

CHAPTER ONE

A PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MOTHERLINESS

1. INTRODUCTION

When there is talk of “educating” one immediately thinks of the persons who make this human event possible and necessary. The child, as someone who has a need for educating, immediately comes to mind but also do those who can respond to his/her childlike need in adequate ways by providing support, i.e., his/her educators. Thus, being-a-child and being-an-educator are the first preconditions for educative situations to be designed. The chilliness of the child who must gradually and increasingly become an adult makes educating possible and necessary. The adulthood of the adult serves as an appeal to a child to gradually and with increasing responsibility live the norm-image of adulthood. Because adulthood has this pedagogical appeal, particular demands must be made.

Also, the question is who represents this adulthood to the child-in-becoming, and who are the adults who, in adequate ways, refer the child to adulthood? Who are the adults who by their real presence can enter authentic communication with the child and, in doing so, establish an educative relationship with him/her? Who are the adults who can give a particular sequence or course to the educative event? Which adults can stand with the child in pedagogical care? Which adults can encounter the child in a pedagogical look to address and listen to him/her in pedagogically accountable ways? With what adults can he/she venture on the difficult journey to adulthood? What adults are ready and able to take responsibility for the necessary educative relationships? To what adults can he/she show gratitude for the security which is offered him/her? Which adults respect his/her dignity as a person involved in his/her becoming?

These and many other questions which can be asked indicate that the persons who can answer positively to pedagogical questions must be particular adults. They must be adults who the child, as child-in-educating, can accept. This means that they must be able

and show a readiness to accept the child in pedagogically accountable ways with the purpose of supporting him/her in acquiring his/her adulthood. This also means that these adults aim at what is intended to care pedagogically for a child-in-educating by making a home (dwelling) for him/her, by creating a closeness to him/her and being accessible to him/her.¹ These adults are authentic educators who can accept responsibility for children-in-education. Authentic educators carry out their being-educators, in the first place, in a primary educative situation (family situation) and in a second order educative situation (school).

The following question now arises: If a pedagogician wants to study being-an-authentic-educator, where must he/she *begin* such a study? It is justifiable to say that his/her study begins there where educative relationships begin. These relationships begin in the primary educative situation (family). One can now ask about the first educator-person in this primary situation, and no one can deny that here there is reference to the *mother*. The pedagogician, thus, will involve him/herself in pedagogically meaningful work when he/she places being-a-mother and its pedagogical significance under his/her scientific spotlight. The aim of this study is implied by its title, i.e., a phenomenological disclosure of “A Pedagogical Perspective on Motherliness”. The critical reader will now immediately ask about the meaning of a term such as motherliness, about what is meant by a pedagogical perspective, and about what significance the phenomenological method might have in this connection. These and other relevant matters are examined in the following pages.

2. THE SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS

The scientist will, by thinking, penetrate those phenomena in the lifeworld which have stimulated his/her wonder and compelled his/her admiration so he/she can understand them. A person is a questioning being and, by interrogating reality, he/she arrives at an understanding of it. As a scientist, he/she is a radically questioning person and he/she will ask questions such as What? How? Where? Why? Thus, he/she questions in a thinking search for the being of a particular reality and its meaning because he/she wants to

determine how this particular reality *essentially* is. Only he/she who knows real essences understands.

The whole or full reality is not comprehensible to one person; therefore, the various sciences have the diversity of possible perspectives on reality to thank for their distinctness. For the pedagogician who wonders about the phenomenon of educating in scientifically accountable ways, the pedagogical perspective is of fundamental importance, and the science which he/she practices is education or pedagogics; i.e., from the reality of life, he/she has demarcated the phenomenon of educating as phenomenon for him/herself, and he/she thus now inquires about the being of educating and its meaning, against the background of universal reality. The pedagogician can now further demarcate by describing and explicating a particular aspect of the educative event such as, for example, the role of the mother in actualizing the reality of the educative event. And additional demarcations are possible; for example, the role of the mother in the becoming of the pre-school child can be investigated phenomenologically. Indeed, this also is what the author attempts to do in the present study.

Because the pedagogue is a scientist, is a pedagogician, he/she must be able to justify him/herself and thus be able to practice his/her science as an authentic science, as a universal and radical reflection, so that what he/she has to say will be unambiguous.

The first question now is: How will the scientist announce that he/she will be involved with reality itself in a scientifically justifiable way and not with fantasies from the realm of ideas? He/she must be accountable to his/her view of “science” and “reality”. Pedagogics is a form of science and is thus no idle talk, even less a superficial curiosity, and not ambiguity (Heidegger). On the contrary, science and scientific practice and, thus, pedagogics, involve reflecting, as authentic effort at radical and systematic reflection. It is thought work which flows from wondering about and admiring events in life reality such as, e.g., the educative event.

