

## CHAPTER 4

### EDUCATING AND TEACHING AS ACCOMPANYING THE AUTISTIC CHILD TO SELF-ACTUALIZING HIS PSYCHIC LIFE POTENTIALITIES

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

A human being will direct his life according to aims and in doing so he gives it a particular form. Although he occupies an exceptional position in creation because of the wonderful talents he has been given and is superbly endowed to be able to realize his human potentialities he also is dependent on adults as someone who helps him fulfill his existence while supplementing it. In spite of his initial helplessness, he succeeds in actualizing his thriving as a person because he is not only equipped with psychic-spiritual potentialities (among which are cognitive, knowing or intellectual potentialities), but he also stands open to the world, can direct himself in searching for meaning, can actively participate in his becoming, is educable and becomes educated. Thus, a person (child) has *potentialities of becoming* at his disposal but they must be realized in the direction of proper adulthood. Viewed psychopedagogically, this means that a child must proceed to *self-actualize* these potentialities and in this self-actualization, he must be accompanied by the educator. Thus, the self-actualization by a child of his psychic life potentialities refers to a two-fold event, i.e., self-actualization, as the child's own role, and the accompaniment-to, as the educators role.

#### 4.2 SELF-ACTUALIZATION OF THE POTENTIALITIES OF THE PSYCHIC LIFE

##### 4.2.1 The concept of self-actualization more closely described

An analysis of the concept self-actualization shows that two constitutive parts can be distinguished, i.e., “self” and “actualizing”. Viewed in its essence, the concept **self** refers to a person, an individual invested with genuine human qualities that on the basis of their uniqueness makes him distinguishable from others. This

uniqueness of each person finds its form in the person-structure or indeed in his particular personal qualities (1 p 117).

In addition, the meaning given to the concept self is that of a unique involvement, unique participation and unique initiative. Thus, there is mention of a uniquely active involvement on the basis of one's own willing selections, choices and decisions.

*Actualizing* as a concept refers to a dynamic, to an activity, to the execution of an activity where there is a realizing or perfecting of what is given, of potentialities, of what is latent or slumbering. Self-realization or self-actualization thus implies the self-initiated, active involvement and unfolding or perfecting (bringing forth) of one's own human potentialities (2 p 117).

#### **4.2.2 How does self-actualizing occur?**

Self-actualization by a child always occurs within the framework of the fundamental-pedagogical structures because if we talk of a child then we talk of a child-in-educating. A child's self-actualizing activities thus must continually be directed to an active contribution to exercising the fundamental-pedagogical structures by having trust in the educator, by understanding that the educator will accompany him and by accepting authority. In this way the child must also carry out the pedagogical sequence and activity structures.

Self-actualizing occurs on the basis of the child's own choices, willful decisions and purposeful attempts to bring into motion (motivate) and to perfect his psychic life potentialities that, in reality, are acts of giving meaning. An act of giving meaning involves the child continually giving more and higher meanings to reality or to the contents of reality (3 p 197). This elevation in meaning and in dialogue implies the actualization of the potentialities of the psychic life that are manifested in two equally original structures, i.e., learning and becoming that are actualized. In essence this elevation in meaning involves that which is meaningful to the child in his becoming adult that is actualized by him as meaningful or is made his own possessed experience.

This self-actualizing occurs through willingly experiencing and lived-experiencing in terms of his potentialities to explore, emancipate, distance, differentiate and objectify as well as by his potentiality to attentively be in the world sensing, perceiving, thinking, imagining, fantasizing, remembering, etc. Through realizing these mentioned psychic life potentialities, the child continually arrives at an elevation in the level of his dialogue with reality and he shows his becoming different in the direction of adulthood.

#### **4.3 ACCOMPANIMENT TO SELF-ACTUALIZATION OF THE PSYCHIC LIFE AS THE ACTUALIZATION OF BECOMING**

The child is dependent on the support and intervention of the educator for harmoniously becoming adult. This means that the educator's educative influence has a direct involvement and role in the way becoming is realized (4 p 211). Psychopedagogically this means that the parent and teacher must accompany the child to a self-actualization of a stable, ordered and meaningful actualization of his psychic life and this is a fundamental precondition for effective learning. This further implies that the events of learning and becoming are realized within particular relationship structures with the parent and/or teacher on one side and the child who realizes himself through the educating and teaching on the other side.

At this stage it must be emphasized that when there is mention of educating, teaching is also always implied, and the reverse. The reason for this is that educating and teaching are a unitary event and opposite sides of each other with a common aim, i.e., the eventual adulthood of the child (5 pp 27-33). The general position is that educating realizes itself in teaching and that teaching already finds its origin in the primary educative situation where from the beginning the mother is already involved in teaching her child because she continually educates by explaining. The teacher in the second-order educative situation (school) is similarly concerned with the total person of the child and offers cognitive, affective and normative accompaniment in his educative teaching. Thus, educating and teaching form an unbreakable duality that can be distinguished but not separated from each other.

According to Ferreira (6 p 57) educating a child by an adult occurs in terms of teaching: “Educating as the opening, the unlocking of reality by means of teaching, is the way a child is accompanied with the eventuality of a self-guiding, a self-involved and an independent participation in reality”. Van der Stoep (7 p 12) also indicates the close mutual relationship between educating and teaching: “Educating cannot occur without teaching. Conversely, teaching has no meaning in the life of a child if it does not contribute to realizing the image of adulthood, the image of a human being in the course of educating. Therefore, one finds the meaning of teaching in educating as such”.

Accompanying to self-actualization implies that the educator will support the child, will guide and teach him in order to continually realize his psychic life potentialities more adequately. “He must be supported to more adequately lived-experience, will, know and behave such that the quality and scope of his experiencing also shows a rise in level. Then it will be possible for him to carry on a more extensive dialogue with his world so that via sensing, perceiving, thinking, imagining and fantasizing as well as remembering he can arrive at a higher level of exploring, distancing, objectifying and emancipating (8 p 79)”. The educator creates opportunities for the child for experiencing, lived-experiencing, perceiving, fantasizing, thinking and remembering.

Within a psychopedagogical perspective there is a distinction among three distinguishable but inseparable ways of educating and teaching that are known as ways of accompanying, i.e., an affective or emotional, a cognitive or knowing and a normative accompaniment. These three ways of elevating the level of becoming arise directly from the modes of lived-experiencing, i.e., the ways a child gives meaning known as pathic-affective, gnostic-cognitive and normative ways of giving meaning.

In the following there is a reflection on accompanying an autistic child to self-actualize his psychic life potentialities in terms of the three dimensions of educating mentioned with the aim of affective, cognitive and normative self-actualization by the child.

## **4.4 ACCOMPANYING THE AUTISTIC CHILD-IN-EDUCATION TO SELF-ACTUALIZE HIS PSYCHIC LIFE**

### **4.4.1 Introductory orientation**

In chapters two and three it was shown that learning and becoming, in their various essences, are inadequately realized by the autistic child because on the basis of his handicap he experiences problems in self-actualizing his learning and becoming. As far as the autistic child's learning and becoming are concerned, it was shown how, with respect to fellow persons the absence of regard for, directedness to, involvement with and being bonded, as well as a lack of an exploratory directedness to reality and an impoverished language acquisition and communication in spoken language all restrain his potentialities for learning and becoming, i.e., his potentialities for experiencing, willing, lived-experiencing, knowing and behaving, his potentialities for exploring, emancipating, distancing, differentiating and objectifying, as well as his potentialities for sensing, attending, observing/ beholding, perceiving, thinking, imagining and fantasizing as well as remembering.

