

CHAPTER 2 DIDACTIC PEDAGOGICS

1. THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF EDUCATING AND TEACHING

Educating is an everyday human experience common to all people. It is an aspect of reality, as are all phenomena, be they natural or essentially human, like making laws and living according to them, conducting business, waging war, or engaging in agriculture. From the introductory observations of the previous chapter, educating is an aspect of the way human beings become involved with reality. Educating is a clearly recognizable aspect of reality in its totality (lifeworld of human beings), and to deny its existence would be to do violence to reality itself. But educating is not a “thing”, i.e., it is not a substance. It is an event, an experience, and an encounter, and it testifies to a relationship between generations where the older generation is involved with the younger one in terms of life contents which the older generation considers valuable, valid, and formative. This statement especially holds true for parents. They are continually involved with their children to try to ensure that they eventually become independent and responsible adults. But what holds for parents also is valid for teachers. As in the case of educating, in general, it also is a recognized fact that wherever schools exist, teachers are involved in sharing (with parents) the task of forming tomorrow’s generation. For this reason, it is of particular significance that a teacher has a thorough knowledge of, and a keen insight into educating. This is the primary reason the relationship between educating and teaching are dealt with before giving further attention to a theory of teaching, as such.

In the previous chapter, it is stated that the relationship between person and reality, the constituting of one’s own lifeworld, and a person’s mobility in the larger reality involve mastering contents. This is particularly important for educating. Life contents include those aspects of life in terms of which adults live as adults: their religious views and allegiances; their moral, social, economic, and political opinions; their language and culture; their lifestyle; their

economic activities, etc. are life contents which largely determine the nature of their involvement with reality. As far as these life contents are involved in educating, it is the adult's conviction that his/her child must master them. The upcoming generation must learn to know these contents, value, and accept them, and the expectation is that they will implement them in everyday life situations if they ultimately will be adults themselves. Therefore, in this sense, educating is not merely adults intervening in the lives of their children, but it is a conscious intervention with the aim that their children will make these contents their own possession.

This has brought us to a basic, primary, and fundamental insight into the relationship between educating and teaching. The most important fact illuminated so far is that educating cannot occur without contents. All adults who educate children are involved in presenting contents to them. These contents include a great variety of things such as norms, values, and skills aimed at helping the child create a healthy person-world relationship. But when a person presents contents, this clearly implies that teaching immediately appears. When a person exposes, broaches, or presents contents by discussing or demonstrating them, he/she is involved in teaching. The essence of this is very straightforward. *Educating is always actualized by teaching, while the meaning of this teaching is in educating.* It is not possible to educate without teaching. Similarly, it is meaningless to teach children if their eventual adulthood is not advanced by it.

That adults educate children by teaching them is one of the most original, essential, and important facts of human existence. Educating is a special form by which a person's life is manifested, and which is fulfilled to the extent that the child is presented with contents regarding the fact that he/she is a human being. Thus, educating is a life practice, and this practice which occurs wherever there are people. In this sense, it is a fundamental fact of human existence.

In this light, educating is dealt with here. The question is what is educating really? When insights of this nature are made available by means of the written word, the question about what educating really is already implies a certain theory. The description of the

activity which we experience as educating already is theoretically colored because it exceeds the practice itself, in the sense that it is that activity or practice which is described; in other words, the theory of what educating is, is already anticipated in these descriptions.

The question of what educating is, therefore, is answered by a specific scientific description which generally is known as a theory of educating, or pedagogics. Thus, the task of pedagogics, as a science, is to systematically, and accountably investigate, analyze, and describe the educative event to try to provide greater insight into its structure for those (teachers) who formally and purposefully intervene with children educatively. Hence, pedagogics is a radical consideration and systematic description of educating as a practice which occurs among people. It seeks answers to such questions as how something like educating is possible; why an activity such as educating is meaningful; what aspects of the activity which we know as educating are essential to its appearance, etc.

This knowledge about educating is necessary because its formal practice (teaching in schools) cannot do without it. The practice of educating is not limited to the relationship or involvement of parents with their own children, but is the concern of adults, in general, who are involved with children, who are in the same situations. In addition to the parents, teachers are primarily involved in educating because, on one or another occasion, and in various ways, in their educative practice, they purposefully intervene in the life of a child with the direct aim of influencing the child's involvement with reality so his/her relationship with reality will change.

When a teacher intervenes in the life of a child educatively, he/she must be able to give an account of the nature, scope, and meaning of his/her actions. He/she also has the responsibility of judging his/her own actions—whether he/she has intervened correctly or fruitfully; if there is a correspondence between the practice which he/she now carries out as an adult, and in the light of the theory or insights at his/her disposal about educating. Thus, for example, the entire practice of teaching is attuned to the children learning. Hence, it is logical that a teacher must not only have a thorough

knowledge of what learning is, but he/she must be able to plan a situation in which learning, as a child's way of existing, can be effectively actualized. The adult must be able to theoretically account for or justify his/her practical activities to avert faulty reasoning, prevent faulty educating, and, especially, enter the school situation in such a way that every aspect of his/her actions, as far as possible, will contribute to educating the pupils. In a study of a theory of teaching, pedagogics has a particular place, and it serves the teaching aims in more than one respect.

