

CHAPTER III

THE EXPERIENTIAL WORLD OF A PRE-SCHOOL CHILD BECOMING A SCHOOL CHILD: A PSYCHOPEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the scientific approach to be followed and used to penetrate the research problem was justified. The theoretical foundation of the psychopedagogical perspective used to study the pre-school child in his becoming a school child was discussed. The aim of this study is to concentrate on actualizing the potentialities of the psychic life that a child possesses. Making these potentialities a reality, i.e., the focus is on the learning and becoming that is realized via a child's self-actualization of them and that make themselves knowable in his experiential world. In what follows, there is an attempt to show how the experiential world of this child appears, how he announces himself, which relationships he establishes and what appeals he directs to his educators. In this connection, it must continually be kept in mind that this essentially involves penetrating his experiential world in terms of his own potentialities. The accompaniment to adequate self-actualization of this particular child originating for an educator is considered in chapter IV.

A phenomenological approach generally will be followed and it must be continually kept in mind that person and world must be viewed as an inseparable unity. Also, a child is continually situated and announces himself in relation to his world. The following world relationships of the child under consideration are discussed in this chapter:

- 1.1 The child in relationship to himself as this shows itself in his:
a) bodily-being-in-the-world, b) his play and c) his language.
- 1.2 The child in relationship with others as this appears in his: a)
bodily-being-in-the-world, b) his play and c) his language.
- 1.3 The child in relationship to things, whether concrete or
abstract, as this appears in his: a) bodily-being-in-the-world,
b) his play and c) his language.

1.4 The child in relationship to a Superior Being.

2. THE SITUATEDNESS OF A CHILD: A PSYCHO-PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 The child in relationship to himself

2.1.1 *Bodily-being-in-the-world*

It does not fall within the scope of this study to give a full discussion of the physical growth that a child experiences from about three to seven years of age. Also, from a psychopedagogical perspective, this would serve little purpose. Consequently, there is only brief reference to such changes that influence a child's experiential potentialities during this phase and that distinguish themselves from the previous, lower levels of becoming and the subsequent ones.

A child dwells in and explores the world via his body and thus any bodily changes do not remain isolated events but encompass and touch the entire range of his becoming.

The results of the accelerations and adjustments in the ways a child dwells in the world via his body are found in his experiential world. Arnold Gesell point out that: "The 6-year-old proves not to be a bigger and better 5-year-old. He is a different child because he is a changing child."⁽¹⁾

Below attention is given to the following body parts of this becoming child in the specific order in which they develop physically before and after birth, i.e., the head, the arms and hands, the trunk and finally the legs and feet.

a) *The head*

Very certainly the most important facial feature is the eyes. Although a child of three months already has the ability to follow moving objects, it remains an arduous task until about 6-years of age. Muscle development and coordination now accelerate to such an extent that a child no longer has to move his head or entire body along with keeping an eye on something or someone. He can now participate with greater ease and success in group conversations and

activities. He now masters his world visually in a more adequate way than in his earlier toddler years. This awakens in him greater self-confidence and satisfaction because of the favorable lived experiences that this entails. To the extent that success is repeated, it stabilizes his lived experiences and is adequately imbued with meaning such that his possessed experiences can be supplemented with the knowledge that “I can”. This forms a favorable preformed field for additionally going out to the visual world, and as a consequence he *wants to/will* emancipate further.

Unhappily, the opposite also is true, i.e., that if a child is exposed to demands he is physically unable to meet he is exposed to failure and the awareness of inadequacy leads him to *not be willing* to linger and proceed to perceiving, thinking and remembering. The entire matter of attending can be harmed by the “negative” emotional significance that the momentary lived experiencing has brought about. Experiencing, that is a continuous matter, in the future possibly can be channelized in a different direction in order to try to ward off a repeat of the unpleasantness.

When a child repeatedly fails, these negative lived experienced emotions also congeal and a child interprets the matter as meaningless-for-me. Thus, he will not linger by it and take the plunge to a more ordered, gnostic-cognitive level of lived experiencing. Thus, it seems clear that a labile emotional lived experiencing not only is detrimental for emancipating to a gnostic-cognitive level of becoming but that such congealed negative lived experiences are lived experienced as meaningless. Gradually these meaningless experiential residues accumulate into possessed experiences.

Possessed experiences arise over a long period. Naturally it is not a matter that changes easily. Especially in the case of a pre-school child, who is still primarily is emotionally in the world and to whom only a limited cognitive appeal can be directed, it is extremely difficult to replace or modify unfavorable moments from his possessed experiences. Whittle agrees with this when he says: “When a specific attunement is systematically built up over the course of time, it is changeable with difficulty”.⁽²⁾

Hopefully, it seems clear that adequate physical mastery of the world, also through visual potentialities, is of cardinal importance for a favorable experience of the self. A child who is satisfied with his own adequate actualization of potentialities can distance himself to such an extent that he is able to differentiate and objectify, and in doing so to actualize his becoming.

An additional matter of importance that involves the increased visual potentialities because of changes in the neuro-motor system is that a child can make adequate use of the look as a human means of communicating. For example, now he can sit still at his place of play or in his little school chair and follow a fellow person with his eyes – an attribute that is of great value in a school situation where eye contact with teachers and the group of children is of cardinal importance. Eye contact is a non-verbal means of communication and a child often responds with a smile, whether of affection or embarrassment, according to the lived experienced valences that the related experiencing brings forth.

A childlike smile also often reveals the first permanent teeth – a further physical change during roughly the sixth year. These first “big” teeth are for a child a tangible symbol of his own becoming. He sees and feels that he is becoming different. The first interchange of milk teeth for permanent sets of teeth is an experience of emotional intensity similar to what sometimes accompanies the physical changes of puberty. Also, a child cannot conceal this new manifestation of his accelerated becoming; it is continually under the scrutiny of others. If there is mocking reference to his teeth, a child feels that it is he who is being mocked and rejected and this colors “negatively” his own attunement to his becoming.

Not only does a child have to struggle with changes in his teeth, but now he also shows an increased susceptibility for infections of the mucous membranes. Red and sore eyes, swollen ears and throat are general phenomena. Thus, he doesn't always look the same to himself but also often feels sulky. A child of this age does not yet have the possibility of localizing pain and discomfort and hence can appear to be annoying and whiney.

b) *The arms and hands*

At approximately one year, a little child already can reach and grasp, but McGraw, as cited by Hurlock, believes these movements can be perfected only after the fourth year.⁽³⁾ The experiential possibilities that touch and feeling offer a child are obvious. At seven years of age, a child already can control his arms, shoulders and wrists with ease, but the control of fine finger muscles, e.g., those used in typing, are delayed until about 12 years of age.

This muscle development results in a child having the possibility to move one limb at a time. For example, he no longer throws a ball with his whole body but only uses one arm.

Now the possibility exists that a child can participate in the physical activities of older children. Depending on his intentional attunement and the direction given by his educators in the past, possibilities exist for a child to broaden his experiential horizon through the new grasp on reality that he now can acquire with his arms and hands.

