

## CHAPTER II

### ORTHODIDACTICS: ITS TASK, TERRAIN AND PLACE WITHIN PEDAGOGICS

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#### 1. General introduction

In the previous chapter, Professor Nel discussed orthopedagogics as a scientific area of pedagogics. There he considered its origin, background, its pedagogic foundation and its complex scientific structure within pedagogics. Since his is an orientation to the development of this chapter on the **orthodidactic**, as such, without undue repetition, brief reference is made to some of his points.

Nel indicates that, at its core, helping a restrained or impeded child is a **pedagogic activity**; it is giving particularized and specialized assistance that includes an **orthopedagogic aspect** (act of re-educating) and an **orthodidactic aspect** (i.e., when such a child is in a formal teaching situation, namely, a didactic one). In this context the orthopedagogic problematic, as a reflection on the total phenomenon of re-educating a child, is considered as are a number of matters that need to be brought to light.

For instructing, and therefore educating, to occur, a child has to **learn**; thus, re-instructing refers to a deficient teaching (didactic) situation within which a child's **learning activity** is inadequate, i.e., within which he is having **learning difficulties**. Moreover, re-teaching also indicates that a child **again** be taught certain matters, that he **again** become involved in certain didactic (orthodidactic) situations.

From the above, a number of problems emerge which demand closer explication. First, it is necessary to attend to the concept "orthodidactic", especially with respect to its etymology. The meaning of the orthodidactic also will certainly depend on whether learning difficulties in practice are indicated, if they exist and how something like learning difficulties are possible. In other words, one can inquire about the possibility that the didactic situation can show certain deficiencies. The fact that there can be such a thing as

learning difficulties or that the didactic situation can fail, are the preconditions for the practice of re-teaching and also for reflecting on this (orthodidactic) practice. Such a reflection should then result in a description of the orthodidactic **task** and a delimitation of its **terrain**. Moreover, it definitely will be necessary to have knowledge of the general methodological problems that surface in studying the phenomenon of learning difficulties.

In the first paragraph of this chapter it is pointed out that Nel indicates that helping the restrained or impeded child (and thus the child with learning difficulties) is, at its core, a **pedagogic activity**. Thus, it is necessary to seek the original ground of a matter such as re-teaching and establish whether it shows itself, in its primordial givenness, to be a matter of educating.

For the sake of being systematic, the further course of this chapter is divided into two parts; first, orthodidactics as a domain of study which especially has to clarify its task and terrain; second, a consideration of its place within pedagogics.

## 2. The orthodidactic as a field of study

### a. The concept "orthodidactic"

Etymologically, the word "ortho" is derived from the Greek "orthos" [straight] which means "to make healthy, repair or correct".<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, we have acquired words such as orthography (the art of writing and spelling correctly), orthopedics (the art of rectifying, "straightening out", bodily deformities), orthopedagogics (correcting educative actions) and orthodidactics. Next, is the word "didactic" which, in its comprehensiveness, refers to the science as well as the practice of teaching, thus to giving and receiving instruction or, as it is generally known, the teaching event.<sup>(2)</sup>

In light of the above, the concept "orthodidactic" refers to the science as well as the practice of educating which, for one or another reason has gone wrong and has to be repaired or corrected. Thus, orthodidactics also can refer to a reflection on the practice of teaching activities between adults that have gone wrong and need to be corrected (e.g., teaching adults, university instruction). However, in the present study, orthodidactics has to do with a child (children)

who cannot master the learning task as desired, thus a child with learning problems and an adult's particular intervention with him. Below, additional clarification is needed of these activities; that is, re-teaching activities should be viewed as pedagogic activities. Stated otherwise, one has to be clear whether the orthodidactic constitutes itself within the pedagogic. If so, it certainly would be desirable to discuss orthodidactic pedagogics.

### b. The possibility of learning difficulties

An additional problem that surfaces is how something like learning difficulties is possible, or stated differently, how is it possible that the didactic event can be deficient.

According to Sonnekus,<sup>(3)</sup> although, because of his openness and potentiality, a child is not predisposed to learning difficulties, everyone (parents, teachers) directly or indirectly involved in educating and teaching is aware that a large number of children do have such problems. Van der Stoep and Van der Stoep<sup>(4)</sup> indicate that because the didactic situation is a matter where human activities arise and the didactic terrain is a field that is commanded by persons, the possibility is always present that the event can fail, get snagged or even miscarry completely for one or another reason or in one or another place. Miscarrying, not attaining something belongs to the fundamental human situation (thus, also a child's); they are expressions of the possibility of failing inherent in being human. The human life world gives evidence that a person is not always constructive, does not always plan and live authentically or genuinely but also is destructive, inauthentic and not genuine. A person (child) also is often inclined to plan inadequately and inauthentically.<sup>(5)</sup> "To err is human!" Consequently, the fact that a child can fail in a learning situation (a situation clearly of **experiencing\*** and giving meaning) belongs to the essence of being-a-child. The fact that there **are** children with learning difficulties is evident in practice and in the reality of life.

