

## CHAPTER II

### FROM PRE-SCHOOL CHILD TO SCHOOL CHILD: A PSYCHOPEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### 1. CATEGORICAL CLARIFICATION OF “A PSYCHOPEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE”

In order to make the claim of a scientifically accountable approach and pronouncements, at the outset it is necessary to provide a sketch of the concept “psychopedagogical perspective”.

Since it is not possible to acquire a complete overview of a child’s entire lifeworld, a particular slice is made of it that can be probed, penetrated and described more closely. According to Van der Merwe to “project or take a perspective” means “... to see through in order to see into clearly, to penetrate, to learn to know fundamentally, to view with understanding, to investigate, to confirm”.<sup>(1)</sup> By projecting a particular perspective, and in the present case a psychopedagogical perspective, there then is an attempt to disclose and verbalize the universally valid essences of the slice of life reality of interest.

In order to proceed to reveal the essences of something, one must begin no other place than with that original reality itself. Thus, a phenomenological approach is obvious. Van der Stoep notes that “... whoever will not think fundamentally can engage in authentic scientific practice with difficulty”.<sup>(2)</sup>

When a perspective is taken according to the phenomenological method not only are essences disclosed but their sense and mutual coherencies also are indicated.

#### 1.1 The relationship between pedagogics and psychopedagogics

Until relatively recently pedagogics was practiced as an applied and not as an autonomous science. Thanks to the thinking of authors such as Perquin and Langeveld<sup>(3)</sup> and in South Africa Landman, Van der Stoep, Sonnekus and others,<sup>(4)</sup> the autonomy of pedagogics is

confirmed beyond any doubt. Thus, Landman writes: “Pedagogics is an autonomous science grounded in universal life reality itself ....”<sup>(5)</sup>

In addition, pedagogics has the reality of educating as its field of study. This slice from life reality however is so extensive and complicated that it is in need of the projection of part-perspectives. The delimiting function of part-perspectives promotes greater clarity. One such part-perspective of the overarching autonomous mother science of pedagogics is psychopedagogics. Not only does it function as a part-perspective of pedagogics but it also claims independence on the basis that its disclosing, ordering, illuminating and describing its object of study occurs in terms of its own categories that will appear later in this study.

### **1.2 The psychopedagogic object of study**

Where pedagogics extends itself over the phenomenon of educating as it shows itself in life reality, psychopedagogics takes the actualization of the psychic life of a child-in-education as its object of study.

Through the projection of its own part-perspective, it then tries to disclose the essentials, the sense and mutual coherencies of the psychic life of a child-in-education and, indeed, to do this in terms of the essences of the psychic life of such a child.

### **1.3 Ways in which the realization of the potentialities of a childlike psychic life are actualized**

“Psychopedagogics as a science is involved in the totality of everything that appears regarding the psychic life of a child as it is actualized in a pedagogical situation”.<sup>(6)</sup>

From this it is clear that a child possesses psychic life *potentialities* that must be realized or actualized in his being on the way to adulthood. Thus, a child must transform his potentialities into realities.

By applying the phenomenological method of thinking, Sonnekus and others have disclosed this reality itself and found that the mentioned realization of the potentialities of his psychic life appear in the fact that a child learns in becoming and becomes in learning

to the extent that he continually undergoes an elevation in level and approaches adulthood. On this basis they postulate *becoming* and *learning* as “equi-primordial structures” in the psychic life of a child.<sup>(7)</sup> The reciprocal relationships and coherencies are such that these two structures are differentiated only for the sake of greater clarity but never can be separated, and the one always implies the other. Indeed, the one is a precondition for the other, from which the name “equi-primordial”. The one does not occur before the other and any pronouncement in terms of either learning or becoming necessarily implies the other.

### 1.3.1 *Essences of becoming in connection with learning*

In order to penetrate the phenomenon “childlike becoming” in its essence it is necessary to disclose its essences. In the Department of Psycho-, Socio-, and Orthopedagogics at the University of Pretoria, the following essential characteristics of becoming have been disclosed:

#### a) *Actualizing:*

In his ability to realize his potentialities, a child shows himself as openness, intentionality and choice-possibility. Consequently, he himself has a role in his own becoming. In order to allow this self-actualizing to progress adequately, an adult’s support and direction are necessary.

