

## CHAPTER 4

### IN RETROSPECT: THE RETARDED CHILD'S ACTUALIZATION OF INTELLIGENCE

#### A. SYNTHESIS OF THE INVESTIGATION

In current practice, there are views of the retarded child and of intelligence in general that are not scientifically accountable but that are based on a natural science image of a person. Often the non-phenomenologically oriented studies that have appeared omit the nature and essence of intelligence and what it means to be a retarded child. Further, they do not attain a realistic picture of the retarded child. Unfortunately, such a child is delivered to these misunderstandings.

These non-phenomenological studies are directed to **symptoms** and certain **characteristics** are attributed to the retarded child, stereotyped **lists of causes** are compiled, and there is an exaggerated measurement of the intelligence of these children on the basis of which they are classified, especially with a view to their **formal instruction** that also is not always carried out in accountable ways. In current practice, a child is **classified** as retarded with an IQ within the range of 65 to 80; even so, there are serious differences of opinion regarding the meaning of this classification.

One of the most striking errors of judgment regarding intelligence, as such, undoubtedly is the value attached to an IQ as "measured" by **intelligence tests** with a disregard of the child as a person in communication with his world. Intelligence thus is approached as a **purely cognitive** matter according to which attention is directed to the retarded child's practical training. Today there are many voices arguing for a more **qualitative evaluation** of intelligence and this indeed is praiseworthy; however, lost sight of is the fact that intelligence merely is a **potentiality** that has to be actualized. To determine if a child actualizes his intelligence responsibly, a **pedagogic evaluation** also is necessary.

Intelligence is an ontic given that only is fathomable phenomenologically. In this investigation, then, intelligence is viewed phenomenologically; to do so, the point of departure has to

be and is the child in his situational relationship to his world. From this perspective, it is evident that intelligence is a power to break through situations; it is a mode of being or a way in which a child comes forward to meet and constitute an experiential world by giving meaning to the world. Even so, intelligence always remains a potentiality that has to be responsibly actualized through the pedagogic intervention of adults. Such responsible actualization will occur only if the child receives adequate **moral-normative education** to **responsibly** actualize his intelligence as well as adequate **affective education** to achieve a **readiness** to actualize it.

Fathoming the retarded child's intelligence means obtaining an image of the ways he comes forward to meet his world (which also is cognitive in nature) and, as a child-becoming-adult, constitute an experiential world. This also means that, on the basis of understanding his experiential world, one acquires an image of his becoming, which implies an image of the ways he actualizes his intelligence as a potentiality. The distinguishable but inseparable modes of being that are closely examined (e.g., perceiving, remembering) are cognitive as well as affective in nature. Related to this, attention is given to the retarded child's language as a means of actualizing intelligence. Owing to the intimate connection between language and thought, the latter also is understood as a mode of being.

Throughout this preliminary study, it is kept in mind that the retarded child, as a child with limited cognitive potentiality, is a restrained child. As such, the responsible actualization of the intelligence of this child whose being is different involves an orthopedagogic-orthodidactic task. Because the aim of this study is limited to fathoming the retarded child's experiential world in order to understand the ways he actualizes his intelligence, the mentioned orthopedagogic-orthodidactic task is left for a more comprehensive follow-up to this introductory one.

Because the stated aim is an explication of the ways the retarded child actualizes his intelligence, this is framed as a **problem** of the **psychology of becoming**. In this context, it is stated further that a child's coming forward to meet his world, his becoming and also his actualizing his intelligence change from a predominantly pathic (affective) to a predominantly gnostic (cognitive) disposition. Actualizing intelligence, then, means **distancing** from the pathic

(affective) to the gnostic (cognitive), which also means **differentiating** how he conducts a dialogue with his world. This dialogue is either primarily pathic/affective (**sensing**) or gnostic/cognitive (**perceiving, thinking, remembering, actualizing intelligence**) and these changing pathic and gnostic moments can dominate imagining and fantasizing. Theoretically, it seems that the retarded child, in actualizing his intelligence, has difficulty taking a gnostic (cognitive) perspective but rather takes a pathic one that leads him to underactualize it.

In this introductory and preliminary study, a few retarded children were studied pedoclinically; three were discussed in the original thesis and one here. As already mentioned, the method of research is primarily phenomenological and during the course of the research various pedodiagnostic media, viewed as media for actualizing intelligence, were implemented to obtain an image of the retarded child's actualization of his intelligence as this is embodied in the constitution of his experiential world. In addition to the above, pedagogic conversation, observation and intuition played a central role. An image of actualization requires a pedagogic evaluation to determine whether a child is responsibly actualizing his intelligence within the framework of his potentialities.

