Remembrances of Childhood as a Source of Pedagogical Understanding

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I set out to become a teacher of physical education and along the way found phenomenology. Frustrated that those who take so much pleasure in physical activity speak so little of its human significance, I recall the impact that my first exposure to phenomenology had when in 1975 I returned to the Brisbane College of Advanced Education to complete my teaching credentials. I read Alfred Schutz and Jean Paul Sartre and tried to read Edmund Husser and Martin Heidegger, however it was not until I stumbled across Maurice Merleau-Ponty that I found a theory for physical education! So, two degrees later, I wrote a master's dissertation on The Phenomenology of Play Behavior and Its Educational Signifcance. Donald Vandenberg, who one of the first to bring phenomenology to the attention of an Australian and North American audience through his studies and translations of the works of Langeveld, Bollnow and Strasser, supervised that work. His mentoring gave direction to my own teaching efforts in the pedagogy section of the Department of Human Movement Studies at the University of Queensland and then in Education studies at the Brisbane College of Advanced Education where I lectured until 1984.

In looking for a place to undertake a doctorate, all signs pointed to the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. I read Max van Manen's work and found someone I wanted to learn from; a friend sent fascinating material by Ted Aoki; but reading the first edition of Phenomenology + Pedagogy was really the deciding factor. So I came to the University of Alberta in 1985 and found within the Department of Secondary Education a place that allowed the kind of writing I saw in that first edition. I was also privileged to have connected with human science scholars in North America and Europe through my work as editorial assistant on Phenomenology + Pedagogy.

In September of 1988 I began teaching in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. Here I continue to work out how phenomenology applies not only to the pedagogy of physical education but also to the diverse human science endeavors of students I supervise in the graduate curriculum program. Published articles have appeared in the Australian Journal of Teacher Education, *the South Pacific* Journal of Teacher Education, *the* Journal of Educational Thought, *the* Journal of Learning About Learning, *and previous editions of* Phenomenology + Pedagogy.

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In our everyday dealings with children, whether they are our own or those entrusted to us, how are we to know that we have done the right thing by them? How are we to know when to act, how to act, and if, having acted, the children have been well served? What kind of pedagogical understanding adjudicates the things we do for for them?

These questions can be partly answered by appealing to, say, a curriculum account of the sorts of things we should have children do, a psychological account of their general effects, or even a speculative philosophical account of where such things might lead. Yet beyond such general formulations of child handling there remain questions that have to do with what is best for particular children in particular situations. And this is especially so when we recognize that much of what we do with children revolves around what Bettelheim (1962) says are "the small events that are likely to happen in any child's day and that need to be handled as they occur" (p. 27). These events require an immediate response, although one that is no less thoughtful for that. In fact, the directness, immediacy, and very personal nature of our everyday dealings with children make any appeal to general accounts of child upbringing seem provisional at best. These very real conditions of our responsiveness to children suggest a different measure of thoughtfulness altogether.

My purpose in this article is to begin to explicate this measure of pedagogical thoughtfulness. Here I propose that a sense of pedagogy, by which I mean a sense of what is the right thing to do in situations where we as adults find ourselves responsible for the course of children's development, is a function of the memories that we can bring to bear on these present situations. My contention is that pedagogical understanding arises from the memories that come to mind when we interact with children in the here and now, and that the quality of pedagogic interaction depends largely on our capacity to bring to mind those events from our own past that not only resemble the activity at hand but also indicate what the activity is good for. None of this is especially new. Where this article differs from previous pedagogical accounts of childhood memory is in the intention to address phenomenologically the particular manner in which memories inform pedagogical understanding. I want to show how remembrances of childhood are held within present situations and how they are constitutive of the feelings we have for what might come of these situations.

Remembrances of childhood are, as I try to show, a source of pedagogical understanding. They give substance to the picture of the present. They provide a more detailed story than we presently understand. They are in some profound way formative of present knowledge. As Warnock (1987) puts it, the source metaphor does not merely imply a particular cause of the present state of affairs (although it is quite possible that some particular moment stands out); rather, it is suggestive of the continuity of events that inform our understanding of the present. "And so," she says,

"if a man's being present at a particular scene can be thought of as the source of his knowledge ... then there is, written into this metaphor, the notion of continuity between then and now, a physical continuity between past and present" (p. 51).

