



The misrecognised child in ourselves

By

Gaby Stroecken
psychotherapist

with a foreword by

Rien Verdult
psychologist-psychotherapist

Translation by Christine Thirlway

www.stroeckenverdult.be

THE MISRECOGNISED CHILD IN OURSELVES

BY GABY STROECKEN

Translator's note: the words 'misrecognition' and 'misrecognised' have been chosen to translate the Dutch words 'miskennen' and 'miskende'. The word misrecognised seems to be acquiring a specialised meaning in psychotherapy but its basic meaning is obvious to the lay person. This is why I have not used the words 'misprized' and 'misprisal': although they are a more exact translation of the Dutch they are no longer in general use.

The original Dutch word, as used in this book, covers not only the failure to appreciate and respond appropriately to the child's needs and nature but also the negative effect of this on the child which means that the failure amounts to ill-treatment. 'The misapprehended and maltreated child in ourselves' would be an alternative translation. Winnicott would call this child the unseen or unheard child.

THE MISRECOGNISED CHILD IN OURSELVES

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Preface

Introduction

Part I. The true Child in ourselves

Chapter 1. *Attachment*

- 1.1 Trust in development
- 1.2 The quality of the attachment relationship
- 1.3 The Child in ourselves

Chapter 2. *Birth is not the beginning*

- 2.1 Conception
- 2.2 Prenatal attachment: the `good' womb
- 2.3 The `good' birth

Chapter 3. *Psychological birth*

- 3.1 In the arms of its mother
- 3.2 Disengagement and letting go
- 3.3 Autonomy

Part II. The misrecognised Child in ourselves

Chapter 4. *Disturbed early attachment*

- 4.1 Misrecognition of the child before and after birth

- 4.2 Prenatal detachment
- 4.3 Birth and trauma
- 4.4 Lack of personal ground

Chapter 5. Insecurity and uncertainty

- 5.1 The vulnerable child
- 5.2 Aggravating circumstances
- 5.3 Consequences in later life

Chapter 6. *The true I and the false I*

- 6.1 `Healthy' and `unhealthy' narcissism
- 6.2 Defence mechanisms
- 6.3 Impasse: depression and grandiosity

Part III. Bringing up and being brought up

Chapter 7. *"Poisonous" pedagogy*

- 7.1 The "poisonous" triad
- 7.2 Guidance as goal
- 7.3 Respect for parents

Chapter 8. *The misrecognised Child as Child-rearer*

- 8.1 The repetition compulsion
- 8.2 From victim to perpetrator
- 8.3 Bringing up and being brought up

Chapter 9. `Knowing' is threatening

- 9.1 Why, because
- 9.2 The ban on `knowing' in upbringing and education
- 9.3 The suppression of `knowing' in society

Chapter 10. *social manifestations of `poisonous' pedagogy*

- 10.1 Inward- turned destructiveness
- 10.2 Outward destructiveness
- 10.3 Camouflaged destructiveness

Part IV. The way outChapter 11. *'Knowing' means freedom*

- 11.1 Attending to the symptoms
- 11.2 The healing process
- 11.3 Freedom

Chapter 12. *Mourning as an opportunity for healing*

- 12.1 Loss and longings for the lost Self
- 12.2 Security in which to live through our experiences
- 12.3 Mourning as an active process of assimilation

Chapter 13. *Towards an antipedagogical psychotherapy*

- 13.1 The therapy, the therapist and the relationship
- 13.2 The psychotherapist as advocate of the Child
- 13.3 Empathy with the true I

Postface: A new society**Literature**

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all those who, in one way or another, whether or not they intended to, have accompanied me in my search for the Child in myself and for the misrecognised Child in my vicinity.

I want to thank all my students over the past ten years, who, while engaged in their own struggles, have fed my resolve and thereby contributed to the birth of this book.

I also want to thank all the clients who trusted me and allowed me to plead for their misrecognised Child.

I am also glad to be able to thank all those who encouraged me to write this book and gave me their support.

My thanks go too to all the authors whose books have deepened my understanding; I think particularly of Alice Miller, Jean Liedloff and Aletha Solter.

Lastly, but in a very special way, I want to thank my partner Rien Verdult. Besides the practical and moral support he gave me he also made a very particular contribution to the elaboration, clarification and explanation of my initial idea. Perhaps his most important contribution lay in rendering the whole mass of material more easily digestible.

Gaby Stroecken
Leuven, Belgium, Summer 1994.

PREFACE

The misrecognition of the Child in ourselves begins early in life. At conception, during the period spent in the womb, at birth and in the first years of life, the vulnerable child runs the risk of finding its natural expectations misinterpreted and disregarded. As children, in the womb or newly born, we are entirely dependent on our parents. Our natural desires lead us to expect that we will be received with love and attention, respected in our vulnerability and have our needs, including our affective needs, punctually met: we expect recognition.

The reality of a 'normal' upbringing is different. Rather than our own expectations, it is the expectations of our parents and of society that are the highest priority. At a very early age we already have to adapt, put off or alter our needs, conceal our true feelings. This alienation takes its toll: free contact with the true I is lost. Instead comes camouflage in the shape of the false I. We have to hide our grief over the loss of ourselves; it has no place and no attention is paid to it. The result is that, as adults, we carry round with us a misrecognised Child. In our moments of emotional difficulty the misrecognised Child speaks, the Child who was forced to keep silent in our childhood.

The misrecognised Child lives within us; it looks for freedom, it wants to break through the wall of silence; it wants to discover the truth behind the facts of its childhood; it wants to cast off the yoke of the false I; it wants to realise itself according to its own capacities. The Child within us wants to live!

In this book, the misrecognised Child in ourselves finds recognition and affirmation. Because its contents lay bare the roots of childhood misrecognition and because it demonstrates the destructive effect of "poisonous" pedagogy, it is a book which is at once confrontatory and supportive. It is confrontatory because it makes us feel what we missed in our childhood, the misapprehension and neglect we have undergone. It is supportive because the author takes a radical stand as champion and advocate of the Child in ourselves.

The misrecognised Child in ourselves is not a book about our children or about bringing up children in the narrower sense. It is a book about ourselves, about the Child within us, about the consequences of our having been brought up, about liberation and self-realisation, about psychotherapy as an opportunity for healing.

The book is the result of a process of growth in the author herself, over many years, both as a person and as a psychotherapist. This can be felt in the text; the author is both incisive and gentle at one and the same time, a combination possible only because she is writing out of her own assimilated past.

Rien Verdult
Developmental psychologist
and psychotherapist

Introduction

During my stay on an old farm in Haspengouwe I found myself back in the atmosphere of my own childhood: it did my heart good. My first visit brought me to a new point of equilibrium: it was if parts of the puzzle of my past had fallen into place. Each part was now in its proper place and I had a sense of quiet. After years of absence it was good to be 'home' again. Back to the roots. Although it was not literally my home, the atmosphere during my stay gave me a feeling of being at home, of 'here I belong'. The process of disengagement, accomplished simply by staying away, had come to fruition. When, as an eighteen-year-old girl, I had left my birthplace - to return thereafter only for brief family visits - I had not been aware of wanting to get away. Now, more than forty years later, I am disengaged and able to feel my attachment to my roots.

During my second stay the experience continued. Now I had the feeling: my book can come. Many people round me and others who have attended my courses know that this book has been on my programme for years. The desire to put down in writing what is alive in myself has long been with me. Why then did it take so long to materialise? In Haspengouwe, this suddenly became clear: not until now had I been sufficiently free to take on the role of advocate for the Child without myself feeling anxious. For this is what I want to do: I want to present a plea for the Child, in the name of the Child, of the Misrecognised Child to whom this book is dedicated. I feel a close connection with this Child. I do not mean only the child which is carried and is born and grows up, but also and equally the Child we all carry within ourselves. This 'adult' Child is often condemned to a burden of fear, loneliness, uncertainty and abandonment; it is the Child which has lost part of itself and is still looking for its lost happiness. To be the advocate of this Child demands courage and resistance. Yet I am determined to continue to fight for the affective interests of the child, born or unborn, and of the suffering Child in many adults. If this means that I have to row against the stream, then that is what I must do. I can do no other. From the day that I decided to allow the Child in myself to speak and to stop forcing it to keep silent, a process was set in motion in which my contact with the Child in me has constantly deepened and intensified. Because of this contact I can do no other than stand up for the rights of the Child.

I hope that many, many readers will be open to finding recognition and acknowledgement in this book. Yet, I am also well aware that many will be upset by my plea and that it will provoke resistance, perhaps even anger and rage. This I can easily imagine because these are the reactions I encountered in myself as the Child within me moved more and more. I am no longer afraid of these reactions. The Misrecognised Child, both in children and in adults, is worth the trouble. It has the right to a witness "who knows"; it has the right to an advocate able to put its disparaged feelings into words. This advocate I choose to be; I am ready to take the risk of being written off as 'mad', 'conservative', 'simple', 'idealistic' or 'unscientific'.

This book invites the reader into renewed contact with the neglected, humiliated, abused or misrecognised Child he carries in himself. It is not a book about upbringing. It introduces no new method of upbringing; it gives no guidelines for different ways of treating children. Its first priority is not that parents should do things differently with their children but that parents should *be* different, for themselves, for their partner and for any children they may have. What the Child needs, in childhood and adulthood, is permission to 'be there'. The Child wants to be able to be itself; it wants to act according to its own natural expectations and desires; it wants to unfold its own potential, it wants to realise itself. In short: it wants to become who it is. Enabling this growing process demands a different attitude from adults, a 'being' different; it demands that they should be or begin to be in contact with the Child in themselves; it demands of the adult that he should 'be' there for the Child that still lives within him. This different relationship with the Child in himself, and thereby also with his own children, is based on openness and respect for the natural needs and true feelings of the Child, the Child in his own self.

This book is about the roots of the almost irrepressible urge felt by adults to 'bring up' their children. Many adults suffer from a compulsion to 'bring up'. The reason for this compulsion must be sought in their own childhood. The compulsion to bring up is caused by the upbringing of the bringers up. It is taken as self-evident that children must be brought up. This bringing up then means: learning to obey, learning what is allowed and not allowed, learning to be polite and to have good manners, learning to have standards and values, and so forth. Parents include a large number of learning goals in the way they bring up their child. All these learning goals have a common point of departure, namely lack of trust in the Child's own capacities for growth. Furthermore, such upbringing has its shadow side: through upbringing the Child's own feelings, needs and desires are pushed out of the way or, even worse, have to be constricted in order to produce a socially adapted citizen. Bringing up leads to misrecognition and such misrecognition becomes in turn the basis for the compulsion to bring up.

Although in recent years many good books in this field have been published - I think of writers such as Alice Miller, Jean Liedloff, and Aletha Solter, writers whose work I shall be eager to cite - I have the feeling that parts are still missing. In the first place, in Alice Miller's approach to the origins of the Misrecognised Child, I feel the lack of a certain developmental dimension. For example, a baby's needs are different from a toddler's, so the corresponding misrecognition may also have different grounds. Alice Miller writes about *the* child but the child at a specific age does not get sufficient attention. A young child may already have built up a false I and in that case already belongs in the alienated world of the adults. We must not then give empathetic support to that false I without more ado; it already requires a degree of pruning in order to be able to return to itself. I think the same element is missing in her approach to adult clients. In therapy the therapist is the advocate of the misrecognised Child within the client and not of the alienated false I of the adult.

Jean Liedloff and Aletha Solter show us a clear path into the world of the young child, but omit the link with the Misrecognised Child in the adult, which is the often unconscious source of interference in the bringing up function.

People often tell me: 'you must be very fond of children'. Yet this is not entirely what I feel. I am fond rather of the Child in the child. I love the happiness and contentment children exude when they are in their mothers' arms; I love their spontaneous laughter when they make contact; I love their curiosity, their wonder at everything new; I love their experimental search for security and trust. Many children I am no longer able to love because they have already lost the child in themselves. Instead, they arouse my compassion. I wish I were able to love all children because they had all retained their natural reality and were not obliged to hide behind 'showing off', clamouring for attention or other forms of unreal behaviour. This book is also a cry for help in the name of the lost Child and the Child who is in the process of losing itself. What we see when we look around us, is a lot of sympathy being directed at the mothers and the fathers who have such a difficult time with their children. Little sympathy is left for the oppressed and neglected child. No one seems to be worried about the conflict of interests between parent and child. These conflicting interests are not found in nature.

There, parents and young live in harmony with each other. Already long since, in 1978, the famous pedagogue Professor Bladergroen gave voice to her distress at the terrible plight of children growing up at that time. She spoke of "the child paying the price". She had an incredible amount of sympathy for children. She sounded the alarm about the obvious symptoms of neglect in children, complaining that "Parents only give what they have over,... we now know quite well how it ought to be done but we don't do it". With that, her cry of distress came to an end. Its curtailment was due to the fact that she saw 'knowing' exclusively as a rational process. She therefore gave 'insight' too great a role in her expectations. Her failure to understand seems to have been connected with inadequate insight into the 'experiential knowledge' which contains the possibility of change. This 'experiential knowledge' cannot be learnt from books, not even from this book. Nor do we learn it from bringing up children. We do not need to have children ourselves in order to make contact with the Child in ourselves. It is possible that 'having' children may even be an obstacle to making contact with the Child in ourselves. 'Experiential knowledge' is fed by examining the course of one's own life and dealing with the roots of misrecognition.

In conclusion, this book was not written 'against' anyone, either parents or anyone concerned with upbringing. It

was written `for' someone, for the Child, for the misrecognised Child in each of us. I want neither to judge nor to condemn, but I do want to be clear and lucid so that there may be no possible doubt about my solidarity with the Child in ourselves.

Part I:

The true inner child

CHAPTER 1

Attachment

*"Before a child can love
it must have been loved."*

JOHN BRADSHAW

1.1. Trust in development

It is my firm conviction that the human person is essentially good. This may seem somewhat naive, surrounded by evil as we are. Destructiveness, violence and repression appear to be taking unimaginable forms. Yet I have no wish to abandon my position, utopian or dated as some may think it. My experience with myself and with others in search of themselves, people struggling for inner freedom, has taught me that the 'good' is within us. I agree with Carl Rogers when he says: "I do not myself think that evil is inborn to man. I have never yet encountered an individual who, in a psychological climate in which growth and choices were possible, chose the way of vengeance and destruction. My experience therefore leads me to believe that it is instead cultural factors which play the leading role in our bad behaviour. The difficult manner in which the child comes into the world, its mixed experiences with its parents, the restricting, destructive influence of our system of upbringing, the unjust distribution of wealth, the prejudices we foster against individuals who are different, all these elements and many others give the human organism a false, anti-social direction. So I see members of the human race as in essence, of a basically constructive nature, but damaged by their experiences."

The human person has the potential to lead a 'good' life. This 'good' life is a process of growth in which a person is able to realise himself according to his own potential. It is a process of movement in the direction chosen by the human organism when it feels itself inwardly free to take whatever direction it wishes. If a person can be who he is and do what he feels essentially good doing, then he will develop in the direction of the 'good'. I place 'good' in inverted commas because when I use this

word I do not want to indicate a moral category but a psychological qualification. 'Good' is thus whatever is appropriate to the capacities and needs of the individual. A person who feels 'good' in himself, who lives a real and true life, is not destructive, not anti-social, violent or tyrannical. Indeed, his own inner freedom implies the freedom of the other.

It is negative experiences which damage the human person in his humanity. Adult child-rearers, because they do not trust the child's own powers of development, set out to lead so-called inborn 'evil' into good ways. The purpose of such upbringing is not to foster the growth of the capacities already outlined in the child, but specifically to limit them. Instead of growth being stimulated adaptation is demanded. Child-rearers are dominated by distrust of the child's natural potentialities. Primarily through this distrust, the child's natural baggage is replaced by an artificial factor called upbringing.

If the parents have confidence in its growth, then the child develops confidence in itself and in its surroundings. This basic feeling of trust is developed by the child in the course of its first experiences with its mother and father. Through this we realise that basic confidence is an essential first step for a positive development of the personality. So if the unborn or newborn child finds it can trust its progenitors then this will give it inner strength for the rest of its life. Erikson called such strength hope or, belief in the future. Children are by nature optimistic and they remain in hopeful mood as long as they can continue their own development.

If the foundations are good then the house itself will naturally be sturdy and strong. In other words: the roots of our existence are of essential importance for the further course of our life. If our roots are established in trust, then there is good hope of a positive affective development. "Each phase in our life lays the foundation for the next", says Bradshaw, "so childhood is the foundation for the whole life".

What is trust? For the child, trust is first of all having the feeling of being able to rely on another person, of being able to build on that reliance. Trust is the certainty of being safe with another person. It is having the feeling that one will not be let down by that somebody, not be betrayed. Trust means that there is another person to whom the child can appeal and who will not leave it in the lurch. Trust is also being able to be yourself without being rejected; and also knowing where you are because that other person is predictable. So the very first basis of trust is trust in another person. It is an aspect of an affective relationship. In this sense our childhood is an extremely vulnerable period. During that period, dependence means being at the mercy of adults.

Where parents trust, the child is able to build up trust in itself. The unborn or young child must be able to place full and unconditional trust in its parents. If not, then its biological and psychological survival will be at risk. Because a young child is naturally trusting, it is also vulnerable to misrecognition. Even though it is equipped with a number of survival mechanisms, the baby is entirely dependent for its physical and affective needs on a caring, loving environment. The unborn or young child is able to signify that it is hungry or that it needs bodily contact, but it is unable to take action to still its hunger, nor can it get up to look for its mother. Its mother has to feed it and go to it. Its only power lies in its capacity to give signals. Responding to these signals is up to those around it. The range of behaviour of the unborn child, or of the baby, is as yet so limited that it needs sensitive parents: that is, receptive, feeling parents, to respond to its signals. When babies are in need, crying is their only means of making their needs known. When they are older they will be able to communicate through language, but now, crying is the only way they can get people's attention. They then anticipate a response to their crying and, if their signals are not answered, they are unable to understand why this should be so.

What quality should the parent-child relationship have so that the child will be able to develop trust in itself and in its surroundings? For the answer to this question I turn to the English psychiatrist John Bowlby. He has specialised in the attachment behaviour of young children. After the Second World War, he was commissioned by the United Nations (WHO) to investigate the welfare of children in orphanages. He discovered that these children displayed a certain type of behaviour which, in his opinion, could be attributed to the fact that they had no one they could trust. This experience formed the basis for his research and led to his theory of attachment. On the basis of years of clinical experience and research, Bowlby came to the following conclusion: "People of all ages feel happiest and most able to use their talents when are certain that they have the support of one or more trusted persons to whom they can turn in difficulty. These trusted persons, also called attachment figures, may be described as people who offer them a safe base from which they are able to operate."

Bowlby defines 'attachment' as a preference for particular persons. This preference, he claims, leads to behaviour aimed at bringing the preferred person closer. Attachment behaviour is often thought to occur only in children. It is even labelled as childish behaviour. Yet this is a pedagogic misinterpretation. Attachment is the natural inclination of the 'healthy' person to enter into well-knit, long-term relationships. It is thus not something diseased, even though pathological forms of it may exist, often as a result of unfavourable experiences of attachment in childhood. I shall come back to this in Chapter Five. Attachment lays the foundation for the child's trust in the surrounding world, starting with the parents who offer it security. On the basis of such security the child is able to go exploring. It can go off and find out how the world works; it can explore the extent of its own capacities. Starting from a secure base the growing child can learn to make its own way. Trust in its parents, experienced by the child in the first year of its life, lays the foundation for self-trust for the rest of its life. With more self-trust the child is able to develop better and is not frightened by the world but sees it as a challenge. Self-trust makes for optimism, mistrust for a pessimistic temper. The distance the child dares to put between itself and its parents is a good measure of its feeling of basic security and certainty. A child who feels secure can leave its parents at a certain moment and go exploring, because it is quite sure it can fall back on them in case of need. It can go on its own voyages of discovery in its own time and at its own tempo.

If we enquire to whom the child originally attaches itself, then we will discover a certain hierarchy for the succeeding stages of its development. Before and directly after its birth, the baby is more or less exclusively attached to its mother. In its experience there is as yet no other human being except the one with whom it has spent nine months building up an extremely intense and absolute contact. In the first months after its biological birth it is still inseparably bound to its biological mother. This symbiotic bond with its mother continues to dominate its life up to around the sixth to the eighth month. After this period a gradual process of disengagement begins and results in the baby's first experience of itself as an individual. I look on the first months as a continuation of the situation in the womb: only gradually does the baby become at all disengaged from its mother and begin to turn its attention to other people. In the hierarchy of attachment figures it is the mother who originally occupies the highest rung. Depending on the degree to which the father involves himself with the baby, he will at some point start to become its second trusted figure. Only after the baby's psychological birth does the father become a more important attachment figure. Then it is the turn of further members of the family living with the baby: brothers and sisters; grandparents if there is intensive contact with them. If the baby is consistently entrusted to a baby sitter or child-carer then she too will acquire a place in the hierarchy. However, during its first year of life, and certainly in the period before its psychological birth, if the baby is entrusted to a 'strange' baby-sitter or child-carer, the quality of this attachment can never be the same as with the biological mother. I want to add the following comments on the subject of this hierarchy: the way the potential attachment figure interacts with the child and the intensity of this interaction are crucial. The point is not just the quantitative

aspect of the attachment figure's availability but primarily its qualitative aspect: not the amount of time available to the child but the affective involvement of the adult with the child. Discussions in which the quality of the attachment relationship of emotionally absent mothers is compared with that of available and responsive child-carers, are therefore useless. Apples cannot be compared to pears.

1.2 The quality of the attachment relationship

Attachment behaviour, or the search for a secure base, focuses on attachment figures. They form an indispensable link in building up a basic feeling of trust. A secure base produces trust. The attachment figures' affective involvement with the unborn and very young child is therefore essential. The general atmosphere in which a child's first experiences take place will be dictated by one of two possible situations: safe surroundings or unsafe surroundings. The child not yet born experiences the womb as either safe or unsafe; the newborn child experiences its mother's breast as either safe or unsafe; for the psychologically newborn child the mother is either safe or unsafe. These are the first vague but fundamental concepts that we form in our lives. They are the first essential experiences of decisive importance for the rest of our life. No further differentiation of our experience of the surrounding world takes place during the first months. All experiences are tested by this criterion: safe - unsafe. Sullivan calls the mother who provides safety a 'good' mother; a mother who arouses anxiety he calls a 'bad' mother. "The degree to which tenderness is present", says Sullivan "decides how the baby's concept of the emotionally comfortable ('good') mother or of the anxiety-arousing ('bad') mother develops". Sullivan's intention is not to express a moral judgment but to point out what the child needs.

The well-being of the newly born baby is positively influenced by 'good' attachment figures who offer it safety. During the first weeks and months the mother takes the leading role. For the purpose of providing a safe climate for the child, the attachment figures take on two main tasks which I shall explain below. These tasks are: fulfilment of needs and respect for feelings.

Fulfilment of needs

Meeting the needs of the child, in full and at the right time, is one of the most important tasks of the trusted attachment figure. The baby will signal the fact that its need is unfulfilled. It will cry when it is hungry, or even continue to cry when it has been fed but still needs bodily contact. The baby and the young child have the power to make their needs known but need a responsive trusted figure to respond to their signals. For this purpose the adult must be constantly attentive to the needs of the child.

Which particular needs take priority depends on the stage of development the child has reached. Maslow has described five basic needs whose fulfilment he considers of fundamental importance for a psychically healthy development. The fulfilment of these basic needs is the force which motivates our behaviour and this is true as much for the adult as for the child. Maslow arranges the basic needs in a hierarchy of ascending importance. The physiological needs are the first to demand fulfilment, followed immediately by the need for safety. After the safety requirement comes the higher need to 'belong' and then the need for appreciation. The highest need is that of self-realisation. He assumes that, when a lower need is fulfilled, this automatically leads to the desire to fulfil a higher one. Although Maslow lays no specific emphasis on the developmental perspective of basic needs, it is implicit in his ideas. For the baby, the fulfilment of its physiological needs is of essential importance. Without the satisfaction of these needs it cannot survive. Eating, drinking, warmth and rest, together with its contact with its mother, are essential to survival. If these needs are met to a sufficient degree and at the right time, the child is able to develop a basic feeling of security.

The attachment figure builds trust in the child when she fulfils the right need at the right time, without delay. For the baby the fulfilment of physiological needs is a priority and also provides indirect fulfilment of the need for security. For babies these two go hand in hand. We also have to realise that a baby's experience of unfulfilled physiological need is different from an adult's. When a baby is hungry, then the whole of its being is focused on the stilling of that hunger; the whole of the baby's body suffers from hunger; it can brook no delay. Delaying fulfilment is very threatening to it because its survival hangs in the balance. This is why Maslow says: the baby is hungry. The baby is quite capable of indicating when it is hungry or thirsty. The only meaningful time to feed a baby is when it indicates that it needs to be fed. Both having to wait and being fed too soon will give the baby the feeling of being helplessly at someone else's mercy and of having no control over what happens to it. Note once again that for the baby, feeding is more than just stilling its hunger; it also means direct bodily contact with its mother. The 'good' breast stills its hunger and fulfils its desire for loving closeness. Bodily contact is for the baby what water and sun are for the plant. The skin, accustomed to pleasurable sensations in the womb, needs these sensations to go on. Such contact strengthens the basic feeling of safety and security. This is how the child becomes conscious of its own body. Aletha Solter says: "Being touched is essential for a baby so that it can develop a feeling of its own existence". Each baby will be receptive to its own form of touching. But it is important that in every touch the adult's heart, both physiologically and mentally, is felt to be present. Obviously breast-feeding corresponds more to these two needs than bottle-feeding. For one thing it appears that mother's milk is the best answer to the child's physiological needs; and for another, while the baby is taking its milk it is at the same time drinking in the closeness of its mother as source of love. One other physiological need, certainly of primary importance during the first year, is the need for rest. Rest is not just a synonym for sleep. For a baby, the essence of rest is to be offered stimuli which its as yet immature mental capacities are able to assimilate. Overstimulation of its mental apparatus leads to anxiety and apathy. Respect for the baby's rhythms of rest and sleep makes yet another contribution to its trust in its own organism. Need for rest may not be interpreted to mean that the baby or young child is constantly to be put to bed. Rest implies closeness. Is there any greater happiness for the baby than resting in its mother's arms? Awake and alone in its cot, it feels abandoned to its fate, and this it must face without the safe presence of its attachment figure. Here too the child itself is able to decide when it wants to sleep. The cot may in no circumstances be made to serve as a place to which the child can be banished in order to spare the parent. It is noticeable that in our Western culture the decoration and arrangement of the baby's room is a very important part of the preparations for its arrival. As soon as this has been done the baby can come! These arrangements may be seen as a significant symptom of alienation, no longer recognisable as such because it has become a generalised neurosis. - This and other generalised neuroses have led to the concept of 'normal': as soon as the majority suffers from a neurosis the neurosis is termed 'normal'. - A baby must sleep, without noise or mess, in its own cot and its own room and for a considerable number of hours of the day and night. Whether this is what the baby needs is no longer even questioned. Solter remarks: "Babies are much better off without all this equipment which only serves to separate them from their parents." And further: "In the animal world it is quite common for the young to be with their mother at night". The natural desires of the baby, who has not chosen to be alone, are ignored, for all sorts of sinister motives emanating from the reason. I agree with Liedloff when she asserts that a human being has an inborn ability to choose what suits him; and that what suits him fits in with the continuum of his family, his tribe or group, his race and even the whole of living nature. Liedloff defines 'continuum' as: "the succession of experiences corresponding to the expectations and inclinations of the human race in a particular environment which may be said to be in continuity with the environment in which these expectations and inclinations came into being." If we are alert to the signals given by the child, then we shall notice that it needs the closeness of its parents, most of all the mother. It feels safer and more restful in contact with its mother's body. A baby which moves its arms and legs a lot is normally called 'a busy baby'.

Few people enquire whether this is so 'normal'. Anna Freud wrote in 1965: "The biological need of the young baby for the continuing presence of the caring adult is neglected in our Western culture and children are exposed to hours of loneliness because of our mistaken conviction that it is healthy for a young child to sleep by itself".

We have already seen that, in addition to the fulfilment of its physiological needs, the fulfilment of the need for safety and security is extremely crucial to the baby or young child if it is to develop a feeling of well-being. A child cannot live without security. It must feel that its existence is in good hands and therefore that it has only to be, without having to act to keep itself in being. The young child looks for certainty, stability, safe independence, protection; it looks for a guarantee against fear, against tension and chaos; it needs a certain structure and delimitation. If these needs are generously met, the young child will feel secure enough to go out and explore the world and to disengage itself a little further from its parents. The toddler will go and look for contact with others of its age. The need to 'belong' surfaces at this age, both in relation to the child's own family and to friends. Recognition and appreciation is the next need to appear, always provided that the earlier need to 'belong' has been adequately fulfilled. The infant and schoolchild are very sensitive to recognition of their capacities and proud of their growing independence. They need appreciation for what they are and for what they can do. The need for self-actualization only comes to the fore in adolescence and remains thereafter a motive force underneath the struggle for an authentic and personal life.

