality” and “reality as background”. By *reality as background* is meant that thinking about a particular reality as phenomenon, e.g., motherliness, occurs against a background—this background is *not* a particular reality but the universal life reality itself. This means that the particular reality involved is itself described and explicated in its real essentiality, as that reality is rooted in the universal life reality itself. Thus, for example, motherliness is described and explicated pedagogically as it shows itself in real educative situations in life reality itself in

order to disclose the real essences of being-a-mother-in-educative-situations. The scientific findings, the universalities, on the contrary, in post-scientific work, subsequently might be held against a screen as background so that its particularities can be compared, but this remains *post-scientific* work, valuable for the pedagogue in practice and for constructing an educational doctrine.

If there is mention of background, then one also says that the phenomenologist, in his search for foundations, follows the road back to the origin of that which he wants to describe and explicate, e.g., educating. This also means that with the origin of the matter itself he verifies the validity of the concepts (categories that he has designed or thought through in dialogue with other scientists and acknowledged in intersubjective-objectivity)³ and tries to eliminate ambiguities.

In this study there is an attempt to return to the most original way in which being-an-educator shows itself, namely, there where motherliness appears, i.e., to mother-and-child situations where educating in its real essentiality is realized or not.

How does the phenomenologist arrive at this origin? By way of the phenomenological method of which a brief overview is offered in the following section:

3. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL WAY

In the first place, phenomenology is a *method* that changes the scientist's *relationship to the world* because it makes him more intensely aware of it⁴ and awakens in him a respect for what that reality has to say for itself. The scientist becomes more aware of events in the life world around him that he previously had accepted as obvious and evident.⁵ They do not remain merely events for the scientist as phenomenologist. From the life reality he takes those events that he has demarcated and then he tries by an intuitive-viewing-thinking to perform an intuiting of essences in order to disclose the essences, the real essentials, thus the fundamentals of this reality. In this study, the author will disclose some fundamental moments of motherliness and will try to give an explication of their *pedagogical* significance.

Secondly, phenomenology is a *presupposition-less search* for real “objective” essences of a reality event. Thus, it is a search for phenomena that are as they are, independent of accidental forms of appearing or any arbitrary meaning that someone readily wants to give them.⁶ Just because the phenomenologist goes to reality itself without presuppositions, i.e., by purposefully leaving his own opinions aside, by being free from dogmatic recipes, free from postulated rules and unverified traditional opinions⁷ that force scientific thinking in a particular biased direction and to certain anticipated conclusions, the phenomenological way is a method along which the scientist can *open-mindedly* go to the reality of concern in his search for fundamental structures. In this way, reality now will allow itself to be disclosed as a surprise—precisely because what was previously obvious *will allow itself to be disclosed* as it necessarily and universally is. The author will search for the phenomena of the event of motherliness in educative situations.

Thirdly, the phenomenological method brings the life world closer to awareness but because what is closest to a person often is what is most unclear, a distance must be taken. This does not mean that a chasm is created between the scientist and reality but it indicates that he will look more closely at an event in its essentiality by lifting it out of the life world.⁸ He wants to *disclose* the real essences, thus the phenomenon. This lifting out is not a detaching but letting it appear in relief against the background of life reality itself in its universality. The scientist as person and his object of study (what he wants to know) are inseparably bound to each other in a relationship and therefore knowledge of, e.g., motherliness is possible. By implementing the phenomenological method, Husserl had disclosed the essential intentional contact between person and world—the interwoven-ness of person with reality and the world with being human.⁹ The world cannot exist as an object without the person as a subject and a person is actually a person as Dasein (in the language of Heidegger), that is, there-in-the-world. He can reach reality (e.g., motherliness) itself and thus be in a position to disclose the real essences (phenomena) of it.

There must be objectivity. It is an objectifying of a two-fold nature:

- a) Demarcating out of the life world can be viewed as objectifying when the phenomenon is lifted out for a thorough investigation.¹⁰
- b) Second, naming is a form of objectifying by which real essences are expressed in linguistic form and thus are lifted out of their “unknown-ness”, and consequently are objectified. The author will attempt to name the real essences of motherliness, as it shows itself in an educative connection, in such a way that this naming contributes to understanding it.

Fourthly, the phenomenological method is a way to the origin from which fundamental concepts spring. The origin of these concepts is consciousness as consciousness-of-something and the *something* is the reality, as world, in which a person, as scientist, finds himself (through his consciousness of it). Therefore, the scientist (phenomenologist) must begin with his *own* conscious experience,¹¹ i.e., he must take a *radical* beginning in his way of thinking to knowledge of his object of study. Here radical means the *insightful* establishment of all elements of knowledge. This is knowledge of essences and knowledge of their essential reciprocal relationships with each other. Consequently, the phenomenological method is an essence disclosing method of reflection. Here reflection means that there is a thinking-back, that the scientist continually asks questions of himself and reality, thus also of motherliness as a particular pedagogical reality. This is not to be confused with speculation (to speculate) as a research method, that means to form theories, opinions without sufficient grounds and that points to guesswork and idle talk. The strict phenomenologist is interested in *that which something, as something, means* and an understanding of it as it *really*¹² essentially is by means of disclosing essences and meaning-structures.