The source metaphor moves our thinking about the originary aspects of childhood remembrances beyond temporal causality. It indicates that we are connected to the past and formed by the past most evidentially in our physical being. We may well forget much that pertains to childhood, yet the inescapable fact is that we bear the marks of having once been a child, and this past is now inscribed in our physical connections to the present. In terms of the source metaphor, our childhood remembrances do not so much establish a physical continuity as potentially bring it out of what Merleau-Ponty (1962) called "primordial, pre-consciousness" and into the light of present-day adult consciousness.

In this article I describe how it is that childhood remembrances can be considered a source of pedagogical understanding through my interest in childhood play. My intention is to avoid from the outset any tendency to regard memories as mentalistic recollections, detached images of the distant past, or even as simple items of nostalgia. The remembrances of childhood I want to address are those vivid moments of earlier life that now constitute a kind of "body memory" impinging on the present sense of activity. They are images animated by the past, yet caught within an imagination for what the present might hold for children. Such remembrances of childhood allow us to decide how we should respond to particular children in specific, yet memorable, pedagogic situations. Accordingly, this focus on childhood play will serve to exemplify the extent to which childhood remembrances provide a body of pedagogical understanding, and it will enable us to describe the essential features of these childhood remembrances and the manner in which they determine the course of pedagogic action.

Approaches to Pedagogical Memory

The importance of remembered events to understanding pedagogical action comes through in a number of autobiographical approaches to educational inquiry. Remembering is one of the five essential steps or movements in the personal, historical research of Krall (1988), while remembered events provide points of mytho-poetic departure in the autobiographical research agendas of Pinar (1980/1981) and Grumet (1980, 1987). Also, a kind of recollective construal is evident in the biographical analyses of Oberg (e.g., Oberg & Blades, 1990) and Butt (Butt & Raymond, 1987). Each of these approaches lends support to the Proustian theory that "the quality of a direct experience always eludes one and that only in recollection can we grasp its real flavor" (Proust, 1924, p. vii). In fact, they give this theory practical value by showing that the "direct experience" we may want to remember most of all is the lived

experience of the present—the experience of present educational encounters.

But childhood remembrances do not loom especially large in these autobiographical inquiries. Grumet's students recall certain childhood events on occasion, and Pinar appeals, at least initially, to childhood memories; however, this autobiographical research tends to be geared by and large to a somewhat self-absorbed concern for what Clandinin and others (e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) call the "personal practical knowledge" of teachers. The concerns of children, along with our adult concerns for children, seem to have diminished significance in these autobiographical narratives.

The value of childhood remembrances for understanding not only one's disposition towards teaching, but also one's position with respect to the children who will be the recipients of our teaching interests, can perhaps be better understood by looking to that specific variant of autobiography that Coe (1984) calls "The Childhood." It is, he says,

> not just a "standard" autobiography which has failed or else been left uncompleted because the writer has run out of time, enthusiasm, or inspiration. It has a purpose of its own: it is an independent genre, with its own internal laws, conventions, and structures. (p. 1)

Here we may find a literary form that proves useful in bringing to the fore those notions of what constitutes a good (or bad) childhood, and that in turn provides a very personal sense of how we ought to treat children.

This tradition of childhood remembrance, which can be traced back to Wordsworth and the Romantics, substantiates our belief in the very notion of childhood. Childhood comes to represent a time of freer existence, of playfulness and openness to what the world has to offer. For the adult, it is often remembered as a time of lost innocence. Of course we need to be careful in maintaining such a romantic belief in childhood. Writers like Nandy (1987) sound a caution in saying that "the idea of childhood as a lost utopia ... is often built out of small episodes in remembered childhoods to serve as a wish-fulfilling fantasy and as a defence against traumatic childhood memories" (p. 65). Nevertheless, literary remembrances of childhood recognize the fact that, even in spite of and indeed because of the many injustices done to children (cf. Miller, 1983; Hoyles & Evans, 1989), a childhood is something worth having and well worth preserving.

What is especially evident in this literary genre is the nostalgic power of childhood remembrances. "Remembrance of a particular form is but regret for a particular moment," writes Proust (1924, p. 325); but such regret need not simply be a wishing for the past nor merely the self-indulgence of wistful childhood reminiscence. Nostalgia and the regret it occasions can also magnify our sense of the present. As Coe (1984) points

out, a major function of the nostalgia of childhood remembrance is the sense it gives of how present things should be.

