

# A PSYCHOPEDAGOGICAL VIEW OF SELF-REALIZATION AS AN ESSENTIAL FACET OF BECOMING ADULT\*

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## 1. Introduction

It is an acknowledged fact that the aim of educating a child is his becoming adult since he/she cannot and ought not to permanently remain not-yet-adult. As an educand\*\*, a child is committed to the educative support of an adult. However, this does not mean he/she has little or no say in his/her own becoming adult. On the contrary, the interpretation, acceptance or rejection and application of educative content that the educator presents to and unlocks for him/her *requires* his/her active participation. Thus, he/she is a partner in an adult's educative activities and, hence, in his/her becoming adult. According to Langeveld, this partnership is attributable to the fact that a child is someone who wants to be someone *him/herself*. Also, Perquin emphasizes a child's *own* role in becoming adult when he refers to the meaninglessness of pedagogic intervention that does not take into account the fact that a child also must arrive at a personal position in his/her involvement with reality.<sup>(7: 61)</sup> Sonnekus links up with this when he indicates that a child reserves all rights with respect to his/her becoming adult.<sup>(10, 10)</sup>

Two distinguishable but inseparable facets of a child's becoming adult thus are indicated. There is the accompaniment (guidance) of an adult (an adult's role in a child's becoming adult) *and* the self-realization of an educand (a child's own role in becoming adult).

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\*\* "Educand" refers to a human child who not only can but **must** be educated (GDY).

## 2. A more specific description of self-realization

An analysis of the concept “self-realization” shows two parts, namely, “self” and “realization”. Firstly, viewed in its essence, the concept *self* refers to somebody, a person, an I, an individual invested with authentic human qualities by which his/her uniqueness makes him/her distinguishable from other human beings. This uniqueness is embodied in a person’s person-structure which is a totality-structure of somatic-psychic-spiritual qualities. Also, the meaning attributed to the concept self is that of *unique* involvement, *unique* participation, *unique* initiative. Here the emphasis is on the *unique* participation or role in contrast to the participation or role of another person(s). Thus, there is an indication of an active involvement and the *self*-exercise of choice.

Secondly, realization, as a concept, refers to a dynamic activity and the actualization of an activity. Thus, here is evidence of making real or fulfilling givens, possibilities and potentialities. In this connection, realization does not imply bringing “something” about from “nothing” but rather the unfolding or becoming knowable of what is latent.

As a unitary concept, self-realization of a person includes making real qualities that will give content to the individuality of a “self”. Viewed in this light, self-realization implies the unfolding or fulfillment of human potentialities. Hence, it is an activity that refers to an individual, *unique* involvement, and thus an active involvement is a necessity.

## 3. The relation between self-realization and becoming adult

With special reference to a child, unfolding or fulfilling human potentialities refer to the course of an educand’s becoming adult. Viewed from a psychopedagogical perspective, self-realization is an unfolding of psychic-spiritual potentialities. These are potentialities with which a child has an undeniable role. His/her self-realization thus can be equated to the unfolding of his/her personal potentialities in giving form to his/her unique person-structure (personality). The *unique* role of a child in this is that he/she can exercise a decisive choice in the various educative and formative

situations in which he/she finds him/herself. Choices that he/she exercises in this connection can be definitive with respect to the harmonious course of his/her self-realization as well as, simultaneously, with the successful course of his/her becoming adult.

Confirmation of the affinity between self-realization and becoming adult also is provided by Landman.<sup>(2: 33)</sup> This confirmation is found in a structural analysis of becoming that he explicates. Although he uses the word becoming, he means becoming adult as is evident in his assertion that becoming includes *becoming different and, indeed, in the direction of adulthood*.

Self-realization is tantamount to becoming adult (becoming) for Landman when he offers the explanation that a child's relationship with the world is characterized by a continual elevation in dialogue that gradually increases so that it occurs as does that of an adult. Thus, a child becomes through the dialogue he/she carries out, but only when he/she is pedagogically supported to that end. By supporting a child pedagogically, the level of dialogue he carries out and/or the relationships he/she establishes are elevated. This implies that becoming is an elevation in level of dialogue.

Moreover, Landman alleges that a child attributes meaning to his/her relationships with things and fellow persons. To attain adulthood he/she must increasingly give meaning to the world as an adult ought to and, therefore, becoming also refers to an elevation in the level of giving meaning.