A child takes the initiative to venture into the as yet unknown world of the bigger child where he soon becomes aware that he no longer is considered to be a “baby”. The pleasurable “positive” lived experiencing that this entails awakens in a child a desire to explore the world further via his body, to temporarily distance himself from his parents so that he continually can project a new vision of the surrounding landscape. Success with this independent exploration necessarily strengthens a positive view of his own human dignity; that is why a child has a preference for repeating any physical activity he can successfully master.

This repeating or lingering with the matter that claims his attending provides an opportunity for a “second seeing” (in the language of Straus). What formerly only was a pleasant sensing now intensifies to perceiving and provides room for fantasy, and via these modes of learning, a moving child also is placed in a position to actualize his gnostic potentialities of lived experiencing.

In addition, already during the early pre-school years a child shows a preference for using a specific hand. By the time a pre-school

child becomes a school child this preference ought to be acknowledged. A child no longer hesitates when a fine hand movement is required of him. He can confidently rely on his dexterity. The experiential importance of this can hardly be over-estimated. In a child there arises a knowing that “I can” – a gnostic matter that brings about favorable pathic-affective lived experiencing. Each such giving of meaning to a confrontation with the reality of physical life strengthens a child’s self-image as a person-in-becoming who can help himself. Not only has he now distanced himself emotionally from his mother but also he has genuinely emancipated himself. Now a child experiences: “I am someone” and this experiential residue is added to his possessed experience and this results in the fact that not only will he no longer remain what he is but *will become* further.

c. *Legs and feet*

On the average, a child learns to walk at 14 months but “... one seldom sees the flow and ease of movement which are referred to as grace in walking and running until the child is five”.⁽⁴⁾

During the late pre-school years drastic changes occur in bodily proportions such that a chubby pre-school child turns into an agile school child.⁽⁵⁾ It is during this phase that a child often must hear how “big” he has become. Recognition of his progress in becoming by an adult is a great source of happiness. Not only does this stabilize his pathic-affective disposition of lived experiencing, but this includes the cognitive side in that adults properly notice and grasp that he also is becoming adult.

Now the child not only can run and kick with grace and ease but can participate in games while he performs these skills. Once again, this opens new experiential possibilities for a child. The whole sphere of adult sport now appears on his horizon and he not only makes attempts to enter a new world of play with older children, but he also attributes new meanings to his old toys. (This aspect will be dealt with in greater detail below).

By exercising his mastery of his gross muscle movements, a child shows that indeed he is “ someone who gladly wants to become someone”. He is involved with mastering new life contents and as a

consequence he is learning and becoming different from what he was – he emancipates to a higher level of becoming than where he was before he had acquired such new possessed experiences.

A child who can enter his world with an increasing degree of bodily control becomes continually less dependent on his fellow persons, his physical surroundings are less threatening and confusing and accordingly he has a favorable experience of himself as a person.

Each pleasant and successful attempt at physical activity by a child is lived experienced as meaningful and results in an experiential residue that implies that on further confrontation with similar situations he will strive to master new heights.

Such an emotional attunement toward himself and especially his physical potentialities implies that at school entry he can joyfully meet the greater demands placed on his physical skills. Motor play has a great role in the life of each child, but especially a school child, so that lived experienced successes in this area meaningfully supplements his experiential world and he daringly looks to the future. The favorable pathic-affective preformed field that thus has arisen makes it possible for a child to enter the more gnostic-cognitive world of a school beginner.

In a Western culture, and specifically the contemporary South African milieu, a high premium is placed on motor skills of boys. It is expected of each boy that he show an interest and certain skillfulness in sports. Also, sheer physical power is seen as an asset. Already from the pre-school years, and to a continually increasing degree during the beginning of his school career, each boy is carefully watched for any signs of physical excellence.

Little girls, in contrast, can be less motor proficient without “negative” meaning being attributed to them or their fellow persons. As long as they are within the limits of what is acceptable, they are accepted. Although a girl is under less societal pressure to communicate motor achievement, the value of a “positive” view of herself on the basis of her-bodily-being-in-the-world is no less important. Hurlock cites Havighurst who says: “To an increasing extent, a child’s conception of himself is tied up with the skills he

has. It is as though his acceptance of himself comes in part from his ability to master different forms of the world outside”.⁽⁶⁾

2.1.2 *Play*

Play is one of those phenomena regarding human existence that, because of the complexity of its nature, cannot readily be included in a definition. There have been multiple⁽⁷⁾ attempts at definitions and most are oversimplified or so broad and vague as to be meaningless. Discussions of the essence and nature of childlike play are not relevant here. In the following there is only reference to those aspects of childlike play that provide a pre-school child with an opportunity to establish relationships with the self.

For a child, play clearly is the way in which he carries on a dialogue with his world. In his play he makes his experiential world knowable and the extent to which he has actualized the potentialities of his psychic life, i.e. his level of having become, can be read from his play. Thus, in his play, a child also makes his experiential world knowable to his educator.

Play not only offers a child an opportunity to project his meanings but also to attribute new meanings and establish new relationships, including with himself. He has excellent opportunity, by re-experiencing them (in play) to assimilate those experiences that have been connected, e.g., to labile or even impulsive pathic-affective lived experiences and/or unordered gnostic-cognitive lived experiences and in doing so to add them to his possessed experiences in what is to him a more acceptable form.

A child's world of play, indeed, is an unreal world that is established momentarily, and results in nothing as a result of the play, but also it is decidedly bound to reality and consequently is subject to limits. One of the factors that influences its limits is a child's potentialities and shortcomings.

Play offers a child the opportunity to arrive at self-knowledge, to become aware of what he is able to do or not.

Not only does a child arrive at self-knowledge through play, but he also has the opportunity to acquire self-confidence because he is in

the secure space of his world of play where he himself can determine the course, tempo and limits, he can risk venturing, exploring, distancing, differentiating, objectifying and eventually emancipating to a new level of becoming. In his world of play he can with security and at his own discretion associate with those things that in the real world are still less known and possibly even appear threatening. This offers him the opportunity to put alternative solutions to the test without having to fear the consequences of failing. A child has the opportunity to take pride in the achievements that he attains in situations where he sets the demands himself. Play also offers excellent opportunity to supplement the awareness of his own dignity and worth.

A child in the transition phase from pre-school to school child is still in the world in a primarily emotional way⁽⁸⁾ and in his becoming has not yet reached the level where he can distance himself from his own emotions enough to distinguish and objectify them by verbalizing them. As soon as a child can differentiate and name his emotions, this shows that he has reached a level of becoming where he is able to attribute gnostic-cognitive sense and meaning. A child in this phase has not yet reached this level. Nevertheless, also in his daily life he is overcome by emotions of joy, anxiety, sorrow, rage, weariness, etc. Now play offers the opportunity to bring these vague, undefined feelings to expression by projecting them. Constructive play and illusive role play for which a child now shows a preference, superbly lends itself to self-expression: "Fantasy play is a very important form of learning because a child exerts himself and allows the play to progress such that it gives rise to a fruitful tension and inner rest [Het fantasiespel is een zeer belangrijke vorm van leren doordat het kind zich inspant en zijn spel zo te laten verlopen dat het vreugde ontspanning en innerlijke rust geeft]" according to Nijkamp.⁽⁹⁾ In his play a child arrives at pathic rest and equilibrium and in such a way reestablishes his self-respect and self-regard.

