

CHAPTER 3

THE ORTHOPEDAGOGIC EVALUATIVE SITUATION

1. ESTABLISHING A MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP

In an orthopedagogic evaluative conversation an **adult** faces a person who is **not-yet-adult**. Thus, the orthopedagogue involves the child in an educative situation in terms of an accountable relationship which involves that he eventually becoming an adult. The aim, according to Ter Horst (258, 104 [in Dutch]) is that "the [vicious] circular movement of the problematic educative situation be made linear, the obscure perspective be made clear; the disturbed dialogue be repaired."

Because there is a disturbed dialogue in the child's everyday educative situation, it is necessary that the fundamental pedagogic structures be adequately implemented when the evaluator and child are together. Therefore, as Van Gelder says, the orthopedagogic situation of evaluation "... is not acquiring the sum of medical-psychological facts and it also is not another form of gathering additional facts about the child, but it is a bit of educating, a careful consideration of the way the educator has to move with the child" (286, 81 [in Dutch]).

The orthopedagogic evaluator communicates with the child by establishing a situation of pedagogic association, an association aimed at learning to know him so he can be helped. There is mention of a pedagogic association because it is a **personal** relationship between the **evaluator** and the child during which the orthopedagogue's purest intention, the intention of love (as Binswanger calls it) is present and which gives him room to be himself while being held responsible for his deeds without forcing on him a particular, fixed image (see 302, 255).

The pedagogic association between orthopedagogic evaluator and the child restrained in becoming adult puts the child in a position to relax and be himself in a natural sphere of association by which he begins to open himself for the adult's entry into his experiential world and by which the adult can perceive something of his intentionality or directedness to the world. He should also feel and know that the orthopedagogue, in their association with each other,

has **time** for him and will "listen" to him. Zijlstra says, "To listen is to have time and to have time is one form of love" (322 [in Dutch]).

Lubbers says if something has happened that the child cannot assimilate, that he cannot integrate into his life, it can have a lasting impression on him. It can be traumatizing when he "dare not bring into view and recedes from what announces itself as content in his life" (150 [in Dutch]). The child does not want to be confronted with the meaning of an unacceptable experience and will ward it off, "and he continues to think it will appear again in everything that is unknown or unfamiliar. He lives in constant concern and tension to keep what is anxiety provoking at bay. The trauma deprives him of his freedom to be" (114, 82 [in Dutch]).

The orthopedagogic evaluator must try to let the pedagogic association flourish in such a way that the child will feel secure because he has to be confronted with what is avoided, but now **indirectly**. As an orthopedagogue, the evaluator knows that if the child is confronted directly with what is avoided, he is only confronted with himself: "then he sees the reflection of his feelings about the world. He is imprisoned in himself. He needs someone to accept him, who can make him secure; someone to sympathized with him in a literal sense, to participate in his world with him and reconcile him with the world" (114, 83 [in Dutch]).

Because the core of orthopedagogic evaluation really is in the **character of an encounter** (see 174, 56), the orthopedagogue aims to establish a pedagogic **encounter** with the child where the **personal** relationship of association progresses to an **interpersonal** relationship (of encounter), a precondition for learning to know the child in his true personal depth. Nel says, "**To encounter a child means to discover him in the heart of his existence**" (174, 78-79 [in Afrikaans]).

In such a relationship of encounter, the child feels and knows that he can **trust** the adult to help him. This is the foundation for his **readiness** to reveal himself in his experiential world to the orthopedagogue. In the encounter there is a first bridging of the gap in the **isolation** of the child restrained in becoming adult. Breaching this isolation is necessary because self-actualization cannot occur if he interacts with life contents in "isolation" (243, 83).

A variety of authors have given insightful comments about a relationship of encounter (see 19, 27; 42; 119; 128; 184, 8, 13, 15-16; 183).

During this encounter, the orthopedagogue discovers the child's intentional directedness to the world, the quality and nature of his modes of psychic life, his feelings and thoughts, his willing, his sense of responsibility, his conscience, his religious sense, the meanings he gives to the world and things, his relationships with people, with his parents, sisters, brothers, with his teachers; briefly: during an **encounter** the orthopedagogue arrives at a real person-image of the child restrained in his being-on-the-way to adulthood.