Needs demand to be met at the actual moment, the moment when the child is receptive. I want to illustrate this point using as my theme an aspect of upbringing which attracts a lot of discussion: toilet training. We may perhaps assume, although I am not entirely convinced of it, that the toddler also needs a certain regulation of the functioning of its bladder and gut. Acquiring control over bladder and gut would fit in with the development of greater autonomy. Yet we should remember that toilet training does not have a significant place within primitive cultures. In my view, with us it is connected with our housing and living patterns and with our type of clothing. The question: "At what age should I begin toilet training?" is a question put to many 'experts' in that field, but never to the toddler itself. The result is that the parents often begin such training before the toddler is ready. Yet the toddler is quite able to say for itself that it would like to do the same as its parents and bigger brothers or sisters. Here, both physiological and psychological factors have a role. Bladder and muscles must be ready for it, but first and foremost, the toddler must itself be capable of monitoring its body functions. Solter finds the best approach to toilet training is to explain and show the toddler how to do it and then to leave any further initiative to the child itself. Encouragement without obligation given at the moment when the toddler has the required capacity, leaves the decision to the toddler itself. The child is able to accept a certain regulation of its behaviour provided that account is taken of its capacities at the time. According to Bowlby, the child is well-equipped to establish its own rhythm and to communicate its own wishes and needs to the people round it.

Respecting feelings

A second important task for the attachment figure, equally crucial for the healthy development of attachment, is to respect all the child's feelings and to do this irrespective of whether we judge them as positive or negative. From the viewpoint of our dominant morality we are accustomed to divide feelings into two categories. Feelings of love, readiness to forgive, contentment and suchlike we label 'positive'. Feelings of hate, jealousy, anger, we place in a 'negative' category. It is obvious to me that we are then talking not about feelings but about moral concepts. We can put it a different way: 'positive' feelings are expressions which strike the other as pleasant; 'negative' feelings are expressions which strike the other as unpleasant. Yet feelings in themselves cannot be either good or bad; they are there and they need to be expressed.

When the expression of feelings is hampered, then 'unhealthy' forms of emotion come into being; emotion which results from repressed feelings. We shall return to this subject in Chapter Seven. At this stage I shall simply give a couple of instances: systematic and persistent punishment of feelings leads to rebelliousness and possibly even to delinquent behaviour; allusions to ingratitude lead to feelings of guilt and anxiety.

Innumerable pages have been written on punishment and reward. This subject will be dealt with later on in the book. It is sufficient at this juncture to remark that feelings should never be punished. Feelings express an inner experience and this in itself is neither 'good' nor 'bad'. Feelings exist and their expression brings relief. Bottling up feelings leads to distortion, alienation, to the false I. So respect for the child's feelings will make an important contribution to the healthy development of the personality.

To make such respect possible a great deal of responsiveness and stability is required from the attachment figure. These characteristics in the attachment figure are important. Responsiveness implies that the signals from the other are noticed, interpreted and answered. It is not simply passive listening but primarily active reaction to the distress and needs of the child. Bowlby says: "A secure child who trusts its mother, has learnt that this parent is to be trusted, that she is there when you need her, and that she is able to allay your anxieties." Besides responsiveness, the parent also needs stability. She must be able to take on the child's feelings, violent as they may sometimes be, without herself being thrown off course. The attachment figure's stability enables her to allow the child's feelings to exist. A stable parent is not afraid of the feelings of the child, for she is not afraid of her own feelings.

1.3 The Child in ourselves

Experiences from our earliest childhood are of decisive importance for our later life. The past within the present determines our future. By this I mean that the experiences of our childhood have a persistent influence on how we function and that experiences in the here and now are partly coloured by what we have been party to in our childhood. What we now experience and do is often an unconscious repetition of what we have lived through as children. The influence of our childhood continues to operate in our daily activities; it determines the conditions upon which we are now able to live. Our very first experiences, in particular, determine the space in which we must realise whatever is best suited to our capacities, our continuum, our original 'being'. The original, unimpaired Child, with its capacities and its limitations, but already acted upon (and perhaps wounded) by its surroundings, I call the Child in ourselves.

For me there are essentially two forms of the Child in ourselves: the 'good', unwounded Child and the 'bad', misrecognised Child. The Child in ourselves is able to feel safe, secure and protected, full of trust in itself and its surroundings; autonomous, self-reliant, creative, in a position to meet challenges; it is full of curiosity, able to take initiatives, lively and sensitive; it has kept its own natural estimation of its value and worth. The misrecognised Child in ourselves, in contrast, feels small, inferior, guilty; it is ashamed of itself, feels aggrieved, humiliated, slighted; it feels insecure and anxious; in short, it feels 'bad'. "When, as a result of neglect of its needs during development, the Child has been wounded, it withdraws into itself or clings to others and gets into difficulties", says Bradshaw.

In order to make the emotional pain of misrecognition and wounding bearable, and to ensure its own psychological survival, the misrecognised child thrusts away the misrecognition. The Child in ourselves is forced to be silent; it is not allowed to know what is being done to it; it may not and

cannot experience the pain. The result is that it produces a false I, designed to camouflage the pain, to make the burden of the past bearable. In front of those aspects of our past that we are obliged to conceal because they are too painful, we erect a false I, a superficial facade whose purpose is to cover up the painful and damaged depths of our interior.

If, in childhood, we have built up a basic sense of trust, then we will have created a rich substrate for continued contact with the Child in ourselves. Then we will not need to construct a false I; then we will be able to stay in contact with all the experiences and feelings of our childhood. We have nothing to hide because there are no unbearable experiences. Of course all of us have gone through painful events in childhood. But it is not the events in themselves that determine whether they will have a persistent negative influence; it is the way the parents allow the events to be lived through which determines whether or not they are frustrating.

When, in childhood, we have known the secure basis of an attachment figure and this has enabled us to build up trust in our own organism, in our own capacities, then the way is open to us to work towards our self-realisation as fully functional personalities. A fully functional human person feels himself inwardly free, is not afraid of close relationships; his experiences are not dogmatic or tied to a structure but independent of imposed patterns; he is open and direct; he is able to experience his feelings immediately; he has no need to protect himself because he is not afraid of what he feels. A fully functional personality has a congruent interior communication; his thinking and feeling are at one. He does not put up a front but can let others see him as he is. A fully functional person has an 'undamaged' Child in himself or has been able to remake the link with the 'damaged' Child in himself. As an adult, the fully functional person stays in contact with the child in himself. He does not betray it, he listens to it. The Child in himself is his compass, it indicates what is right for him. As I have already mentioned, Liedloff defines 'right' as whatever connects with the human continuum. Those who foster the Child in themselves and listen to it, are not only in a continuum with the human race, but also with their own personal life history. Fully functional individuals live not only in continuity with the development of their race but also with their personal journey through life. Their functioning in the here and now will then contain no break with their experiences from the past. In their affective functioning as adults, they have no trouble feeling the role played by the Child in themselves. Past and present are not cut off from each other for a continuous interchange takes place between the two. Fully functional people live with the experiences from their childhood but these are not permitted to dominate and certainly not to overwhelm them. Their early experiences took place, are accepted and are bearable.

If the Child in ourselves has been too drastically misrecognised, that is, if the misrecognition has been greater than the recognition, then it is very difficult to maintain continuity in our lives. In other words, if we have not been given trust by our attachment figures, then the Child in ourselves will be held in contempt and damaged. The reaction of the growing child and later of the adult is to shut himself off from this damaged or misrecognised part of himself. His continuum is shattered. There is no longer any question of a 'fully functional person', or even of a person functioning at all 'well'. The 'false' child no longer recognises its own feelings, is not open to them, but is instead mistrustful of what it feels. It experiences in a stiff, rigid and dismissive way. The misrecognised child exhibits contradictions between what it thinks, what it feels and what it does. It is a made-to-measure individual rather than itself and does not know where it stands; it has no substrate of its own. In relation to other people it tends to be stand-offish, to wait and see or shut itself off. It tends to be on the defence rather than open or free. The Child in ourselves can be a rich source of strength and creativity, the basis of a sound development of ourselves. The 'good' Child in ourselves looks towards its own realisation; it is always in process, journeying towards its authentic core. The misrecognised Child in ourselves stands in the way of any further development, puts on the brakes. It demands a

tremendous amount of energy, energy which then becomes unavailable for growth. It is a heavy load which we drag with us into our future lives.

CHAPTER 2

Birth is not the beginning

"The unborn child is a being with feelings, memories and consciousness, and that is the reason why whatever may happen during the nine months between conception and birth, to him, to us all, is to a very large extent definitive and shaping for his personality, motivations and ambitions."

THOMAS VERNY AND JOHN KELLY

2.1 Conception

The foetal psyche exists. We need not doubt this any more. More and more indications, both from the scientific and the psychotherapeutic fields, make it clear that our psyche begins not after but before birth. Already before its birth, the human person in process of becoming possesses a form of consciousness. In the uterus he grows from an embryo to a conscious being. His prenatal development consists not only in a spectacular bodily development but also in a revolutionary growth of his psychic and affective capacities. The foetus experiences! The prenatal child is a experiencing and feeling being. The thesis that the unborn child possesses no consciousness, no memory, no experience, is no longer tenable. The human person in process of becoming reacts to his surroundings; he reacts to signals which reach him, to the moods of his mother, to changes in the uterus. In short, the foetus is not a passive being but an active, sensitively experiencing and reacting human person in process of becoming.

From this new perspective on prenatal life a further picture has been formed of the beginning of human life: of conception. Although the psychology of the earliest part of life is still of a speculative character, there are cautious indications that conception is the very first step in the development of a healthy personality. Conception is not merely a biological or sexual event, with the aim of propagating the human race, but also, and perhaps most importantly, an event in which a preparatory climate is created for a loving welcome. In our present-day culture it is possible to plan births; thus also consciously to conceive a child. Sexual intercourse can become a conscious, loving act of welcome. I want to comment here that in an intimate relationship of partners, sexual contact will inevitably have a greater content of love and tenderness. Here and now, sex is often saturated with an aggressive weight of unexpressed feelings from the man's side, and a stunted, subservient seeking for attention and caresses from the side of the woman. In this case it becomes for both of them a surrogate gratification in their search for lost happiness. Intimacy between the partners is, however, an important condition for a loving awakening of new life. If intimacy and sexuality are bound together, then the conception will be desired and the new life will easily take its place within the relationship. In Victorian times there was love without sexuality; in our times there is sexuality without love. For the awakening of new life both these realities are undesirable; for a 'good' conception, love and sexuality go together. The partners are concerned for each other, and seek neither to let off steam nor for compensation, but for an exchange of their love, looking towards the new life. Perhaps we should think of conception as a first message to this new life: 'you are coming into our life, you may be there,

and you are welcome'.

The capacity of the parents to mother and to father is linked to their experiences with their own mothers and fathers. The emotional involvement of woman and man with their child-about-to-be begins when they themselves are still young children. Their own childhood experiences define the degree to which affective participation by woman and man in the conception and in the pregnancy is possible. To the extent that they have received much love in their own childhood, to the extent of their experience of being desired and welcome and of being allowed to have and develop their own capacities, they will now be able to give love to their child, desire it and make it welcome, allow it to grow up in its own way, at its own rate, according to its own capacities.

The quality of the woman's affective participation in the conception and in her pregnancy depends on how far she has come in her woman's being. Is she content with herself as a woman or must she still acquire value by looking after others? The man's affective investment in the conception and in his support for her pregnancy, depends in a similar fashion on the extent to which he has filled out his own masculine being. Is he happy with himself as a man or has he still to prove himself in life? Mothering is included in a girl's upbringing because her mother treats her differently from her brothers. Mothering is not included in a boy's upbringing. To cite Nancy Chodorow: "The reproduction of mothering by women can be explained through various object-relational experiences and from differences in the final result of the psychic development of men and women. Because a woman has mothered them, women themselves will want to carry out motherly functions more than men, that is to say that they present themselves once more in a primary mother-child relationship and possess psychological and relational capacities enabling them to mother." In other words, through the nature of her upbringing, and in particular through her relationship to her own mother, a woman has more capacities for mothering. For Nancy Chodorow, it is the structures of society which keep this going. Apart from the question of how it all began and how it keeps going, we can find in her study confirmation for the thesis that it is the childhood experiences which determine the content of motherhood and, I think, also fatherhood. Because their mother, particularly in very early childhood, related to her little daughter differently from how she related to her small son, the woman is more prepared for being mother than the man for being father.

These thoughts on the awakening of new life make me ask this question: what are our conscious and unconscious motives for awakening new life? The intensity and complexity of the desire for a child seem to be determined by a number of elements. On the surface, social expectations play a part. The pressure from surrounding circles can be an influence. Thus, reaching a certain age and after a certain number of years in a stable relationship, women are still expected to bring a child into the world. Certainly in traditional family lore a child is the crown of a relationship. Social trends help to determine the choice for new life; it now seems to be more fashionable to 'have' three rather than two children. Inapposite considerations such as financial factors may also influence the choice to be pregnant.

It seems to me that the more fundamental reasons lie in the more unconscious influences which mostly go back to one's own childhood. The first factor we have already discovered with Chodorow. If, in her earliest childhood, a little girl has been prepared for motherhood, then as an adult she may have the feeling that she is not fully a woman until she has borne a child. This seems to me a negative effect of being brought up to 'mother'. A woman's identification with her mother may be such that she either wants to be like her mother and just as good a mother as she was, or to show in her own motherhood that she can do it differently and better than her mother did for her. Besides identification with or distancing from her own mother and the upbringing she provided, it seems to me that there are some other desires which play an essential role: these are narcissistic and symbiotic desires.

Narcissistic desires indicate the mother-to-be's need to feel complete and all-powerful. It is a desire that is rooted in an ideal image. The longing for completion is satisfied both by the pregnancy and by the child. For some women this longing 'to be pregnant' can be overwhelming: pregnancy allows them to feel full, complete, and to experience their bodies as strong and fruitful. Pregnancy can compensate for feelings of emptiness, of physical incompleteness or insufficiency. If she longs for completion via her child, the mother will see her child first of all as an extension of herself. A second aspect of the narcissistic desire for a child is the search for a mirror image. The baby is then destined to be a copy of her own ideal self-image. Later on it will have to tell her how good she was at being its mother. Fear of having a defective baby threatens this self-image and is often not acknowledged.

Symbiotic desires consist of fantasies of merging into the child. The desire is to be one with the child. The child-to-be-born holds the promise of an intimate relationship, of the close, warm bond for which the mother longs; it represents an expectation of the fulfilment of her own fantasies and desires and will have to make up for the losses of her own childhood. Narcissistic and symbiotic desires to conceive children seem to me to be typically female desires. A man is generally only interested in the child when it seeks contact with him after birth.

With this I come to a fourth unconscious element in the longing to have a child, and here we can also recognise the father, namely in the need to fulfil one's own lost ideals and missed chances. 'Having children' seems to open the way back to lost happiness. Parents, both mothers and fathers, can imagine their child succeeding where they failed. The imaginary child has to be ideal; it will symbolise perfection. It therefore becomes the extension of what Kohut called the 'grandiose self-image'. The 'fantasy child' must be perfect, must realise every slumbering capacity in the parents. It must make their own unfulfilled expectations come true at last. The child-to-be-born must offer its parents a second chance, bring them new happiness.

These desires of the mother and the father, often unconscious, can have a negative influence on the affective receptivity of the child-to-be-born. The common factor in all these desires is that they arise from the emotional distress of the mother and the father, and not from the affective needs of the child to be conceived. The conception can be too oriented towards fulfilling the parents own needs and too little towards the conscious affective awakening of new life. Psychic energy is then invested not in the new life but in the quest for the parents' own lost happiness.

Let us go back to the conception. Veldman stresses that the readiness of the mother's womb to receive the child is an important condition for the implantation of the fertilised egg cell in the uterus. "This implantation is not only functional in nature, but must also", he asserts, "be affectively prepared. The affective affirmation must already be present in the act of creation. Where a man and woman, in an affective, physical encounter, consciously give some thought to the coming of 'their' child, then the affective affirmation of the prenatal child has already begun. The seeds of life which are to form it, are then charged with loving, psychic energy and are received in a hospitable womb." From its conception onwards, the child so conceived should continue in a climate of love, a climate of affective involvement in the life that carries in it the kernel of a fully functioning person. Lietaer Peerbolte also points out that between the egg cell and the sperm there is a particular force of attraction which comes from a form of psychic energy and out of which is formed a primitive-I, the first form of consciousness. This means that already before and during fertilisation a certain form of consciousness - be it very rudimentary - is present in the form of the primitive I, which has knowledge of the ocean, the world of the unending, without time or space, of boundless, objectless being. In short, the provisional conclusion in this ongoing debate is that the early unconscious motives for conceiving and the manner in which the conception itself takes place, affect the degree of well-being enjoyed by the newly awakened living being.

2.2 Prenatal attachment: the 'good' uterus

A detailed description of the prenatal development of the child does not belong in this book. For such a description I recommend authors such as Janus, Tietze and Verny and Kelly. For our present task it will be appropriate to discover which aspects of the foetal development and of the prenatal interaction between the mother and the unborn child are important to the child-to-be-born's affective development.

The unborn child is a being with feelings, memories and consciousness. Its prenatal development is to a large degree definitive of its personality. The unborn child has perceptions, even if its consciousness does not go as deep as the adult's and is not as complex. Thus, for example, it learns to know its mother by her voice, through her movements, through her heartbeat. Its emotional and intellectual needs may be called more primitive. Yet this does not mean that it is any less important to the child-to-be-born that these needs should be fulfilled. Liking and disliking are the only two categories the foetus knows; it does not yet understand the concepts of joy and grief. Joy it experiences as pleasure, grief as pain. Its feeling life is as yet undifferentiated but no less essential to its existence for that reason.

There is a mutual bond between mother and foetus. Communication occurs in the uterus. The unborn child reacts to its mother and the mother reacts to it. This is clearest when the foetus begins to make more movements but there is also interaction during the preceding period. What a mother repeatedly thinks and feels about her child determines, for the most part, what the child will finally think of itself. Her thoughts, her love or rejection, or the ambivalence of her feelings are definitive for his affective capacities. In the uterus the foundation of the later affective life of the child is laid. The development of a basic feeling of trust and safety is already in the process of formation during the prenatal period. If the woman is happy with her state of pregnancy, feels at home in her womanhood, has a basic feeling of trust and security of her own and knows that she has and can rely on the support of a loving partner, then her uterus will be

`good' for her unborn child. Her own affective security creates for her expectant child a nourishing and stimulating environment, in which it knows it is safe and protected. In doing this, the woman, and to a lesser extent the man, can make a decisive difference to everything their child will feel, hope, dream, think or accomplish for the rest of its life.

In postnatal development, the American psychiatrist Sullivan distinguishes between safe and worrying experiences. For the young child, a situation in which its needs are attended to immediately and with love is a safe situation. Sullivan speaks of the `good' nipple and the `good' breast when these offer the baby security because they fulfil his physical and affective needs. Everything which is safe is `good'; insecurity, fear and emotional pain he calls `bad'. In this sense I should like to extend Sullivan's concept to include prenatal development. The `good' uterus is the uterus in which the fertilised egg cell can implant both functionally and affectively, where the embryo, and later the foetus, can develop in a safe affective climate, where mother and foetus are affectively involved with each other and react to each other. In a `good' uterus, the foetus can continue to experience its oceanic attachment without threat. For the foetus this oceanic attachment is based on an unlimited symbiotic relationship with the mother. This relationship is unlimited because for the foetus there are as yet no rules, laws or standards to which it must conform. The relationship is symbiotic in the sense of being intimate and dependent; there is as yet no distinction between the foetus's own I and the other object, that is, its mother. The foetus has the feeling of being utterly identical with the mother carrying it, at least insofar as no disturbances have taken place. In a `good' uterus, life in the womb is an affective living together, an inseparable attachment, a safe, warm existence. It is an All-world, an experience of oneness, a timeless experience of boundless space, an experience which is quite separate from the I which does not yet have to be bound to the senses. The oceanic experience is an experience of an all-world in which no distinction is made between past, present and future. It is the most archaic experience of a human being. When no disturbing factors are present, the circumstances are ideal for the foetus: it experiences protection, safety and constant gratification of its needs. The oceanic feeling in the archaic oneness with the mother can be looked on as a cosmic unity, an overwhelmingly positive feeling of peace, a feeling of calm and happiness, even ecstasy. In the `good' uterus the feeling of bliss is all-inclusive.

So the basis of prenatal attachment is laid in the affective interaction between the mother and life in its prenatal phase. Although the foetus is an amazing tiny being already with a certain resilience, it is not in a state to form a unilateral attachment. If his mother shuts herself off from it, it has no idea what is happening. In other words: not every uterus is, by definition, a `good' place for the unborn child. The quality of the interaction between mother and unborn child is definitive for the quality of the affective bond.

Communication between mother and prenatal child occurs on various levels. Verny and Kelly distinguish three levels on which interaction takes place. They differentiate between the physiological, the behavioural and the feeling channels of communication. Physiological communication is unavoidable. The presence of the child in the woman's belly means that there is physiological communication, even if only in order to provide it with food. Yet how the mother and child utilise this line of communication will make an essential difference. This is most clearly expressed in the transfer of the hormones connected with tension and fear. The woman's hormones are in direct contact with her foetus via the bloodstream. "No proof is needed", assert Verny and Kelly, "of the observable fact that fears which directly concern her child, her pregnancy or her husband, or her own feelings of insecurity and inadequacy, have the greatest consequences for the foetus." If the woman experiences no persistent and intense fear or stress during the pregnancy, she will not burden her unborn child with feelings of anxiety. Also, healthy eating, no smoking, little or no alcohol, the absence of caffeine or other drugs, are good factors for good physiological communication contributing to good prenatal

attachment.

Behavioural communication becomes most obvious when the foetus begins to move. Kicking is perhaps the clearest form of behavioural communication between mother and prenatal child. By kicking, the foetus can indicate that he is not feeling good, that he is overtaxed or that he is in difficulties. The mother's emotions can also lead to kicking. It has been clearly shown that if the mother feels calm and relaxed, the foetus kicks less. Stroking the tummy also produces a change in the behaviour of the foetus. In haptonomic guidance for pregnancy, communication at behavioural level is consciously used to promote the affective contact.

Communication of feeling is perhaps the least perceptible, but at the same time the most profoundly effective. The attitude and mood of the mother in relation to her unborn child are enormously influential on the life of the foetus. An attitude of rejection means that the requisite prenatal attachment simply does not occur; a receptive, open attitude produces 'good' prenatal attachment.

The impression may have been produced that everything a pregnant woman does will influence her relationship with her child. This is in some sense true. Yet we must assume that the unborn child also has a certain resilience which enables it not to be discouraged by frustrations. However, if these frustrations lead to the child's feeling shut off from its mother, or if its physical or its affective needs are persistently ignored, then the requisite prenatal attachment is endangered.

What is the father's role in prenatal attachment? In face of the organic connectedness of mother and foetus, the father is behindhand in the matter of attachment. That does not mean that he has no significant role. By supporting his partner he can make sure that she feels good and that she enjoys support during her pregnancy. The man can influence his partner's mood and attitude in a positive direction. In this way he can affect the affective climate in the uterus. Through loving contact with his partner's body and particularly her swelling tummy, he himself, at a haptonomic level, can build up his own direct bond with his unborn child.

2.3 The 'good' birth

Being born is more than a biological parting from the mother-body and entry into the world. Being born is a psychosomatic process in which an active exchange between mother and child goes on. We must abandon the idea that the child 'thank God' does not notice its birth happening. The child experiences its birth; it has a clear impression of it. How the child is born makes a great difference to how and in what direction it will develop and how it will deal with the world around it. A growing consensus of scientists and psychotherapists is claiming that a person's birth is a crucial step in his own personal development and that this step can be taken well or badly.

The prenatal child does not undergo birth in a passive manner; it has an active and initiating role in its own birth. When the prenatal child is fully mature and fully grown, the moment arrives when it is ready to leave the uterus. The birth process is begun in mutual 'dialogue' with the mother. The prenatal child is ripe for leaving the 'good' place, but not yet mature enough to live without the safe assurance of security and protection its mother provides. It also needs her help and support during its birth. The newborn child wants to take a further step in its life and yet it cannot yet walk, either affectively or physically. Its birth turns out to be its first disengagement from his mother, but must not yet lead to a radical break. Being born means that the baby becomes disengaged for the first time in its still infant life; yet for the baby this cannot mean detachment; it needs its affective bond with his mother more than ever.

For the baby the birth itself is an overwhelming experience. The child will never entirely forget this experience up to the very end of its life. During the birth the child takes in every feeling, every gesture and every movement. This means that it is theoretically possible for it to recall its birth later in life. Memories of birth are present, and from such memories it may be concluded that, from a psychological viewpoint, the birth of many newborn babies has a traumatic aspect. Is being born a trauma by definition? I do not think so. Being born is a natural process, which can take place 'without violence' if mother and child are prepared for it. If the child has come to term in a 'good' uterus, then it will have developed a feeling of trust in its mother and in its own organism and will therefore be able to cope with this new step. Meanwhile, its mother has prepared herself for its entry into the world, for its first appearance, for its first disengagement, and is looking forward to it. She is literally and figuratively open to it.

Being born seems, in itself, to consist of an alternation of pleasant and unpleasant sensations. The pressure exercised on the child to expel it can make it confused. There is, on the other hand, intense pleasure to be felt as it passes through the birth canal and experiences immediate physical contact for the first time in his life. His skin is immediately stimulated for the first time, and that gives feelings of enjoyment. And at the same time as the perinatal child is subjected to these stimuli, it also experiences pain. The contractions of the uterus exert a great deal of pressure on the baby's body. Being born is simultaneously an experience of pleasure and of pain. If its mother can share its pleasure and take care of its pain, then the baby will have had a 'good' birth.

Being born is an initial disengagement in which the perinatal child demands support and protection from its immediate environment.

From the 'good' uterus, where the prenatal child found security, protection and permanent satisfaction of its needs, the child emerges into a world without limits. The intimate security of the 'good' uterus must give way to an attachment in the external world. The manner in which the child is born is crucial to its well-being, now and later. The French gynaecologist Leboyer developed a child-friendly method of giving birth. It is actually not a new method, but rather a conventional birth, but 'without violence'. The child comes into the world in a dim light, after which its bodily contact with its mother is immediately restored. Even before the umbilical cord is cut, the newborn child is back with its mother. Keeping mother and child apart after the birth is absolutely wrong and disastrous; a baby who has just been born looks for its mother, not for the purpose of restoring the full prenatal situation - it has grown out of that - but in order to continue the attachment and connectedness established before the birth.

The immediate restoration of bodily and affective contact after the birth is of essential importance, both for the first assimilation of the efforts of birth and for the confirmation of a fundamental feeling of trust. Scientific and psychotherapeutic discoveries indicate that the manner in which the child who has just been born is received and taken care of, makes a decisive contribution to its later development. When the baby has begun to breathe for itself and is lying on the mother's tummy, and she has stroked it until it is calm, and when its umbilical cord has stopped beating and has then been cut, then the baby is put to the breast. At precisely that moment, as soon as the birth is a fact, and without waiting for washing, weighing or examination, Liedloff considers that the momentous event of imprinting takes place. "It is a well-known fact", says Liedloff, "that many young animals imprint the image of their mothers in their memories at birth, Young geese, for example, as soon as they emerge from the egg, imprint the first moving object they see in their surroundings. The meaning is, that this is their mother." Liedloff seems to be forgetting that the newborn human child does not have to imprint its mother. It knows its mother from the prenatal period; it knows how she feels, what her attitude to it is. The imprinting, the entire absorption of the mother's identity into the baby, does not have to happen after birth; it has already occurred in the uterus. This is not to say that I do not share Liedloff's vision that bodily contact immediately upon the birth is of essential importance. It is simply that the imprinting is not happening for the first time but acquiring a new dimension, namely, that of expectant attachment.

In its foetal state, in the 'good' uterus, the child's physical and affective needs were continuously met. The protection and the security were always there, a felt presence. The foetus was nourished on a continuous basis. In its symbiotic connectedness with its mother there was as yet no room for experiences of dependence. After birth, however, as soon as the newborn baby starts to breathe for itself and the umbilical cord stops beating, comes a primitive feeling of dependence. This dependence underlines its vulnerability. Of itself, the newborn baby can neither seek out contact nor find its own food. Its environment will have to help it. It can give signals, for example, crying; it can also find the breast for itself once it is laid on its mother's tummy. In its vulnerable dependence it will have to build up trust in its environment. It seems to me that a newborn baby from a 'good' uterus, already has that trust. It has the expectation that it will be seen and heard, that its signals will be taken seriously and that its physical and affective needs will be fulfilled. In short, it expects an attachment which will follow on as closely as possible from the prenatal attachment and also minister to its new needs. Memories of the imprinting of the very first fulfilment of its new need for attachment immediately after its birth, will continue to shape its basic feeling of security and trust in itself and in life, throughout its lifespan.

Psychological birth

"Independence from the mother can only come via her, through her fulfilment of the correct role, as she gives her child the experience of staying in her arms and, when that is no longer necessary, allows it to develop further."