When a child enters the school world (and in cases where he enters a pre-school so much earlier), necessarily he comes into contact with age mates. He then especially is given the opportunity for group play. True playing together such as occurs with puerile children is still alien to a pre-school child. Rather, playing with

mates entails more a playing next to each other than with each other. In this connection, Bladergroen mentions: “Real communication, even in conversations, is still only sporadically present; they carry on a monologue with each other [Werklijke communicatie, zelfs in de gesprekken, is nog maar aanwezig; ze houden monologen tegen elkaar].”⁽¹⁰⁾ Nevertheless, a pre-school child now has the opportunity to acquire his own standpoint in the group because now he can compare his own potentialities and achievements with those of his mates. In playing together, often for the first time he is offered the opportunity to see his potentialities in perspective. Especially a youngest, oldest, only children and late additions to a family incline to a “distorted” view of their own excellences and shortcomings.

Thus, play is an outstanding medium by which a child acquires an opportunity for self-criticism, self-valuing and building up possessed experiences regarding his own human dignity.

2.1.3 *Language*

As with play, language is a phenomenon difficult to define. Stander arrives at the following preliminary description: “*Language is then a multidimensional symbol-form system, intentional outcome of the psychic-spiritual dimension of being human and his dialoging with his world: It is a phenomenon carried by one’s willing, affect and intelligence, and, as such, as a human phenomenon, it is a human being’s most subjective possession.*”⁽¹¹⁾

At birth a human being is a completely helpless being and is totally dependent on his fellow persons. Each child actually is born with psychic life potentialities. Within an adequate educative situation it then is possible for a child to realize and use these potentialities.

As mentioned earlier, experiencing is the original way of being in the world, it is the first turning to and reaching knowledge about the surrounding life reality.⁽¹²⁾ As soon as a child announces himself on earth, he begins to *learn* and consequently also to *become* to the extent that he actualizes his primordially given intentionality.

Initially, a child lived experiences reality as being global-diffuse. It is obvious that a child’s lived experiences, that still are primarily

pathic, will be impulsive and that his initial gnostic lived experiences will appear extremely unordered because at birth there are no psychic possessed experiences available. Systematically, to the extent that his pathic lived experiences are stabilized and the gnostic aspect becomes more ordered, experiential residues occur that are given meaning during moments of lived experiencing and that congeal into possessed experiences. From this, Van der Stoep says that “childlike lived experiences essentially are congealed experiences”.⁽¹³⁾

With the actualization of a possessed experience, it is possible for a child to differentiate, to objectify, etc. and because of that he gradually builds up a frame of reference in the form of a possessed experiences against which he can evaluate new lived experiences, and he can also name them. When a child verbalizes something, i.e., uses language, this serves as evidence of the becoming that has occurred. A child not only reflects in his language his state of becoming and possessed knowledge but also his experiential world. The relationships a child has established, also with himself, can be read from his language.

With a young child language is going to be paired with physical activity; he provides a running commentary of his movements and play, he thinks aloud and his linguistic expressions have the character of a monologue. What he says is of great interest to himself because he doesn't really talk to others so much as he talks in the presence of others. Such a tendency lasts up to the late pre-school years and then gradually disappears. This seldom occurs before the beginning of the first year of school.

From his language it seems clear that a child now links himself with his interests, and they are central themes of his thoughts: “Like the adult, the child talks about the things that are most important to him and thus we know what his dominant interests are”.⁽¹⁴⁾ And a pre-school child seldom talks about subjects other than what he himself is involved with. For example, he cannot yet distance himself from and objectify to the extent that he readily can engage in abstract thinking. This latter tendency, i.e., a more cognitive signifying of reality, presents itself as a potentiality at or about the seventh year of age. A child then shows evidence of an increasing

interest in acquiring knowledge in gnostic-cognitive ways. This phenomenon directs a very specific appeal to his educators, a matter attended to in the following chapter.

Also, a young child hardly is in a position for accountable self-criticism, first because of his deficient possessed experiences regarding his own and other person's potentialities and second because he still signifies his world pathic-affectively to such an extent that he cannot sufficiently distance himself from his own involvement to make comparisons in gnostic-cognitive ways. He does not see his own failures as such but attributes their origin to others. For example, he immediately blames another child when he himself has stumbled. The fact that such blaming cannot be rationally justified passes by the child. He does not yet signify the situation in an ordered cognitive way. His linguistic expressions give clear evidence of this. Thus, when he is tired and sleepy, he doesn't identify this, as such, but directs a stream of blame at others that they annoy him.⁽¹⁵⁾

On school entry there is a dramatic change in a child's interpretation of his own potentialities. Buhler cites the following finding of Pearl Greenberg: "Spontaneous negative self-criticism makes its first appearance at 6-7 years in 10 per cent of the cases in comparison with 70 per cent of self-praise".⁽¹⁶⁾

Owing to the more formal nature of his situation in a schoolroom, there is an increase in occasions for experiencing his own potentialities and shortcomings in comparison with those of age mates who are subjected to the same demands. It occurs commonly that children in the beginning classes provide negative verbal criticism of themselves and their attempts. A child expresses his alleged inability and makes his disapproval of his attempts known, e.g., by asking if he might turn the page and begin again or by erasing it – if need be with his finger! Anything is no longer good or is simply beautiful because he has done it himself.

Very quickly a school beginner now acquires his own position within the group in connection with his own view of himself. He is ready to become involved in a serious argument when he thinks he is underestimated by another, but can just as honestly say what he

cannot do well. Now he no longer thinks and says that in all respects he is the most exemplary child.

Thus, it seems clear that there is a big change in the relationship established with himself in the course of his becoming from a pre-school to a school child. However, this is a transition or indeed a leap that does not merely progress. All children do not actualize this change without adversity. During this transition phase there are far-reaching demands placed on the primary (parents) and secondary (teachers) educators with respect to providing adequate support. (See chapter IV).

With school entry a pre-school child, by law, is separated from his parents for the first time and placed in a formally ordered group of age mates. His lifeworld is radically changed and with that so are his possibilities for experiencing. A child now is confronted with situations he cannot avoid. A more cognitive attunement is expected of him to the extent that he proceeds in his school career. The quality of educating he has received previously and his own readiness for self-actualization are tested to the extreme, but this also immediately creates a new need for his educators to support him in normative, affective and cognitive ways in order to make possible a safe passage through this phase of becoming.

Stander indicates that the acquisition of “literacy” opens a new area for experiencing.⁽¹⁷⁾ Indeed, he says: “In his continuing discovery, acquisition and mastery of language, a developing child finds a level of security and new safe mobility that is difficult to over estimate”. With this the author eagerly will add, specifically with respect to a child’s relationship to himself: *provided his educators identify his need and support him to adequate self-actualization.*

2.2 The child in relationship to others

The relationships with fellow persons that a child finds himself in during his becoming from a pre-school to a school child are complex. For the first time in his life out of necessity he now is exposed to formal, artificially established relationships. Before proceeding to a penetration of a child’s actualization of his psychic life in relationship to other persons, as this manifests itself in a

child's bodily-being-in-the-world, play and language, a framework is given of the scope of these relationships with fellow persons:

2.2.1 *The scope of relationships with fellow persons in which a child is involved*

The first is a child in relationship with adults, among which are:

- a) known adults, e.g., his parents, family and friends,
- b) unknown adults with whom he must establish a relatively permanent relationship, e.g., his pre-school teachers, primary school teachers and possible others who are concerned about a child's transportation, supervision and care,
- c) unknown adults with whom a child must establish a fleeting relationship, e.g., random visitors, shopkeepers, etc.

