

CHAPTER II

THE PRECONDITIONS FOR PERSONAL ACTUALIZATION

1. INTRODUCTION

Psychopedagogics is that part discipline of pedagogics that is interested in the ways a child becomes adult in an educative situation. The question of concern is “how“ does his changing, becoming adult or personal actualization occur. Thus, the object or area of study for psychopedagogics is a child’s becoming adult or personal actualization in an educative situation.

As noted in the previous chapter, the constituents of an educative situation, i.e., adult, child and educational content, play a role in a child’s personal actualization. His personal actualization and the adult’s educating or guiding are closely related. Indeed, personal actualization can occur because he has the potentiality to be educated and thus also to become adult. From philosophical anthropology it is clear that he is potentiality and this is the foundation of his total personal actualization. A child enters the world with given potentialities but these potentialities have to be gradually actualized. Potentialities refer to the total of a child’s personal potentialities by which he is able to become a full-fledged adult person. Thus, he has physical, intellectual, linguistic, psychic, social, spiritual, sensory, relationship potentialities, etc. However, they all have to be actualized through educating or by the adult guiding as well as by a child’s own self-actualizing his potentialities by participating in his being educated.

Hence, there is a close relationship between the adult guiding and a child self-actualizing. Consequently, the nature of this guiding directly influences the way he will become adult. For example, at birth a child has the potentialities to be able to walk, talk or do arithmetic. However, it is largely the nature of the guidance that is going to determine “how“ he is going to learn to actualize these potentialities and “how“ his becoming adult is going to appear.

Although guidance and personal actualization are not separate from each other, it is necessary for greater clarity to first attend to the nature and ways of guiding. Since educative guiding always has as its aim a child's adequate personal actualization to proper adulthood, it should be viewed as the adult's purposeful and planned intervention with a child in order to reach this goal (Crous, 1981, p 43). For this reason guidance needs to be linked up with how a child's personal actualization takes place (see further on) and, therefore, three ways of guidance are distinguished, i.e., affective (emotional), cognitive (knowing) and normative-meaning giving guidance (Sonnekus and Ferreira, 1987, pp 293-297). Also, these ways of guiding are not actualized apart from each other but rather as a unity. Under particular circumstances, one can be more prominent than another although all are continually relevant.

2.1 Affective or emotional guidance

The educative situation is carried largely by the emotional relationship between adult and child. Since guiding is mainly an activity initiated by the adult, he is responsible for establishing a warm, intimate and trusting educative climate by means of his emotional guidance (Sonnekus and Ferreira, 1987, p 293). Such an educative atmosphere is characterized by mutual trust, reciprocal understanding and unconditional acceptance of each other. This involves the adult, who the child accepts, opening up to, committing to and lovingly turning to him, gaining his trust, showing trust and interest in him, and allowing him to feel secure and safe (Vrey, 1979, p 63). Indeed, emotional guidance is the framework within which the educative event takes place and it is the basis for a child's adequate personal actualization.

Acceptance, mutual trust, establishing a relationship, experiencing security, handling feelings and independence all are viewed as some of the forms of emotional guidance (Prinsloo, 1984, pp 50-55). Through this guiding, both adult and child experience trust and acceptance by which educating is inspired and the child becomes ready and willing for it. The adult's consistent actions strengthen a child's emotional life to such a degree that he will explore his world with increasing self-confidence. The emotional atmosphere "serves as an island of safety" (Newman and Newman, 1975, p 52) to which

he can return when the world becomes too threatening so that he can be encouraged there to once again go exploring. A child has to trust that the adult will help him in his short-comings and not abandon him because it is precisely in these short-comings that he experiences that his own dignity can be undermined or destroyed (Prinsloo, 1984, p 52).

If there is a close mutual relationship between the parents as well as between parents and child, this enables him to enter into favorable relationships with friends and other adults. In such a close relationship, the parent also shows sensitivity for his feelings and offers him the opportunity to express these feelings and helps him deal with and assimilate them.

Emotional guidance embraces activities such as encouraging, consoling, acknowledging, praising, being approachable, being sensitive, being friendly, being sympathetic, caring, coddling, empathizing, making physical contact and following routines. These sorts of actions by the adult can lead a child to lived experience security, certainty, relaxation, and self-confidence, i.e., emotional stability that are the basis for adequate personal actualization.