These theoretical insights compel the adult to thoroughly reflect on the *aim*, the *means*, and the *persons* involved in the event of educating. The adult must know where he/she wants to lead the child. If he/she purports to help the child become more adult (as, indeed, is the case), he/she must know what adulthood is. If, for example, the educator primarily views adulthood in terms of vocational independence, then this becomes his/her most important educative aim, and he/she will have to emphasize his/her educating such that his/her intervention with the child will result in him/her eventually being able to practice his/her vocation independently. On closer view, this aim appears to be narrow because vocational independence is only one aspect of adulthood, in a broader sense.

All educative aims are summarized under one final aim, namely, the eventual adulthood of the child. This implies the self-determination, the responsibility, and the moral independence of the child. This general or eventual aim (adulthood) has various aspects. For example, one can talk of immediate aims such as the cleanliness of the child; of incidental aims such as good and regular eating habits; of intermediate aims, which are aimed at something else, such as learning as a prerequisite to accepting the articles of faith of a church. On the other hand, one could also hold the view that educating can be divided directly into facets such as the intellectual, cultural, moral, esthetic, social, etc., each of which has its own partial aims which, collectively, express the concept "education". The fact of the matter is that the adult does not account for his/her educative aims casually, but that he/she carefully considers what he/she has in mind for the child's eventual adulthood. Without teaching, these aims cannot be realized.

Therefore, teaching aims are educative aims, and the practice of educating also always is the practice of teaching.

2. EDUCATING THROUGH TEACHING

The essential matter which has emerged from the previous paragraphs is that educating and teaching show an indivisible unity in their origin as well as in their course. This means that teaching first appears (in human existence) in the educative situation, and nobody can understand teaching if he/she doesn't also have a fundamental knowledge of educating [Although teaching includes non-educative teaching]. It also is indicated that the ultimate aim of teaching and educating children is their adulthood. The idea of adulthood indicates that, as possibility/potentiality, a child is directed to his/her future. Although the future is open for him/her, it is not an obvious matter. Hence, in his/her intervening with a child, the adult directs an appeal to him/her to explore and master this future, and he/she makes certain demands or imperatives of him/her to which he/she must give particular and meaningful responses. With these responses, the child gives evidence that the adult's intervention with him/her has not been in vain. The fundamental aim of this form of activity is directed to allowing the child to change because he/she *can* change.

The support provided by the adult in this respect, is educative and it is observable in an educative situation. This support assumes that the adult accepts the child, that he/she cherishes and protects him/her, and that he/she provides security for him/her in the home. The mastery of reality which the child must show, however, also must coincide with the idea of propriety held by the adult. Therefore, the child may not act improperly, in an unseemly way, or objectionably because this would be contrary to the idea of adulthood held by the adult.

The view that the child is potentiality, however, assumes that he/she possesses certain powers or gifts which he/she can use to acquire his/her own position in the world. To be able to succeed at this, he/she must learn to know the reality surrounding him/her. This knowledge not only includes the religious and moral values which continually come up in the home, but also the systems of his/her

culture. Because of the cultural systems, the world or reality is *what* and *how* it is. By mastering these cultural systems (language, economic, and literary activities, political practice, etc.), the child learns to live like an adult. If these systems are not fully and adequately mastered by the child, it means life outside the home remains closed and foreign, even dangerous, to him/her, and he/she will not really be able to maintain him/herself adequately in the adult world. In such a case, the danger is that he/she will never really become a full-fledged adult. Both the idea and the mandate “to learn” are inherently unique to educating.

However, it is important to note that the systems of a culture are built up by persons over thousands of years, and that the child’s own way (form) of living is radically influenced by them. A large part of these systems is or were initially aimed at mastering nature. In this way, through the ages, humans have created a lifeworld which, in practically every respect, implies transcending the boundaries of nature. The lifeworld about which the adult directs the child in educating him/her really is a lifeworld which humans have brought about over centuries. These intricate structures are not known or knowable to a child at birth and, therefore, he/she cannot yet understand and use them. Hence, one of the most important tasks for educators is to make available and known to the child this world which has been ordered, systematized, and built up by persons, and to teach him/her about it. If the adult can meet this demand, it also should be possible that the child’s potentialities are actualized so he/she is able to master these life contents of the adult world. By learning to know these systems or contents, the possibility is created that the child can learn to control them, i.e., after several years he/she can act as an adult, in general, with respect to a given reality.

This teaching, instructing, or introducing of cultural systems, or life contents, has its beginning in the home. In addition to the values and related norms, in the family, a child also learns to know various other aspects of the contents necessary for adult life. The parent can present this knowledge to the child systematically or incidentally. Thus, the child masters the language, and his/her parents lead him/her with increasing intensity from his/her own baby talk to a general standard of language. Also, from his/her

initial insights, he/she learns to discriminate quantitatively, and to form concepts by which he/she masters reality. He/she listens to the radio and encounters music; he/she handles various tools and artifacts, and observes his/her parents reading books, magazines, newspapers, etc.