It is expected of an adult that he/she must him/herself be able to responsibly express a decision and make a choice. Therefore, a pedagogical demand placed on a child who is becoming adult is that he/she increasingly is able to make choices on his/her own initiative. Landman also qualifies becoming as an elevation in choosing.

In a dialogue that a child carries out, the meanings he/she attributes to something, to someone and to situations, as well as the choices he/she exercises, he/she continually is an initiator of activity. In each case, this *self*-involvement is conspicuous. Thus, a child's self-

realization includes an elevation in the level of dialogue, giving meaning and choosing.

However, a child cannot arrive at self-realization merely by exercising self-choosing, self-deciding and self-judging without complying with the accountable helping guidance that an adult, as an educator, offers him/her. Thus, for example, a child can reject the values and norms presented and during his/her choosing and judging allow him/herself to be guided by sensory and vital values, i.e., those values that for him/her offer immediate and temporary guidelines as well as physical gratification. However, such a child remains vitally bounded in his/her dialogue with the surrounding reality and does not arrive at an elevation in level of dialogue, meaning and choice because he/she does not progressively fulfill the demands of propriety that are placed on him/her. According to Landman<sup>(2: 34)</sup> here there is no becoming (becoming adult) but at most growth. Regarding a child's psychic-spiritual potentialities, there is no increase in level of their actualization and he/she does not arrive at adulthood-directed self-realization. Indeed, he/she becomes different but such a change is degenerative (negative becoming).

#### **4. Ways of self-realization**

##### *4.1 Introduction*

A person is continually in relationships with the reality surrounding him/her. Such relationships are between a person and him/herself, persons, things around him/her and, for a Christian believer, between person and God. It is within these relationships that a child's self-realization is actualized by modes or ways of self-realization.

##### *4.2 Self-realization through experiencing and lived experiencing*

###### *4.2.1 Self-realization through experiencing.*

Viewed from an accountable psychopedagogical perspective, experiencing is an original, continuous and directed activity that is recognized by a self-concerned-reaching reality that surrounds

him/her.<sup>(11: 8; 12: 108)</sup> Such a directedness to and involvement with reality eventually result in acquiring experiential *knowledge*. It is conspicuous that in the linguistic explication of the word experience, *conquering/mastering knowledge by means of learning* are accentuated.<sup>(1: 158)</sup> Although experiencing implies a totality involvement and thus a bodily and emotional involvement, the cognitive directedness of an experiencing person especially is required.

With reference to and linking up with Sonnekus'<sup>(11: 8-9)</sup> and Ferreira's<sup>(12:112-115)</sup> findings, the following are distinguished as essential characteristics of experiencing:

- a) Experiencing is not a passive event but is a self-involved being engaged with reality;
- b) Experiencing is an orienting activity characterized by a time-space localization and a qualitative evaluation of what is experienced;
- c) In all experiencing there is evidence of intuitive knowing or a pre-cognitive knowing on a sensing level which contains the possibility of proceeding to a cognitively directed knowing;
- d) Experiencing implies anticipating or assuming what is not evident in the experienced;
- e) Experiencing is an activity;
- f) Experiencing is an essential component of lived experiencing.

#### 4.2.2 *Self-realization through lived experiencing*

Viewed from a psychopedagogical perspective, the involvement of a child with reality also can be explicated in terms of an active being aware of reality, as an intentional directedness and as an activity of receiving meaning, giving meaning and taking a position. Sonnekus has summarized this unitary event with the concept lived experiencing that he describes as "... the intentionally determined, subjective, personal (pathic-normative) taking a position by a person (the self)\* as a totality-in-communication with reality."<sup>(9: 23)</sup> Pretorius expanded on this description by describing lived experiencing as "... the personal (pathic-gnostic-normative)

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\* Inserted by the author.

intentional (meaning giving, meaning receiving, taking a position), continuous activity of being-aware of reality.”<sup>(8: 8)</sup>

With reference to Landman, this active involvement of an individual (self) is elucidated by Pretorius as follows: “All lived experiencing is lived experiencing of self and this fact contributes to the meaning of the lived experiencing. In other words, lived experiencing belongs to the unity of the Self ... .”<sup>(8: 6)</sup>

