

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PEDAGOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIRTH-EVENT

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

A typical family consists of a husband, wife, and child or children. The task of the parents is educating their children and that, when they reach adulthood, an unending cycle is taken over by them when they establish their own families. From a woman, a being is born and is called a human being who, throughout his/her life must remain involved in his/her becoming. The fact that he/she is *called* a human being indicates his/her acceptance by others as a fellow human being, and his/her mother is the first to do so. As being a female because of her biological-physical being-a-woman, she also has the possibility of showing and living her femininity. Her biological factuality, as carrier of and giver of birth to human life, refers to more fundamental moments than merely an organic and biological nature. She chooses as a person, in her going out to the world, i.e., via her intentionality, whether she will be true to her femininity or not. Her going out to the world is mainly directed to human relationships and to her *immediate* world.<sup>1</sup> Her world-constituting and meaning-giving is of such a nature that she devotes her attention to another, and in turning herself to the other as fellow being, she constitutes her world. Her dialogue with the world is a dialogue of turning to. It is her turning to which proclaims her as a woman. She is a caring being in the world.

It is characteristic of the way of being a woman, as an expression of her femininity, that she yearns to be with someone, also with someone who can be addressed as “child”. She yearns for someone to which she can turn so that her female way of existing will be meaningful. A human being, and especially a woman, is not an isolated monad and, therefore, her existence essentially is directed to co-existence with the other gender and with a child or children, i.e., with fellow beings who need this kind of help and support in their world-constituting that she can provide. There is a yearning for a partner for whom a home (dwelling) can be established. At

first, this partner is her spouse, but there also is a yearning which springs from her femininity. This is a yearning for co-being with another to whom she can provide support in his/her becoming, i.e., by giving support to his/her becoming adult. This means that, by giving support to someone who is not-yet-adult, thus, to a child who has a need to be educated, she can give sense and meaning to her own female way of being.

A woman herself has a need of support in establishing a home for someone who she will be dependent on, and who can and will support her in constituting her own world. When she receives such support, then her yearning goes out to someone else who can be dependent on her for support and to whom she can offer that support.

Only after and through the birth-event is her dialogue possible with the support-seeking child for whom she yearns. Then she enters a co-human entanglement<sup>2</sup> with her child and her child, and becomes a possible partner for her, a fellow person as an equal to her because he/she also is a human being who increasingly must become an adult with her support, which is a precondition for it. He/she is a partner who demands involvement without which he/she, as a human child, cannot become who he/she ought to be.

He/she is her partner, and to be a partner means to enter a concrete dialogue with her. Such a dialogue is denotable as primordial evidence<sup>3</sup> and, indeed, primordial evidence as an original being-accepted-by-the-other. That is, as a partner, as a helpless partner on his/her way to becoming adult, it is a fact of being that, in his/her being-there, the child directs an appeal to his/her parents as partners, to notice him/her and to *accept* him/her as a partner. As a fellow person, he/she must first be received and accepted as a unique other by this fellow human being with whom he/she finds him/herself in the world. To be not accepted as a fellow person is to treat him/her inhumanly and indecently.<sup>4</sup> This acceptance as a fellow being by another makes the *awakening* of his/her spiritual life possible,<sup>5</sup> and, thus, this is the first precondition for educating a child who is committed to his/her becoming as becoming adult. When he/she is *accepted*, a pedagogically preformed field is established as a precondition for the eventual realization of

successful pedagogical interventions. The meaning of “accept” is clarified in the following sections.

## 2. THE BIRTH-EVENT AS AN ACT OF ACCEPTING

Involvement with fellow beings is a primordially evident fact. That is, from the very beginning, it is given with being human. It is an onticity, an irrefutable reality which cannot be thought away, and which is effectively expressed by Binswanger’s concept “Das-Nehmen-bei-Etwas”<sup>6</sup> in which he refers to the newborn’s coming-into-the-world (as a present for, a being given to) as a turning to a world *by which*, *with which*, and *to which* he/she, as a childlike being, is accepted by others who are his/her fellow beings.