Only through accompaniment (by an adult) to self-actualization (by a child) is a child able to elevate and intensify his dialogue with his surrounding lifeworld. The fact that such an elevation in dialogue occurs implies that a child has become “different”; he has learned something that he had not possessed before. Hence, actualizing potentialities of the psychic life necessarily result in learning and becoming.

#### b) *Exploring:*

A child who actualizes the potentialities of his psychic life goes out to the world, explores, investigates and discovers. In doing so he continually pushes back his life horizon and uncovers new landscapes on his path of life. New life terrains are disclosed and uncovered. In their turn, they again create starting points for

further exploring. Thus, through exploring a child continually creates new possibilities for learning.

c) *Emancipating:*

Because a child becomes adult, he breaks through his dependency, lack in responsibility, unformedness and lack of independence and eventually he becomes a morally independent adult. Langeveld, as cited by Sonnekus, makes the pronouncement that a child is someone who “wants to be someone himself”.<sup>(8)</sup> Thus, he emancipates from being a child to being an adult by realizing his potentialities under the guidance of his educators. In order to become adult he must broaden his radius of contact with reality and acquire as adequately as possible the cultural heritage that is his due. This only is possible if he learns. The knowledge possessed by an adult exceeds that of a child.

d) *Distancing:*

In this context, distancing means loosening from and creating distance. Thus, a child leaves his previous position and acquires a new, more advanced, higher level of becoming. This is possible only if he understands and masters the new, i.e., if, by learning, he has arrived at greater insight and breaks away from his previously inadequate signifying of reality.

e) *Differentiating:*

When distancing and emancipating are actualized on a higher level, differentiating occurs. This includes refining or crystallizing various modes of intentionality. These ways of becoming entail that a child direct himself with respect to bodily, pathic-affective, gnostic-cognitive becoming via sensing, perceiving, imagining, fantasizing, thinking, remembering attending and observing (known as modes of learning). The latter also are ways in which a child arrives at giving meaning, insight and understanding.

f) *Objectifying:*

Initially a child lived experiences reality as global-diffuse. To the extent that becoming is realized, a child actualizes his existential possibility and “thus must ‘step out of himself’ and enter a particular slice of reality in order to be able to objectively consider it as it is”.<sup>(9)</sup> A splintering between “child” and “world” is not

possible,<sup>(10)</sup> but a child can, in a less involved way, cast a glance over himself and his surrounding reality. Obviously, this implies a more gnostic-cognitive way of lived experiencing that then also is a precondition for actualizing the more gnostic-cognitive modes of learning. A precondition for objectifying as a way of becoming is a stable emotional life. If pathic-affective lived experiencing progresses on a favorable level, it is possible for a child to distance to a more objective signifying of reality.

In addition, it seems clear that only a child who objectifies and has the possibility to view himself and his world from a distance, which makes possible an elevation in level, can learn adequately. Without objectifying all attribution of meaning remains highly particular and the realization of generally valid concepts is not possible.

For a more refined discussion and specification of these modes of becoming, there is reference to the work, *Psychopedagogics: An introductory orientation*, under the editorship of M. C. H. Sonnekus, pp. 30 and following. In a more recent work, Sonnekus indicates that the mentioned essences of becoming "... in particular refer to different possible levels of elevation in the becoming of a child-in-education".<sup>(11)</sup> From this it appears that the essences, or forms of becoming are now coupled with learning. Indeed, they are realized via the modes of learning.

### 1.3.2 *Essentials of learning in connection with becoming*

Learning is a phenomenon that has awakened human interest since times of antiquity. Plato (+/- 400 BC) and Aristotle (+/- 350 BC) had already concerned themselves with this.<sup>(12)</sup>

With the establishment of the first psychology laboratory by Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) in Leipzig, the phenomenon of learning was investigated more closely. For a long time, pedagogics was an applied area of psychology and, together with its mother science of psychology it came under the influence, first of philosophy and later the natural sciences. On the European Continent and in South Africa, and since about the 1960's, mainly because of the application of the phenomenological method, it became delimited as its own autonomous subject area of pedagogics rooted in an accountable child anthropology.