From the following essential characteristics of lived experiencing, especially as particularized by Sonnekus<sup>(11: 12)</sup>, it is clear that self-realization by a child clearly is actualized by means of lived experiencing:

- a) Lived experiencing is an intentional activity directed to life reality. Such intentional directedness is characterized by seeking and giving meaning which gives lived experiencing a normative character;
- b) Lived experiencing has an emotional (pathic-affective) as well as an illuminative or knowing (gnostic-cognitive) side that are distinguishable but not separable;
- c) Lived experiencing shows a unitary character. Pretorius<sup>(8: 38)</sup>, in reference to Linschoten, says that the unity of consciousness is that all psychic phenomena actualized together (e.g., seeing, hearing, imagining, judging, deciding, loving, hating and desiring) belong, as part phenomena, to a single unity. In addition, lived experiencing is not actualized via these separate functions;
- d) On the basis of its nature of searching for and giving meaning, lived experiencing always is directed to something, namely, to content of life reality;
- e) Lived experiencing is not a momentary but a continuous event;
- f) Each lived experiencing is subject- and person-bound and is I-defining since each lived experiencing includes giving sense and meaning *by* and *for* the one who lived experiences;
- g) Lived experiencing reality continually actualizes itself differently that then, for an individual, involves receiving and giving meaning differently in each situation. Hence, this is the

importance of lived experiencing as a way of self-realization (way of becoming and/or degenerating);  
h) Lived experiencing is an essential component of experiencing.

#### *4.2.3 The connection between experiencing and lived experiencing and what that connection has to do with the child's self-realization.*

According to a structural analysis of experiencing and lived experiencing, they are closely connected. Viewed in its essence, experiencing is a turning (directedness) to reality; i.e., it is primarily on a sensing level and also is pre-cognitive. However, experiencing without giving meaning is unthinkable. Such giving sense or meaning is a subjective (person-bound) matter since this appropriation of reality by an experiencing person is more or less meaningful for him/her. In addition, it also is an event that, to complete or round off the activity of experiencing, must serve to make the experiential content knowable (cognitive activity). According to Van der Stoep<sup>(14: 118)</sup> the implicit sense of things must be made explicit by giving subjective meaning to what is experienced.

Since lived experiencing essentially is a meaning receiving and attributing activity, lived experiencing something is a finalizing of experiencing. According to Ferreira<sup>(112: 118)</sup> lived experiencing is the meaningful rounding off (completing, finalizing), refining of and giving a deeper meaning to the experience content. Hence, experiencing gives rise to lived experiencing, but the experienced content given by lived experiencing also has relevance for future experiencing. Thus, a child experiences while lived experiencing and lived experiences while experiencing. Regarding their relationship, they co-influence and co-determine each other.

From these descriptions, each experience and its correlated lived experience includes the acquisition of experiential and lived experiential knowledge. Each involves a quantitative and qualitative increase or deepening of possessed knowledge (i.e., possessed experience) and brings about change. This change also holds true for the formation of the structure of a person (personality) who experiences and lived experiences. Thus, this

als holds true regarding their *self*-realization. Factually, each experience and lived experience does not necessarily include a positive value for forming a person structure of one becoming adult—which underlines the necessity for educating a child. The acquisition of experience and the correlated lived experience, specifically when actualized outside of an educative situation, do not necessarily lead to becoming but degeneration also can result. Further, lived experiencing and experiencing something in the presence of an adult is no guarantee that a child will become adult because it is possible that he/she can degenerate. The above implies that each meaning giving activity during a child's experiencing while lived experiencing and lived experiencing while experiencing life reality only will lead to becoming if it is actualized in terms of pedagogically accountable value structures.

### *4.3 Self-realization through exercising willing*

#### *4.3.1 Introductory remarks*

With reference to his exploration of the psychological literature regarding a person's volitional life, Garbers distinguishes three schools of thought.<sup>(5: 412)</sup> According to him there are:

- a) those who attribute such breadth to willing that it includes every human striving;
- b) those who view willing as the result of various opposing strivings and;
- c) those who see in willing a type of striving that cannot be reduced to one or more other strivings.

In his view of a person's volitional life, Garbers agrees with the last group of thinkers. This discussion borrows liberally from Garber's views.