On the other hand, emotional guidance also is actualized when the adult appears to a child to be unfriendly, insulting, abusive, humiliating, destructive and aggressive. Superiority, inconsistency, an authoritarian attitude, over protection, sarcasm, etc. can lead him to experience insecurity, anxiety, tension, unwillingness, etc., i.e., emotional lability that can seriously interfere with his personal actualization.

From the above it is clear that the ways a child's personal actualization takes place cannot be separated from the ways he is guided by the adult. Within this framework, emotional guidance is the basis for personal actualization in the sense that it promotes or impedes it.

2.2 Cognitive or knowing guidance

Adequate cognitive or knowing guidance is only possible if it rests on a child's stable emotional lived experiencing. Although

emotional guidance is the basis or framework for adequate educating, cognitive or knowing guidance should not be viewed as a higher or more important way of guiding. It is another type that, in addition to the emotional, has particular importance for a child's becoming adult.

First, cognitive guidance is characterized by a purposeful striving by both adult and child to learn to know each other better (Prinsloo, 1984, p 55). The adult needs to know a child and his destination and a child has to progressively learn to know what educating confronts him with (Landman, 1974, p 24). Second, it is directed to actualizing a child's learning potential (Sonnekus and Ferreira, 1987, p 295) and this is only possible if the adult knows what he can expect of him, what he is going to do and how he is going to do it.

According to Prinsloo (1984, p 55) there can be mutual understanding only if the opportunity is created to interact with each other. The adult needs to understand a child and educate him in this light. Knowledge of being a child implies knowledge of him at each level of becoming and in each period of life. Also, a child needs to understand what the adult's purpose is in guiding him. The degree to which he learns to know the adult will depend on the degree to which the adult makes himself knowable.

Since this way of guiding primarily is directed to a child's learning potentialities, it is mostly actualized in terms of the learning contents the adult wants him to master. Although cognitive guiding is most clearly recognizable in the school situation, it does not occur exclusively there. In the primary educative situation (home), it plays an equally important role and it embraces activities such as explaining, clarifying, ordering, systematizing, asking and answering questions, transferring knowledge, solving problems, insight and understanding. Thus, a parent who teaches his child table manners is just as much involved in cognitive guidance as is a teacher in a mathematics class. Especially by means of cognitive guiding, a child is lead to learn to know himself and his world better so he can gradually find his way without the adult's help. Effective or adequate cognitive guidance results in a knowing lived experiencing by a child that is ordered. In contrast, unordered and poorly

structured cognitive guidance leads to a lived experiencing of unorderedness and consequently also (emotional) lability that can seriously restrain learning. The reason for this is that unordered guidance does not lead to understanding, insight or comprehension and consequently this robs a child of his self-confidence and leaves him feeling uncertain and insecure about the particular contents.

Although a child actualizes learning himself, still, it is directly influenced by the way he is guided by the adult. Therefore, the adult should continually take into account the cognitive level (concrete, abstract, etc.) on which a child actualizes his learning and with which his guidance has to be linked up.

2.3 Normative meaning-giving guidance

Since the aim of educative guidance is a child's eventual proper adulthood, this implies that he should be guided so that he gradually lives in accordance with the norms of adulthood. In this light it is clear that educative guidance is a normative matter. Through his guiding an adult has to convey the particular norms of a particular society to a child. However, he should not merely hold such norms and values before a child but he especially should exemplify them and in such a way that a child can and will identify with them and in doing so accept and appropriate them as norms for himself. Subsequently, he should strive to eventually be like an adult.

Through authority and discipline an adult guides him to be obedient to the demands of propriety posed by the norms. This requires that the adult set specific limits in terms of the norms (see Prinsloo, 1984, p 59). These limits should clearly indicate to him what he might and might not do. However, these limits should be prescribed in ways that it is possible for him to obey them, and they also should be in his self interest and not for the sake of the adult's own convenience. A child should not be left to his own devices and it gives him security if he knows where the limits are (see Prinsloo, 1984, p 59).