By about the child's sixth year, he/she shows an attunement to exploring, mastering, and making the world outside of home his/her own. The structures of these contents which he/she increasingly explores are very complex, and he/she cannot gain an adequate grasp of them by him/herself. Also, his/her parents do not necessarily have a systematic and formal knowledge of them. His/her parents may not be able to clarify and explain things like natural phenomena, political events, and the increase in the cost of living. These contents also are broad in scope, and complex, and the parent is aware that his/her child's grasp and understanding of them depends on systematic and sustained teaching. To correctly and systematically present and make these contents available, in accordance with the child's unique nature, the adults create institutions in life where he/she can undertake this task in formal and organized ways.

Going to school is an important part of educating a child because it gives him/her the opportunity to formally, and systematically learn to know the reality which he/she does not yet know, and to create a future for him/herself. The most important aspect of this form of intervention with the child by the adult certainly is the didactic or teaching activity which already had its origin in the adult's actions in the home, and now is carried on in the school in formal and systematic ways. Thus, the adult creates a school-didactic situation within which an adult (teacher) and child (pupil) come together to converse about life contents (learning material) with the aim that the child will learn to know them. His/her mastery of the contents must lead him/her to acquiring a greater mastery of the world outside the school. Therefore, the adult calls these contents learning material or learning contents. As does the parent, the adult who teaches helps the child who needs this assistance such that the idea of educating also will be realized in the teaching. The aid and support the teacher gives the child in this series of situations is not casual or incidental. What the teacher puts at the

disposal of the child in the form of learning contents, learning, and teaching aids, guiding the learning activity, controlling (monitoring) and evaluating his/her work, etc. essentially is premeditated, systematic, planned, and differentiated.

The adult who wants to involve him/herself in teaching must realize that, in every respect, the school is an extension of the activities initiated in the home. However, these activities must be brought to full fruition in a series of situations during which the child can acquire more knowledge and experience so that he/she can eventually become an adult him/herself.

For these reasons, the educative and teaching situations cannot be divorced from each other; one is the obverse of the other. Without teaching, educating cannot occur. Without taking the educative ideal (aim) into consideration, teaching children is relatively meaningless, and even unthinkable. The place and meaning of schooling, in this wider context, is dealt with fully in a later chapter.

3. WHAT IS DIDACTICS?

With reference to what was noted previously, at this stage, one can indicate that teaching is an activity present in a person's lifeworld which is worthy of close analysis and examination as such. After all, teaching, like educating, belongs to the most fundamental of human experiences. A theory of teaching, or a reflection on the activity of teaching, is called "didactics". Therefore, "didactics" is the scientific study of the activity of teaching, i.e., a theory of it. In the broadest sense, didactics, as a science, is a theory about what "teaching" implies: it examines the conditions basic to effective teaching; the general principles which must be considered; the possible forms it can take; the relationships between teaching and learning; the meaning of learning contents; the ways these contents can be organized; what the concept "school" comprises, and how it is viewed in educatively; and, if the teaching activity fails, what factors the teacher should consider to be able to work in an orthodidactic (corrective) way in his/her classroom.

The greatest danger in interpreting the concept "didactic" is that, in the literature, it is continually confused with the concept "method".

This confusion is the result of the common practice of equating a theory of teaching with a theory of teaching methods. Even everyday experience shows very clearly that the entire matter of teaching includes much more than teaching methods; hence, this view leads to serious mistakes in and errors of judgment.

The word “didactic” is derived from the Greek word “didaskain” which means to teach, to offer, or convey contents or something for someone to learn. Various inferences are drawn from this root word to describe and explain a human being’s involvement in teaching. Words such as “didasklos” (teacher), “didaskalia” (the teaching profession), “didache” (the contents which must be taught), and “didastikos” (a person who is involved in teaching in one way or another) are concepts derived from the root word meaning to shed light on the activity generally known as “teaching”. Therefore, it is important to realize that, currently, the usage of “didactic” is as a comprehensive word which includes the concepts mentioned, as well as many others. Briefly, in its original meaning, “didactics” had to do with describing the activity of teaching and of being taught. Thus, it is worth noting that the science generally known today as didactics arose from the study of the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching. In other words, a person is continually placed in and deals with situations in which teaching is necessary. Hence, in this respect, didactics also means the science and the practice of teaching.

Viewed historically, “didactic” was used in the Middle Ages to describe a particular intention or aim of a written piece. Specifically, the word was used to describe the influence of the contents of such writings on forming (changing) the persons who studied them. Post-Middle Ages literature is full of didactics, i.e., written pieces by which there is an attempt to bring particular facts and opinions to the attention of the reader. In the early Netherlands literature, Jacob Catz is a good example of a writer who devoted himself to contents for teaching. Also, in the Afrikaans literature, Totius is well known for the didactic flavor of his works. As a poet, he is intent on convincing the reader that certain views and concepts are valuable; his poems are basically didactic because they are aimed at teaching the reader.

It is important to indicate that the activity from which didactics developed is not foreign to life or merely abstract. The central concern of didactic pedagogics, i.e., teaching children and everything associated with it, in all respects, is an integral part of the human lifeworld. To be human means to experience teaching at one time or another, and to be taught in a variety of forms. Earlier this matter is dealt with briefly. Therefore, the phenomenon generally known as teaching is given with being human and does not arise merely because one establishes a school in which this teaching occurs in systematic ways.

