



# The Pedagogical Atmosphere: The Perspective of the Educator

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## Trust in the Child

Thus far we have looked at the adult-child relationship from the perspective of the child, and we have spoken about the educator (teacher or parent) only as he or she must recognize and nurture the fruitful emotional condition of the child. But it is no less important to consider the sensibility of the educator in dealing with the child. Therefore, we turn our attention to the side of the educator in the second part of our deliberations. This includes in particular the problem of educational virtues, the spiritual and mental preparedness of the teacher which are essential for his or her success. It is astonishing how little thought has been spent on this problem so far. Thus we have to approach it first with some basic considerations.

In the sphere of emotional relationships we begin again with the state of trust. In the preceding part we spoke about the importance of the confidence which is granted by the child to the world in which he or she lives and in particular to the persons who stand in close relation to the child. Of no less importance is the trust given to the child by his or her living environment and especially by the child's educators because this too is necessary for his or her proper development. The child is not just evolving from within, following his or her own inherent laws as postulated by the romantic interpretation of a plant-like growth. The child is also dependent on what expectations the environment provides. In order to develop properly children need to feel trustful of their environment. Where this trust is missing, or where there exists instead an open or hidden distrust, there proper development cannot succeed, there it will be deficient or displaced in a disastrous way.

In order to gain an appropriate understanding of the educational implications of the meaning of confidence, we have to examine its different aspects.

### *Confidence (Zutrauen)*

First we must distinguish between "confidence" and "trust in general." Although the distinction between the two words is not

sharp, one experiences a certain difference. *Having confidence* is somehow a simpler form of behavior than *trust* because it causes fewer problems. It acts as the less complicated preform of real trust. The difference can be determined in two directions.

First, *confidence* (*Zutrauen*) is one-sided, and it does not yet have the intrinsic moral character of *trust*, but it relates in a simpler mode to the natural abilities of the human being. One has confidence in someone's physical and spiritual powers, or one believes someone is capable of something. Confidence always relates to a distinct ability. As a rule it is meant in a positive sense. It means one is convinced that someone has the ability to perform well this or that task. For example, if we give orders to a craftsperson to make or fix something, then it is self-evident that we feel sure that he or she is able to do the ordered work. Under certain circumstances this sense of confidence can be intensified into admiration of extraordinary faculty. But one can feel sure about someone's bad abilities as well. If one says about a person that "one 'knows' that he or she is capable of anything," then it means one has to expect the worst.

Second, *trust* (*Vertrauen*) is a reciprocal relationship, as we show in more detail. Trust demands a response. There is no trust without faith which we have toward a person who has trust in us. But confidence is not asking for such a response. Confidence is independent from a person's reaction to our confidence in him or her. A person in whom we have confidence may not react at all; he or she may not even know that we feel confident about him or her. Moreover one can feel confident about the abilities of someone who is a total stranger to us. Nonetheless, if a person is aware of our confidence in him or her, then our confidence tends to encourage and improve this person's particular ability. The person who feels that we have confidence in him or her increases his or her self-confidence and will try to justify (already unconsciously) our confidence.

This confidence is of high educational importance because it enhances the achievements and improves the development. One has to have confidence in children. That is the prerequisite for any demand or task with which we are confronting them in the family and school. And true educational responsibility is demonstrated by the well-balanced amount of confidence we have in children. One also has to grant children confidence for new tasks for which they have not had a chance to prove their abilities yet because they are still developing and their abilities are still growing. Our confidence always has to be a little in

advance. One even has to take some risks, because nothing is more discouraging for a child than to hear on every occasion: "You can't do this." Of course, there are limits to this as well, and one must not force the child too far in granting him or her unlimited confidence for everything. Lagging behind such expectations will discourage the child, and then accomplishments will decline instead of grow. On the other hand, the educator must not be too anxious in this respect either, because in their growing urges for action, children demand confidence for it and for the abilities it requires. Children gain confirmation from it and they are ready to accept even higher demands; they are happy and proud to fulfill such expectations. Children have a natural urge to test their abilities to the limit, and the educator would foster weakness if he or she would not again and again ask for these ultimate limits, if he or she would not make tough demands. Physical stress on longer hikes or mountain climbs offer good opportunities for such demands. The child's knowledge about his or her own abilities and the achieved self-discipline will then have an influence also in the spiritual sphere.

### *The Imprinting Power of Opinion and Belief*

The second distinction is the opinion or belief which one has about a certain person. Opinion and belief are also of great importance for the child's development while their significance is poorly understood because here one sees in a deep way a problem, which was poetically elucidated from new standpoints by playwright Pirandello, portraying how a human being is forming himself or herself according to the opinion of the environment (Löwith, 1928). Pirandello also sees it in a different, mainly critical, context. The unity of a personality is divided by many perspectives. But this has simultaneously a positive meaning; the person becomes what the environment believes about him or her, and so the person forms himself or herself according to this picture. Individuals take over the role made for them by the environment. Modern sociology has elaborated this in all sharpness. The environment in that sense can indeed change a human being, for good or for worse, depending on the nature of his or her belief. Hartman (1926) recognized this very clearly as a philosopher. Belief has the creative power "to actually bring forth what is believed about the other person." "Belief," he summarizes, "can transform a person" (p. 429).

The notion of "belief" that is being addressed here is more encompassing already than the notion of naked *opinion*, and thus far the two concepts can be distinguished from each other. What we are dealing with here is not just the abstract assumption that human beings have moral dignity. Rather we are

concerned with definite positive qualities which one invests or presumes in the other person. These presumed qualities support our social life and form the ground which sustains social life. To the extent that this belief has at once an immediate practical implication, and to the extent that one is using the strength of these qualities in relation to another person, one speaks pointedly about trust. In this sense one has trust in someone's courage, honesty, discretion. Similar to holding a positive opinion about the person, one can be confident that such trust will strengthen the attributes in question. Despite this similarity there is a difference: If I am disappointed in this trust, then not only do I have to correct a false opinion about the person whom I trusted, in the same manner as I would have to correct errors in the factual world, but it is the other person himself or herself who has disappointed my trust. The other person has disappointed me by actions for which he or she is accountable. He or she has forsaken my trust and in this respect we have entered the domain of morality.

