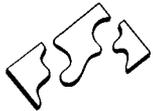


## Pedagogy in the Shadow of the Year 2000.<sup>1</sup>

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To educate children is by definition an activity with an intention for the future. Educators, the professional ones as much as parents, want their pupils to be grown-up, the immatures to be mature, the weak to be strong, the dependent to be self-supporting.

Education embraces a wider field than just school education, teaching, and vocational training. Also included are the raising of children in the framework of family life, the stimulating of self-consciousness, the confronting of all kinds of political and religious convictions in the youth movement, and the helping to find their own identity for youngsters growing up outside a protecting family: in orphanages, in homes for the crippled, in youth prisons. So not only teachers are educators but also parents, youth leaders, social workers, nurses, rehabilitation workers, and so on. To make a clear difference I prefer the following terminology: "education" for the field of just teaching, training, and learning; "pedagogy" for the accompaniment of the immature to maturity, including school education.

The word "accompaniment" evokes the association of a walk, of a way *from* somewhere *to* somewhere, of wandering to *arrive* somewhere. That's what I mean by stating that pedagogy has an intention for the future. The future can be described as physical growth, mental maturity, and social independence. Once this purpose is accomplished in respect to a certain group of pupils, the pedagogue's task as a pedagogue is completed.

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This sounds very simple, but it has become much more complicated. The Enlightenment first and the Industrial Revolution afterwards prolonged the process leading from childhood to adulthood. The Enlightenment forced this prolongation through theoretical arguments; the Industrial Revolution made this prolongation possible through material means. The lengthening of the maturing process caused an extension of the task of the pedagogue. Instead of 7 years he supervised a pupil 12 years, afterwards 16 years, and nowadays, in the case of a university training, about 30 years.

This prolongation caused the pedagogue to move his attention from the *goal* of his educational work to the *process* of that work. As a result, he expressed his goal in terms accentuating the process-like character of his work. The goal of his pedagogical work was no longer his pupil *being* mature but *becoming* mature, not *reaching* adulthood but *growing towards* adulthood. *Being an adult* even received a negative connotation, something final, something without any further possibilities of development.

As the affluent society could bear the expenses of *éducation permanente* or prolonged schooling, the goal of education faded increasingly into a more distant horizon. The task of the pedagogue became an indefinite one. As their teacher, therapist, or social worker, he accompanied his pupils during their whole life. Paradoxically, in a time of movements for anti-authoritarian education, denouncing authority and hierarchy as negative phenomena, the superauthority of the andragogue, the adult educator, was born. His accompaniment could not be lacked by

any human being regardless of age. The question of who could accompany the adult educator himself, being as much a human being as all his "clients," remained unanswered.

So we lost the perception that man's education ought to have a visible finish within a determined space of time. But, with the loss of this distinct finish of the educational process, the philosophical perspective for that educational process also disappeared. Henceforth, a pedagogue offering his pupil a philosophical perspective was looked upon as an indoctrinating authoritarian. Every pupil or client had to look for his own perspective. Pedagogy lost its normative character. The pedagogue was no longer a guide in the landscape of values, morals, ethics, and norms.

In the sixties pedagogy as an attitude bent for the future became extremely influenced by some new sciences: *futurology* and *polemology*. The first tried to analyze the developments of the future on all the fields of human culture; the second was occupied by the problems of war and peace. As much as by these new sciences, the speculations about the future were influenced by the discoveries in outerspace by aeronautic expeditions. These explorations caused a new kind of literature to come into being: *science fiction*. Perceptions of the future inspired by this kind of technology reached a wide public, especially after being adopted by the movies. Once penetrated into T.V. programmes, this material even confronted children. It is true there are differences involving the science of polemology, the pseudo-science of futurology, and the medium of science fiction. Nevertheless, they have two things in common: they are bent for a future causing fear, threatening destruction through eschatological and apocalyptic perspectives. And, secondly, they share a fixation on the year 2000. We can state that all three of them have caused a new wave of millenarianism.