For this reason, the danger of the tendency to equate didactics with method is noted again. Didactics covers a much broader area than is the case with methods. Didactics deals with teaching in its *entirety*, i.e., in its broadest sense and in all its facets. Methods or methodology are concerned only with specific methods to be able to realize general or specific teaching aims. Methods are not concerned with the validity of teaching aims because this is a question of a general didactic nature. Didactic aims must be clearly considered and formulated before a particular or general method is chosen to realize them. If the concept “didactics” is limited to “method,” this means that, indeed, valid statements might be made about the course of teaching, but not necessarily about its nature and sense, especially pedagogically. Didactics includes methods, as such, because it also describes and explains teaching methods, as well as everything related to them.

The didactician who wants to investigate and understand the nature and essence of teaching must realize that the origin of his/her thinking, research, description, and explanations is the original didactic situation in the reality of educating, itself. This matter deserves further attention.

From birth, a child is continually drawn into teaching situations by his/her parents. In the home, these situations vary greatly regarding their aims, eventual results, etc. The important consequence of this for didactics is that a child is not drawn into a teaching situation for the first time when he/she enters school. Also, the appeal to learn is not foreign to him/her. In fact, the learning activities the child has carried out since birth make formal

teaching possible because he/she possesses a wide variety of knowledge, insights, and skills when he/she enters school for the first time. The learning situations the child has experienced from birth are part of a parent's involvement with him/her from the beginning. This involvement is primarily a pedagogical (educative) matter. Analogous to the didactic situation generally found in the home, the adults then formally and systematically design comparable circumstances within which the child now not only learns to master elementary insights, skills, and techniques, but within which he/she also learns cultural systems (life contents) of his/her lifeworld. Schools were introduced to help the child reach this level of competence.

When there is now radical and systematic scientific thinking about didactic problems, one cannot but begin with this original didactic (teaching) pedagogical (educative) situation. The primary source of knowledge, at the immediate disposal of didactic pedagogics, is the reality of educating as this is given in the human lifeworld. If we also keep in mind that the primary source of knowledge regarding contents is the adult's life- and worldview, then the form and contents of teaching in the original educative reality appear as a harmonious unity.

If one examines this point more closely, it is evident that the forms of human existence (ways of relating to the world) are determined by his/her potentialities and abilities, on the one hand and, on the other hand, by the nature of the reality with which he/she creates a relationship. A person looks at, touches, smells, and tastes a concrete object; he/she listens to sounds and he/she thinks about relationships between various processes and things. The forms of his/her activities (looking, touching, smelling, tasting, listening, thinking, etc.) are in accord with and reflect the nature of aspects of reality (concrete objects, sounds, relationships). It is in this sense that there is an original harmony between form and content. Thus, when a parent explains a concrete object, he/she lets the child look at it, touch it, smell it, and, if it is not dangerous, even taste it. The parent would never tell a child to "listen to" an object, or to "smell" a sound! Therefore, it is in this sense that the form and content of teaching in the original educative reality (home) appear as a harmonious unity.

It is against this background that a didactic theory examines the problems mentioned in the following section. Because these problems are the warp and woof of the following chapters, they are only indicated synoptically here as preparation for the explanations which follow.

3.1 The grounding (accounting) of a didactic theory

The important matter which arises in this first aspect of didactic theory is a didactician's search for the fundamental ground or origin of the human activity he/she wants to describe. This fundamental ground or origin of the didactic activity is of extraordinary importance for establishing a theory of teaching, because the theory must clearly indicate where the activity of teaching appeared for the first time in the lifeworld of human beings. If one wants to assess this matter in terms of the brief explanations in Chapter 1, and in the previous paragraphs of this chapter, this implies that the didactician investigates reality as it is, to acquire an answer to this first question. The educative reality is the only acceptable point of departure for writing a theory of teaching.

It is not the aim of this book to deal with the greater intricacies of the ontological, epistemological, anthropological, and general pedagogical problems which this point of departure raises. The most important aspects of these cases are mentioned in the previous section. However, the reader must note that this is a matter of fundamental significance for establishing a didactic theory. It radically influences the nature and validity of such a theory.

If a didactician, e.g., takes the school situation as his/her point of departure, this means that he/she reduces teaching to what occurs in the school, without attempting to take the totality of human experience into consideration to determine whether the activity "to teach" takes place before it appears in the school. The argument against the school as a point of departure for a theory of teaching is that it is not and does not represent the origin of teaching. Teaching in the school is only possible and meaningful because teaching is primarily a matter of educating. Apart from this, the

school is a second order (i.e., derived, reconstituted) practice which is not at all *necessary* in the lifeworld of human beings. The school, as we know it, can be removed, or thought away from the lifeworld without fundamentally altering it [it is not an essence of the lifeworld]. Also, today there are societies in developing areas where there are no schools at all and where, despite this, people still become adults, since they acquire a certain command and appreciation of reality merely because of the teaching which appears in educative situations and without experiencing formal teaching in the modern sense of schooling. If a didactic theory searches for its origin in the school situation, this simply means that if one removes the school from society—which is quite possible—teaching (as a form of being human) also is removed. The validity of such a theory of teaching, thus, is very questionable.