Because of the complexity of a person's volitional life, a concise explication of what is meant by exercising willing is no small task. Nel<sup>(4: 52)</sup> arrives at such a summary of a person's volitional life when he says that the intentional directedness of a human being to reality is known through a person's intentionalized going-out or earnest-



going-out to the world around him/her. According to him, there is a “will” or a propelling power present during a person’s entire life to go out to the world.

The volitional life of a person is closely related to an individual’s level of becoming and, therefore, to the developmental state of his/her somatic and psychic-spiritual personal potentialities. Qualitatively, the intentionalized going out to the world of a toddler, elementary school child, puber, adolescent and adult always show relative differences. As such, these differences are an indication of the degree of self-realization. In this connection, Nel asserts “At the beginning of a child’s life this intentionalized going out [to the world] is on a vital level: It is a vital striving for nourishment, for physical or sensory contact, etc. To the extent that a child, as possibility, is activated from his spirituality and his “I” or personal core comes into action, his intentionalizing develops on a spiritual level by which spiritually willed activities, choices and decisions arise.”<sup>(4: 52)</sup>

#### *4.3.2 A structural analysis of volitional life*

With reference to Langeveld<sup>(3: 177)</sup> and Garbers<sup>(5: 412 et seq.)</sup> the following inseparable moments (facets) of volitional life are distinguished:

##### **a) The moment of striving**

Regarding this striving moment, Garbers refers to motives, driving powers (see Nel) or propelling forces at the foundation of a person’s behaving. In this connection, he distinguishes among reflexes, instincts, vital motives and emotions that are grouped within the vital sphere of being a person. In addition, social strivings, human or absolute, or value strivings are mentioned as well as emotions belonging within a psychic-spiritual sphere of being human. These driving powers are closely entwined with a person’s desires, wants and needs as well as his/her life aim, that in their turn, are strongly influenced by the cultural milieu of a person.

Consequently, it is understandable that a child who, in his/her life conduct, allows him/herself to be directed primarily by vital driving forces will not gradually appropriate supra-personal values (a

precondition for full-fledged adulthood). Thus, being stuck in the vital sphere of being human will greatly determine a one-sided and narrow foundation regarding that youth's behaviors and his/her corresponding value judgments. Hence, he/she cannot arrive at an adequate self-realization.

#### **b) The moment of choosing**

The fact that a person must choose because of the presence of various strivings also is emphasized by Oberholzer<sup>(6: 181)</sup> when he says that exercising willing implies that a person also can "say no" to whether a personal aim is realized. Thus, his/her choice is the basis of subsequent actions. According to Garbers<sup>(5: 418)</sup>, typical events characterizing this moment are weighing possibilities and hesitating while deciding what striving has higher value and which, thus, requires preference.

Above it was said that self-realization (directed to adulthood) implies an elevation in choice; consequently, any choice that increases an accountable becoming adult, such as an accountable adult willing, ought to be made. Repeated acts of willing, supported by a continual preference for vital strivings, has little pedagogical meaning for anyone becoming adult. A youth who finds him/herself in a situation in which he/she must decide *for* or *against* societal norms lived experiences a moment of crisis in his/her becoming adult since the quality of his/her value preferences, enmeshed in his/her strivings, determine the pedagogical acceptability of his/her choices and actions. Because of the accompaniment [guiding] function the emotions play regarding the differentiated strivings, that child whose emotional life is labilized because of pedagogical neglect much more easily can make a choice that is in opposition to societal norms than that child whose emotional life shows a higher degree of stability. Guidance in making choices, therefore, is an indispensable facet of any re-orientation program for a child who manifests anomalous behaviors.

#### **c) The moment of deciding**

According to Garbers, the moment of deciding implies that the aim included in the striving with respect to the specific behavior is

accepted, rejected or delayed.<sup>(5: 418)</sup> The choice is finalized by a decision. What is aimed at now by making a decision gives direction to the concerned person's behaviors and, in essence, this amounts to *self*-realization. According to Garbers<sup>(5: 419)</sup> when a decision cannot be carried out immediately or when its realization is a long-term matter, it becomes a plan.

Making a decision is a normative event and assumes that the person who must decide will allow him/herself to be led by the demands of propriety that address him/her from his/her particular life milieu. To decide is a particular way of self-realization because the final decision must be made on one's own initiative.