ALETHA SOLTER

3.1 In the arms of its mother

After its biological birth, the newborn child's need for intensive contact with its mother continues. For the first time and primarily in a biological sense, it is apart from her, but it is as yet quite unable to live without her. Its growth has gone far enough for it to emerge from her body, but this does not yet place it in a position to go any further on its own. Its whole being seeks to maintain the absolute and immediate liaison it experienced before its birth. It is still entirely dependent on the care provided by its attachment figure and thus, in its vulnerability, also seeks contact with her. It is in the world but not yet able to direct its attention to that world. It first has to establish itself, get to know where it stands; it must feel it belongs somewhere, that it is not lost, that it is not abandoned to its fate. The imprinting moment is therefore, as we have already seen, of essential importance for the affirmation of its existence.

"The period immediately following its birth is the part of life outside the mother's body which makes the strongest impression. What a baby encounters at that time is, for it, what all life is about. Any later impressions can only to a greater or lesser degree supplement that first impression which took place before it had any other information about the outside world. Its expectations in that phase are the most unalterable it will ever have. The change brought about by emerging from the total hospitality of the uterus is enormous but, as we have seen, it arrives already prepared for the great jump from the uterus into its mother's arms", thus Jean Liedloff. What it is not prepared for is a still greater jump, that is, the jump into its 'own' cradle. It expects its mother and not some lifeless textile with which it cannot communicate; it expects her trusted body, her voice and her heartbeat, and not a baby basket lined with material which does not move, has no smell or any feeling of life. "It is understandable", Liedloff continues, "that the violent wrenching apart of the continuum of mother and child, which has laid such a strong foundation during the stages enacted within the uterus, may result in depressive feelings for the mother and in torture for the newborn child."

For the first months after its birth, therefore, the child's greatest need is direct and immediate bodily contact with its mother. It wants to be in its mother's arms. This stage is called by Margaret Mahler the stage of normal autism. The baby reacts primarily to internal needs and not yet so very much to stimuli from outside. For example, it wakes up because it is hungry. The newborn baby is still turned in on itself, not yet open to experiences from outside, unless these experiences are connected with the

fulfilment of its needs. For Mahler, the newborn baby's most important task is to acquire an equilibrium in the external world. What was self-evident in the uterus now requires a new approach. Needs have to be met and the baby must now give signals whereas before it did not have to do so. The feeling of being welcome in this world and the need for a special place of its own both demand ever-renewed affirmation and in its mother's arms the baby hopes to find such confirmation. The baby gives signals in order to bring its mother close to it. Only in the direct nearness of its mother does the baby experience that it is welcome, that it has a right to its own space, that it is allowed to be there. Up to this point, its mother has been its only link with the surrounding world; she is the one who has provided, nine months long, for all its vital functions and fulfilled all its affective needs via her 'good' uterus.

This 'good' uterus has now let the child go. However, the biological birth is only a first step in the process of disengagement, in taking leave of the symbiotic bond between mother and child. Immediately following its birth, the newborn child has no further need to disengage still further from its mother or to turn towards the world. It needs time to assimilate its physiological birth and orient itself in its new surroundings. It still has to take its place and experience this as 'good'. Only then can it go on to a new step, that of its psychological birth.

After all the effort of the biological birth, what the baby most needs is to maintain contact. According to Solter, it wants to be in its mother's arms all the time. It is in bliss when she carries it with her or when it lies on her belly and hears her trusted heartbeat. It is wholly connectedness when it is at the breast. It is for this reason that the baby is equipped with the means of restoring this contact if it gets the chance. If the baby is laid on the mother's belly, then it 'creeps' instinctively upwards, looking for her breast. It will look for her breast and there find its desire for nourishment gratified, bodily contact with its mother restored. It will experience the complete pleasure of being satisfied in its mother's arms, just as for nine months it has been satisfied inside her body. In its perception of her closeness it will rediscover the secure base it has just left, be it in another form and another fashion. The baby's life goes on, no longer in but with its mother.

"Its place in its mother's arms is the expected place", asserts Liedloff. "In its deepest inner being it knows that this is its place. It corresponds to its continuum, meets its present needs and contributes 'correctly' to its development." In its mother's arms, and in its father's concerned closeness to it, it finds a state of bliss; its expectations are fulfilled, it does not feel it has been left to its fate. Everything it needs at that moment it finds in its mother's arms. After a combined effort, the 'good' uterus has given place to the 'good' breast, and this feels 'good' to the baby. For it, its mother's arms are the 'right' arms.

What does the baby look for in its mother's arms? Besides fulfilment of its primary needs, hunger, thirst, relief from bodily discomfort, the baby also looks in the first place for bodily closeness. In contact with its mother it finds safety and assurance of security. It looks for continuous and immediate gratification of this essential need. It expects its mother to lighten and make bearable the pain to which it is subject because of the frustration of its needs. In the months after the birth the baby needs its mother to take it seriously, to affirm it and to give it the feeling that it is allowed to be there as it is. It needs her to let it know that she is there, that she is available to it and will react to its signals. It expects her to take serious notice of its pain, its fears and its grief. "All painful experiences", says Solter, "are, during this period, solved in its mother's arms." I should like to add to this: on condition that the arms are available and responsive, thus 'good' arms. The child is able to feel whether its mother is taking it seriously not because she tells it but because she lets it feel that the needs it has are allowed to be there and that the signals it gives are heard and followed up by her.

It is the rule for every attachment relationship: letting go is possible only after an intense affective connection has been created. This holds true in the first months of our life. An affective connection in the 'good' uterus makes a 'good' birth possible; a 'good' imprinting after the birth and a secure feeling of attachment in the first months makes possible a new step in becoming disengaged. In other words, the newborn baby can only start to disengage from its mother if it has first of all enjoyed a connectedness which supplies security. In the first months of our lives our symbiotic connection to the uterus cannot yet entirely give way to closeness at a distance. As babies, we are at that moment not yet ready for it. At that moment, distance is still experienced as 'bad'.

For a long period after its birth, a small baby sees its mother as part of itself, just like when it was still in the uterus. Its consciousness is not yet sufficiently developed to allow it to recognise the separate existence of the other. It knows only absolute connectedness, an inseparable being together, even taking the form of being 'identical with the other'. It is for this reason that, after its birth, its pattern of expectation demands that its mother should always be there. It does everything to be close to her. This is sometimes called 'infant tyranny'. Yet a small baby has no feeling of power, no need of power. All it has is those experiences from the uterus from which it has concluded that its mother automatically has the same desires, interest, longings and expectations as itself. It knows no distinction between subject and object, between I and you, between itself and its mother. It has an acute perception of her, just as it did in the uterus. Her joy is its joy, her fear is its fear, her certainty is its certainty and her aversion is its aversion. In relation to itself it can only feel what she feels. Its sensitivity to her attitude in relation to itself is as keen as it is because it knows no distinction between her and itself.

If it is allowed to be in its mother's arms and its needs are fulfilled there, then through these experiences the baby can build up a 'healthy' narcissism. 'Healthy' narcissism is a basic feeling of being allowed to be who you are. If you are loved for who you are, admired and esteemed for your value as yourself, touched and handled as something special; and if you know for sure that your mother is not going to leave you and if you are taken seriously, then you develop a 'healthy' feeling of self-worth and self-love. Alice Miller calls this 'healthy' narcissism; Erikson calls it a basic feeling of trust. When these needs are met in our childhood, we do not need to drag them with us into adult life. When we have been able to develop 'healthy' narcissism we do not later need an 'unhealthy' narcissism for the purpose of proving ourselves and disguising our insecurity behind a facade of pomposity and swank. If we have confidence in ourselves, we do not later need to feel uncertain and inferior. We do not then have to give ourselves extra value through status and power.

To sum up, for the first months after the biological birth we human children are still wholly involved with our mother, with our entire organism, even though we have emerged from her body. We experience no 'I'; our chief experience is a 'we'. The psychological birth will change all this. On the foundation of a safe connectedness with the mother, a feeling of 'I am' gradually develops. Or, as Bradshaw so accurately expresses it: "We need the mirror in the eyes of our mother figure and the echo in her voice in order to discover our 'I am'."

3.2 Disengagement and letting go

As we have seen, after our biological birth we continue as small babies in a symbiotic involvement with our mother. Biologically-speaking, the umbilical cord has been cut but psychologically-speaking that has not yet taken place. The young baby experiences itself as still totally and entirely dependent on its mother. However, its need for immediate contact with its mother decreases in so far as it is satisfactorily met. Gradually, the baby, toddler or infant begins to need to fall back on her only when it cannot cope with a situation by itself. But we have not yet reached that point; first the baby has to be

born anew, this time in a psychological sense. The psychological birth is its discovery of its own existence, apart from its mother, as a distinctive autonomous person.

During the first three to four months of its existence the baby's capacities for interaction with its mother and, more distantly, with its father, as separate people, increase extremely quickly. If during the first weeks the newborn baby has mostly a vague picture of the 'good' breast by means of which it gets food and comfort, after a few months the baby's first concepts of people develop. The 'good' breast then becomes the 'good' mother. On the basis of this first concept of the other, primarily the mother, the child develops its first ideas of itself. In other words, as the contacts with its mother acquire more form and content, its experience of itself also fills out with more form and content. In those contacts, in which it is treated with affection and trust, it develops the concept of a 'good' self. Every experience in which it is treated with irritation, small esteem, rejection or in other damaging ways, contributes to the formation of a self-image as a worthless, unloved, incapable individual. "A dismissive attitude in the parents has the unhappy effect of making the child think that it is not lovable enough, that it is not worth their love and attention. It is totally against its nature to see its parents as 'wrong', and it has therefore to be the child itself who has done something wrong", says Liedloff. Thus the baby forms an image of itself as apart from its mother, but in this case a negative image, a 'bad' I.

Its experience of itself as a separate individual and of the world around it will grow swiftly over the coming months, especially under the influence of motor and sense impressions. A dramatic change will come about in its interest for and interaction with its surroundings. The baby begins to smile more and make more eye contact. It enjoys discovering new things. It emerges from its autistic shell. This heightened interest and interaction strengthen its image of itself as an independent life, as its own 'I', as the beginning of an individual. The symbiosis begins to make way for a distinction between itself and its mother, and a little later between itself and its surroundings.

On the foundation of its first concepts of itself and of the other, the baby will take its first cautious steps in the process of disengagement. It can explore itself and its little world, for it has discovered that it can exist apart from its mother. According to Mahler, the first differentiation has then taken place, a differentiation between itself and the world. With this, the first step has been taken in the process of disengagement we call the psychological birth. On the basis of its own experiences, and its own capacities, the baby can let go of its mother for a little while. It no longer has to be in her arms all the time. It can momentarily do without her immediate and bodily closeness. It can take the first steps towards being by itself.

The psychological birth will have begun in about the fourth to the sixth month, and lasts until the baby is about one year old. It is a period of heightened consciousness of the process of disengagement from the mother, and at the same time the starting point of the baby's own autonomy and individuality. I purposely use the terms 'disengaging' and 'letting go' rather than separation. A 'good' psychological birth is a natural process which links on to the child's continuum and puts the child in a position to loosen its primary bonds, particularly those it has with its mother, without entirely losing them. In a 'bad' psychological birth, the close and immediate bond between mother and child is broken too early and too abruptly, before the child is ready of itself. Then the psychological birth is not a process of disengagement or freeing from, but rather one of cutting-off or rupture. The result is that the baby begins to feel insecure. No acceleration in the child's individuation process takes place but stagnation instead. Through this process the young child does not become self-sufficient but, rather, increasingly insecure.

Letting go, on its own initiative and at the right time, is possible for the baby only when it has felt safe

and secure in its primary attachment and has developed trust in itself and in its 'good' mother.

"Once the stage of complete individuation is reached and the individual is free from these primary ties, he is confronted with a new task: to orient and root himself in the world and find security in other ways than those which were characteristic of his preindividualistic existence", thus Fromm. While the baby's mother, although a little further off, remains its primary orientation, the baby now has to enter into a different relationship with her. Direct dependence and her immediate presence gradually give way to the knowledge that it can always rely on her. It has found out by experience that it can let her go but that in case of insecurity or some other urgent need it can always go back to her. Its trust in itself will not now be as dependent as before upon her immediate availability; it is now able to bear a little distance. This distance, both in time and space, will gradually get bigger. Whereas before its psychological birth it was unable to bear any distance between itself and its mother and wanted only to be in her arms, during the process of the psychological birth, in the second half of the first year of life, it becomes able to tolerate more distance. A whole day without its mother is still eternity for the baby and arouses feelings of abandonment. Until around the age of a year a child is still not conscious enough of time and continuity to know that its mother and father will come back. Disengagement at too early an age results in a basic feeling of insecurity and uncertainty.

This requires a different attitude from the mother. Whereas her direct, immediate availability and responsiveness are an absolute condition during the period before the psychological birth, she can now be present more in the background. She does not take the initiative of seeking contact, but becomes more passive. She is present, but does not impose herself. She can let go of the young child, allow it to take its first steps in the world, go its own way, discover and explore of itself. Her continuing background presence and the fact that it can fly to her for refuge, creates a counterbalance to its first voyages of exploration and give it the feeling that it can enter the big world in safety. Its 'good' mother does not have the feeling that it is rejecting her when it is happy by itself; she has no need to make it stay small. On the contrary, she feels delighted by the discoveries it makes; she encourages it to experience itself as a separate individual. She does not need the baby for her existence; it, on the other hand, still needs her for its existence, although somewhat less than in the first months. Total symbiosis has come to an end. The process towards free, independent life can now begin. Through and following on to the letting go process, individuation has begun. The baby has been born as a being of itself, as an individual in process.

3.3 Autonomy

The disengagement process begins at the psychological birth but does not end there. The motor and intellectual development of the toddler and infant continue. As long as it has developed a basic feeling of security, trust and inner certainty during its first year, then its natural need for independence will grow further. It will want to enlarge its world in accordance with its newly-developed capacities. By experimenting with its strength it will want to discover more of who it is and what it can do. It is curious, wants to learn, and wants to discover and explore the world through ever new experiences.

The infant's natural tendency to experiment goes with its tendency towards caution. Discovering the world also includes learning more about the attendant risks and dangers. If the infant is not over-protected, it will learn what is dangerous and what is not; if it is over-protected it will not discover the dangers for itself and will react according to its parents' fears.

The object of all the child's activities is to discover who it is itself, to do what it expects of itself. It does not need to be made to work by means of pedagogic games. For the child, life is learning and this

learning comes spontaneously as soon as it is ready. Playing is learning; imitation is working. It becomes more and more involved with the world of the adults. In itself it has little need of toys or games to play. It is too busy looking at what its parents are doing, with imitating what they do. It does not want to be distracted but to take part in their world, to join in the adult world and take its place there. In this way it picks up from its elders whatever it is able to grasp.

It is enormously interested in what everyone is doing but has no urge to influence anyone else, let alone compel them. "The toddler's will is his motive force", says Liedloff, and she is right. Its first decisions are taken in the 'correct' manner as long as it is subject to no compulsion and no attempts are made to persuade it. As long as grown-ups do not rob it of its growing independence, the child is well able to look after itself and has an intrinsic feeling of what is right for it and what not. It is not ashamed of what it wants and what it can do. The toddler is also keen to learn and wants to get on. Shame occurs only if it gets the idea that what it does and is capable of is silly and pointless; if its growing independence is called in question. A toddler who is ashamed of itself has acquired this feeling from its parents; not from itself.

The psychological birth results in a basic feeling of autonomy. This autonomy becomes striking when the toddler reaches the phase of saying 'no' or 'me do it' or 'won't'. The autonomy phase has therefore sometimes been called the phase of 'the child's own way', often with a negative aftertaste. Bradshaw calls this phase "bonding under protest". From this it would seem that the toddler will by definition resist its parents and that its need for autonomy will turn against them. However, its growing powers are not directed 'against them': on the contrary, they are directed 'at them'. The child is not against his parents but for its own autonomy. It wants to imitate their lives, incorporate their lives into its own. If it gets the space in which to learn and is allowed to discover where its boundaries lie, then its struggles towards more independence will not direct themselves against its parents.

"Autonomy", to cite the words of Arno Gruen, "is the situation in which you are entirely one with your own feelings and needs. Autonomy is being open to what is positive in existence, to feelings of joy, grief and pain, in short to vitality." Autonomy is not independence in the sense of proving that you count, that you are valid. It is neither a rebellion nor deformed egoism.

Autonomy indicates the experience of being able and allowed to feel for yourself what you feel. The autonomous toddler is independent not only in what it does or does not do but also in its experience of life. It no longer has to experience what its mother experiences; the child itself can now take in impressions, have ideas, experience feelings. Its living is no longer her living, and its mother feels that this is 'good'. Where its mother and father can allow their child to grow into autonomy without feeling threatened by its will, the child's will have the experience that it may go its own way, feel what it feels, even if its perception differs from that of its parents. Parents are able to allow their child's autonomy insofar as they themselves have developed their own autonomy.

What the toddler now needs are reliable but patient parents who set boundaries appropriate to its age. Its parents do not impose their will but provide it with a safe space in which it can discover more about its own willpower. It does not need competition but testing. It wants to test the boundaries of its own capacities, how far it can go. Marking boundaries is not the same as punishment or restriction. Marking boundaries means that the toddler has the experience of its parents protecting it without constant fault-finding; providing safety without constriction; saying 'no' without rejection.

The safe boundaries set by its parents may conflict with its own determination to explore. This does not have to be a problem. Dealing well with conflicts is very important to the toddler's development of 'healthy' autonomy. In its future life its autonomy will certainly collide with that of other people. Its

autonomy is not unlimited. Resolving conflicts teaches it to watch over its own frontiers without forcing itself. Toddlers must see their parents solving their own conflicts in an honest and open way. They must witness an honest relationship in which both parents express their true feelings and reach a solution to their differences of opinion. In the same way that its parents resolve their differences of opinion, the toddler will discover that it can have an opinion different from that of its parents - about what may be done and what may not be done - and that it can be cross with them without losing them. It must have the experience that conflicts are allowed to exist and can be resolved without judgment or rejection.

The disengagement process in the toddler expresses itself in a growing autonomy. It wants to discover its own capacities, in its own way, its own time and at its own chosen moment. Letting go on the part of its parents means that their role recedes more and more into the background where they continue to provide their child with a safe base. The safe base is there for the toddler to fall back on in case of need.

Part II:

The misrecognised Child in ourselves

CHAPTER 4

Disturbed early attachment

"People who have never been loved will never be able to tell what happened to them as embryos or tiny babies. The inarticulate early months get no further chance to speak later on in life."

PETER SCHELLENBAUM

4.1 Misrecognition of the child before and after birth

"To be able to perceive and satisfy its needs, a child's parents must establish an affirmative, responsible, and caring relationship to it. If the child's natural, primal needs are satisfied, it will be endowed with a fundamental feeling of security, trust, and vitality. Together these will form the foundation for a positive ability to form human attachments", thus far Stettbacher. This links on to my observation that the satisfaction of primary needs is an essential condition for healthy development. Being and continuing to be oneself is possible only where people have been brought up in an atmosphere in which needs are taken seriously and satisfied. Pre-birth and newborn children have the biological expectation consequent to the developmental history of the human race, that their primary needs will be satisfied by their progenitors. It corresponds to their continuum that they should rely on their parents to satisfy their needs.

To the extent that parents, both mother and father, deny their unborn and very young child the satisfaction of its primary needs, the child will feel insecure, its vitality will be impaired and it will be unsure of itself. When the tiny human being receives no response to the signals it sends out, for example calling or crying, then it is filled with increasing tide of pain and terror from which it is powerless to save itself. It will feel misrecognised. Yet it will experience and feel this to be its own shortcoming. No small baby, no young child, can grasp lack of response from its mother or father. It will feel it has been rejected and abandoned. This rejection and this misrecognition lead to a basic

feeling of abandonment, of having been left to one's fate, of having been banished: there is no one to fall back on. "We should not scruple", asserts Peter Schellenbaum, "to see insufficient love [in childhood GS] as the cause of all symptoms of abandonment." The issue here is not simply one of being actually left alone. Misrecognised children may actually never be left alone, they may even appear to be much fussed over, whereas in reality they are not loved at all. Lack of love, sometimes difficult to detect from outside and which the child cannot put into words either, always produces a feeling of abandonment. It is the parents' responsibility to build up a loving relationship with their child. For the child, the important thing is that it should experience the parents' love not that its parents should imagine they are loving it. Misrecognition happens where the parents are more preoccupied with themselves than with the child; where parents react out of their own emotional neediness and not on the basis of the needs of their child. Their intentions are often good but are soon shattered by their own unsatisfied childish wishes and desires. You cannot give your child what you yourself did not receive in your own childhood.

Where the fulfilment of primary, affective needs such as needs for security, support, belonging and affirmation is lacking, the result is misrecognition. All violations of the primary integrity of the unborn or very young child occur through the denial of its feelings, desires and needs. Through neglect, through threats and demands, through long delay before its needs are satisfied, through isolation and seeming rejection, through humiliation, through a shortage of 'good' love and attention, the young child becomes overloaded, confused and disturbed.

Among the ways in which the very young child expresses its feeling of being misrecognised and held in contempt are motorial restlessness, inconsolable crying and increased demands for attention. Recently, in Prague, I witnessed the fundamental misrecognition of a child of about 10 months. The child was screaming with fear and panic, apparently because of the pressure of the crowd around its pushchair. Its father refused to take it in his arms; worse still, he forbade either his wife or an older woman to do so; the child was to stay sitting in its pushchair. Moreover, the way the father placed himself behind the pushchair clearly revealed his anger and his urge for revenge. The whole event was saturated with abuse of power. The child must learn to stop screaming, in spite of its fear; the child must learn to be obedient, in spite of its fear; the child must learn to be quiet, in spite of its fear; the child must learn to adapt, in spite of its fear. The child probably did at some point stop screaming. A child who is not heard finally stops crying because there is no response. The misrecognition then changes into adaptation. If a misrecognised child finds out early in life that its only hope is to adapt to the demands of its environment, then misrecognition is complete. The adaptation makes it even harder for the adult to get in touch with these early childhood experiences. Adapted children who have learnt not to cry, mostly have the impression of having had a 'happy' childhood.

If the child experiences too little real cuddling, it will continue to long to restore its bodily and affective contact with its mother. It will go on demanding her attention. It will go on looking for what it never had; it will go on searching for its lost happiness. Parents who essentially misrecognise their children, often have 'difficult', 'annoying' or 'awkward' children. Misrecognised children demand the attention they have not been given. In Liedloff's words: "Children may put an enormous amount of energy into demanding attention; not because they need attention in itself but because this is how they indicate that a particular experience is not acceptable and plead with their care-giver to alter the situation. A lifelong urge to go on demanding attention is thus no more than the logical sequel of the expression of the very first demands for attention, until unceasingly demanding the attention which was in the first instance refused, becomes an object in itself. The type of parental attention which results in more and more urgent signals from the child is thus clearly the wrong sort of attention."

If the search pursued by the misrecognised child does not lead to restoration of affective contact, then

the child will suppress or distort its needs. It develops the feeling that its primary needs are incorrect and its signals wrong. It is painful to go on longing for something which is never forthcoming. Continuing to send out signals which are not heard strengthens the feeling of rejection and misrecognition. In order to avoid this pain, which gnaws away at the organism's survival mechanism, it stops sending out signals. It ceases to cry, for example, but becomes depressive; it no longer asks for attention at home, is even a 'model' child, but totally intolerable at school. The suppression and distortion of fundamental needs have destructive consequences for the child. If misrecognition happens on a large scale it may lead even to serious psychopathology.

So, in my eyes, the misrecognised child is a child who has not seen its fundamental, primal needs and desires more or less fulfilled, at the moment that it signalled its need. The absence of such satisfaction leads to psychic problems. The younger the child was when misrecognition took a structural form, the longer and more profound the price it will have to pay in later life. So misrecognition does not have an effect only at the moment when it occurs but also throughout the subsequent life of the person concerned. As adults, we carry with us the misrecognised child that was formed before we were born and in our earliest childhood. In many of us, therefore, the feeling of constant rejection can be traced back to concrete, non-imaginary life experiences dating from our earliest youth. The need for continuing affirmation, the insatiable need for bodily contact and sex, addiction to eating and drinking, loss of contact with our physical needs, all are symptoms of early childhood misrecognition. "But for all this," declares Bradshaw, "if the needs you had in babyhood were not fulfilled, you yourself also have a feeling of shame; a feeling somewhere deep inside you that something is wrong with you." Shame such as this may cause us to blush deeply throughout our lives whenever we desire anything, consciously or unconsciously or are obliged to take up cudgels for ourselves.

4.2 Prenatal detachment

At conception

Misrecognition of the child may occur long before its birth, often even at conception. At the implantation of the fertilised egg cell, the seeds of detachment may also be implanted if there is no affective investment in the conception and the womb is not prepared to provide a 'warm' welcome. If the uterus is not prepared to receive the new life and the journey to the receptive surface where it is to be embedded has no affective accompaniment, then the very first stage of attachment will not take place. If there is a cold reception at the moment when attachment should take place, this will lead to imprintation of the first feelings of abandonment, the first detachment. If the parents, in their sexual contact, did not envisage the coming into being of their child in an affective manner, then the first fundamental attachment will be missing. Instead of affirmation of its 'coming into existence', of its welcome to life, of delight in its youthful being, comes cold, distance, loneliness and feelings of abandonment, a feeling of being unwanted. "What makes us, then, produce unwanted offspring?" sighs Stettbacher. "In these times," he continues, "everyone who is fertile should be conscious of what he or she wants from a sexual encounter. Is it an erotic adventure? Or the desire to conceive a child in love? If the aim is to have a child, then this should be done in full knowledge of our responsibility for the new life we are creating. It is a crime to conceive a child in ignorance or as a plaything." Or citing Veldman's words: "There is a world of difference between loving reception: 'receiving' a child, and the rationalised 'getting' of a child. Developments in the field of artificial procreation are having the effect that the 'getting' of a child is deteriorating more and more into a technical operation: something one 'has a right to'. Parents' rights to 'have' a child are unassailable in our societies. But where are the rights of the child to its natural parents? Where are the child's rights to have affectively present parents?"

Now that we know and can find out so much more about what the child experiences from conception onwards, how it feels and feelingly reacts in the womb at early stages, we must ask ourselves what the affective consequences of these experiences can be for the child. How does it feel to be the unplanned child, the artificially conceived child, the lent out child, the child of a surrogate mother, or the manipulated child? I am aware that my ideas, which have been shaped on the basis of the natural expectations of the child which is to be conceived and which wants to be welcomed affectively, may arouse strong emotion. Medical science has indeed accomplished a miracle: everyone can 'have' a child! The 'produced' child exists. From my conclusions on and feeling for the significance of prenatal attachment, I am led to grave doubts about long-term effects on the well-being of unplanned, artificially conceived, lent out or manipulated children. These doubts have not been inspired by social conservatism but by an intense involvement with the affective rights of the unborn and postnatal child.

In our society, the question of the psychological motivation of both mother and father cannot be raised. Are man and wife up to receiving a child? Do their conscious and unconscious wishes and motives imply serious risks to the optimal human development of the child they expect? Where their principal motive for bringing a child into the world is to affirm themselves through producing a child; where the unborn child is designed to add value to their own existence or where the future child is destined as a disguise for their own misrecognition, then this will interfere with the affective fusion of egg and sperm and with the affective reception in the womb. Particularly in the case of women in an unsatisfying partner relationship, women with disturbed affective relationships with their own mothers and women suffering from serious anxieties and cares, the risk of damaged attachment is greatly enhanced for the future child.

During pregnancy

W.E. Freud says: "The quality of the woman's emotional investment in her pregnancy depends on how far she has come towards complete womanhood." Her emotional ripeness for pregnancy stems not from her adult years but from her childhood, when her own affective development began. For the father too, his investment in the quality of his contribution to the conception and pregnancy in his partner is dictated by his affective capacities to 'give'. The basis of this is also laid in childhood. Where the man and the woman are not ready to beget and to bear then the child's existence takes root in bad soil. The first and fundamental attachment is missing. Prenatal development must provide the basis for the later intellectual, affective and social flourishing. A secure attachment in a 'good' womb is the basis for this. The foetal child, during its life from conception to birth, runs the risk of suffering interference in its affective development. Interference with the intimate feeling bond with its mother has a damaging influence on its affective development and particularly on its basic feeling of trust.

We have already seen that the foetus is capable of experience. At the beginning of its life, a human being is one and all body. "Our perceptions and the resultant reactions are governed by the senses. These signal heat and cold, softness or hardness, sound and silence, light and dark. Good and bad are still synonymous with pleasure and displeasure", thus Stettbacher. The foetus experiences its environment and thereby the 'good' or 'bad' uterus. It can already be damaged in its integrity by overloads which affect its sense of well-being. As it is still entirely dependent on its perceptions these will determine its reactions; it cannot reflect on or attempt to understand them. If it experiences fear and pain, it cannot interpret this overload. It simply becomes confused.

