

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PEDAGOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIRTH-EVENT

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

A typical family consists of a husband, wife and child or children. The task of the parents is the education of their children and that, when they reach adulthood, an unending cycle is taken over by them when they establish their own families. From a woman a being is born and is called a human being who throughout his life must remain involved in his becoming. The fact that he is *called* a human being indicates his acceptance by others as a fellow human being and his mother is the first to do so. As being a female because of her biological-physical being-a-woman, she also has the possibility of showing and living her femininity. Her biological factuality, as carrier of and giver of birth to human life, refers to more fundamental moments than merely an organic and biological nature. She chooses as a person in her going out to the world, i.e., via her intentionality, whether she will be true to her femininity or not. Her going out to the world is mainly directed to human relationships and to her *immediate* world.<sup>1</sup> Her world-constituting and meaning-giving is of such a nature that she devotes her attention to another and in turning herself to the other as fellow being, she constitutes her world. Her dialogue with the world is a dialogue of turning to. It is her turning to that proclaims her as a woman. She is a caring being in the world.

It is characteristic of the way of being a woman, as an expression of her femininity, that she yearns to be with someone, also with someone who can be addressed as “child”. She yearns for someone to which she can turn so that her female way of existing will be meaningful. A human being, and especially a woman, is not an isolated monad and, therefore, her existence essentially is directed to co-existence with the other gender and with a child or children, i.e., with fellow beings that need this kind of help and support in their world-constituting that she can provide. There is a yearning for a partner for whom a home (dwelling) can be established. At first this partner is her spouse, but there also is a yearning that

springs from her femininity. This is a yearning for co-being with another to whom she can provide support in his becoming, namely, by giving support to his becoming adult. This means that by giving support to someone who is not-yet-adult, thus to a child who has a need to be educated, she can give sense and meaning to her own female way of being.

A woman herself has a need of support in establishing a home for someone who she will be dependent on and who can and will support her in constituting her own world. When she receives such support then her yearning goes out to someone else who can be dependent on her for support and to whom she can offer that support.

Only after and through the birth-event is her dialogue possible with the support-seeking child for whom she yearns. Then she enters with him into a co-human entanglement<sup>2</sup> and her child becomes a possible partner for her, a fellow person as an equal to her because he also is a human being who increasingly must become an adult with her support, which is a precondition for it. He is a partner who demands involvement without which he, as a human child, cannot become who he ought to be.

He is her partner and to be a partner means to enter into a concrete dialogue with her. Such a dialogue is denotable as primordial evidence<sup>3</sup> and, indeed, primordial evidence as an original being-accepted-by-the-Other. That is, as a partner, as a helpless partner on his way to becoming adult, it is a fact of being that in his being-there the child directs an appeal to his parents as partners, to notice him and also to *accept* him as a partner. As a fellow person, he must first be received and accepted as a unique other by this fellow being with whom he finds himself in the world. To be not accepted as a fellow person is to treat him inhumanly and indecently.<sup>4</sup> This acceptance as a fellow being by another makes the *awakening* of his spiritual life possible,<sup>5</sup> and, thus, this is the first precondition for educating a child that is committed to his becoming as becoming adult. When he is *accepted*, a pedagogically pre-formed field is established as a precondition for the eventual realization of successful pedagogical interventions. The meaning of “accept” will become clearer in the following sections.

## 2. THE BIRTH-EVENT AS AN ACT OF ACCEPTING

Involvement with fellow beings is a primordially evident fact. That is, from the very beginning, it is given with being human. It is an onticity, an irrefutable reality that cannot be thought away and that is effectively expressed by Binswanger's concept "Das-Nehmen-bei-Etwas"<sup>6</sup> in which he refers to the newborn's coming-into-the-world (as a present for, a being given to) as a turning to a world *by which*, *with which* and *to which* he as a childlike being is accepted by others who are his fellow beings.

*By which* refers to the observable bodily presence of the child upon his birth. He is accepted in his bodiliness.

*With which* refers to motherliness as a comprehensive life spatiality (see Chapter Three), i.e., motherly acceptance as making room for a life space for her child in an intimate space of we-ness. The absence of this makes bonding impossible and leads to neglect.<sup>7</sup> *With which* also refers to particular forms of dialogue that the child has with the world, e.g., his movements.<sup>8</sup>

*To which* refers to futurity that here means educating the child, which always is directed to his future.<sup>9</sup>

### (i) Birth as acceptance-with-bodiliness

In anthropological space, thus in the world of being human, the birth-event is a fundamental anthropological phenomenon. This is an anthropological phenomenon because, with humans, this is not primarily a biological PROCESS by which an anatomical body or a physiological organism appears, as material in naturalistic terms, but it is an existential acceptance and being accepted. This event of acceptance is the first precondition for establishing a pedagogically pre-formed field that, in its turn, is a precondition for later pedagogical interventions.