This millenarianism penetrated the minds of parents, teachers, kindergarten leaders, leaders of the youth movements, authors of children's literature, librarians of youth libraries, as well as professional pedagogues. What consequences will these *negative* perceptions of the future have for the pedagogical perspective for the future, which, as we stated above, by definition has to be a *positive* one? The perspective of the destruction of everything alive within a near future makes pedagogy senseless and impossible because in pedagogy we want to *arrive* somewhere.

Now the interesting thing is that the presentation by all kinds of political and religious groups of the world's imminent destruction is offered as something new as if we never before were in danger or were afraid we were in danger. But, as a matter of fact, nowadays cultural pessimism associated with the year 2000 shows remarkable congruence with the medieval cultural pessimism towards the year 1000.

Both pessimistic movements are millenarianistic in that they were obsessed by the magic of numbers, in this case the number 1000. Both movements are inclined to irrationalism, magic, and mysticism. Nevertheless, in both cases their complaints are based on real dangers, disasters, and threats to social and cultural developments in the fields of politics and economics. But, where in medieval times every kind of misfortune was looked upon as divine punishment or a diabolic act, in our time we should be able to analyse and master by our scientific means these

misfortunes. The troubling thing is that even now the fears for extinction result in irrational, magical, and mystical reactions. Professional as well as nonprofessional educators have to be aware of the dangers for pedagogics originating from this modern irrationalism. Otherwise the predicted destruction of human culture will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Before describing these pedagogical dangers, we have to point to the resemblances between medieval and modern millenarianism. First of all there is a fearful fixation on the number of 1000. For Medieval people there was a theological justification for this fixation. Did not the book *Daniel* of the Old and the *Revelations of John* in the New Testament divide world history in four eras, each counting 1000 years? After these four eras, intense sufferings would befall mankind, cumulating in the destructive wars of Gog and Magog, and followed by the End of Days and the Last Judgement. The last of the four was counted from the birth of Christ or from his crucifixion, coming out on the year 1000 or 1033.<sup>2</sup> Nowadays, in a secularizing society, such a theological justification does not make sense anymore; so what remains is pure magic of numbers.

The second resemblance can be seen in the fear of the destruction of the environmental balance. In the medieval case there were droughts, famines, whirlwinds, epidemics with fatal effect, comets, and all kinds of such phenomena looked upon as signs of an imminent end of the world.<sup>3</sup> In our time there is the polluting of water and air, the "Silent Spring" caused by insecticides, the reducing of flora and fauna by cars and freeways, the diminishing sources of energy, and the fearing of new, nuclear energy sources.<sup>4</sup>

A third resemblance can be found in the appearance of "heretical" movements. In the medieval case they manifested themselves as opposition groups of very pious clerics against what they felt was the degeneration of the old church ideals: the abandoning of the principle of poverty above all, but also the clerical bureaucracy and its corruption.<sup>5</sup> In our time we see the same kind of opposition against the bureaucracy and corruption of the establishment, the secular as well as the clerical. The opposition to the secular establishment results in the fission of the traditional political parties into a wide scale of little new parties and anti-parliamentarian groups of protest. The opposition to the clerical authorities results in new phenomena like lay priests, feminist theology, a prism of new sects like Jesus People and United Family, and an escape into exotic religions and philosophies like Hare Krishna, Zen Buddhism, or the doctrines of numerous gurus.<sup>6</sup> In the Middle Ages, as well as nowadays, the problem of the criticized authorities is that they cannot throw disrepute on these apostates by accusing them of being frivolous or unpious people because in the public opinion these rebels were and are looked upon as the only real pious souls. The established authorities try to save their position by ongoing concession and compromise, but in doing so their hold on things becomes undermined. A vacuum of authority comes into existence preparing a fertile ground for radicalism, extremism, and polarization. Around the year 1000 this process debouched into the brutal crusades; in our time it results in terrorist movements.

A fourth resemblance is the denouncing of modern life and a romantic idealization of former days. Around the year 1000 public aversion was uttered against new methods in trade which pursued more rationalization

and efficiency: for example, the introduction of the oath in civil law instead of trial by ordeal.<sup>7</sup> In our time we recognize a distrust concerning the affluent society, automatization, technology, and technocracy, blaming these phenomena for causing overproduction, unemployment, overpopulation, and bureaucracy. In those bygone times, as much as in our days, the catchwords are "returning to nature and poverty."