This study involves a search for the being and meaning of motherliness in educative situations:

First, there is the radical and systematic penetration of motherliness which flows from the author's wondering about and admiration of it.

Second, the unambiguous description of the real essentials of motherliness as the opposite to being ambiguous and flamboyant about motherliness, which can conceal, obscure, or distort it so that it appears to be something that motherliness necessarily and in a generally valid sense is not.

If the pedagogician searches for real essences, for general and necessarily valid universalities, for constitutive uniformities, then he/she cannot begin his/her search anywhere else than at the beginning, i.e., with reality itself. Here it is the educative event itself in the actual educative situations in which the educator (in this case the mother) finds herself from time to time with a child who is committed to being educated, where the educative relationships are realized, in other words, where there is child becoming through motherly support. Briefly, the point of departure of the pedagogician must be the reality of educating itself because he/she wants to find the real essentials and invariants of motherliness in educative situations.

Hence, the pedagogician's work is *nothing other* than phenomenological-ontological—it is only phenomenologically that the essential reality is disclosed because this method, which also is scientific, is the only one which leads the scientist to the matters themselves.² Reality is *there*, but the real essentials are not fully observable. There must be an active thinking search for them without prejudgment or bias, otherwise the reality of motherliness will not show itself as it *is* in its real essentiality but rather as the “scientist” wants it to appear according to his/her own prejudiced conception of it.

With this, now a second key concept is dealt with in addition to science, i.e., the concepts “reality”, and “reality as background”. By *reality as background* is meant that thinking about a particular reality as phenomenon, e.g., motherliness, occurs against a background—this background is *not* a particular reality but the universal life reality itself. This means that the particular reality

involved is itself described and explicated in its real essentiality, as that reality is rooted in the universal life reality itself. Thus, for example, motherliness is described and explicated pedagogically as it shows itself in real educative situations in life reality itself to disclose the real essences of being-a-mother-in-educative-situations. The scientific findings, the universalities, on the contrary, in post-scientific work, subsequently might be held against a screen as background so that its particularities can be compared, but this remains *post-scientific* work, valuable for the pedagogue in practice and for constructing an educational doctrine.

If there is mention of background, then one also says that the phenomenologist, in his/her search for foundations, follows the road back to the origin of that which he/she wants to describe and explicate, e.g., educating. This also means that, with the origin of the matter itself, he/she verifies the validity of the concepts (categories he/she has disclosed or thought through in dialogue with other scientists and acknowledged in intersubjective-objectivity)³ and tries to eliminate ambiguities.

In this study there is an attempt to return to the most original way in which being-an-educator shows itself, i.e., there where motherliness appears, i.e., to mother-and-child situations where educating in its real essentiality is realized.

How does the phenomenologist arrive at this origin? By way of the phenomenological method of which a brief overview is offered in the following section:

3. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL WAY

In the first place, phenomenology is a *method* which changes the scientist's *relationship to the world* because it makes him/her more intensely aware of it⁴ and awakens in him/her a respect for what that reality has to say for itself. The scientist becomes more aware of events in the lifeworld around him/her which he/she previously accepted as obvious and evident.⁵ They do not remain merely events for the scientist as phenomenologist. From the life reality he/she takes those events which he/she has demarcated, and then he/she tries by an intuitive-viewing-thinking to perform an intuiting

of essences to disclose the essences, the real essentials, thus, the fundamentals of this reality. In this study, the author discloses some fundamental moments of motherliness, and tries to give an explication of their *pedagogical* significance.

Secondly, phenomenology is a *presupposition-less search* for real “objective” essences of a reality event. Thus, it is a search for phenomena which are as they are, independent of accidental forms of appearing or any arbitrary meaning which someone readily wants to give them.⁶ Just because the phenomenologist goes to reality itself without presuppositions, i.e., by purposefully leaving his/her own opinions aside, by being free from dogmatic recipes, free from postulated rules and unverified traditional opinions⁷ which force scientific thinking in a particular biased direction and to certain anticipated conclusions, the phenomenological way is a method along which the scientist can *open-mindedly* go to the reality of concern in his/her search for fundamental structures. In this way [via bracketing assumption’s -G.D.Y.], reality now allows itself to be disclosed as a surprise—precisely because what was previously obvious now *allows itself to be disclosed* as it necessarily and universally is. The author looks for the phenomena of the event of motherliness in educative situations.