The mutual interaction between mother and unborn child grows with the months. In this mutual

interaction the starting point lies in the woman's affective readiness and the support she receives from her partner. Her 'communication' with the prenatal child will influence its mood and thereby its communication. Vervy and Kelly, as we have already seen, distinguish three channels of communication between mother and unborn child. A communication channels may silt up or even become entirely blocked and the prenatal channels of communication are no exception. The mother's attitude to the unborn child is of definitive significance. The more combative, ambivalent and rejecting the mother's attitude to her prenatal child, the more overload the foetus experiences. Such an attitude on the part of the mother is often unconscious. The more equable the mother and the more focused on the child, the more equable will be the newborn baby.

At every level of communication there are recognised risk factors which have a negative influence on the bond between mother and unborn child.

The physiological communication between mother and prenatal child can be disturbed and thus weaken the prenatal bond. By the transmission of hormones, the fundamental anxieties and chronic stress of the mother pressurize the unborn child's basic feeling of safety and security. We are not talking about women who get worried now and again. But intense, continuous anxiety in the mother will be dangerous. The attacks on the child by the stress hormones she produces will result in a state of heightened arousal in the foetus. Such 'overcharged' arousal upsets its equilibrium. Research into prenatal stress reveals the following consequences for the child: sleep problems, motorial restlessness, high irritability, lower intelligence, excessive crying, apathy, low weight and growth rate. After birth, overactive and stressed foetuses are more fearful of aggression in contacts with other children; they are more reserved in seeking contact with their peers. They are insecurely attached. Excessive alcohol intake and the use of drugs may also be qualified as forms of physiological communication of the mother with her child. The damaging alterations which may be brought about by these substances in and round the foetus's immediate home, are likely to worry it. Active and passive smoking are also damaging to the physical and psychic well-being of the foetus. Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen in the mother's blood and without sufficient supplies of oxygen the growth of the foetus is reduced. Research has shown that, seven years after their birth, the children of mothers (and fathers) who smoke have more difficulties in learning to read and more psychological problems than other children of the same age. So the consequences of smoking by a pregnant mother continue to be perceptible even much later in the child's life.

Behavioural communication begins to be clearly noticeable as soon as the prenatal child starts to kick. Many of the behavioural patterns used by the woman in communication with her child are very subtle and seem superficially quite ordinary. Even the way a woman moves is a type of behavioural communication; her child can feel the emotional mood which lies at the root of her movements. Is she, for example, in a hurry and tense? Then its tension also increases. Research has shown that foetuses whose mothers had attended a sound-blasting rock concert exhibited stress reactions for days afterwards: they were much more fidgety, kicked more and their sleeping-waking rhythm was upset.

As I have already remarked, feeling communication is perhaps the most difficult to recognise. There are affective situations or attitudes which have a clear biological component, such as stress, anxiety and anger. The woman's body then produces hormones which have their effect on the foetus. However, communication of feeling extends further. Even affective situations and attitudes which have no clear biological component may influence the unborn child. One example is the complex and subtle emotions of ambivalence. The woman is not necessarily aware of her ambivalence to her pregnancy, and it would appear impossible to point to a biological component of ambivalence. Yet it is as good as certain that her ambivalence has a negative effect on the prenatal attachment. The affective radar of the unborn child is so sensitive that it is able to receive even the weakest vibrations

sent out by its mother's emotions. Thus, a woman who feels rather cool about her pregnancy and her unborn child, will transmit these feelings of distance to her child. Her child registers the distancing and the attachment is disturbed.

I want to emphasise again that it seems that negative emotions which occur now and then, or a few days of pressure and tension, will not have a persistent negative effect on the growing reciprocal communication and attachment. The unborn child has a certain resilience which enables it to withstand such influences, provided that it can continue to perceive its mother's affective involvement. When there is real danger for its affective development is if the mother's anxieties and tensions or her ambivalence or cold approach acquire a chronic character. The prenatal child may then start feeling isolated from her because its psychological needs are being persistently neglected. All the unborn child wants is love and attention. As long as these are forthcoming then prenatal attachment follows of itself. The emotional patterns which exist before birth are to a marked degree definitive for the creation of the mother-child relationship after the birth.

4.3 Birth and trauma

It will now have become clear that, thanks to our knowledge of the child's prenatal development, we may abandon the idea that the child scarcely notices the birth event. Yet we are far from knowing everything there is to be known about the psychosomatic birth process. Whether or not every birth is by definition traumatic is still under discussion. Janus claims that this is so, and also assumes that the trauma takes place both at the somatic, physiological level and the psychological level. For him, the birth trauma on the physical plane hinges, banally enough, on a single missing centimetre. The diameters of a baby's head and of the pelvic opening at its widest, both measure around ten centimetres. At least one extra centimetre is required to allow for the soft parts. This is supposed to have come about through biological and evolutionary processes. For this reason it is claimed that there is not enough room for the child to have a good birth. It is held that it experiences pressure on the brain and lack of oxygen. As soon as the waters have broken immense force is exerted on the body. All this is held to be the basis of the birth trauma in every human being.

However, it seems to me illogical that mother and child should be unprepared for a natural birth. I therefore disagree with Janus's reasoning. In my opinion, birth does not necessarily have to be traumatic. I agree that many people have had traumatic births. But the reason for that, as far as I can see, does not lie in a natural impossibility of a 'good' birth, but in the way in which pregnancy and birth are approached in our Western 'civilisation', and in the attitude of expectant parents to their child's birth. I will come back to this later in this section.

As we have already seen, natural birth must be understood to be an overwhelming event for the child; an event for which it needs the support of its parents. When the perinatal child comes into the world, after living for nine months "in paradise"... in protected dialogue with its mother" as Stettbacher puts it, the event will surely be accompanied by violent and deeply moving emotions. Stettbacher even claims that we measure every emotional event in our lives against the standard of our birth experience; as soon as some emotion comes up the birth experience is recalled to life. I do not know whether our birth weighs so heavily in the scales of our life. What I do know is that a traumatic birth has a long-lasting and deeply felt negative influence on our further development. In other words, whether the intense experience of being born becomes a negative stress, depends on the way the child is treated during the time that it is being born. All too often, alas, our birth is a brutal, painful expulsion from paradise. Or was that paradise already no longer such a paradise? Sometimes it is, to cite Stettbacher once again, "deliverance from hell into the torture chamber of the delivery room."

A child who is born in a traumatic manner will not forget this; the child's unconscious will experience its traumatic expulsion as an experience of being disowned. Where the birth becomes a process of torture, accompanied by heavy emotions, by terror and pain, the child is at a loss to find any explanation within its own natural patterns of expectation. It has as yet no concepts which might allow it to grasp this monstrous event. "The infant feels itself mistreated, pushed and pulled about, squashed, beaten, hung up by its heels, choked and strangled - and this, by strange, alien powers. ... Once our bodies have registered these horrendous traumatisations, it is not surprising that the experience becomes for us the epitome of hell, banned to the unconscious as the terror of all terrors, stored as a warning of mortal agony." This is Stettbacher's description.

The question which arises is: how does it come about that so many births which might take place in a natural manner nevertheless become so traumatic? I have the idea that there are two main reasons for this: the medicalisation of birth in our culture and the attitude of the woman to her pregnancy and the birth of her child. There are birth methods, such as the Leboyer method, which ensure a non-violent accompaniment to a natural birth. Yet most traditional hospital births, - why give birth in a hospital? having a baby is not an illness? - may be characterised as traumatic. A growing body of research in the area of prenatal psychology is indicating that children who appear happiest and learn most quickly, have three things in common: a natural birth around full term, a peaceful place of birth (usually at home) and the fact that they stayed close to their mothers immediately after their birth. The increasing medicalisation of birth increases the risks of psychological damage. Medical technology may be relevant in emergencies, but must be used within the limits of the baby's right to be treated as a fully human person. Anything more tends to be simply damaging. Having a baby is a manifestation of life, not a case of illness.

Verny and Kelly distinguish five categories of psychological risk at birth. Ordinary, uncomplicated births through the vagina belong to the category attended by the smallest psychological risk. As we saw before, this natural way of being born offers many advantages, in particular the strengthening of a firm bond of feeling between mother and child and between father and child. Caesarian births may have a long-lasting negative effect on the child's psychological well-being. It appears from psychotherapeutic practice that adults born by caesarian section retain a deep and often unassuageable longing for bodily contact. It seems that this may be attributed to the fact that during its birth the baby was deprived of its intense experience of physical contact. Giving birth without pain also falls within this risk group. More psychological risks are associated with breech births, and minor, shortlived difficulties with the umbilical cord fall into the same category. Babies from the first group are at greater risk of experiencing learning difficulties and those from the second are more likely to have swallowing and speech problems such as stuttering. The category at highest psychological risk is that the category of premature births. Being born too soon, that is to say, before the prenatal child ready, either physically or emotionally, may cause enormous damage to a baby. What is meant here is not a baby born two or three days early, but babies born weeks or months too early. In this group, risks of later emotional difficulties are greatest, accentuated of course by the separation which follows birth when the baby is raised in an incubator.

Besides the traumatising influence of birth methods, a further important possible cause of trauma at birth must be recognised in the woman's attitude to her pregnancy and to giving birth. Her attitude has a great influence on way she will give birth and on any risks to the child associated with that event. An ambivalent attitude to her coming motherhood, a consciously or unconsciously disturbed relationship with her partner and great apprehension are the complicating factors for a woman who is not 'ready' for motherhood. She has more chance of psychological problems during her pregnancy and there is a greater risk of complications during the birth. For example, a woman who is not yet

ready or not yet mature enough to take on the care of a child, may unconsciously hinder her body from pushing the baby out. This will of course hinder the birth process because it is a process which goes best when the body, mind and heart of the mother are focused on supporting her child through its birth. For example, a woman who cannot bear any pain either physical or emotional, will resent her child during the birth because of what it is doing to her. She may require the child to make up to her all its life for the labour pains she suffered at its birth.

If we look at birth as a process of interaction between mother and child, then we see that the birth process may lead either to a closer or a more distant affective bond. Veldman sees natural birth as a conversation. The mother's message to the child is 'you are fully grown'; the child experiences this as a sign that it can take a further step under its own steam and seizes the initiative to be born. At the birth, the wishes of mother and child coincide. Both of them now want to interact with each other on another basis. At a 'good' birth both want to set in motion the first step towards independent life for the child. The mother feels proud and 'relieved'. She has completed her first task.

However, if, through inadequate psychological adaptation, the mother loses contact with her child during its birth, then the child comes 'alone into the world', without support, without protection, in a single word: detached. There is an abrupt break with the prenatal symbiotic phase, a break which is not mended. In fact, if, during the birth, the woman is focused on her self and what she is living through to the exclusion of her child, then there is more risk of the birth becoming a detachment instead of establishing a closer bond of feeling. It is very important to the child and to the mother that she should give birth to her child naturally, in full consciousness and on the basis of her own free choice.

4.4 Lack of personal ground

Through the prenatal attachment and a natural birth, followed by direct bodily contact after the birth (the moment of imprinting), the foundations are laid for a feeling of trust. Such trust is, as we have already seen, oriented not only to the outer world but also and most of all to the child's own experience. The unborn child who experiences that the uterus in which it is growing is a 'good' and thus safe uterus, develops trust. The response to its affective needs gives it the feeling that it is being taken seriously. From the fact that its needs are respected the prenatal child concludes that its needs are justified, that it may experience what it experiences. It feels recognised in its affective needs. This is the beginning of a basic feeling of trust in itself as a living, experiencing, feeling, direction-giving Self. This is how the foundations are laid for a healthy personal ground.

Misrecognition and mispraisal of the fundamental affective needs of the prenatal and newly-born child lead to the absence of a personal ground. The earliest experiences before, during and immediately after birth of being 'repudiated', 'not wanted', 'rejected', lead to an ungrounded existence. The absence of the first prenatal and perinatal attachment has a fundamental and damaging influence on the basic feeling of trust. Without trust in itself and in its own organism, a child cannot, psychologically speaking, survive. Without trust it cannot grow or realise itself according to its own capacities. The best it can do is adapt and alienate its own self. Such very early rejection lays the foundations for every later psychological difficulty. Fear and insecurity replace trust in the other; emotional poverty and emptiness replace trust in itself. The world is inimical and threatening and the child has no power of its own to wield against these terrors.

The adult with an ungrounded Child in himself may appear to be well-adapted; he seems to be able to function well, and yet he does not 'feel' good. His relationships will tend to be superficial and he will

never be able really to experience his feelings. He will do his best to hold the fort and yet will never be able to deal with conflicts or recognise boundaries. Anxiety is at the root of the ungrounded existence. Once again, this anxiety goes back to very early misrecognition and mispraisal of the affective needs of the prenatal and newborn child.

On the basis of his psychotherapeutic experience, Janus makes the following assumptions: "Early and even the very earliest experiential situations are not 'primitive', 'soulless' or 'reflexive-unconscious' but on the contrary intensive, emotional and comprehensive." Following Veldman, this experiential situation may be called 'affective consciousness'. Disturbance in the development of the 'affective consciousness' produces a basic anxiety. On this point I should like to formulate the following psychological 'law': in the life of the child, born or unborn, the earlier the frustration of the affective consciousness occurs, the more extensive the consequences in later life. Or, the earlier the frustration, the smaller the personal ground. This means of course not simply superficial frustration but fundamental affective misrecognition and mispraisal of the child.

In many of the anxieties experienced by children and in the dreams of adults, prenatal and perinatal experiences may recur. For example, fear of being shut in when tight clothing is pulled over the head may be recognised as an unconscious repetition of fear at birth. The fear of being torn and devoured by a wild beast, a frequent fear, may also point to a birth fear. Another typical repetition of birth fear is fear of being captured by a spider, and then bundled up and strangled in its web. The fear felt by many children of losing their parents or by adults of losing their partner, may have its roots in an abrupt separation caused by a difficult birth in which the child was not gathered up and consoled by its mother. Changes in life may arouse neurotic fears and difficulties simply because any change recalls the original experience of a traumatic birth. Neurotic symptoms seem to speak a perinatal dialect.

The Hungarian-American psychotherapist Stanislav Grof has specialised in the diagnosis of perinatal experiences in his clients' symptoms. By studying experiences with LSD he was able to discover the link between birth experiences and later neurotic symptoms in adults. On the grounds of these observations he came to the conclusion that differing psychological disturbances which may be manifested in later life belong to differing stages in the birth process. Without at this point going into the details of his theory and treatment, I should nonetheless like to include a couple of his remarks. He observes that a remarkable number of symbolic perinatal clues occur in the language used by clients suffering from anxiety and depression. 'I see no way out', 'I feel torn apart inside', 'I shall never get it together', 'I always have to do everything on my own', 'I feel as if I'm numb'. Discoveries in prenatal psychology and in psychotherapy are making it clearer and clearer that all sorts of psychological and psychosomatic complaints and problems have prenatal and perinatal roots. The English theologian and psychotherapist Frank Lake starts from the assumption that negative involvement of the mother with the foetus develops an emotional distress syndrome. Under emotional stress the foetus attempts to deal with its overwhelming feelings by shutting out the overload and emotional pain. It is the same sort of psychological mechanism as is often found in severer form in adults with serious psychological difficulties.

It is now in principle possible to distinguish between prenatally and perinatally caused psychosomatic symptom forming. As the birth process is followed through in the imagination, the psychosomatic symptoms arising from it can be directly derived. Chronic tiredness, shortness of breath, neck and shoulder trouble, asthma, dizziness, headache and migraine may be linked to birth experiences. Janus gives an illustration of this connection in the case of what he calls a 'heart neurosis'. In this case, when partings are imminent, a person is suddenly seized by a deadly fear that his heart will stop. According to Janus, such an attack of anxiety should be seen in the context of postnatal dependence and

disengagement conflicts. Because of their fear of separation or threatened separation, people with a 'heart neurosis' enter into strong relations of dependence, in which they seek the security of the prenatal and perinatal attachment. When these relations of dependence are discussed or when separation really occurs through the death of the partner, a recapitulation of the traumatic fear of separation during the birth may be experienced. On this point it seems to me that Janus should be extremely careful to distinguish between experiences during the biological birth and experiences during the 'psychological' birth. For although the psychological birth is the period when the first steps towards individuation are taken, it is at the same time a period of heightened vulnerability to separation. The 'heart neurosis' might therefore date largely from the 'psychological' birth and not necessarily from the biological birth.

Another field in which the effects of prenatal and perinatal experiences betray themselves is that of suicide. More and more frequently, in the literature on suicide, connection is being made between the way the suicide takes place and the way the birth took place. If the birth took place with violent intervention then the means used in the later suicide will tend to be violent. If the birth was accompanied by the use of narcotics the suicide will tend to choose a consciousness-deadening method. From this, Janus concludes that a person's wish to commit suicide is fed by a longing to reunite with the primitive mother being. In this sense, suicide and attempted suicide are deranged attempts to reunite and be reborn in order to renew oneself in a situation from which there seems to be no escape. This feeling of there being no future may in turn be rooted in prenatal and perinatal damage.

Prenatal detachment may cause the bottom to fall out of a child's life. When serious prenatal detachment has taken place, it may lead to serious psychological difficulties. Serious prenatal misrecognition and mispraisal can lead to an entirely ungrounded existence in which fundamental pleasure in life and its meaning are missing. Living then becomes survival.

Insecurity and uncertainty

*"Your expectation was turned into waiting
and watching.
You learnt to make your moves counter-moves,
because what you expected was not what they expected.
You quickly found yourself in a world full of uncertainty,
doubt, fear for your existence."*

STEVEN DE BATSELIER

5.1 The vulnerable child

In chapter one I tried to make clear the importance of a secure attachment. A securely attached child feels sure of itself, does not cling, is full of initiative and shows no fear; it is ready to go exploring without tension and if tension increases it runs back to retrieve the closeness of the trusted child-rearer. In short, it feels secure and confident. We have seen that available and responsive attachment figures create a secure base which allows the child to go out and explore its own possibilities and its environment. If it has been provided with a secure base it is able to flourish of itself. In this chapter I want to explore what happens when there is no secure base, but in consequence, disturbed affective, cognitive and social development.

All sorts of reasons underlie the inability of parents to be available or responsive. How does it come about that parents are unable to offer their child a secure base? Certain obstacles are of a superficial nature and would be quite easy to remove or alter. There are the opinions and ideas which flow into the ear of the child-rearer and which are handed down from generation to generation. Principles of upbringing are also lifted out of popular literature. Liedloff writes: "In 'advanced' countries it is the custom to supply a book on baby-care as soon as a child is expected. It may be the fashion at that moment to let the baby cry till its heart is broken and it gives up, goes numb and becomes a 'good baby'; or to pick it up when the mother feels ready and has nothing else to do... Whatever it is, the young mothers read and obey; they do not trust in their own inborn capacities, do not trust the baby's 'reasons' when it gives its ever too clear signals...." Critical reflection on such opinions would bring the child-rearer in closer contact with her own sound intuition and make her less of a follow-my-leader.

A more essential reason for not being available is to be found in the break in the attachment relationship incurred at separation. Premature separation of the child from the attachment figure not only upsets the child but also has negative consequences for the parents. The child feels insecure and uncertain and the parents' responsiveness is dealt a blow. For example, mothers whose babies were in incubators after their birth reported that by the time the babies came out of the incubators the mothers' feelings towards them had changed. They felt they were more at a distance, that it was less easy to adapt to the child, that they were less intensely involved. The break in the contact with their child had made them less responsive.

Finally, a serious and far-reaching cause of non-responsiveness is to be found in the tensions and emotional problems of the parents themselves. Although I shall be treating this in greater detail later on, I do not want to go on without remarking that the emotional problems in question stem largely from the parents' own childhoods. As a result of their own earlier misrecognition, parents may themselves be suffering emotionally and may try to use their child to compensate for what is missing. A child seems to be exceptionally well-designed to make up for an emotional lack. Child-rearers who, in their own childhood, had parents who were not very responsive to them, will find it very difficult to be responsive to their own children. Because the mother starts from what she now thinks she needs for herself, and is not aware of the fact that these needs are based on what she needed in the past and did not receive, she is unable to start from the needs of the child.

Available and responsive attachment figures help to create a secure base and a positive affective development and this favours the entire personal growth. When there is no security for the child whose very nature it is to attach itself, then its attachment starts off as an anxious attachment relationship. Bowlby understands an anxious attachment relationship as an affective bond between the child and its attachment figure in which the child is not certain that it can rely on and trust this figure, a bond in which the child has the feeling that it may lose this figure and in which it has no base to fall back on. Trust must then give way to suspicion, to watching out. The certainty of protection in case of need is lost. Security gives way to anxiety and uncertainty.

There are two forms of anxious attachment, the anxiety avoidance form and the defence against anxiety form. In the first form the child becomes more and more distant from its attachment figure; it seeks little contact even at times of stress. Even after a separation, for example time spent in hospital or a holiday taken by the parents, the child keeps its distance. It does not seek to be close to its attachment figures, but in fact avoids them. The child exhibits anxiety-avoiding behaviour. The balance is pushed towards exploration. This exploration is of poorer quality than that of the securely-attached child. The anxiety-avoiding child is often wrongly considered to be exhibiting 'early independence', especially because its behaviour does not usually raise problems. Its limited feeling responses usually go unmarked. Near where we live there is a child of about eighteen months who, in my opinion, is exhibiting anxiety-avoiding behaviour. When it comes home with its mother and father in the evenings, after its day in the creche, it always runs away from them. No sooner is the child let out of the car than it runs about everywhere except in the direction of its parents. When the father or mother is carrying it, it looks around in all directions and struggles to be put down. It gives the impression of being a child full of initiative but I think that on a deeper level there may be a weakened affective bond. The child appears not to feel secure with its parents and therefore runs away from them. It avoids its attachment figures, does not look for closeness, would rather go off by itself.

The child who fearfully clings to its parents is exhibiting anxiety-defensive behaviour. It has a strong tendency to look for closeness. Such a child does not want to leave its parents; it is often called a 'mother's child', because it clings to mother's skirts. Anxiety-defensive children cannot in fact do without their parents' proximity. They therefore have a tendency to keep their world small. They will not be quick to take up something new, but prefer to watch where the cat jumps. They feel happiest with what is familiar to them. If a defensive child has the feeling that it is being let down by its parents then it does not attempt to make contact. It prefers not to be confronted all over again with possible separation or rejection. The defensive child takes no risks; it shuts itself off by showing no interest in its attachment figures; it does not let its trusted figures near it because it wants to prevent the pain of threatened loss of contact. The child refuses contact in a painful experience,

particularly after a separation. It is ambivalent in its relationships. Neither in itself nor in its relationships does it find the security which would enable it to explore. This is in contrast to the anxiety-avoiding child who nonetheless finds enough of a base in itself to go exploring on its own.

So how does the child's first attachment relationship relate to its development, cognitive and social? Or in other words: what are the consequences of a 'bad' attachment relationship? The securely-attached child is socially more competent. In its dealings with its parents we discover that the securely-attached infant cooperates with its upbringers in a better and more positive manner than the insecurely-attached child. There is a good balance between looking for closeness and exploring. In comparison with its peers, the securely-attached child is more social; it is better at 'playing together', takes more notice of the others. The insecurely-attached child has rather unstable relationships with others during the first years of its life. It is afraid of others, keeps more at a distance, finds it more difficult to share its feelings, feels vulnerable. Securely-attached children seem to be able to relate to strange adults more easily than insecurely-attached children. The latter are more troubled by fear of strangers.

Securely-attached children are also more competent in non-social fields. They are singled out by the quality of their exploration. They are more curious, more interested in learning new things. They want to test the bounds of their own capacities. They are persistent in striving towards their own ends. In solving a problem they show more enthusiasm and attack the task with more concentration. They possess more ego-resilience, which means that they have the capacity to react with either flexibility or resistance, according to the circumstances. The anxiously-attached children, by contrast, show more signs of ego-brittleness; they are rigid and have a certain incapacity to adapt. They prefer to avoid new things and so have more difficulty in learning. They are quicker to feel uncertain and have little trust in their own capacities. Securely-attached children also have the capacity to be open or closed as may be necessary. They are able to express impulses, feelings and longings or to refrain from doing so when their well-being would be affected. We call this, ego-control. In anxiously-attached children we find two extremes. Anxiety-avoiders seem to be too controlled; they try to keep their expressions of feeling under lock and key. For in their experience their most important attachment figures cannot deal with their feelings. Anxiety-defensive children, by contrast, show lack of control and let themselves go too quickly. These children have not experienced sufficient secure boundaries with their parents. These two extremes are also to be found in adults.

Securely-attached children are also better at cognitive activities. They assimilate information more quickly and have fewer learning difficulties. They have good concentration because they are keen to learn new things. The development of their talents goes faster and they have a larger vocabulary and can express themselves better. Under stress they are less troubled by an inner turbulence which then translates into motorial problems; for them, stress is not something which knocks you off balance but instead a challenge. Secure children are not hyperactive.

Thus, secure attachment not only has a positive effect on the affective flourishing of the infant and toddler but also on its social and intellectual capacities. Insecurely-attached children are as it were handicapped in all areas and will not find it easy to make this up.

5.2 Aggravating circumstances

There are various circumstances which upset still more the building up of a secure attachment relationship and thereby trouble the child's further development. I want to deal here with the following aggravating circumstances: separation and threatened separation, spoiling and over-

protection and the offer of control patterns.

Separation and threat of separation

Chief among the possible causes of disturbed attachment are 'separation' and 'threat of separation'. The concept of 'separation' is not strange to our society but is usually used in a particular context in connection with two partners in a marriage splitting up. Yet there are additional forms of separation which can have deep consequences for the emotional, social and intellectual development of the young or older child. Separation always means a rupture in the bond with the attachment figure. This rupture may be definitive or simply temporary but the separation is always of such a nature as to have an emotional effect on the child. Whether a short-lived separation has a permanent effect on the basic feeling of security will depend on how the child lives out the separation. For example, if a mother walks to the garage, this does not have to signify separation. If she walks to the garage in a rage and fails to come back the whole day, then this will give the toddler an experience of the threat of separation.

There are various sorts of separation experience. The most incisive is the separation experience where the rupture with the attachment figure is definitive. The death of a parent or of another trusted person often means a deep rupture in the child's feeling life. There are other forms of separation which are less readily recognised as separation experiences but which may leave deep traces. So, for example, a spell in hospital either on the part of the child or of the attachment figure, often evokes separation feelings in a child and certainly if the child is not properly prepared for the event. Being sent away for a long or short period may also lead to the same experience. It is known from prenatal psychology that the unborn child may also experience feelings of loss. The spontaneous abortion of one of the foetuses in a multiple conception may leave the remaining full-grown baby or babies with an unfocused feeling of loss.

The loss of domestic pets can also give children feelings of separation; the same may happen with loss of a loved object. Examples of this are: a dog or cat which dies, moving to another room, another house or another neighbourhood, the loss of a soft toy, a doll or some other toy, having to give up one's own place at table or one's own bed. In short, 'separation' is a reality which shows itself in many forms; only the person who undergoes it can recognise the content of that particular experience of separation.

Of course not all separations from attachment figures or objects are equally important. Separation is always a subjective experience; something which seems a slight loss to one person may be insurmountable to another: discussion between the people involved is useless. I think a certain hierarchy is to be distinguished according to the relative weight of different experiences of separation. The loss of a loved person mostly weighs more heavily than the loss of objects to which a person is attached. Within the experiences of loss of attachment figures there is also a hierarchy. At the top of the hierarchical ladder come the first attachment figures and these are the parents. For the very young child the mother has more affective weight than the father. Under two years of age the loss of mother will mean more, provided that the mother is the primary attachment figure.

For older children, the loss of either of the parents may have the same emotional effect. Somewhat lower on the ladder are the brothers and sisters. The loss of a brother or sister can make an enormous impression on the child. Then come other members of the family with whom affective bonds exist: grandparents, aunts and uncles. Friends may also occupy a very important place in the child's feeling life.

How does the child react to separation? If, as adults, we examine and acknowledge the separation feelings of the child, then we shall notice that children react more or less in the same way as adults. In other words, children's and adults' feelings after an experience of separation are the same. The phases of the assimilation process, as we know it in adults, are also to be found in very young and young children. In the beginning, children react to loss with denial. 'It can't be true!' This original refusal of the experience is necessary to them when the experience of loss is too painful and at that moment unbearable. Rage, exasperation and resentment may follow the denial. These feelings are to do with the fact that the experience is received as wrong, unreasonable and unjustified. 'Why me?' Then, in children too, comes a period in which they start to allow their grief. They may grieve intensely over the loss they have suffered. Only when they have been able to allow their grief is the loss assimilated and they are able to go through the last stage of the mourning process. The mourning process ends when the child has reached a new balance without the lost person. When the loss can be accepted, the mourning process is complete. Sadly enough, children are dependent on the space adults allow them to give shape to their feelings of mourning. Because children's sense of time and distance is different from that of adults, we are perhaps inclined to minimise their experiences, brushing them aside with 'children forget so quickly!' Yet children need a certain period of time in order to go properly through the mourning process as we know it in adults. Children experience loss and separation and, like adults, need time to assimilate them. Children can mourn. On this point I should like to formulate a psychological 'law': the younger the child is at the time of its experience of separation, the more deeply incisive this experience will be, and the more time and space the child will require later on in order to assimilate the separation. This 'law' is the opposite of what is generally assumed to be the case. In divorce or at the death of a parent you often hear the comment that it is less serious for the very young children, for they will hardly remember it. Nothing is less true. The youngest children will often exhibit the most emotional problems at a later stage, precisely because of the denial of their need to assimilate their loss.