*By which* refers to the observable bodily presence of the child upon his/her birth. He/she is accepted in his/her body-ness.

*With which* refers to motherliness as a comprehensive life spatiality (see Chapter Three), i.e., motherly acceptance, as making room for a life space for her child in an intimate space of we-ness. The absence of this makes bonding impossible and leads to neglect.<sup>7</sup> *With which* also refers to forms of dialogue which the child has with the world, e.g., his/her movements.<sup>8</sup>

*To which* refers to futurity, which here means educating the child, which always is directed to his future.<sup>9</sup>

### (i) Birth as acceptance-of-body-ness

In anthropological space, thus, in the world of being human, the birth-event is a fundamental anthropological phenomenon. This is an anthropological phenomenon because, with humans, this is not primarily a biological PROCESS by which an anatomical body or a physiological organism appears, as material in naturalistic terms, but it is an existential acceptance and being accepted. This event of acceptance is the first precondition for establishing a pedagogically pre-formed field which, in its turn, is a precondition for later pedagogical interventions.

Through the birth-event, as a being accepted from a pre-worldly space, a particular way of relating to the world is initiated, which expresses the nature of the newborn as *coming-into-the-world*. As a coming-into-the-world, the newborn begins a way of being a child because now he/she can be taken by and with his/her hand.<sup>10</sup> This means that through the birth-event, the newborn is not an ontically objectified organism<sup>11</sup> but is a human and worldly being because, from the beginning, he/she is a human being, and is accepted by his/her mother as a fellow being in an all-embracing totally engaging attitude.<sup>12</sup> That is, he/she is received and accepted as he/she is. He/she is accepted unconditionally as co-existence, as a being with whom there must be a dwelling and living together. The mother accepts the newborn as a child, in affirmation of his/her being human, and *decides* to help him/her in his/her becoming a person although, of first importance is for her to hold him/her in-the-world by physically caring for him/her. She accepts him/her bit-by-bit, i.e., from his/her boy-ness to his/her becoming because, as a child, he/she is destined to be involved in becoming an adult. She takes him/her, accepts him/her with the knowledge that he/she must still be-in-the-world progressively (toward his/her adulthood).

Even before his/her birth, his/her mother knows of him/her as an individual with his/her own body when he/she moves in her, and she cannot control his/her movements even though he/she is part of her body.<sup>13</sup> This being accepted in his/her body-ness at his/her birth is a precondition for further forming a dialogue which, in its turn, is a mode of coming-into-the-world as a particular way of executing his/her Dasein<sup>14</sup> (the other, e.g., the mother, is already there where he/she comes from, where he/she is received and accepted). As a transcendental possibility, he/she is continually surpassing him/herself to his/her future.

As Dasein, the newborn subject shows him/herself in his/her emergence as the other co-being (the other is always a co-being) because his/her body is an embodiment of his/her subjectivity. A human being is his/her body and remains during the time he/she is his/her body. Firstly, it is in the look of the other, as an authentic encounter, that he/she appears immediately as a situated body-ness. That is, in his/her body-ness, he/she is *there*, he/she cannot be ignored or disregarded; secondly, as an observable present

beginning, he/she appears under the word (dialogue) of the other in his/her body-ness as listener; thirdly, as confirmation of his/her observable presence for the sake of living in dialogue with another.<sup>15</sup> For the mother, this observable presence is a fulfillment of the expectation which she had cherished since the confirmation of the child's conception, as a future coming-into-the-world. The body-ness of the mother acquires a sense of fulfillment for her with the birth-event,<sup>16</sup> with encountering her child as a newborn and viewing his/her face. The SENSE OF FULFILLMENT is a way of giving herself to her child for his/her sake. This giving, as surrender, is an existential source of power for her irreducible (ontic) partnership in a vexing world where she will-care-for and linger-with<sup>17</sup> her child, and of a must-be-cared-for, and an appeal-to linger-by from the child which she unconditionally accepts. This appeal from the child to the mother to accept him/her is an appeal which arises because of his/her helplessness. At and after the birth-event, she then also lives her motherliness by *accepting* him/her *because of his/her helplessness*.