The second is a child also is in relationship with other children among which are:

- d) his brothers and/or sisters older than himself,
- e) his brothers and/or sisters younger than himself,
- f) known mates older than himself,
- g) known mates younger than himself,
- h) unknown children older than himself,
- i) unknown children younger than himself.

When in the following a child's bodily-being-in-the-world is discussed, the above interpersonal relationships continually must be kept in mind.

2.2.2 *Bodily-being-in-the-world*

As shown in section 2.1.1 above, a child now experiences an accelerated increase in skillfulness regarding bodily control. Not only does he please himself with this but he eagerly demonstrates this skillfulness to adults, especially his parents. Ad nauseam, he will insist that his parents look at how fast he can run, how far he can jump on one leg or how high in a tree he can climb. This tendency reaches a highpoint by school entry. Then a child continually tries to get his teachers to pay individual attention to him by demonstrating his motor skills. He repeatedly will show how

nicely he can draw or in group singing he will try to elevate his voice above the others. In doing so he tries to win a teacher's affection. It is only with great difficulty that a school beginner suppresses this desire and learns to be still and proceed with his work. In a class context he is in a position to compare his achievements with that of others and he continually harbors the fear that his individual excellence will go unnoticed. Not only does he want to listen to himself sing but he wants to be sure that his teacher also listens to him. This awakens in him the sensing of a safe, secure learning space within which he can proceed to perceiving, thinking, imagining, fantasizing and remembering. When he pathic-affectively senses security, this enables him to actualize his intelligence on a more gnostic-cognitive level.

Also, a child not only claims the attention of his teachers via his body, but he also has a strong need for physical pampering and contact. A child will lived experience senso-pathically that his educators are devoted to, accept and cherish him. Only by building up adequate possessed experiences in this respect will he be so stable in his lived experiencing that he will emancipate from a predominantly senso-pathic to a more pathic and even affective level of giving meaning.

During the time a child reaches his second school year it is a sufficient indication of a favorable relationship if his teachers only look at or smile at him. No longer does he need to be touched by her to be sure of her goodwill.

In the presence of unfamiliar adults, a young child is physically more distant because at first glance there is not an intuitive sensing of acceptance. For him it is even a source of confusion if a stranger physically touches him. However, he notices their height, teeth or skillfulness, and nevertheless this remains a joy and it creates an emotionally favorable preformed field from which a child dares to venture with self-confidence to explore this unknown relationship.

During this phase, he is so aware of an approving or disapproving look directed at him as a person by adults that he even begins to pay attention to his personal appearance. He insists on dressing himself, bathing and caring for his hair. Even a visit to a

barbershop is no longer the struggle it was before. Girls especially are very fond of caring for their hair; ribbons, decorations and hair bands are a source of great pride for them.

A child also establishes relationships with other children via his body and they mutually explore their relationship by physically doing things with each other. Even though at this stage there is no genuine playing together [cooperating] or talking together [conversing], they are involved with each other and thus create a piece of common lifeworld. The one chases the other around aimlessly. They climb in the same tree or ride on the same swing. For boys wrestling is extremely popular because of the sheer mutual physical contact and opportunity to exhibit decency. The outcome of the “combat” is entirely unimportant – rules are almost non-existent or merely improvised at the moment.

A child is not merely aware of his own body, but apprizes his mates in the same light. Often there is disapproval expressed of another child because of his physical appearance. The opposite also is true: A child feels attracted to another who for him appears physically exquisite and acceptable.

This inclination is observed very clearly in contact with an unfamiliar child. If at first glance a strange person looks extremely unacceptable, a child makes no attempt to establish a firm relationship. From this it seems clear of the importance of the pathic mode of learning *sensing* is for a pre-school child and school beginner. If he attributes negative meaning on a pathic-affective level of lived experiencing, this leads to such possessed experiences that he will not explore further and the situation will not be given meaning on a more gnostic level. Thus, the building up of more comprehensive, adequate, broader possessed experiencing in this respect thus becomes impeded. A five and a half year old remarked to this author that he would not like another child because he had warts, and with that the matter was settled.

Because a child places such a high premium on bodiliness and physical skillfulness, he has a great admiration for older children. Gender preferences are not expressed so clearly. Towards the onset of this phase, boys start to show a decided preference for being with

older boys. From the beginning they even are inclined to play with older girls, provided they encounter them in their own characteristic physical ways. Young girls seldom turn to boy mates, but they try to get the attention and goodwill of an older girl. A school beginner experiences that she is accepted when an older schoolmate holds her hand or comes and sits next to her. During recess at school grade I girls often follow in a group behind any older girl who doesn't mind.

These ways of establishing relationships with other children, also with known mates of the same age, are clearly observable when children have the opportunity to establish relationships on their own initiative. During recesses on the playground or in the daytime at home, they do not pursue one of the traditional child games such as hide-and-peek, but rather run around with them, go drink water together, or spontaneously chase each other around. The pleasure of being together is found in being-physically-active together.

2.2.3 *Play*

It has been shown that a child learns to know himself by playing, but play also is an outstanding medium for establishing relationships with others: "A child develops himself while playing, discovers himself in his involvement in play, discovers the world and fellow persons in his playful contact with them [Het kind ontwikkelt zich al spelend, ontdekt zich zelf in het spelend bezig zijn, ontdekt de wereld en de medemens in het spelend contact]."⁽¹⁸⁾

Where the levels of becoming of a pre-school child and a school beginner still are such that they are not yet able to establish relationships with others in their world primarily via language, play is the obvious means of communication: "From an early age there is a dialogue between child and world and play is one of its most meaningful forms".⁽¹⁹⁾

During the transition phase from pre-school to school child, indeed individual play comes to the fore, but such a child manifests a particular need for playmates. However, there is not yet any sign of group or team play.

This child often tries to play with his parents but one very quickly realizes that play between an adult and a child is of shorter duration and progresses differently than play between children. A child already is aware that there are definite limits with respect to the times and places that an adult becomes involved in play. When a child establishes a relationship with an adult via play, the adult sometimes is inclined to entirely assume the initiative and purposefully direct a child to certain discoveries. (Compare with the Montessori method of teaching).⁽²⁰⁾

Milly Almy says: "... too often attempts at cooperative exploration of the implications of the idea that children really learn in nursery school have come to nothing or have ended in mutual distrust. Many different factors contributed to this state of affairs, but perhaps most crucial has been a lack of mutual understanding of the nature and function of play in the cognitive life of the young child".⁽²¹⁾ Many adults communicate further under the mistaken belief that they play with a child while informally giving them assignments. With genuine play, the outcome of the activity is always of minor importance, the co-players maintain mutual initiative in changing the course of the play or ending it. Mutual enjoyment and goodwill are essences of true play.

