

Redemptional Pedagogics

Per Jespersen

Our society is no longer based on family life. Many families are split up, even in the nuclear family, because every member of the family lives his or her own life: you take your meal alone, everybody has his or her own room with a tv set or a computer, and the children spend much of their time in their own room, playing computer games or Nintendo.

But of course you meet sometimes, but not always during the meals. Especially the main meals with everybody sitting around the table in the kitchen was a meeting, where you could tell about things you had experienced during the day. You could exchange opinions and get a new perspective to your experiences and thoughts through the common dialogue. Nowadays people do not give themselves time to put their experiences into words, and the regressed experiences therefore are not put into perspective together with other human beings, and you do not get the family members' opinions on important things that have happened to you.

Superficiality is there - all over the room - because there is only time to talk about the weather and the crazy neighbor, who has a crazy dog, that barks crazily all day. You do not go deep into anything: either you skate over the problems without touching the water under the ice, or you conceal everything. But as the meaning of Life is the opposite of superficiality, this meaning and intention of Life can feel so painfully lonesome: unexpressed - unexperienced on a deeper level - pent-up. Then, the soul freezes: the deepest of our mind shivers by cold and pent-upness.

The times we live in are characterized by freezing souls - a spiritual, coldshivering nakedness, for which we have to pay a high price, if we do not try to solve the problem. The soulfreezing human being - is it not terrible?

We can live with the superficiality, but if it turns into coldness of the soul, it is dangerous. We can discuss for hours what the reason for this spiritual crisis is. You could write shelves of books on this issue, but let us here with sorrow and concern ascertain, that spirituality and humane-ness is in a deep crisis.

Globalization and internationalization will never succeed, if we are not able to strengthen our spiritual roots. Thus, humaneness will never succeed, if the soul is in a crisis. The whole human being is a presupposition for a whole and sound humanity. Here pedagogics comes in. When the family network no longer exists, pedagogics has a new task, as it lives there, where the young generation lives: in the institutions, where children and teens spend most of their time.

Pedagogics can never replace and compensate for the missing family network - but it can create humaneness in the children in such a way, that the child's inner spiritual life will not become stunted.

Pedagogics has a new task.

A new challenge.

The problems have to be solved.

For the sake of humaneness.

For the sake of the children.

Thus, we must redefine the goal of pedagogics.

BEING

What we do talk about here is the basic problem of existence. The inner nuclear of the concept being. Put simply: what does it mean to be, and what is the inner essence and nature of being?

We are not talking about joie de vivre or quality of Life, and we are not talking about instinct. We have to go deeper, trying to investigate, what it means to be. It seems a simple - perhaps naive - question. But it is so, that the simplest concepts and the apparently most clear concepts are the concepts, which are the most difficult to define.

What does it mean to be?

Through milleniums philosophers have created several theories about this, because these thinkers intuitively and constantly have sensed, that if you could solve this problem, you would be able to solve all other existentialistic problems. I will try to think from the very beginning in order not to be stuck in isolated theories. My intention is to show, that pedagogics of today has to be connected to the essence of being. Pedagogics is not procurement of knowledge - knowledge and pedagogics are two different concepts. Procurement of knowledge is one thing, pedagogics is something else. The first is handicraft - the latter is sympathetic insight and empathy.

So once again: what does it mean to be? The basic elements of being can easiest be found in children, because they still are unspoiled, intuitive, and spontaneous. As pedagogics is for children, everything should fit together.

So: what is the characteristics in the being of Life, as we find it in children? I think you can say that in one word - so simple, but yet containing so great consequences - one single word:

COMMITMENT.

In the inner depth of a child's mind there is a universal basic element: commitment to the life, it is born to live, and a commitment to the nature and the being, it is born with. Without this commitment a child would never develop curiosity and a need to learn. Very often we take these concepts for an obvious matter of course, but if we want to penetrate to the deepest nature of pedagogics, we must comprehend, that the child's commitment to the nature of its own being is the essence of Life. It is, as if the child discovers its own nature and its own being - it ponders and possesses a longing to know it, and it burns to comprehend it in order to be able to fulfill the intention of its nature and its being. I do not understand commitment religiously, but metaphysically. Spirituality is born in the child's commitment to its own being and its own inner nature. Obligation - the feeling of obligation to its own being and nature - is part of this commitment. Commitment without obligation is unthinkable, and obligation without commitment is unthinkable as well.