## B. FINDINGS

1. On the basis of the image of actualizing intelligence, the retarded child has difficulty adopting a gnostic/cognitive perspective--he mainly displays a **pathic** disposition that leads to him **underactualizing his intelligence** as a potentiality. This being bound to the pathic can be attributed to several factors:

(a) From the beginning he is of **limited intelligence** and this predisposes him to a degree of pathic boundness from which he is unable to distance himself. This limitation is a primordial given and can't be changed.

(b) The fact that he **experiences** himself as **being different** (as intellectually deficient), and that also includes experiences of being blocked on more formal (gnostic/cognitive) tasks contribute further to his being bound to the pathic.

(c) His being flooded pathically influences the quality of his **language** which leads to a vicious circle. That is, his

language is bound to the concrete and consequently it is not an adequate means for actualizing his intelligence. **(d) Gnostic/cognitive moments of lived-experiencing**, necessary support for actualizing intelligence, are mainly absent. Thus, this child pathically senses tasks (especially more formal, cognitive ones) rather than perceives them on a cognitive level. As a result, he seldom actualizes thinking, remembering, imagining, fantasizing and the other modes of learning and lived-experiencing on a cognitive level. Hence, he underactualizes his intelligence because of his pathic imprisonment.

On the basis of a qualitative evaluation of intelligence test performances, it is clearly evident that an IQ is merely a level of achievement and it reflects the retarded child's underactualization of his intelligence; consequently, his intelligence as potentiality can be qualitatively higher than an obtained IQ would suggest. This means that many children who currently are labeled as retarded mainly on the basis of an obtained IQ would not be so labeled if their intelligence were evaluated as a potentiality.

2. On the basis of the pedagogic evaluations, the following were found:

**(a)** The retarded child in the **primary educative situation** (home) is not always seen by his parents as **being different** and as **experiencing** this being different, which also includes experiences of being blocked by more formal (gnostic/cognitive) tasks. Thus, it is not surprising that such parents, because of non-accountable pedagogic intervention, contribute to the child's pathic disposition and the resulting underactualization of his intelligence.

**(i)** Insight into the child's experiential world and the corresponding affective education by the parents possibly can lead the child, on the basis of a greater affective readiness to participate in his world, to distance himself more from the pathic and be able to actualize his intelligence more responsibly.

**(ii)** Since the parents often unjustifiably accept that their child is more dependent on the practical because he is "dumb", they are indifferent to his "usual school

work" or theoretical subjects. Thus, in providing normative education to their child, the parents do not hold before or exemplify norms for more responsibly actualizing his intelligence.

(b) A parallel to the above is found in the **secondary educative situation** (school):

(i) Although teachers usually are very sympathetic toward the retarded child, seldom are they qualified orthodidacticians, and they do not always have insight into what being a retarded child really means. Thus, they do not have insight into the child's lived-experiences as these are embodied in his experiential world; consequently, **affective** as well as **normative** education often miscarry. Regarding normative education, it is worth mentioning that the excessive emphasis on practical subjects has the consequence that the retarded child is not given sufficient opportunity to actualize his intelligence via theoretical subjects. The obvious absence of this very necessary opportunity contributes to a further underactualization of his intelligence. This amounts to the fact that the teacher, by offering attenuated (watered-down) learning material to the child, does not present norms to him to actualize responsibly the intellectual potentialities he does have.

(ii) A matter related to the above is the type of **course of study** appropriate for the retarded child. It is doubtful that existing courses of study are compiled accountably, i.e., by persons who are schooled in orthodidactics and thus have ascertained in advance what being a retarded child really means. Because of the course of study followed, often the retarded child is not given the opportunity to optimally actualize his intelligence.

(c) The fact that the retarded child underactualizes his intelligence because he is affectively-pathically bound and that he does not actualize it responsibly because of non-accountable normative educating, as well as the fact that he does not adequately constitute a world by means of language all indicate that his giving meaning to his world is damaged.

## C. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Adequately actualizing intelligence clearly requires a gnostic/cognitive perspective. From the present study, it is evident that the retarded child, because of his pathic imprisonment, underactualizes his intelligence. This pathic imprisonment can be attributed to several factors, e.g., to a limited intelligence, to experiencing being different and being blocked by more formal (gnostic/cognitive) tasks, to the relative absence of cognitive lived-experiences such as thinking, perceiving, remembering, imagining and fantasizing needed to support the actualization of intelligence, and to the fact that his language is not adequate as a means for actualizing his intelligence and thinking. An IQ only reflects the child's underactualization and does not represent at all the child's intelligence as a potentiality.