A suckling and even a toddler are in a favorable position to genuinely play with their parents. However, when a child becomes a pre-school child and stands at the threshold of school entry, parents often take a confusing attitude toward playing with their child. Play becomes seen as a golden opportunity for him to "learn a few things".

Also, it is when a child is ready to put aside his playful attitude and can show for relatively long periods of time a more matter of fact attitude toward assignments that he continually shows school readiness.⁽²²⁾

Initially, a school beginner, just as a pre-school child does at home or in the pre-school, attempts to establish a relationship of play with his teachers. This presents a large task to both his parents and teachers.

Because a child during his becoming from a pre-school to a school child so strongly explores his world emotionally, and because *sensing* has an important place as a mode of learning, parents and other adult who do not genuinely play, seldom succeed in leading a child by the hand; emotionally a child senses that “play” indeed is a sugar coated pill, and no matter how pleasant this might be, they continually yearn for true play and turn to his mates. Even children whose parents often “play with him” still ask to go play with other children.

By playing with another child a child gradually learns to be charitable, to give and take turns and to respect the rights and dignity of another as much as his own: “At first, the nursery school child treats other children as things. Gradually he learns ‘what potential play content can be admitted only to fantasy, and only to play be and with oneself, and what contents can be shared with others’”.⁽²³⁾

Those norms and values that are expressed in specific ways of behaving and that make ordered human co-existence possible are tested by a child in his play. In their educative intervention with their child, parents hold certain norms before him as proper and play offers him the opportunity to test them. If it is useful and true to life lessons that a parent has taught his child, he finds them useful in his play with mates and assimilates them. In his play with mates a child now also acquires the opportunity to test, in security and following his own initiative, all of those aspects of co-existential relationships that are going to promote his future entrance into the community and society. In play he exercises all of those dispositions, actions, restrictions, etc. that he is going to exercise as an adult facing his fellow humans.

A pre-school child who has experienced the joys and sorrows of fellow human contact has taken a step forward in his becoming a school child and has learned lessons of life that will serve him well in his becoming adult.

2.2.4 *Language*

A pre-school child becoming a school child manifests his experiential world in his language. A penetration of his verbal

communication with his fellow persons and his comments and observations about them give an observer an image of how he treats his fellow persons and his relationships with them.⁽²⁴⁾

His language acquisition is so fast and comprehensive that a closer demarcation within this phase is possible. The aim in no sense is to draw watertight distinctions but the language of a child during the onset of his pre-school phase differs so much from a child who has covered his first school year, especially with respect to interpersonal relationships, that a closer demarcation is meaningful.

Regarding a child's relationship to his parents during the beginning phase of the pre-school year, from his language it is clear that particularly now he identifies himself with them.⁽²⁵⁾ He readily boasts to others about them and their possessions and quotes them as authorities. He eagerly pleases his parents with his verbal skills and plays with sounds by forming lists of rhyming words. At about 5 years of age he readily expresses himself verbally and he will express in words his feelings about his parents.⁽²⁶⁾

Provided a child has obtained the needed pathic-affective stability for him to distance himself from his mother on school entry he is able to assume a more cognitive attunement. Thus, he has reached such a level of becoming that he can manifest the potentialities of his psychic life in a form of being distanced. For example, he questions his mother's orders or refuses to carry them out. Apparently, he now has become impudent, contradictory and uncooperative with his mother.⁽²⁷⁾ Indeed, he experiences his emancipation to a more independent person. Now he continually becomes more someone himself, explores the world outside of the home and acquires knowledge and insights that lead to a new awareness of his own identity.

Consequently, he has arrived at a degree of differentiation where some distancing is possible. However, he has not yet reached the level of becoming where objectivity regarding his relationship with his mother is possible. A school beginner's habitual attunement to the reality he enters via experiencing it, remains primarily emotional: "Since a school beginner participates in his lifeworld mainly in a pathic way of lived experiencing, there is little

fortification of the self via language as an emotional means of verbalization".⁽²⁸⁾

This tendency does not appear towards the father.⁽²⁹⁾ For a child, mother personifies the familiar home situation, what he is trying to move away from, while father symbolizes the unfamiliar outer world. As he enters the world outside of the home by experiencing it and as he lived experiences more gnostic-cognitively, a child moves closer to father.

That a child now is involved in making room for his own place to stand, and to acquire this within intimate groups,⁽³⁰⁾ he inquires of those interested in him about his family and origins. He especially asks his grandparents questions. His reference to them gives signs that he is aware that he is related to them in many particular ways, in contrast to other adults.

Regarding unfamiliar adults, his relationship with them remains something he explores with hesitation. His possessed experiences indicate to him his own dependence, awkwardness and inability to communicate adequately verbally with unfamiliar adults without the help of a supporting adult. So often while he was younger, unfamiliar adults did not understand him and his verbal expressions still are still so inadequate that he will not converse readily with strangers. Under the look of an unfamiliar adult, he experiences his inability to such an extent on a pathic level that he falls back on his body, he bows his head, he sucks his fingers and his voice dwindles.

Where a school beginner shows a willingness to enter the world of things on a more gnostic-cognitive level of attributing meaning, the world of relationships with adults remains for a long time on a much lower level of lived experiencing.

This propensity also is noticed in his linguistic expressions about his teachers. He is ready to greet and converse with her but shows a degree of reservation that is not found in his discussions with mates.

Although a school beginner (as doe a pre-school child in a pre-school) communicates with age mates, continually he demands

individual attention from his teachers and refers to her as “my teacher”. He does not yet at all feel committed to the group. It is only at the beginning of the puerile phase (about 9 years) that he refers to the teacher as “our teacher”.

In the presence of his mates he talks with great ease but at them rather than with them. Exceptions to this are when ill will arises or when a child tries to monopolize the attention of a friend. During the first school year each child yearns for a “best friend”. The fact that he does not yet feel self-assured about his own acceptability is an additional indication of deficient distancing and objectifying. Friendships seldom are enduring and continually change. If a child is asked about the reasons for this, his linguistic expressions are evidence of his extremely emotional attunement. In this regard, in his linguistic expressions he seldom gives evidence of thinking or imagining as particularized ways of actualizing learning-as – experiencing. They usually remain limited to sensing and, at most, perceiving. Also, here the adults who have pedagogical responsibility for the child have a big task. (Also see chapter IV).

In the family context, a child’s relationships with other children are no less tumultuous. Initially he is disposed to let himself be “mothered” by older brothers and sisters but towards his fourth year he teases them and shortly after he cheerfully fights with them. Although a child at this age possesses a relatively extensive vocabulary, arguments often result in merely repeating words or a phrase that is offensive. From this it is concluded that a child is aware of his own place and rights within the family circle. Although he admires and strives to identify himself with them, he is still awkward in his interpersonal relationships.

Outside of the family it seldom happens that a child argues and fights with older children and rather seeks fellowship and befriends them.