What has been said about human beings at such a general level is particularly relevant also for the child. The child does not have the same inner strength as an adult, and therefore, by being so much more open, the child is much more exposed to good or bad influences than the adult. And from this stems again a deep pedagogical problem. The belief of the educator strengthens the positive faculties which he or she presumes present in the child. The educator is in a sense luring them out with his or her belief. If the teacher thinks highly about a child's reliability, sincerity, devotion, then his or her belief awakens and corroborates these qualities in the child. By this trust the child will truly become reliable, sincere, and devoted. The child is forming himself or herself according to the picture the educator has about the child and according to his or her trust in it. But the opposite is also true: All the bad things which the educator suspects in the child are, in a sense, brought forth by these very suspicions, and the child eventually will be just as dumb and lazy and mendacious as the distrusting educator has supposed the child to be.

Thus the educator has to pay careful attention to any such impulses of distrust, which can easily arise from his or her professional experience, because his or her distrust has a disastrous influence, drives the child into obduration, and hinders the child's free development (Bollnow, 1962, p. 198). Fröbel (1951) has seen this already in his time. In a beautiful sequence of his *Menschenziehung* (The Education of the Human Being) he writes:

Certainly it is very true, and our ignoring of this very truth takes revenge every day, that it is most often the human being, the other human being, often the educator himself, who makes a person, a child, a boy into a bad person, a bad child, a bad boy. It happens when one is supposing a vicious, bad, or at least crooked intention in everything that is done by the child or the boy in ignorance or without consideration.... Unfortunately there still are such calamitous individuals amongst educators; they always see little, nasty, insidious, lurking devils in children and boys, where others at most perceive an overabundance of fun or the results of a somewhat unbridled joy of life. Such ill-fated individuals, especially when they are educators, turn other persons or children, whether they are totally innocent or not, into culprits, by putting thoughts and actions into them which otherwise would be unknown to them. (p. 75)

It is the educator who, in his or her distrust, produces the bad child. From this stems an enormous responsibility of the educator because the judgment he or she is making for him or herself about a child, often without much thought and just as a first impression, is not the educator's private matter. If it were, then it would concern nobody but the educator. But the point is that the educator's mere belief has certain practical implications. The educator may not be talking about what he or she thinks; nevertheless, these beliefs have consequences on his or her behavior and in this way they influence directly the development of the child. It depends very much on the educator's belief of how the child will develop.

### *Trust in General*

If we have so far distinguished trust in a human being from confidence in him or her and opinion about him or her by noting that trust is related to the person's moral core, then finally all forms of trust which have to do with singular accomplishments are related to trust in general, which addresses the person more than any particular aspect. I do not have trust only in certain single attributes and virtues of this person, but in the whole person. And this general trust is to be realized in its basic importance as an indispensable prerequisite for education more than any considerations entertained so far. This trust is the basic constitution, the atmospheric condition of all education, as we found it already in the trust of the child toward his or her world at the beginning of our analysis of the child's feeling of security. Now we see it from the educator's side as the trust which the educator has in the child.

This trust is fruitful, even indispensable, for the development of all faculties of the child, even when this trust does not yet have any particular direction. The child's moral power is dependent on the trust which the environment and especially the educators bestow on the child. If they deny this trust then they deprive the child of the stamina for all its good resolutions, and even the most obstinate doggedness, for the child's tasks will eventually break down if it is not supported by such accommodating trust.

As we did with respect to the trust which the child has in his or her surroundings, so here again we have to distinguish between two different levels of trust. In the beginning, trust works directly in a taken-for-granted manner. The infant is totally surrounded by a loving and affirmative environment, and usually one does not bother him or her with difficult demands. In this respect the infant's life is still "easy." Even in the normal case of the healthy daily social life of people, such a natural atmosphere of trust is predominant.

But this self-evident trust which the adult has in the child will not last forever. It must necessarily be shaken some time as it has been with the trust of the child toward its environment. This trust will dissolve when the child lags behind expectations, when weakness and malice occur, or when the child turns out to be a completely different person from what the educator had believed. Such experiences are inevitable because children, and educators too, are imperfect beings. Time and again parents and educators are disappointed in their beliefs and trust in a child. Now the reestablishment of this trust, not from the side of the child to the world but in contrast from the side of the world to the child, is becoming a difficult human and pedagogic problem. Because if it is true that without trust education is not possible, then the educator must be able to find the power for such trust in his or her soul despite all his or her disappointments and often against all calculations and human sensibilities.

Of course, adults often exhibit a certain naiveté, good faith, and blind confidence. And so they maintain trust in the child which sometimes borders on stupidity, despite repeated disappointments. The doting love of some mothers, and not only mothers, is blind. But this doting love remains without educational value, or even does damage, because children easily see through it and abuse such situations.

True pedagogic trust is not blind. The true educator clearly sees the child in his or her human weakness, with all its inclinations

toward evil. Nevertheless, this educator will muster new trust after all the emotions of disappointment have passed, because he or she knows that without it educational help is fundamentally impossible. In fact, this trust is never more important than at new beginnings after educational crises. When the child, after making a mistake, promises honestly to improve, then he or she is still not able to handle the situation alone. It only works if the other person, to whom improvement is promised, believes in it. If this person denies restoring the trust, by explaining that the child has disappointed him or her already too often and that the next relapse is already foreseeable, then the adult must bear the consequences of withholding the power from the child to persist in keeping the promise. In general, a person can keep a promise only if this promise is accepted by the person to which the promise is made. A promise that has not been acknowledged and accepted is idle talk. And however a human being clings in grim stubbornness to a resolution, eventually he or she will break down. The need for trust is fundamental.

The educator's trust in the child involves, like every true trust, a risk, and because of the danger inherent in this risk it demands special commitment if it is not to deteriorate into blind confidence. Although trust is fruitful and indispensable for the development of the child, trust does not work with the inevitability of a law of nature, especially because one must presume and accept the other person's freedom which is in principle not predictable. Therefore, there is fundamentally no protection from the possible abuses of trust. And so, if the engagement fails, then the educator may be ridiculed as well for his or her helplessness. But, of course, it would be wrong to blame the educator for having made a mistake. Even when everything is made all right and in a next case when the educator must do exactly the same thing, then possible failure is unavoidable partly because of the risky nature of his or her trust.