Through the birth-event, as a being accepted from a pre-worldly space, a particular way of relating to the world is initiated that expresses the nature of the newborn as *coming-into-the-world*. As a

coming-into-the-world, the newborn begins a particular way of being a child because now he can be taken by and with his hand.<sup>10</sup> This means that through the birth-event the newborn is not an ontically objectified organism<sup>11</sup> but is a human and worldly being because, from the beginning, he is a human being and is accepted by his mother as a fellow being in an all-embracing totally engaging attitude.<sup>12</sup> That is, he is received and accepted as he is. He is accepted unconditionally as co-existence, as a being with whom there must be a dwelling and living together. The mother accepts the newborn as a child, in affirmation of his being human, and *decides* to help him in his becoming a person, although of first importance is for her to hold him in-the-world by physically caring for him. She accepts him bit-by-bit, i.e., from his bodiliness to his becoming because, as a child, he is destined to be involved in becoming an adult. She takes him, accepts him with the knowledge that he still must be-in-the-world progressively (toward his adulthood).

Even before his birth his mother knows of him as an individual with his own body when he moves in her and she cannot control his movements even though he is part of her body.<sup>13</sup> This being accepted in his bodiliness at his birth is a precondition for further forming a dialogue that, in its turn, is a mode of coming-into-the-world as a particular way of executing his Dasein<sup>14</sup> (the other, e.g., the mother, is already there where he comes from, where he is received and accepted). As a transcendental possibility he is continually surpassing himself to his future.

As Dasein, the newborn subject shows himself in his emergence as the other co-being (the other is always a co-being) because his body is an embodiment of his subjectivity. A human being is his body and remains so as long as he still is his body. Firstly, it is in the look of the other, as an authentic encounter, that he appears immediately as a situated bodiliness. That is, in his bodiliness he is *there*, he cannot be ignored or disregarded; secondly, as an observable present beginning he appears under the word (dialogue) of the other in his bodiliness as listener; thirdly, as confirmation of his observable presence for the sake of living in dialogue with another.<sup>15</sup> For the mother this observable presence is a fulfillment of the expectation that she had cherished since the confirmation of

the child's conception as a future coming-into-the-world. The bodiliness of the mother acquires a sense of fulfillment for her with the birth-event,<sup>16</sup> with encountering her child as a newborn and viewing his face. The SENSE OF FULFILLMENT is a way of giving herself to her child for his sake. This giving, as surrender, is an existential source of power for her irreducible (ontic) partnership in a vexing world where she will-care-for and linger-with<sup>17</sup> her child and of a must-be-cared-for and an appeal-to linger-by from the child that she unconditionally accepts. This appeal from the child to the mother to accept him is an appeal that arises because of his helplessness. At and after the birth-event she then also lives her motherliness by *accepting him because of his helplessness*.

### (ii) Birth as accepting because of helplessness

When the child is accepted as a newborn at the birth-event, this act of acceptance is a precondition for his being-there to thrive. It is also a precondition for dealing with him. Here this involves dealing with him with a purpose. The *purpose* is to constitute a particular being-with, namely a being with someone who can demonstrate motherliness. This establishes an observable presence that is ontologically constitutive of the humanness of both partners in this event. Child and mother are observable presences as belonging to and being accepted by each other. The mother belongs with her child and he with her. She is the leader because she knows the *aim* and the *way* to the aim in this pre-formed pedagogical situation. In contrast, the child is an educand.<sup>18</sup> Here the mother establishes a being-with because she answers the appeal of her child for help, active care and guidance.<sup>19</sup> The newborn is accepted because of his helplessness; his appeal for care in his bodily appearing initiates the educative relationship. This situation of taking with and by the hand in which the newborn is noticed because of his NEARNESS and in which accessibility and belongingness become possible lead to establishing a pre-formed pedagogical field.