From his relationship with younger children his deficient potentialities for differentiating and distancing appear. He often demands the same behavioral privileges from his parents as younger children enjoy. However, shortly before beginning school he can be protective of and affectionate towards a younger child,

but when he has already become a school child there is a drastic change because now he is domineering and bossy towards young ones. This phenomenon has to do with the *new life knowledge a child has acquired through his experiencing outside of the home situation*. He now entertains a conscious knowing of his richer possessed experiences and continually tries to elevate his own human dignity by disparaging a younger child.

The linguistic expressions of a pre-school child who is becoming a school child offer a sympathetic listener a way of penetrating his experiential world.

2.3 The child in relationship to things

2.3.1 Introduction

For the purpose of this study, the following organization of the world-of-“things” is offered as it makes itself knowable in the everyday lifeworld of a child.

a) **Concrete things**, including the following:

- (i) his own possessions such as toys, books, clothing and other useful objects,
- (ii) shared possessions such as family furniture, pet animals, plants, etc. as well as public things,
- (iii) possessions of strangers such as other children’s books, pencils, toys or other adult’s belongings.

b) **Abstract things** in the lifeworld with which a child comes into contact, including the following:

- (i) concepts such as love, rage, sorrow and other feelings,
- (ii) norms and values that are addressed to him from his specific cultural heritage, e.g., obedience, loyalty, civility,
- (iii) sound-, number- and music-symbols that also are culture-bound.

With these provisional attempts at structuring, no claim of completeness is made. The purpose only is to order the terrain of things in a child's lifeworld to such an extent that it is feasible to accommodate it within the limited context of this study.

In what follows, the "thing"-world of a child will be penetrated in terms of bodily-being-in-the-world, play and language as was done with the other relationships:

2.3.2 *Bodily-being-in-the-world*

Experiencing by way of exploring the physical environment via the body is one of the most obvious activities of a young child. It is a way of being that continually is present in a child's becoming, but particularly so in a phase within which he does not yet signify his world in a habitually cognitive way.

A pre-school child becoming a school child is, as already shown, primarily in the world emotionally. The more cognitive modes of learning such as thinking, imagining and fantasizing indeed are used in his becoming via experiencing, but not primarily. He is still strongly inclined to vacillate between a pathic-affective and a sensoripathic level of lived experiencing in his giving meaning to things and as such establishing relationships via bodiliness, is of cardinal importance for a pre-school child becoming a school child: "They want to touch, smell, taste, see and hear everything. The more they learn, the more they want to learn".⁽³¹⁾

Sensory experiencing is of obvious importance via sensing, perceiving and observing, as particularized ways of actualizing learning as bringing forth actualized psychic life potentialities. This does not involve "describing the sense organs as 'channels' or points of contact by which a child receives stimuli from the outer world. No less is this a matter of the physiological side of sensorial processes. More particularly the question is how does a child, in his childlike being, lived experience when he contacts his world via his sense organs".⁽³²⁾ Of further importance is which experiential residues does he add to his possessed experiences. For a discussion of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, grasping, reaching and pointing as experienced bodiliness there is reference to the work of Sonnekus.⁽³³⁾

Rich possessed experiences from associating bodily with concrete objects in the lifeworld are necessary for giving adequate meaning to these objects on a continually higher level of becoming. In other words, to actualize becoming by way of exploring, differentiating, distancing, objectifying and emancipating it is necessary that a child learn about the concrete things in his lifeworld. Only when his possessed experiences are enriched as a result of sensing, perceiving and viewing is a child able to adequately actualize thinking, fantasizing, imagining and remembering. The latter modes of learning make a strong appeal to a child's potentiality for abstraction: "For a child to understand the concept of 'roundness' he must first have experiences with real round things".⁽³⁴⁾ That abstract thinking follows thinking on schematic and on concrete levels is generally accepted. (See the theory of layers or levels of consciousness of the Cologne school of the psychology of thinking.)⁽³⁵⁾

The connections and coherencies among rich possessed experiences and willing as a direction-giving intentionality as well as lived experiencing in light of previous experiences, that result in the attainment of further knowledge, are so close that Piaget even views intelligence as an accumulation of experiences. According to him, experiencing is one of the ways in which "intellectual growth" is promoted.⁽³⁶⁾

This point of view cannot be agreed with mainly because it testifies to a naturalistically oriented [philosophical] anthropology and that it amounts to an oversimplification of the phenomena of experiencing and intelligence. Important aspects such as a child's own openness, directedness and intentionality, i.e., his own role in his becoming, are ignored. However, it must be agreed that adequate possessed experiences that evidence affective stability and cognitive order create a favorable preformed field for actualizing intelligence. (See C. A. van der Merwe's work in this regard.)⁽³⁷⁾

These days particular emphasis is placed on sensory perception as a basis for learning. In this connection Lowenfeld says: "It is only through the senses that learning can take place", and further on, "Schools have done little to educate the senses that are our only

avenue of learning”.⁽³⁸⁾ Also Grove agrees with this: “The method used to educate pupils to school readiness amounts mainly to developing the perceptual skills of a child”.⁽³⁹⁾

This standpoint also points to an oversimplification of learning and becoming in that it absolutizes the importance of establishing bodily relationships with the world and assumes that childlike becoming actualizes itself because sensory perception occurs. With this, perceiving via the body is absolutized. As Armstrong⁽⁴⁰⁾ shows, there are more ways of perceiving than only sensory perceiving. He mentions a “higher” type of perceiving that he calls categorical perceiving or viewing.⁽⁴²⁾

That more modes of learning can be distinguished as well as the importance of emotional stability as a precondition for the adequate actualization of learning are stated clearly by Sonnekus and his co-workers.⁽⁴³⁾

That a child actualizes his psychic life potentialities further can be inferred from the fact that he learns and consequently becomes (different). The real act of perceiving, as a way of learning, cannot be studied individually. Thus, Coetzee says, with reference to Brentano, that: “each psychological act is accompanied by knowing, being conscious that we perform the act. When we hear a sound, then we are aware that we hear, but we only perceive the sound, not the process of hearing”.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Then Coetzee also points out that lived experiencing is a momentary event within the stream of experiencing: “Through reflecting, however, it is possible to subsequently select out the lived experiencing of hearing from the whole of experiencing and attend to it”.⁽⁴⁵⁾

The same holds for the other modes of learning. It is not possible for us to determine how the events of thinking, fantasizing, etc. are actualized. It can be said on which level they are actualized and what their quality is. However, that a child actualizes these modes of learning appears in the fact that he becomes.

What can be said without fear of contradiction is that a child’s experiencing via bodily-being-in-the-world indeed is the way in which he establishes relationships with concrete objects in his

lifeworld. The quality of the sense and meaning given to these concrete things, whether the attribution of open or personal meaning, largely is influenced by the normative education in which a child is involved.

Because of a pre-school child's propensity for physical activity, he takes an interest in toys where he can use gross muscle movements. A climbing pole, a swing, a scooter, a rope ladder, pushcart and tricycle are preferred toys: "His exploration of his own skills and power can give rise to a child venturing into dangerous situations".⁽⁴⁶⁾

By his fifth year a child is reasonably well acquainted with the immediate surroundings, provided his pedagogical situation looks favorable. For a short time he is satisfied to assimilate the experiential residues he has undergone to his ordered possessed experiences. A child finds much delight in the familiar and known. He is attached to his own bed, own chair [or place at the table] and a favorite toy.

