CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 Person, world and reality

A person always finds himself at the intersection of himself and a world or reality (6, 10). This intersection is in a field of tension between the subject (the I) and the reality surrounding him. The tension is that a person continually lingers between turning inward and pausing and his need to establish relationships with reality, which implies breaking away from a lack of tension and mastering the world and reality. Person and world are not separate and the meaning of his existence is in his participation in the world. A person never completely meets and is never completely in his world (Gehlen, Nitschke).

Glaeser (10, 34) illustrates this intertwining of person and world in a very interesting way. He says a person should try to forget everything he has known, experienced, heard, learned, what is around him, what he is still involved with, what affects him, what he influences. Forget all names, all identifiable characteristics, all lawfulness, all being conscious of color, form and feeling. Then look around without names, concepts, without consciousness. This is really not possible but it gives one an idea of the complexity of a person's relationships to reality and to which he has to attribute sense and meaning.

1.1.1 Mastering contents

Mastering world* and reality** means mastering contents (49, 17). Mastering a world and reality without contents is not thinkable. In mastering world and reality a person's (child's) self-knowledge and relationships with reality are always changed and the profile of his field of tension is altered to some degree.

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* **world** - Otto Frank states that for a person the main sources, masses and powers of life lie in three areas, namely, in the **world** around us, in ourselves and above us. (Das Wesen der wahren Bildung, Frankfurt, 1877).

** everything around a person that is of concern, whether he is aware of it or not.

A person is a being who educates and is committed to educating (32, 331).***

The **extent** and **meaningfulness** of his life are continually defined by his greater or lesser mastery of contents, but also by the quality of his (a child's) control of meanings and insights which are present in life contents.

1.1.2 Greater mastery of contents

This view that the extent and meaningfulness of a person's being-in-the-world correspond with his greater or lesser mastery of contents raises the question of **how** they can be presented to a child so he is able to gain an optimal grasp of and insight into them. Reality has to be unlocked for him in such a way that he not only acquires a grasp of it but also gains self-understanding (46, 129). By making the contents known to a child, he acquires insight into reality--a better understanding of things, but also he has to be able to orient himself better in establishing relationships with things.

1.2 Investigating the structure of contents

In such an investigation, the structure of the contents has to be disclosed to verify that they lend themselves to being made accessible and determine if there are relations in the contents that lend them to being presented in a reduced, more presentable form. Since this is an investigation of teaching activity, it is limited only to contents that are connected with teaching and learning. Therefore, not all contents of the lifeworld are considered.

There is a review of how different authors and thinkers give an indication of the ways contents can be reduced so that complicated and unsurveyable contents can be elucidated and made accessible to children.

The adults who unlock with care the contents for a child's benefit play a key role in the activity of teaching and there has to be an exposition of their role in this unlocking activity. In this regard, Wagenschein indicates how, on the path from contents to a child, "all of the spiritual **world** and all of a **person** are touched by such a 'fundamental' experience" (55, 72). This indicates that the

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***A being who without learning and educating cannot become a true person (36, 109).

contents not only carry the structure of a general relationship that can be made known in a reduced way, but that such an unlocking includes the possibility that they encroach in the life of the learning person by means of the information contained in them.

1.2.1 Questions considered in this study

First group of questions:
Where do the contents that figure in the didactic situation come from? Who selects them?

Second group of questions:
How can contents be made accessible to a child? Who has to find the essential elements and present them? Are there particular didactically accountable ways in which the contents can figure in a didactic situation?

Third group of questions:
Can contents be educative and formative for a child who does not feel inclined to become involved in and experience the contents in order to master them? Can contents be educative and formative if they are not presented in a form accessible to a child?

Fourth group of questions:
Does a child learn more or less than what is unlocked? Must the unlocker follow a particular path leading from the "matter" to the child or can the path be left to chance? To what degree can there be guidance on this path?

Fifth group of questions:
Is the adult indispensable in the teaching situation? Can educating and forming also prosper without adults? As an achieving consciousness, to what extent can a child master the world and reality by himself?

Sixth group of questions:
Can the contents made accessible be described as the elemental? Should the larger structural relationships be typified as the fundamental? Does the fundamental merely lie in the level of the contents or does it also refer to human insights into these contents?

Seventh group of questions:

Is the elemental merely the elemental and the fundamental merely the fundamental? Can the course of teaching begin with the elemental or must it be expedited by unlocking the elemental?