In the same way, Van der Stoep and Van der Stoep<sup>(6)</sup> indicate that in the daily practice of learning and living there is no one without learning difficulties. Indeed, learning difficulties are one of the most general phenomena evident in a didactic situation. At one or

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\* See footnote re lived-experience in previous chapter.

another time each child is confronted with a problem or task (at home and/or in school) where his own disposition is of such a nature that available data, skills, insights, etc. for mastering what is expected of him are inadequate. According to these authors, whether this becomes a crisis situation depends on many factors such as the child's dispositions, intensity, the availability and nature of assistance, circumstances--really on the total person he is in the situation. If, as a consequence of one or more factors that influence his learning, a child gets the upper hand, the learning difficulty is cleared up and this can even make a formative contribution to his mastery of reality. However, if for one or another reason, he continues to fall short in the situation, this means he cannot find a response to the appeal directed to him to act; the consequence is that he tries to avoid the task or handles it inadequately. Should this happen, he finds himself to some degree in a situation that he **experiences** as a life crisis, i.e., as a situation in which he requires special help and attention. The nature of this help will be clarified later.

But now, when the didactic event shows certain deficiencies, there always is a place and task for the pedagogue or teacher to reflect on these failures, to do research and with the results contribute to eliminating or neutralizing as far as possible the deficiencies in this event by re-teaching. Thus, as a scientific matter, orthodidactics has its point of departure in the orthodidactic situation itself, which in its primordial ground, in its appearance in the original experience of re-teaching has to be examined closely. With this, a clearly distinguishable area of research from the life world is seen; indeed, it is a territory ripe for penetrating thought and knowledge. Whether this orthodidactic problematic is also a pedagogic matter will be fathomed in a later section. That there is not always pedagogic thought about this problem is, however, a proven fact; that orthodidactics, as a science, was and still is satisfied to search for its insights in other sciences (especially biology, psychology, sociology) remains an irrefutable fact and thus it is open to influences and interpretations from other subject sciences.

Before trying to delimit the task and terrain of orthodidactics, it is necessary to attend to some methodological problems that a researcher has to deal with in the area of orthodidactics.

### **c. Some methodological problems in studying orthodidactics**

A student might well ask why such a section as this arises in studying orthodidactics. For an orientation to orthodidactics, it is necessary to have knowledge of the methodological problems that can surface so the student of this terrain can be prevented from stepping into unnecessary potholes. Yet, completeness is not the aim of this section and the reader is referred to the existing literature<sup>(7)</sup> dealing with this theme.

In attempting an overview of the literature on learning problems, one is struck by what Van Meel<sup>(8)</sup> calls the "methodological complications" with which the researcher has to deal that stand in the way of the progress of his scientific research. In this regard, he presents two examples to illustrate the small amount of actual progress in this area: The standard work of Schonell, **Backwardness in the basic subjects**, appeared in 1942 and by 1965 had gone through ten completely unchanged printings. The chapter "Causes and symptoms of disability in reading" summarizes as possible causes the same factors that continually arise in contemporary research. Although since then a number of refinements and expansions have arisen, there have been few new insights or approaches. A more specific example is the finding in the literature of a relationship between learning disturbances and left-right handedness. As early as 1928 Orton ascribed learning disturbances to the inadequate dominance of one of the halves of the brain. Since then, discussions and research on this have continued but without being able to arrive at unambiguous conclusions. In 1965, Delacato stressed once again this dominance relationship. Luckert (1966), who bases his insights on the ideas of Delacato, writes, "Everything refers to a functional (neurological) explanation of poor reading."<sup>(9)</sup> In his criticism of the above approach, and especially Delacato's, Dumont<sup>(10)</sup> explains "that imperfect lateralization plays a role in the origin of reading-language disturbances is a demonstrated fact; that this role is not the one ascribed by Delacato is an equally irrefutable fact."