As helpless childlike involvement, he increasingly becomes receptive to guidance. Because of his situatedness as a child, i.e., as a not-yet-adult, and an appeal for companionship in the world, in his world relationships he is a task for the adults as educators, and in this case for the mother as educator of her child. The child is a gift to his

parents and is a large task demanded of them, namely his education for which, at the earliest opportunity in his being-there, his mother establishes a pedagogically pre-formed field and later concrete educative situations.<sup>20</sup>

The acceptance because of helplessness, as a precondition for constituting his being and also as a fundamental and constitutive element of the ground structure of his Dasein, is not necessitated because he is a being who is born prematurely. This acceptance indeed enables him to be involved with fellow persons at the earliest possible time. Otherwise he would, as is an animal, from the beginning and through his entire life be bounded by fixed, inborn patterns of behavior and, as an animal, react to certain stimuli in the environment with certain clearly meaningful patterns of behavior.<sup>21</sup> A primordial dialogue of a person with his world is already given with his birth as a functional-becoming, i.e., a child does *not* react to stimuli but carries on a dialogue with his world by which he increasingly becomes himself and which he implements in his further becoming with pedagogical support from adults. Childlike being is a fully human, existential being as a becoming being. The meaning of being-a-child is to BECOME and not to remain a child but to gradually and progressively become a responsible adult.

As an existential being, for a Christian, the newborn is doubly-born—[borne by and] born of the mother through her womb (and also born of God). This double-bornness is not a biological-physical process but an anthropological-ontological matter —<sup>22</sup> it is a real essential of being human and personal becoming.

Whoever says human-being implies a concern with norms and therefore this double-bornness is an existential-ethical-normative functionality. In brief, this reality is personological. A human being, as person, must show a firm direction in which he leads his life according to particular moral norms. Pedagogically this means that these norms must be exemplified for the child and they are of fundamental importance when the pedagogically pre-formed field becomes a pedagogical field.

### (iii) Birth as accepting with-the-word

It is a fact of experience that the mother addresses her child even before, but especially after the birth-event: the dialogue is verbalized in the form of addressing (speaking-to) in contrast to a mere “speaking” or “talking”. The newborn is addressed by his mother as “child” pointing to an immediate feeling that the particular name essentially is<sup>23</sup>, because with this name the understanding is acknowledged that she is a person committed to providing support. The name is a particular way of calling to. It is a way of realizing the close involvement between two human ways of being (being-mother and being-child) in an anthropological space as an invoked space and the child is a possibility-called-to-becoming. In this invoked space a person finds TRUST as accepting another or DISTRUST as withdrawing from. The anthropological foundation that makes the trusting relationship possible is a particular way of accessibility that can be described as the sphere of morality.<sup>24</sup> In a pedagogical sense, this refers to a particular adulthood, namely a morally independent responsibility on the part of the educator, here the mother, who addresses her child in the dialogical relationship. An answer by which the other can be accepted is needed. The answer requires a responsible or morally relevant addressing, i.e., moral responsibility is assumed.<sup>25</sup>

Acceptance with the word “child” emphasizes the childliness of the child who is addressed as accepted child. This also emphasizes the necessity of the mother, as accepting person, to address her child with the educative aim (adulthood) in view. Whoever is addressed as “child” is someone who is accepted by this act as a partner and comrade, as an associate and fellow traveler. He is accepted as he is with his own historicity. Acceptance with *that* word CHILD, in other words, is an acceptance of him in his *historicity as futurity*.

Naming with the word “child” implies that the child, as Dasein, possesses the ontological structure of a *project*. The child is not a ready-made adult (not already an adult). He is becoming-adult and projects himself with pedagogical support to adulthood. He is thriving possibility and, as such, he is already in advance of his actual being toward his own able-to-be. He continually exceeds the milestones of becoming that he has reached, he goes to meet his future.

### 3. BIRTH AS CONSTITUTIVE OF INDIVIDUALITY

The concept “individuality” first must be clarified. With it is meant personality that means to be a being who is different from another, and that the child not only might but *must* be different.<sup>26</sup>

The birth-event, as constitutive of participating in the life world, realizes the child’s ontologically grounded right to be an individual, to acquiring his own-being-in-the-world as a person. The child (educand) possesses a personally particular formative-principle.<sup>27</sup> He is always born *as a child*, and it is from this formative principle that a desire and aspiration for being someone himself flows.<sup>28</sup> It is a precondition for educating; that is, it makes becoming independent possible. The cutting of the umbilical cord, as an act of individuation, is further constitutive of individuality. While expecting her baby the mother already experiences that her child has his own individuality in the sense that he moves himself and that she cannot control his movements through her willing or deciding. The dual-unity of mother and unborn child already conveys the knowledge that he will be delivered from her and will move farther away from her<sup>29</sup>, that he *will* and *must* become himself. It is necessary to distinguish the one person who from the beginning is a meaning-carrying being from the other. Mother and child are both individualness<sup>30</sup> in their situatedness. Therefore, an encounter, as intentional act, also is necessary between the mother as educator and the child as educand in an educative situation.