Obligation and commitment are the two sides of the same coin. Both sides have the same value; you can turn the coin in two ways, but the value remains. You cannot separate the two sides of the coin, as they ARE the coin at the same time. Separation would mean that the coin would stop existing.

The value has nothing to do with the two sides of it. The coin is an object, representing a certain value, but it is more an abstraction than a solid value: the two sides of the coin keeps the inner value together in one existence.

Commitment and obligation keep the flame of Life alive. We make a huge mistake, if we let pedagogics polish the «two sides of the coin» instead of nourishing the value of the child's inner being and nature.

RELEASE

The child's discovery of its own being and nature leads the child on, and exactly here pedagogics must set in. Every single child is a unique person, as it exists on this planet for the first time - with its commitment. This uniqueness must be the absolute starting point of the pedagogics. This very child's uniqueness cannot be compared to other children - pedagogics has to think from the very beginning and listen itself into exactly this very child's special nature and being. The situation is quite new every time the pedagogue meets a new child. The experiences, the pedagogue may have, must go into the new pedagogical situation, as if they were totally newborn and directly spiritually new-creating. Experiences do not exist to be repeated, but to be crystallized in the meeting with the new child's uniqueness. It is a

difficult balance to make old experiences slide back in the memory, in order that they are no longer ascertained facts, but new valuations on wordless foundations. Intuition is the answer, because built in intuition you will find experiences as subconscious powerful elements.

How difficult this is!

But anyway: here you will find the key to the work, pedagogics is obliged to do: release.

What does it mean to be released - I even dare to use the term redeemed?

Pedagogics must redeem the new child's commitment: its aspirations to learn its own nature and its own being.

Redemptional pedagogics!!

Thus, the absolute starting point for all pedagogics is naturally listening – responsiveness and spiritual readiness. Perhaps this is not new at all, but I am not talking about external listening. Responsiveness is an ability, which can be trained and practised, and the pedagogue and educationalist should be able to penetrate to the child's inner being. It is a question of hearing the child's commitment - its spiritual pulse. The external signals are easily recognized: what the child tells you, your knowledge about its background, its play and ability to socialize etc. But this is not the crucial point. We cannot use the external signals pedagogically - it is too ordinary. But these signals are doors to the child's spirituality: its commitment to penetrate deeper and deeper into its own nature and being.

Oh, this is difficult!!

But we have to remember, that the child's commitment to its own nature and its own being is a spiritual energy. So don't lose this spirituality! We can easily do that, if we as pedagogues allow, that this energy expresses itself in what I would call the «systemal thinking», i.e. political, cultural, religious or other ready-made pedagogic models. As the educationalist stands in front of a new child with a new inner world, which has never been on this planet before, there are no pedagogical models.

The child's spiritual energy, the commitment to its inner nature, to Life, and to its own being, must be maintained, in order that the child can be helped to explore and discover itself, but also in order that the commitment will not be lost in the systemal world. This is not a call to selfishness and self-worship, because there is something else in the child's commitment: a humility and an obsequiousness towards the person, the child will discover in itself. Humility is part of the commitment and has to be released and redeemed.

Oh, it is so difficult!

Commitment without humility will be ship-wrecked in the systemal pattern of thinking, and we have to avoid this with all the power, we possess. The humility we have towards the child's existence is the same humility, which is built-in in the spiritual nuclear of the child's universe. In this way the child and the adult can meet. Humility cannot be learnt - it can be discovered. This, exactly this, is part of the redemptional process.

Take a puppy. In the very beginning of its life, it does not know, that is around - it is just there. It has no idea about the fact, that it has a tail, and it fools around to catch this tail and does not understand, why it hurts, when it finally catches it in a bite. But one day it makes a great discovery: I am the one who has this tail. Now it is conscious about its tail - and now it uses it consciously.

That is the way it is with the child. How could it ever know, that it is around? But one day it discovers fragments of its own nature and being. Growing up, it expects this being to be released.

The explanation is simple:

You are only a half human being, if your nature and being are not released and redeemed. I do not only mean discovered and accepted by the pedagogue, but I mean released. This redemption is by nature metaphysical. I see the relation between child and pedagogue as deeply metaphysical.