According to Van Meel, a primary problem confronted by one researching the terrain of learning problems is the virtually unlimited number of possible causes from the most divergent of sectors. For example, Rosler<sup>(12)</sup> mentions no less than 44 factors that correlate with failure in school while Van Krevelen states "there is practically no psychological disturbance, practically no milieu

deficiency that cannot be reflected in a decline in school achievement."<sup>(13)</sup> According to Van Meel<sup>(14)</sup> this diversity of factors considered to be possible causes impedes attempts to acquire a clear image of the phenomenon, and Dumont<sup>(15)</sup> agrees that such inventories of factors are of little use in evaluative practice. A resulting methodological problem that surfaces is the nature of the relationships among factors and the particular individual combination of factors.<sup>(16)</sup>

An important problem that needs to be clarified is whether the factors correlated with school failure are causal or concomitant phenomena. This holds especially for symptoms of affective disruption. Also, deficiencies in learning can result from a primary deficiency in implementing the school milieu that, in turn, can result in affective problems. Finally, deficiencies in becoming can be the origin of problems of implementing the school milieu, but also the consequence of failures at school. (Viewed in light of the fact that learning is a phenomenon of becoming, the latter needs to be well understood).

This common inability to separate cause-effect relationships from others not only surfaces regarding the question of whether a particular factor is a phenomenon that accompanies an already existing learning problem but also whether the possible causal factors are hierarchically related to each other and which often are exceedingly obscure and thus open to a variety of interpretations. Often the research does not take this latter fact into account and there is preponderantly a search for defects in one particular dimension of being. A one-sided illumination of the relation of specific deficiencies to the biological, the psychological, the sociological, etc. then leads to a simplistic vision. Regarding the latter, one thinks of what Dumont<sup>(17)</sup> calls the different explanatory models, namely, the psychodynamic, the neuro-physiological, the cognitive and learning theoretical. These models will not be considered further, but it is noted that all of them lead to a limited illumination of one factor and the consequence is that more fundamental disturbances or handicaps are overlooked. The following illustrates the above: A so-called "functional deficiency" or a lack of pronounced [lateral] dominance often is only a symptom of a general delay in the child's becoming and cannot be viewed as an isolated cause of learning problems.

A hierarchical relationship among potential causative factors can also be open to more than one interpretation. According to Van Meel<sup>(18)</sup> a hierarchical relationship will vary in structure for different researchers in accordance with the particular theoretical perspective espoused. A problem that can surface here, e.g., is whether a child is insecure and anxious because he is poorly oriented spatially and temporally, and consequently feels himself easily threatened, or is he poorly oriented in space and time because, as a consequence of his anxiety and insecurity, he does not adequately explore (learn about) his world. This reversibility in interpreting hierarchical relationships is one of the problems that gets in the way of a differentiated causal hierarchy. For Van Meel, what remains desirable is a gradual compilation of factors that eventually give rise to learning problems. The concrete learning difficulty as expressed in the learning situation is the last link in a long chain of which one has to know all of the links to be able to properly reconstruct its origin. Van Gelder<sup>(19)</sup> advocates a similar approach where he proceeds from the idea of multiple causality, but with a convergent method, while Vliegthart<sup>(20)</sup> also promotes what he calls a "multi-factorial determination".

Irrespective of the above methodological problems with which a researcher in orthodidactics is confronted and has to be acquainted with, it also is necessary for him to evaluate the existing methods and ways of research. Only a few are mentioned here. While many researchers accept the idea of multi-causality, they often also view a group of children with learning difficulties as homogeneous, an idea open to strong criticism when one continually deals with a child who is **different**. Here one also can agree with Van der Stoep and Van der Stoep<sup>(21)</sup> when they explain that, viewed pedagogically, there is no such thing as "**the** child with learning difficulties". Many researcher also reject the idea of heterogeneity and proceed to a division into subgroups. For example, Naninga-Boon<sup>(22)</sup> differentiates six groups, e.g., the word blind, the word deaf, the psychically disturbed. However, this remains an apparent division in light of the great overlap existing among the groups. Also Bladergroen<sup>(23)</sup> is guilty of such an apparent division of reading disturbances that are based on deficiencies in several other psychic "functions".

A very general use that is found, especially with Schonell<sup>(24)</sup> and several of his followers, is where the **subject area** is taken as the criterion to arrive at an additional division. In this way, reading, writing and arithmetic disturbances are separated from each other. Language itself is separated into reading (aloud and silent), spelling, written work, etc. Since there is an anthropological and pedagogical difficulty with such a division and method (see also Chapter IV of this book), it is evident from practice that a learning problem in an isolated subject area seldom arises; indeed, in most cases achievement problems are attained in more than one subject area.