2. ENTERING AN EDUCATIVE CONVERSATION

During the evaluation, mutual **trust** is required. Since the restrained child generally cannot share his anxiety with his parents (see 150), he often enters the evaluative situation with a habitual **conflict of trust** toward the situation. Thus, his readiness to **want** to enter into communication first has to be ensured by creating a situation within which he can feel safe and secure. Feeling accepted and confident breaks through his feeling of loneliness. Hence, as soon as possible the evaluator has to determine the degree and ways the restrained child is ready to establish a relationship with an adult and, in particular, is ready to enter a relationship with the orthopedagogue directed to his adulthood (see 243, 79).

An adequate relationship of trust ensures that he will be emotionally ready to venture with the evaluator and explore his problem area. For this reason, a positive emotional bonding between the orthopedagogic evaluator and the restrained child is necessary so that the emotional no-man's land (197, 64) the child finds himself in can be disclosed. Thus, in the first place, the orthopedagogue has to win his trust, especially by showing trust in him and allowing him to lived experience that he is unconditionally accepted. Therefore, he has to generally show respect for his dignity as a person, allow him to feel secure by also showing concern and sympathy. He has to establish a stable relationship with him (also see 121, 7-11), and allow him to lived experience emotional security and allow him to **feel** that he is **understood**.

To accomplish all of this, the orthopedagogic evaluator has to be a spontaneous counter-player says Van Strien (302, 256). "We should not suppress the appeal the other makes to us but allow it to speak in our behavior. This occurs naturally and freely so that we are the counter-player, the mirror in which the play of the concerned person can remain undistorted when we not only view his exteriority but also his living, free interiority. Emotional appreciation must be continually embedded in the totality of everyday behaving with another" says Van Strien (302, 256 [in Dutch]).

If the pedagogic relationship is damaged, e.g., by a thoughtless remark or look then the child will withdraw himself because he then will distrust the polyvalent world of the adult. The look of the orthopedagogue has to be such that he feels secure. Therefore, he continually has to keep in mind that the restrained child easily can interpret his look as hostile (see 219). He also has to purposefully strive for the child to lived experience his look as kindly, lenient and loving (see 151, 181-192; 142, 75, 79-85). Equally, the child will withdraw if the adult involves him too directly in meanings regarding adulthood with which he has problems.

A few of the many guidelines presented by Perquin (189, 169-175) regarding a successful pedagogic conversation can also serve as guidelines for an orthopedagogic evaluative conversation: The conversational space has to be arranged so that the child will be disposed to trust. A cozy atmosphere should be created, e.g., with books, prints, etc. The room must not be "empty" because then he will lived-experience a lack that he has to fill. The room should have a personal character because neutral space fills him with uncertainty. He should not feel that **he** is under expectations because then he will feel compelled to **have to** do something. He must find the orthopedagogue to be someone who is downright meaningfully occupied and that he is invited and welcome.

When the importance of orthopedagogic evaluation as an educative event is taken into account, it is obvious that the evaluator himself will take responsibility for the pedagogic accountability of his actions as judged by pedagogic criteria used to evaluate the implementation of educative actions.

3. THE FOUNDATIONAL FORMS OF THE ORTHOPEDAGOGIC EVALUATIVE CONVERSATION

Before briefly considering some of the ways an orthopedagogic evaluative conversation is put into practice, Van der Stoep (280) is enlisted in regard to the four basic forms of living he has postulated as **fundamental forms** of teaching. **Play, conversation, example, and assignment** should also be viewed as fundamental forms of orthopedagogic evaluation. They emanate from practices of living such as are **manifested** in the primordial situation of educating. The fundamental forms are everyday **forms of living** which, as primordial activities of learning to know, one uses for the sake of evaluating and for creating a practical, exploratory situation which involves the conscious implementation of these forms of living to attain a pre-established aim (see 280, 139).

In reflecting on the primordial ways in which a person communicates with contents, he does this by **speaking, playing and working**. It was already said that the essential aim of exploring the child restrained in becoming adult is to establish an image of his particular experiential world. This experiential world is constituted by the child's relevant meanings as possessed experiences. The evaluator strives to learn to know these possessed experiences in their relevance, especially to gauge his feelings, dispositions, dislikes, likes, norms, values, life attitudes, knowledge. Such knowledge can only be available to the evaluator in terms of contents and thus he has to find ways for making the contents observable to him.

Speaking is a human form of living. By means of **language**, it is possible to talk to a child about anything he feels or is aware of, what he knows (thus has verbalized). By careful attention to the contextual integration of his language usage, the meaning of particular life contents to him indeed can be gauged. Thus, conversation is a form of actualizing the event of orthopedagogic evaluation.