The fifth resemblance with which we are confronted is the need to find a scapegoat. In both periods the cause of the derailment is blamed on a foreign element: in the Middle Ages the Jews, Syrians, and Lombards; nowadays, the foreign labourers and immigrants. Holland has its Caribbeans, Surinams, Ambonese, Turks, and Morroccans; England its West Indian people and Pakistani; France its Algerians; the United States its blacks and Puerto Ricans; Russia its Jews. A new xenophobia and a new racism finds its way throughout the world.

While all scapegoating has to be accused of absolute irrationalism, the complaints themselves leading people to scapegoating are based on real abuses and dangers, like nuclear weapons, the energy crisis, overpopulation, and bureaucracy. Not real at all, however, as far as our time is concerned, is a presentation of the problems as if we were as unable to cope and as much doomed to despair as the people in the Middle Ages. The presentation of the problems does not take into account the almost infinite power of modern science as a key to solutions. On the contrary, science is blamed as one of the most important originators of the problems themselves.

It seems as if the most important function of science, to demythologize the world's patterns, has come to a standstill. It seems as if man has lost his awareness of himself as the creator and modulator of society. Again, as in medieval times, but now unnecessarily, he does not look at the inconveniences and abuses as results of his own mistakes, and he does not look at himself as able to correct them. The feeling of responsibility for the happiness of the world, to have a mission in one's life and a task for the future, the awareness of human power over the elements, over diseases, over poverty, over war and peace, as the Enlightenment taught us, is disappearing more and more. We are blaming others and regarding ourselves only as victims, not as actors of history. The old wisdom that man himself spoiled his paradise and only man himself can bring it back is effaced. The old tradition that messianic times will not be given to us as a present from heaven but has to be deserved by human merit sank into oblivion. Unlike the Medieval people we are not blaming God or the Devil, but other impersonal powers like the Establishment, Bureaucracy, Capitalism, Communism, Technocracy, Automatization, the uncreative and consummating Affluent Society, Urbanization, the Poisoning of human mind by pharmacy and medical science, and so on.

In pedagogics this means that we no longer educate children normatively. We do not awaken a feeling in them that they have a task, that they have a responsibility, that there is a goal to pursue in life. Following Dr. Spock, we educate children only to pursue their own individual comfort, and so we create these little tyrants of family life. Collective goals disappear out of sight. Our cult is, as Christopher Lasch named it, the culture of narcissism.<sup>8</sup>

But, as we said before, pedagogy is bent for the future, pedagogy needs a perspective, pedagogy implies growth towards something. All children think, dream, and talk about: "Later, when I am grown up. . ." What can modern day children fill in on the dotted line following this sentence? It seems like we modern pedagogues have blocked all the possible identifications that children in former times could fill in on these dots. To become a father is authoritarian, to become a mother is unemancipated, to become a hero saving his fatherland is, at least in the Western World, reactionary, to become a preacher of religious values is handing out opium to the people, to become a famous inventor is an ignoble quest for achievement, to pursue success and fame is a manifestation of detestable competition, to heal sick people is stimulating overpopulation, and to play an active role in management and enterprise is promoting the overproduction that will strangle our world.

So, to what purpose do we take our children to school? What cheerful outlook do we offer them in case they do their best? What can a child long for, what can it be curious about, to what can it devote itself?

In educational publications there is much talk about motivation and motivating. But to what purpose? In high schools teachers attribute the apathy of their pupils to the expected unemployment waiting for them after their finals. And, indeed, it is not true any longer that after graduation the world is awaiting you with open arms. These negative prospects, however, are compensated for by greater possibilities for prolonged learning and training than in former days, accessible to more boys and girls than before thanks to a growing quantity of scholarships and stipendia.