According to Van Meel<sup>(25)</sup> a statistical approach to learning problems is not always acceptable because it is found that other combinations of factors often play a role. Such an approach can offer little help in penetrating an individual child's problem, says Vliegthart.<sup>(26)</sup> Moreover, he indicates that especially in a study such as Helen Robinson's where use is made of massive statistical analyses, the "entire constellation of individual children disappears from view." She makes special use of team research but the data remain separate and disconnected.<sup>(27)</sup> Even so, one cannot deny that a statistical approach can be helpful in presenting a synoptic overview of the causes of learning problems in particular groups of children.

Even a case study cannot always lay claim to completeness and has the danger of omitting relevant factors that are not merely hypothetical. Especially in some case studies many of the factors and facts remain disconnected from each other and do not really lead to an image of the child as a person. Consequently, his life world and learning world are glossed over. Regarding case studies, then, the author strongly agrees with both Van Gelder and Vliegthart who plead for a phenomenological analysis of the particular situation of the child with learning problems, but now viewed as an **educand**. This also acknowledges the idea of multi-causality with a striving to convergence, or as Van Gelder<sup>(28)</sup> states it, "Where the diagnostician ... tries to determine the mutual relationships among possible causes and their place in the child's development, in this he also allows himself to be guided by a phenomenologically acquired image of the 'child-world-relationship'".

The last problem to be mentioned here is the fact that in most research and approaches there is a **vacuum** between the

description of the concrete learning problem (errors) and the analysis of the so-called deeper causes (or even the person image of the child), according to Van Meel.<sup>(29)</sup> The ways the child makes the error(s) of concern are left out of consideration, i.e., missing is insight into the **activity structures** or **forms** underlying the concrete learning disturbance. Van Parreran<sup>(30)</sup> has indicated that the same learning achievement can rest on various activity structures. This implies that a learning error (e.g., in reading, spelling or arithmetic) can rest on various activity structures. In other words, this means that particular activity structures or forms underlie particular learning errors. For example, the same reading error occurring with two children can for each rest on one or another faulty structure. When, for example, the word **irradication** is read as **irradiation**, this can occur on the basis of faulty globalizing, analyzing or synthesizing or certain combinations of them. With the aim of orthodidactically helping (re-teaching), it is of extreme importance that the evaluation determine the basis on which the learning error of concern is made. It is obvious that the orthodidactician has to have knowledge of the structure that is unique to the subject matter that crops up.

Also, the entire question of evaluating and assisting are not discussed further here and are brought up in later chapters. The aim of this section is primarily to make the researcher in the area of orthodidactics aware of certain methodological problems that arise in a scientific study of this subject area and to indicate the deficiencies that still exist.

To raise the orthodidactic to scientifically founded research, in the first place it is necessary to delimit the area of study, that is, to indicate its task and terrain.

#### **d. The task and terrain of orthodidactics**

Although these two facets of the orthodidactic are not separate (indeed, if one is omitted, the other also disappears) it is merely for the sake of greater clarity that they are separated here.

##### **i) The orthodidactic task**

Van der Stoep and Van der Stoep<sup>(31)</sup> say that the orthodidactic applies itself to, i.e., has as its task, investigating and describing the

nature, essence and problems of the teaching situation that has an adjustive or extraordinary character; **among others**, as tasks of orthodidactics a number of matters are mentioned that require radical reflection and description aimed at necessarily true judgments:

- a) In the first place, the orthodidactician has to do penetrating research into its foundation and, indeed, into the pedagogic meaning of orthodidactic action or practice. (Certainly it is unnecessary to indicate that this is the most important theme for reflection because the conclusions arrived at will determine whether the orthodidactician will engage in **pedagogic work** or not).
- b) As a part perspective of the fundamental theme of all pedagogic thinking, namely, the event of educating (we tentatively accept this as such), orthodidactics also has the task of indicating its place or relation to the other pedagogic part disciplines and especially the psychopedagogic, the didactic pedagogic as well as the orthopedagogic--thus to indicate where and how it connects with the mentioned part disciplines within the framework of the pedagogic.
- c) Disclosing the problematic of learning difficulties by children, in its widest view and which, among others, includes:
  - aa) The possibility that the didactic situation can fail, which includes the possibility of learning difficulties.
  - bb) Flowing from the orthodidactician's knowledge of the phenomenon of a child's learning as a psychopedagogic, didactic pedagogic and psychology of becoming matter, to think about what learning difficulties are.
  - cc) The meaning of the learning difficulty for a child's eventual becoming adult.
  - dd) The life world as experiential world\* of the child with learning problems. (In this regard, see Chapter III of this book).
  - ee) Origins of or reasons for learning difficulties. Here the following questions have to be answered:
    - ee-1) Is there a factor or factors correlated with learning difficulties and is this factor or factors of a causal or concomitant nature?
    - ee-2) What is the hierarchical relationship among

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\* See footnote previous chapter.

possible causal factors for learning difficulties; i.e., is there a gradual building up of factors that ultimately result in the concrete learning difficulty?