Eighth group of questions:
Does unlocking leave a child untouched? On what level of unlocking is lived-experiencing still pathic-affective? When is meaning received and normative attunement evident? These questions are considered again in the Retrospect (Chapter Six).

1.3 Introduction

In the German literature the concepts "elemental" and "fundamental" are used by many in a didactic connection. In the following chapter, the use of these concepts is reviewed and discussed to determine whether they have relevance for didactic theory and practice.

The research in Chapter 3 requires a degree of interpretation because there is no unanimity among these German thinkers and didacticians regarding the didactic significance of these two concepts. Some didacticians and writers sometimes imply these concepts in didactics and in teaching practice without formally mentioning or describing them.

To be able to follow the course of the discussions of the different authors' contributions to the elemental and the fundamental it is necessary in this introduction to indicate the terminology they use.

In general this research amounts to indicating that contents have a particular structure. Within this structure there is an advanced concept or a larger relationship, but there also are features unique to the object or contribution or introduction that give a child access to the advanced concept or larger relationship.

Klafki says that the contents should not be discussed to their full extent in a teaching situation. He says there should be thought about "unlocking an essential element" by which complicated and (for a child) inaccessible contents can be clarified and made accessible. This requires reducing the contents to what is basic, elementary, **the elemental** (16, 323). The review of the literature is focused on how different writers approach the basic, elementary, i.e., the elemental in the contents.

Also considered are the forms in which the elemental appears and whether the elemental, as such, appears in the lifeworld or whether it has to be abstracted from the contents. (See especially the discussion of Schleiermacher's view of this matter).

In this regard, an additional investigation is directed to the use of the concept of **the fundamental** as this comes to light in the literature. In this respect, a number of views are dealt with in a later chapter, but two views of W. Flitner give an indication of the direction in which there is a search for a didactic interpretation of this concept. He asserts that educating can only succeed if it is founded in the **fundamental** and elsewhere he gives a definition of the fundamental as the "primordial experience of existential becoming".

These two pronouncements deserve further explication in order to better grasp the discussion in Chapter two. Educating can succeed only when it is founded in the fundamental. When does educating succeed? The (fundamental) pedagogic aims spring immediately to mind, namely, meaningful existence, self-judging and self-understanding, human dignity, forming morally independent choices and actions, responsibility, norm identification and a philosophy of life. The logical conclusion from these pronouncements by Flitner and by Landman (22, 147) is the synthesis that the fundamental figures whenever pedagogic aims arise. This implies that the fundamental is a collective word for the pedagogic aims and this has to be discussed later.

For now, the other pronouncement by W. Flitner demands attention, namely, that the fundamental is a primordial experience of existential becoming. The fundamental is a primordial experience, i.e. a first, original, unique, authentic experience within the didactic situation. But this experience is qualified and typified as an experience that gives rise to a thriving or becoming of child existence. Thus, it is an experience of contents that have been made accessible to him and by which he "becomes" by making them his own.

As is the elemental, the fundamental is a concept regarding content. Where the content as elemental rests above all on the teaching deliberations of the teacher, the fundamental is describable as learning contents, meaning that as they take form within the

framework of a child's learning activities, the **elemental becomes converted into the fundamental.**

The role of the **teacher as unlocker** of reality for a child is a precondition and is assumed in all pronouncements, discussions and deliberations considered in this study. In this regard, see the argument by the Van der Stoeps in their **Didactic Orientation** (50, 124 et seq.) as well as the pronouncement of B. F. Nel (31, 22).

Again, all conclusions and pronouncements regarding the elemental and the fundamental are interpreted as embedded in the didactic situation without which they lose all validity.

The concepts of teaching, instructing, educating, forming and becoming are used often in this study and they carry the following connotations:

> Teaching ["onderwys"] and instructing ["onderrig"] are used as interchangeable concepts in the sense that an adult takes the initiative and directs children to or shows them something. The primordial meaning of "onder" is between/among, implying a reciprocal showing or directing--an insight that has become obscured in contemporary teaching. The mutual showing or directing indicates an attitude of give and take and has a course different from teaching that only aims to convey or "transfer" something to the children.*

> Educating and forming refer to those activities that give sense to instructing and teaching in that they are their aims. The distinction between educating and forming is that forming is achieving adulthood while educating leads to it (47, 21 (g)).