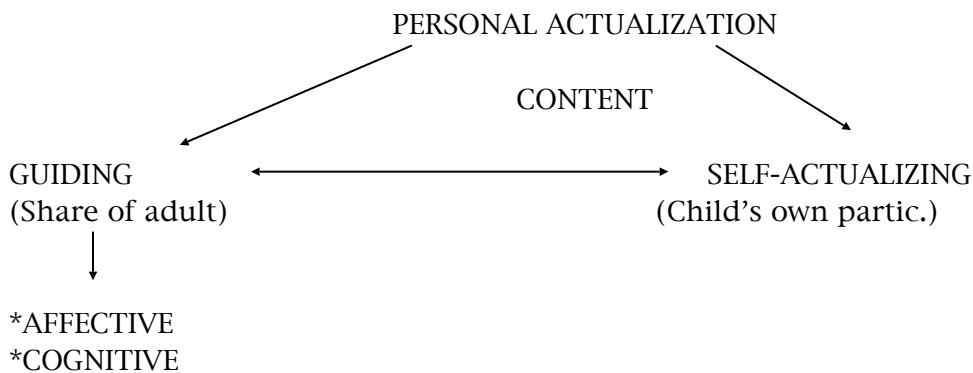
Although normative guidance goes hand in hand with maintaining authority this does not mean that norms should be forced upon a

child. Even though educating is initiated by an adult, a child needs to take the initiative to appropriate or identify with it. Ultimately, it is a child who has to give meaning to the norms before he will act in accordance with them. This identification and giving meaning begins by a child initially identifying himself with the big size and with the person of the adult and gradually with the norms in terms of which the adult also lives (see Sonnekus, 1976, pp 9-10).

In addition to identifying with the exemplified norms, as such, normative-meaning giving guidance also has another side that is closely related to the above. A child should be guided so that the sense and meaning of the educative contents are unlocked for and by him. Certainly, he needs to identify himself with the norms, but the presence of an adult who can bring home to him the sense and meaning as well as the underlying values of things is indispensable. This guided giving meaning largely occurs through the ways a child is emotionally and knowingly guided. The way a child lived experiences his emotional (stable or labile) and knowing (ordered, unordered) guidance largely determines the nature of his normative lived experiencing (meaningful or meaningless) (See “lived experiencing” further on). A child attributes a high value to contents that he lived experiences as valuable, useful and meaningful and they gradually become norms for him that are expressed in his increasingly normed behaviors.

These three ways of guiding cannot be actualized apart from each other and in their mutual relationships they have particular significance for the way a child’s personal actualization takes place.

The above is schematically represented as follows:



*NORMATIVE

3. SELF-ACTUALIZATION

As has been repeatedly mentioned, personal actualization rests on two legs, i.e., guidance by the adult and self-actualization by the child. Self-actualization refers to a child's own participation or involvement in his personal actualization where he purposefully tries to optimally implement all of his personal potentialities (see also Nel, 1963, p 46). Educative guidance is the adult's role in the educative event. In this discussion it will not be mentioned again but it has to be kept in mind that self-actualization (i.e., a child's own participation) always occurs within the framework of adult guidance or educating in terms of educative contents (the three constituents of an educative situation).

The following deals with the preconditions for, the nature and ways of and the results or manifestations of self-actualization.

3.1 Preconditions for self-actualization

Guided and self-actualizing are activities that can occur only because a child and adult are potentiality. A child enters the world with given potentialities (see philosophical anthropology) and gradually they have to be actualized. Thus, it is clear that all of a child's potentialities and the adult's guidance are the preconditions for self-actualization as well as for becoming adult. This raises the question of the nature and meaning of these potentialities.

3.1.1 The I as spiritual core of a person

A child has a variety of potentialities that contribute to his becoming a proper adult. The first and probably most important of these is life. Consequently, a first precondition for personal actualization is the spirit as life. As the deepest essential of a person, the spirit is viewed as the I or personal core which is at the center of being human (see Nel, 1963, p 53).

Since the spirit is the seat of the I as well as the personal core which constitutes the deepest essence of being human, it is what makes a person a human being. When phenomenological anthropology (see chapter I, section 3.1) is searched for the first essentials of the I, the following are seen as its essentials:

- Openness
- Potentiality
- Intentionality
- Dialogue
- Totality
- Existence
- Consciousness and self-consciousness
- Historicity, etc.

Also, the following are essentials of particular relevance for forming a better concept of the I.

The I is:

- polyvalent potential
- the drive and driving power of a person
- an active power
- a free, creative power
- a driving, animated power (see Nel, et al., 1965, p 135;
Kritzinger and Labuschagne, 1980, p 247;
Nel, 1968, p 35).

According to Max Scheler (Nel, no date, p 106), the I is not a perceptible substance but manifests itself in a person's actions. In the deed, in the activity, the I is the core, the most essential of a person's own involvement (Nel, no date, p 107). Although the I manifests itself and makes itself knowable in human activities, it is not the activity, but first it is the power that makes the activity possible and second the I, as the most essential core of a person, always is involved in and becomes embodied in the activity. The I or spiritual personal core is a source of energy which is the organizational center of all activities and, according to Vrey (1979, p 13), it is directed to the meaning of life. From the beginning, a person's I is present as power. However, power has little meaning in

itself. It only has meaning if it is used to participate in something. Therefore, the I is viewed as a given potential, a plurality of powers that make activity or action possible, and it accompanies and continually is at a person's center.