In this chapter attention is given to how the educator's accompaniment of the autistic child can contribute to helping him self-actualize his psychic life potentialities more adequately. As already mentioned, this will occur in terms of the three ways of educating mentioned. Since the autistic child in particular communicates in affective distress and since a stabilized emotional lived-experiencing is of fundamental importance for self-actualizing learning and becoming, here the greatest attention is given to affective accompaniment.

### **4.4.2 Affectively accompanying the autistic child to self-actualization**

#### **a) General**

A child's affective life must be optimally humanized, awakened and appealed to before particular affective lived-experiences are possible for him, e.g., before he can answer in favorable ways to his

being addressed pathetically, or before he can initiate favorable affective relationships, according to Pretorius (9 p 52). It can be accepted that a child possesses the potentiality to direct himself affectively or emotionally to the surrounding reality and fellow persons but such potentialities must be optimally unfolded by self-realization, especially by means of affective or emotional accompaniment.

The concept affect refers to a human state, disposition or driving power. It is a continuous, emotional human attunement to the world, things and others (10 p 39) that arise because a person (child) is addressed, moved and activated. Nel, as cited by Olivier (11 p 42), asserts that it is a particular state of lived-experience that can propel a person to action and that it arises because of being addressed by the world of things and/or humans. Affectivity also includes the emotional as momentary emotional expressions (and as manifested emotional excitement in outwardly perceivable behaviors) (12 p 39).

Affective accompaniment results in establishing and maintaining a pedagogical relationship of trust between child and educator. Sonnekus (13 p 42) points out that the pedagogical relationship of trust is primarily an emotional relationship between child and educator that is characterized by co-involvement, reciprocity or interaction, communication, conversation or dialogue. It is also characterized by solidarity and establishing a genuine emotional bond because the educator with an affective attitude turns himself in loving care to the child and the latter is emotionally touched by this, as is evident in his conduct. Emotional reciprocity, then, is a necessary requirement for establishing a pedagogical relationship of trust. Hence, this involves the adult standing open to, surrendering to and lovingly turning to the child he accepts, gains his trust, shows confidence and interest in him and allows him to feel secure and safe (14 p 63). A child has a primary need for love, emotional warmth, friendliness, coziness, pampering, loving address, coddling, and the lived-experience of acceptance, bondedness and belongingness in his relationship to his educator (mother). The affective accompaniment of the mother in her relationship to her child is sketched as follows by Gunzburg (15 p 141): “Daaronder verstaan we het hartlijk toelachen, de baby knuffelen, tegen hem

praten, voor hem zingen, de troetelwoordjes en kleine spelletjes, die de liefdevolle moeder of opvoedster zelf uitvindt en welke bijna niet onder woorden te brengen zijn, omdat ze so subtiel zijn”.

Thus here a forthright appeal is directed by the emotional or affective accompaniment to the child to open himself and prepare to “announce” himself in such a way as to also proceed pathically-affectively to self-actualization such that there will be an elevation in level and in realization as realization of becoming (16 p 214). The lived-experience of security and safety by a child as an impetus for this opening himself and self-actualization are only realizable by awakening the child’s trust: “Mijn vertrouwen wordt gewekt als ik ervaar dat in het wereldontwerp van het ander plaats is voor mij, dat de ander ruimte en tijd heft voor mij”, notices Bonekamp (17 p 226). To this he adds the following: “Wie zichzelf geeft, dwingt de ander tot vrijwillige overgave”. Thus, stable emotional lived-experiences can be viewed as an important initiator of a being willing to experience and lived-experience on a more distanced affective-cognitive level and eventual self-actualization (on that level). Increasing stabilization in the pathic-affective level of realization, thanks to adequate affective accompaniment, thus has a reciprocal influence on the gnostic-cognitive level of realization because it prepares the way for the latter.

The sense of the realization of the pedagogical relationships, as essences of adequate affective accompaniment, is that they are the preconditions for and lead to the realization of all of the other structures in the pedagogical situation. Affective accompaniment not only lays the foundation for all of the other ways of pedagogical accompaniment, but is of cardinal importance for all realization of becoming by the child.

**b) The problematic of affectively accompanying the autistic child to self-actualization in the primary educative situation (i.e., the home)**

From birth on the autistic child shows a defect in inter-human accessibility, directedness, and an inability to become involved with fellow persons, to encounter them and to live together with them in bondedness. As a baby, the autistic child already shows himself as a

particularly “well-behaved and quiet” child who does not pay attention to the emotional expressions of his mother’s voice addressed to him, rejects loving pampering, chooses to remain alone and does not lift his arms with an expectant attitude of being lifted up. Emotionally such a child is thus untouchable and his emotional life remains un-aroused, slumbering and blunted.

In spite of sustained loving pampering and caring, however, the mother finds that she cannot reach her child emotionally, especially because he does not look at her, does not enjoy chatting while being pampered, doesn’t smile and laugh at her and does not pay attention to her coming and going. Although the mother is physically and caringly present, there is a gap in their being together that can be compared with an “absent mother” and affective neglect because of this child’s being emotionally unreachable. Thus, there is little affective accompaniment to self-actualization with the autistic baby, toddler and pre-schooler because such a child, on the basis of his handicap, is not emotionally reachable, impressionable, movable, addressable and is difficult to influence.

**c) The specialized task of affectively accompanying the autistic child to affective self-actualization in the secondary educative situation (i.e., the school)**

From the previous section it seems clear that the affective accompaniment to affective self-actualization of the autistic child in the parental home is an almost superhuman task. It also is not surprising that many mothers of autistic children do not succeed in fully understanding, accepting and assimilating their child’s handicap regarding the establishment of emotional relations and as a consequence of their child’s emotional inaccessibility, they “distance” themselves from him. A number of mothers of autistic children experience this phenomenon by their children as a rejection of their attempts to approach (mother) him that sometimes also includes far-reaching consequences for their own emotional stability. Acute nervous breakdowns even occur in some mothers of these children.



The teachers who have at their disposal specialized knowledge of autistic children, of the full implications of their handicap and the nature of their educative and teaching (needs), and who are not as subjectively involved in educating such a child as the parents are, after a time eventually succeed in (establishing) a sustained affective accompaniment to awaken such a child's emotions. In their daily being together, by a greater purposefulness and deliberateness and by giving as much personal attention as possible to the autistic child, and by "intruding" himself on the child in an attempt to allow him to experience an encounter and solidarity, the teacher succeeds in supporting such a child to gradual affective self-actualization. That this affective accompaniment, as one of the ways of intervening educatively with the autistic child, shows an orthopedagogical character can especially come to the fore if one attends to Vliegthart's (18 p 76) pronouncement: "Een opvallend verschijnsel in de orthopedagogische praktijk is nu, dat het gerichte opvoeden ('opvoeden in engere zin') daar een veel groter plaats moet innemen dan in de algemene pedagogische praktijk".

The affective accompaniment of the autistic child in the school situation, to an important degree, is focused on realizing a solid emotional bond between teacher and child so that the latter can break through his excessive aloofness and become willing to explore the surrounding reality. In reality this amounts to the fact that the teacher of the autistic child must play the role of a surrogate mother in the awakening of the autistic child's emotional life and expertly accompany him affectively on his way to affective self-actualization.