One must not try to circumvent the risk by only playfully pretending to have trust for *pedagogical* reasons, whereas in reality one is still skeptical. Such an attitude can never convince and is bound to fail from its own intrinsic dishonesty. Trust is only fruitful if the trusting person is fully convinced of it. With tricks, nothing can be achieved. The pediatrician Nitschke (1962) once said emphatically that the physician can help a patient in a threatening situation only if he himself has the strong belief that the sick person will survive and that it is the decisive difficulty for the true physician to establish this belief time and again, despite the failures. Quite a few physicians are

not successful because they are unable to find this belief after experiencing some serious failures at the beginning of their career. The same is true in education. The educator must create in his or her own heart the power of trust, even though the educator is a realist and knows all about human weakness and wickedness.

This is the great difficulty of the educational profession, that the educator becomes overtaxed with the requisites of the necessary trust, and this is often the source of a peculiar tragedy. It is but easily understandable that many educational careers end early in exasperation and tiredness. Another difficulty with trust, as with some other educational virtues of this area, is that it cannot be created intentionally. Only that person will receive it who knows himself or herself supported by a general trust of being and life (or in Christian terminology by trust in God) which can withstand all the many disappointments. In this ability to have trust in children lies the final and unalterable prerequisite of all pedagogy, and in this the educator can stay young in spirit despite disappointments. The educator's trust exercises its influence even in the details of the daily educational work. In the next section we talk about some typical "virtues" of the educator.

## **Virtues of the Educator**

### *Educational Love*

The problem of the virtues of the educator have not attracted much thought as of yet. The only virtue which has been investigated to a certain extent by theorists of education is love. But here the misleading term of *pedagogical love* has caused more confusion than clarification; thus first we have to evaluate the issue critically in order to gain an unprejudiced view.

Often the term *pedagogical eros* has been applied, without considering how far the contemporary Greek meaning of this term was involved, even when used in a general sense. In particular the pedagogical movement at the onset of our century took the idea enthusiastically, without deriving great benefit from it because one took the risk of conceiving education as an erotic relation although this was done in a highly spiritual way. To me the term *eros* as an expression of the basic educational principle is not appropriate for several reasons. First, this term expresses, even if used in the most subtle way, the bestowal of sympathy to a single, selected, and preferred person. It purports an exclusiveness, which is never part of true educational love, thus making this impossible. And such exclusiveness is dangerous when the educator, the teacher, is dealing with a class, with a



group of children, where he or she has to do justice to everybody. In addition, eros is not only a particular emotional term, but it also expresses a pronounced subjective attitude which must run into conflict not only with feelings of equity and justice but also with the objectivity of true education. And finally, eros is love devoted to the bodily and spiritual perfection of the beloved, and so it is always connected with a touch of *amorousness* and *deification*, which again would distort the nature of educational love. Eros actually prevents education because an idolized and worshipped person cannot help but paralyze the educational will. Why would one want to educate what is already perfect? Despite the venerable origin of the interpretation, the concept of *pedagogical eros* cannot express properly the emotional relationship between educator and child.

But I would also be uncomfortable with Spranger's interpretation. Spranger (1921, p. 63) sees educational love as a "sensitive and willing devotion to the potential values of the strange soul—not as has been said erroneously, a devotion to the real values." Thus he sees eros connected not so much with the person at present but in the future. But if one makes such distinction, then one is disrupting the educational relationship by obscuring its elementary connection: this fine affirmation and kindness to the young person just as he or she is without any artificial distinction.

Maybe it is already confusing and even wrong to speak about educational love. It may place one in those difficult situations which Scheler (1926) described by pointing out that love and education exclude each other in real life because education presumes necessarily the imperfection of the other person, thus contradicting the positive values which the beloved holds for a person. And Scheler is right in saying that "love does not include the will to change the beloved object." "Such an attempt for improvement," he says, "is provoking immediately and necessarily the disappearance of real love" (p. 183). But at the same time Scheler speaks against the simplifying interpretation that love and pedagogical action always exclude each other. Against this argument he points out that he only said, "love and educational engagement as actual and coincidental phenomena cancel each other" (p. 183). This does not deny but rather presupposes that love with its basic assumption of social equality is the basis for actual educational help, without taking the risk of being presumptuous or overbearing.

It is also misleading to orient educational love to the Christian term of *charity*. Charity is the merciful love which bends itself toward the poor, miserable, and weak human being. It stems

from a common feeling of humanitarian bonds, as wonderfully demonstrated by the Good Samaritan. Of course, in any education there exists an inevitable and natural superiority of the educator in relation to the educated, which conceals the use of the term eros. But this is of a totally different kind and has nothing to do with mercy and compassion. Educational love is a much more original and self-evident relationship. The educator does not feel compassion for a child because he or she is not educated. Rather, the educator's love is bright and full of joy, free of any oppression, which would always be present in a compassionate relationship.

So neither with eros nor with charity can one describe pedagogical love. Maybe it is just plain human love which in itself is not yet specifically educational, but which supports and enables the educational relationship (in the sense of our considerations) as an indispensable presupposition, as long as the child responds with love as well. Pestalozzi refers to this kind of love when he speaks of an atmosphere of corresponding love between mother and child and in general between educator and pupil which forms the basis for successful education.

### *The Expectations of the Educator*

This connection brings us to the timely problem of the basic pedagogical attitude. It is essential for pedagogical action that it surpasses in its hopes and expectations the present and that it rushes into the future, because education means constructive work toward a goal which will be reached in future, even in a relatively distant future. But, as mentioned before, there is a difference between education and the production process of an artisan. The result of education does not solely depend on the work of the educator but also on several conditions which are out of the educator's control. First of all the organic or physical growth needs its time and cannot be accelerated by human intervention. Here the educator needs a lot of patience. And there is much more to this where the free will of the child comes into play. Tensions will necessarily be created between the faster moving expectations of the educator and the slower progress or other-than-expected developments of the child. Parents and educators are disappointed if the child remains behind expectations or if the child is not developing in the ways that were expected. Here we meet a serious question: Is it at all permissible to impose distinct expectations on a child?