Owing to this, in 1969 Sonnekus could say "... learning by a child means an act or activity, as an intentional, existential, sense and meaning giving activity, that in constituting the learning event cannot be explained by the various theories of learning."<sup>(13)</sup>

Correctly, in this connection, Ilg and Ames also indicate that: "Education sometimes seems to be interested in everything except the child."<sup>(14)</sup>

As laudable as the works of Van Parreren,<sup>(15)</sup> Ausubel,<sup>(16)</sup> Hilgard,<sup>(17)</sup> and others might be, they still cry for an accountable child anthropology. In this regard, there is reference to the works of Landman,<sup>(18)</sup> Nel,<sup>(19)</sup> Sonnekus<sup>(20)</sup> and Van Wyk.<sup>(21)</sup>

Regarding the connections between learning and becoming, Van Niekerk says: "The constituents of the psychic life are the totality of personal potentialities with which a child enters the world. This embraces all of his potentialities for becoming and for learning; all of his potentialities for exploring, emancipating, distancing, differentiating and objectifying; all of his potentialities for experiencing, willing, lived-experiencing, knowing and behaving; and all of his potentialities for sensing, attending, perceiving, imagining, fantasizing, thinking, actualizing intelligence, remembering and observing."<sup>(22)</sup>

It seems clear that the ways the psychic life of a child are manifested via becoming and learning are so entwined and enmeshed that at most, they can be distinguished but never separated. Sonnekus<sup>(23)</sup> and Van Niekerk<sup>(24)</sup> distinguish the following modes of learning and becoming.

a) *Accompanying modes of learning*

(i) *Sensing*

Erwin Straus, cited by Sonnekus,<sup>(25)</sup> calls sensing the "first seeing". It is that first strongly emotionally colored knowing by a child that a specific aspect of reality speaks to him. In other words it is a disclosing knowing.<sup>(26)</sup> Sensing is repeatedly succeeded by a more gnostic way of learning, but it must be kept in mind that sensing itself reveals something and, as such, it also has a gnostic side.

Sensing actualizes itself on each of the levels [or modes] of becoming, i.e., exploring, emancipating, distancing, differentiating and objectifying. Depending on the quality of sensing, i.e., stable, labile or impulsive, it promotes or restrains the further course of a child's becoming.

Sensing that indeed is a more pathic mode of learning also is an accompanying mode of learning. It is never replaced by another mode of learning, but rather remains present next to other modes of learning right through the learning event. Consequently, it is called an accompanying mode of learning.

(ii) *Attending*

With attending or paying attention to is meant a lingering-by the slice of reality that speaks to a child via sensing. This not only implies a being concerned with but a remaining concerned with something because of the wondering awakened in a child. Adequate attending indeed is an indication that a child is exploring the specific landscape that he is lingering by.

Attentively-being-in-the-world, as learning potentiality, is an additional prerequisite for adequately actualizing all of the modes of learning. Not only does attending initiate all of the other modes of learning, but simultaneously it also sustains them. As such, it also is called an accompanying mode of learning.

b) *Gnostic modes of learning*

Initiated by and with the accompaniment of sensing and attending, a becoming child actualizes the following preponderantly gnostic modes of learning: perceiving, imagining, fantasizing, thinking, remembering and observing. For a description of these modes of learning, there is reference to the work of Sonnekus and Van Niekerk.<sup>(28)</sup>

It serve to note that each of these gnostic modes of learning includes an emotional side that is going to co-influence the meaning given to the reality that a learning, becoming child comes forward to meet.

This act of giving meaning, or lived experiencing,<sup>(29)</sup> congeals and accumulates in the form of experiential residues that, in their turn, co-influence a child's subsequent going out to reality via learning and becoming.<sup>(30)</sup>

### 1.3.3 *Accompaniment to self-actualization*

No child can reach adulthood alone. For a child to adequately become adult he needs to be accompanied, supported and given direction. He has the given *potentialities* to become adult but he can bring this about only in and via the educative event.

No adult can make this event of becoming and unfolding happen; he can only create a favorable preformed field for it to occur. The initiative to become rests exclusively with a child. He has the possibility of choice; he need not necessarily accept an adult's provision of support and direction.