**ee-3)** What are the implications (also for eventually assisting the child) of the uni-causality and multi-causality, the latter of which can fall into two approaches, namely, the divergent and the convergent?

**ff)** The forms in which children's learning difficulties appear, i.e., the ways in which a child **responds** to the learning task. Here attention has to be given to whether the learning difficulty appears as an isolated facet of a subject, if the child rejects the total learning activity, if there is a selective stagnation, or a slowing down in the learning activity, etc.

**gg)** It is important for orthodidactics to do research into the level or levels where learning difficulties appear. Here one especially thinks of cultural techniques such as language and arithmetic systems.

**d)** Moreover, orthodidactics has to reflect on the nature, the sense and meaning of orthodidactic activity or practice, namely, the questions of evaluating and assisting as **pedagogic activities**. The meaning of orthodidactic practice certainly can be viewed as a response especially to one question: Is re-teaching the child also concerned with educating him? Here, the following matters are important to be clear about:

**aa) Regarding evaluating**

**aa-1)** The **aim** of evaluating children with learning difficulties. (Here, among other things, there is a search for the reasons for the child's learning difficulties and how he presents himself by means of his pathic, gnostic and normative **experiencing**, and in this light to determine the pedagogically achieved in contrast to what is pedagogically achievable).

**aa-2)** The preconditions that have to be met so the evaluative situation can qualify as a pedagogic one.

**aa-3)** The nature and ways of implementing the research media as pedagogic media as well as interpreting the data.

**aa-4)** The ways in which findings from other subject sciences regarding the forms of retardation or restraint are taken into account, which also are investigated by them because these problems also crop up in their fields of study.<sup>(32)</sup> Here one thinks of

the medical, sociological and psychological sciences. Examining these data through a pedagogic lens is absolutely necessary.

**aa-5)** The aspects within an evaluative situation that must come to the fore with the aim of eventually providing help. (Where giving assistance includes re-educating and re-teaching as inseparable activities, of importance here is the learning image and orthodidactic image that, respectively, is a total image of the child's life world and an experiential world and a structural orthodidactic image of the activity structures that are at the foundation of the learning errors. See especially Chapter IV).

**bb) Regarding giving assistance**

**bb-1)** The aim of orthodidactic assistance.

**bb-2)** The preconditions for creating a helping situation as a pedagogic one.

**bb-3)** The content (learning material), the means and methods used for giving help, such help being re-educating and re-teaching.

**bb-4)** Aspects or facets by which assistance can be given the child with learning difficulties, as a total activity, can be distinguished. (Here one thinks of re-educating and re-teaching as one event but where still there is a distinction between orthopedagogic help or pedotherapy and orthodidactic assistance).

With the above lists of pronouncements, the author does not lay any claim to completeness regarding the task of orthodidactics. What is important is that none of the themes mentioned can be omitted from a scientific study of the field. In light of what was said above, the orthodidactic terrain can now be delimited.

**ii) The terrain of orthodidactics**

Now viewed in light of its task, the terrain of orthodidactics shows itself as a two-fold structure, namely, as orthodidactic theory and as orthodidactic practice; the latter has two facets, namely, evaluating and assisting.

**a) Orthodidactic theory**

Van der Stoep and Van der Stoep<sup>(33)</sup> indicate that the sense of orthodidactic help (re-teaching) is that in practice certain learning problems can be observed in some children. As a phenomenon or problem which is not merely hypothetical or theoretical in nature, it compels each pedagogue (and specifically the orthodidactician) to

reflect and to investigate. It is this reflection on, investigation of orthodidactic problems which necessarily leads to particular orthodidactic theories by which this phenomenon from practice has to be thought through in radical ways to arrive at its root or ground. Reflection on orthodidactic problems seems to be an absolute necessity because an adult cannot really help a child if he does not have a basic certainty about the phenomenon or problem for which help has to be given. Primarily, orthodidactic theory takes as its area of reflection those aspects presented above (i.e., the task of orthodidactics) and which will not be repeated here, although once again it has to be indicated that the orthodidactic structure must never be viewed apart from the pedagogic and its area of knowledge, especially the orthopedagogic and the didactic pedagogic. This reflection or thinking through has to lead to a particular orthodidactic theory or insight.