To the extent that a child is school ready and experiences a greater skillfulness of hands and wrists he also shows an interest in paper, pencil, scissors and paste. His creations, however, attest to the concreteness of his thinking.

By now a child has emancipated to such an extent that he no longer primarily is attuned to exploring the world of concrete things sensorially and now he can look at something without also wanting to grasp and taste it. However, his lived experiencing is unstable or if he is emotionally shocked he immediately falls back on a lower level of lived experiencing and often is thrown back to his body. Thus, many parents find that their child complains of stomachaches or fatigue when he cannot meet the demands of the moment. If a classroom in the beginning school year is full of tension, pencils, bows and hankies are chewed on and crumpled up irrespective of the original aim. Then a child gives sense and meaning to "objects-for-me" in a highly personal way and this dominates giving any open meaning to which he has already come.

If, however, the pedagogical situation of a child is so favorable that he can lived experience in an emotionally stable way, his attribution of open meaning to concrete objects shows a rise in level—he then carries on a dialogue with his world on a higher level. Now his ball no longer merely is an object with which he amuses himself but from his physical association with it an understanding arises of the place a ball assumes in the adult world. The same holds for a pair of scissors, a pen and other familiar objects.

Toward the end of this phase, i.e., during the first year of school, there is a decrease in physical activity and a child can explore the world of things in such a cognitively distanced way that he can use imagining and fantasizing as particularized ways of actualizing the potentialities of his psychic life. Now he also can experience adequately in other ways than bodily to an extent that his teachers can increasingly lead him into the world of abstract symbols.

2.3.3 *Play*

One of the essences of child play is that it is free from obligations. The pleasure of playing is in the activity itself and not so much in its result. If specific knowledge is acquired in this way, it occurs in an unplanned way. As soon as one or another of the participants directs play so that certain discoveries are made necessary, the play[fullness] is violated and it is changed into a task that is carried out informally.

Now the question arises if genuine play, as a way of teaching, can be done justice in a primary school where a child must acquire particular knowledge in a specific amount of time. Bladergroen bluntly says: “the activities carried out in the sphere of play, however, are free from any obligations (De handelinge in de spelsfeer verricht, zijn echter vrij van elke plicht)”.⁽⁴⁷⁾

A person always plays with *something* (however, the something can be another person): “Playing is being active with things and with fellow persons (Spelen is actief zijn, met de dingend, met de medemens)”.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Play provides enjoyment and consequently a positive emotional attunement arises in a child. If given the opportunity for uninterrupted playing to explore, this stabilizes his pathic-affective giving meaning to his experiencing such that,

indeed, he creates a favorable preformed field for actualizing his more gnostic modes of learning. A child attends, lingers by what his wondering awakens.⁽⁴⁹⁾

In this light, it can be understood why play is such a serious situation for a playing child. It has many implications for his educators, both parents and teachers. (See chapter IV).

Bladergroen mentions that the transition from pre-school to school child clearly is the phase within which a child, by experiencing, explores the world via playing experimentally. This progresses on the following levels⁽⁵⁰⁾

- a) Acquaintance with the characteristics of things. No symbolic values are ascribed.
- b) The changeableness of things. Sand, clay, paper, etc. assume different forms when rolled, pressed or squeezed. Even the form of structured play materials can be changed by “breaking” them; “A human child discovers something fundamental: the changeableness of the world (Het menskind ontdekt dn iets fundamenteels: de veranderlijkheid van de wereld)”.⁽⁵¹⁾ It is unique to a human being, and also a child, that he continually tries to change his surroundings by creating or transforming something according to his own needs. In this light “breaking” and “creating” are opposite sides of the same form of play.
- c) Constructive play has the unmistakable character of imitating. From unstructured material such as sand, clay and paper or structured material such as cardboard boxes, small boards and blocks a child builds something. In order to actualize imagining as a mode of learning, a child must be so emotionally stable that he dare to explore and wants to test and use the possibilities of the play material. If a child is confronted with the limitations of his own possibilities or those of the play material, he must once again resort to imagining improvising to make it available to him. This directs a strong appeal to his potentialities for giving cognitive meaning. Actualizing his fantasizing, as a mode of learning, in his constructive play means he once

again experiences in gnostic ways because he brings about something new, something with which he had not yet been familiar in reality. The imitative character has now abated.

d) Imitative play: Here the following forms also are distinguished:

- (i) Self-imitation occurs when a child is pleased and satisfied with his own attempts and repeats them.
- (ii) Imitating others, whether a person, an animal or a moving object. This has a symbolic character and shows that a child has progressed in his becoming such that he differentiates and objectifies. In this, a child gives evidence of a potential for abstract thinking. Bladergroen says: “In imitating, one of the arsenals of experiencing is consolidated into knowledge of a thing and its function (In de imitatie word een arsenal van ervaringen geconsolideerd tot kennis van de dingen en hun functie)”.⁽⁵²⁾ In imitating, a child gives evidence of his lived experiences and with their consolidation into possessed experiences he arrives at knowledge. Thus he has learned and genuinely experienced something.
- (iii) Fantasy play: In this form of play a child creates a world according to his own desires. He creates an unreal world that is controllable, one in which he rules and is master. In fantasy play a child not only creates new relationships with things but also gives signs of existing relationships. In his fantasy world, nonetheless, he is aware of limits of the real world. He will not really chew a piece of cardboard under the fancy that it is chocolate. He practices handling, ordering, grouping and manipulating things that in the real world are inaccessible to him.

Vermeer makes the following divisions of child play^{®53)}

- a) The world of play as bodily world
- b) The world of play as manipulable world
- c) The world of play as esthetic world
- d) The world of play as illusive (make believe) world

Van Wyk⁽⁵⁴⁾ implies that there is a heightening of level from a) to d) and the ideal is that (pathic-affectively) stable children in favorable pedagogical situations will play on the illusive level. However, there cannot be agreement with this standpoint since such a view does not take into account a child's level of becoming. A toddler and also a puerile child seldom engage in illusive play. Illusive play is not necessarily of a high quality. In the form of anthropomorphic play it can be qualitatively extremely poor, while senso-pathic play, that progresses on level a), can be so high qualitatively that a child, via gnostic-cognitive lived experiencing, can bring about precious new knowledge about the form and structure of things that he comes forward to meet in experiencing them. It seems clear that Vermeer's division rather must be seen as an indication of the different forms in which child play appears, with qualitative differences within each form.

Vedder⁽⁵⁵⁾ has done an empirical survey of the ages in which children of different ages give preference to specific forms of play. Accordingly, pre-school children becoming school children clearly prefer constructive play with illusive play as the second most popular form of play. Bladergroen's⁽⁵⁶⁾ findings agree with this.

Whichever form or quality of play a child adopts it nevertheless remains the most obvious way of experiencing by which he learns to know the things in his world. In his playing he senses, perceives, thinks, fantasizes and remembers and in imagining he arrives at ways in which he actualizes his becoming via exploring, differentiating, distancing, objectifying and emancipating.