Responsibility in decision-making is a matter that is especially actual since the person who decides must be able to be accountable for his/her decision. In this connection responsibility is emphasized and accountable deciding is a criterion for adulthood. This latter is underlined emphatically by Landman when he states that an adult is someone who can remain faithful to [or rather, responsible for ?? G.D.Y] the most extreme consequences of his/her decisions.<sup>(2: 36)</sup>

Indecisiveness, however, is a problem that many persons must deal with. Such persons often are able to act with difficulty or not at all. With reference to Lersch, Van der Merwe<sup>(12: 45)</sup> presents the following explanations of the phenomenon of indecisiveness:

- (i) It can be attributed to conflicting strivings where a person must choose among various possibilities while finding it difficult to abandon others;
- (ii) Sometimes this is based on a fear of accepting responsibility and risking making a decision;
- (iii) A labilized emotional life undermines and weakens a person's "will-power" and restrains him/her from deciding.

There is a fundamental and meaningful difference between indecisiveness and a lack of independence. Where the former refers to an impotence to purposefully choose between possibilities, a lack of independence implies that a person does not exercise an act of willing because someone else prescribes to him/her.<sup>(12: 145)</sup>

#### *4.3.3 Some essential characteristics of a person's volitional life with special reference to the phenomenon of self-realization*

For a summary of these explications of the structure of volitional life, the following essential characteristics are distinguished with reference to Sonnekus,<sup>(11)</sup> Garbers<sup>(5)</sup> and Van der Merwe<sup>(13)</sup>:

- (i) Volitional life is characterized by self-initiative or taking a personal initiative;
- (ii) Exercising willing is directed to realizing an aim;
- (iii) Willing serves a direction-finding and integrating function regarding a person's strivings;
- (iv) A person's volitional life is directed to the future;
- (v) Willing is decisive in nature;
- (vi) Willing is decisive in a person's aim-directed actions;
- (vii) A person's willing is inextricably interwoven with both his/her cognitive and emotional life;
- (viii) The exercise of willing in its relation to experiencing and lived experiencing is a way in which a person (in particular a child) arrives at self-realization;
- (ix) Exercising willing implies a verification of a person's wanting to become a person in his/her own right and, from a psychopedagogical perspective, implies that a child increasingly affirms his/her own identity by becoming a person.

#### *4.3.4 Relationships between willing, experiencing and lived experiencing*

Regarding the relationship between willing and experiencing, as well as between willing and lived experiencing, Van der Merwe<sup>(13: 82-88)</sup> indicates that especially the initiating and direction-giving functions of willing deserve mention. With reference to the emotional side of a person's lived experiencing, the level on which such emotional lived experiencing is actualized determines the quality (nature) of the act of willing and there then is mention of "will-power".<sup>(5: 425)</sup> For example, a child with a labilized emotional life will find it difficult to take a rational attitude and, consequently, his/her acts of willing that flow from this mostly are actualized on a

sensing level. During the discussion of the moments of choosing and deciding of volitional life, the close connection between emotional (pathic, affective) and knowing (gnostic, cognitive) lived experiencing and willing are indicated. On this basis the quality of “will-power” is an expression of, among other things, the relationship between a person’s knowing directedness and his/her willing. For example, during his/her experiencing and lived experiencing involvement with such a situation, a person can distance him/herself, consider a number of possible choices and eventually decide accountably and responsibly. From this it seems that, although the emotional life still determines to a great degree the quality of the act of willing, it remains under the strong control of cognitive directedness. In addition, it also is true that a person is not abandoned to emotional lived experiencing (and deciding) but, that through willful effort, he/she can be in a position to decide on the basis of a cognitive judgment.

## 5. Conclusion

In this article the concept of self-realization is closely elucidated and attention is given especially to some of the ways of self-realization, among which are experiencing, lived experiencing and exercising willing. However, the question arises about how the self-realization of a child or individual is knowable. This is a question about the form(s) it takes. That these forms of self-realization are related to a person’s personal qualities (so-called personality traits) is clear. In the psychological literature a great deal of attention is given to this matter, while contemporary psychopedagogical views reflect a renewed interest of pedagogicians in it.

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