The objections to a theory of teaching which takes the school as its point of departure are equally valid for other possible points of departure which appear extensively in the didactic literature. For example, one thinks of approaches and explanations based on specific theories of learning such as behaviorism [as well as, e.g., constructivism and cognitive science], which have had many adherents, especially in the American literature. A learning theory (psychology of learning) cannot disclose the real essences of teaching because learning and teaching are not identical activities; they are complementary. Apart from this, it is an open question whether a psychology of learning can make valid pronouncements about the relationship between person and world. On the other hand, German didacticians are generally inclined to take teaching contents as their point of departure for writing a theory of teaching. It is immediately apparent that a theory of this kind cannot claim scientific validity either; pronouncements about contents in no way can describe the activity of “teaching”. If a didactician is certain about *what* he/she is going to teach, in no sense does this imply that he/she knows what teaching is, or how it should be done. Fundamental insights into and skills regarding the activity of teaching enable the teacher to teach *any* contents in terms of such insights.

The question of grounding or accounting for a didactic theory is mentioned only to illustrate its importance and to orient the reader

so that he/she can fundamentally assess the various didactic findings and pronouncements he/she will encounter in studying the didactic literature, and even evaluate all didactic descriptions in terms of his/her own experience of teaching.

3.2 What is teaching?

This second question which didactic theory must answer is a search for the fundamental nature or essences of the activity of teaching. This search is of fundamental significance to the didactician. The findings he/she arrives at in this respect enable him/her to account for what teaching really is.

A didactic theory which does not clearly and frankly express itself about the essences of teaching fails to explain the relationship between teaching and educating, with the result that the descriptions and pronouncements (especially as far as the practice of teaching is concerned) remain vague. Thus, a lack of insight into the activity of teaching makes it impossible to design a valid school practice because the teacher then is not able to account for the facets he/she must provide for in his/her preparation. For this reason, an examination of what teaching really implies is of vital importance when all facets involved in its practice are studied. This has to do with the didactician avoiding, at all costs, taking a distorted, incorrect, or perplexed image of teaching as a basis for the decisions he/she makes regarding the other facets connected with his/her practice.

Another matter directly related to the question of the essences of teaching is the problem of criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching practice. These yardsticks or didactic criteria allow the teacher to evaluate whether the practice he/she has designed has been effective. It is generally known that there is an indissoluble relationship between teaching and learning activities. The nature and quality of the learning activity depends greatly on the nature and quality of the teaching. To determine the effectiveness of his/her teaching, the teacher must have valid didactic criteria to provide a healthy and sound basis for self-criticism and self-assessment. Without healthy and valid self-criticism and self-assessment there can be no real qualitative improvement in a teacher's teaching practice.

Since these matters are dealt with extensively in later chapters, for now, we leave this entire matter with these few orienting and explanatory remarks.

4. DIDACTICS AND THE THEORY OF FORMING (BILDUNGSLEHRE)

Because of the relationship between educating and teaching, notice is taken of the didactic significance of the theory of forming (Bildungslehre), especially as this has been explicated for many years in the German literature. The problem here is that the two concepts “teaching” and “forming” (“Unterricht” and “Bildung”), in the history of didactic thought, have primarily been viewed as identical.

The word “Bildung” unquestionably refers both to an event and a condition. In this connection, if “Bildung” is translated as “forming,” the entire matter of forming refers to an event which continually is actualized in a person’s life but, at the same time, it also is a matter of an attained condition, or degree of formedness observable in persons. The connection between this and teaching theory is that teaching is an attempt to bring about a change in a person’s life, while the condition of being formed, or formedness, refers to the result or outcome of teaching. In this sense, the most important aim of teaching is forming the learning person, while its most important result is his/her formedness. The activity of teaching (Bildung) and its result (Bildung) are summarized in one word generally known as “Bildungslehre”. For this reason, important German didacticians do not hesitate to equate didactics with the theory of the formative task and formative content (Klafki). Hence, within the context of didactic pedagogics and didactic theory, it is important to take note of the findings of the theory of forming, in so far as it represents a theory of teaching.

Speaking generally, one can understand that the aspects which continually arise in a theory of teaching are equally prominent in a theory of forming, namely, teaching, learning, and learning contents. To the extent that a greater emphasis is placed on the significance of the learner, on the one hand, or the content, on the other hand, for the eventual condition of formedness, different variations of the theory of forming come to light. These variations are not of so much importance. The importance of a superficial knowledge of them is evident when later there is an explication of categorical forming. Generally, these variations of the theory of forming are divided into two main types, namely, formal forming

and material forming. These two views are directly opposed to each other, in the sense that the first (formal forming) emphasizes human spiritual powers or so-called abilities, while the second (material forming) proceeds from the point of view that the contents, in themselves, have formative value and can effectively sharpen and change the human spirit.

4.1 Formal forming

The central theme of formal forming is that the child, as learning person, is at the center of the formative event. This formative event essentially is directly reducible to the matter of teaching and all aspects or facets related to it.

The entire matter is child-directed and all reflections about teaching consider the child's involvement with reality. From this, various child- or pedo-centric teaching practices have arisen which are continued in the present. This so-called child-directed forming (formal forming) has as a central aim the schooling of the child's spirit, and his/her free development in accordance with his/her own potentialities. From this view, the entire matter of teaching, i.e., all its theoretical and practical facets, is subordinated to insights regarding the child.