From the beginning, childlike being is being human and he is only possible as an individual, but indeed always in relationship with the other in a fundamentally shared world, and indeed on the basis of a purely ontological relationship and thus not first through a previous rational insight or experience. Individuality as individual existence is a necessary distinction that refers to the impossibility of an exemplary way of being. A human being is not an example of a type, and not even identical twins are actually identical. They each have their own conscience, their own moral valuations.<sup>31</sup> An exemplary human image makes educating impossible because the human being as a person is a being who knowingly confronts himself with norms and can direct his life in accordance with them

in unique ways—also with respect to his own thrown-ness. Cutting the umbilical cord, as existential act, once again testifies to the primordial phenomenon<sup>31</sup> of individuality in an inter-human world.

#### 4. BIRTH AS CONSTITUTING A FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIP

This heading emphasizes the primordial fact that the life world is a relational design of human beings. The birth-event is the child's possible becoming of a now observable bodily being-placed-in-the-present. Before the birth-event, the mother knows of her child but she does not know how he is. The fact that his gender is a secret until the birth-event, with his bodily being-there, makes the secret even greater. But the fact that the "baby" now is a "son" or a "daughter" is an acceptance-of-bodiliness where this accepted body was at first vague. The mother's directedness to the futurity of her newborn is qualified such that being-accepted-bodily proceeds to an encounter through bodiliness. The face-to-face encounter strengthens her future-directedness.

Constituting a face-to-face relationship is only possible after the birth-event. Also and especially with this birth the face is the usual place of encountering.<sup>33</sup> By this it also is acknowledged that the face of the newborn is a fundamental way in which he *is* what he *is* for the mother, namely her child who is committed to her for her motherliness. This implies that her newborn is not OBSERVED by her impersonally and from a distance; it is through a face-to-face encounter that he is SEEN as a particular fellow person. In other words he is accepted as a person with respect for his being human. Motherly observing elevates him to a partner and makes possible the establishment of a pedagogically pre-formed field.<sup>35</sup>

Temporal and spatial immediacy are fundamental for a face-to-face situation and are a basic structure in the life world as a constituted field of sense and meaning. This means that the child who is being-there, at a given time and place, is physically present with his mother and finds himself in a face-to-face situation with her. This situation is a pre-formed field for educating. A photograph of the mother's face or a film of her movements is *not* what is meant by temporal and spatial immediacy. She must be an encountering

presence to her child so that this face-to-face situation can be meaningful and continually thrive. She also must be able to see her child's face because it is there that she can see whether there is an encounter and then she can construct and design an inter-subjective world with him and continually affirm it in the future. This continual affirmation in the future refers to the possibility of a series of pedagogical situations spread over the period of becoming adult in which the child progressively becomes the adult person that he ought to become.

As a unique form-of-living-in-function, for the mother, the newborn is no abstraction, no example of a typical way of behaving but because of participating in a common and clear present, there is unique individuality in a unique, particular, singular situation of intimacy.<sup>36</sup>

In this intimacy the newborn is made present under the mother's lingering look (that rests on things) and he becomes observable to her in his childliness. This means that her child in his there-ness cannot or might not be ignored by his mother. The lingering-with as a being-with proceeds to the look that glides over and lightly touches things and both ways of looking radiate out into a receptive imminence (imminence=remaining with, immediate presence) and consequently is evidence of an authentic being-with. That is, there is a being-there of the one for the other in loving openness and acceptance (Binswanger). The motherly look, as a way of constituting a being-with (a *communio*—Buber) that expresses itself in the resting, lingering look is a structural moment, a fundamental structure belonging to motherliness. The mother *illuminates* the life space of her child with her eyes.<sup>37</sup> In his mother's face a child sees his life world reflected and he often reads the interpretation of what for him is still inexplicable in a gesture that he understands and also in the motherly voice, hold, caress, etc.

The lingering-touching-resting look of the mother is further affirmation of her embracing her child. The embrace is evidence of an ontological belongingness to each other of mother and child and of openness. Without openness there cannot be an encounter and without an encounter there can be no further openness for each other because openness is necessary for being-with-each-other

(Mitsein). In addition, openness is a precondition for co-human involvement (personal association by which the mother can deepen her involvement in the existence of her child by participating in it through an unselfish turning-to him from her heart—called by Binswanger the objectivity of love.)<sup>39</sup> From this it is concluded that the mother of her child, as a particular fellow person, intentionally deals fundamentally with the pedagogical significance that, with this act of acceptance, creates the original pre-formed field for the realization of educative moments.

In this chapter, “motherliness” has been referred to a few times. In the following chapter there will be a phenomenological description and explication of this exclusively anthropological (i.e., human) phenomenon. This description will be ontological in nature since an attempt will be made to disclose the real essences of motherliness against the universal life reality itself as background. In addition, attention is given to the pedagogical meaning of these real essences that will be illuminated.

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