To a certain extent such expectations are admissible and even necessary. The teacher may expect that the child will be positively responsive to meaningful educational requirements. But

such justifiable expectations are possible only over relatively short periods of time and for purposes which can actually be achieved by the child. It is much more dangerous when educators, especially parents, are expanding their expectations beyond meaningful dimensions. The problem occurs when parents in their vanity expect extraordinary achievements by their children or the accomplishments of tasks which the parents consider appropriate for their own benefits, for example, to learn a certain profession in order to take over the business later. If the child does not fulfill such expectations the parents are disappointed and reproach the child or show their dissatisfaction in one way or another. Such expectations do bitter injustice to the personality of the child, and it is essential for the educator to fight such intentions. As an expression of parental resignation Goethe (1949a) says in "Hermann und Dorothea," we cannot form the children in our image; as God gave them to us, so we must accept and love them.

Similar care is required with respect to all *ideals* and *idols* which the elder generation (based on its understanding of the world) tries to impose on the younger generation. If these values do not work the parents are again disappointed; here too we see a sort of runaway expectation of the educator.

Critical awareness of the limits of possible and justifiable expectations is of great importance. Formulating meaningful expectations is possible in areas of life that can be planned and the progress of which is in the hands of human beings. But such expectations find their limits in futures that are unforeseeable, as well in the unforeseeable development of the child. The attempt to penetrate this area with expectations that are developed and anticipated in a manner that is too exact stems from a weakness in human attitude: the attempt to envisage and precalculate the future. Often it is only the hidden aspirations and pretensions of the educator which seem to matter and which threaten to narrow the personality of the child in a dubious way.

Therefore, the educator basically has to change himself or herself. An expectation that is too detailed would narrow the view or even blind the educator and prevent him or her from seeing fruitful new developments because he or she had it differently in mind and is angry now. It is essential to keep the mind open, full of trust in the unexpected which the future may bring. Marcel (1935) called this important virtue *disponibilité*, availability. It is the ability to engage in new developments without being preoccupied. Thus, rather than impatience and hasty expectations, the educator needs a forbearing patience which is capable

of waiting quietly for the completion of certain processes and which is able to see unexpected new developments in a positive manner as enrichment.

### *Patience*

An important aspect of the teacher's emotional conditioning is patience. Patience is in a sense the basic virtue of the educator and must be present if education is to be successful. What is true for patience is true for other virtues: No specific virtues of the educator are valid only for the educator and his or her work. What we are talking about are common human virtues, present in everybody, although especially effective in the special situation of an educator.

Generally, patience is a virtue which reconciles human beings and time. It is the virtue of waiting. We gain the best understanding of it when we look at its opposite, at impatience, or expressed more directly, when we look at haste. Haste has its origin in the natural human desire to surpass the course of time, to try to reach the destination earlier than possible under the given circumstances. Impatience or haste is an unnatural human temptation because it finds its roots in the attitude of anticipation, in the desire to skip the present and get at the goal as fast as possible. In that sense impatience is a natural vice of man. The child in its unbroken state can be particularly impatient. That is evident, for example, when he or she is counting the days and can hardly wait for Christmas. In contrast, patience is a virtue that must be learned. In other words the natural temptation of impatience must willingly be overcome. Patience enables the human being to restrict the desire of surpassing time, it brings the person into harmony with the course of time, whereas impatience always signals insecurity; one does not dare to wait, one is afraid to miss something.

It is reasonable to distinguish three types of patience which demonstrate our relationship to time in specific ways but which demonstrate accordingly how impatience changes its character: the patience of the craftsperson, the patience of the gardener, and the patience of the educator.

1. The craftsperson needs patience in order to do his or her work with the necessary exactness and care. Without patience the craftsperson is hurrying the job, wanting to be ready as soon as possible, and he or she soon will make mistakes, thus diminishing the value of the work or destroying the success. Then he or she has to begin anew. Impatience at work is the exaggerated speed we name haste. Haste is the specific vice of human beings in their relation to work. And the importance of patience is

growing in accordance with the delicacy of their work. In rough work, especially in bodily work, it is possible to increase efficiency to a certain extent by an increase of effort. In doing subtle work the gain of time is usually lost in the quality of the result. The watchmaker and the precision toolmaker may serve as examples of professions in great need of patience.

2. The gardener needs patience in a different way, and this is true also for the farmer and the rancher. Plants and animals are governed by the laws of natural organic growth. Humans can provide the means for growth but cannot influence growth itself. Growth follows its own laws. The gardener may stimulate or accelerate fresh shoots, but then he or she has to wait till the fruits ripen. Of course, gardeners can remove the windows of their greenhouses too early and expose the plants to the dangers of frost. But those who do often find that it would have been better to be safe than sorry. Fröbel (1951) says:

We provide young plants and animals with space and time, knowing that they then will unfold and grow beautifully according to immanent laws ... but the young human being is a piece of wax, a clump of clay for the adult, who can knead at his or her will.

(p. 11)

Therefore, patience is particularly the virtue of the gardener and the virtue of the farmer because they have learned in a lifetime to adjust themselves to the laws of natural development, to adapt themselves to the natural course of time. Again, in contrast to this virtue here is impatience, the inability to wait, the desire to reap the fruit before it is ripe. But this kind of impatience is not haste as in the first case. Haste is impatience within one's own activity. Timewise it can be influenced to a certain extent, although at the cost of care and quality. In the second case impatience is the inability to wait. The process of growth itself is going on regardless of the desires of human beings, but for the impatient person this process seems too slow, and this person loses his or her temper because personal wants are too far ahead, and time and again the person must endure correction by reality.

3. The patience of the educator differs in turn from the two types mentioned earlier. Its absence is disclosed in many premature actions which seem typical for pedagogy. Mother is delighted about any progress of her child, she is proud when such progress occurs as early as possible, she forces it wherever she can, and so it goes with the development. Each teacher is proud when his or her pupils achieve fast progress. In particular the philanthropists were fond of an early education of their child-

ren. To learn patience seems more difficult for educators than it is for gardeners or farmers. But why is that so? Why is it so much more difficult for the educator to learn patience than it is in other human professions?