#### **4.4.3 Cognitively accompanying the autistic child to cognitive self-actualization**

Cognitive accompaniment implies that the teacher supports the child in order to help him realize his knowing, intellectual potentialities. The realization of cognitive potentialities especially occurs within the pedagogical situation where the educator teaches learning content to the child and the child is actively involved in learning. It is almost impossible for the parents of an autistic child to accompany their child to realize his cognitive potentialities because this child does not encounter his parents and live together with them in a state of being bonded, because he does not acquire

language and shows a deficient cognitive directedness to reality and a labilized emotional life. A child who does not live in a state of being bonded with an educator not only feels insecure and unsafe but also does not possess the will to explore reality.

With an autistic child it is extremely difficult to determine whether the affective or the cognitive is more primary. Rather, the affective and the cognitive can be viewed as equi-primordial structures that mutually define each other. Autistic children especially manifest a deficient attribution of meaning in their involvement with reality and as a consequence show either inadequately realized or unrealizable cognitive potentialities and are not in a position for an ordering and a stabilizing control of their affectivity. On the other hand, also missing by some is a stable, distanced and differentiated affectivity as an accompanier of the actualization of the cognitive potentialities.

Besides this, a young autistic child is extremely retarded in the acquisition of language. Language offers certainty, stability and assurance and enables the child to acquire a new grasp of reality. The actualization of the cognitive potentialities without the possession and communicative use of language is nearly impossible. The autistic child does not name things and also does not ask his parents questions. Thus, it is obvious that with such a child, learning, becoming, perceiving, thinking, etc, are not adequately realized.

Van der Stoep (19 p 56) points to the following forms in which the learning intention is expressed and perceptible in the primary (home) educative situation as modes of learning that are applied by the child and ordered by the parents: perceiving, playing, talking, imitating, fantasizing and working. The autistic child is handicapped in each of these forms of expression because of a deficient openness and defective language. Hence, it is obvious that the parents, who do not succeed in bringing about an encounter with their child, cannot offer adequate affective or cognitive accompaniment to their autistic child.

The teacher in a lesson situation must support the autistic child via affective accompaniment to a willing readiness to direct himself in

gnostic-cognitive ways to the learning material offered since a stabilized emotional life serves as a favorable preformed field for the actualization of this child's cognitive potentialities. In the lesson practice it is customary for the teacher to begin with extremely elementary constructive-, disclosive-, preliminary- or joint-work in his cognitive accompaniment. Trusting contact, along with this, promotes the child's feeling of cognitive security and offers him the necessary "push" to master more advanced learning assignments and contents. However, the teacher must continually make the known present out of the unknown and gradually introduce change while taking into account the particular child's level of intelligence and experience. Besides this the cognitive potentiality of the child of concern must be differentiated and this often results in an individualized approach. It must also be kept in mind that exploration in the lesson situation requires an affective as well as cognitive attitude and that such a child communicates in affective distress because of a defective and inadequate emotional bonding with others. Personal attention, praise, encouragement and approval as well as a loving turning to him by the teacher must continually figure forth.

As the autistic child progresses on the path to cognitive self-actualization use is made of more involved and complicated learning material, formal language and speech teaching is offered and the child is especially encouraged to ask questions while involved with the learning material. The cognitive accompaniment of the autistic child to the self-actualization of learning and becoming by the teacher in the lesson situation via teaching learning content is discussed more comprehensively from a psychopedagogical perspective later in this chapter.

#### **4.4.4 Normatively accompanying the autistic child to normative self-actualization**

According to Landman (20 p 39), "educating is helping a child by presenting the normative and helping the child follow the normative until proper adulthood is acquired, i.e., until an unconditional identification or assimilation and appropriation of norms occurs". Norm identification, an important educative aim, gives meaning to a person's life. Because the autistic child arrives at

normative self-actualization with extreme difficulty, it is necessary, with an eye to the present study, to determine *why* such a child experiences such problems and *how* the adult's normative accompaniment must proceed to offer maximum support to this child's normative self-actualization:

First it must be emphasized that values and their implied norms are anchored in the *emotional* and that a possessed norm is primarily an emotional recognition (21 p 342). Normative self-actualization presupposes affective self-realization in addition to knowing or cognitive self-actualization. The fact that the young autistic child is not emotionally accountable largely explains the problematic of normative accompaniment as well as normative self-actualization in his primary (home) educative situation as is evident from the following: "It is the mother who has to withstand the main brunt of a child who will not settle into any sort of routine; a child who will not respond to any attempts to set a regular feeding pattern, to toilet training, to simple commands, and who does not learn the correct patterns of accepted social behaviours which, when learnt, make life easier for everyone. How does a parent explain away head banging, spitting, ripping wallpapers, excessive screaming, biting, rocking, smelling objects, flicking hands, spinning wheels, grabbing bright objects, playing with mechanical devices, and removal of clothes to mention but a few of the common problems? These behaviours become harder to control as the autistic child gets older, bigger and stronger" (22 pp 136-137).

Because even as a baby the autistic child does not succeed in contributing positively to the unfolding and thriving of his emotional life, it is seriously disturbed as is evidenced by the mentioned negative lived experiences and behaviors. It must especially be kept in mind that emotionally such a child is hardly reachable, impressionable, touchable, addressable and is difficult to influence. Frye (23 pp 124, 94) asserts that the autistic child really is influenced neither by being lovingly addressed emotionally nor by being reprimanded and that he responds by showing opposition to this with unsuitable expectations and ways of behaving and acting. For example, an autistic child might laugh when adults reprimand him or he might revolt violently against authority, i.e., be extremely resistant to authority. The emotional and normative

inaccessibility of such a child can also be attributed to the fact that he has little attunement to and understanding of the finer emotional nuances of another's voice and shows an extremely inadequate sympathy, compassion, concern or empathy with respect to another's discomfort, sorrow or suffering (24a p 90; 24b p 416). Wing (25 p 88) describes this inability of the autistic child as follows: "He reveals a lack of understanding of how other people feel and how they would react to his behaviour".

That the autistic child often does not have the vaguest notion of proper, respectable conduct in the midst of others, as is evident from the fact that he often has no sense of shame, he intrusively butts into the conversations of adults, creates the impression of impudence or disrespect and ways of behaving and associating that are unsuitable in his relationships with other children and also in his associations with adults (26 p 88). From the above it seems that such a child experiences *emotional* as well as *intellectual* problems in fulfilling demands of propriety and identifying with norms. From this it also can be inferred that there is a close affinity among affective, gnostic-cognitive and normative self-actualization and that an adequate, stable emotional life is indispensable for norm identification.

Because affective, gnostic-cognitive and normative accompaniment of an autistic child is such an extremely specialized matter, it clearly is the task of teaching personnel. Normative accompaniment of an autistic child has its origin in affective accompaniment in the educative situation at school. Only by realizing the pedagogical relationship of trust, characterized by a genuine bond of solidarity, can there be mention of a co-existential turning to by the autistic child. This turning to in trust also implies that the autistic child eventually will declare himself ready for a positive valuing and respect for the teachers who exemplify and present norms, i.e., person-identification and norm-identification occur simultaneously. Especially teachers of the autistic school beginner must be extremely mindful about the example he presents to this child and, out of necessity, make use of almost excessive pedagogical concurrence in order to awaken his feeling of personal worthiness and norm-awareness. In the practice of teaching the autistic child it is also customary, especially for the school beginner, to not only be praised

for his acceptable behaviors but to even be lovingly pampered. By exemplifying the normative, i.e., explaining the norms in a simple and understandable way, paired with appropriate pedagogical interference (intervening and agreeing), the autistic child must be supported to obey the demands of propriety followed by emulating the normative. To achieve this it is necessary to help such a child with the acquisition of all forms of language since linguistic experience is indispensable for forming a sense of morality and the normative. Thus, the autistic child must have the necessary linguistic experiences at his disposal in order to understand the explication of norms and admonitions and consequently be able to proceed to give meaning.