"Many violent emotions occur at the time when affectional bonds are instituted, during the period of their existence and when they are broken and renewed once again. The unthreatened continuation of an affectional bond is experienced as a source of security and its renewal as a source of joy. Actual loss causes grief and the threat of loss arouses anxiety, while both situations arouse anger", thus, in a nutshell, John Bowlby expresses the significance of affectional bonds.

Threatened separation may stand in the way of building an attachment relationship. The word 'threatened' already expresses the gravity of the situation. We all know the word in connection with the threat of war, the threat of bad weather and so on. It gives a feeling of insecurity and helplessness. There is something here we are unable to manipulate, we are helpless in the face of something that lies beyond our powers. We have lost control of the situation. As long as the threat continues, anxiety and insecurity will be on the prowl.

Being threatened by separation is an experience which is easily passed over or underestimated as the cause of unfocused, incomprehensible anxiety. In contrast to the situation of actual separation, we have here a situation less easy or even impossible to evaluate in time, place or consequence. Will it happen or won't it? When is it going to happen? What will happen in consequence? For a child, such insecurity can leave deep, perennial traces.

What are the situations which may give a child this feeling of threatening separation? Before answering this question I should like to draw a line between situations which do not originate in the child and situations which are directly connected to the child's behaviour. To put it another way, on one side there are unintentional interventions which have the side effect of making the child feel threatened, and on another side are active interventions by the parents intended to reach the child. To the first category belong illness in the attachment figure, depression in the attachment figure, conflicts in the family, sending the child away with insufficient preparation. In the second category we can place punishment of the child by ignoring it, threatening the child with 'going away' if it is not 'good'. The essence of all these situations is that the child sees its relationship with its attachment figure threatened to such an extent that the continuity of that relationship hangs in the balance. Even unintentional intervention can cause the child to feel responsible for the threatened separation. As we said before, the young child cannot see its parents' behaviour as bad. It will take on itself the guilt for whatever is wrong. This gives the disturbance of the attachment bond yet another dimension.

How does the child react to the threat of separation? In contrast to the situation of an actual separation, there can be no question here of real assimilation. There are no events to get hold of or facts to mourn. There is nothing definitive about a threatened separation and there is no final term to the threat. The anxiety, the insecurity, the threat, simply continue. In other words, there is nothing for the mourning process to get to grips with. The child is simply suspended in an atmosphere of abandonment, doubt and anxiety, to which, for the moment, there is no end, even if the threat should at some time be withdrawn. Here an accompanied process of assimilation will have to take the place of a spontaneously developed mourning process.

Spoiling and over-protection

If we half listen to the language of upbringing - upbringing has its own vocabulary and a use of language all its own - we seem to hear the word 'care' coming up rather often. The sum total of upbringing is often lumped together as a great deal of 'care' and this attitude often has, alas, a negative sound. In order to divest the concept of 'care' of its burdensome and sometimes negative load, it might be useful to compare it with the concept of 'concern' with which it is often confused. In order to bring to light the difference between 'care' and 'concern' it is important to clarify the basic underlying attitudes.

From the time of pregnancy onwards the parents are inclined to form an image of their child's future. Further examination reveals that this image often has the characteristics of and is rooted in the parent's experiences with his or her own parents. This is not to say that the image has to be the same, it may be the very opposite, but it will refer to this image. Some examples follow: 'My child is not going to become what I have become', 'I shall not do the things they did to me to my child', or 'My child will get further in life than I have'. The child-rearer's own upbringing continues to be the point of reference. Dominant standards and values in society strengthen these expectations. The child must be prepared to be made to fit the expectations of that society. It must become someone and must therefore fit into society. About this, its parents are concerned. Concern starts from the upbringers, from the image they have of the child's future. The upbringers' anxieties usually play a central role: will the child succeed in realising this image, will the upbringers themselves thereby be seen as good parents?

Care has a different basis: what is this child asking of me, what are the potentials and limitations of this child? What is going on in this child's feeling world? Care starts from the affective needs of the child and not from the upbringers nor from the way the upbringers were brought up, nor from the standards and values of the society behind them. Concern can become so dominant that people tend

to forget entirely that this child demands its own care. Or, put another way, the great concern for the child can result in parents acting against the feelings, needs or interests of their child. So much importance is attached to what the child must achieve, that the child is no longer seen as what and who it is and what it needs. The child's own needs are passed over. The distinction between 'care' and 'concern' makes the difference between 'mothering' and 'over-mothering'. 'Over-mothering' starts from a parent burdened with her own unassimilated feelings or emotions and needs. 'Mothering' starts from the child's needs and imposes nothing; it means watching and waiting for the child to make its needs known. A child cannot be spoiled or over-protected as long as the parents start from the child's own needs.

In order to avoid misunderstanding I will make the following comments. Starting from the child's feelings is not a 'passive' occupation. It does not imply that children can and may do anything, that there are no boundaries. Nor does it imply that the parents are not allowed to have needs of their own. I am not advocating a so-called 'free' upbringing. In both 'free' and 'authoritarian' upbringings the upbringing starts from his ideas, his dogmas and not from the experience of this child confided to his care. A so-called 'free upbringing' is neither better nor worse than an 'authoritarian' upbringing. Both are inadequate because they do not start from the child's needs. Passively allowing things to go as they may can be a form of neglect. Bringing a child up according to a preconceived plan entails the massive risk of misrecognising the feelings, needs and experiences of the child. Parents have their own needs: all I ask is that they should not use their child to fulfil those needs.

Does this mean that we must never put obstacles in our child's way? Indeed, we must put nothing in the child's way; there are already hindrances enough in its way which cannot be avoided in its process of growth, especially in our society. These hindrances range from small malaises to deep frustrations. In order to overcome these hindrances and frustrations a child needs the support of its parents and it needs them to set boundaries. Clarity, structure and the setting of boundaries give the young child security. 'Good' attention assumes both stimulation and protection, always in proportion to the child. A child under two years old must only receive but not receive everything, only what his needs prescribe. Later, boundaries may be set. For example, if a toddler asks for a sweet just before a meal, this need must not be fulfilled at that moment. The boundary can be: no sweets before the meal. The toddler will be disappointed; he really wanted a sweet. The boundary will evoke a feeling of disappointment, but it does not have to mean repression of the child's own capacities to feel. A child is able to deal with the disappointment if it is allowed to experience the accompanying feelings - anger for example - without curtailment. In this way the very important relationship with the child-rearer remains intact and the child has had the chance to experience its own feelings and boundaries. Where the upbringing is unable to stand the child's disappointment, they will either let things happen which are unsafe for the child or offer the child a surrogate. In both cases the necessary setting of boundaries is omitted and the child starts to feel insecure. Offering the child a surrogate deprives it of the chance to have a new experience. This is the essence of spoiling and over-protection.

Spoiling starts from the needs of the child-rearer who is unable to set boundaries, who cannot bear disappointment, who has no tolerance of frustration. If the child-rearer cannot bear the child's disappointment because he is concealing his own disappointment stemming from his own childhood, he will spoil the child. It is not the child's pain which is unbearable but his own pain originating in his own childhood. He will spare his child disappointment and prevent the child from feeling it. This does not mean that we should frustrate a child merely for the sake of frustration. It is important to distinguish between frustrations which may be avoided and frustrations which are unavoidable. In avoiding frustrations we shall of course take into account the age and capacities of the child. For example, for a small baby it is important for it to be fed as quickly as possible after it sends out the message that it is hungry. At a slightly older age it can be made clear to it that it has to be patient for a

little while. Many needless frustrations for children may be avoided by arranging the household with reference to the child. In such surroundings the child itself can explore as much as possible in order to get to know its own limits and those of its surroundings. The child-rearer's care can come into its own here. Spoiling has no place. Spoiling covers up a lack of `real' attention, `real' love. Spoiling means that the parent does all sorts of things for the child which it doesn't need.

Overprotection is also diametrically opposed to care. Overprotection may be seen as an extreme form of over-mothering which springs from the child-rearer's own anxiety. It is the child rearer's anxiety which is projected on to the risks the child may run. The child's explorations, its investigation into its own possibilities and their limits, is already restricted in advance because they make the child-rearer afraid. The overprotective parent is inclined to keep everything the child does under her own supervision and control. It then becomes difficult to let go of the child and allow it go its own way. The child-rearer who has not integrated her own anxiety will exhibit an excessive inclination to keep the child strictly under control. Yet children do not need parents who are always on top of them; they need their parents to be present in the background. Although such intensive and persistent attention is easy to class as care and love, we must insist that it has little to do with either. Overprotection is like a hug which holds you too tight.

Presenting the child with patterns of control

The child that has spent enough time in its mother's arms, that knows it is safe around her, will be content and fulfilled to live in the now. The child that has had to go without this essential experience will carry around with it a fundamental feeling of unease. It will always be seeking to compensate for this feeling. `I should be happy if only.....': the dots stand for all sorts of surrogate longings.

Quite soon in its life, the child that has spent too little time in its mother's arms, that has known too little security and safety, that has been able to build up little trust, will exhibit compensatory behaviour designed to alleviate its suffering. Such compensatory behaviour is also known as control patterns. These control patterns are designed to avoid emotional pain, rejection and misrecognition. Control patterns are a form of defence. Of the child that cannot feel the pain because it is unbearable to him, Liedloff says: "He kicks as hard as he can to stop the prickling longing of his skin, he waves his arms, rolls his head from one side to the other to deaden his senses, he tenses his body, curves his back with all the strength he can muster, so that he needn't feel any longer." This child gets marked down as hyperactive.

From their mistaken interpretation of these manifestations - they are not seen as signalling discontent with the misrecognition felt by the child, but as `normal' or `typical of that age' - parents strengthen these control patterns by providing the child with yet more means of compensation. Such compensations are supposed to keep the child still, so that the parents are not troubled by its displeasure. They are bribes. For example, the child is swamped with toys which make a lot of noise, so that the child can `have its fling'. For the compensatory thumb-sucking and the desperate crying a dummy is produced. Rocking prams and cots on rockers also count as presenting a control pattern. Instead of picking the baby up and taking it in their arms, the parents fob it off with rocking. The imposed acceptable is used to get rid of what is unacceptable. If the child will just not be unhappy or not allow its displeasure to appear; if it will just refrain from calling out its parents' displeasure; then it is an easy child. Whether it is a `happy' child the parents do not enquire. According to Liedloff these things are proffered in order to compensate for loss. "Toys traditionally console a distressed child, yet they involve passing over the distress itself. In the first place comes a teddybear or similar soft toy `to take to bed'. This is meant to give the child the feeling that there is always someone with it. The energetic attachment which sometimes follows is seen as an amusing example of the fancies which

take small children rather than an expression of an acute sense of loss in the child that in its desperate need for a companion who will not leave it in the lurch, falls back on anchoring itself to a lifeless object." Aletha Solter calls toys which have this function 'discharge repressive objects'. They deprive the child of its natural power to express its displeasure and thereby discharge its pain. When we look closely we see that parents often pass on their own control patterns to their child. Parents who can't bear their child's crying will do anything to stop it. Have they not 'learnt not to cry' in their own childhood? Parents who are addicted to eating will 'console' their child with food. Every time the child cries they want to feed it, even if all the child is saying is that it wants to be close to them. Or, where parents compensate their own discontent by being 'busy and active' they will keep their child busy, distract it, play games with it, anything to forget the discontent. Or, if the parents compensate for their own emptiness by driving silence out of their lives, they will present their child with the means of making noise, toys, TV, music, not to enjoy it but to fill up the emptiness and the silence.

Solter attaches great importance to the child's opportunities to discharge its grief. The most important means of doing this is crying. This crying may be a signal of actual pain but may also be a cry of desperation arising out of the old unassimilated pain from the past. When the child is simply distracted from this pain or offered surrogate-consolation, the old pain becomes more and more entrenched and the tensions grow higher and higher through months and years. "Anxiety, anger and grief are aroused when new experiences remind them of painful events from the past. Their observation of reality becomes more and more disturbed and restricted by the accumulated pain." Crying can thus have various meanings for the child. A positive approach lies not in the presentation of control patterns but in furthering opportunities to discharge the pain. Control patterns start a process of alienation and keep it going.

5.3 Consequences in later life

Experiences with the attachment figures in the prenatal, perinatal and postnatal periods have a persistent influence on the further course of our lives. This effect may be largely positive, but may also, alas, be largely negative. We may have a persistent feeling of confidence or a basic feeling of insecurity and uncertainty. We may be able to take up new challenges or we may avoid them like an overprotected child, because we experience them as threatening. We may be able to assimilate loss or cope badly with separation and threatened separation. We may react well to frustrations but also, like a spoiled child, refuse to accept boundaries.

In this section some of the difficulties in adult life following disturbed attachment relationships in childhood will be discussed.

Disturbed mourning reactions

As we have seen, separation or threatened separation should be followed by a process of assimilation. This process of assimilation has the same characteristics as a mourning process when a loved one is lost. A healthy mourning process, that is to say, a process which results in a new equilibrium without the missing person, proceeds according to a particular pattern and is accompanied by particular, characteristic feelings. Insufficiently assimilated loss in childhood can have the result that the person concerned is unable properly to live through a separation or loss later in life. The healthy process of mourning, as we have said before, is disturbed. There are varied forms of disturbed assimilation. I want to make a particular distinction here between chronic mourning and omitted mourning. Chronic mourning, that is, a constant feeling of mourning, can take the place of a healthy feeling for

life. It means, in essence, that the person remains stuck in one of the phases of mourning. They stick fast, either in denial or in rebellion or in chronic grief. In its strongest manifestations, denial may take the form of keeping the old situation as it was: the surroundings in which the lost person lived are kept intact. This is called mummification. the world of the dead person continues to be present now because nothing is altered; everything goes on as if he were still alive and about to come back at any minute. The table is still laid as if the dead person will still take his place there, his clothing is kept as if he is going to need it, his room stays as it is. This clearly hinders any growth in the direction of a new equilibrium. A mourning process which goes badly may also take the form of a long-lasting failure to mourn consciously at all. The person who is omitting to mourn acts as if nothing has happened, although it is clear he is under a certain tension. He is often proud of his independence and regards crying as weakness. When people who have omitted to mourn are at last obliged to admit their grief because they can no longer deny it, they will compensate with emotion.

The loss-sensitive personality

Through experience of separation or threatened separation in early childhood, a loss-sensitive personality may develop. Such a personality is very sensitive to any form of experience of loss. He will invest a lot of energy in preventing loss. He will avoid all experiences which may be liable to confront him with separation or loss. He is often very sensitive to rejection, because rejection contains the possibility of threatened loss. A loss-sensitive person has difficulty in dealing with pain and grief. This personality is expressed in various forms, such as the person with ambivalent emotional relationships, the person with an independent posture and the person driven to look after others.

A loss-sensitive personality may form his affective relationships in a fearful and ambivalent way. He has a strong need for a close relationship but is also afraid of it. In other words, he is looking for closeness but at the same time keeps his distance. It may come about that all the feeling relationships in his life will be characterised by fear of loss. He is always on the watch to prevent this. It can be a heavy burden for his partner. For the loss-sensitive person both invites and pushes away, often at an unpredictable moment. This may lead to serious conflicts in the relationship.

In the second manifestation of the loss-sensitive personality there is an independent posture towards any sort of emotional bond. From the outside it looks as if this person is extremely independent. He often lets those round him know that he does not need affectivity. He experiences a relationship as too constricting. Where the attachment figures, particularly in the earliest years, have not responded or have responded badly to the child's needs, there is a strong possibility that, in later life, this child will be wary of relationships which are too close. The same effect may also be the result of badly assimilated loss of an attachment figure. Such people will either avoid every emotional bond or enter into an 'intellectual relationship'. in either case they will avoid all affective investment in a partnership because they would then run the risk of rejection and loss.

The compulsion to look after people may also be an expression of loss-sensitivity. Such a person is unable to allow space to the other person because he is afraid of losing them. He therefore floods his partner or child with his attentions. The crux of it is that it looks as if all the sadness and helplessness which are not recognised or acknowledged in himself are transferred to other people. This manifestation will be easily recognised in people who had in their childhood either a mother on whom they could not rely or a mother who was mostly preoccupied with herself, in particular via physical complaints. Children whose mother did not look after them with true feeling may also compulsively care for others later in life. Their happiness consists in gratitude for the happiness of others. The adult Child continues all its life to long for closer relations. The lack that is experienced as a loss remains a

dominant feeling. Out of that lack, care is compulsively forced on other people. This mostly stops if the other does not show sufficient gratitude. Then the compulsive carer is disappointed, and in consequence feels once again unaccepted. The story repeats itself: the feeling of something missing seeks new victims. Thus a woman whose children have left the house, may 'fall on' the grandchildren.

The beginning of the false I

In the following chapter the true I and the false I will be examined in detail. Yet at this juncture I do not feel I can leave out the phenomenon of the loss of the true I. The Child that, in its earliest existence, feels insecure with its attachment figures, will give up a piece of itself in an attempt to reach the necessary state of security. The anxiety-avoiding child, the anxiety-defensive child, the spoilt or overprotected child - all will later (consciously or unconsciously) suffer from the loss of their essential centre. The go through life alone like a wounded Child. And the essential feeling of a wounded Child is: I am defective. This feeling leads to fundamental shame. Schellenbaum defines 'shame' as "the feeling that arises when individual longings and social [read: parental, GS] standards collide." In this confrontation the individual longings of the young child will always fare badly against the more or less high demands made by the parent. In an insecure attachment relationship every attempt by the Child to meet its natural needs will result in 'giving up in exchange', coupled with feelings of guilt and shame. Guilt touches on what the child does, shame touches on what it is. The control patterns with which children are presented or which they have themselves installed, will prevent them from living out of their essential Self.

Spoiling is overvaluing the false I. Overestimation of the true I is impossible. In the most favourable instance the individual will keep his life livable by continuing to master his neurotic complaints. More serious are the situations of the gravely psychologically distressed person and the socially dysfunctional person.

Serious psychological problems

Affectional bonds disturbed early in life, in particular bonds with the first attachment figures, may later lead to serious psychological problems. I will take two extreme instances in brief: psychopathic expression and depressivity.

People with a psychopathic structure are marked above all by the lack of the possibility of creating an affectional bond. They try to enter a relationship, but this has the function of making use of the other. Because they are no longer in contact with their own world of feeling, true psychopaths are not able to receive the feelings of other people. The cause of this disturbance may be traced to the first years of life in which the person concerned was either severely neglected by his own parents or underwent repeated changes in the parental figures. Loss or threatened loss has acquired a more or less permanent form in the early years of childhood.

Psychopaths are people who take no account of what is happening in the other person. They lead strictly their own lives and often achieve highly. With a large dose of intellectual ability, which they often possess, and other qualities, they are able to occupy high positions, for example in politics or management, in which they are able to unite all power in themselves. It may perhaps be rightly said of them that their path to power is over the dead bodies of their competitors. When they are crossed they are sometimes capable of destroying themselves or others. In other cases they become addicts of some kind.

Helping badly psychopathic patients is very difficult, if not impossible, because every sort of help stumbles against the impossibility of forming a relationship with them. If it suits them, psychopaths may pretend, even for a long time, that such a relationship exists. They continue this pretence only as long as it fits in with their plans: for example in an attempt to avoid punishment. Sooner or later the therapist realises that nothing will be served by further investment from his side. This often happens when he has made the maximum possible efforts, sometimes excessive efforts.

The second instance of a psychological problem connected with disturbed attachment is depressivity. Feeling down or depressed is something we all encounter in ourselves at some point in our lives. Certain situations lead to it. Blows of fate, for example losing one's job, can make for melancholy. However, this mood is such that if we can get rid of the nuisance, we come to ourselves again and are able to take up the thread of our lives. A depressive mood is not depressivity. To be in a depression all the time is more serious. It is usually the result of badly assimilated loss or threatened loss in earliest childhood. If the omitted process of assimilation can still not be enacted, people threaten to succumb to an indescribable tiredness. 'Everything is too much'; in this expression lies the whole panorama of their life. None of the ordinary life functions is unaffected; sleeping, eating, working, relaxing, making contacts: everything is disturbed. There seems to be no bottom to their existence.

To sum up: insecurity, uncertainty, anxiety and doubt in the vulnerable child can lead to serious psychological disturbances. Life can become a lifelong path of suffering.

The true I and the false I

*"A person... in the grip of an old hurt
says things that make no sense,
does things which don't work,
is unequal to the situation
and is subject to terrible feelings
which have nothing to do with the present."*

HARVEY JACKINS

6.1. 'Healthy and unhealthy narcissism

The moments of conception, prenatal growth and birth, both biological and psychological, are fundamental to the life of the young human. At these moments the greater part of their future is decided, in particular as concerns the picture they will have of themselves and of the world. The experiences of earliest childhood define whether the person will look at themselves in a positive, realistic manner or will pay exaggerated attention to their image at the expense of their true I. A positive and 'healthy' self-image is based on self-confidence and basic security; an exaggerated, inflated self-image originates in misrecognition and rejection.

People who are more interested in how they are coming over than what they are feeling are termed narcissistic. In Greek mythology Narcissus was a beautiful young man who scorned the love of the nymph Echo. One day, leaning over the bank of a pool, he saw himself reflected as if in a mirror. He fell passionately in love with his reflection and died of his longing. The gods changed him into a flower which was called, after him, the narcissus. In the myth, therefore, the narcissist is punished for the fact that he could love no one but himself.

In general, all forms of narcissism are branded as negative. Lowen, for example, in his book on narcissism, treats it as a negative concept. He writes: "Narcissism represents a psychological as well as a social phenomenon. At the personal level it points to a disturbance in the personality characterised by a disproportionate investment in the self-image at the expense of the self. From a social point of view narcissism is the loss of human values - an absence of concern for the environment, the quality of life, fellow human beings." In his opinion, narcissism is synonymous with being obsessed only with oneself, striving for power and control and a tendency to seduce and manipulate. In this definition of the concept of narcissism Alice Miller speaks of 'disturbed narcissism'.

Is there 'undisturbed' narcissism? Alice Miller thinks so and I agree. She describes such 'healthy' narcissism as a feeling of inner freedom. Narcissistically healthy people live out of a strong centre; they live out of themselves and for themselves first of all; they are egocentric. Others can rejoice because of their joy in living. The gospel message 'love your neighbour as yourself' assumes that

people start by loving themselves. This precept is, in fact, hardly necessary: anyone who really loves themselves automatically draws others to share in that love. People reach out to others from abundance rather than from shortage. The healthy narcissist is not an egoist, but he lives in an egocentric manner, that is to say, from the centre of himself. This nucleus contains sufficient treasure to enrich others as well. Social behaviour is innate to human beings. 'Healthy' narcissism is also characterised by a 'healthy' consciousness of self; the experience of needs, feelings and desires is felt to belong to the self and all these are permitted. 'Healthy' narcissism also manifests itself in the ability 'truly to find oneself in the moment of living', as Liedloff puts it. The real self lives in the now, which is synonymous with 'feeling right'. This makes it possible to have a liberating relationship with others. The person is transparent to the other, distinct from him without being cut off from him. 'Healthy' narcissism means that we are able to allow our feelings to exist, to 'live them through', express them, regardless of the question of whether they will lead us to be loved or rejected. From a feeling of our own worth we may be happy, sad, puzzled, needing help... we can be alone without being lonely.

'Healthy' narcissism happens if the young child, before or after its birth, is confirmed in its earliest existence, by its mother. If the unborn child or baby know that they are accepted in all respects and are sure that someone is always there for them, then they build up a 'healthy narcissistic storehouse'. "This means," writes Bradshaw, "that you are loved as who you are, admired and treasured in a proper manner, touched and treated as something special, that you know for sure that your mother will not leave you, that you are taken seriously." A young child so used is still truly loving; it gives friendship. If misrecognition by the parents has forced the child into unreality, then it may swiftly start to exhibit all sorts of false symptoms. It makes excessive demands for attention; it absolutely has to be noticed or it withdraws totally. The result is that the child is no longer seen as a nice child but perceived as difficult and therefore disregarded still more. The downward spiral has begun.

The following excerpt from a letter from a woman of over seventy who nonetheless wanted to heal the misrecognised child in herself, gives us a picture of how her upbringing went wrong. She writes: "Mother, you were always too busy with your charity work. You never had time to tell me you loved me. You only took notice of me when I played the piano and you could be proud of me. You only let me have feelings which were acceptable to you. I was important only when I did what pleased you. You never loved me for myself. I was so alone..."

A healthy narcissistic initiation prevents us from dragging childish needs into our later lives as adults. If we have not been given this initiation then the false self which has been created will cultivate these needs and hunger for them all its life. The true child who has been wounded will go on spoiling its life with bursts of anger, fits of crying, exaggerated reactions and inadequate social relationships.

Alice Miller lists ten characteristics of successful narcissistic development. She calls them "ideal constructions ...to which reality can only ever approximate". Some of these characteristics I would not want to leave out here. I give my own summary of them:

- The battle for independence is not experienced as an expression of aggression, so that it is not punished.
- As the parents did not need the child as a 'visiting card' to represent them, the child could have its own feelings; love, hate, jealousy, grief, anger, etc.
- Because the parents were strong enough, the child has been able to use them to experiment with its own powers and limitations.
- The child has been able to show conflicting feelings, whereby it has been able to experience itself and others as successful and less successful; it has not had to isolate the 'bad' from the 'good'.
- Love for others has become possible because the child has been loved not as an extension of its parents but as a separate being.

The conclusion is obvious: 'healthy' narcissism is possible only if we ourselves have been brought up in such an atmosphere or have made such an atmosphere our own. On the assumption that upbringing is, by definition, based on the needs, feelings and standards of parents, no one will be capable of creating this sort of safe climate for their child just like that. For many people, psychotherapeutic treatment will be urgently required so that they can become free people, able in their turn to bring children up as free human beings. We shall, for the time being, continue to be faced with the fact that the 'adaptation of the child to the adult, from its earliest moment of existence, is the most important cause of 'disturbed narcissism'.

"The child is not automatically able to experience and live through its own feelings", says Alice Miller, "for a child is only able to live them through if there is someone at hand who will accept it with those feelings." As a result of not being able to live its own feelings through the child feels 'abandoned', a primordial feeling for the small child who has no power to nuance it. It cannot reach its parents or make them understand. At this point I want to comment that the issue here is not one of individual parents who are bad in the moral sense. All parents have been in narcissistic need to a greater or lesser extent. Their children, and their children's children, will be the same in turn, unless someone breaks the vicious circle.

The 'Child in the parent' manifests its own needs in relation to an available object which is the child outside the parent. Such needs demand satisfaction. The child feels that and very early on it stops expressing its own needs. Through this adaptation the child ceases to know what its own 'real' needs are; it becomes severely alienated from itself; it loses touch with its own ground and is therefore unable to disengage itself from its parents; it constantly wants to be 'affirmed', The child becomes narcissistically needy. It invests its energies in diseased stock and the resultant leaves and flowers are neither healthy nor fruitful. This situation continues later in life. Infinite trouble is caused by the multitudes of people demanding affirmation; in whatever way they can get it. "To be psychologically ill, therefore, is to have been injured in one's primal integrity, to be a person whose original harmony has been disturbed, who is now capable of only partial consciousness and whose functioning is impaired." writes Stettbacher. The circle is complete: the child's feelings are denied, whereby it builds up a false I which in turn sets about denying its own feelings. Or, in other words: narcissistically needy parents 'possess' a child as narcissistic object whereupon that child becomes narcissistically disturbed in its turn and so grows up to be a narcissistically needy parent. 'A person traumatised in this way, will later on exhibit patterns of reaction which are the result of the compulsive effect of certain key features and signals, without being himself able freely to determine his behaviour." adds Stettbacher.

Out of her experiences in an Indian culture, where she says the 'true' Self had a better chance of developing, Liedloff describes the reactive forms in which she experiences the false I in our Western civilisation:

- The ill-mannered wretch: "that sort of ill-mannered person is like a filthy, whining baby who wants to be loved just because he's there..."
- The martyr: "...who occasionally utters a complaint in the midst of suffering. They are convinced they will get a place in heaven if they give their all."
- The actor: "... who surrounds himself with a great crowd of people to show that he is the centre of attraction, despite a nagging feeling to the contrary."
- The compulsive academic: he "has managed to make his alma mater into an ideal surrogate mother."
- The eternal student: "...who clings on to his childish attitude to school."
- The businessman: "...who hangs on to the skirts of his firm year in year out."
- The adventurer-pirate: who has got the impression that " a singular achievement is a sign that all

those competing for attention have been worsted."