In view of the fact that a child can recount **how he feels, what he knows, what he believes**, his attribution of meaning to life contents also is expressed in what he talks about with others, **about what and how** he argues, debates, etc.

It serves no purpose to ask the restrained child why, e.g., he wets the bed; rather, life contents, as such, are discussed. Because the orthopedagogic evaluator uses conversation as a fundamental form

in such a way that relevant meanings figure in the discussion, knowledge is acquired about the child's possessed experiences.

To be in the world **playing** also is a primordial way a person enters into a dialogue with the world. In his play, a child also manifests in particular ways the meaning of life contents to him. Especially with a younger child, his involvement with things seems so much clearer in his play. Because play still is such a part of a child's habitual going out to the world, just when the younger restrained child actively plays he is not so consciously attuned to "avoiding" the problematic in his educative situation. His playing involvement with things and others in the life world gives an indication of what these matters mean to him. However, the evaluator has the task of not allowing him to play **aimlessly** but of directing his play so that conclusions can be drawn about his relationships with life that appear there. With this aim in mind, a variety of play media are designed to explore the actualization of the child's psychic life-in-education; and play is indispensable for the orthopedagogic evaluation of the toddler and young child.

Since in this work special attention is given to the practical evaluation of the older child, this mode of exploration will not be considered further and it suffices to refer the reader to some authoritative publications in the area of play, e.g., Moor (162), Vermeer (307), Scheurl (221), Fink (63), Plattel (195), Buytendijk (30), Van der Zeyde (284), Faure (61, 62) and Van Wyk (303, 304).

As are **conversation** and **play**, **work** is an original human form of living. It also is obvious that the orthopedagogic evaluator is confronted with the task of giving particular **assignments** (work) to the child. By giving an assignment the conversation with the child and his play activities are directed to particular contents as constituents of his experiential world. By careful deliberation and planning a child's intentional involvement is directed to particular possessed experiences by the assignment.

An additional fundamental form is **example**. On the basis of its characteristic form, the exemplar differentiates itself from the other fundamental forms. The example has to do with the relationship of particulars to the general and the fact that it reflects characteristics of a particular field of knowledge making its general structure penetrable (see 284, 81). By offering an example from the child's

experiential world, its reality is made directly and immediately perceptible to the orthopedagogic evaluator.

Thus, by means of conversation, play, work and assignment, the child restrained in becoming adult can communicate with life contents, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to the orthopedagogue what they mean for him.

The child's possessed experiences, as the sense and meaning of his actions via play, conversation, example and assignment, are closely related, indeed even to ways of associating between person and reality about what is generally present (see 280, 141).

That all play, conversations, examples and assignments are obviously not matters of learning to know the child is evident, but they can be if the orthopedagogue engages in evaluative actions with the aim of learning to know the restrained child with whom he ventures by means of these modes.

As far as evaluating is concerned, these fundamental forms presume that the event involves particular **contents** (with meaning-full possessed experiences) (see 280, 141).

How the evaluator is going to use these fundamental forms really is not determined by the forms themselves because the situation, the child's level of becoming, his historicity and a number of other matters will influence the choice. The preference for one fundamental form or another will also be determined by considering the particular child as a **person** in his problematic educative situation. Thus, the choice is not bound by fixed prescriptions but always rests on a personal, somewhat intuitive choice. He also has to select one or more of these fundamental forms to enter into dialogue with the child about his experiential world during the orthopedagogic evaluative event.

4. SYNTHESIS

The orthopedagogic evaluative situation can be described as that situation which is created at the initiative of the orthopedagogue in terms of particular fundamental forms of establishing a relationship between himself and the child restrained in becoming adult. Here the pedagogic relationships are implemented. The child's attained pedagogic level in terms of the meanings he attributes to educative

contents is gauged and evaluated in terms of his pedagogically attainable level in connection with which the **discrepancy** in becoming adult, its **nature** and **causes** are revealed. In an encounter with the child, his experiential world is explored and the structure of his **different** meanings are gauged, more particularly in terms of disturbed experiences, willing, lived experiences, knowledge and behaviors.

The orthopedagogic evaluative situation is established when an orthopedagogue tries to understand a child as a person restrained in becoming adult who finds himself in a problematic educative situation.

Because the child also is a **subject** he cannot be disclosed by means of particular standardized techniques or methods; rather a fundamental relationship of communication is required with the child as a person in free, spontaneous ways, at each moment, in each situation, with forms that continually vary depending on the situation (see 312, 218).