#### **b) Orthodidactic activity or practice**

With orthodidactic activity, the orthodidactician has the opportunity to seek a harmony between the practice he is going to engage in as a provider of help and the available theory or insights he has about the matter; that is, he now is compelled to implement and integrate his theories into a practical situation.<sup>(34)</sup> Although this orthodidactic activity has two sides, namely, evaluating and assisting, they are not strictly separate from each other because the one implies the other. Dumont<sup>(35)</sup> says, "Diagnosing (evaluating) that doesn't anticipate action and action that doesn't work retroactively on diagnosing is and literally remains a job half done."

#### **aa) Orthodidactic evaluating**

The theoretical study of learning problems in children and the re-teaching flowing from them has to enable the orthodidactician in a practical situation with a specific child to recognize a particular form or variation of a learning difficulty, reveal the types of errors made as well as their underlying structure, determine the causative and/or concomitant factors of the learning problem, acquire insight into this child's unique experiential world as well as into how these learning difficulties restrain him in his becoming adult, i.e., acquire insight into how he announces himself as a totality in the learning situation.

Van der Stoep and Van der Stoep<sup>(36)</sup> indicate that although practice shows that a child's learning difficulties are constituted on two levels, namely, acquiring a language and an arithmetic system, to

understand this, the orthodidactician has to direct himself to the child's potentialities regarding especially reading, writing and arithmetic. (In this respect, see the orthodidactic image).

However, practice also shows that a child's learning difficulties often are merely symptoms of deeper-lying pedagogic reasons. Thus, orthodidactic research also is of pedagogic significance<sup>(37)</sup> which means that the orthodidactician also has to determine for a particular child how the pedagogically achieved appears with respect to the pedagogically achievable. Obviously the orthodidactician makes use of particular evaluative media which are discussed in Chapters V, VI and VII.

Viewed as a whole, the result of the evaluation is a total image of the particular child's learning world. (See also Chapter IV).

#### **bb) Orthodidactic assistance**

When the orthodidactic evaluation is completed, actual help to a child with learning difficulties is not yet provided and the orthodidactician is confronted with the pedagogic question and task (in the words of Van Gelder): Now, how should I proceed further with this child in my trust? With this, the second aspect of orthodidactic activity begins, namely, helping this child. The orthodidactician always has the task of planning, in formal situations, that the deficient course of learning now, as far as possible, progresses as it should. Although these plans and situations differ from child to child, the assistance given will have certain basic aspects in common. (In this connection, the reader once again is referred to Chapters IV and VII).

With this division it is sufficient to indicate that now the orthodidactician enters the terrain of re-teaching where specific series of situations are created within which such help is provided via particular methods, aids, learning content, etc. to help the child overcome his learning problem in part or entirely.<sup>(39)</sup> What the nature of this help is and to what it is specifically directed will become clear later. At the same time, however, the orthodidactician enters the terrain of pedotherapy or re-educating. A child with learning difficulties remains above all a child in educative distress so that help given him also is help regarding his form of living, his life content, his lifestyle. In other words, assistance provided a child with learning problems shows itself as a unitary activity within

which two factors are distinguished. Whether this first facet mentioned (i.e., orthodidactics) essentially is connected with re-teaching, thus, if it is related to the orthopedagogic, also with the didactic pedagogic and thus is a pedagogic matter will hopefully become clear in the next section.

### **iii) The pedagogic foundation of the orthodidactic**

#### **a) Introduction**

To merely assert that the orthodidactic is anchored in or is a facet of orthopedagogics and didactic pedagogics as pedagogic disciplines certainly will not satisfy the critical reader and student in search of the fundamental foundation of his subject area.

Each scientist, and thus the orthodidactician, has the task of delimiting his particular view of life reality and to methodically unveil its essentials so he can arrive at generally valid and necessarily true knowledge of his particular area of study.

The question that now arises is, where is the orthodidactician going to search for the foundation of his practice? To search for this primordial foundation, according to Landman and Gous, the orthodidactician, as any scientist, has to return to the spontaneous, everyday and pre-scientific life world where he delimits a particular recurring phenomenon which stimulates his wonder and is problematic in nature with the aim of radically fathoming and understanding it.<sup>(40)</sup> Also, the orthodidactician can search no place else for this foundation than in the phenomenon that has awakened his wonder and is problematic in nature, namely, re-teaching, as it shows itself in the life world. To be able to penetrate and describe this phenomenon, he avails himself of the phenomenological method, as a method of knowing, where there is a move to the phenomenon itself so that answers to the following questions can be supplied: Where and how does the phenomenon of re-teaching appear? What are its essential features or fundamental structure? What is its meaning? etc.

If the orthodidactician arrives at a founding of orthodidactic activity, there are some matters of cardinal importance which he has to reflect on.

#### **b) Educating, teaching and learning**

The entire activity of re-teaching children with learning difficulties can be difficult to grasp if there is not a return to the phenomenon of educating.