#### (ii) Birth as accepting because of helplessness

When the child is accepted as a newborn at the birth-event, this act of acceptance is a precondition for his/her being-there (Dasein) to thrive. It is also a precondition for dealing with him/her. Here this involves dealing with him/her with a purpose. The *purpose* is to constitute a particular being-with, i.e., a being with someone who can demonstrate motherliness. This establishes an observable presence which is ontologically constitutive of the humanness of both partners in this event. Child and mother are observable presences as belonging to and being accepted by each other. The mother belongs with her child and he/she with her. She is the leader because she knows the *aim* and the *way* to the aim in this pre-formed pedagogical situation. In contrast, the child is an educand.<sup>18</sup> Here the mother establishes a being-with because she answers the appeal of her child for help, active care, and guidance.<sup>19</sup> The newborn is accepted because of his/her helplessness; his/her appeal for care in his/her bodily appearing initiates the educative relationship. This situation of "taking with and by the hand", in which the newborn is noticed because of his/her NEARNESS, and in

which accessibility and belongingness become possible, lead to establishing a pre-formed pedagogical field.

As helpless childlike involvement, he/she increasingly becomes receptive to guidance. Because of his/her situatedness as a child, i.e., as a not-yet-adult, and an appeal for companionship in the world, in his/her world relationships he/she is a task for the adults as educators and, in this case, for the mother as educator of her child. The child is a gift to his/her parents and a big task is demanded of them, i.e., his/her educating for which, at the earliest opportunity in his being-there, his/her mother establishes a pedagogically pre-formed field, and later concrete educative situations.<sup>20</sup>

The acceptance because of helplessness, as a precondition for constituting his/her being and as a fundamental and constitutive element of the ground structure of his/her Dasein, is not necessitated because he/she is a being who is born prematurely. This acceptance, indeed, enables him/her to be involved with fellow persons at the earliest possible time. Otherwise, as is an animal, from the beginning and through his/her entire life, he/she would be bounded by fixed, inborn patterns of behavior and, as an animal, react to certain stimuli in the environment with certain clearly meaningful patterns of behavior.<sup>21</sup> A primordial dialogue of a person with his/her world is already given with his/her birth as a functional-becoming, i.e., a child does *not* react to stimuli but carries on a dialogue with his/her world by which he/she increasingly becomes him/herself, and which he/she implements in his/her further becoming with pedagogical support from adults. Childlike being is a fully human, existential being as a becoming being. The meaning of being-a-child is to BECOME, and not to remain a child but to gradually, and progressively become a responsible adult.

[As an existential being, for a Christian, the newborn is doubly-born—[borne by and] born of the mother through her womb (and also born of God). This double-born-ness is not a biological-physical process but an anthropological-ontological matter —<sup>22</sup> it is a real essential of being human and personal becoming.]

Whoever says human-being implies a concern with norms and, therefore, this double-born-ness is an existential-ethical-normative functionality. In brief, this reality is personological. A human being, as person, must show a firm direction in which he/she leads his/her life according to particular moral norms. Pedagogically, this means that these norms must be exemplified for the child, and they are of fundamental importance when the pedagogically pre-formed field becomes a pedagogical field.