Through affective as well as cognitive accompaniment to affective and cognitive self-actualization the autistic child must carry out his experiences of giving meaning on higher levels. Meaning is located, also for the autistic child, in a life that is lived in accord with a norm image of adulthood. In giving support to stable, pathic-affective lived experiences and to ordered, systematic comprehending gnostic-cognitive lived experiences the autistic child must be guided to the recognition and acceptance of norms, i.e., to normative self-actualization to the extent that this is possible for such a child.

#### **4.4.5 Synthesis**

The accompaniment of the autistic child to arrive at affective, cognitive and normative self-actualization is a particular task for his educators. Other than in the case of a school for normal children where in many respects the activities in the school are an extension of what already has had a beginning in the parental home, i.e., with respect to affective, gnostic-cognitive and normative accompaniment, the educating and teaching of the autistic child in school must start over from the beginning in all respects. Because the life world of the autistic child is unordered, chaotic and even insecurity appears there, his world must be built up and conquered stone by stone, as it were, through specialized educative and teaching accompaniment. Thus, it is obvious that teaching the autistic child includes a particular orthopedagogic-orthodidactic task for the teaching personnel and for these reasons it is necessary

in the following to reflect on the task and terrain of a school for autistic pupils.

## **4.5 EDUCATING AND TEACHING THE AUTISTIC CHILD AS A SPECIALIZED SCHOOL'S TASK**

### **4.5.1 Introductory orientation**

Although as an institution the school especially has teaching as a task, in the first place it must be emphasized that such intervention with a child implies that there is a focus on the totality of his future adulthood (27 p 15). Thus it would be correct to qualify this task of the teacher as educative teaching because simultaneously there is an effort to form the child as a person as well as with respect to the form systems of the cultural milieu (28 p 24). Because educatively teaching the autistic child is such a massive task for the teacher and since educating and teaching are a unitary event with a common aim, for the purpose of this study it is necessary to reflect on both. The teaching of autistic pupils is especially distinguished from all other teaching by two aspects, i.e., to a greater degree it is paired with purposeful orthopedagogic intervention with such a child and by the fact that the teaching is begun entirely with elementary tasks. With greater deliberateness there is an attempt to create a bond of solidarity between the child and the teacher in order to break through the former's aloofness, to awaken his directed search for meaning and readiness for exploration, to bring about an unfolding of his emotional life and thereafter to strive to bring about orderliness in his chaotic way of existing. Until the autistic child possesses as stable emotional life as the basis for all learning activities, there can be little forming of his knowing or intellectual life because it is largely propelled by this stability. In addition, this child must be supported to acquire cleanliness and independent activities such as dressing, washing, using eating utensils and social intercourse with others. To a greater degree than is the case in all other teaching, the teacher must purposefully interfere with the child as a total person and one hardly can summarily begin with formally teaching and intellectually forming such a child.

### **4.5.2 The educative and teaching task of a school for autistic children**

### a) General

In order to participate in a human world and to carry on a dialogue with it in important ways, the autistic child must be taught in spite of the fact that, because of a variety of handicaps, the same ways of instruction that normal children enjoy cannot be effective for him. In the case of an autistic child, then, via entirely special teaching, a wider field of interference, and via more accentuated pedagogical means and techniques, there must be an attempt to make such a child a conqueror of culture. Because an autistic child is handicapped in learning from the beginning, this implies that the task of a school for autistic children must have mostly an orthodidactic nature and that, out of necessity, specially designed didactic means must be used to meet their particular needs. To be able to teach them, their aloofness must be broken through and their readiness to communicate and learn must be awakened.

### b) **Awakening the autistic child's learning-readiness, -directedness and -activities in a teaching situation**

The autistic school beginner usually has a negative disposition towards learning. To be able to learn a child must have a readiness to actively explore learning contents. Thus, learning is the fruit of a learning directedness and an active exploratory and meaning seeking involvement with learning contents. With any autistic child, indeed any child, there can be a readiness to learn only if he experiences security. Indeed, the experience of security is only possible if there is an experience of affective stability. Affective stability can arise only if an active interpersonal involvement, encounter and being bonded are realized between teacher and child. For these reasons the establishment of an emotional bond between teacher and child in the teaching situation must be viewed as the point of departure for this teaching. Genuine emotional bonding is necessary for neutralizing the negative behaviors of such a child as well as for making him ready as well as propelling him to effective learning. Consequently, the first aim that must be realized in the orthodidactic interference with the autistic child is the deliberate creation of a genuine bonding between teacher and child. For this to succeed it is necessary to affectionately smile at the



autistic child, to speak to him using terms of endearment, to pamper and even sing to him (29 p 142). In this way the basic openness of the autistic child is readily awakened in order to come to an interested, learning directed involvement with learning material.

**c) Awakening the autistic child's facial-, vocal- (voice) and visual-directedness as well as his attending**

One of the greatest stumbling blocks in educating and teaching an autistic child is that he has difficulty paying attention, has a short attention span and his attending is directed to trivialities and not to the meaningful. This means such a child is not facially-directed, apparently pays no attention to the voice of the teacher who speaks, stares with a blank look at meaningful learning material and teaching aids, his visual attending focuses on the periphery and does not succeed in remaining directed to searching for meaning in the learning tasks with which he is confronted in the teaching situation. The primary task of the teacher is to motivate the child to become facially directed and to establish a facial relationship with him or her. Next to this, it also is necessary that the child's directedness to the voice must be awakened (must become aware of the voice) and to do this he is supported to attentively listen to the teacher. Where this child is inclined to stare into the distance, by means of specialized interference he must be supported to attentively observe the learning material and learning aids and the teacher continually exemplifies activities for the child to follow. Because an autistic child has such a short attention span, his attending easily fluctuates and he easily becomes enmeshed in compulsive, stereotypic behavior. The teacher has a particular task of building up this child's attending and keeping it fixed on the learning material presented.

**d) Means for meeting the autistic child's need for a means of communicating**

No effective orthodidactic interference with the autistic child is possible before a way of communicating between pupil and teacher that is worth mentioning is accomplished. Autistic school beginners often possess neither the linguistic abilities nor language as a means

for communicating with others. Where the teaching of normal school beginners is founded on a well-grounded spoken language that was acquired spontaneously by the child on which language in a written form can be built, the autistic child can only be brought to this point in a formal way. Before this is brought about there can be no teaching of subject matter contents.

Spoken language communication as a way of carrying on a dialogue with others and the cultural world is made possible by four factors: the possession of language (the essence of all communication), the ability to produce speech that is understandable to others, the ability to give meaningful significance to the spoken language of others and the acquisition and mastery of language in written form. The first aspect is a task for all teaching while the other three aspects of communication are additions to the formal teaching program for autistic children. Although they must not be seen as isolated facets of the teaching of autistic children, for the sake of organizational aims, a distinction is made among teaching in mastering speech, in the ability to meaningfully interpret spoken language, and teaching that has as its aim mainly the acquisition of language and the mastery of skills such as reading writing and reckoning and the expansion of subject content knowledge and dexterity. Because specialized speech instruction necessarily ought to form an important aspect of the teaching program for autistic children, in the following brief attention is given to this matter.