Since, according to Langeveld,<sup>(41)</sup> a human being is a being who educates, is educated and is committed to educating and, according to Oberholzer,<sup>(42)</sup> is a being who lends himself or is accessible to educating, it is evident in life reality and thus is a primordial human phenomenon that cannot be reduced to any other. Thus, the fact that adults educate children and that children lend themselves to being educated is an evident fact in the experiential world of people.

Many contemporary pedagogues, and here one especially mentions Van der Stoep,<sup>(43)</sup> indicate that the entire event of educating, from the first moment on, is carried by teaching. Educating always involves particular dispositions, attitudes, valuations, behavioral codes and more which are accepted as proper and this suddenly gives rise to contents in educating. Thus, the child is taught about matters and he learns, namely, to express his being human in particular life situations in terms of particular contents. In order that the child eventually will show unconditional obedience to norms of propriety, the educators try to reach this aim largely by intensively teaching the child--i.e., he is **taught** particular contents (learning material).

The educative activity, then, also announces itself in reality in a two-fold way; first, as forming conscience in terms of particular values and norms which have to do with a person's religious and moral life; and, second, as a teaching intervention which is especially directed to a person's conscious life and by which the contents of the life world are directly presented to him because anyone who wants to create a world can do so only in terms of these contents. Thus, educating and teaching, from the beginning, show themselves as one event.

But now, for a child to create his own world, he necessarily has to learn. He learns because he is a being who will and must learn, and learning is a primordial phenomenon, it is a potentiality that is embedded in the child as Dasein, according to Sonnekus.<sup>(44)</sup>

Sonnekus also indicates that at its root learning is a basic **phenomenon of becoming**, since the child, because of his wanting to learn himself, ... is "someone who wants to become". In each teaching or didactic activity at least one person is involved in the situation as a learner. Educating manifests itself concretely in the fact that a child proceeds to unconditionally obey particular norms that he has **learned**. Then, it also holds that as a precondition for his becoming adult, he has to learn particular contents (values, norms, behavior codes, etc.) before there can be an unconditional obedience.<sup>(45)</sup> Van der Stoep<sup>(46)</sup> even goes so far as to ask the question whether the learning activity is not primary, i.e., is in an absolute sense a precondition for educating. Thus, the fact that a child learns sufficiently guarantees his being educated and with that his becoming adult. That a child later enters school, as a re-constituted situation of what previously had occurred in the home makes no difference for what was said previously: Also, the school situation remains basically a matter of educating in the broadest sense.

### c) Re-educating and re-teaching

We have now seen that all educating is not successful and at the same time we also have seen that all teaching and learning are not either. The activity of educating, as educating and teaching, is for the adult to direct an appeal to the educand and from whom an answer by way of his learning activity is expected. The child's answer can be inadequate or even none at all for various reasons that are not all to the point here, although they can be truly present. Also, the educative appeal is not always equally clear or fluently directed with the consequence that the child's response to it often is skewed and distorted and thus not fitting. Also, as educand, the child can refuse to participate in the educative situation.<sup>(47)</sup> In other words, this amounts to the child giving inadequate embodiment to his learning activity and thus an inadequate contribution to his own educating and consequently he is restrained and held back in his becoming toward adulthood.

The question now is if the parent is aware that the total activity of educating, as upbringing and teaching, does not take the expected course because of the child's deficient learning, are there specific activities to point out to the parent with reference to his child and can these activities be qualified as educative?

A further expansion of the above problem follows:

- i) On the basis of what knowledge does the parent engage in these activities?
- ii) What is the nature of these activities?
- iii) What is the aim of these activities, i.e., why does the parent engage in them?

It also can be asked: Are there parental activities in the life world that indicate that he should adjust the educative event when his child has not learned adequately, thus activities that refer to the parent re-teaching with the aim of re-educating? Now we will consider a few such simple situations that can arise between parent and child in the spontaneous life world: A young child continually uses his spoon incorrectly at dinner time, perhaps because the parent did not pay the necessary attention to this at first; the spoon is scooped too full, at the same time too much food is put in his mouth, food falls out of his mouth onto the floor, he dirties his clothes, etc. It is clear that he has learned improperly. On the one hand, this refers to a **learning error** because the **activity structure** that leads to correct ways of eating are inadequate, but on the other hand, this situation indicates that the child has not learned to eat as he **ought** to.