Child-anthropological and child-psychological findings, in this aspect of the theory of forming, are the ultimate criteria regarding pronouncements about teaching. The contents considered here are especially attuned to calling forth the spiritual powers which are unique to the child. It also is understandable that the opinion, generally held in formal forming, that anyone who is expert in his/her subject area, and who also has made a thorough study of the child as a person, is able to teach. Teacher training and study, i.e., a study of the essentials of teaching itself, and in what ways it can be brought about, are not discussed here.

The theory of formal forming has become differentiated into two views [i.e., functional and methodological forming] which must be considered.

4.1.1 The theory of functional forming

The central idea in the theory of functional forming is that there is correspondence between certain contents (learning materials) building up certain powers in the learning person which sharpen him/her as a person, i.e., fundamentally influence his/her becoming adult, in the sense that it exclusively determines the relationship between him/her and reality. This condition of formedness (spiritual schooled-ness) will determine his/her pattern of life for the future and will be transferable and useful in all life situations in which he/she is placed. The view of functional forming assumes that a person is a unity of powers (thinking, willing, fantasizing, remembering, etc.) by which he/she builds up contact with the world. These matters exist as latent or slumbering potentialities in the life of each child and can be formed in terms of carefully selected contents (e.g., classical languages and mathematics), which then provide the direction in which human existence is developed. The formative value of the contents is that they provide the child with the opportunity to exercise these slumbering powers and bring them to a solid, functional form. This exercise promotes a person on his/her way to spiritual schooling and maturation, which eventually allows him/her to show a certain formedness. In this sense, the contents have functional value, and this view is summarized as “functional forming”.

Didactically, the task is to select the appropriate contents in terms of which this/her functional spiritual schooling can occur. In this way, didactic theory is reduced to a theory about formative contents, whatever that might mean.

4.1.2 The theory of methodological forming

The theory of methodical forming essentially is only an extension of the views of functional forming, in that the formative value is not merely in the contents but also in the methods of the various subjects selected as formative contents or learning materials. Proponents of this approach to the theory of forming do not select different contents than supporters of functional forming. The teaching emphasis, however, is distributed between the contents and the methods which are deemed to be an inherent part of that subject. Mathematics, for example, is taught according to strict

logical deductive methods. Classical languages are taught by a series of mechanical drills or exercises of various grammatical rules.

The aim in emphasizing the methods is that their exercise enables a child to understand and use them so thoroughly and effectively that their contents eventually become a part of him/her. In this way, the contents become a dominant factor in the child's lifestyle.

The didactic task, in this respect, is to establish the relationship between the contents and the methods in teaching to attain this formative aim. It is important to indicate that the method mentioned here is not a teaching method but a matter of subject contents. This means that the unique nature of the subject matter is the sole guiding principle for a method of teaching, e.g., mathematics or Latin and, in this way, the teaching must be made effective.

4.2 Material forming

It is not surprising that opposition grew against these narrow and one-sided views of teaching as they arose in formal forming. Especially, it was Herbart and his followers who opposed this over-emphasis on the formative value and methodological formative value of certain school subjects. In the theory of material forming, there is a search for a spiritually enriching formative practice in terms of clearly planned learning situations. The aim is to expose the child to a wide variety of factual knowledge to give him/her the opportunity to develop his/her own point of view concerning the various aspects of reality; this aim especially stresses the child's moral judgment.

The didactic tasks of this view are two-fold: firstly, content must be selected which will enable the child to establish an objective view of surrounding reality. This objective view of reality is only possible if a large quantity of contents are made available, by which the child can orient him/herself to everything which surrounds him/her. Secondly, learning situations must be designed which will be capable of achieving this aim.

In the light of the above regarding teaching and a theory of teaching, these theories of forming are not didactically valid. Even contemporary theorists, who accept the point of view that teaching is primarily concerned with forming (Bildung), are clear that the dualism of formal and material forming is not capable of explaining teaching in its connection to the relationship of human beings to the world. Therefore, a third theory of forming was developed, which is of such importance for a didactic theory that it warrants close examination.

5. CATEGORICAL FORMING

The most important criticism of the theories of formal and material forming is that they excessively stress the intellectual aspect of persons. One can summarize this criticism as follows: the human being is not only intellectually involved with reality; he/she is involved in it as a total being. Consequently, every aspect of a human being's existence is involved in the formative event. The idea of forming cannot be fully understood unless the concept of totality is taken as a point of departure.

The theory of categorical forming dissociates itself from the one-sided views briefly dealt with above to be able to postulate a totality perspective, as a new synthesis of the formative event. The theory of categorical forming is founded in three important matters:

5.1 The **contents** involved in forming are in direct relationship to the reality which surrounds human beings. This reality has a clear and noticeable order, system, or essential aspects by which it is knowable. This implies that reality is made up of essences or categories which, in their coherence, constitute the totality of reality. Thus, e.g., there is a historical, religious, social, geographic, mathematical, physical, chemical, and a linguistic aspect or category of reality, each of which, in its own way, provides access to the greater whole, which is described earlier as the human lifeworld. Therefore, reality has a categorical structure, and forming can only occur if the whole (the coherence of the different categories) is the formative content in teaching.