### (iii) Birth as accepting with-the-word

It is a fact of experience that the mother addresses her child even before, but especially after the birth-event: the dialogue is verbalized in the form of addressing (speaking-to) in contrast to a mere “speaking” or “talking”. The newborn is addressed by his/her mother as “child”, pointing to an immediate feeling that the particular name essentially is<sup>23</sup>, because with this name, the understanding is acknowledged that she is a person committed to providing support. The name is a particular way of calling to. It is a way of realizing the close involvement between two human ways of being (being-mother and being-child) in an anthropological space, as an invoked space, and the child is a possibility-called-to-becoming. In this invoked space, a person finds TRUST, as accepting another, or DISTRUST, as withdrawing from. The anthropological foundation which makes the trusting relationship possible is a particular way of accessibility which can be described as the sphere of morality.<sup>24</sup> In a pedagogical sense, this refers to a particular adulthood, i.e., a morally independent responsibility on the part of the educator, here the mother, who addresses her child in the dialogical relationship. An answer by which the other can be accepted is needed. The answer requires a responsible, or morally relevant addressing, i.e., moral responsibility is assumed.<sup>25</sup>

Acceptance with the word “child” emphasizes the childness of the child who is addressed as accepted child. This also emphasizes the necessity of the mother, as accepting person, to address her child with the educative aim (adulthood) in view. Whoever is addressed as “child” is someone accepted by this act as a partner and comrade, as an associate and fellow traveler. He/she is accepted as he/she is with his/her own historicity. Acceptance with *that* word CHILD, in

other words, is an acceptance of him/her in his/her *historicity as futurity*.

Naming with the word “child” implies that the child, as Dasein, possesses the ontological structure of a *project*. The child is not a ready-made adult (not already an adult). He/she is becoming-adult and projects him/herself, with pedagogical support, to adulthood. He/she is thriving possibility and, as such, he/she is already in advance of his/her actual being toward his/her own able-to-be. He/she continually exceeds the milestones of becoming which he/she has reached, he/she goes to meet his/her future.

### 3. BIRTH AS CONSTITUTIVE OF INDIVIDUALITY

The concept “individuality” is first clarified. It means personality, which means to be a being who is different from another, and that the child not only might, but *must* be different.<sup>26</sup>

The birth-event, as constitutive of participating in the lifeworld realizes a child’s ontologically grounded right to be an individual, to acquiring his/her own-being-in-the-world as a person. The child (educand) possesses a personally formative principle.<sup>27</sup> He/she is always born *as a child*, and it is from this formative principle that a desire and aspiration for being someone him/herself flows.<sup>28</sup> It is a precondition for educating; i.e., it makes becoming independent possible. The cutting of the umbilical cord, as an act of individuation, is further constitutive of individuality. While expecting her baby, the mother already experiences that her child has his/her own individuality, in the sense that he/she moves him/herself and that she cannot control his/her movements through her willing or deciding. The dual unity of mother and unborn child already conveys the knowledge that he/she will be delivered from her and will move farther away from her<sup>29</sup>, that he/she *will* and *must* become him/herself. It is necessary to distinguish the one person, who from the beginning, is a meaning-carrying being, from the other. Mother and child are both individualness<sup>30</sup> in their situatedness. Therefore, an encounter, as intentional act, also is necessary between the mother, as educator, and the child, as educand, in an educative situation.



From the beginning, childlike being is being human and he/she is only possible as an individual but, indeed, always in relationship with the other in a fundamentally shared world and, indeed, because of a purely ontological relationship and, thus, not first through a previous rational insight or experience. Individuality, as individual existence, is a necessary distinction, which refers to the impossibility of an exemplary way of being. A human being is not an example of a type, and not even identical twins are identical. They each have their own conscience, their own moral valuations.<sup>31</sup> An exemplary human image makes educating impossible because the human being, as a person, is a being who knowingly confronts him/herself with norms and can direct his/her life in accordance with them in unique ways—also with respect to his/her own thrownness. Cutting the umbilical cord, as existential act, once again testifies to the primordial phenomenon<sup>31</sup> of individuality in an interhuman world.

#### 4. BIRTH AS CONSTITUTING A FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIP

This heading emphasizes the primordial fact that the lifeworld is a relational design of human beings. The birth-event is the child's possible becoming of a now observable bodily being-placed-in-the-present. Before the birth-event, the mother knows of her child, but she does not know how he/she is. The fact that his/her gender is a secret until the birth-event, with his/her bodily being-there, makes the secret even greater. But the fact that the "baby" now is a "son" or "daughter" is an acceptance-of-body-ness where this accepted body was at first vague. The mother's directedness to the futurity of her newborn is qualified such that being-accepted-bodily proceeds to an encounter through body-ness. The face-to-face encounter strengthens her future-directedness.