Fifthly, the phenomenological way is a *descriptive* way. Phenomena are described as they are found by the open-minded and reflecting, reality-seeking scientist. This excludes the possibility of speculative thought-constructions. If the phenomenologist will strictly limit himself to essential relationships and meaning-structures his findings must be essential insights (seeing into).¹³ Also he cannot profess to describe and explicate all of the essentialities because they are endless. Therefore, it is said that Fundamental Pedagogics

is essence-pedagogics. It is a thinking search for and description of the essences of essences of essences, etc. These essences are described and named (given categorical names). Naming and describing the figuring forth of motherliness in the pedagogical reality is the aim of this study. The phenomenologist is the describing investigator of the knowledge-structures as facts of being, as onticities. When he is involved with a descriptive analysis, e.g., of motherliness, he will avoid mysticism, one-sided and misleading descriptions, dogmatism and biased reasoning. The true phenomenologist will not make himself guilty of phenomenological impressionism. He is exclusively interested in describing essential relationships and structures and not in particular facts or circumstances.¹⁴

Because this author will present a phenomenological description of motherliness, viewed from a pedagogical perspective, in the remaining chapters there is an attempt to ascertain the generally valid structures of motherliness. Before this can be done there first must be clarity about what is meant by “motherliness”.

4. MOTHERHOOD IN CONTRAST TO MOTHERLINESS

A precondition for being human is being-in-the-world. Therefore any scientific thinking about human beings must begin with his being-in-the-world otherwise attempts will be used to understand a person as an isolated being and this is not possible because to understand a person means to understand his world relationships. Where this involves motherliness the thinking search must begin with the real situation of being-a-mother. (See Chapter Two regarding the birth-event). Being-a-mother implies being a mother of someone. In this study with its “in pedagogical perspective”, that someone is the child-in-education, thus that being who in his becoming adult is committed to education. He is dependent on being supported by adults of which his mother is the first giver of support in his becoming adult. That is, his mother is the first educator with whom he finds himself as a co-concerned person. In this connection there must be a clear distinction between motherhood, which is a biological, physical matter, and motherliness, which is a personological matter, i.e., an existential-ethical-normative matter. Here the concern is *not* with the

biological fact of motherhood as such but the ethical-existential concerned involvement of the mother with her child for whom she accepts responsibility in pedagogical love. Thus, the mother who, after the biological experience of motherhood, rejects the child falls outside of the scope of this study.

In this study the concern is with motherliness and indeed motherliness as a particular way that *being-an-educator* appears. In other words, motherliness is the *original* figuring forth of being-an-educator. Immediately the question arises about the meaning of “original” in this connection and why the pedagogician (scientist who practices pedagogics) tries in his thinking to disclose the “original”.

“Original” refers to that which has existed first in time, i.e., what is primary. In this light it is undeniable and unquestionable that the relationship with the mother is the first meaningful one for the child.

In addition, “original” refers to a first precondition.¹⁵ When motherhood is mentioned as “original”, in the second place, this also means that displaying it to her becoming child is the first precondition for his becoming.

“Original” can also mean “first-hand contact¹⁶ or direct experience¹⁷. The child-mother contact is decidedly “first-hand” in the sense of being-accepted by his mother as an acceptance-of-his-helplessness, acceptance of his bodiliness and acceptance of his name. (See Chapter Two for more on this).

Penetrating the mother-child relationship within which motherliness arises leads to disclosing what motherliness really essentially is, and also motherliness as the purest form of being-an-educator. Now the question immediately arises about what is meant by “pure”. It means that what is given (here motherliness as exemplar of being-an-educator) can show itself more clearly in its essentiality. Whoever will illuminate the essential characteristics of being-an-educator proceeds correctly if motherliness (being-an-educator in its purest form) is thoughtfully described and explicated. This is precisely what the pedagogician and also the phenomenologist will

attempt to do. In other words, the pedagogician turns himself to original phenomena in the life world, such as motherliness, and tries then to clarify their essential characteristics. Essential characteristics of, among other things, the birth-event, the acceptance of a child by a motherly mother and their pedagogical significance will be thoughtfully-interpreted, thus will be investigated phenomenologically. (See Chapters Two and Four).

5. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem around which the present study revolves is to follow a phenomenological approach to search for the real essences of motherliness as the original way that being-an-educator manifests itself. Thus, in Chapter Two the real essential pedagogical significance of the birth event is disclosed. The problem considered in Chapter Three is the deeper meaning of motherliness in contrast to motherhood. In order to show the essential difference, a phenomenological analysis is attempted of a caring-being-in-the-world of a mother, the motherly caress, the look of the mother and motherly addressing-listening.

Whoever wants to determine and describe the pedagogical significance of the relationship between a motherly mother and her little child must go to the pedagogical situation where such a relationship appears as a fundamental educative relationship. The pedagogically permissible and accountable, as expressed in words by the pedagogical categories, and implemented as criteria, also must be described as an essential part of an authentic educative situation with the educative aim as objective to which the motherly mother is directed in her pedagogical activities with her child. This is the aim of Chapter Four.

The author does not pretend to broach motherliness and its pedagogical significance for the entire path the child must cover to adulthood, but will attend only to the child during his preschool years and relationships with his mother. In addition, this is a fundamental pedagogical study and therefore attention will not be paid to didactic pedagogical, socio-pedagogical and psycho-pedagogical moments but indeed to the fundamental, thus to the

real essences of motherliness as it is manifested in the *mother-preschool child* relationship.

It is obvious that in closing there must be a brief indication of what is meant when there is talk of the “*preschool child*”.

A preschool child is that child who does not yet attend a formal school as a second-order educative milieu. Although the child as suckling, toddler, etc. and his relationship to his mother in the primary (first-order) educative space (i.e., the family situation) is the main theme of this perspective on motherliness, the preschooler and his preschool teachers, as surrogate mothers, are included here because they also must display motherliness to the child. By the preschool period is meant the period of a child's becoming up to five years. The preschool child will also be viewed in his childliness, i.e., in his humanness as a being who must become someone because he himself ought to become, but especially in his need for support, as a child who *wants* to become somebody and his appeal for *support* in order to become that somebody that he ought to be. This appeal primarily is an appeal to someone who can display authentic motherliness to him.

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