With child-being, a child also is given as primordial trusting openness.<sup>(31)</sup> Because of this, a child trusts that an educator means well for him and he lends himself to education. That is, he allows himself to be accompanied to the self-unfolding of his potentialities. This accompaniment and support that an adult provides a child occurs in a three-fold way:

- a) Affective accompaniment to affective self-actualizing;
- b) cognitive accompaniment to cognitive self-actualizing;
- c) normative accompaniment to normative self-actualizing.

These ways of educating realize themselves within the reality of educating, and indeed through adequately actualizing the following fundamental pedagogical structures:

- a) The pedagogical relationship structures;
- b) the pedagogical sequence structures;
- c) the pedagogical activity structures; and
- d) the pedagogical aim structures.<sup>(32)</sup>

In addition, Sonnekus says: "A child basically is someone who himself eagerly *will experience* and *lived experience*."<sup>(33)</sup> To the extent that a pedagogical situation between educator and child is

realized adequately, this creates a preformed field for continually progressive exploring, emancipating, distancing, differentiating and objectifying via a readiness to experience, will, lived experience, know and behave by a child. This creates the possibility for him to sense, attend, perceive, think, imagine, fantasize, remember and actualize his intelligence by which he learns.

The results of adequate affective accompaniment of a becoming child is that he will feel safe and secure to such an extent that he will venture to explore and in doing so will emancipate to a higher level. This holds not only for affective self-actualization but a stable emotional life also makes it possible for a child to enter his world in a gnostic-cognitive way.

Ordered, systematized and regular cognitive accompaniment by an adult supports a child to a systematic, ordered, intellectual exploration of his world and a superior actualization of his own intellectual potentialities.

Similarly, consistent normative accompaniment by an educator leads to a meaningful ordering of experiential residues with respect to a child attributing meanings and values.<sup>(34)</sup>

Thus, accompaniment by an educator to self-actualization by a child is indispensable for making adequate learning and becoming possible.

## **2. EXPERIENCING AS A WAY OF ACTUALIZING THE POTENTIALITIES OF A CHILDLIKE PSYCHIC LIFE**

As indicated above, it is obvious that a child uses his psychic life potentialities in order to *learn* and *become* adequately. In order to determine HOW this event is realized, it is necessary for a psychopedagogue to illuminate and penetrate the question in terms of a particular psychopedagogical category or categories.

The present problematic will be analyzed and penetrated further in chapters III and IV in terms of the psychopedagogical category of *experiencing*. In this way, there is an attempt to establish an image of the experiential world of a child in his becoming from a pre-school to a school child.

The choice of experiencing as a category rests on the insight to which Sonnekus came in his work “Onderwyser, les and kind” [The teacher, the lesson and the child], i.e., that there are such close connections and coherencies among childlike willing, lived experiencing and experiencing that they cannot be separated from each other. In addition, Ferrieira<sup>(35)</sup> has indicated that experiencing embraces other categories. Thus, when there is reference to the *experiential world* of a child, this also implies that childlike willing, lived experiencing, knowing and behaving are included, as seen in their mutual coherencies with each other.

## 2.1 Particular essences of experiencing

Before the experiential world of a child in becoming from a pre-school to a school child can be investigated, it is necessary to note briefly some particular essences of childlike experiencing:

- (1) Experiencing implies knowing. Through experiencing that which is becomes knowable.<sup>(36)</sup> The radius of contact between person and reality continually broadens because more knowledge is acquired by standing in the world experiencing it.
- (2) “Experiencing makes possible a *synthesis* of perceiving.”<sup>(37)</sup> Sensory impressions are joined together and synthesized into knowledge regarding a particular slice of reality. This knowing then becomes experiential residues that are strung together into possessed experiences that, in their capacity as a frame of reference, influence the acquisition of further knowing. (In this respect, see Sonnekus’ cyclic notion: Experiencing, accompanied by willing, congeals into lived experiencing that then sediments into experiential residues. Such experiential residues again direct the subsequent cycle of experiencing.<sup>(38)</sup>)

According to Kant’s view, experiencing is possible “only through a necessary concatenation of perceptions... Thus, experiencing necessarily leads to understanding by which it becomes possible to name and formalize objects, i.e., to associate with things”.<sup>(39)</sup>