Thirdly, the phenomenological method brings the lifeworld closer to awareness, but because what is closest to a person often is what is most unclear, a distance must be taken. This does not mean that a chasm is created between the scientist and reality, but it indicates that he/she will look more closely at an event in its essentiality by lifting it out of the lifeworld.⁸ He/she wants to *disclose* the real essences, thus, the phenomenon. This lifting out is not a detaching but letting it appear in relief against the background of life reality itself in its universality. The scientist, as person, and his/her object of study (what he/she wants to know) are inseparably bound in a relationship and, therefore, knowledge of, e.g., motherliness is possible. By implementing the phenomenological method, Husserl had disclosed the essential intentional contact between person and world—the interwovenness of person with reality and the world with being human.⁹ The world cannot exist as an object without the person as a subject, and a person is actually a person as Dasein (in the language of Heidegger), i.e., there-in-the-world. He/she can

reach reality (e.g., motherliness) itself and, thus, be able to disclose the real essences (phenomena) of it.

There must be objectivity. It is an objectifying of a two-fold nature:

- a) Demarcating out of the lifeworld is viewed as objectifying when the phenomenon is lifted out for a thorough investigation.¹⁰
- b) Second, naming is a form of objectifying by which real essences are expressed in linguistic form and, thus, are lifted out of their “unknown-ness”, and consequently are objectified. The author attempts to name the real essences of motherliness, as it appears in an educative connection, in such a way that this naming contributes to understanding it.

Fourthly, the phenomenological method is a way to the origin from which fundamental concepts [i.e., categories] spring. The origin of these concepts is consciousness as consciousness-of-something, and the *something* is the reality, as world, in which a person, as scientist, finds him/herself (through his/her consciousness of it). Therefore, the scientist (phenomenologist) must begin with his/her *own* conscious experience,¹¹ i.e., he/she must take a *radical* beginning in his/her way of thinking to knowledge of his/her object of study. Here radical means the *insightful* establishment of all elements of knowledge. This is knowledge of essences, and knowledge of their essential reciprocal relationships with each other. Hence, the phenomenological method is an essence disclosing method of reflection. Here reflection means that there is a thinking back, that the scientist continually asks questions of him/herself and of reality, thus, also of motherliness as a particular pedagogical reality. This is not to be confused with speculation (to speculate) as a research method, which means to form theories, opinions without sufficient grounds, and which points to guesswork and idle talk. The strict phenomenologist is interested in *that which something, as something, means* and an understanding of it as it *really*¹² essentially is by means of disclosing essences and meaning structures.

Fifthly, the phenomenological way is a *descriptive* way. Phenomena are described as they are found by the open-minded and reflecting, reality-seeking scientist. This excludes the possibility of speculative

thought constructions. If the phenomenologist strictly limits him/herself to essential relationships and meaning structures, his/her findings must be essential insights (seeing into).¹³ Also, he/she cannot profess to describe and explicate all the essentialities because they are endless. Therefore, it is said that fundamental pedagogics is essence-pedagogics. It is a thinking search for and description of the essences of essences of essences, etc. These essences are described and named (given categorical names). Naming and describing the figuring forth of motherliness in the pedagogical reality is the aim of this study. The phenomenologist is the describing investigator of the knowledge structures, as facts of being (i.e., onticities). When he/she is involved with a descriptive analysis, e.g., of motherliness, he/she avoids mysticism, one-sided, and misleading descriptions, dogmatism, and biased reasoning. The true phenomenologist does not make him/herself guilty of phenomenological impressionism. He/she is exclusively interested in describing essential relationships and structures, and not in particular facts or circumstances.¹⁴

Because this author presents a phenomenological description of motherliness, viewed from a pedagogical perspective, in the remaining chapters there is an attempt to ascertain the generally valid structures of motherliness. Before this is done, what is meant by “motherliness” must be clear.

4. MOTHERHOOD IN CONTRAST TO MOTHERLINESS

A precondition for being human is being-in-the-world. Therefore, any scientific thinking about human beings must begin with his/her being-in-the-world, otherwise attempts will be used to understand a person as an isolated being, and this is not possible because to understand a person means to understand his/her world relationships. Where this involves motherliness, the thinking search must begin with the real situation of being-a-mother. (See Chapter Two regarding the birth-event). Being-a-mother implies being a mother of someone. In this study with its “in pedagogical perspective”, that someone is the child-in-education, thus, that being who, in his/her becoming adult is committed to education. He/she is dependent on being supported by adults, of which his/her mother is the first giver of support in his/her becoming adult. That

is, his/her mother is the first educator with whom he/she finds him/herself as a co-concerned person. In this connection, there is a clear distinction between motherhood, which is a biological, physical matter, and motherliness, which is a personological matter, i.e., an existential-ethical-normative matter. Here the concern is *not* with the biological fact of motherhood as such, but the ethical-existential concerned involvement of the mother with her child for whom she accepts responsibility in pedagogical love. Thus, the mother who, after the biological experience of motherhood, rejects the child falls outside the scope of this study.