However, access to these categories is not a self-evident matter because the scope of these contents is so great that a straightforward or all-encompassing mastery of them is not possible. Consequently, the pupil can only gain access to the different categories of reality in the teaching situation if the teacher concentrates on sifting through these categories to determine the *elementals** of such an aspect or category. “Elementals” are those basic, primary insights of a specific aspect of reality which give the pupil access to it, and which enable him/her to understand that, and related aspects of reality.

An example of such an elemental insight is the concept of quantity. If while in the primary school, a child attains a thorough insight into the concept of quantity, it will enable him/her, as his/her schooling progresses, to understand the four basic arithmetical and mathematical operations. In the same way, gravity, in physics, is an elemental insight which enables the child to understand Newton’s laws and everything related to them, and to apply them in mastering the physical category of reality. If a child manages to understand and command these elementals and weave them into his/her own lifestyle, they then become *fundamentals*⁺ for him/her. Thus, “fundamental” means the child has made the elementals an authentic part of his/her own existence, and that his/her involvement with reality is generally directed by these insights into the formative content. The relationship between the elemental and the fundamental is illustrated by the example which the child’s insight into the Fall of Man, redemption by Christ, and sanctification are elementals (essences) of his/her religious forming. When these three aspects of Christian belief become interwoven in the lifestyle of the child and, thereby, become reality for him/her, then we say that the elemental has become a fundamental and, in this way, the desired formative effect, at the categorical level, has been realized. This first aspect of the theory of categorical forming refers only to the **contents** involved in the formative event.

* Elemental: German (*Elementar*) didactic terminology to indicate the essences or categories of the contents of a specific subject.

+ Fundamental: German (*Fundamental*) didactic terminology meaning that the child, by means of insight into elementals, has given his own meaning to the reality represented by the content.

5.2 The second cornerstone on which the theory of categorical forming rests is **teaching**. The accepted view is that the reality the child must learn, in its categorical structure, is extremely involved and complex. Therefore, the child needs someone to unlock or unfold this complex reality for him/her. The theory of categorical forming maintains that teaching is a preplanned and systematic attempt to unlock reality, in its categories, for a child. One must realize that this is of fundamental importance for a theory of teaching and is dealt with in a separate chapter. All attempts, designs, and systems which arise in teaching fall within this aspect of categorical forming as an attempt to meaningfully unlock reality for a child in the context of his/her situation. This [unlocking] is a precondition for the child to identify him/herself with the content and to make it his/her own. Herein lies the assurance that the child can convert the elementals into fundamentals for him/herself.

5.3 The third aspect, logically related to the above, is that the child also must **open him/herself** to reality and, in accordance with his/her intention, learn to be ready to enter the reality which is unlocked by the teaching. This entry into reality means that, because of the appeal which the teaching and the contents direct to him/her, he/she is ready to learn to know, master, and use the various categories of reality independently, and under the guidance of the teacher (educator).

These last two aspects, namely, unlocking reality and entering this reality, are known in the theory of categorical forming as a double unlocking: reality is unlocked (in the teaching situation) and the child opens or unlocks him/herself to the teaching and the related content of reality (by learning it).

In this interpretation, the theory of categorical forming is an attempt to achieve a new synthesis of the divergent and ineffectual views of formal and material forming. It cannot be denied that this is a matter of great importance for establishing a didactic theory. Hence, the theory of categorical forming is mentioned and referred to continually throughout the descriptions which follow.

What has been stated so far is only a summary, and an introduction. If one studies this preliminary description in terms of

the question: what is teaching, the theory of categorical forming will be heavily drawn upon when deciding what a theory of didactics should consider in its explanations and descriptions.

6. THE BALANCE OR EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN FORM AND CONTENT: THE LESSON STRUCTURE

In the light of the relationship between educating and teaching and, especially since educating is actualized by teaching, and that the sense and [a primary, but not sole] meaning of teaching are found in educating, it is an educative task to ensure that teaching occurs in a planned, systematic, and accountable way. For didactic theory, this implies that its research must be attuned to two facets, namely, to bringing together the form and content of teaching in a balanced unity to be able to establish a meaningful practice for systematic teaching. Although this is not the sole aim of didactic theory, still it is a very important and even central one, if the contemporary lifeworld, and the central position of the school in it, is to be evaluated.

As indicated, as far as form is concerned, didactic theory must examine what forms of living there are within the horizons of human experiences and lifestyles which have didactic importance and meaning for teaching. Once again, it is stressed that teaching is an essential and original aspect of a human being's involvement with reality.

This also means that the form of teaching cannot surpass or ignore human experience. The forms which teaching takes must be found within the limits of human existence and be described and interpreted for application in systematic teaching. If this is not done, this simply means that teaching will be foreign to the human lifeworld; however, this would be a contradiction. For this reason, the didactician returns to the reality of educating (life reality) to carefully examine the forms in which educating appears in the lifeworld. Then, he/she must describe these forms as forms of teaching which can be implemented in school practice. These basic forms of living used in teaching are refined and combined to establish a meaningful teaching practice in the school. They are known as "didactic ground-forms". In summary, didactic ground-

forms are those forms of living which are applicable to and usable in teaching, and which are refined and combined so that, with these forms, the school system can function.