- (3) Experiencing envelopes lived experiencing because lived experiencing eventuates in giving sense and meaning to that which is experienced. With reference to Kant, Hannah says: “A person acquires his experience in so far as he is himself active in a world that for him is real and meaningful”.<sup>(40)</sup> Experiencing realizes itself in connection with giving meaning, whether positive or negative. When a person lived experiences something as meaningless-for-me, the possibility of acquiring meaningful experience is lessened. Not only does previous experiencing influence giving meaning, but lived experience again directs in its turn the acquisition of further experiencing.
- (4) According to Husserl experiencing is the original way of being in the world. Thus, it is given with being-human and is possible because of a person’s intentionality. Hence, each child has the potential to acquire experiences, but he might not do so maximally or in a positive way. For adequate experiencing, a child also is committed to education. (This matter will be discussed more completely in chapter III). A child is disposed to experiencing. It is an inevitable matter of being human, but experiencing does not have a predetermined, set course.
- (5) As a human matter, experiencing also is temporally bound. The moment of entering reality is when experiencing realizes itself: “A person experiences when he is undergoing something.”<sup>(41)</sup> Thus, experiencing is a matter of the present moment.
- (6) With reference to Martin Heidegger, Hannah<sup>(42)</sup> says experiencing makes it possible to make judgments. The world-for-me is filled with contents and sense with respect to experiencing. Thus, experiencing also makes it possible for a person to orient himself with regard to reality. Experiencing fills a child’s world with contents and decreases the unfamiliarity of the lifeworld. Because of the unique position he takes and the meaning he gives (lived experiences), his unique experiential world arises.

## 2.2 Some ways of actualizing childlike experiencing

That a child realizes the potentialities of his psychic life by means of experiencing , as well as by the state of his possessed experiences, is knowable in the following:

### 2.2.1 *Language*

With respect to the connection between language and lifeworld, it is worth mentioning that a child not only makes his possessed experiences knowable in his verbal expressions but language mastery opens and makes accessible additional possibilities for experiencing.

With reference to Sonnekus' pronouncement about the "lifeworld"<sup>(43)</sup> Mulder says "A child's original experiences are rooted in this lifeworld that continually is subjected to the influence of a particular cultural world. A child is born and educated into a particular cultivated experiential world in which he must acquire the language ... Language discovery leads to giving meaning but also a loosening from the sensory-concrete and entering the world of the symbol as a token symbol with sound and meaning."<sup>(44)</sup>

The connections among language usage, as a way of actualizing experiencing, lived experiencing, learning and emancipating, as a mode of becoming, are obvious.

Through using language a person carries on a conversation with fellow persons and opens his unique experiential world for another to enter. In doing so, a newly shared piece of the experiential world is established.

Ferriera<sup>(45)</sup> states that "... the act of naming is the completion and crowning of that which a child has experienced." When a child names a piece of reality this means he has distinguished it as an entity, has identified it and has given a sound symbol to it. This implies that he can emotionally distance himself to such an extent that he can associate with things on a more gnostic or cognitive level. He thus has arrived at an elevation in level; he has learned something more about reality and thus becoming is actualized.

### 2.2.2 *Movement*

When a child *goes to* and *enters into* reality, he comes into motion. This movement is intentionally determined and is a spontaneous moving. Moving is necessary to actualize his psychic life. Bodily movements such as touching, grasping, reaching, feeling, seeing, etc., according to Sonnekus, are spontaneous ways in which a child, via his body, explores, establishes relationships with, gives meaning to his world and consequently also experiences.<sup>(46)</sup> Movement with respect to actualizing the potentialities of his psychic life and bodily movements are closely related to each other.

The significance of bodily-being-in-the-world of a child becoming from a pre-school child to a school child deserves particular attention, as is done in the following chapter.

Ferreira<sup>(47)</sup> differentiates experiencing as movement into the following two modes of actualization:

a) *Experiencing as activity*

When a child comes into motion, he corroborates his active being-in-the-world. Thus, he participates in his becoming by self-actualizing. By exploring, differentiating, and objectifying, a child *looks at, feels, grasps, thinks about* life reality and continually expands his possessed experiences to such an extent that from what he has learned he is able to continually give more adequate meaning; he thus is changed. Consequently, experiencing, as an essence of becoming, implies activity.

b) *Experiencing as reaching*

Not only does experiencing allow itself to be known in activity and movement, but also in reaching reality. By this Ferreira means an understanding of the structures of the lifeworld.