First, the parent becomes aware of his child's faulty learning and this distresses him and he perhaps begins to reflect about this: on the one hand, he notes that his child doesn't eat correctly but on the other hand it also is clear that he does not eat as he **ought** to. Second, the parent can look for reasons why he eats incorrectly and think about possible ways of helping his child, i.e., how he can be taught again or re-taught so that from then on he will eat **correctly**. Third, the parent proceeds to re-teach him; he is helped so the spoon is not scooped too full; it has to be held so the food doesn't fall on his clothes or on the floor, he has to put just enough food in his mouth, etc. These parental activities are, on the one hand, directed so that his child will master the correct activity structure, but, on the other hand, his objective certainly is that his child from then on will eat correctly with a spoon as a person ought to.

A deeper analysis of the above situation brings to light some important matters:

First, the parent notes that his child is not completely obedient to the norm (eating properly), i.e., the control of reality is not yet in accordance with the idea of propriety. Thus, here is mention of what has been pedagogically achieved compared with what is pedagogically achievable. For this, knowledge of the child is extremely important. Second, the parent actually supports his child with the aim that eventually he will unconditionally obey the norm. The parent creates situations within which his child, as **educand**, is involved in the activities of re-teaching. Thus, re-educating and re-teaching his child take place and at the same time forming his conscience and consciousness are worked on with the expectation that by **re-experiencing**,<sup>(48)</sup> reality he will gradually display a better image of adulthood.

Thus, the child has to not merely learn again but also to again learn respect and value. An additional matter is very important here: because re-teaching occurs with the aim of re-educating, the child has to learn, thus, he has to venture into and open himself to the learning situation on the basis of the necessary **experience** of security. Finally, without any doubt, this situation qualifies as a pedagogic one where the pedagogic categories (e.g., normativity, security, sympathetic, authoritative guidance, anticipations, futurity) as well as didactic categories (e.g., unlocking reality, learning, forming, orienting, guiding) are present.

At this stage the earlier questions now can be answered. The first question is on what basis does the parent engage in these activities? He does so in terms of his knowledge of the becoming child. This knowledge is acquired through using "natural" ways of learning to know a child that Nel<sup>(49)</sup> calls continual association and communication (conversation) between parent and child which are necessary and which from time to time have to proceed to a very intimate association (i.e., an encounter) from which arises an intimate "our-world". Nel then also indicates that in such situations of encounter the parent necessarily acquires a deeper knowledge of his child. Thus, a parent learns to know his child and how to handle him. Obviously, this is not a scientific, well thought out method of knowing or research, it occurs spontaneously in the life world of parent and child.

An additional question is about the nature of such activities. Once again it is indicted that the parents do not reflect scientifically

about these activities (re-teaching with the aim of re-educating). Yet they engage in particular instructional activities based on their intuitive knowledge of their child. In each case, this re-teaching is conducted by accepting, encouraging and pathically supporting their child; this re-teaching can vary from pointing out, prompting, demonstrating, giving assignments, etc.,<sup>(50)</sup> during which the parent makes use of particular contents.

The final question, namely, what is the aim of these activities, now can be answered briefly as follows: for the parent, his child with deficiencies remains merely a **child** as he involves him in re-teaching situations. Therefore, the aim of these parental activities is the eventual adulthood of his child.

### 3. Summary

In the previous section, the primordial ground of orthodidactic practice or activities was sought. This phenomenological view allowed some matters to come prominently to the fore. At the same time it is now conspicuous that the earliest orthodidactic or re-teaching activities do not occur in school or in a child guidance clinic. These instances occur later when the child has learning problems in a re-constituted, thus formal didactic situation. The adult's activity of aiming to know the child (later formally known as evaluating or diagnosing) for the sake of providing help (re-teaching) also does not first appear after the child enters school but rather in the primordial pedagogic situation in the home. Thus, what we know formally as evaluation (see later orthopedagogic-orthodidactic evaluation), its preconditions and characteristics and as providing assistance (see later orthopedagogic-orthodidactic assistance) are only scientific, well thought-out activities that are already present in the spontaneous, everyday and prescientific life world.

These activities that are re-established in formal situations remain **pedagogic** activities. Thus, the event or activities from which the orthodidactic arises as a science is not merely theoretical or foreign to life but in every respect is an integral part of the human life world and indeed part of the activity of educating. Seen in this way, the orthodidactic shows itself to be unquestioningly a pedagogic matter and whoever approaches learning difficulties from any other perspective, no longer acts pedagogically. Thus, the orthodidactic has its foundation in the pedagogic which clearly includes the

orthopedagogic and the didactic pedagogic and it can never be considered apart from these two scientific areas.

In the following chapter, the learning world of the child with learning difficulties as an experiential world will be penetrated. There reference will be made to the deficiencies in the experiential world of such a child as well as to the pedagogic-didactic demands that these deficiencies pose.

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