- The compulsive traveller: "new places promise to be the 'right' place at last, for the illusion of the magical return to the mother's arms can no longer be entertained in reality..."
- The criminal: haunted by "the feeling that he should get all these things as if from his mother, without having to pay."
- The invalid: "In times of exceptional emotional need the continuum [the immature true I, BD] is able to arrange for us to be ill and to need others to care for us... The need for attention may be hitched on to a certain person, a ring of family members and friends, or the hospital. However impersonal it may seem, a hospital places everyone in the position of a small child, and it is the hospital which, despite shortage of staff and lack of amenities, is responsible for seeing that he gets his meals on time and that all decisions are made for him... Many people fall ill because they are unable to cope."

The 'disturbed' narcissist is constantly in search of his lost happiness.

After a 'good' conception, after life in a 'good' womb followed by a 'good' birth, it may be assumed that the newborn child is in possession of the seeds of 'healthy' narcissism. It bears within it the potential to develop a 'healthy' self, that is to say, a clear spirit and sensitive feeling in a vital body. It carries in itself the expectation of realising itself according to its own capacities, and such development is 'good'. The baby is innocent and reacts spontaneously on the basis of the physical needs of the Self. The child trusts its surroundings and places its confidence in them. This trust is broken by the neediness of the parents. The innocent baby is betrayed. This takes place first of all through what the parents 'neglect' to do: they do not cuddle the baby enough; they fail to see the child in its uniqueness or to respect that uniqueness. In the second place, the child's trust is betrayed by what they 'do' to the child: they mould the child to the image they have of it, an image that comes from their own distorted self image, based on the traumas of their own childhood.

By the action of its parents, the child is thus twisted into an 'unhealthy' narcissistic person. The child is led to feel and do what the parents want it to feel and do. The feeling is a mental construct. All this takes place on the presupposition that it is for its own good. They call that 'responsible pedagogy'. Parents want their child to be special; this is the picture they have before them. They want to make something of the child. However, the reality is that they need something from the child, and that something is affirmation of themselves. Through denial of its own feelings and needs the child is rejected and humiliated and because of this those feelings and needs are repressed. The child puts itself at the parent's service. It wants to save what still remains to be saved. Its own being becomes enfeebled. The child is delivered helpless into the power of the parents. The false I is born. Denial of the feelings of the young child is equivalent to robbing it of its Self. The result is that in compensation, and in order to survive, the child constructs a false I. The false I will exhibit more and more features of unhealthy narcissism. The most important characteristics of the narcissistic person are:

- that he is more concerned about how he comes over to others than about what is happening inside him
- that he puts a lot of energy into the image of himself he has constructed following the image that important others have of him, at the expense of his inner self;
- that he is mostly turned to the outside, cut off from inner feeling, which he disregards;

- that he 'acts out' rather than 'living through';
- that he is always bound to draw attention to himself;
- that he is unable to distinguish between 'image' and 'being';
- that feelings of superiority and inferiority go hand in hand in him.

Lowen calls 'unhealthy' narcissism a focus on the 'imago' instead of on the feeling. An 'unhealthy' narcissist wants to be perfect and other people have to see him like that. This image portrays his false self, his false I. The true I is the true Self, the natural Child in ourselves. The false I is the counterfeit self.

Lowen opposes the contention that a child can be born 'unhealthily' narcissistic. He also thinks that it is a disturbed parent/child relationship at a very early stage which produces the distortion. Primary narcissism - I would call it egocentricity - is 'healthy' narcissism. The disturbed parent/child relationship operates so that the child identifies with the parent's distorted I. It takes over the parent's values and develops a self image that reflects these values. The child rejects in itself what the parent finds worthless, because it believes that what the parent rejects is really 'bad' and must be corrected in itself. Affirming what the parents think is 'good' is also a form of disregarding feelings. We are taught at a very early age that we must hide our feelings and put on a particular face. For example, people must not be allowed to see that we are angry. Of course this happens at first unconsciously. What parents want is a good, easy baby who laughs and smiles all the time.

Children soon learn that people love them if they laugh. Yet from birth a baby's first and deepest need for the purpose of relieving stress is to cry. This is tolerated by the parents for a while; 'it's right for a newborn baby to cry'. Yet the child soon notices that the parents don't care for this behaviour. It arouses all sorts of unwelcome emotions in them: guilt, uncertainty, irritation... Two predominant emotions then arise in the child: grief and anxiety. Grief because it has lost something of itself; anxiety because it is vulnerable and dependent on other people upon whom it cannot rely. The 'healthy' narcissistic child then feels battered: its desires do not go beyond its real natural needs, it asks no more than it needs, and still it is approached with revulsion. Revulsion is an appropriate term for what is experienced by the naive child as yet unconscious of evil. The evil is not in the child but in the parents who imprint their own frustrated feelings on the child. It is these projected feelings which condemn the child to a land of coercion.

When a baby's crying oversteps the boundaries of its physical powers, we may assume this to be a signal that the child is trying to rid itself of a greater burden than the urge to make known its natural needs for food or rest. The child is crying over a fundamental loss. It feels lonely, it is losing touch with whole chunks of its Self. As compensation it searches for unnatural substitutes, for example sucking its thumb.

This is what has happened to a greater or lesser degree to all of us; we have had to take refuge in a surrogate; we have had to exchange our 'healthy' narcissism for a counterfeit self, for a false I. later on, this counterfeit self can do no other than seek artificial compensations to which it becomes addicted. Bradshaw defines addiction as "a pathological relation with any means of altering mood at will which has life-damaging effects". He lists four sorts of addiction:

- active addiction: altering your mood by distraction;
- cognitive addiction: living in your head;
- affective addiction: being addicted to your emotions;
- addiction to things: money, stimulants, wealth, career...

Addictions are inherently life-damaging, apart from their immediate dangers, for they serve to maintain the false I.

In the beginning there was 'health'; then came misrecognition and hurt; the result is 'suffering'. We shall continue to suffer to the extent that we remain narcissistically unfulfilled adult children. This finds outlets in multitudinous forms of dissatisfaction: we are disappointed in our relationships, we are addicted, we chase after money and material goods to foster our feeling of self-worth which doesn't really work, we go on and on looking for affirmation. In short, we go on and on searching for our vanished happiness. False I-s go on searching, but will not find happiness, because they are looking for compensation for their loss.

Among young people in our present restless Western world two clear-cut streams may be distinguished in the way they search for their lost happiness. Some look for it in meditation and others in monotonous repetition. Although they seem at first to be widely separated, these two currents manifest the same longing for happiness. In meditation they seek serenity. "It is as if, as people from a 'civilised' world who have had to do without the essential experience of the infant in arms, they are busy trying to compensate for this defect by bringing themselves into a state which resembles that which they have had to forego, and which may possibly also be reached by the use of opiates", writes Liedloff. The way of monotonous repetition in discos and house music, serves to assuage their pent-up unrest.

6.2 Defence mechanisms

The child who has lost itself can do nothing except seek compensation. The pain would otherwise be unbearable. The false I that develops in the process erects a wall in front of the dammed-up pain. In this way the child, and later the adult, attempts to ward off the pain. It is a search for a fixed point in the midst of loss. The control patterns which the child establishes as a substitute for what is has lost, have already been mentioned. As the child becomes more adult these patterns develop into an often obstinate defence; deep anxieties are produced as impulses to forbidden experiences are pushed into the unconscious. This defence by the false I is often based on our strong points. For example, rationalisation takes place in our intellect, and the greater the capacities of this intellect, the more chance there is of rationalisation when we deny our feelings. We also use manipulation on the basis of our feel for situations: the sharper our intuitions the more likely it is that our false I will operate in this manner.

Freud made a radical study of the mechanisms of such defence. I will give a short description of a few of them:

- In the case of illusion or denial, reality no longer appears as it really is. The grief and anger of the young child who is not heard are not to be borne. It must therefore quickly proceed to deny these feelings. The crossness and neglect must not be allowed to be there. The child feels powerless and weak. The desire is transferred to something else. The dependence is denied. By these means feelings of power are quickly produced and camouflage the missing strength and the gnawing powerlessness. Confronted by the apparent certainty of parents who take an arrogant stance, the child becomes uncertain.
- By means of displacement, feelings which are not allowed to exist are translated into other, acceptable expressions. If grief is more acceptable, the defence mechanism against suppressed anger may express it in this form. This plays a large role for girls. Children are told from the beginning that they mustn't be cross. Anger with parents certainly cannot be expressed. Children are often punished for angry outcries. They are obliged to

settle everything in a friendly manner. The resultant sense of powerlessness bursts out in tears. And when crying is not allowed either, the child may turn to laughter to cover up both anger and powerlessness. It does not want to be targeted any more; the better course is therefore for it to deny that it feels anything at all.

- In the case of introjection, what is imposed from the outside is taken in and treated as part of the child's own self. If the child is rejected in its creativity because the parent is compulsively controlling and always busy clearing up, then in the long run the child knows no better than to assume that it too is innately mad on cleanliness and order. Its creativity has faded into the unconscious; the parent's lame duck has made its nest in the child.
- In rationalisation we displace experiences from the feelings to the intellect in order to make them acceptable. If the body and the feelings that go with it are rejected, the child learns to draw the conclusion that it can use its mind to transcend the lower and to become superior. The reason has overwhelmed feeling and action. This provides a point of support.
- In the case of sublimation attempts are made to escape from the self and by so doing to cope with the feeling of oppression. This escape, this flight, may take the form of feelings of might. We fancy ourselves immortal, on the same level as the gods, we live in higher spheres. An analysis of the lives of many saints and heroes would expose the narcissistic traits of their 'heroic' lives. Stettbacher gives further explanation: "Because the result of any form of defence involves compromise, something of the original, rejected impulse often persists in the end result of sublimation. A certain amount of aggression, for instance may be expressed in a fanatical urge to convert people."

All these defence mechanisms have the common effect of banishing the original situation and the feelings associated with it. Their aim is to reduce anxiety, the anxiety which arose because of the loss of the person's own I. A split has occurred between the 'true' and the 'false' in the self. The false I can no longer 'live through'; it takes refuge in 'acting out', letting off steam. 'Emotions' predominate rather than 'feelings'. Both feelings and emotions have their own characteristics. Feeling belongs to a particular situation, is in contact with the here and now of this particular local place. Emotion is often indirectly evoked by circumstances exterior to our own local existence. For instance, emotions are produced in response to images seen on television. These images actually call upon repressed experiences in ourselves, even though we attribute our reaction to the events happening outside us. These may be: injustice, wounding, loss, hunger, abandonment, powerlessness. Or we see positive things which we ourselves have sorely missed: warmth, security, tenderness, understanding...

Feelings are in general less explosive than emotions. As long as we fail to recognise and acknowledge such emotions as signals of our unassimilated feelings, they will bring us no nearer these feelings. We shall continue to 'act out' our emotions. And we shall continue to look for the same old things: more attention, more understanding, more rights, and often from the wrong people.

For this diseased system of upbringing there is only one way to health: an end to the alienation of the true I in adults. If not, babies will continue to grow up into people with unutterable and insatiable needs and desires. They will be adult children no longer able to retrieve contact with the reality of themselves and or of other people. Every signal from inside to outside or from outside to inside is monitored. As long as the misrecognised and wounded child cannot leave the place where it hides from rejection, it will continue to try to make up for its past by forcing others into the role of parent so as to satisfy its false I. 'Acting out' is a signal from the true Self. The true Self is still there but is consistently denied.

In the best case, recognition will allow 'acting out' to be transformed into 'living through'. However, such recognition will be jealously watched by the eye of the false I, because the latter needs to keep

plenty of space free for working off childhood hurts. The unbounded aggression erects on the one hand a mighty dam against the bursting out of pent-up emotions and on the other side asks to be given boundaries, in its own interest and that of others. The setting of boundaries is not the same as punishment. Punishment is largely to do with the emotions of the punishers. It is their defence against repressed emotions. To pass from 'acting out' to 'living through' is therefore a demanding task. Gruen stresses this task as one of overcoming anxiety, " but rebellion by itself does not make you into a human being. It is only a first step on the long, difficult and never-ending path towards overcoming your fear of the freedom to have a self of your own and a human heart."

6.3 Impasse: depression and grandiosity

Alice Miller divides expressions of narcissistic disturbance into two categories: grandiosity and depression. A person who has lost their own personal ground through far-reaching adaptation in childhood, will continue to seek vainly for admiration. The narcissist becomes his own world and believes that he is the whole world. The admiration is never sufficient because admiration is not the same as love. Those who suffer from grandiosity live in a martyrdom of dependence from which they are never free. On one hand they are enormously dependent on the admiration of other people and on the other they are dependent upon properties, functions and achievements all of which can disappear. Then depression looms. Real satisfaction of the need to be able to be there as they are, without achievements, is no longer a possibility. The time for that is irrevocably over; but success and acknowledgement can never fill up the old void. The old wounds can only be healed if the person concerned is able to abandon the frenzy of success and stop and attend to the open wound. Then the origin of the depression will no longer be sought in other people, for example a partner or children. It is perhaps difficult actually to realise that depression is a signal that the I has been lost, and that this process began with the adaptation necessary for survival in earliest childhood. As we have seen, the child often learns from very early on how not to feel, so that it will not risk losing parental love.

Grandiosity and depression point to a lack of inner freedom. They have many common features and are like two sides of the same coin. Alice Miller names some of the characteristics shared by both modes of expression, all signs of a false I:

- vulnerability in the feeling of self-esteem,
- perfectionism,
- betrayal of the repressed feelings,
- excessive use of other people,
- severe fear of losing love, and therefore an exaggerated readiness to adapt,
- difficulty in not crying down 'healthy people',
- aggression,
- sensitivity to hurt,
- tendency to feelings of shame and guilt.

Lowen outlines the 'imago' of superiority as follows:

- denial of the painful inner reality,
- an obsession with obtaining other people's esteem,
- the exercise of power over others.

Common to all these is the need to transcend oneself in order to make life livable. As soon as the narcissistic facade of superiority crumbles come the feelings of loss and sadness: the depression. This is typically marked by absence of feeling, inner emptiness, frustration and non-fulfilment. The sense of inferiority of the depression acts as camouflage for the grandiosity.

All this leads to anxiety. An impasse has been reached. The true I, imprisoned in the dungeon of denial persistently attempts to make its true Self known, not to the parent this time but to its own adult, deformed child. This comes up against helplessness. But in our society helplessness is equated with feebleness while power and mastery are presented as the way of escape from fear and despair. So we have learnt to run away from the experience of helplessness. "Thus nearly all of us dream of success: conquests and mighty deeds, simply to escape from our feelings of helplessness, fear and despair. Yet in our childhood nightmares and after, they catch up with us", is Gruen's comment. Attempts to leave the dungeon provoke great fear and resistance. The unknown is threatening. We are afraid of losing the familiar, the false I. What will take its place? This fear can mean the pangs of death. Inside ourselves we are mortally afraid; outside we construct a facade in front of what shows itself by turns as grandiosity and depression: are we someone or are we no one? Are we powerful or are we powerless? The person who chooses utter power will behave like a tyrant, a criminal. Where powerlessness is dominant, psychic disturbance ensues. In between come the 'moderates' who are pushed backwards and forwards between feelings of power and powerlessness, of grandeur and depression, from being there to not being there. We make attempts to enter into a covenant with ourselves: we shall not be too demanding; give a bit of ourselves and count on the others. Acceptance by other people, which we missed in our early life, becomes our priority.

But these expedients by no means heal the split. This is situated in the first instance between the true I and the false I; only in the second place between myself and other people. The divide runs between the father and the mother in me, between body and soul, between my desire to be important for others and my desire to have real significance for myself, between the real and the unreal in me. These extremes are at war within me. The true I wants to grow, live, experience. The false I loses more and more of its vitality; it degenerates, both spiritually and physically. Such lifelessness leads to the need for stimulation and causes yet more deadening effect in its turn. We look for more and more of the same; we become addicted: addicted to attention, to recognition, to stimulants, to sleeping pills, to power, to contemplation, to mystic experiences, in short to surrogates. We try to run away from reality. In one way we are afraid of despair and fly convulsively from chaotic feelings and in another way we live 'normally', which is to say 'without feelings', and that is what is so truly desperate. The false I misuses other people to camouflage its own feelings. Doubt is cast on those people or they are made fun of, immediately they touch the sore spot of its own incapacity.

Whatever is real in a human person - to the extent that it may still be alive - wants nothing better than that other people should love them, but whatever is false prevents them expressing this in a healthy manner. The demand for 'real' love has already been disappointed early in life. Later on it is difficult for us to come to experience that things are different now, that we are now no longer so vulnerable and dependent, that we are now better able to protect ourselves. The defence mechanisms were set up at moments when the child needed them in order to survive in the tangle of denials. Such defences are now no longer necessary and do more bad than good. The defence mechanisms have turned into neuroses and poison our lives.

What our parents neglected to do at an earlier stage, can, in principle, be done by us now: fostering, acknowledging, recognising and nourishing the child in ourselves and setting it free. However, this will mean that we have to take risks in respect of the unknown. It will demand that we take less outward action look more inwards in order to 'be' and to 'feel'. All outward distractions such as radio, TV, the disco, dare-devilry, material dissipation, stimulants, pep-pills, drugs: all these take the human person away from himself; they distance the person from their feelings. This keeps their loss of identity in existence. Their well-being is not advanced. Missing their own basic identity, their feeling of self worth, they go on living on the worth of others. Lowen puts it like this: "As soon as your ego is inflated by success or by something achieved, the reality of your body retreats in proportion. In that

case confusion can only be avoided by denying your body and its feelings." In these times the body is given a lot of importance. Yet its importance has everything to do with 'looking good' and little to do with 'feeling good'; even the possibility of the latter is denied. A refreshing deodorant is supposed to make us self-confident and happy.

The stress reaction, which is a positive capacity meant to allow us to deal with a temporary circumstance, becomes a chronic reaction pattern. The ground on which our existence is founded may shift at any moment; we ourselves have no consistent influence on it. The false I is thus a very vulnerable self. This finds expression in both bodily and psychosomatic complaints and mental inertia. Real relaxation is threatening for the tottering consciousness of self. We keep the bow drawn; reinforce the bastions of the false I as a remedy for our underlying insecurity. For the blunted and false I there is nothing to choose between 'hero' and 'coward'. Yet between these two lies the reality of the growing self: I can be strong and weak; I can do a lot of good but I can also fail; I am independent but sometimes feel dependent. In our society, to be weak is to fail: the worst that can happen to you. Being strong, achieving and succeeding are the highest values. If these fail, then the disappointment also has to be concealed. We find this in all innocence after losing in a TV quiz. There is forced laughter and the stereotypical comment of 'after all, it's only a game' is brought out in order to banish all feeling. At a higher level, we recently saw on television President Dehaene, after his failure to be elected chairman of the European Parliament, saying with a painfully racked expression: "It is worse for Europe than for me."

The impasse to which the misrecognised child has come also gives rise to problems in relationships. When our own basic identity is missing we do not experience our own boundaries. And without clear boundaries we cannot know where we ourselves come to an end and where the other begins. This leads to violation of frontiers in both directions: others will come too far into my territory and I in turn shall be oblivious of their boundaries. While unbounded feeling leads to undisciplined behaviour, over-restrained, rigid feeling leads to over-disciplined behaviour. In the area of intimacy, dependence and love are confused. Without an identity, without our own ground to stand on, every intimacy contains a double risk. Either we are frightened that the other, whom we so much need, will abandon us, or we are afraid of being swallowed up and to cease to exist as ourselves. This dilemma arises because what has been built up is a 'tie' rather than a healthy bond with the other. The lifelong preoccupation of the false I is thinking about these ties: ties with children, ties with parents. The parents' concern is: how can I keep my children? The children live with the unconscious demand: how can I keep my parents happy, so that they show me they love me? We see this very clearly at the time of the great festivals. Children feel obliged, often at the expense of quite different needs, to spend these days with their parents. If they do not carry out this obligation there is a whole drama with the parents: the children have no gratitude or, worse, they are worthless. The children feel guilty and have to look for all sorts of excuses. For this they can make use of their own children. Once again, this tie between parents and children, the first one in life, will damage all other relationships. The narcissistically unsatisfied child continues to keep this tie going for the sake of its unappeasable hunger for love, attention and affection. On such a basis intimacy is impossible. Sex is often used as a substitute for the lost intimacy and to make up for the lack of a capacity to give and receive love. This is primarily manifested on the woman's side. A woman's narcissism often camouflages itself under cover of always being nice, loving and 'giving'. Just so long as he is happy! The false I of the man gets confused in his sexuality since this is often pervaded by accumulated anger and repressed aggression. His sexuality then takes the form of an expression of power.

Lowen says: "Via power man dominates nature and the woman, whom he sees as on a par with nature." For the man, power is a way to protect himself from humiliation and inferiority. This is why his power may not be challenged. Any attack on that power threatens to render him powerless and

once again calls forth his fear of being humiliated. In this way frustrated anger can lead to blind rage. In blind rage there is no longer any proportion between it and the affront offered at that moment. The atrocities happening in Bosnia and Rwanda speak all too plainly of this. "The disproportionate nature of blind rage leads one to suspect that the true motive for such murderousness is to do with a more serious affront or vulnerability experienced earlier in life and at that time repressed." In this way, babies with their inexpressible desires and unsatisfied needs can later become murderers, dictators, addicts with no will of their own, or anxious depressive patients. The false I continues to squirm in the grip of the old sore. This impasse is responsible for the violence and cruelty on earth. It is also responsible for the passive subjection to this oppression of large groups of people. They 'nurse' their suffering in apathy and depression. Their true I is no longer involved. Their life has a certain unreality: they are there but somehow do not take part in it. Often they hide behind some ideology or religion. To distract themselves from the feelings which well up in them they use their brains to produce the appropriate saw: 'we all have our crosses to bear', or 'there's always something'. Generalisation is an escape route from emotion.

The impasse between the true I and the false I is in fact a struggle between the present and the past of the misrecognised child. Because a part of the false I always hankers after the unfulfilled past, it can never give its full attention to the present moment. It lives in constant regression; it still looks for the attention and the love which it was forced to do without in its early life. It still wants to be treated as a baby. At the same time the narcissistic self uses substitutes, control patterns or defence mechanisms which mutilate the true I still more badly. We need assistance to cope with handicap. Other people play a large role here. Partner, children, friends, colleagues, the false I needs them all in order to keep its surrogate life going. Its own pain is projected on to others. Advertising knows well how to exploit the discontents of the misrecognised child. Your lost happiness will be restored by money, luxuries and stimulants, in themselves addictive solutions. How these things make you feel seems to come down to the feeling the baby should have had in its mother's arms. Addictions keep alive the myth that all desires can still be fulfilled. Yet the immature true I, the immature child in ourselves, continues to send out signals that all is not well with it. Depressions, physical complaints, restlessness, insomnia, all witness to this fact. The false I represses these distress signals, forces the child to be silent, at both individual and societal levels. The phenomenon of increased use of drugs is but the tip of the iceberg.

One prickly problem, too little recognised, is the expansionist urge, particularly characteristic of men. Repressed anxiety lies at the root of this problem. Besides war and violence there are many other legalised anxiety-repressing mechanisms camouflaged as noble causes. The masculine struggle for European unity is one example of this. To anyone who is able to take a step back from this European construction it looks like the let's play pretend of a toy theatre. While large portions of the world show every sign of wanting to tear themselves loose from the artificial unity imposed by colonial powers and other totalitarian regimes, and to search out their original identity, politicians and businessmen in Europe are engaged in this counter activity. In order to suppress their fear, they want to create ever larger unities. Wouldn't it have been better to take one of Eve's ribs to make Adam?

Besides the tendency to form large, controllable unities, there is also a tendency to get over our fear by making everyone equal. A world in which everyone is the same is a world in which feelings are not properly recognised. This phenomenon, which is to be found everywhere - and certainly in the Netherlands - on a large scale, is called equalisation. 'Everyone is equal, everyone is of the same value' reads the slogan. The fact that discrimination is not permitted, that we are forbidden to 'differentiate', is fatal for every seed, for every individual chance of development. In our civilised world, discrimination has become synonymous with 'rejection'. Whereas the term has acquired a negative connotation, the evil lies not in the 'differentiation' but in the suppression of certain differentiated groups. I want to go even a little further: everyone is not of equal value. But the difference in value lies

not in skin colour, intellectual development or status, but in the possession of a true I. Someone who has kept and developed his true I better than someone who has cultivated his false I, is of greater value. Yet those who have a true I are precisely those who are subjected to negative discrimination in our society, because they are a thorn in the flesh of their narcissistic neighbours.

The only right scale of values is that of the development of the inner person. It signals the result of the fight between the true and the false. The more the true I wins, the freer it becomes from the yo-yo of megalomania and depression.

People with marked megalomania only come to the psychotherapist when depression looms. At the level of consciousness, they suffer less in the megalomania period, but their surroundings suffer more. This is perhaps the biggest cause of difficulties in partnerships: men are able to keep their megalomania intact for longer periods; women's position makes depression more likely. This means that they come to the psychotherapist earlier.

'Poisonous' pedagogy

*"In our society rights are not granted
because wrong is done to someone,
but because someone complains about it."*

JEAN LIEDLOFF

7.1 The poisonous triad

I should describe bringing up children as an ordinary part of life, a task belonging to life itself: the conception and raising of children. That is what keeps the human race going. There is no training for it, no diploma is required. On the whole, people think they can cope with this task. The more primitive the people the more easily the process proceeds, with, according to certain anthropologists, the greatest success. Such so-called primitive people have no ideal in their minds and yet this is the case in our Western countries. In this context I should like to define 'primitive' as 'pure', 'natural', 'uncomplicated'. Jean Liedloff spent some time deep in the jungle of Venezuela and there she met a tribe of Indians who were still living in the Stone Age. There she discovered their happiness and the harmonious way of life they led. She realised that the living out of happiness in our society is disturbed by the way in which we are brought up. For 'primitive' people, raising their children means following their own nature. This is far from the making of plans and the formulation of principles of upbringing which we find in our 'civilised' world. The subtitle of Liedloff's book is: "Towards a natural way of raising children". For me, this subtitle evokes something quite different from goals, ideals or and means to an end. These terms belong to 'methods of upbringing' and are typical of our Western culture. Let us pause and reflect on the 'ideals of upbringing' which dictate the way we carry out the task of raising our children.

The Western ideal of upbringing is not an individual goal. The society around us contains a collective ideal of upbringing. Its basic assumption is that the adult knows what is good for the child better than the child itself. It is a 'reasonable' assumption. The intellect - which although it may be a good servant is not a good master - takes the reins. The child is seen as an ignorant little being endowed with nothing of itself, a being who, in order to become a human person must be provided with everything from the world outside it. It is even assumed that it contains only destructive forces. The child is deemed to be wicked by nature, with a tendency to tyrannise over other people. From this viewpoint, bringing up the child must be to mould it into an 'adjusted' individual, in service to the world into which it has come.

In order to achieve such adjustment, a scale of subsidiary goals accompany the upbringing. In this series of goals of upbringing, the following qualities are crucial: obedience, industry, neatness, social adjustment. These qualities still figure on school reports in one form or another. For the child they mean that it must be 'good', which is a disguised translation of 'easy for adults'. Görtzen writes: "The

whole of modern pedagogy aims to produce easy children..." In modern handbooks on upbringing the ideals mentioned above are conveniently camouflaged. None of us will agree with the text cited by Alice Miller from a handbook of 1748: "The first years of life have the advantage that violence and force may be used. In the course of the years children forget everything that happened to them in their earliest childhood. If the children's wills can be broken in this period, they will not remember later that they ever had a will, and the strictness with which they are treated will not then have any serious consequences." This is language we can no longer condone. Yet I am afraid the content is still very much with us: the child's will is still something to be broken: 'mother knows best' and the same is true of father. Which brings us to the subject of the power of parents, child-rearers and adults.

Power is in essence misuse of superior strength. If I try to describe the situation of the child, small or large, in relation to the adult, and we take the child's point of view, then what comes before my eyes is a picture of an elephant and a flea. The power relationship between child and parent is like that of the flea to the elephant. Why should an elephant exert his power over a flea; with the mere flick of a muscle he can make it clear to the flea that he has had enough of its company. The elephant has vastly superior strength but he does not need to use it. But what do we see happening in upbringing? Because of a total unawareness of vastly superior strength, the child is bullied in every possible way, physically and psychically, in order to obtain the behaviour desired. Why is this necessary? The child already has all the potential required to take its place as an equal but, because of its temporary need of help, it is bound to rely on the superior strength of the adult. Respect for what is vulnerable, and small, and needing help, would do justice to the full humanity of the young child. The child does not expect its parents to misuse their natural superiority. It expects respect for its vulnerability and support in its development. It does not expect abuse of power from its parents. Parents rob their child of its Child-being and later on wonder why it is difficult, annoying and intractable.

The use, or even worse the abuse of power in relation to the child is the kernel of upbringing in our society. Alice Miller therefore calls all upbringing 'poisonous' pedagogy. Every kind of treatment, every kind of behaviour on the part of the adult that imposes on the child something other than what would allow it to grow of itself, without compulsion, is a drop of poison in its life. In all these situations abuse of power is at issue. Because the same power is exerted not only by child-rearers but also by anyone who has 'vulnerable subjects', such power is not taken out of the hands of those responsible for upbringing. Only when there is flagrant physical neglect or abuse is there an outcry, the more so if it is a nuisance to society. Violence and crime sound the alarm, but society spends no sleepless nights on the oppression of the child although this is at the root of violence and crime. This subject will be treated in more detail in Chapter 10.