> There is ... one special context in which mere nostalgia can intensify to the point of becoming a genuine source of inspiration: it is not so much that the child itself, now an adult, has forever outgrown the splendors of the past, but rather that civilization and "progress" have annihilated, perhaps totally and irretrievably, an ancient way of life and replaced it with something crude, rootless, and modern. This is more than nostalgia; it is nostalgia shot through with bitterness, resentment, and disgust. Not merely—once upon a time—did the grass seem taller, the flowers and butterflies brighter, the birds noisier; it is a fact that there was once more grass and less concrete, that the wild flowers and butterflies has not yet been reduced to rarity by weedkillers and insecticides.... This is what we might call, perhaps, "black" nostalgia: far from being sentimental, it is an outburst of despair or protest against the wanton destruction of beauty. (p. 64)

The nostalgia of childhood remembrance may even give us a sense of what we might do to make the present better.

Consider what Postman (1982) says so nostalgically about the impoverishment of children's games.

> Even the idea of a children's game seems to be slipping from our grasp. A children's game, as we used to think of it, requires no instructors or umpires or spectators; it uses whatever space and equipment are at hand; it is played for no other reason than pleasure. But Little League baseball and Pee Wee football, for example, not only are supervised by adults but are modeled in every possible way on big league sports. Umpires are needed. Equipment is required. Adults cheer and jeer from the sidelines. It is not pleasure the players are seeking but reputation. Who has seen anyone over the age of nine playing Jacks, Johnny on the Pony, Blindman's Bluff, or ball-bouncing rhymes? Peter and Iona Opie, the great English historians of children's games, have identified hundreds of traditional children's games, almost none of which are played with any regularity by American children. Even Hide-and-Seek, which was played in Periclean Athens more than two thousand years ago, has now almost completely disappeared from the repertoire of self-organized children's amusements. Children's games, in a phrase, are an endangered species. (p. 4)

The comparison Postman draws between the supposed games of the past and the adult-controlled activities of the present goes beyond simple nostalgia. It is the kind of black nostalgia referred to by Coe. These particular remembrances of childhood constitute a criticism of the present treatment of children. The regret they signal for the past (which we suspect is a trifle too utopian) raises the question of how children might be better served in the present.

Memorable Events From Childhood

"Our whole childhood remains to be reimagined," says Bachelard (1960, p. 100). This does not mean glorifying a general childhood or even our

own particular childhood, but rather, capturing the qualities of past events within an imagination for what the present might possibly hold for children. Consider, for example, a schoolyard event that Atwood (1988) finds especially memorable.

One day someone appears in the schoolyard with a bag of marbles, and the next day everyone has them. The boys desert the boy's playground and throng into the common playground in front of the BOYS and GIRLS doors; they need to come to this side of the playground, because marbles have to be played on a smooth surface and the boys' yard is all cinders.

For marbles you're either the person setting up the target or the person shooting. To shoot you kneel down, sight and roll your marble at the target marble like a bowling ball. If you hit it you keep it, and your marble too. If you miss, you lose your marble. If you're setting up, you sit on the cement with your legs spread open and put a marble on a crack in front of you. It can be an ordinary marble, but these don't get many shooters, unless you offer two for one. Usually the targets are more valuable: cat's eye, clear glass with a bloom of colored petals in the center, red or yellow or green of blue; puries, flawless like colored water or sapphires or rubies; waterbabies, with undersea filaments of color suspended in them; metal bowlies, aggies, like marbles only bigger. These exotics are passed from winner to winner. It's cheating to buy them; they have to be won.

Those with target marbles call out the names of their wares: *purie, purie, bowlie, bowlie*, the two-syllable words drawn out into a singsong, the voice descending, the way you call dogs, or children when they're lost. These cries are mournful, although they aren't meant to be. I sit that way myself, the cold marbles rolling in between my legs, gathering in my outspread skirt, calling out *cat's eye, cat's eye*, in a regretful tone, feeling nothing but avarice and a pleasurable terror.

The cat's eyes are my favorites. If I win a new one I wait until I'm by myself, then I take it out and examine it, turning it over and over in the light. The cat's eyes really are like eyes, but not the eyes of cats. They're the eyes of something that isn't known but exists anyway; like the green eye of the radia; like the eyes of aliens from a distant planet. My favorite one is blue. I put it into my red plastic purse to keep it safe. I risk my other cat's eyes to be shot at, but not this one.