In this study the concern is with motherliness and, indeed, motherliness as a particular way in which *being-an-educator* appears. In other words, motherliness is the *original* figuring forth of being-an-educator. Immediately the question arises about the meaning of “original” in this connection and why the pedagogician (scientist who practices pedagogics) tries, in his/her thinking, to disclose the “original”.

“Original” refers to that which has existed first in time, i.e., what is primary. In this light, it is undeniable and unquestionable that the relationship with the mother is the first meaningful one for the child.

In addition, “original” refers to a first precondition.¹⁵ When motherhood is mentioned as “original”, in the second place, this also means that displaying it to her becoming child is the first precondition for his/her becoming.

“Original” can also mean “first-hand contact¹⁶ or direct experience¹⁷. The child-mother contact is decidedly “first-hand”, in the sense of being-accepted by his/her mother as an acceptance-of-his/her-helplessness, acceptance of his/her body-ness, and acceptance of his/her name. (See Chapter Two for more on this).

Penetrating the mother-child relationship, within which motherliness arises, leads to disclosing what motherliness really essentially is, and motherliness as the purest form of being-an-educator. Now the question immediately arises about what is meant by “pure”. It means that, what is given (here motherliness as

exemplar of being-an-educator) can reveal itself more clearly in its essentiality. Whoever illuminates the essential characteristics of being-an-educator, proceeds correctly if motherliness (being-an-educator in its purest form) is thinkingly described and explicated. This is precisely what the pedagogician and the phenomenologist will attempt to do. In other words, the pedagogician turns him/herself to original phenomena in the lifeworld, such as motherliness, and then tries to clarify their essential characteristics. Essential characteristics of the birth-event, among other things, the acceptance of a child by a motherly mother, and their pedagogical significance are thinkingly interpreted, thus is investigated phenomenologically. (See Chapters Two and Four).

5. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem around which the present study revolves is to follow a phenomenological approach to search for the real essences of motherliness, as the original way that being-an-educator is manifested. Thus, in Chapter Two, the real essential pedagogical significance of the birth event is disclosed. The problem considered in Chapter Three is the deeper meaning of motherliness in contrast to motherhood. To show the essential difference, a phenomenological analysis is attempted of a caring-being-in-the-world of a mother, the motherly caress, the look of the mother, and motherly addressing-listening.

Whoever wants to determine and describe the pedagogical significance of the relationship between a motherly mother and her little child must go to the pedagogical situation where such a relationship appears as a fundamental educative relationship. The pedagogically permissible and accountable, as expressed in words by the pedagogical categories, and implemented as criteria, also must be described as an essential part of an authentic educative situation with the educative aim, as objective, to which the motherly mother is directed in her pedagogical activities with her child. This is the aim of Chapter Four.

The author does not pretend to broach motherliness and its pedagogical significance for the entire path the child must cover to adulthood but only attends to the child during his/her preschool

years and relationships with his/her mother. In addition, this is a fundamental pedagogical study and, therefore, attention is not paid to didactic pedagogical, socio-pedagogical, and psycho-pedagogical moments, but indeed to the fundamental, thus to the real essences of motherliness as it is manifested in the *mother-preschool child* relationship.

In closing, there is a brief indication of what is meant when there is talk of the “*preschool* child”.

A preschool child is that child who does not yet attend a formal school, as a second order educative milieu. Although the child, as suckling, toddler, etc., and his/her relationship to his/her mother in the primary (first-order) educative space (i.e., the family situation) is the main theme of this perspective on motherliness, the preschooler and his/her preschool teachers, as surrogate mothers, are included here because they also must display motherliness to the child. By the preschool period is meant the period of a child’s becoming up to five years. The preschool child also is viewed in his/her childliness, i.e., in his/her humanness as a being who must become someone because he/she him/herself ought to become, but especially in his/her need for support, as a child who *wants* to become somebody, and his/her appeal for *support* to become that somebody he/she ought to be. This appeal is primarily an appeal to someone who can display authentic motherliness to him/her.

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