Besides 'goals', 'poisonous' pedagogy also has its means which are as legalised by society as its goals. I have arranged these means in two categories. There are means which are used less explicitly as force, but have more to do with persistent ways of behaving; we may call these a style of upbringing. Other means are very explicitly used as measures to reinforce and affirm the child-raiser's power. A style of upbringing as a measure designed to establish the power of the child-rearer is expressed in the form of non-stop propositions and patterns of behaviour. I include a few as examples:

- 'obedience' is designated as incontestably the highest principle of upbringing;
- 'self-control' is praised as a quality of the highest order;
- 'humiliation' produced by looks and intonation is used to give orders more effect;

- 'being ashamed' of itself is brought in if the child shows too much individuality;
- 'pretence' is used to conceal one's own anxiety and ignorance.

Such basic principles and the patterns of behaviour which derive from them make up the style of upbringing in a family. But outside the family too, via the morals of our culture, they become the basis of an alienating socialisation. This style of upbringing is supported and accompanied by incidental power games. They are to assist the child in concretising its adaptive behaviour. Yet they are so strongly integrated into and recommended by our system of upbringing that the reader may be amazed to see them called in question here. We are talking about punishment and reward, warnings, threats, distraction, bullying, withdrawal of love. These belong to the second category of means used to reach the goal of 'poisonous' pedagogy. In the next Chapter we shall return for a wider and more detailed look at these themes. These ways of treating children are not individual discoveries. They are praised in all 'respectable' books on upbringing and are apparently the result of a collectively built up body of knowledge. After all, does not pedagogy deal with what ought to be done in the interests of the child?

What is the child's interest? What interest is served by 'poisonous' pedagogy? Behind this fine ideal hides a world of misrecognition of the 'true' child. This misrecognition springs from the parents' situation of need: they are struggling for the power they were forced to give up to their own parents. They too were once vulnerable children in need of assistance who became the victims of the misuse of their parents' superior strength. Here we touch the very centre of upbringing: if the child-rearers have never been in a position consciously to experience and work through the humiliations from their own childhoods, they will hand these on to their own children. Alice Miller puts it like this: "If we have never been in a position consciously to experience and work through the humiliations of our own childhood, we hand these on to our own children. Purely intellectual knowledge of the systematic laws of child development cannot protect us from annoyance or rage when the child's behaviour does not fit in with our expectations or needs, let alone if it threatens our defence mechanisms. With children it is quite different: they are not hindered by a previous history and their tolerance for those in charge of them is unlimited. Every conscious or unconscious cruelty by the parents is safely covered over by the child's love." And because the child covers up its own misrecognition, the parents believe that 'a child forgets', 'a child forgives', 'a child is pliant' and 'has no trouble adapting'. On this point the adults have appearances on their side. In all its helplessness, all its dependence, the tiny child can do no other than bend finally to the will of those who have charge of it. It needs them too much, for they are its only source of security. We shall cite Alice Miller once again as she remarks somewhat cynically: "During the first two years of life any number of things can be done with a child, it can be browbeaten, exploited, given good habits, beaten, punished, without anything at all happening to the parent, without revenge by the child." The more the adult violates the individuality of the child the weaker grow its potential powers, the more spinelessly it will respond to the desires of its parents. It still hopes that provided that it behaves well it will not lose any more love. It buys its parents love by adapting itself to their wishes.

When this is the position between parents and children every form of upbringing is 'poisonous' pedagogy. Even the noblest of the ideals of upbringing cannot prevent children from being used as long as the adults remain stuck in the unconscious suffering of their own childhoods. Their situation leads to lack of empathy, lack of the ability to enter into the needs and possibilities of their own children. Because of this shortage of capacity to empathise, the child-rearers force the child to do what they themselves think is desirable or necessary. This forces not only the child's outward behaviour, but worse, for the child is forced to recognise the message contained in its upbringing as right and to make it its own: 'you must see it and want it to be so; you shouldn't feel what you feel, your ideas are daft, what you want is stupid'. It may also happen that this seeing and wanting is subject to chance

and change. What is white today can be black tomorrow. The good is not always rewarded and the bad not always punished. Adults lie and do not always keep their promises. This is yet another danger for 'unhealthy' personality development.

Children are more susceptible to what their parents 'are' and 'do' than to what the same parents say they are and do. What Haley writes on the subject of the children of schizophrenics seems to me also to apply to 'normal' families in which 'poisonous' pedagogy is dominant. He writes: "If the child seeks closeness it is encouraged to stay at a distance. If it tries to create a distance between itself and its parents they react as if they have been criticised and say that the child must come closer. If it asks for something it is too demanding. If it does not ask it is too dependent. The child is imprisoned in a series of paradoxical relationships in which all its reactions are classified as wrong. What other parents would describe as normal behaviour - the child asks them for something, grumbles at them, doesn't agree with what is being done, defends its own independence, etcetera - they describe as impossible behaviour. Even positive or very affectionate behaviour on the child's part gets a negative response from these parents, as if they had the feeling that more and more would be required of them." Thus Haley.

The child does not need force in order to be itself. Children have an innate social character. As social beings they do what is expected of them as long as they are not treated as extensions of their parents. Their own will is the motive force for this. Görtzen writes: "...the child has a sense of duty as long as it is not imposed on him by force, it is certainly orderly, keeps the rules and performs duties. Its only care is that the burden it is given should not be too heavy for it but can be shouldered without pain, and that it is treated with understanding when it lingers, loses its footing or stops to get its breath when it is exhausted." The option for a sense of morality and duty he calls "protheses which are necessary when something essential is missing." I think the basic missing thing is that child-rearers are not in a position to let their child develop according to its own capacities. They do not trust in the growth of the child into a truly human person, because they themselves missed such trust in their own childhood. Perhaps the greatest emptiness in the adult is the feeling of not being allowed to be there. Then the child, by accommodation to the parent, has to make up to it for this feeling. So in the end, the incapacity of the parents, coupled with the child's accommodation, keep the triad of 'poisonous' pedagogy in existence.

It is the triad of 'poisonous' pedagogy because, according to Alice Miller, it contains the following three principles: the child must respect the parents, the child's 'inborn tempers' must be moderated and channelled by the adult, and finally, the trauma must remain hidden.

Respect for the parents plays an even greater role where the family balance between the parents is lacking. The child then serves to redress the balance. "The children are there to concern themselves with their parents' marriage and are used to assuage their loneliness.", writes Bradshaw. Where a child is emotionally more important to a parent than the partner, then the way is open for use to become abuse, whether sexual or not. In any case the child will fill a gap for the parents, whereas it should not have anything to do with the battle of role allocation. Maltreatment and abuse are not too distant from one another, in either a physical or an emotional context. But "unlike prisoners in a concentration camp, children are confronted with a torturer who loves them", remarks Bradshaw.

Hiddema cites Hagendoorn where he aims to give a summary of the standards for family life and of upbringing in the Germany previous to 1945. I believe this summary would still apply to other countries at the present time:

- General values; success at work makes you happy; success is achieved by effort and respectability.

- General standards of child behaviour: a child must learn discipline; discipline is learnt by always being occupied doing something useful; laziness and failure should be punished; freedom leads to laziness and must be avoided; a child must know its place and should be obedient; a child must be orderly and clean.
- Values in upbringing: a child must learn to respect authority; respect arises when the child is confronted by physical superiority; a child must be toughened by means of physical punishments; it is manly to be tough; the child must learn self-control and develop strength of will.
- Standards for the child's feelings: the child must feel respect for the father; the child must love its mother; children over 6 should think it childish to be cuddled by their mother; children must gradually learn to dominate their emotions; boys must be strong; boys must be tenacious (it's 'girlish' to give in); boys must suppress feelings like tenderness, fear, remorse and grief (these are emotions for girls).
- Standards for parental behaviour in respect of their child: the father must meet disobedience with immediate, strict and just punishment; corporal punishment and correction are justified forms of punishment.
- Standards for parental emotions in respect of children; the father shows no affection in respect of the child; the father may openly express anger; the father may not be weak or indecisive; the father must repress his own emotions; the mother may express affection with regard to the child.
- Standards concerning the relations between man and woman: marriage is a contract, not a love relationship...

Hiddema comments after all this that one should not conclude that there are no normal Germans. "It is primarily a question of particular accents, which are perhaps more marked in Germans than in other nationalities." So is something less marked normal? Yes indeed, especially something less 'outspoken', literally and figuratively, as long as it fits in with the normal pattern of bringing up and being brought up. Even where the reins are left entirely loose, we still have the hard nucleus of 'poisonous' pedagogy before us.

Upbringing is unnecessary. The child has its own innate capacity to realise itself and this will not be at the expense of other people. Alice Miller expresses it as follows: "Upbringing can make someone into a good citizen, a brave soldier, a devout Jew, Catholic, Protestant, atheist or even into a devoted psychoanalyst, but not into a free, living human person. And only this last, life and freedom, that, unlike pedagogic force, opens the source of the true capacity to love." She goes on: "Children who are respected learn respect. Children who are served, learn to serve, and to serve those weaker than themselves. Children who are loved as they are, also learn tolerance. On this basis their own ideals develop, ideals which can never be other than human, because they spring out of the experience of love."

7.2 Guidance as goal

After everything we have said in the previous section about 'poisonous' or 'black' pedagogy, we may now ask: is there a white pedagogy? In other words: do children need an adult to mark out what they have to do and how they must achieve it? We have already discussed the way a child comes into the world with its own capacities for growth and self-realisation. It bears its own seed within it, a seed which it can develop for itself as long as it has enough space, warmth and digestible food. The child appears not to need any planning from outside. External planning can only disturb the development of the seed and do violence to it. "Guiding the child can only favour certain skills at the expense of others, but nothing can bring the whole spectrum on to a higher level except what the child already

has in its own nature. The price paid by a child forced in a particular direction which its parents consider best for it (or for themselves), is something detracted from its whole personality", declares Liedloff. For her, upbringing has the same original meaning as education: 'leading out'. To be 'led out' by a guide or parent affects the child's development because it is pulled off its natural path and on to one that is less natural to it. This sort of restraint, even in the best case, where the approach is cooperative, assumes that the child is asocial by nature and must therefore be taken in hand. It is this purpose that is to be served by the upbringing; there must be learning and unlearning; motives and aims must be adjusted. This state of affairs is far from the natural path to self-realisation, a path which runs parallel to a 'healthy' adjustment of the individual to his social surroundings, and this of course to the degree that the surroundings themselves have managed to remain healthy. Because, for its development, the child needs neither socialisation, nor guidance; every type of pedagogy is a form of violent interference, whether it be gently or roughly applied. All upbringing which is active intervention in the child's development, is damaging. Such active intervention demonstrates insufficient trust in and respect for this new person's own capacities for development. "Mother" does not "know best": the child knows what is best for itself. The child's own will is its motive force to become the person it has the potential to be.

So why is the system of upbringing so firmly anchored in our society? Why do we give children what they do not need and even what is damaging to them? This cannot be our intention. Surely we all want what is best for our children. What makes changing the system such a threat? Alice Miller gives us the answer: "All recommendations for bringing up children betray more or less clearly the multitudinous and very varied needs of parents; the satisfaction of these needs is not only no use at all to the living growth of the child but actually makes this impossible. This is also true of cases in which the adults are honestly convinced that they are acting in the interests of the child." The word 'betray' puts us on the trail of a concealed objective. 'The child's interest' is the open and conscious intention. Behind it, and often pushed very far back, is a concealed drive: the working off of the adults' unmet needs. Alice Miller gives us an account of the hidden needs of adults, those needs which trouble the conscious ideal of upbringing.

Adults are in search of a safety valve for the parts of their own selves that they had to abandon as children. Their natural abilities, their needs, their feelings: none of these were allowed; now these old warded-off feelings present themselves as uncontrollable emotions; unverifiable for themselves and especially unverifiable for their children. For this new need, the need to let out what has been repressed, adults seek out an available object which they can also manipulate. The child, particularly the young child, fills the bill. Its natural basic trust and its dependence on adults, particularly on its parents, make it eminently suitable for satisfying the needs of its parents.

Adults want to preserve an ideal picture of their own childhood and their own parents. To this end they build up a defence against anything which might spoil the picture. This need 'not to know' may not be challenged or thwarted by the purity of the child.

Adults unconsciously take revenge on their children for the pain suffered in their own childhood and since repressed. This need, as well as the urge to see their original needs met at last, remain hidden from the child-rearer. 'To know' is threatening. Chapter 9 will return to this question in detail. "Because every upbringing includes at least one of the motives summarised here, such upbringing tends at the most to make the pupil into a good child-rearer", says Alice Miller.

The bottom line of all these needs is fear; fear of freedom, fear of the return of everything which has been thrust aside and which now comes back in one's own child. What parents fight in their own child is what they have killed in themselves.

The parents' own fear of freedom makes it impossible to give the child 'true' freedom. Görtzen distinguishes between 'being allowed freedom' and 'being free'. He says that many child-rearers think their child is free and are very eager to watch over that freedom. Against this he wishes to point out that a relationship within upbringing knows only permitted freedoms. Within the upbringing the child 'is not free' but 'allowed freedom'. At every moment, and of course as the child-rearer thinks fit, its freedom can turn into un-freedom. The child-rearer also decides the extent to which the child may be free and often also how it should occupy the freedom it is granted.

Freedom is a pre-condition for building up a fully human existence. On the subject of freedom, the Polish paediatrician and educator, Janusz Korczak, speaks of the basic rights of the child. He is convinced that the child has the following basic rights:

- The child has the right to be as it is.
- It has the right to the now of today. A striking feature of upbringing is how the parents respond to their children in terms of 'later on'. You will be grateful to us later on, you'll understand later on, later on you'll enjoy it... This mode of thought persists even beyond childhood: many people still do everything for later, a later that extends far beyond the grave.
- The child has a right to its life and its death. Although it is certainly necessary for child-rearers to take a complementary and supervisory role here, the child possesses the fundamental right to get to know its own dangers and in certain cases to decide whether or not to prolong its life.

These basic rights are the logical consequence of a freedom which means 'being free' rather than being 'allowed freedom'. "When the true freedom of the child collides with the true freedom of the child-rearer or other adult, then natural commandments and natural prohibitions are the rule", says Korczak. According to Liedloff such collisions do not happen in surroundings where the child's social sense gets a chance to develop naturally. With us, freedoms do limit each other; violation of such boundaries meets with resistance. It is important for the adult to make a habit of asking: isn't this to do with my own limitations, my own crooked growth, rather than resistance on the child's part?

All these remarks lead to a response to the fundamental question: should a child be 'led' and 'guided' and 'accompanied'? As we have already remarked, traditional upbringing has an ideal, namely to lead the child towards an objective. It is as if we take the child by the hand in order to bring it to the place where we think it should be. That in doing this we are convinced in our minds that we know what is best for the child, makes no difference. The fact that when we do this we overlook the child's own inner potential for growth denotes a lack of sensitivity. This sensitivity has been lost by child-rearers in their own childhood, a childhood in which they too were led.

Accompanying a child is another matter. It demands a completely different attitude from the child-rearer, an attitude which starts from the child. To give an example: if we accompany a child, then we do not take the child by the hand; we create a safe enclosure within which it can explore its own capacities, its own uniqueness, in the most creative possible manner. Such accompaniment, which starts from the child's affective needs and natural expectations, assumes that we respect the child as 'a person' having their own rights, most especially the right to be themselves. As well as this it will be essential for us to accept the child's feelings and allow all their expressions, free from the categorisations into good or bad typical of 'poisonous' pedagogy. Feelings are never bad. When we are not allowed to experience them they grow into destructive emotions; for example, suppressed anger becomes destructive aggression, but aggression is light years away from the original anger arising from self-defence.

From a supervisory, empathetic basic attitude, child-rearer discover that they themselves can learn from the child. They will press their senses into service to observe the child, in order to discover how it organises its world. In this way, adults can also obtain insight into their own childhoods and so come into contact with the child in themselves. The contact with the child outside them can put them in a position to mourn the damaged life of feeling in the child within themselves. In the pure, unfrustrated baby they can see what the undisturbed affectional life of a human being looks like: direct, unprejudiced, relaxed, ready to explore.

Accompaniment of the young child takes for granted that the child-rearers have got in touch with their own true I-s. If this reality is there, adult and child will bend in freedom together to the natural boundaries of social dynamics and find them no obstacle. Accompanying the child means in the end growing in the kingdom of the other, in this case, the kingdom of a new and unsoiled life over which we asked to watch for the a time.

7.3 Respect for parents

"Above all love one God alone, do not swear idly, neither curse nor mock; ever holy is the day of the Lord." It all sounds familiar. In Belgium there is even a rhyming version of the Ten Commandments. After the first three commandments which give us a clear picture of our duties towards the one, abstract, almighty god, follows the fourth commandment: Honour your father and mother! It is a task, a duty, a commandment. It seems to me no mere chance that this commandment comes so swiftly after the first three; they have as their common ground: there is always someone above you with whom you must reckon, someone to whom we are bound to show respect and demonstrate our responsibility. God and parent, both mean having power. They are both in the privileged position of exercising power over dependent beings. Is that not enough then? Why launch into commandments to force respect? Who made those commandments? We may suppose that there is every likelihood that they were the same people as those who now keep them in force: people looking for still more power, more prestige, revenge for the repression they themselves suffered. The power they allocate to themselves is not sufficient to satisfy their needs. They do not feel safe with such power; a commandment of respect from the side of the weaker reassures them of that power. This is why they call in the assistance of an all-dominating, inaccessible God, behind whom they can hide. Even non-believers are subject to the same influence. The commandment of 'poisonous' pedagogy is also valid for them: honour your father and mother. When we consult the old Roman Catholic catechism on this point, we find our task is to honour our parents and our spiritual and secular superiors. As a further explanation we find in several question and answer formulas the following duties of children (subjects). Children must honour their parents and superiors, love their parents, obey them, help and assist them in their need; subjects must honour and obey their superiors and watch over their just interests; citizens must love, serve and defend their fatherland and respect and obey civil authority. Then come the duties of parents and superiors. Parents must 'for a time' provide for the physical support of their children and give them a Christian education; superiors must watch over the spiritual and temporal welfare of their inferiors. Whereas parents have only to provide for their children on a temporary basis, the latter are bound all their lives long to give honour, obedience, help and assistance to their parents. Is this not the best life insurance yet devised?

A short time ago I heard a radio programme about Corsica. It related that the atmosphere of that country is marked by the honour and care paid to old people. The spontaneous question arose in my mind: when will I be able to go to a country which is proud of respecting its children? Yet 1979 was the Year of the Child! The government then called attention to the rights of the child. Measures were

taken to give the child more self-determination and a say in things. Greater tolerance of the child was demanded and attention was paid to children of the Third World.

But what child were people talking about? In my opinion it was an abstract child. The concrete child with its own unique world of feeling stayed out of sight. The commandment of 'poisonous' pedagogy: 'honour your father and mother' remained untouched, as did the pedagogical mentality of this society. Respect and tolerance towards the true child is not to be taught or fostered by a worldwide advertising campaign. It will be the result of creating a space for the child, out of

the inner peace which the adults themselves have attained. If the Government really wants to do something for the child, then it must devote money and thought to making its adults healthy: parents, child-rearers, social assistants and policy-makers. The Government (we write this with a capital letter!) itself must realise that 'honouring the child' is more important than making 'the family the cornerstone of our society'. Politicians and policy-makers will have to realise that if this is to be achieved, the traditional pattern of upbringing will have to be scrapped instead of reaffirmed. Why the government does not realise this I will explain in Chapter 10. For the moment we must not expect any help from that quarter. Let us hope that, here and there, healthy parents will take the initiative of recognising and acknowledging the child in its own development, without burdening it with the traditional yoke of 'poisonous' pedagogy. If these parents no longer need to insist that they should be honoured and affirmed by their children, then at whatever stage in their development they have reached, these children will be in a position to experience and shape their own needs, their own experiences, their own capacities and limitations. In this way they build up a 'healthy' narcissism. In this way a child can shape its own identity; in this way it can know who it is; in this way it can become disengaged from its parents and build up an autonomous life. A child who is consistently allowed to have its own thoughts, express its own feelings, test its own actions in its social environment, is a respected child. That child has, without doubt, sensitive parents or educators. These are the ideal educators. In less ideal terms we can say this: the less narcissistically possessed the parents, the more space they are able to give the child and the less of their own constricted worlds they pass on. The child then escapes being an extension of its parents' traumatised existence; it can lead its own life. It may be itself. The child does not feel it has a duty to honour its parents. Out of its own deep self-respect it will respect others, not least its parents who have given it the chance to be and remain itself, to develop itself on its own healthy basis of self-confidence and trust. Lowen puts it like this: "Parents who respect the child's feelings, serve and conserve the respect of the child."

Honour and the respect for young children is all the more necessary in that they intuitively and unconsciously tend to meet the needs and wishes of the parents; they are acutely sensitive to them. By meeting these needs the child hopes to earn what it so much needs: love and attention. At that moment

- and often also later - it can make no distinction between love and 'narcissistic possession'. For lack of a better, the child fails to recognise the conditional nature of the love it receives. It builds up a false I in order to survive, for the parents' conditions are precisely that the child should give itself up. The child can do no other than use its true affectional life as gage. The earlier in the child's life this occurs, the more dramatic the consequences, especially if it occurs before the psychological disengagement from the mother. The child is then as it were torn from its symbiotic relationship with its mother to act as an object to meet her needs. The child is allowed to be hungry if it is convenient to the mother to feed it; the child may need to be cuddled at the moment when the parent needs to cuddle it; the child may be angry if the parent does not have to take the anger on herself; the child may laugh, kiss, shake hands, when others think it important and seems to them a sign of the success of their upbringing. Later on, other points of upbringing come on the scene. Everything the child will do spontaneously at its own right time, is either planned and controlled by the adults or simply suppressed. The child must be toilet-trained at a certain time; at a certain age it must be able to sit, walk, talk. But it may not eat by itself, dress itself, go out by itself too early... All this is called 'upbringing'. It is really 'psychological maltreatment', often supported by physical correction.

Robbing the child of its own self - whether it is done gently or roughly - is the deepest kernel of child abuse. In our society of 'poisonous pedagogy' only physical maltreatment and sexual abuse are recognised and researched and even these are not prevented. 'Soft' violence is supported and encouraged in the guise of upbringing. Yet such violence is not necessarily less terrible. Against it the child is unable to protest or defend itself. It is a subject on which the child's voice is not heard and,

worse still, later in its life, the child cannot remember the evil that was done to it. Lack of self respect is its silent witness and will ensure that the commandment 'honour your father and mother' will continue to exist. The work of upbringing can continue on its way.

The Misrecognised Child as Child-Rearer

*"Make something of your own life
before you make a new life."*

THE IDEAL ADVERTISING FOUNDATION

8.1 Repetition compulsion

As we have seen, bringing up children is an exercise of power. In the best case, one would be able to change and forbid such power, if it were not for the fact that behind it the irresistible drive of the child-rearer hides from view. I use the phrase 'hides from view' on purpose; everything that may not be consciously lived out must hide from view. Where an adult, earlier on, from his very earliest childhood, has had to play hide-and-seek with his own feelings and needs, he will have concealed his 'true' I behind a facade. This facade, however solidly it may be constructed, will have holes. Everything he thinks, does or says will contain elements which will leak out through the facade. In that sense 'unconscious' is not an absolute concept. The damaged child, behind this wall, will not be able to keep in its need to react to its maltreatment, because the pain, either conscious or unconscious, is too much to bear. In the adult, and in all his relationships, the impulse even now to retrieve something of the former loss and to get rid of the painful experiences, will take a compulsive pattern. Impulse becomes compulsion. The inner impulse is turned into the outer compulsion, urging becomes compelling. In everything the adult thinks, says or does there will be a hidden message: what was once impossible I still want to make possible. For instance, a common example of camouflaged feeling is a person's need to 'possess' someone who is completely for him. It indicates what so many of us have missed: a mother who was completely at our disposition. This attempt to catch up will never succeed and will thus have to be repeated. The lack cannot be filled. This contrasts with the fulfilment of natural or primary needs which cease to exist once they are satisfied. Purely physiological hunger ceases to exist as soon as the right food is obtained, in the right quantity and at the right time; the hunger feeling for closeness to the mother, which is 'solved' by giving food, will continue to exist. If we often experienced this 'solution' in our childhood, this feeling of hunger will stay with us all our lives and become insatiable. This can find strong expression in demands made on our partners. In most cases such demands are not met to a sufficient degree or for a long period and then longing arises for a new opportunity to be saved from the distress. One's own children then present themselves. At all stages of their lives they are extremely usable objects for the mostly unconscious compulsive repetition impulse for love, recognition and acknowledgement. The newborn baby gives a feeling of warmth and tenderness; the wilful toddler or infant gives us a chance to exert our own attenuated will by issuing orders and vetos; the adolescent provides an opportunity to work off resistance to autonomy and sexuality. This is a small selection from the whole range of advantages parents take of their children in order to come to terms with themselves.

Our parents were also victims: not however of their children but of their own parents. This is why

they now, alas, make use of their own children. Use made without free permission is abuse. In our society, this word, 'abuse', is largely used for sexual abuse. This restricts the concept of abuse and other forms of interference with the child's individuality are neglected. In their lives, children undergo traumas through experiences connected to the fact that their feelings, their ideas and their needs are not considered. That is violation of the child. This misrecognition extends to all areas: 'also' therefore to the sexual area. Lack of respect for the child is wrongly attributed only to paedophiles, incest perpetrators and other sexual abusers. In our moral landscape, sexual abuse is strongly underlined as causing damage, while other forms of power abuse in respect of the vulnerable child are underestimated or even stimulated by the same moral code. This looks more like moral irresponsibility than real appreciation of the life of the child.

Using children to unburden ourselves is disastrous for the child and fatal to oneself. The urges, and with it the repetition compulsions, will stay with us as long as we fail to recognise and consciously work on them. The little room where the remains of our unhappy childhood are hidden away must be cleared out. Whatever is not cleared out by assimilation will persist in seeking a way out, a suitable object. Our own children are the first to be asked to pay the bill. They pay for the damage suffered by their parents who disguise their repetition compulsion behind expressions such as 'there's always something with you', which means "you never come up to my expectations, there's nothing wrong with me". Baartman writes: "When children had been unhappy with their parents, Freud tended rather to ask: 'what sort of children are these who are unhappy with their parents?' than 'what sort of parents are these with whom their children are unhappy?'" The question Freud asked still predominates. People who, as children, were neglected, threatened, humiliated, damaged or mutilated, cannot help but use their own children to vent their own suffering feelings. How can child-rearers, who are themselves mutilated, still believe in the inborn goodness of the child and its natural potential for self-development and social interaction?. For them therefore, it is impossible simply to leave the child in peace.

Making use of one's own children is an attempt to make the unlivable livable. Children serve to keep one's own repressed pain manageable. A poignant instance of this is to be found in the life of Hitler. Hiddema writes: "What Hitler did to the world has gradually become well enough known. Much less well known is that he was brought to do this because of having undergone a personal trauma." A weak, spoiling, over-fussy mother and a tyrannical father prevented him from bringing his gifted individuality to a 'healthy' development.

Hiddema describes the background of Hitler's upbringing as follows: "Adolf's father, Alois, was described as a hard-working, harsh man, who rose to be assistant-inspector in the Customs Service. He was the child of an unwedded country woman and the story goes that his father was Jewish. Alois's married life was stormy. He divorced his first wife, who was fourteen years older than he was, when he was already living with his mistress Franziska whom he later married. Two children were born of this marriage. When Franziska became ill with tuberculosis, Alois brought his great-niece Klara Pözl into the house, first as his mistress in turn and later, when Franziska had died, as his wife. She bore him six children: four sons and two daughters, of whom only Adolf and Paula survived. Opinions on Alois's behaviour are widely different. It is asserted that his children regularly had to fetch him back from the tavern and that he sometimes beat members of his family. Adolf, in particular he is said sometimes to have beaten almost to death... Alois's stubborn behaviour was almost certainly influenced by his difficult youth. According to Miller he was humiliated by the poverty-stricken circumstances in which he grew up, by his illegitimate birth, by his mother's divorce when he was 15 years old and by the fact that he was possibly of Jewish blood.

Hitler's mother was born of an old peasant family, seventh of eleven children. She was industrious

and a devout Catholic, educated in the doctrine of sin and penance. At the age of 15 she came to live in the house of her future husband. Klara was completely dependent on her husband; she had an almost incestuous relationship with him. Alois apparently brought her into his home in order to fill the vacancy in the running of the household. He treated her as a slave. Klara must have had strongly masochistic traits to enter into marriage with this man. Adolf was born after Klara's first three children had died. As he was at first a sickly child he got all his mother's attention. Klara was apparently very moralising and gloomy. Kubizek writes that she once said to Adolf: 'Because you are not obedient, your father has no peace in his grave. Obedience is the very basis of being a good son. You are not obedient and that is also why you haven't got any further at school and why you aren't happy in your life...' According to his mother, Adolf had many characteristics in common with his father, yet inwardly he must have resembled her. After her death Hitler was left alone as someone who had learnt nothing, achieved nothing and could do nothing.