Constituting a face-to-face relationship is only possible after the birth-event. Also, and especially with this birth, the face is the usual place of encountering.<sup>33</sup> By this, it is also acknowledged that the face of the newborn is a fundamental way in which he/she *is* what he/she *is* for the mother, i.e., her child who is committed to her for her motherliness. This implies that her newborn is not OBSERVED by her impersonally and from a distance; it is through a face-to-face encounter that he/she is SEEN as a particular fellow person. In

other words, he/she is accepted as a person with respect for his/her being human. Motherly observing elevates him/her to a partner, and makes possible the establishment of a pedagogically pre-formed field.<sup>35</sup>

Temporal and spatial immediacy are fundamental for a face-to-face situation, and are a basic structure in the lifeworld as a constituted field of sense and meaning. This means that the child, who is being-there at a given time and place, is physically present with his/her mother and finds him/herself in a face-to-face situation with her. This situation is a pre-formed field for educating. A photograph of the mother's face or a film of her movements is *not* what is meant by temporal and spatial immediacy. She must be an encountering presence to her child so that this face-to-face situation can be meaningful and continually thrive. She also must be able to see her child's face because it is there that she can see whether there is an encounter, and then she can construct and design an intersubjective world with him/her and continually affirm it in the future. This continual affirmation in the future refers to the possibility of a series of pedagogical situations spread over the period of becoming adult in which the child progressively becomes the adult person he/she ought to become.

As a unique form-of-living-in-function, for the mother, the newborn is no abstraction, no example of a typical way of behaving but because of participating in a common and clear present, there is unique individuality in a unique singular situation of intimacy.<sup>36</sup>

In this intimacy, the newborn is made present under the mother's lingering look (which rests on things), and he/she becomes observable to her in his/her childness. This means that her child, in his/her thereness, cannot or might not be ignored by his/her mother. The lingering-with, as a being-with, proceeds to the look which glides over and lightly touches things, and both ways of looking radiate out to a receptive imminence (imminence = remaining with, immediate presence) and is evidence of an authentic being-with. That is, there is a being-there of the one for the other in loving openness and acceptance (Binswanger). The motherly look, as a way of constituting a being-with (a communion—Buber) which is expressed in the resting, lingering

look, is a structural moment, a fundamental structure belonging to motherliness. The mother *illuminates* the life space of her child with her eyes.<sup>37</sup> In his/her mother's face, a child sees his/her lifeworld reflected, and he/she often reads the interpretation of what for him/her is still inexplicable, in a gesture which he/she understands, and in the motherly voice, hold, caress, etc.

The lingering-touching-resting look of the mother is further affirmation of her embracing her child. The embrace is evidence of an ontological belongingness to each other of mother and child, and of openness. Without openness, there cannot be an encounter, and without an encounter there can be no further openness for each other because openness is necessary for being-with-each-other (Mitsein). In addition, openness is a precondition for co-human involvement (personal association by which the mother can deepen her involvement in the existence of her child by participating in it through an unselfish turning-to him/her from her heart—called by Binswanger the objectivity of love.)<sup>39</sup> From this it is concluded that the mother of her child, as a particular fellow person, intentionally deals fundamentally with the pedagogical significance which, with this act of acceptance, creates the original pre-formed field for the realization of educative moments.

In this chapter, “motherliness” is referred to a few times. In the following chapter, there is a phenomenological description and explication of this exclusively anthropological (i.e., human) phenomenon. This description is ontological, since an attempt is made to disclose the real essences of motherliness against the universal life reality itself as background. In addition, attention is given to the pedagogical meaning of these real essences which are illuminated.

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