I don't collect marbles because I'm not a very good shot. My brother is deadly. He takes five common marbles to school with him in a blue Crown Royal Whisky bag and comes back with the bag and his pockets bulging. He keeps his winnings in screw-top Crown preserving jars, donated by my mother, which he lines up on his desk. He never talks about his skill though. He just lines up the jars.

One Saturday afternoon he puts all his best marbles—his puries, his waterbabies and cat's eyes, his gems and wonders—into a single jar. He takes it down into the ravine somewhere, in under the wooden bridge, and buries it. Then he makes an elaborate treasure map of where it's buried, puts it in another jar, and buries that one too. He tells me he's done these things but he doesn't say why, or where the jars are buried. (pp. 66-67)

Atwood's recollection is possibly not like our own, although it is certainly vivid enough for us to treat as our own. This fiction, this reimagining of a childhood experience, speaks to the truths of our own experiences of the playground. (In fact, our own childhood remembrances can also be of a fictionalized kind, just like the event one "remembers" that has really only been told to you.)

What qualities of lived experience are we to find in such imaginative childhood remembrances? How might this remembrance and the images it contains of children and of the nature of their schoolyard play allow us to imagine the potential richness of the present activities of children?

As we read Atwood's description we are reminded of the way in which playground activities develop. For a while, it may seem that children are preoccupied with playing marbles; however, the next time we visit the playground we may well find that they have moved on to skipping, elastics, or any number of chasing games. The transition from one kind of activity to another may be determined by tradition (like which sports are being played from one season to the next), by fad (as we have seen in the yo-yo, hula hoop, or hockey sack crazes), or it may simply be the result of some child turning up at school with a bag of marbles. What seems important is not so much the kind of activity, nor even that certain activities are perhaps no longer played, but the fact that the activity is introduced and developed by children. At a time when children are being led in so many directions, it is good to know that they are still capable of leading themselves.

Atwood's description alerts us, as well, to the potential value of playground and schoolyard events. We now have evidence of an ideal playground, a "common playground," a place where boys and girls of different ages can play together and learn from one another. We also gain some idea of the virtues that playground activity can instill. There is a pecking order, to be sure, and there are some children who are no doubt taken advantage of; but there is, nevertheless, a sense of fairness and a code of honor that can be found in playground life. As Atwood says: "It's cheating to buy them (marbles); they have to be won." And having been won, certain marbles take on the dimensions of prized possessions. They need to be kept safe, even if it is only one cat's eye. They need to be treasured, for they have come to represent the depth of a child's conception of things, the wealth of his or her life inasmuch as it can be played out on the schoolyard.

These considerations stemming from a certain recollection of childhood experience allude to what informs and guides the responses we will nevertheless make to the children now in front of us. For contained within vivid childhood remembrances are images of children, activities that seem good for children, postures that appear suitably childlike; in short, guiding notions of the good of childhood. They are notions we would hope to play out in our present encounters with children, ones we

would want to act out as we try to teach the child about the good of the activity that now concerns him or her. This kind of imaginative childhood remembrance brings a reflective consciousness to bear on our responsiveness to children. It provides a source for understanding what we should be concerned with in the here and now.

The Notion of a Good Memory

Against this literary backdrop we can ask again the question: How do childhood remembrances yield pedagogic understanding? Part of the answer seems clear already, since the literature on childhood remembrance reminds us of how certain events of childhood experience can provide a normative sense of the present. Memories that hold up without romanticizing childhood, sentient but not sentimental memories, nostalgic but not self-indulgent memories, such memories can give conviction to our thoughts of how the present ought to be.

Recall the words of Dostoevsky (1912), who through Alyosha Karamazov, said:

> You must remember that there is nothing higher and stronger and more wholesome and good for life than some good memory, especially a memory of childhood, of home. People talk to you about your education, but some good, sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education. (p. 819)

It would seem that far too much of what we do with children stems from our attempts either to live out personal hopes and desires or to ameliorate the unfortunate aspects of our own childhoods. By speaking of good memories it may be that we can avoid imposing our own conceits, defects, and defeats on children. In fact, good memories are not projected recollections at all. They are remembrances of a childhood past, the facticity of which remains largely with the childhood that is now presented to us.

We might speak even more precisely of the *good* of a childhood memory. For the memories we have in mind are those that carry some essential truths about the present! Consider the significance that is attached from the beginning to certain childhood remembrances, "those moments" that Woolf (1976) says "can still be more real than the present moment" (p. 67). Woolf describes the following events.