The redemption is deeper than learning one's own I - perhaps even deeper than a socratic dialogue can reach. And yet: I believe, that the true socratic dialogue peripherally touches the child's commitment to its own being. Put in other words: the socratic dialogue can contribute to start the child's inner speech with itself. In the commitment to one's own being there is something narrative: the child tells itself stories with the spiritual contents, it needs in order to know the depths of its being, which is a presupposition for understanding other human beings' being and nature.

This self narrativity can be started by the socratic dialogue, when it is at its best. It is liberating a sort of mediation in such a way that the spontaneous and innate ability to spiritual comprehension builds a bridge between the child's and other human beings' nature and being.

The most important of pedagogics is to create the possibility of this redemption.

CARE

Redemptional pedagogics is the pedagogics, which makes every single child's being and nature flower. Every child has this right - right to be as it is. Therefore, it is a humiliation of the child to try to canalize the child's nature and being into foreign areas. It is not sufficient or adequate to understand the child - it is far too superficial. On the contrary: the pedagogue must care for the child's real nature

and being on the metaphysical level. A pedagogical, metaphysical, and socratic love to this marvellous child, whom you as the redeeming pedagogue are allowed to spend time with in a short period of its life.

The redeeming pedagogue loves the child's nature and being and tries to make this existentialistic love (Agape!) to the spiritual sovereignty of all living help the child to discover the intention of its nature and being - not religiously, but humanely. The deepest humaneness is to know and recognize and be liberated by one's own being. This spiritual liberation possesses a potential for tolerance through selfcomprehension. You cannot be tolerant and unprejudiced without having comprehended your own nature and your own being.

Here philosophy, understood as pedagogical method, comes in as the only «science», which can help the pedagogue and the child. Philosophy is deeper than anything else - even deeper than religion, as religion can be juxtaposed to politics: the morass of cut-and-dried opinions, which can never lead to redemption of a human being's nature and being.

Uppps! This was a bad one! But necessary!

Moreover, I dare say the following: religion and politics fetter, while philosophy releases and redeems.

So: Let the children come to philosophy, and do not hinder them!

Uppppppps, this one was even worse and perhaps a contestation! ! !

The spiritual crisis of today has its roots in the outlines, I have tried to sketch out. And it will aggravate, if we do not follow the way of redemption.

Through love to the children - and to Life!

REDEMPTION

Therefore, the pedagogue must disengage himself from the pedagogical knowledge, he has learnt. At every meeting with a new child, the pedagogue must restrain his systemal knowledge and in a way start all over again, because he has never ever met exactly this being before. Everything is new - the child is new - the situation is new - the challenge is new. Here is the redemption - also for the pedagogue - the separation from experience and routine. Both the pedagogue and the child are spiritually naked and ready to jump out into the great being - Life itself - with everything this demands: responsibility and forgiveness, liberation and spiritualization - respect and love.

Besides the ordinary teaching the Socratic, philosophical dialogue ought to be the travelling companion with the child on its journey in Life. If you forget, that the primary task for the pedagogue is to be a redeemer for the child's discovery of its own nature and its own being, it is almost certain, that the child will slide into the systemal world and thereby loose its uniqueness. This is what we experience in these confusing years, where most of us live a life so superficial, that we do not apprehend the signals children and teens send us. Many of them are deeply lonely - some of them even suicidal.

They have not met the redemptional pedagogues, and the lost land is too often difficult to conquer.

We behave cowardly, when we leave children and teens to their own selfredemption. It cannot take place without help from an adult. The confidence in the adult world fades away, and the child moves into the systemal world, loses its experience of being and slides into nihilism. Even the worst blusterer of a boy and even the most foolish girl has a being, which has to be released. The pedagogue, who complains over problems with the noisy and disturbing boy and the giggling girl has not understood that the cause of the children's behaviour comes from the pedagogue. There is no child on this planet, whose nature and being cannot be redeemed.

So listen, pedagogue, working in the kindergarten, in the school, or in other institutions: your work has to be releasing and philosophical. Then everything will go easy, because the longing for learning will only be there, when you fulfill the child's right to be spiritually redeemed.

We pedagogues do not work for the sake of society or for the sake of culture. We work for the sake of children. For the sake of redemption. For the sake of love for existence. For these concepts form the basis of culture and society.

Let the children meet the redemptional pedagogues!

Do not hinder them!!

Address correspondence to:

Per Jespersen
Randerup 40
6261 Bredebro
Denmark
e-mail: fil@postl2.tele.dk

[Back to current electronic table of contents](#)