This difficulty is irredeemably connected with the particularity of pedagogical procedures. On the one hand, education does not depend on the free will of the educator but on certain laws of natural development of the child. This distinguishes education from the work of the craftsperson and brings it closer to the attitude of the gardener. On the other hand, it is much more difficult for an educator to wait patiently than it is for the gardener, and this has its reason in the decisive difference between the educator's and the gardener's work. Plant growth is so slow that it is nearly invisible. At best the gardener may come back the next day and look after his or her plants. The educator though can potentially intervene at any time. In addition to that, the development of a child is not totally following unalterable laws of nature but depends to a certain extent also on the skills of the educator and on the child's own free will. The child can accept or reject education or can more or less go along with educational demands. Accordingly, the development of the child will progress faster or slower and the educator is somehow entitled to be impatient when he or she notices that the child does not show a real interest in doing work.

When we take a closer view we can perceive many different situations. If we are dealing with short-term jobs which can be overseen and which are completely within the abilities of the child (for example, some routine tasks which are known by the child), then some impatience is justifiable. Then the educator is right in asking: "Have you still not finished your work?" The appropriate reaction, however, is not the expression of impatience; rather, it is the strong request for speeding up the process. But it is usually different in the case of school tasks where children first have to learn certain skills such as making arithmetical calculations or translating texts from a foreign language. Of course, the teacher can do this much faster. He or she knows the result already and is waiting now while the inexperienced child slowly follows. That is the dangerous time for becoming impatient. The teacher now may force the child to hurry up, he or she may scold the student for his or her slowness, or the teacher will shortcut the process in telling results or providing hints for a fast solution of the problem (Wagenschein, 1962). The same kind of danger is of course present when one educates the child at home or in the workshop, for example, when parents take tools away from the child and prefer to do

the job themselves. They just cannot stand it any longer to see how slowly progress is made by the untrained child.

It is different again with slowly progressing spiritual and moral developments which to a great degree do not depend on the child. Special problems arise. Sometimes there is guilt involved, and relapses into frailty occur which were thought to be cured already. Other times we experience the emergence of laziness and wickedness. In short, all signs of human weakness are encountered. In this context of spiritual and moral development much patience is needed. Patience does not only mean that one needs to be able to adjust to immutable rates of development; it means as well that one needs to understand human weaknesses and that one needs to be able to help overcome them. Patience here is no longer identical to realistic adaptive behavior; rather, it is part of an unselfish turning toward this human being in his or her weakness. This is only possible on the basis of a deeply felt humanity.

It would be a radical misunderstanding to mistake the patience of the educator for indifference, albeit that patience and indifference may look similar in their outward appearance. It is significant that such misunderstanding is only possible in the sphere of educational patience. A craftsperson is too deeply involved in his or her work, and a gardener waits for progress so routinely as to become suspect of negligence. Only the educator has the possibility to intervene and if he or she waits patiently, this may be misunderstood as indifference stemming from unconcern. In reality this patience is an attentive accompanying of the course of development. Educational patience as far from premature haste as it is from inattentively missing the right moment, when the child's development goes through certain phases and when the educator's intervention may be required. Therefore, especially in cases when offences have been committed or when relapses have occurred, an understanding patience has to meet a fresh beginning with good will; then a sense of balance is required in the face of conflicting demands.

### *Hope*

The educator, however, is only capable of such patience when he or she is sure of himself or herself deep down; that is, the educator must be fully confident about the child's development. Here we see hope as the final and decisive basis of education. Where the narrowing expectations fail, where human beings are lost in all their efforts to anticipate the time to come, only hope remains as the more comprehensive and deeper relationship to the future. This kind of hope cannot be condensed into specific

forms but will always stay open for the gift of unforeseeable possibilities. And no matter what difficulties one may experience at present, this hope does not lose trust in a kind of resolution which will somehow come, even if we do not see it yet. Hope in this sense is trust in a future. And this is different from having trust in a child as we discussed above. I trust a child as a moral person. In that sense trust always refers to a distinct personal relationship. Hope, in contrast, is much less determinable; it belongs much more accurately to the educational atmosphere. Hope is a fundamental mood of the human soul.

Elsewhere I have explained in more detail that hope is the ultimate foundation of our soul. It is what makes life possible as a future oriented human acting and aspiring enterprise. Marcel (1935) once said: "Hope is perhaps the material from which our soul is made" (p. 87) and Goethe (1949b) characterized hope as "the most beautiful heritage of living, from which we cannot divest ourselves even if we wanted to do so" (p. 873). Hope must inhabit every person insofar as he or she is indeed alive. And yet most people do not reflect on it. Even in the inexorable display of despair a spark of hope must remain if a human being is to survive. So hope is a general prerequisite for life as well as a particular prerequisite for education. It is the hope that the child will properly develop—a process of development less based on the child's own efforts than it is a development graced by the goodwill of nature. In the most severe disappointments and desperate-looking entanglements, hope provides the surety that *somehow* everything will eventually work out, and it gives the inner preponderance which can also carry the child through difficulties where he or she would otherwise succumb.

Hope and patience can thus be grasped in their necessary polarity. They are related to each other in a reciprocal complementarity, and together they determine the present and future related aspects of education. Where hope opens itself onto future possibilities of a more deeply fulfilled life, patience keeps inner quietness when dreams are running away with themselves. Hope and patience are carried by trust in life and in the world, and they are carried by feelings of safety in a world which is *good* after all. So hope and patience are ultimately religious virtues (independent of any particular denomination), and it is clear that human life in general and education in particular are possible only on the foundation of their existence.



## About the Attitude of Mature Educators

### *Serenity*

The basic attitude of a mature educator is best characterized by three prominent features: serenity, goodness, and humor. All three are interconnected. First we discuss serenity, which is a prerequisite for the other two.