2.3.4 *Language*

The state of becoming and relationship to things a pre-school child becoming a school child has established, continues to establish and future expectations in this regard also are reflected in his language:

“Research indicates that the active vocabulary shows the largest percentage of increase during the third to fifth year of age.”⁽⁵⁷⁾ Thus, language acquisition has taken on such a momentum that by school entry a child is able to carry forward his thinking in an understandable, grammatically correct way.⁽⁵⁸⁾ His language already shows a degree of flexibility and suppleness. At this stage most children have at their disposal an extensive vocabulary of “taboo” words. Also, they are well aware of their shock value without necessarily understanding their specific meaning. The use of descriptive words such as adjectives indicates that a child, in his perceiving things in his world, no longer works in a global-diffuse way. In his going out to the things in the world via experiencing, he already actualizes differentiation as a mode of becoming. Consequently his experiential residues are more refined, variegated and nuanced than they were at the beginning of this phase. The deficient awareness of norms of this child in transition can be read from his verbal expressions. He is still deficient in actualizing objectifying as a *form* of realizing his becoming. Very seldom will a child in this phase provide evidence in his linguistic expressions of concern with things such as, e.g., fairness, loyalty and sense of responsibility. His concerns lie much more in the puerile child’s sphere of interest. If a young child complains about something, this springs from the emotional meaning he gives to the matter or object. He will say something makes him angry or sore, but the underlying demands of propriety, e.g., if it is fair or just, are going to pass him by such that on his own initiative he has nothing to say about it.

With school entry a child is taught in a group context. When a child is introduced to the number and letter symbol systems that result in skillfulness in reading, writing and arithmetic, a teacher of beginners assumes certain foreknowledge as possessed experiences. The most efficient way in which she can determine the contents of a child’s possessed experiences is to make an appeal to his potentialities for imagining through language.

Among other things, language is a sound-symbol system and in his use of it a child gives evidence of his level of becoming but also of the quality of his lived experiences of things in the lifeworld. If a teacher wants a child to learn to read a particular word, it is not

always feasible first to bring forth foreknowledge about the concrete thing. Via language she appeals to a child to actualize his psychic life by means of imagining and fantasizing. Thus, before she proceeds to teach the new abstract symbol system, she must explore, through language, the adequacy of his experiencing the concrete.

In language expressions of a pre-schoolchild becoming a school child, his giving sense and meaning to things in his world are detectable, but even further, the qualitative deepening and enriching of his possessed experiences also are knowable.

2.4 The child in relationship to God

Which content a child gives to his relationship with the Creator is read from his language and behaviors. A child's questions especially throw light on the ways and quality of the childlike experiencing of his relationship to God.

Here this does not have to do with the extent a child participates in religious practice. Attending church services, reciting text verses and prayers or using clichés occur in some communities at a relatively young age. In other communities all religious instruction is delayed until the onset of adolescence. Be that as it may, the aim of this study is to show what religious predispositions appear in a pre-school child becoming a school child and, more specifically: How does this child actualize his psychic life potentialities in experiencing his relationship to God.

Religion is one of the cultural *universalia* of being human and the importance and form its practice takes with a young child largely depends on his normative educating and example of the parents. Snijders-Oomen believes there especially are three aspects the co-influence childlike religious experiences, i.e.:

1. The meaning attributed to religion in the particular community.
2. The quality of the situation of educating.
3. The importance of religion in the lives of the educators themselves.⁵⁹⁾

Between three and four years of age, a child emancipates to the extent that he shows an interest in facts regarding his own identity. Via language he explores the terrains of his past and future. Provided he communicates with his educator(s) in a trusting relationship, he asks questions about where he came from, his birth, death, the hereafter and God. Out of this relationship of trust and because of his primordial openness, a young child accepts whichever answer or explanation is provided him: “He has no difficulty with it (Zij hebben er geen moeite mee)”!(⁶⁰) The explanation offers pathic calm and stability, he is satisfied and explores no further on a cognitive level. What he believes is the answer given to his question, i.e., the way in which he gives meaning to the new experience and integrates it into his existing possessed experiences.

A child who has experienced safety and security in his pedagogical situation, readily signifies God as a source of protection and safety. However, if his possessed experiences are attenuated, impulsive and unordered, he finds it difficult to give adequate meaning to the new knowledge in light of his possessed experiences:

“Typically the religion of little children is egocentric and self-seeking.”(⁶¹) From their linguistic expressions in this regard, it seems that a child in the phase under consideration mainly views God as the giver of good gifts – specific material things. It does not occur to him that there is a *quid pro quo* expected from him. A child follows certain behavioral codes because of the personal gain he expects from doing so.

Also, this attunement leads back to a child’s pedagogical situation. His experiences with his educators point to an unconditional acceptance of him as a child. He is fed, clothed and of necessity provided with means of living by his parents, without any *quid pro quo* from him. Gratitude for security is an essence of a pedagogical situation that still is slumbering with a pre-school child becoming a school child. Thus, a young child signifies Christmas indeed as a time for receiving. To give, or the deeper-lying symbolic significance of presents, escapes him: “As he is accustomed to having things done for him by adults, just so he visualizes God as a person who will do things for him”.(⁶²)

The emotional value of a child's lived experiencing of God seldom is intense. Its superficiality can be attributed to the abstractness of the concept and the fact that the child hardly realizes objectifying as a form of actualizing his becoming. In this context, at most he arrives at differentiation.

Hurlock says that during the pre-school phase children signify God in the same way they do fairytale characters. It is worth pointing out that there is a pathic as well as a gnostic difference in these lived experiences. In his language and behavior a child gives evidence of lived experiencing God with awe: this is different from the case of fantasy characters. With the opposite, gnostic illuminative side of lived experiencing, there is the knowledge a child acquires of the serious and awesome treatment of God, as well as the sublime above daily life, as adults also treat these matters.

In addition, Hurlock says with *school entry* a *change* appears in a child's signifying of God. He now distinguishes clearly between fantasy figures and God and attributes great value to symbols. In terms of actualizing his psychic life, this indicates an increased degree of actualizing the gnostic potentialities of lived experiencing. In his exploration of his lifeworld a child arrives at knowledge the existence of a Supernatural Power. His lived experiences in this regard still are gnostic-cognitively unordered and without structure. A child will become, will emancipate but because of his deficient possessed experiences he cannot yet distance and objectify, although there already is a degree of differentiation. He uses his evolving cognitive potentialities by establishing a symbol, e.g., a cross, a star, an old man with a long beard, etc. Genuine thinking is still beyond his ability and in an attempt to order his experiential residues into possessed experiences, his thinking progresses on a beginning schematic level.

The implication of this for his educators is attended to in the next chapter.

3. SYNTHESIS

This chapter is an attempt to penetrate the actualization of the potentialities of the psychic life of a pre-school child becoming a

school child in terms of the psychopedagogical category of *experiencing* as they emerge in the relationships in which a child is involved. The emphasis is on the child as he announces himself or appears in a favorable pedagogical situation. Psycho-orthopedagogical phenomena are not touched upon because they do not fall within the scope of this study. Only the “usual”, the adequate actualization of the potentialities of the psychic life are addressed.

However, a pre-school child becoming a school child, in his becoming adult, addresses a strong appeal to his educators for support. The nature and scope of such support is penetrated in chapter IV.

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