### 3. SYNTHESIS

In light of the foregoing it is clear that the constituents of a childlike psychic life are *not* knowable as separate entities or abilities. That it is present as a given *potentiality* speaks clearly of the fact that a child learns and becomes. Thus it is only the results of the actualized potentialities of the psychic life that are made knowable. The *ways of actualizing* (i.e., the manner in which this occurs) as well as the *forms of actualizing* (i.e., the level on which this proceeds) are read from the fact that a child continually establishes

relationships with himself, others, things and God in a different way and on higher levels as well as from the changed significance of these relationships. The way in which a child associates with the things in his world show that he *learns* and *becomes*. The most obvious ways in which a pre-school child becoming a school child associates and establishes relationships with his world are by means of his bodily-being-in-the-world, language and play.

In his bodily-being-in-the-world, in his languaging and playing, his experiencing is directed to reality. According to Hannah (following Husserl) experiencing is the original way of being in the world. This cannot be reduced to anything else. As such, it is the first becoming aware of the surrounding reality (sensing). This also implies immediate attending. As soon as reality claims the attention of a child, he responds by exploring. He only can explore via further sensing and attending, paired with perceiving, thinking, fantasizing, imagining, remembering and observing. Sonnekus calls these ways of associating with reality *modes of learning*. The result of learning is the acquisition of knowledge. Reaching knowledge then also is an essence of *experiencing*. Because a child now knows more, has greater possessed knowledge in the form of possessed experiences, indeed he has become different and he now can further differentiate, distance, objectify, emancipate and consequently explore on a higher level (forms of actualizing becoming).

Attaining (reaching) knowledge, as possessed experiences, on still higher levels of becoming influences the actualization of childlike willing, as a way of giving direction to actualizing intentionality, and lived experiencing, as giving meaning to and taking a position toward the particular *content*. A child is always learning *something* and that something is content. There are close reciprocal connections and coherencies among the forms and ways of actualizing becoming as well as the modes of learning. These mutual connections always must be kept in mind. For a more precise consideration of these mutual relationships, there is reference to the work of Van Niekerk.

It now seems that *experiencing* is a form and way of actualizing becoming and in addition implies the particular ways of actualizing or modes of learning. To experience means to realize the

potentialities of the psychic life. The choice of experiencing as a psychopedagogical category for penetrating the specific problem of concern seems to be the most practical and feasible approach.

In the following chapter, an image is given of the *experiential world* of the pre-school child becoming a school child. The following is an indication of what is meant:

All humans live on the earth and thus have the surrounding reality as a common lifeworld. However, each, in unique individual ways, gives sense and meaning to certain aspects of this lifeworld and in doing so establishes a unique, individual lifeworld as a world-for-me. A person continually gives sense and meaning to specific contents in his world; i.e., he continually lived experiences while actualizing his personal potential. Lived experiencing, however, is momentary and changes from one moment to another. Those things to which he gives meaning at a particular moment, on whatever level, constitute his world of lived experiencing. As such, the contents and scope of this lived experienced world continually are subject to change.

Lived experiencing occurs in light of and is directed by existing possessed experiences. Thus, the course of experiencing has congealed in the moment of lived experiencing. The meaning imbued contents, as experiential residues, are added to the possessed experiences. The nature of the lived experiencing, whether pathic-affectively labile or stable or impulsive and/or gnostic-cognitively ordered, structured or not, will determine the *quality* of the eventual possessed experiences.

Just as a child always lived experiences *something*, he also always experiences something; they both have to do with contents. The eventual mastery and understanding of these meaning imbued contents are possessed experiences. To the extent that learning and becoming are actualized, the experiential residues increase in quantity. If they become consolidated into qualitatively favorable possessed experiences (cognitively ordered and affectively stable giving meaning), will depend on a child's self-actualization of his willing in response to the accompaniment and support of his educators.

These compound possessed experiences of a child will influence his further going out to and giving meaning to his world. The experiential world of a child thus is those consolidated contents of which he, thus far, has knowledge and to which he has given meaning in his own unique ways as well as his emotions, thoughts, realization of his willing and values.

In chapter III it is shown how a pre-school child becoming a school child actualizes the potentialities of his psychic life; i.e., how his experiential world shows itself.

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