*Serenity* is a pure mood in the original sense of the term. It is a state of being in which the internal and the external world are not yet separated. The word *serenity* can thus express both the atmospheric condition of the sky and the internal condition of the soul. The sky is serene if not obscured by clouds; it is serene when shining in full blue clearness under the glimmer of the sun. Nevertheless, there is a certain cool freshness that still seems to be part of the mood of serenity; in other words, a heavy, sultry sky in the heat of midsummer would not be called serene. In contrast, one can with Rilke (1953) refer to the clear expanse of the night sky as serene (p. 59). Similarly Wieland says, "And now the full moon bathes the whole landscape in serenity" (Trübners, 1939, p. 396). Or, to illuminate it again with the poetic language of Rilke (1953): Water is an image of serenity in the way that it fuses clarity, coolness, and liquidity. He praises "the water's serenity and origin" (p. 94), and the creek is to him a "serene gift of the colder mountains" (p. 162). In any case, the serenity of the sky corresponds in human beings to a state of inner well-being, in fact, a very special quality—not just an inactive state of good health, but a state of unfettered alertness and an actively stimulated carrying of happiness.

Therefore, the word *serenity* can characterize a state of our soul. Pestalozzi (and sometimes Goethe) use this word in a rational sense in order to express clarity of thought. Pestalozzi wants notions to be serene, or teaching has to make them serene. The German word *Aufklärung* holds in its original meaning this atmospheric character: It means the internal clearing of the spirit. But today the understanding of this undertone has mostly disappeared. Thus in classical times the Greeks could still be referred to as "the serene people."

Today the word *serene* is mainly used in the realm of feelings, and the spiritual meaning of the word in atmospheric terminology is maintained here as well. Serenity in the realm of feelings indicates an undisturbed, *cloudless* inner life, where *cloud* stands for all the sorrows and burdens coming from the outside and also for all the unbridled inner disquietudes. In contrast to cloudiness, serenity refers to that inner equilibrium that brings about a sense of happy fulfillment for the human being.

In this characteristic of happy fulfillment, serenity is different from other forms of elated life-feelings. Serenity is distinguished by its stillness from other expressions of loud or agitated joyousness. Such joyousness tends to erupt uncontrollably in people. It is the expression of a spontaneous, naive, and unbroken happiness, often bursting into bright laughter. Frequently it is accompanied by lively action, by an unimpeded stride, and by productive activity. Joyfulness can be part of our work. But it is hard for human beings to be serene at work. Serenity is more the attitude of the person who meditates, who has created a certain distance from things, who stays above the everyday events. It is the expression of the quiet smile, and in this superiority its sense of steadfast constancy is based. Thus serenity is immune to the precarious nature of other happy moods which change with the vicissitudes of life. Serenity also is different from all ecstatic forms of happiness because of its untroubled clarity. But the lack of ecstasy must not be seen as a lower level of fulfillment. It is of a different, perhaps higher, quality because it is a true state of mind from which no sober awakening can happen. For good reason, therefore, Jean Paul (n.d.a) praises the quality of that "steadfast mild serenity" (p. 828).

Serenity is perhaps closest related to bliss, at least as Carus (1846) uses this term when he says, "in bliss the soul is in a state of highest quietude, truth, and clearness and of highest existential happiness" (p. 240). Nevertheless, it seems to be more appropriate to reserve the term *bliss* for the godly sphere, which is open to humans only in a religious sense. Serenity is of a lighter kind. While the blessed may be withdrawn into a state of last fulfillment, the serene is still open and dedicated to the life world—reflectively thoughtful and yet still completely in this world.

There is yet another usage for the word *serene*. Thus one may speak about a serene light-headedness after the consumption of too much alcohol. But it is not necessary to address this type of meaning because it is only a polite paraphrase of an unworthy situation where we avoid the use of less euphemistic language. We may also speak about the *serenity* of the loud silence which may occur in the classroom and which is feared by teachers because it may put him or her out of control. This kind of *serenity* is known also in meetings of parliament after some joke by a speaker or after an embarrassing slip of the tongue. Such a moment of *serenity* is expressed in a burst of laughter. Its object is ridicule. And the accompanying laughter is an expression of a sudden relief and relaxation. It occurs particularly where seriousness and pathos are exaggerated, as easily happens in class-

rooms. But again, we do not have to address these superficial forms of serenity, which come and go. After these confining remarks we focus on the quiet, steady serenity which does not originate in a single (comic) incident but which emanates from the depth of the soul. Such a state of serenity does not just happen on its own; rather, the human being must learn it and wrestle it from the difficulties of life. It is a virtue in the full sense of the word. And Jean Paul is completely correct when he states "Serenity is to be our duty and our goal!"

Usually *serious* and *serene* are seen as contrary to each other. One seems to exclude the other, hence the proverb: "Life is serious, art is serene." In a similar manner Schiller (n.d.), in his "Song of the Bell," distinguishes between "black and serene fates" slumbering in the womb of the future. In this context, such a contrast may be justified; there are indeed situations where we deal with external relations which can be brighter or darker. A situation which is serious cannot be serene as well.

But we have already said that the nightly expanse can also be serene. The opposite of serenity is not darkness, which can have its own clarity; the opposite is gloominess and duskiness. Therefore, for the human soul too, the real contrast to serenity is not darkness but somber sadness, sulkiness, and moroseness, in short, the expression of an ungoverned life. In his *Glasperlenspiel* Hesse (1952) points out—in the beautiful and profound evening conversation between the hero Knecht and his school friend Ferromonte—that there exists a flat pseudoserenity, but there is also a different serenity, which is "not play and surface but seriousness and depth" (p. 419). This state of serenity is accessible only to those who have experienced all the horrors and precipices of life and who have conquered them in a liberating manner. This serenity stems from overcoming all these difficulties and creating inner preponderance and quietness. Now the turmoils have subsided and pain has vanished. Serenity in this context is blissful clearness which cannot be disturbed by the toss-ups of life. Thus Hesse (1952) describes serenity as a "virtue of saints and knights, indestructible and growing with age and nearness of death" (p. 419). From this perspective we can also understand Nietzsche's (1922) longing verse:

Golden serenity come!  
Sweetest and most secret delight  
presentiment of death. (p. 455)

Jean Paul (n.d.b) describes the perfect picture of such an age-sensitive serenity in the last days of "Schoolmaster Fibel." It is

this sublime stage of life, where man is living as if he were at the pole: no star is setting, no star is rising, the sky is standing quiet and blinking and the Pole Star of the second world glistens immobile directly overhead. (p. 118)

“The world receded; heaven came near” (p. 809). Although Jean Paul is describing in this example a superior unconcern for the human world, so is this last and extreme stage of life still characterized by serenity. Actually, this is a state of perfect serenity, but not goodness any more, despite the fact that Fibel is a schoolmaster. At his advanced age Fibel has left behind him this kind of devotion to humanity. Therefore, not every form of serenity is necessarily a pedagogical attitude and of pedagogical value.