#### **e) Providing specialized help in speech instruction and speech therapy to the autistic child**

The problems experienced by the autistic child in the acquisition of well articulated speech is exhaustively discussed in Chapter 5 of a report on teaching autistic children (30 pp 100-122) and therefore it is unnecessary to go into this matter once again in the present study. It is sufficient to assert that there is a great correspondence between the quality of voice of a deaf and an autistic child. In both cases the voice shows an inadequate control regarding tone, volume, intonation, phrasing and rhythm of the spoken. In addition, the autistic child often speaks in such a way that his use of voice and language show little indication of feeling. Thus it is obvious that

help via specialized speech instruction and speech therapy must be an integral part of the curriculum for the autistic child.

**f) Means for promoting the autistic child's gross and fine motor movements**

The active and hyperactive autistic child generally has good control and dexterity when it comes to gross bodily movements. However, some autistic children are more passive, are hindered in gaining control of their bodily movements because of possible brain damage, or show poor balance and show peculiar, meaningless hand, foot and arm movements. For these reasons Elgar (31 p 201) stresses the necessity for regular physical exercise, swimming and dancing. Movement play, ball games, rhythmic movements in time to music, roller-skating, climbing exercises on special play apparatuses are also measures implemented to promote such a child's motor movements (muscle coordination and control) and sense of balance.

Because the autistic child often shows weak hand and finger muscle control and defective eye-hand coordination it is necessary to take steps to promote his fine motor movements. Here one thinks especially of arts and crafts and the mastery of basic skills by offering such activities as using scissors, painting, paper folding, drawing, simple sewing, embroidery, coloring in, playing with clay, leather work, etc. (32 p 57).

**g) Means for promoting the autistic child's agility, rhythmic bodily control and play activities**

Many autistic children show defective "imitation" skills ("apraxia") and literally are unable to consciously and willfully use their hands appropriately to carry out tasks requiring activity (33 p 38). Such children are not only incapable of imitating the movements and activities of others but also cannot carry out spoken assignments. Irrespective of their weak "imitation" skills, nevertheless it is advisable to place before these children tasks to be performed independently. However, if it appears that they are too clumsy to act by themselves, it is necessary that the teacher manipulates or steers their hands, arms and legs in the desired directions for

successfully carrying out the practical work assignments. For example it might be necessary to hold and direct an autistic school beginner's hand when he has to write, draw or carry out other assignments. In addition copying activities are sometimes necessary to promote the child's skill in paying attention to the acts and behavior of others. To step, trot, clap hands, carry out body movements or keep cadence in time with music are measures that can lead to the autistic child's rhythmic body control and to correctly carry out requests.

As a consequence of his aloofness, passivity, lack of imagination and lack of interest the autistic child is hardly in a position to play the way a normal child can. Consequently, special attention must be given to the autistic child in order to evoke and qualitatively improve his play activities. In this way exploration as a mode of learning, social intercourse and cooperating with schoolmates, i.e., the entire becoming of the autistic child, can be promoted. Games such as dominos, snakes and ladders, the joint assemblage of a jigsaw puzzle or building blocks, playing with dolls, the meaningful use of a toy and a tricycle under the supervision and guidance of can play important roles in this context.

**h) Means to make the autistic child aware of his own body and body schema, and to allow him to acquire knowledge of his body and its uses**

Many an autistic child has a defective knowledge and insight into himself, in particular knowledge of his body, its uses or a body image. The necessity for the possession of language for these matters to be taught is obvious. The naming of the child's body parts by the teacher, after both have stood before a mirror, or the singing of playful songs that make provision for this, human drawings and games during which body parts are named and their functions emphasized, serve as methods for promoting the child's body image, body knowledge and knowledge of its uses. A body concept normally arises because a child is active, carries on a meaning seeking dialogue with the world and acquires language as a means for giving meaning (34 p 97). In contrast, an autistic child does not usually live a meaning seeking existence and often is without an adequate awareness of or notion or idea about his own

body. The autistic child must also be supported to distinguish between him (his own body) and others (their body) and draw comparisons.

**i) Means for promoting independence in the autistic child**

For most autistic school beginners the basic self-care skills such as cleanliness, using the toilet, washing, dressing and undressing, the correct use of eating utensils and good table manners must be learned. The skill of being able to care for oneself is an important aim in teaching the autistic child and therefore must be an integral part of the school program. However, this must not be viewed as an alternative to formal teaching. It is important to purposefully create opportunities for this child to be able to acquire these skills such as, e.g., offering food at school. Where initially the teacher must do things for the child, this must gradually change into a doing together during which the role of the child must continually increase in order to eventually lead to independent task performance (self doing). The child must also continually be encouraged and praised in his becoming independent.

**j) Means for promoting the autistic child's association with others and self-assertion in community contexts**

Socialization is one of the most important aims in teaching the autistic child. This includes all skills and knowledge of living in a community context that necessarily involves living and working *with* and not merely *next to* others (35 p 140). The autistic child who does not live in a close bond with others is incapable of being adequately inserted into the community. Therefore, it is necessary that he be provided the opportunity to also be acceptable for and can be inserted into other social groups than those of his immediately familiar surroundings. The following remarks by Gunzburg (36 p 144) regarding the socialization of intellectually handicapped children are also applicable to the autistic child: "Hier ligt van zelfsprekend een aanzienlijke verantwoordelijkheid bij de opvoeder en onderwijzer, die de opleiding van deze kinderen moet richten op de dagelijkse praktijk van het sociale leven om zo een

gunstige aansluiting te verkrijgen tussen school en latere leefmilieu. Want voor latere integratiemoelijkheden is niet in de eerste plaats de verstandelijke handicap doorslaggevend, maar wel de bekwaamheid om goede menselijke verhoudingen aan te kunnen”. Thus, in a school for autistic children opportunities must be created for these children to also encounter normal children, play with them and interact socially with them. The autistic child must especially be able to observe how a normal child behaves himself and acts toward his peers.

Regular excursions to public places, e.g., the use of public transportation facilities, are excellent ways in which the autistic child can be given the opportunity to learn socially accepted behavior by exercising appropriate behaviors with normal persons. In the school itself it is necessary to strive for good mutual relationships among the autistic children. Generosity, respect for the uniqueness of another and good cooperation are a few virtues that must be brought home to the autistic child.

In the previous sections there especially is an attempt to provide an image of the specialized and extra-ordinary nature of autistic children and there is special attention given to the so-called accessory aspects of such an educative and teaching program. Nothing was pointed out about more general matters such as the formal teaching of language, writing, reading, arithmetic and other school subjects. With respect to the different ways of handling the mentioned teaching matters as carried out in a school for autistic children, Oppenheim (37 p 51) expresses herself as follows: “The only difference between our approach and that in the ordinary classroom is that we adapt our methods, our materials, and our techniques to the individual disabilities of our children. Wherever applicable, we use simultaneous sensory modalities – auditory, visual, tactile and kinesthetic – to reinforce the child’s learnings”.

#### **4.5.3 The activities of the School for Autistic Children located in Mowbray, Cape Town: An exemplary overview\***

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\* Permission was obtained from the Human Sciences Research Council and the Department of National Education, under whose jurisdiction this school falls, to

### **a) Introductory remarks**

With the previous discussion of the particular nature of teaching autistic children as a background, the following is an exploration of the contemporary practice of this teaching in the Republic of South Africa. Since the school for autistic children in Cape Town is not only a pioneering school, but also is leading the way in the area of this teaching, comprehensive and exclusive attention is given to the activities of this school.