In light of the above, the I is at the foundation of personal actualization and continually forms its pivotal point.

3.1.2 Child potentialities

A child's personal actualization does not occur automatically. It requires that his given potentialities be actualized. This does not occur merely on the basis of an interaction between heredity and environment (Stern). Also, he is not surrendered to what he has inherited. Within a hereditary framework he has the task of actualizing his potentialities himself. Thus, his personal potentialities have to be converted into personal actualities (Van Niekerk, 1976, p 34). All of his personal potentialities constitute his psychic life and this includes all of his potentialities for learning and becoming adult (Van Niekerk, 1976, p 83).

Before actualization is discussed, attention is first given to some of the potentialities that are the basis of personal actualization.

3.1.2.1 Intelligence as a cognitive potentiality

In the above discussion, the I or personal core, as power, has little meaning in itself. It only acquires meaning if it is used to participate in something. Also, the I acquires meaning because it is the potentiality that gives a child the power or intentionality to actualize these potentialities.

Among others, a child has physical, cognitive, linguistic and social potentialities. Of these, the cognitive potentiality of intelligence is of particular significance and a teacher should have a thorough understanding of it. It plays a particular role in personal actualization in that it determines its quality.

In and through his intelligence, a child goes out to the world and becomes acquainted with it (see Sonnekus, 1968, p 78). Through his intelligence, he enters a relationship with reality (Prinsloo, 1982, p 83), masters it and maintains himself within it. Intelligence is an approach and it also determines the level on which the I enters reality. Therefore, Sonnekus says: “Within the totality of a person, intelligence is a power for breaking through the world surrounding one who in his world involvement continually confronts new situations.” In this way he continually breaks through new situations, broadens the horizon of his landscape and creates a new world for himself (Nel et al., 1965, p 311). Thus, intelligence, as is the I, is a power within a person’s totality. However, the main difference is that the I is a polyvalent power while intelligence is a cognitive power.

Above and beyond the fact that intelligence is a potentiality in itself, it also is the foundation for actualizing other potentialities. It is a given potentiality and, as such, it needs to be actualized and is merely potentiality until it is. Also, intelligence is implemented by means of the modes of actualization (see further on), but their level is determined by intelligence. Consequently, intelligence is the cognitive stratum on which the psychic life is actualized and learning occurs (Prinsloo, 1982, p 49).

3.1.2.2 Language, play, body

Along with intelligence, language, play and body are a few other potentialities by which personal actualization takes place. There is no doubt that there are many more. Without going into these potentialities, the following briefly indicates their significance for personal actualization and especially for the interdependence among all of the potentialities.

Language is a person’s medium for communicating, expressing and projecting, thinking, attributing meaning, etc. It is especially by means of language that the educative relationship between parent and child is put in motion and it is obvious that it contributes greatly to personal actualization.

Play is a way a child deals with things in his world. It is a way in which he learns to know and master himself and his world. In playing, he strengthens his grip on reality and this contributes greatly to his personal actualization.

A person enters the world as a biological being (Langeveld) and it is in and through his body that he becomes involved in his world. It is the center of his existence and through it he becomes acquainted with what surrounds him, and in terms of it his personal actualization is able to thrive.

Each of these human phenomena essentially are given as potentialities and therefore must gradually be actualized and thus contribute to personal actualization. However, there is an interdependence among them with which a person is born. Actualizing does not occur in isolation but actualizing one potentiality is always a precondition for actualizing others. Thus, language and play cannot be actualized apart from the body. Bodily potentialities need play and movement to be actualized and the relationships among language, thought and intelligence are inseparable.

From this very brief discussion it is clear that a child's becoming adult or his personal actualization is a matter of a totality within which all of his personal potentialities are continuously actualized and are inseparably connected with each other.

4. SUMMARY

Psychopedagogics is especially interested in the ways a child becomes an adult. Therefore, personal actualization is its area of study. However, personal actualization is not a matter that occurs automatically and, thus, in the above discussion the preconditions for it also are indicated. The adult's guidance, the nature of the contents and a child's potentialities are identified as preconditions for personal actualization. In the following chapter, attention is given to how personal actualizing occurs by actualizing the psychic life and learning.

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