Nevertheless, serenity is especially the virtue of educators. And as we understand it now, it is particularly the older educator who attains this virtue, whereas the younger educator more likely displays a sweeping cheerfulness. In a human being, serenity is a clarifying medium which brings all the troubles of the world almost naturally to a rest; it radiates to others as well, so that other people entering the sphere of serenity participate in this clearness. For them, too, confusion disappears almost on its own. Hesse (1952) has sensitively given expression to this in his previously mentioned “*Glasperlenspiel*.” The hero provides in the following manner a description of his “former music master”:

During the last years of his life this man possessed the virtue of serenity to such a degree, that it radiated from him like the light from the sun. His serenity kindled in others a sense of goodwill and love of life, good temper and trust and confidence. And those who accepted and engaged in its shine radiated in turn those qualities to others. (p. 418)

This serenity always occupies a position superior to the troubles of the world. Therefore, its atmosphere is not the same as a joyful togetherness. Serenity creates distance. A serene educator is transported above the free cheerfulness of a group of children by his or her transcendent serenity. But this distance is of a special kind. It is not a cool contrast but a warm relation in which the other, in particular the younger child, finds himself or herself accepted in a loving and positive manner. So it is absolutely right that such serenity does not just animate a love of life and good temper in others, but in addition creates trust and confidence in their own abilities.

In the above paragraphs we rejected the significance of contrasting seriousness with serenity; now we see how this affects educational relationships. Serenity does not signify playfulness. Therefore, serenity does not mean a *take it easy approach* with respect to one's educational responsibility. The teacher does not excuse the child from real requests and tasks. Rather these are demanded with a quiet self-evidence without making a great deal of fuss about it. But because the children's involvements are requested in a serene mood, an atmosphere is created which lets the tasks be assumed without resistance and with happy willingness. That is why it is of infinite importance that such a quiet serenity is present throughout the total educational atmosphere, in the family as well as in the classroom, and in any other educational situation.

Serenity must constantly renew itself against the temptations which make life in schools difficult and against the sober seriousness to which teachers often feel obliged, and especially against the moroseness and joyless sullen tone which can easily take over in classrooms, thus suffocating any kind of happy willingness to learn.

Thus serenity is a high virtue and the purest form of atmosphere emanating from the educator. But one has to keep in mind that in education such serenity cannot be simply *demand-ed* or *produced*, even though one may have recognized its importance and one may want to act from the deepest sense of educational responsibility. Serenity is granted to the person only if he or she has been able to come to terms and balance with the troubles of life by himself or herself. Stifter (1949) said, "But if someone is a 'somebody' then it is easy for him to educate others" (p. 663); in other words, that someone, who wants to teach, must have befallen a certain equiponderance. A teacher, therefore, cannot simply strive for serenity in order to obtain this special professional virtue of an educator. It must grow from the mature human in his or her total being; then this serenity can radiate into education just as it is present in any other human relationship unsought and unsolicited.

### *Humor*

From this gentle serenity grows at once the kind of humor which is typical of the real educator. At this point I do not mean humor as a human way of life in general, especially not the humor which is associated with the comedians of this world and which is expressed in bursts of laughter, and similarly I do not mean humor as the manifestation of an unbroken joy of living. These kinds of humor would take us too far from our considera-

tions. I am talking here about that special form of educational humor which has its own character and which is clearly distinct from the other forms. The German educator scholar Nohl loved to mention the significance of educational humor, and he used to point out that a humorless person is completely unfit as an educator.

With respect to education, humor means the ability to see the small worries of the child from the perspective of a certain preponderance and so to take them lightly. If the educator takes any sorrow as serious as the child, for whom the trouble often seems infinite and unbearable, he or she would not be able to help the child in appropriate ways. The educator would essentially be in the same situation as the child, that is similarly captive. But with humor the educator relaxes the tension. He or she is taking the burden not quite as seriously as the child and thus is able to lighten the situation and to provide the child with the possibility to overcome problems. This certainly does not mean that the educator would be blunt and indifferent. The point is that children still vacillate easily from states of extreme happiness to states of abysmal desperation. This means that at any instant the child is fully and undividedly exposed to the present situation against which he or she is personally defenseless. The adult, in contrast, is not swayed the same way between extremes. He or she has gained from a longer life experience an inner balance and a distance which allows him or her to see things with a sense of relativity which appear, for the child, absolute and insurmountable in the momentary situation.

Often a simple: "Let me see" helps to alleviate the first grief. The child has a natural trust in the adult's helping power. If a mishap occurs to the child, making him or her feel inconsolable, then humor may correct it. Not taking a mistake too seriously, showing how one can correct a mishap, and in particular, not putting everything immediately on the scales of absolute measurement—overseeing the case in a serene manner—may help the child to master the situation.

The same is true in case of bodily pain, for instance, when a child gets hurt. The parent may aggravate the problem if he or she is taking it just as severely as the child. The effect of an often-used German children's saying demonstrates the success of this attitude.

Heal, heal, blessing.

Three days of rain.

Three days of snow.

It does not hurt any more!

Of course, we would not expect, at least not from an older child, to believe in magic procedures. The pain is alleviated by the humorous superiority of this attitude; it is not really taken seriously. And when the child is about to join the laughter, perhaps still under tears, then the most important thing has already been done.

This kind of humor has to prove itself in particular when the child opposes the teacher in anger or rudeness, when he or she remonstrates in defiance or even tries to harm the teacher. In such cases the educator must refrain from reacting with immediate personal anger or from retracting into a posture of cold justice. In catching the assault with humorous superiority the educator will break the tip of the aggression and usually correct the situation without difficulty. Humor is the “gift of the light hand” in dealing with the vulnerable child.