### **b) The origin of the school**

In a journal article Hoffman (39 p 19) sketches the history of this school as follows: “In 1966 a small group of professional people and parents met in a private home to discuss ways and means of alleviating the distress of autistic children, their parents and immediate relatives. The first general meeting of the Cape Town Society for Autistic children was held two years later. In January 1970, after intensive propaganda, education of the public and fund raising, the first ‘school’ with six children of the statutory school-going age and two teachers was started”. Where initially it was a self-financed, private school of the mentioned society, the Department of National Education has subsidized it since July 1973.

### **c) Physical facilities and personnel**

A large and old two-storied house was bought, renovated and transformed into a “school building”. Later additional out buildings were erected to serve as temporary classrooms. The building complex is organized such that it can provide office and classroom space to a school head, a vice-head, educational psychologist and approximately thirty pupils. There are offices for the head, vice-head and administrative personnel, a kitchen and eating room for the pupils, a personnel room, a ‘school hall’, a number of classrooms

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include this section that is part of a report on teaching autistic children (38 pp 219-231). The views expressed about this school are those of the author and not necessarily of the Human Sciences Research Council, the Department of National Education or the school.

within which nine small class groups are taught, as well as facilities for a part-time speech therapist.

The personnel consist of a head, vice-head, school psychologist, two part-time secretaries, a house mother, a cook, five servants, two part-time child psychiatrists, a person who is responsible for driving the school bus and for general maintenance work, a head and assistant head in a boarding house, a house mother, a cook, a household member who is responsible for the laundry and a handyman. Certain personnel members do not hold approvable posts and therefore are not paid by the Department but by the association, Cape Town Society for Autistic Children.

#### **d) Grouping pupils into units and classes**

The allotment of personnel is of such a nature that a teacher can be assigned to each three pupils. During 1976 the school had twenty-seven pupils who were grouped into the following units and classes:

1. A toddler unit of two classes.
2. A primary unit of two classes.
3. A transitional unit of two classes.
4. A junior unit of a boy's and a girl's class.
5. A special class.

#### **e) Admissions requirements and age**

Pupils are usually admitted after they have been classified as autistic by the child psychiatrist at the Red Cross Children's Hospital in Cape Town. Most pupils are admitted between the ages of four and six. However, already admitted is a pupil who is two and a half years old who has shown quick progress in all facets of the school's educative- and teaching-program. Indeed, the personnel prefer that pupils begin their school career as young as possible because this is viewed as the best means for success in school.

#### **f) Educative and teaching aims**

In exploring the psychic life of the autistic child in the preceding chapters it seems that there is almost no aspect of being human



where the autistic child meets expectations, where matters do not progress wrongly or where essential personal potentialities have unfolded inadequately. With this in mind, it is not surprising that this school does aim to put the autistic child in a position, with specialized support, for continuous acceleration in and harmony of his personal becoming. Because from birth the autistic child's right to benefit from affectively bonding with his mother has miscarried because of his aloofness, "mothering" the school beginner is an important educative aim. By means of sufficient individual attention, loving touching and coddling there is an attempt to create a genuine affective bonding between teacher and child so that the latter in this way is allowed to experience security, basic trust and existential safety. Thus, neutralizing the child's anxious, unordered and meaningless existence resulting from a lack of bonding and being unanchored (i.e., affective distress) are striven for.

Experiencing security and carrying on a meaningful existence are also closely related to mutual communication via spoken language and therefore is a form of giving support and encouragement that can lead to the equally important aim of the autistic child's educative teaching program.

Socializing, which implies establishing co-existential involvement, inserting into the community and encountering fellow persons, acquiring self-care activities, acquiring good manners and norms, can be designated as an additional educative aim. Next to this fighting against annoying, stereotypic, unusual behavior as restraining factors in the child's becoming adult is an important aim in the educative intervention by this school.

Formal teaching in which there especially is a striving for experience-full, insightful and transferrable learning by the child is the ultimate aim of the educative- and teaching-program as well as the highest possible scholastic achievement that the child is in a position to attain are presented as prospects.

**g) Nature and scope of the educative- and teaching-activities**

The initiative, will and active participation to be able to become adult, peculiar to any child, is wanting in the autistic school beginner and therefore the educative teaching activities of this school are characterized by the fact that the accompaniment of the child to self-realization receives particular emphasis. Thus, the autistic child must be supported by means of intensive, specialized intervention to be able to build up an ordered and meaningful life world step by step. Aspects of becoming adult that are accepted as obvious in the case of a normal child must be brought home to the autistic child in tedious ways. Here one thinks of the acquisition of [habits of] cleanliness, the use of the toilet and good table manners among which is the handling of eating utensils by the child himself, to mention only a few aspects of the educative program. The comprehensiveness of this school's educative- and teaching-program lends a particularly distinctive character to it.

Owing to the divergent capabilities of the pupils with respect to their learning potentialities, it is necessary to plan and implement unique curricula and methods of teaching for each individual pupil. Because each pupil's progression, capabilities, deficiencies and the extravagances in his becoming adult (independence, the normative and scholastic progress) the emphasis is continually placed on those aspects in which the progress is not as desired. To assess the child's state of becoming adult, assessment charts designed by Gunzburg (40 pp 222-233) are used. These forms are known as The Primary Progress Assessment Chart of Social Development, Progress Assessment Chart of Social Development, Form 1 and Progress Assessment Chart of Social Development, Form 2. The first-mentioned form is used for all pupils younger than six years. The second form is used for pupils between six and twelve years and the third for pupils older than twelve years. The forms (charts) make provision for four main divisions and their relevant matters, i.e.:

- A) **Self-help** (under which are table manners, eating habits, physical motility, toilet- and washing-activities, dressing and caring for clothes as well as caring for one's own body when slightly hurt).
- B) **Communication** (including, among others, speech and language skills, understanding time and money, attentive

listening, repeating, verbal expression as well as writing and reading skills).

- C) **Socialization** (including directedness and accessibility to others, greeting, carrying out assignments, playing together, self-initiated communication and emotional expression, performing tasks, singing, dancing, playing games such as snakes and ladders, helpfulness with doing household tasks, doing independent shopping and the degree to which he can maintain himself in public with his peers).
- D) **Manual activities** (including gross and fine motor activities and skills, meaningful use of free-time activities and participate in social activities).

These assessment charts provide tables and diagrams that go together with them. The tables contain either 120 or 130 qualified questions about the skills the pupils must be able to possess and are subdivided into the four categories mentioned. In order to be able to form a total image of a concerned pupil's skills and state of becoming adult, the results (questions that can be positively answered) are graphically presented in circular diagrams. The circular diagrams consist of a number of concentric circles and radii subdivided into 120 or 130 blocks as well as into four quadrants each representing the four categories (self-help, communication, socialization and manual activities). By means of coloring in, an image can be formed of a particular pupil's skills, or lack thereof, because each block represents the answer to a qualified question. Colored blocks refer to the skills the child already possesses and the uncolored ones refer to the shortcomings in his becoming adult. Thus, this diagram offers an indication of the child's harmonious and disharmonious becoming and shows the direction of the specific educative- and teaching-interventions that will be appropriate for such a child. The parents can be informed in terms of this of their child's progress, or not, and continual changes can be made in such a child's curriculum in accordance with his particular educative- and teaching-needs.