> The concept "becoming" is used in the sense that B. F. Nel (31, 50 et seq.) uses and applies it, namely by considering the child

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* Although glossed over in this paragraph, "Closely associated with teaching is the concept instruction ... which is actually considerably narrower and more specific. Instruction ... really constitutes only a part of teaching." The aim of instruction is to transmit knowledge or information. The aim is subject matter knowledge rather than the development, forming of the child as a person. See C. F. G. Gunter, (1974) **Aspects of Educational Theory.** Stellenbosch: University Publishers and Booksellers, pages 22-23. [G. Y.]

in his becoming as a perceiving, imagining, remembering, thinking and **understanding intentionality**. In this study sometimes a child also is referred to as becoming, by which the above insights are implied with respect to a child-in-becoming.

Effective teaching requires a path from an elemental input to a fundamental result. This path cannot be left to chance because if it fails so will teaching (Flitner). A point of departure in which thinking about teaching and educating or material and formal forming are separated is conspicuously faulty. The path from the elemental to the fundamental is the same path on which teaching and educating are actualized which is indicated by the question: to what does the unlocking lead? With this the possibility is established that unlocking an elemental expedites a particular teaching effect that is predominantly on a pathic-affective, gnostic-cognitive or normative-meaning giving level. There also will be unlockings that lead to all three of these levels and "the entire intellectual world and the whole person become changed by such a **fundamental** experience" (55, 72).

Weniger says that in the first place didactics is a science of teaching and learning but that it is more than the interaction between them (57, 5 part 1). The above formulation, "more than the interaction between teaching and learning" can be understood in part as meaning that the fundamental effect of the unlocking can exceed and extend beyond its immediacy.

It has to be understood that all unlocking does not have a clear path to the fundamental. Contents unlocked for a child do not lead to a similar degree of knowing or insight. Teaching and learning are not two sides of the same coin. Both arise from an encountering activity between persons and this alone makes it necessary that all human intentionality be taken into account. The whole existential mystery of being human and of human becoming arises in determining the success of teaching. It is doubtful that any unlocking leaves a child untouched except when, although he is physically present, other intellectual sources are absent. Successful teaching is gauged by a learning effect that, in turn, depends on a child's acceptance of and his entrance and immersion (H. Moller) into the unlocked contents. Without the child uniquely and authentically experiencing and making the contents his own the situation is constructed in vain.

1.4 So much to learn, so few are able to

A problem as old as humanity itself is emphasized by the above lament by the great pedagogue-didactician JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI. It is a frustrating experience for any didactician when he realizes how few of his pupils are in a position to learn in spite of his tireless attempts to unlock knowledge. And if one has taught to the best of one's abilities and the pupils' (children's) independent attempts still leave much to be desired, the need arises to continually think about and try other ways of attack by which a child will be able to assume a more independent attitude. Pestolozzi's search for a more effective course on the path to the fundamental had become a life task for him and resonates in his last little work "Swan Song".

1.5 The Tubingen Congress

Nearly two hundred years after Pestolozzi, a congress convened in Tubingen, Germany and had his lament of "so much to learn, so few are able to learn" as its theme. From 30 September to 1 October, 1951, representatives from various universities, high schools and education authorities met to confer about the didactic problem of the deluge of learning materials. "The German school system is in danger of suffocating its intellectual life by an excess of learning contents" (16, 352)[*].

The members of the congress did not have the charge of increasing children's achievement but had stressed that achievement is not possible without thoroughness and thoroughness is out of the question if there is not a reduction in learning contents. The following insight is of considerable importance and has had a revolutionary effect on German didactic theory and practice during the decades since the congress. The insight is that **original phenomena** of the intellectual world can be made clear to a child by a few examples or cases that ought to be comprehensible to him. This aim is not realized with the pupils because the phenomena that matter, that are of essential importance, are obscured by an accumulation of learning material "that is not really understood and consequently is quickly forgotten." There followed an appeal that a **search for the essentials** of the selected teaching contents enjoy priority and be placed above any other considerations, especially

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[*] Throughout this study, quotations have been translated into English by G. Y.

above the further expansion of the syllabi that include the learning contents.

The first research and attempts are grouped around concepts such as "original phenomena of the intellectual world" and "penetrating to the essentials of the contents." But contributions such as that of Herman Heimpel "Exemplary Teaching and Learning" and the address by Eduard Spranger, "The fruitfulness of the Elemental", give an indication of the direction in which a solution to the oppressive problem of the deluge of learning material was sought (16, 2 and 3). After a time, this search also manifested itself in the problem of the **elemental** and the **fundamental** of which Spranger's address is an example.