Intelligence as potentiality, of which a qualitative image can be obtained, however, can be adequately actualized through the pedagogic intervention of adults that especially includes the parents and teachers. It seems, however, that these adults seldom notice the child in his being different and his experience of this as well as the experience of blockage with formal tasks. Without this awareness, the retarded child cannot be affectively and normatively educated accountably, and will not actualize his intelligence most optimally within the framework of his limited cognitive potentialities.

As an existential matter, underactualizing intelligence leads to the fact that the retarded child's giving meaning to his world also is touched. The entire course of his becoming is touched and this amounts to a non-accountable actualization of Dasein.

## D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The mere "measurement" by tests of the retarded child's intelligence, as if it were an isolated matter, is untenable. This entire matter should be viewed from a phenomenological standpoint as a much broader and comprehensive issue. A qualitative analysis of performance on an intelligence test and a pedagogic evaluation of that performance are urgent necessities and can only be done by recognizing the retarded child as a unique child in a unique situation. In other words, the retarded child continually constitutes an experiential world and an understanding of his intelligence can

only be gotten by studying phenomenologically the differentiated ways he actualizes his intelligence as this is embodied in the constitution of his experiential world.

The mere intelligence test score (IQ), with a few additional vague factors taken into account, as the basis for classifying the retarded child is unacceptable. Not only is this basis unacceptable but so is the classification itself, especially regarding borderline cases. In current practice, often a child is stigmatized merely by his IQ and by attributing to him characteristics and stereotyped causes and thus he is surrendered to the label of being a retarded child.

Before decisive decisions are made about the future of an alleged retarded child--such as transferring him to a special school or classroom--the investigator should first ascertain what intelligence and being a retarded child essentially are, and only then make these decisions after an accountable phenomenological investigation has been done with each child--such as the study described here.

That there is a need in practice for such an approach cannot be doubted. Any person who studies a retarded child or rather a possibly retarded child and by whom the final decision is made ought to be primarily a psychopedagogue, that is, an orthopedagogue.

2. The retarded child's being bound to the pathic because of his limited cognitive potential cannot be abolished. However, where such a child is bound to the pathic because of other distinguishable factors, it is evident from research that, by means of educating and re-educating, to a degree, the retarded child can distance himself from the pathic to the gnostic/cognitive which not only can elevate actualizing his intelligence to a higher level but also elevate his general involvement in and giving meaning to his world. This is an area in need of further research, i.e., an orthopedagogic investigation of the elevation of the dialogue the retarded child conducts with his world, and, more particularly, of a more adequate actualization of his intelligence through engaging in a series of pedotherapeutic sessions.

3. Although there is acknowledgment of the unselfish work done by teachers in practice, still it is doubtful that these persons always are pedagogically (orthopedagogically) schooled and thus are equal to their task. The retarded child normally is not noticed in his being

different, his experiencing himself as being different, his experienced blockage on more formal tasks. Consequently, often he is not affectively and normatively guided in accountable ways to actualize his potentialities on his way to becoming an adult. Ideally, each teacher of a retarded child should be a qualified orthopedagogue (orthodidactician).

This also means that the classes should be as small as possible so each unique child in his unique situation can receive optimal attention. Where nowadays there are other restrained children in special schools, e.g., children with minimal brain damage, physical handicaps, it is recommended that this situation be avoided as far as possible.

4. (a) Each retarded child ought first to receive a complete didactic-pedagogic evaluation before he receives formal instruction in school. This means the retarded child should not receive "remedial" teaching, as a treatment of symptoms, but that he be recognized as a **person** who must responsibly actualize his intelligence as potentiality as a child-in-becoming on the way to adulthood.  
  
(b) With respect to each retarded child, a primary emphasis should not merely be placed on practical subjects in which the child also can be retarded. Theoretical subjects gradually ought to receive more attention since the child has to be given this opportunity in order to actualize his intelligence responsibly.  
  
(c) The question is asked if the courses of study followed by the retarded child and in terms of which he must actualize his intelligence are not merely a "marking time." Qualified orthodidacticians who do not see the child in his "inferiority" but in his **being different** ought to have the responsibility for assembling the courses of study to be offered the retarded child.
5. In addition to the need for a comprehensive orthopedagogic study, it seems clear from the above recommendations that there is a need for a didactic study concerning the retarded child in which matters such as the planning of a curriculum (course of study), ordering and presenting the learning

content, orthodidactic assistance (in place of "remedial" teaching) are given attention.

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