> The first: I was fighting with Thoby on the lawn. We were pommelling each other with our fists. Just as I raised my first to hit him, I felt: why hurt another person? I dropped my hand instantly, and stood there, and let him beat me. I remember the feeling. It was a feeling of hopeless sadness. It was as if I became aware of something terrible; and of my own powerlessness. I slunk off alone, feeling horribly depressed. The second instance was also in the garden of St. Ives. I was looking at the flower bed by the front door; "That is the whole," I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower;

part earth; part flower. It was a thought I put away as being likely to be very useful to me later. The third case was also at St. Ives. Some people called Valpy had been staying at St. Ives, and had left. We were waiting at dinner one night, when somehow I overheard my father or my mother say that Mr Valpy had killed himself. The next thing I remember is being in the garden at night and walking on the path by the apple tree. It seemed to me that the apple tree was connected with the horror of Mr Valpy's suicide. I could not pass it. I stood there looking at the greygreen creases of the bark—it was a moonlit night—in a trance of horror. I seemed to be dragged down, hopelessly, into some pit of absolute despair from which I could not escape. My body seemed paralysed. (p. 71)

Here we have strong memories, their significance pertaining to the fact that they jolt the child out of his or her childlikeness. These "remembrable things" that Wordsworth (1850/1959) calls "gleams like the flashing of a shield" (pp. 581-588) bring children face to face with their impending maturity.

These events may be regarded as useful memories; however, they are not really remembrances of childhood other than being drawn from the time of childhood. Indeed, a distinction can be made here between those memories that are distinctly memorable and those that are good in some pedagogical way—the former bringing a sense of maturity to bear on our actions and the latter being of a kind that indicates what we might now do in situations where we find ourselves responsible for children and not just for ourselves. Accordingly, when we talk of good memories of childhood we are really addressing a certain kind of childhood remembrance that has the strength of events that stay with us along with the subtleties of meaning that intervening events disclose. It is a feeling for childhood that is caught within the exigencies of the present.

Such remembrances of childhood indicate what is good for children. They are good in some fundamental pedagogic sense. Certainly Fulghum (1986) would say as much. His bestseller *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* stands as testament to the enduring pedagogic value of childhood memories. Watching neighborhood children playing hide-and-seek becomes for Fulghum an occasion to remember his own childhood experiences some 30 years before. He sees the significance of what is before him by catching hold of his own past. Fulghum writes:

Did you have a kid in your neighborhood who always hid so good, nobody could find him? We did. After a while we would give up on him and go off, leaving him to rot wherever he was. Sooner or later he would show up, all mad because we didn't keep looking for him. And we would get mad back because he wasn't playing the game the way it was supposed to be played. There's hiding and there's finding, we'd say. And he'd say it was hide-and-seek, not hide-and-give-UP, and we'd all yell about who made the rules and who cared about who, anyway, and how we wouldn't play with him anymore if he didn't get it straight and who needed him anyhow, and things like that. Hide-and-seek-and-yell. No matter what, though, the next

time he would hide too good again. He's probably still hidden somewhere, for all I know.

As I write this, the neighborhood game goes on, and there is a kid under a pile of leaves in the yard just under my window. He has been there a long time now, and everybody else is found and they are about to give up on him over at the base. I considered going out to the base and telling them where he is hiding. And I thought about setting the leaves on fire to drive him out. Finally, I just yelled, "GET FOUND, KID!" out the window. And scared him so bad he probably wet his pants and started crying and ran home to tell his mother. It's real hard to know how to be helpful sometimes. (pp. 54, 55)

There is a message or moral to be drawn from this interaction of the childhood remembrance with a sense of what is presently happening. It is to "Get found, kid!" Don't hide too well; and know that being found is what makes the game, and life for that matter, richer. So, although it may be "real hard to know how to be helpful sometimes," some idea of how to be helpful is at least suggested in the childhood remembrance.

These good memories signify, in the kind of tension they create between immanent childhood meaning and adult interpretation, the possibility of an understanding relation to children. I may, for instance, talk about hide-and-seek in quite a detached manner, but if I happen to have fond memories of playing this game, when I see children similarly engaged I will be more inclined to talk about what they are up to in a helpful, responsive way. I may even choose to become involved in the activity. After all, as Barritt (Barrit, Beekman, Bleeker, & Mulderij, 1983) and his colleagues ask: "Is there anyone who does not recognize this experience [of hide-and-seek]? Who has either played this game or watched it being played?" (p. 143). And who, in watching it, does not feel the urge to become part of the situation?