The Gunzburg assessment charts were originally designed for use with intellectually handicapped pupils but have been found to have particular utilitarian value for assessing the autistic child's state of becoming adult and for designing an appropriate curriculum for such a child.

Individual teaching and learning programs, as compiled and made available by the National Society for Mentally Handicapped in England, are also used. The following five teaching programs are distinguished:

- “Programme One: Spatial Orientation Body Image and Motor Activities.
- Programme Two: Form Perception and Visuo-Motor Activities.
- Programme Three: Auditory Discrimination and Language.
- Programme Four: Pre-Number and Number Concepts.
- Programme Five: Pre-reading Activities”.

As the pupils show progress, as their being formed affectively and their co-existential involvement are realized, and as they have abandoned their stereotypic, ritualistic and peculiar behavior and bodily movements and as they learn to write, calculate and read, provision is made for teaching formal school subjects such as Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, Natural Science, Geography and History. In addition to this a good deal of time is devoted to esthetical forming as well as to making possible the pupil's eventual successful insertion into and maintenance in the community.

#### **h) Particular teaching methods, learning material and teaching aids**

##### **(i) General**

When it is remembered that the autistic school beginner's co-existential inclination and accessibility, yearning to explore reality and for self-realization (becoming adult) are not yet awakened, and he also is without adequate language and speech and is without a decent life experience there can only be a notion of how severe his retardation in becoming is. To be able to form an idea of the

significance of exploration in the life of any child (a phenomenon that must be awakened in the autistic school beginner) it is necessary to heed the following pronouncement by Standing (41 pp 26 47): “Every child is a born explorer. He never loses a minute, but takes every opportunity of investigating the world. His life, in fact, is a continuous series of the most absorbing scientific experiments. By means of touching, handling, opening, shutting, collecting, comparing, this little scientist is incessantly prying into everything”. Also, one can also mention the significance of a child’s questions for learning to know, name and describe things.

In addition to the fact that the autistic child does not proceed to explore on his own initiative, it can be indicated that often he does not succeed in making as good use of his extremely learning-sensitive early years as he should. From a psychopedagogical perspective, the adequate use of this extremely sensitive time period in the life of a toddler cannot be overemphasized. It is obvious that the autistic school beginner has an almost uncorrectable retardation in becoming that offers the teacher a particular orthopedagogic and orthodidactic challenge.

In light of the above, it is understandable that the autistic child is continually approached and formed as a totality in this school in Cape Town. Even the formal teaching situation is characterized by the fact that it goes hand in hand with affective forming and attempts at socialization, spoken language communication, the normative as well as promoting an exploration of the immediate environment and practical life. With the teacher a particular awareness and attunement prevails, while carrying out their daily task, of actual matters, the child’s everyday activities, his immediate learning and living milieu as well as learning material that will be meaningful to the child. Systematically there is also a pushing through to abstract and broader learning content only after a considerable time of concentrating on the concrete-visual and more familiar as well as “experience-ful”. The everyday activities of the pupils and generally useable objects serve as learning content and form the point of departure in the teaching situation.

- (ii) **Exercising sensory perception and concept formation by implementing Montessori-**

## hardware as preparation for the acquisition of language, learning to read, write and compute

Through the intensive utilization of teaching aids such as the diversity of Montessori-hardware (those originating in Israel and a number of others) the autistic child is supported to the manifestation of his own willing readiness, spontaneous interest, own initiative and persistence as guiding principles in order to explore and learn through his self-activity. The Montessori-hardware consist of a variety of apparatuses that can be taken apart and that then must be built, assembled, inserted, etc. in a specific manner in order to complete a desires pattern or series.

One apparatus that is often appropriately used after the child has entered school is the *Pink Tower*. This consists of a number of wooden blocks differing in size that must be put on top of each other [in decreasing size] to build a tower.

After the child has acquired enough insight to be able to build this tower he is usually confronted with the *Cylinder Blocks*. This consists of three sets of solid wooden blocks each of which is 55 cm. long, six cm. high and eight cm. wide (42 p 192). Each block has a row of ten holes in which are placed removable cylindrically shaped wooden figures of different sizes to form a series from largest to smallest. On the top of these cylinders are wood and copper knobs for ease of handling. The cylinders of the first set are all 55 cm. high but their widths vary from large to small to form a series. The cylinders of the second set all have the same width but their heights vary and they are arranged in such a way as to form a series of ten. The cylinders of the third set have different heights and widths and also form a series of ten. By handling these cylinders the child learns to distinguish among thickness, height, size and weight and to find the correct hole into which each cylindrically shaped figure correctly fits.

The *Long Stair* and the *Broad Stair* consist of a number of wooden blocks of various sizes that must be constructed in such a way that they can form either ten long, narrow steps or ten broad, short steps (43 p 55).

The *Color Tablets* consist of eight color series of eight different hues and thus constitute 64 color-hues in total. It is expected that the child will take all 64 colored tablets from the box and arrange them so that they form eight rows of the series of color series in the correct order of the variations from light to dark (44 p 189).

The *Geometric Insets* consist of a series of frames in which there are insets shaped like different geometric forms into which the corresponding geometric figures must be placed. The frames as well as the geometric figures are made of wood and are extremely suitable for promoting the child's understanding of form. For the sake of convenience, the frames are kept in a cabinet with six drawers. George (45 p 198) describes the structure of this chest of drawers as follows: "Each drawer contains six of the small frames with their respective insets. In the first drawer are kept four plain wooden squares and two frames, one containing a rhomboid, and the other a trapezoid. In the second is found a series consisting of a square and six rectangles of the same length, but varying in width. The third drawer contains six circles which diminish in diameter. In the fourth are six triangles, in the fifth six polygons, from a pentagon to a decagon. The sixth drawer contains six curved figures (an ellipse, an oval, etc.), and a flower-like figure formed by four crossed arcs".

The *Ten Rods* consist of square-sided wooden rods (three cm. thick) of different lengths of which five are painted red and five blue (46 p 194). When the rods are arranged from one to ten according to their different lengths, the effect obtained looks like organ pipes. These rods are not only useful for the child to learn to distinguish between "long and short", "longer than" and "shorter than" but also gives him an opportunity to learn to count from one to ten. The use of these rods serves as preparation for later arithmetic teaching and to clarify the principle of the decimal system in a practical way (47 p 195).

The implementation of the Montessori hardware in teaching the autistic child includes the following advantages for him:

1. This child is enticed to engage in exploring, self-activity and imitating (48 p 69).

2. This fascinates the child and thus stimulates his attentiveness such that his concentration and attention span are promoted (49a pp 56 103 171; 49b p 343).
3. This puts him in a position to sharpen his sensory perception (50a pp 12 103; 50b p 350).
4. This promotes the child's motor skills, i.e., his muscle and eye-hand coordination (51 pp 12 57).
5. This allows him to experience the meaningfulness of objects and promotes his notion of order and orderliness that can also be transferred and applied to other terrains of his life world ("The order of the macrocosm is thus reflected in the microcosm") (52 p 21).
6. This forces him, as it were, to realize a variety of intellectual activities, by, e.g., letting him think logically; judge; distinguish; contrast; classify; systematize; make relations; form a concept of space, distance, time, color, form, weight, length, breadth, thickness, height, diameter and magnitude; acquire insight as well as firm up ideas and concepts that can be remembered, recalled and applied in new situations (53a pp 22-27; 53b p 196).
7. This offers him a satisfactory forming of his concrete thinking by handling concrete material and in doing so paves the way for a leap to abstract thinking. Standing (54 p 196) states this matter as follows: "Even though we start with concrete materials, they are only the media which enlighten the mind on its way into the abstract world of thought".
8. This facilitates the later learning of abstract, formal school work such as learning to count, concept formation and the acquisition of skills when it comes to number naming and manipulation, arithmetic problem solving as well as learning to read and write (55 pp 12 52 69 104).
9. The successful completing of such work assignments not only provide the child with joy but at the same time strengthen his feeling of pride and his own worthiness (56a p 70; 56b p 344).
10. This offers the child the opportunity to manifest and realize his slumbering and hidden potentialities for learning and becoming because he continually broadens and deepens his knowledge and experiences; i.e., he continually learns how to better master his life world (57 p 67).