The apathy of teenagers and adolescents is not so much caused by the doubt whether there will be something for them to *do* as by the doubt whether it is of any *use* to do it. If it should be true that working in trade or industry means coping with the exploitation of the working class, if doing social work means to obscure social injustice by a palliative, postponing the very needed revolution, then it is not very clear any more what should arouse children's enthusiasm for life. Where can children go to employ their achieved knowledge and their unused energy?

As long as you were taught that your mere existence is a factor in the problem of overpopulation, you have to come to the conclusion of your own superfluousness. As long as you were taught that your part of the world is unjustly privileged over the Third World, as much in educational as in material respects, you will be burdened by a feeling of guilt. If you want to get rid of that guiltiness by going to work for the Third World, they will unmask the help to the underdeveloped countries as neo-colonialism. Would it be amazing then if you, instead of protesting against the H-bomb as you did before, would start to hope that it would efface the whole inextricable puzzle in one blow so that you do not have to solve anything anymore or even do not have to know anything anymore.

As long as this apocalypse holds off, you can, as an adolescent, try to eclipse individually. You can do that in different ways, but three of them increased during the last twenty years in a terrifying way: first, the escape into drugs and alcohol; secondly, into mysticism; thirdly, into suicide.

While recent publications have focused on drugs and alcohol, rather little attention is paid to mysticism as a means of escaping reality in search of salvation. What kind of salvation is looked for nobody knows. And what kind of salvation could morally be justified by youngsters whose parents or other educators did not hand them over any kind of norms or values by which they could test their choice? Norms and values like courage, diligence, studiousness, or achieving spirit have fallen into disrepute. Young people are taught to suspect these values or even to despise them. Such an education, advertising itself to be progressive, has certainly led to a longing for a strong man, a charismatic leader, who will offer new norms and who will fight the final war that will end in absolute and definite silence and rest: the rest of death, like in the massacre of the commune of The People's Temple, in Guyana, in 1978.

Finally, escape into suicide has, especially as far as children were concerned, till now been an untouched taboo. Childhood was supposed to be the happiest time of man's life, and suicide, if it happened at all, was linked to grown-up patients or, very romantically, to frustrated lovers. But in recent times the signals coming from physicians and general hospitals about the suicides of children and youngsters has alarmed the psychologists. Pedagogues should quickly pay attention to what is wrong with our youth. During the last twenty years suicide apparently has become more frequent among youngsters of 15 to 25 years of age and among children from 10 to 14 than among older people. These victims were known as "normal" kids; that's to say, they were not what we call psychiatric cases, children with troubles in school, or physically deprived kids. Looking at the rising statistics, we cannot comfort ourselves by stating that it is impossible to talk about a rising curve because, as a result of the long cultivated taboo, we do not know how common suicide was among youngsters previously. The alarming fact is that suicide amongst young people has progressively risen during that short time that we *did* dare to do research about it.

The reasons for children's suicide are manifold: disjointed family life, the burden laid upon children to make their own choice between the father or the mother in cases of divorce, childbattering, oppressed sexuality, bad school reports, and conflicts with teachers. But as few of these problems are new phenomena, they cannot explain the sudden rise of children's suicide. New only is the progressive frequency of divorces, and we are convinced that this is disastrous in a child's life even if things are prepared and handled very carefully. Inevitable consequences of every divorce of parents of young children are identification crises, loyalty problems, and the feelings of guilt towards oneself ("I failed to keep my parents together") and towards that parent the child is not living with anymore ("I am unfaithful to my father or to my mother").<sup>9</sup>

But the most important reason behind the rise of suicide in childhood is that children get a perception of the world as senseless and without any perspective. In France cases were found of high school children killing themselves by burning, because of, as they mentioned in their goodbye letters, "the wars and the follies of mankind," or "because of the hunger in Biafra." These kids too were known as well balanced youngsters.<sup>10</sup> There

was no question of doubt or lack of self-confidence in these kids themselves, but in the adults and their world, or, as one of the scholars studying children's suicide put it, "the last thing these young persons want to be is an adult" because "they do not want anything to do at all with the 'real' world as they see it."