Remembering Is a Bodily Act

I approach my nephew on the playground. He has been out of my sight for quite a while, so it seems timely to check on how he is faring. I find him sitting underneath one of the platforms of the climbing apparatus. "Jamie, how's it going? What have you been up to?" Jamie seems not to hear my question. "Well, what have you been doing?" I ask, a little more insistently. "Don't bug me!" he says, "I'm walking backwards through my mind!" For Jamie, the question required him to retrace his steps in order to remember the movements that had brought him to beneath the platform. For this young child, remembering is very much a bodily act.

For adults also, the remembrances of childhood that the present analysis begins to define are those vivid moments of earlier life that now constitute a kind of "body memory" (Casey, 1987) located in the present activity. They are experiences that lead to the present, and experiences that we remember because of the way present activity impresses itself physically on us. We might even say that remembering childhood is a

bodily act something like Jamie's "walking backwards through his mind."

A good example is Proust's (Warnock, 1987) description of stumbling on the flagstone in a courtyard and in that instant being "immediately flooded with an amazing delight."

> Merely repeating the movement was useless; but if ... I succeeded in capturing the sensation which accompanied the movement, again the intoxicating and elusive vision softly pervaded me as though it said "grasp me as I float by you, if you can, and try to solve the enigma of the happiness I offer you." And then, all at once, I recognized that Venice which my descriptive efforts and pretended snapshots of memory had failed to recall; the sensation I had once felt on two uneven slabs in the Baptistry of St Mark had been given back to me and was linked with all the other sensations of that and other days which had lingered, expectant in their place among the series of forgotten years from which a sudden change had imperiously called them forth. (p. 91)

A further example is given by Van den Berg (1961/1975) as he tells the story of how Jean Cocteau once visited the neighborhood where he grew up. He describes Cocteau visiting the house he once lived in. And then he goes on to describe how Cocteau finds himself wandering the streets of this once all-too-familiar neighborhood.

> Thinking of the past, he trailed his hand along the wall. But he was not satisfied with the result; he felt something was missing. Suddenly it became clear to him what was wrong: he had been smaller as a child, his hand had touched surfaces which he missed as an adult simply because he was drawing a different line. He decided to repeat the experiment, but this time he bent down. (In Paris one can do such a thing.) He bent down, closed his eyes, and let his hand trace the wall at a height which had been natural in the days he went to school. And immediately appeared what he had vaguely been expecting. "Just as the needle picks up the melody from the record, I obtained the melody of the past with my hand. I found everything: my cape, the leather of my satchel, the names of my friends, and of my teachers, certain expressions I had used, the sound of my grandfather's voice, the smell of his beard, the smell of my sister's dresses and of my mother's gown." (p. 212)

These examples show that childhood remembrances are most vividly real when the body is remembered, when the body is our direct access to the past, or when the body becomes the bearing of our thought.

But to what extent are these examples indicative of the kind of remembering that leads to pedagogical understanding? What kind of physical recapitulation is involved when the childhood remembrance bears on our good sense of the present activity of children? After all, even Jamie cannot be bugged by the present while reliving the past. And certainly we get a similar impression of abstention from present concern in the descriptions provided by Proust and Van den Berg. How then can physically construed remembrances inform present conduct? How can their

physicality create a strong awareness of what is presently happening not just to ourselves but more especially to children before us?

In order to address these seemingly more complicated questions of the structure of pedagogical understanding, let us return to the game of hide-and-seek and consider the following incident described by Beekman (1986).