The same is true for the growing child. It will repeatedly happen that the child does not see a way out of a situation and becomes desperate. Here too the teacher can help when he or she is able to overcome the problems with humor, to which at times a little kind-hearted irony may be attached. And the educator has the gift of humor because here he or she sees beyond the child’s immediate perception of the situation’s possibilities. The educator sees in the particular case—for instance, in a suicidal young man over unrequited love—the typical recycling of general human conditions. From this view the world is losing some of its severity when the uniqueness is taken away and when we consider that the same fate happened to countless other people before and that life did continue and that there always was a way out, even though it may not be seen right away. But we cannot deny that this attitude hurts a little for the moment. For the time being the youngster feels left alone and not taken seriously in his or her pain. And yet he or she has received some comfort already. The trust in the older person in life, who usually provides a good solution, is transferred to the younger person and the child feels a certain easement and relief.

But this superior humor would degenerate if it were cold irony or biting sarcasm and not warmhearted sympathy. That is why I hesitated when I made reference above to “a little kind-hearted irony,” which could be attached to educational humor. Real irony, in the sense as it is understood today, is not bearable for a child. Irony may be a weapon in the battle against an equal opponent; or in a finer form, irony may be a way in which an older person relativizes himself or herself—an expression of the distressing incongruity of goals and achievements. But ironic treatment of children is simply forbidden. A child in his or her

vulnerabilities is helpless against irony, and such treatment would expel this young person from human relationships and do damage to the child's innermost being. True educational humor can speak from its point of superiority to a child in his or her weakness only because it takes the still inexperienced child back into the protecting relationship with the adult, and in doing this it reestablishes the original safety. All educational humor treats the child, even the more or less fully grown child, somewhat as an infant, and this humor only works when the child accepts this role (at least for the moment). In general, educational humor is possible only when it is couched and supported by warm human goodness.

Of course, this humor has limits which one must not transgress. Pedagogic humor describes the appropriate pedagogic attitude toward minor distresses in the life of the child, where the child is taking something too seriously—something that is *not that bad* according to the better insight of the adult. In contrast, where we are dealing with a really serious matter, where the child gets hurt or encounters a threatening mishap or when the child behaves really violently and moral norms must be respected, then humor loses its place and clear seriousness takes over. Thus humor somehow plays around the earnestness of life, by taking away the edge of severity from minor distresses.

### *Goodness*

Finally we discuss goodness as an educational attitude which the teacher bestows on other people and in particular on the child. Serenity and humor are fruitful in pedagogical relations only if they are embedded in such goodness. Goodness, therefore, is probably the highest of all the virtues of an educator. But *real* goodness is accessible only to the older educator. Fundamental study and reflection should investigate the age-related changes occurring not only in the child but also in the educator. Eventually the overwhelming zeal of the young teacher is replaced by the genuine pragmatism of the more mature educator and subsequently by the *real goodness* of the older teacher. Different ages stipulate typically different kinds of educational attitudes.

Pedagogic goodness is not the same as love, not even love in the sense of *pedagogic love* as mentioned earlier. Love touches its *object* in unbroken spontaneity and love embraces it especially when there is a positive response. And so a happy person is just as well loved as the sad person. In contrast, goodness turns especially toward the human being who suffers. It tries to comfort those who experience distress. Love expects a loving response,



but goodness does not ask for such an answer. Goodness feels fulfilled already when it meets with some thankfulness or with a shy return of affection. Goodness in this sense must also not be confused with good-naturedness. Goodness is far from a natural attribute of human beings. It is a mode of being which can be reached only through a steady and painful process of maturation in the confrontation with one's own suffering. Individuals who thus have arrived at goodness are able to open and share themselves with others. Just as we tried to characterize the mood of the young by the feeling of morningness, so it seems right to describe the feeling of eveningness associated with the older educator as a mood of calm and serene goodness.

Again, we must recall the earlier description of the general concept of serenity, in order to concentrate on how this general serenity is different from the more specific pedagogical sense of serenity in the context of goodness. As we stated before, serenity too is of high pedagogical significance, but its real educational effect does not lie in a particular educational intention or bestowal but in the clarifying and relaxing effect which emanates naturally from a serene human being. Goodness is different from serenity in that it orients itself in a helping way to other people by understanding their sorrows and by alleviating these sorrows in using one's own experience and security. Often in this higher sense of goodness, a shade of painful resignation is present. It consists in the profound knowledge of all the unavoidable suffering and quandaries of human life. It is, to speak with Goethe (1949c), the attitude of the person who is adept already at the "complexities of life," who knows its distresses but who has gained mature control over it and who now possesses a kind of security as compared with less experienced people.

This *pure goodness* is generally the great virtue of the mature human being, even where it does not yet have an educational effect. It radiates good feelings and happiness to everybody entering the sphere of this person. In particular, this quality of goodness is the character of the good educator. Although it is predominantly an attitude of the mature human being and develops with age, maturing must not necessarily be pinned to the number of years. It is also accessible to younger people who may have matured earlier as a result of some severe suffering or heavy illness. A striking picture of such bestowal, grown from suffering, is given in Goethe's (1949c) "The Elective Affinities" where Ottilie, who has gone through grief and guilt and who has now almost become a saint, begins her new educational task. "How serene," she says, "I will look at the predicaments of my

young pupils, smile about their innocent anguish and lead them with a quiet hand out of all entanglements" (p. 250). This wording combines in an incomparable manner all three of the above-mentioned characteristics: serenity, humor, and goodness. In the hands of such an educator everything goes right, just naturally. It is as if one person's virtue makes it easier for the other to be virtuous.

But goodness has its inherent limitations, as does humor, though they are different. Humor ends when we are confronted with serious questions, deep sorrows, binding demands. But goodness per se can by all means go hand in hand with serious steadfastness. In fact, real goodness is necessarily inexorable in its demands where one is concerned with the inner sense of truth and with keeping a firm hold on what is recognized as morally right. Such goodness has the power of understanding, which is at once forgiveness based on the insight into the general weakness of the human being. But this does not mean that goodness is a condition of infirmity; although goodness understands mistakes, its moral demand remains in quiet self-evidence. In contrast to infirm benevolence, goodness does not relax the situation by lowering the demands; instead, it accompanies the other, especially the younger and more vulnerable person, with a requirement of strictness and a sensitive watchfulness. I know it is difficult, but it must be—and in this context goodness may well have a smile, albeit one of austerity.

### Note

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