11. This puts him in a position to increasingly be able to carry on a dialogue with reality on a more advanced level and in doing so proceed to a more adequate self-realization (58a pp 67 70 201; 58b p 38).

In addition to these advantages connected with implementing the Montessori hardware in the teaching situation, it can also be mentioned that this offers the teacher extremely appropriate opportunities to increase the child's vocabulary and forge bonds of solidarity. The teacher clarifies, names, encourages, praises and asks the child questions about the Montessori activities that were carried out and the names of the objects handled. All of this means that using the Montessori hardware as teaching aids not only offers the opportunity for promoting the child's intellectual development, but is also suitable for forming the entire structure of the child as a person.

**(iii) Particular means that can be taken for the affective forming, socialization and language acquisition of the autistic child**

**a) Swimming**

In addition to the value that swimming has for physical exercise, there is a special attempt during the structured teaching of swimming to establish a relationship of trust between the autistic child and his teacher. Where previously the child had succeeded in avoiding physical contact with an adult, or violently protested against it, during the swimming lesson he often finds himself in water in which he cannot stand and he is forced, as it were, to cling to the teacher for safety. Such behavior often is the first time such a child has "spontaneously" made physical contact with another and offers him the opportunity to place his unconditional trust in his teacher who holds him tightly and moves around with him.

**b) Roller skating**

Also, with structured roller skating teaching the same aim is striven for and realized. What is especially remarkable is that certain autistic children acquire a surprising skillfulness in this type of

sport and it also has a positive influence on their extreme tenseness, anxiety and insecurity. After a roller skating or swimming lesson it is found that autistic children show better cooperation when in the classroom they are confronted with a learning or work assignment. At the same time it must be kept in mind that the autistic child at the roller skating rink is given the opportunity under the teacher's guidance to associate in appropriate ways with his schoolmates and pay attention to their movements. In addition, the value roller skating has for improving body control and balance cannot be overemphasized.

### **c) Horseback riding and caring for pets**

The autistic child with his dormant emotional life and unusual aloofness often succeeds in developing a particular attachment and can give expression to their feelings of devotion, e.g., to animals during horseback riding lessons and when they are instructed in playing with and caring for pets. Naturally, it is hoped that such devotedness will benefit the child in his encountering fellow persons and that this attachment to animals will contribute to establishing interpersonal relationships.

### **d) Music and singing**

The aim of this teaching is first to sharpen the child's auditory perception because among other things they learn to distinguish between low and high notes and a fast or slow tempo or rhythm. These perceptual and discrimination exercises are paired with motor exercises because the pupils are expected to jog or run two by two and indeed hand in hand in a large circle to time with piano music with changing tempo and pitch. Singing playful songs serves to improve the children's body images and language acquisition because there is singing about body parts and movements. In addition, the pupils are given the opportunity to play drums to the beat of the accompanying piano music. The forming and stabilizing of the child's emotions, the acquisition of language and a body image, socialization and the promotion of body movements on the basis of auditory discriminations are thus all aims of this teaching.

### **e) Excursions**

As a consequence of disturbed behaving, autistic children often are not taken to public places by their parents hence the opportunity is missed for them to learn to know and master the broader life reality. However, in this school pupils are taken on weekly excursions to public places, restaurants, department stores, the sea shore, museums and other places worth seeing. Here the aim is to let the children overcome their unfounded fears of, e.g., elevators, escalators, a bus or a train and become acquainted with the broader world. Pupils are also taught how to act socially with “normal” persons. Photos are often taken of the pupils during such excursions and the pictures of the places visited are put in an album. The pupils’ activities during these excursions then serve as a basis for class discussions, the teaching of language (narrations and compositions) and teaching other subject matter. For teaching the history of a certain period on the Cape, they are brought on visits to museums, questions are asked about the children’s experiences during such visits and they also are often given the assignment of writing down their impressions in this respect or make a sketch to interpret them.

Proper behavior as well as correct conduct with strangers is impressed upon these pupils during these excursions in an attempt to make them eventually more acceptable to the uninformed public.

#### **f) Social club (Youth club)**

In order to be able to provide the autistic child the opportunity to eventually be able to more easily join the normal community, the senior pupils of an ordinary primary school are invited to pay a weekly visit to this school to help promote the socialization of these autistic children. During these gatherings provision is made for teamwork between the two groups of pupils. Also, the autistic children are presented with the opportunity to entertain the visiting pupils with refreshments. The autistic children, who indeed have impoverished life experiences and are ignorant with respect to socially acceptable behavior and conduct with their age cohorts, in these gatherings are put in a position to watch the conduct of the normal children, imitate them and in this way learn from them. That the autistic children profit from these gatherings and

experience the inter-human association and encounter as pleasant cannot be doubted, according to the head of this school.

#### 4.5.4 Synthesis

The accompaniment of the autistic child to arrive at affective, cognitive and normative self-actualization presents teachers with a particular task. From a psychopedagogical perspective it seems clear that the autistic child is inclined to under-actualize learning and becoming and thus his psychic life and this makes accompanying him a particular psychopedagogic as well as orthopedagogic-orthodidactic task.

Affective accompaniment of the autistic child can only occur when the teacher makes him feel at home in a loving place within which a pedagogical nearness and an “our” space is created (59 p 7). It is this teacher’s task to establish an intense relationship of trust with the autistic child which presupposes the following accompanying activities: paying sufficient individual attention, accepting, showing affection, pedagogic attunement in the form of patting on the shoulder, praising, applauding, encouraging, giving a friendly smile, nodding, etc. When the affective accompaniment of the autistic child occurs in this way in the teaching situation, this especially leads to affective self-actualization by such a child and serves as a driving power for successful cognitive and normative self-actualization.

Concerning the cognitive accompaniment of the autistic child to cognitive self-actualization in the teaching situation it is necessary that the teacher support the autistic child to explore and learn through self-activity where initially use is made of concrete and experienced learning material. However, to the extent that the child succeeds in mastering language and proceeds on his own initiative to explore in the teaching situation he must be supported to a more adequate actualization of his cognitive modes of learning, i.e., to cognitive self-actualization.

Normative accompaniment of the autistic child to normative self-actualization implies that the teacher support this child in such a way that he will identify himself with the teacher because this will

result in his identifying with the norms that the teacher exemplifies and presents. For this to happen, it is necessary that he teach the child what is proper and creates an intimate and familiar space. Because the autistic child has such difficulty in forming a concept of the meaningfulness of norms, the teacher must, in almost excessive ways, praise him whenever approvable deeds are executed in order to bring home the feeling of his own dignity or worthiness and awareness of norms.

A summary of the content of this study, some conclusions and scientifically grounded recommendations are presented in chapter 5.

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