What is valid for form is equally applicable for contents. In this connection, the lifeworld (reality) is the primary source of knowledge, as it appears in educative reality. In relation to the lifeworld, a life and worldview function as a second source of knowledge from which the educator selects contents which, in his/her judgment, give proper meaning to his/her educative ideals, especially in the light of his/her philosophy or view of life.

As with form, didactic theory must examine contents to determine the elementals capable of providing the child with fundamental insights which enable him/her to firmly grasp reality. The final focus of this examination, quite simply, is a curriculum theory which makes the school curriculum possible.

This examination of the harmonious relationship between form and content, as far as formal teaching is concerned, has its ultimate and final consequence in the lesson structure. The lesson structure represents the conclusion about how the teacher must integrate *form* and *content* in his/her teaching. In this sense, the lesson structure is the necessary result of didactic research because the didactician must eventually be able to justify how his/her theoretical insights can be functionalized in a practical teaching situation. These matters are so important for a theory of teaching that separate chapters are devoted to each of them.

7. DIDACTICS, SUBJECT DIDACTICS AND ORTHODIDACTICS

The lesson structure and everything related to it is the final aspect with which a formal didactic description is involved. Essentially, it is a compiled and constructed description and explanation of teaching as it ought to be reestablished in school practice. It also is important to note that didactic theoretical descriptions, explanations, and findings, which culminate in a lesson structure are general and universal. Therefore, didactic theory does not address the way the lesson structure should be designed or interpreted in teaching a specific subject, such as language,

mathematics, or geography. Such specifics are the research area of subject didactics.

Just as didactic theory attempts to arrive at generally valid pronouncements and findings about teaching, subject didactics attempts to interpret and implement the general findings of didactic theory in the context of teaching specific school subjects. Thus, subject didactics is a particularization of these general pronouncements for teaching a specific school subject such as biology. Didactic theory is the background and context of subject didactics, in the sense that it provides the general structures by which teaching occurs. Subject didactics particularizes these general structures, and, in this sense, its findings and pronouncements are primarily a matter of *designing* a specific teaching situation with the aim of reaching a specific teaching aim.

This particularization of general didactic findings also explains the relationship between didactics and subject didactics. In general, this particularization especially is concerned with the following three aspects of teaching.

7.1 When didactics addresses the problem of **contents**, the nature of its findings is general and universal. In this sense, contents are dealt with generally. General didactic theory is not concerned with specific subjects. In contrast, the school curriculum is composed of many school subjects, each having its own *nature*. Mathematics, as a scientific area of study, and as a school subject, differs from history. Each uses different methods, and mathematical contents place different demands on the teaching situation, the teacher, and the pupils than do historical contents. Particularization, in accordance with the nature of the school subject, with the aim of realizing teaching, falls within the terrain of subject didactics. Therefore, subject didactics must indicate how this matter must be realized in school teaching.

7.2 A theory of teaching discusses the **learning child** in the same general terms as it discusses contents. However, in the school, teaching and learning activities are always concerned with a particular child from a particular background, and who is in a particular class. It is a particular child who eventually must master

the school subjects effectively. The ways these particulars are made functional in the school situation are described and explained by subject didactics.

7.3 Each lesson in the school is presented under particular circumstances, and under the guidance of a particular **teacher**. The lesson situation in the school, therefore, also is a particular teaching situation which must be planned and realized in terms of the special conditions which prevail for that period in the school timetable. This aspect also is a particularization of general didactic findings by subject didactics, in accordance with the specific nature of the school subject, and the child for whom the lesson is designed.

The relationship between didactics and subject didactics is the same as that between didactics and **orthodidactics**. Orthodidactics is that aspect of general didactic theory concerned with researching and designing an accountable practice for the benefit of a child who cannot cope with the usual demands of a subject or subjects in the school. The aim is to provide special teaching for a particular child so he/she can learn adequately.

This aspect of didactics is generally referred to as remedial teaching, but this term is not acceptable, because the findings of remedial teaching are much too limited. The special relationship of orthodidactics to general and subject didactics is that it uses the findings of both. To design an orthodidactic program, the findings of both general and subject didactics are examined and interpreted for the specific program and are used to evaluate the effects of the program. Hence, orthodidactics is concerned with the child when ordinary teaching has failed for a variety of reasons. Its primary aim is to design a program to try to correct these derailments. For this reason, it is understandable that orthodidactics is rooted in didactics to try to establish and realize teaching, based on the generally valid findings established by general didactics. In the same way, it is attuned to using the findings of subject didactics to present such important learning contents as language and mathematics with the aim of responsibly bringing the child, who has lost his/her way in subject teaching, back on the right path. In a separate chapter, these relationships are more fully discussed.

In the following chapters, each of the aspects which have been mentioned only synoptically, and even incidentally, are dealt with in greater detail. The aim is to systematically guide the reader through the aspects of didactic theory and, eventually, pull together the relationships among the various aspects of teaching by making some pronouncements about the lesson structure. More specifically, the aim is to give an account of what teaching essentially is, and of what basic particulars must be implemented in the classroom each day. It is repeatedly stated that, although there are many systems and views of teaching, there is only one teaching. Before any pronouncements can be made about a teaching system or principle, one must determine what teaching essentially is.