And how do children see the real world? That depends on how adults *show* them the world. There was a time that we adults did not show children the world at all for fear that it was too difficult for them to understand, too cruel, too threatening. In my book *Bringing Up Children By Keeping Them Down*,<sup>11</sup> I called that period "Youthland." It's the time from the Enlightenment up to the Second World War. In that time we made a sharp distinction between children and adults. We brought into shape a world of childhood, a world of toys and nannies and books especially written for children and telling them only about children and never anything about sorrow, death, poverty, war, sickness, prisons, sexuality, cruelty, and all the other troubles of the world of the adults. We kept children in the nursery like tiny plants that could not bear storm, hail, cold, and rain in the open air. From about 1780 till 1900, this was the way middle class and aristocratic children were kept protected.

For working class children this protected world came into being from 1900 on. Parents and teachers and youth movement leaders learned a lot about children's psychology, children's development, children's needs, children's language, and while dealing with their pupils, they were attuned to speak in the pupils' language, to treat them by *their* codes, to tell them stories conforming *their* fantasy and never introduce them to anything of adult feelings, adult emotions, adult fears, adult problems. I explained in my book how puberty as a separate time in life full of problems and *Weltschmerz* came into being by this childish treatment far away from reality, because the young person at the age of 13 till 17 years old suddenly had to confront the real world after being unconscious about its existence during all his former life.<sup>12</sup> A protection like this was possible as long as the Western World lived in ever growing luxury and comfort, and parents had enough leisure time to spend playing with them and reading to them and accompanying them on every step. But it had to come to an end with the appearance of the World Wars and the worldwide economic depression between them. At that time children could not be protected any longer. Bombs, hunger, persecution, evacuation, lack of clothes, separation of family members, concentration camps, and so on did not stop before the borders of Youthland. Children had to take care of themselves after losing their parents, teachers, youth leaders; they had to find something to eat, a place to sleep, a place to hide all alone. Sometimes they had to steal food for a sick parent or a baby brother or sister. Children saw adults killed, saw adults starving, even saw adults copulating. Youthland as a separate part of the world was gone.

After the war adults tried to restore Youthland. But it never came back in its former shape. Although adults again were in charge of providing food, clothes, lessons, toys, and all other needs, children never again forgot that they had been able to do things themselves and, moreover, never again forgot that parents and teachers had not been able to help them as they

needed it. Like the colonial world, children decolonized themselves after war. The Sixties were the glorious years of children's "Auto-emancipation" in the whole Western World.

Although the causes of the break-down of Youthland were horrible, the effects cannot be seen as only deplorable. Youth became politically involved, demonstrated against new wars like that in Vietnam, protested against overpopulation, marched against pollution, and fought for administrative power in schools and universities. The educators, accused of misgovernment of the world that was, lost their assertiveness and took to anti-authoritarian education, which meant standing by and watching how their children made the rules or trying to keep a bit of a hold on things by educating page by page according to Dr. Spock's bible.

Another way to keep hold on things was to introduce children very early into adult problems before they reached the age of discovering for themselves the mess adults had made of the world. The most important textbook in school became the daily paper. Teachers uncovered the secrets of sexuality, the dangers of nuclear weapons, the threats of pollution, the war-causing overpopulation, the injustice of colonialism, the oppression of women, the robbery of capitalism, the poisoning of the crops by insecticides, all within the daily school curriculum. This was done partly to make children more able to defend themselves in times of disaster and partly—and most times unconsciously—to disculpate the world of the adults, and so to disculpate their own generation, by blaming impersonal powers like Industrialization, Urbanization, Automatization, Bureaucracy, Science, Religion, Pharmacy, Chemistry, Capitalism, Communism, and so on, for the horrors of the world. This is the black perception of the world we present to children nowadays. And should children long for that world, live a useful life for it? They learn that man is without power, that superhuman powers are manipulating him to death. So why to live any longer?

And now, what is the solution? What is the answer of pedagogy? Do I think we have to return to Youthland and hide the world's problems from children once more? I do not. I wrote my book as an adversary to Youthland. I do not see children as a separate kind of creature but as human beings with the responsibility of human beings, only a little smaller, a little weaker, a little less experienced, and with a little less knowledge. So we have to make them bigger, stronger, more experienced, more scholarly. For that we have to inform them about everything in the world. It is their world too, and not just the world of adults.