> At camp, on a pleasant summer evening, after the meal, we all played hide and seek. Together with John, eight years old, I hide on the side of a large field, under a bush where there is a kind of shallow hole in the ground. It is a thick bush and from the outside it looks like a dark spot. We only see it because we are looking for a hiding spot. As we work our way inside, we are under the cover of leaves in filtered light. I really have to dig myself in, in order not to make a bulk; John, with his slender small body, fits exactly in place. As we lie there together, he covers my back with dry leaves and twigs. We hear the voices of the searching team coming nearer. We hardly dare to breathe, push ourselves to the ground. Time seems an eternity. They pass, and their voices fade away. We breathe more freely and we look at each other with glittering eyes. John tells me "We stay put. They will never find us." He laughs softly. As time passes we hear the voices of the others far away. We look around us and see the ants working to restore the damage we did to their work. We enjoy the cozy lazy togetherness, and wait till we hear the chorus of voices calling out. The game is over, and we are not found. Proudly we come out of hiding. (p. 40)

Now we might question the kind of adult involvement reflected in this description of the game of hide-and-seek, but more puzzling is the contrast it creates with the previously described childhood reminiscence of the importance of being found! Perhaps it is the case that in this example there is too much physical involvement on the part of the adult, which is tempered by too little adult remembrance of the good of the activity. On the other hand, maybe it is at times a good thing not to be found. To be found, or not to be found? Could it be that the pedagogic truth of a childhood remembrance is only fully understood in the context of our engagement in the present?

A friend rings me one evening and during the course of our conversation she tells me of a recent concern. The manager of her townhouse complex has removed the basketball fixture from where her son and his friends have been playing. Sue is told this by her son Eric who seems not overly concerned about it. However, for Sue, the event is of some considerable importance. She feels anger at first, then later she weeps over the loss of the basketball hoop. Sue even begins to question her own state of mind at responding in such a manner to this seemingly innocuous event. And as listener, I too wonder what is so tragic about all this. It seems that the issue for Sue is not merely the removal of a basketball hoop, but rather the kind of adult indifference to the predilections of children that this action signifies. She remembers her own childhood and how she was driven by her father to engage in organized games and sports. She recalls

the resentment she felt at not being allowed to simply play at things either by herself or with her close friends. And now, the pact she made to let her son experience the kind of childhood she herself was denied is threatened by a new father figure.

Sue weeps for her past. But she is not confined to the past. Sue weeps for her son as well. And in this kinesthetic remembrance it is not clear what meaning comes from the past and what meaning is held in the present. This recent event summons a bodily response connecting this adult's biography to a sense of what the present (and future) possibilities are for her son. It is an occasion to remember certain events from her own childhood, not for purposes of self-indulgence, not for regretting what has been irretrievably lost, not even for recrimination, but instead for resolving that her son's childhood will not be so constrained. This situation involving Sue and her son shows that what we adults essentially remember of childhood is not just in the mind as "thought, idea, or representation," but "gathered" and "concealed" as a way of minding (from *memor* —to be mindful) the present (Heidegger, 1968, p. 11). Childhood remembrances do not stand apart from present living. Only as "thoughts, ideas, or representations" are they distinguishable from a lived sense of present action, and even then, not so far removed that they cannot serve as practical, ethical reminders of how we ought to act.

Conclusion

Treating childhood remembrances in this physical manner helps to make sense of the pedagogic maxim that we can see "the child within us as a way to the child before us" (Lippitz, 1986, p. 56). Childhood remembrances allow us to address the child's view of things while lending significance to what the child does through the mediation of our own lives. Or, as Meyer-Drawe (1986) put it (calling on Merleau-Ponty), "We can only thematize childlike possibilities as specific deviations [of our own experiences], and this means we cannot avoid implicating our own point of view" (p. 50).

We look for the potential in what the child does on the basis of our own past deeds. We step back at times from present encounters, withdrawing from the situations we find ourselves in with children, in order to make further sense of them. I say further sense because already we have an intuitive sense of what is appropriate for children on account of the remembering that is inscribed in the conditions of our first wanting to offer them some guidance. Specific childhood remembrances thus serve as the means of stepping back. In suggesting a source of present understanding, they allow us to look more circumspectly at the present. They bring an elaborated resourcefulness to our thinking about how we should act in the presence of children.

Must we be confined to the biographics of childhood remembrance? Is pedagogical understanding totally bound by a kind of biographic introspection? Not if we do not step too far back from present engagement

with children. On the basis of a certain nostalgia, our past can inform the present; on the basis of events confined to our own past, we can reimagine our childhood as a condition for childhood in general; on the basis of significant childhood memories, memories that sometimes jolt us out of a childhood, we can allude to the good of childhood experience; on the basis of actual events, we can develop a sense of physical connectedness to the child before us. Rather than limiting our relations to children, childhood remembrances, in their resonance with contemporary events, give depth to pedagogical understanding. They provide the most thoughtful measure imaginable of the quality of our efforts to bring up children.

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