So we never should return to "hide the bad world from our children's eyes." But showing them the world as it is, we have to proceed in a pedagogical way. That means that we have to recognize the needs of children for concreteness and logic. Children's logic asks for justice and safeness. So when we show the modern world as a bad one, their logic wants it to be bettered tomorrow. We adults, as soon as we show them the wrongs, have to offer them synchronically the means to make things better. Moreover, the possibilities to better the world must not be reserved for politicians and scientists; they must be within the reach of children's hands. Pedagogically it cannot be justified to evoke emotions in children without channeling and transforming them into deeds, into action.

Without translating political and social criticism into political and social action, no matter how small-scaled that may be, children will become depressed and turn to drugs, mysticism, and suicide. I cannot verbalize the problem better than Hans Magnus Enzensberger<sup>13</sup> did as he said:

Doomsday is the negative of utopia. Doomsday probably is the only remaining all-embracing vision of the future of what human mind can grasp as future. Not being able anymore to believe in the utopia of the liberal state of freedom, nor in the communist ideal state and neither in the anarchistic personalism we will give birth to the danger that the Apocalypse will be the only vision of future that will be left.

We pedagogues, when introducing children into an adult world, not only have to translate that world pedagogically; we also have to believe in that world ourselves. We have to make clear for ourselves—and have to be able to transfer to our pupils—these norms and values through which hope for the future is justified. Fear of hell and damnation never made human beings more decent. On the contrary, desperateness leads to aggression and destruction. No other pedagogy can exist than the pedagogy of hope.

## Notes

1. This is an abridged version of the author's inaugural speech as professor in the history of education at the University of Amsterdam. In full length it was published as *Pedagogie in de Schaduw van het Jaar 2000 of Hulde aan de Hoop*. (Amsterdam: Meppel, 1980).
2. N. R. C. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Messianism in Medieval and Reformation Europe and its Bearings on Modern Totalitarian Movements* (Fairlawn, N.J.: Essential Books, 1961).  
Lea Dasberg, *Untersuchungen über die Entwertung des Judenstatus im 11. Jahrhundert* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965) Vol. 3, Chapter 2.
3. Lea Dasberg, *Untersuchungen*, 187.
4. G. T. Taylor, *The Biological Time Bomb* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1968) 18, 19, 219-222, 226. R. Carson, *Silent Spring* (New York: Fawcett Publishers, 1963). Dennis L. Meadows (editor). *The Limits to Growth*, the Report of the Club of Rome Project on the Predicament of Mankind, Dennis L. Meadows (ed.), (New York: Universe Books, 1972).
5. G. Tellenbach and R. F. Bennet, *Church, State and Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948).
6. Th. Roszak, *The Making of a Counter-Culture. Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Doubleday, 1969).
7. This is an analysis of *De Diverstate Morum (Temporum)* by Alpertus Mettensis, 1021-1024, by Lea Dasberg in *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, (Groningen, 1958) 243-249.
8. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in An Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 1978).
9. See E. Lockhorn, *En wat gebeurt er dan met mij? Kinderen over echtscheiding*, (Baarn: Anthos-boek, 1980). This book presents a series of interviews with children of divorced parents.
10. This is a Dutch essay by R. Diekstra, A. Koster and B. van der Leeden, about children and suicide in *Ouders van Nu* (April, 1980). See also the essay "Schütterselbstmorde," about German experiences with juvenile suicide, in *Betrifft: Erziehung* (April, 1980) Vol. 4, 21-31.

11. See Lea Dasberg, *Grootbrengen door kleinhouden als Historisch Verschijnsel* (Amsterdam: Meppel, 1979).
12. See also Lea Dasberg, A historical and transcultural view of adolescence, in W. Everaerd, C. B. Mindley, A. Bot, J. J. van der Werff ten Bosch (editors), *Development in Adolescence, Psychological, Social and Biological Aspects* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), 1-16.
13. M. M. Enzensberger in an interview with Max Pam and Rob Sijmons, *Vrij Nederland* (11-3-1978) 7.