It seems strange that Adolf Hitler never made any clear statement about the unfavourable circumstances in which he had been brought up. He never expressed negative views of his parents. Yet it seems that in his writings there are innumerable expressions which are a conscious message of the suffering he underwent. At the outbreak of the first World War he reacted by saying: 'For me those hours signified redemption from the stifling dream of an orderly and peaceful future which had embittered my youth.' It is also not unlikely that he was revenging himself on the suffering caused him as child when in May 1938 he gave the order to make the village of Döllersheim into terrain for military exercises. His father's birthplace and his grandmother's grave were razed to the ground in the process." Thus far the Hiddema citation.

This is a piece of background to Hitler's existence, a background which helps us to make his incomprehensible mode of behaviour more accessible. His life was one great repetition compulsion. His one-dimensional life, with its incapacity for love and for affectional contact, witnesses to serious early-childhood rejection and affective neglect, despite the amount of attention he received from his traumatised mother. It would seem that his repetition compulsion took the form of discharging himself in war and chaos, the outer war being in proportion to the war within. "He degraded the Jew to the oppressed, degraded and beaten up part of his childish self."

The reader will perhaps retort that Hitler's upbringing and its consequences are an extreme example and that this does not happen in 'ordinary' families or at least not to such an extreme degree, and also that Hitler had historical opportunities to gratify his lust for power. I follow Liedloff when she says: "Extreme cases are as it were a magnifying glass through which we can more clearly observe injuries and misrecognition and their consequences on the broader, more varied and subtler plane which we describe as normal. Such normal injuries are by now so inextricably tied up with our culture that we have come to describe them as 'normal' except when the floodgates open."

Hiddema cites Bastiaans' definition of psychopathic behaviour. It is highly applicable to Hitler's life. "Bastiaans sees psychopathic behaviour as persistent distress signal behaviour, whereby an inner isolation occurs which is so strong that egocentricity and depersonalisation are the consequence. From the viewpoint of the inner state of alarm, the world is acknowledged only in terms of what it can offer in terms of security, admiration, spiritual nourishment and cherishing; it is there only to still hunger.." Such inner isolation comes about through the worst that parents can do to their children, especially when these are very young: not allowing them to be there, in all their affective expressions such as anger and sorrow, without running the risk of losing parental love. Parents who are 'full' of the urge to work off on the outer world the suffering they have undergone, are unable to give their children this freedom of feeling. This will come to a climax in the thinking and acting of their children later on. Parents build a dungeon for their children identical to the one in which they themselves are

imprisoned.

It is therefore totally unacceptable to me that there should be successors to Hitler anywhere on earth, even though I know that millions of other big or small Hitlers are walking round who have indeed 'brought' children into the world. Alas, the truth stretches even further. To the degree to which each of us still carries with us some portion of unassimilated past, we shall hand a burden on to our children. Between happiness and unhappiness runs a long path of painful experiences. To prevent these we shall have to see before our eyes the compulsion which springs out of the irresistible urge to avenge our own childhood. If not we shall pass from being victims to the so dangerous role of perpetrators. There is no other possibility. Parents are not 'guilty' of the mutilation which they themselves have undergone. They are, however, 'responsible' for handing on the damage to their children. This damage must be exposed. To ignore the parents is to play blindman's buff, which comes down to treating the innocent child as guilty. However harsh it may sound, this unprotected child may later as adult rely on the same indulgence for his disguised repetition compulsion. The question of fault cannot be asked again, the feeling of guilt will be shoved one step further on to any child he may have. Yet the feeling of guilt persists in the adult too. He demands reassurance for it in a cunning way by demanding expressions of humility and acceptance. Once more the child is there to fill the role.

8.2 From victim to perpetrator

Unconscious individual needs and vulnerabilities in child-rearers are compensated in the upbringing they give. The fact that most misrecognition is carried out unconsciously in no way detracts from the fatality of its consequences. Unfulfilled longings and needs from their own childhood play the chief role in their treatment of their own children and of other inferiors in all layers of society. "The one who wants to beat him [the child GS], punish him and limit his activities is the wounded Child in the parents. The wounded Child in the parents wants to do this because of a) an over-adapted fear of abandonment or b) the need for revenge, to do to their child what they would so much have liked to do to their parents", thus Bradshaw. Alice Miller interprets it as follows: "The repression helped us, it is true, in our childhood, to survive cruelty, but at an adult age it prevents us leading a conscious, responsible life. Most people do not know that they were damaged as children and that it is precisely that damage that prevents them from respecting and sheltering new life. So they damage their own children in turn and classify obvious child abuse under the name of toughening up, bringing up or socialisation." The pedagogical objectives now so beautifully formulated are the masks which dissemble this reality. In order to achieve this, equally dissembling pedagogical methods are recommended. They conceal, as do their goals, the child-rearers's incapacity to declare the child innocent of their own repetition compulsion. Two 'pedagogical methods', namely punishment and reward, are number one on the list of the legalised and encouraged modes of behaviour in child-rearers.

Although giving rewards seem innocent enough and is seen by all pedagogues as an extremely positive means of giving encouragement in the course of the child's personal development, it betrays an objective which belongs to 'poisonous' pedagogy: shaping the child in one's own image and according to one's own need. Encouraging a child to answer to the desires, expectations and standards and requirements of the adult is very far from encouraging it to develop its own self. It is not the child's behaviour that needs confirmation but its own existence together with every way in which it expresses it. Take a very practical example: the infant comes back from school with a drawing. Objectively and independently considered it means nothing. Some parents think that as 'good pedagogues' they must react with enthusiasm by judging the result positively; other parents will react little because they do not understand the drawing; yet others will emphasise possible improvements

to the work of art. Although one type of reaction may seem to work better for the child than another, all of them betray concern for the result instead of for the child's feelings and for its capacities of expression. Has the child been able to express itself in the drawing? What did it want to express by these shapes and these colours? Is it happy with the result? These are important questions. A child can be very disappointed in its own performance. If the parents then react with enthusiasm it may be superficially comforted, but it will remain inwardly alone with its disappointment. The reverse may also occur: parents reject the result whereas the child is delighted with what it has done; here too the child feels alone, not understood.

Every judgment of what the child does, without thought for what is happening in the child, comes from the adults' own needs and their own expectations and will later on make the child into a 'perpetrator' who will make new victims. In this respect, rewarding is no different from punishing. The true child wants to be respected in all respects. It wants its parents to be at its disposition, not that they should offer it things (a soft form of imposition), nor withhold them. Solter puts it like this: "The instruments of praise and rebuke, so dear to us, are crippling for children's motivation, especially the smallest children. If the child does something useful, such as dressing itself... nothing can be more discouraging for it than the surprised ejaculation that it has behaved in a 'social' manner. 'Oh what a clever girl!' 'Look what Peter has made, all by himself!' and so on, imply that social behaviour cannot be assumed in a child, is not characteristic and is unusual. The child may perhaps be taken in by it, but at the same time it will have the uneasy feeling that it has not done what was expected."

To set limits on the behaviour of a growing child (not on a baby) is very important for the secure development. Boundaries should be set by means of clear messages as to what is permitted and what not. These are not accompanied by any implicit message like 'otherwise you are bad' or 'otherwise I shant love you any more'. Nor must punishment or reward be promised for the future. The child should not be allowed to feel that it is bad but only that it is a child that is loved and that does what is not permitted in the concrete situation. A child that has built up a solid basis of trust during its time as a baby, will be able to respect these boundaries without being forced to do so. Punishment and reward, as forms of hard and soft force, are not necessary in this context. Such violent means belong to the parents who at length, after a youth full of unfulfilled desires, want to have their way. This is the basis of their misuse of their superior strength; superior strength which lends itself easily to domination, violence and maltreatment.

At present, the media are giving child abuse a lot of space. It is estimated that 20% of the children in our society are abused. Attempts are being made to bring this to an end. Yet how can the problem be tackled before it is properly understood. Child abuse is still approached as if it were something happening in the margins of society. Yet as long as violence is still permissible as a means of upbringing, any discussion of child abuse will remain hypocritical. It is not a question of particular families, particular parents, particular children; it is a question of average parents at all levels of the population. It is true that its mode of expression may be typical of certain sections of the population. In the lower class we may possibly meet with proportionally more physical violence, with against that perhaps more mental violence in the higher. Wherever the fundamental assumption that parents are bound to 'bring up' their children, continues to be defended, no demarcations are possible. The gate to acts of violence is open and it is no longer possible to draw a line between violence and outward acts of violence. To me, violence as a pedagogic instrument must be called, at the very least, the wrong treatment.

Where is the line between the wrong treatment and abuse when violence is at the root? Is psychological violence the wrong treatment and physical violence abuse? From the child's point of view, from the victim's side, every use of violence is a violation of its unique development and thus

abuse. How could a child work out that blows are allowed and abuse, in whatever form, not? Beating is usually coupled with 'good intentions': the child's tempers must be bridled! But what is the difference between beating as a pedagogic measure and blows as child abuse? Baartman speaks of a 'pedagogic flick'. According to him this may and can be done. "Sometimes it is literally a rap over the knuckles... this flick is not humiliating, elicits no physical or mental pain and is not damaging to physical or mental health." I find this attitude superficial. A rap across the knuckles, given in the presence of others, can certainly be very humiliating and thus injurious to mental health. The rap may also be accompanied by a look and an intonation which radiate anything but amiability. The rap may not be so terrible in itself; the humiliation and the damage perhaps all the greater for that. Here too, the motive is the exercise of power. The motivation of the adults is in fact the criterion, rather than the behaviour of the child, or the pedagogic justification: 'the child needs to be made to do things in order to grow up.' The pedagogic justification is merely a layer of camouflage over the ineradicable repetition compulsion of the adults. Even legislators do their bit. Respect for the child is not included, at least in the Dutch Civil Code. Article 245 lays down the following terms for the parent-child relationship: paragraph 1 "A child, of whatever age, is bound to honour and respect its parents"; paragraph 2 "Parents are bound to care for and bring up their children during their minority". Except that the parents are bound to devote a limited time to their children - who are bound to their parents in a subservient position for the whole of their lives - there is not a single mention of parents respecting their children. In the Scandinavian countries there is fortunately somewhat more regard for this. Swedish family law dated 1983 provides: "Children have the right to care, security and a good upbringing. Children must be treated with respect for their person and may not be subjected to physical punishment or other humiliating treatment." Although in this text as well the secret of 'poisonous' pedagogy is not exposed (what is a good upbringing?), it adopts a clear position on respect for children. The Danish provision reads as follows: "Parental care implies the duty to protect the child against physical and mental violence and any other harmful mode of treatment." Yet who is there to protect the children against parental treatment inspired by 'poisonous' pedagogy? Is it, in the eyes of the Danish legislator, harmful to settle what is good for the child? Is it, in their eyes, harmful to let a baby cry in order to make it fit in with its parents' daily programme? Is it harmful to misrecognise the child's affective needs by denying it its mother's arms?

The exercise of power and the perpetration of violence merge so easily into each other that they are very difficult to distinguish. Both betray a deep-anchored need in the parents to avenge a lost battle. These adults, in the grip of the repetition compulsion, are therefore not in a position to decide what is harmful to the child. The only correct criterion is the child's own experience. What is 'good' is whatever offers safety and security, whatever respects the child's own individuality, whatever trusts to its natural expectations. A child who is 'incorrectly' treated sends out signals, it loses its vitality. Very concrete symptoms can be observed. Yet from the viewpoint of 'poisonous' pedagogy they are often misinterpreted. I recently read, in an article on child abuse, that despite the very clear signs of physical abuse, it is often very difficult to make a correct diagnosis. Many of the symptoms, for example, might occur as a result of ordinary accidents or illnesses. In the same breath, head-banging against the wall was described as disturbed behaviour. It is a misleading manoeuvre not to see the banging as a sign of maltreatment or abuse, when, in my understanding, there is a perfectly clear link between this 'dysfunction' and abuse. It is not the bumps and bruises that are the symptoms but the head-banging in itself. Further in the same article - this time on the subject of mental maltreatment - came the following: "For an outsider it is sometimes difficult to link mental neglect to a particular attitude in the child. Provoking behaviour can indeed lead to humiliation of the child, but it is also possible that continual humiliation of the child is the origin of this behaviour." A few critical comments seem to be required. First and foremost, an outsider may have no opinion since it is the parents who lay down what is good or bad for their child. The provoking behaviour is not seen as a signal of distress, as a signal of misrecognition. A reaction is being made to a manifestation, not to the

underlying experience of the child. Finally, humiliation is approved as a responsible method of upbringing.

Whether people may strike other people, whom they may strike, when they may strike them, how hard they may strike them.... such questions are absurd. Beating is always a form of misrecognition of the child. Yet it is impossible to combat beating as child abuse as long as the exercise of power continues to be tolerated and even recommended. In upbringing, power is the primary dynamic between parents and children. Lowen says: "Many mothers resent the fact that the [young GS] child automatically assumes that she, the mother, is always there and will always fulfil its needs while it takes absolutely no account of her feelings. Children are all too often accused of trying to exert power over their parents, whereas all they want is for their needs to be noticed and met. A babe-in-arms is entirely helpless and can only make us aware of its need by crying. A child is really powerless. Towards him, in fact, his parents are almighty; they literally hold the child's fate in their hands... The parents' narcissism is projected on to the child."

Striking the child is a serious offence, yet it is not the only one nor always the worst. If we outlaw striking, but otherwise allow people to deprive the child of all sorts of things such as affection, presence, relaxation, love and attention, then we are still far from interpreting the real meaning of respect. The question arises once again: what does a particular child experience as the worst in the given circumstances? All oppression is a form of violence, even in its sanctioned and legitimised forms. On this point I want to make some distinction between the use of violence as an impulsive reaction of powerlessness - a reaction to which the parent can later return with the child - and cold-blooded abuse of power in the form of delayed execution or sadistic tortures. Expressions such as 'I'll deal with you later' or 'you'll be hearing from me' betray bloodthirsty and vengeful outlets of feeling. This makes a deep impression on the child who has no idea at all what is gripping the other person. The child must have the feeling that it must be very bad to attract these vengeful feelings. It can only relate the other's dissatisfaction to its own badness. This also takes place when the 'chastisement' is presented as being given in love and out of love. In this context it is hard for the child to object to the maltreatment. Mental oppression without corporal punishment gives the child the same incomprehensible double message: it experiences 'violence' and so-called love is offered. The child wants the latter too. Baartman cites one author (Gunning 1911) as saying: "The fairly corrected child creeps back to no one more readily than to the one who punished it; he is the one it prefers to cuddle and comfort it." And again: "the punished child feels small and seeks to be comforted and cheered up, and these it seeks for preference from the person from whom it received its punishment."

Kohnstamm, in 1992, even speaks of bonds of love being strengthened by punishment. Sinister thought! Dobson [in Baartman GS] takes it even further: "Nothing brings parents and children so close as a clear victory by father or mother after open insolence... No other process is so conducive to mutual [?GS] respect as such a parental demonstration of authority." These are statements against which all of us, together with Alice Miller, must offer emphatic resistance. Yet the reality is beyond our power. The hate which such treatment naturally evokes cannot be expressed. And whoever is unable to express it becomes alienated from his own feelings. In this context we think of well-known victims of the open or more hidden violence of the father: of Luther, Hitler, Nietzsche, Van Gogh, Kafka. Those unable to allow themselves their hate against a parent, will take it out on themselves or on other people. Situations such as these are still current. We may even add that these children will often react in an exaggeratedly positive manner to any sign of the approach of the punishing parent. Where else are they to turn for comfort? Children have no other choice, they cannot bring their complaints into the outside world; that would be betraying their parents whom they need so much. This is also often explicitly forbidden on pain of being abandoned. Children are taught not to strike animals or younger children; they may strike older children in self-defence, but adults they may never strike, even if they themselves are struck. Later, as adults, they will be able to take over the role of

perpetrator.

Sometimes it is said that children ask for punishment and violence. Alas, this is all too often the case. If a child can get attention by no other means, it will sometimes 'choose' to make its presence known by this method. Many years ago I was staying at a farm camp-site in France. One of the spaces was occupied by a French family consisting of three generations. Véronique was the youngest child and about four years old. It quickly became clear to me that this child was being seriously maltreated. It was not at first clear what led me to think it. Later I realised that Véronique had to stay inside a certain radius round the tent. She failed to keep to this and the well-known consequences ensued. After some time I got to know the extent of her 'run'. Every time I went outside the fear took hold of me: now it's going to happen again. And it happened; any of the adults in the family, it didn't matter who, was apparently allowed to scream at her. I did not then realise that for Véronique this was the only way she could get any attention. 'Painful' attention was more bearable than the pain of being ignored. Other than beating, Véronique was given nothing at all: no love, no attention, no affection.

There is another reason why children ask for punishment. If they constantly feel that everything that happens to them is their fault, a punishment can serve to remove this burden of guilt. It produces a temporary release. The way parents react to this invitation depends on their own specific needs; the urge to ignore can sometimes be more fundamental than the impulse to punish. In both cases, however, the parent-child relationship is considerably disturbed.

Baartman gives the following definition of child abuse: "...the fracture of the physical or mental integrity of a child by those responsible for its care or upbringing, based on a fundamental disturbance in those persons' disposition towards the child." Such a fundamental disturbance in the child-rearers' disposition has, I am convinced, little or nothing to do with the child's behaviour, but much or even everything to do with the repression undergone by the child-rearers in their own childhood. The child has no part in it. The most the child's behaviour does is to evoke the childhood experiences of the child-rearers, no more. Underlining the child-rearers' intentionality in maltreatment - with or without evil purpose - is misleading. We will do better to speak of conscious or unconscious working off of their own childhood. All pedagogic means of making the child learn or unlearn is the wrong treatment of the child on the part of the child-rearer. The pain the child experiences in this case is the pain of maltreatment. In other words, what the adult does, is at the least wrong treatment; what the child undergoes is always maltreatment where it feels its person is not being respected.

As a result of the attention child abuse is receiving just at the moment, it might be thought that we are on the brink of an improvement in how we treat the child. Nothing could be less true. Beating children is still more of the rule than the exception. And where it seems a softer attitude may prevail this proves to be merely apparent. Blows are often replaced by mental neglect. Where, for example, people leave their young child largely in the care of others, which I consider a form of affective neglect, then they often compensate this by material spoiling. Mental neglect is just as much wrong treatment and therefore for the child maltreatment. From a future point of view, this form of misrecognition is more fatal because of the difficulty of recognising it; 'they had everything, they can hardly blame their parents'. Their spoiling, sometimes in the form of idolization, gives them the power to begin to abuse others, including their own parents. Society then finds in this a reason to justify taking a stronger line, using more compulsion. So it appears, again and again that as long as we fail to expose the true centre of the treatment inspired by 'poisonous' pedagogy, we will stay on the roundabout and it will not stop. The music of the roundabout is as follows: 'beating' is regulated and legalised, because it seems impossible to eradicate; adults need it, but set some limits if you please. Large sections of society, including children, will never reject what they may not and cannot see: the battle for power which makes victims into perpetrators. The right to strike a child is the right of the strong, the powerful. At

last it is their turn.

8.3 Bringing up and being brought up

The theme of 'child abuse' may give us the feeling that it is all presented in a rather gloomy way or that it is rather exaggerated. Indeed, even if 20% of children are abused, that still leaves 80% who 'have it good'. However, if we look carefully at the working definition used by the Dutch Medical Office (Nederlands Bureau Vertrouwenartsen) we shall quickly have to relativise this 80%. "Child abuse is all forms of physical or emotional violence to which children are subjected, not by accident, but through the acts or omissions of parents or carers, whereby disorders occur or may reasonably be expected to occur in the child." Can we not recognise here the very nucleus of 'poisonous' pedagogy?

The boundary line between wrong treatment and maltreatment will be drawn in a different place in every social culture and even by every individual. The line will in any case be drawn by the adults; the child has no say. The 'normality' of the upbringing is thus part of culture, but the child has no voice in that. The child lives out of its natural expectations, out of its own unique being. Even maltreatment in the current definition is simply a degenerate form of ordinary, everyday violence, of the exercise of power. It is implicit in an 'ordinary upbringing'. Many adults consider striking a child a responsible means of education; the exercise of compulsion in a softer manner they nearly all think is normal. It is simply called 'bringing the child up'.

Child-rearers have themselves been brought up and they are often proud of being 'well brought up'. Expressions such as 'my upbringing didn't do so badly by me' or 'I'm proud of the upbringing my parents gave me' or 'everyone needs a good upbringing, it sets you up for life', all witness to the idealisation of the upbringing in question. From the use of such expressions it may be deduced that their users, now responsible for bringing up children, have lost contact with the child in themselves. Through study and experience it has become clear to me that idealisation of one's own youth and psychological complaints often go together. The worse the past was, the less chance there has been to work it through and the more the experiences are repressed, the more the inclination to idealisation.

The fact that it is largely young to very young children who are concerned - corporal punishment is applied particularly to young children - means that 'forgetting' is more likely. This is, mentally and physically, the most vulnerable group. Because of their degree of dependence, young children are most accessible to pressure from their carers. Once they have become 'good' then nothing more happens to them, then they have nothing more to fear and can preserve in their memories the image of a splendid childhood. Maltreated and wrongly treated children try to survive by exaggerating the image of the good parent or parents and minimising that of the bad parents. My parents are good, I am bad, is the basis of a tie which will have negative consequences throughout life. What betrays these maltreated children later on is their disturbed relationship with their own children. The power they wield is camouflage for their own feelings of helplessness accumulated in their own childhood. Adults who have been themselves wrongly treated, treatment which was often respectably wrapped up in 'good intentions', run the risk of having a disturbed judgment. Their feelings and their experience are cut off from their judgment, from their intellect. There is no longer harmony between their experiences, their memories and their judgments. They have no compass to show them the right course. Bringing up their own children then becomes a question of being bounced back and forth between their own troubled experiences on one side and the demands of the society around them on the other.

What sort of style of upbringing will they opt for? An authoritative upbringing is more or less out in

our society at this particular juncture. 'Free' upbringing too has had its day. A new method, the 'inductive style of upbringing' has come in. The parents try to 'convince' the child that it should behave according to their wishes, their needs and the image of the child that they have made. This sort of upbringing is a further concealment of the same basic principle.: we parents know what is good for you. This cover is more difficult to penetrate in the inductive style of upbringing than in the authoritative. Later on it will be even more difficult for the child to recognise and work through what was done to it.

Despite their 'good' intentions there are forces in the parents themselves over which they have no control and which lead them astray in bringing up their children. Because child-rearers themselves are the victims of their own upbringing and because they are not sufficiently conscious of this fact, they fall into repetition, do the things they do not wish to do, lose hold of their own behaviour in respect of their children. The forces out of the repressed past are stronger than rational control. In this way parents are 'forced' to misrecognise their children because of their own misrecognition.

In our society, bringing up the children has long been the task only of the mother. That is still largely the case. 'The mother' is literally and figuratively celebrated in every known key. From this we distil the predicate 'good mother'. This is a woman working her fingers to the bone, doing everything for her children, a woman who keeps track of her children and checks on them, a woman who accomplishes her careful tasks in silence and is quite forgetful of herself. As such, she is really a 'well-brought-up mother'. What the child needs is a mother and a father who do not need to recoup their missed chances through their children and therefore have space enough always to start from the feelings and needs of the young and growing child. These are parents who can offer their children a firm hand, a firm hand which strikes no blows. Although the value of a firm hand has become a cliché of pedagogy, we can place it outside the area of 'poisonous' pedagogy. First of all we must define the age of the child with whom we are concerned. Very young children need a warm, comforting hand, the toddler and infant a secure hand. After that a firm hand means a reliable hand. A firm hand should never mean making rules for the child's feelings or needs. The word 'must' should be treated with caution. Who 'must' provide such a hand? The parents, society? A better way of putting it is that the child needs it. Outside 'poisonous' pedagogy the meaning is that 'the child needs a firm hand': the child must be able to rely on a permanent, trusted person who is clear and can set positive limits both for herself and for the child. Where child-rearers have themselves been too much brought up, the 'firm' hand quickly degenerates into an unreliable hand, one which may deal out blows. It is not only the child who becomes the victim of this corruption but also the child-rearers themselves. They are not free to enjoy the child's growth, they are not free to listen unforcedly to the child's questions, they are not free to enrich themselves from contact with this new, fresh life. Child-rearers are not free and they pass on their lack of freedom to their children. Impulse becomes compulsion.

At the beginning of this century, Key [in Baartman GS] wrote that the twentieth century should be the century of the child. The century is reaching its end. the Year of the Child (1979) is far behind us. what is the result? Physical violence is happening in fewer families, but the violence is more terrible, the offences are more serious. Grave abuse is increasingly reaching the public eye. There are more measures against abuse and because of these there is a shift from open physical violence to mental cruelty. The camouflages in the form of principles of upbringing have become stronger. There has been a shift in advisers. These used to be priests, pastors and doctors, now they are the pedagogues, even if 'medicalised' problems of upbringing are still brought to the doctor. Yet is the very centre of 'poisonous' pedagogy now called in question? Is 'poisonous' pedagogy being grasped at the root? Are the results of 'modern' upbringing better? Do children feel happier? I have my doubts. Does the twenty-first century not threaten to become one great battlefield unless the spiral of 'being brought up and bringing up' is broken? I give the final word to Stettbacher: "There is absolutely no reason - unless

it be for egotistic, exploitative motives in contempt of the human race - consciously to bring children into the world without loving them. Yet this happens unconsciously, day in day out, a thousand times over: a daily increase in destructive potential....."

CHAPTER 9

'Knowing' is threatening

*"That post-traumatic suffering
is healed by being forgotten is not true,
but it is true that many people
attempt to heal themselves by forgetting."*

ALICE MILLER

9.1 Why, because

My mother told me very little about my childhood. The only thing I learnt from her was that I was always asking why. She did not say how she had dealt with my questions. Fortunately, I had a younger brother and three younger sisters so that I was able to observe her as a mother of young children. Those little ones also asked why. My mother's only answer was: 'because'. I remember her consistently giving me the same answer when I was much older. She did not need to give any additional explanation. I understood it to mean: 'I don't owe you either explanation or justification, I know what I'm doing and that's enough.' I also remember that, at quite a young age, I understood that mother did not actually know what she was doing but that she could do no other. I think this freed me from the fiction of a happy childhood. My child's eyes had apparently seen through the power games of upbringing. It helped me, certainly in later life, to use these memories to free myself from the armour-plated panels of 'poisonous pedagogy'. I now realise that one or more adults less convulsively rigid than my mother must have crossed my childhood path, and given me the chance, even if only now and then, to see what was happening. Who were they? I am thinking of a neighbour and of the household help. Did they lift a corner of the veil by allowing me a glimpse of their own affective life? I had the feeling that my mother had grave doubts about their lifestyles. Now I see the connection, for now I can know, see and feel for myself.

Morals, ideology, religion: my mother used them all. They functioned as blinkers against everything she was not supposed to see, or know or feel. When, consciously or unconsciously, experiences from the past have to be prevented from reaching the light of day, they have to be kept under by the use of psychological weapons. Yet pain will not let itself be put away; it continues to fester. Blinkers like these are instruments people devise in order to protect their own mutilated I. My mother was one of the many who had emerged mutilated from her own childhood and unconsciously made use of such instruments. She suffered from what is called 'protective loss of memory' which served to make her own pain bearable.

Lest we should think that the influence of such ideologies is on the wane, it is enough to take a close look at the present huge build-up of theories, systems and methods for which the intellect is responsible. They are there to strengthen the 'because answer'. The mind is given top priority. Yet as soon as the mind is disconnected from feeling and experience you have alienation. Feeling, experiencing, are for the feeble,

for children, for girls. Being strong, having backbone, learning: that is what makes you into someone. All this assumes that we need feel little or nothing, that we do not need to listen to our bodies. Through one-sided emphasis on intellectual knowledge the path to true 'knowing' is closed. The intellect in isolation, with its systems and methods, kills feeling, represses experiences and makes what remains unrecognisable. For this it uses language as a razor-edged defence mechanism.

Upbringing, religion, science and politics all have their own jargon and it had a single common characteristic: the terminology of 'poisonous' pedagogy. When a child, naturally intrigued by its surroundings, enquires about the why and wherefore of things, or, from its urge to explore, asks what things mean, it does not expect to be told 'because'. It expects its questions to be taken seriously; it expects an answer it can understand on the basis of its own experience. It does not want to be put off with authoritarian arguments, with 'because' answers such as:

- why? because I say so;
- why? because I know what's good for you;
- why? because that's how it is;
- why? because that's how it ought to be;
- why? because you should be grateful;
- why? because you'll understand later;
- why? because feelings are dangerous;
- why? because you'll get what you deserve.

All these expressions are intended to modify and adapt the child. It is not allowed to feel what it feels, it is not allowed to know what is going on inside itself. From the very first moments of childhood pedagogic variations on this theme are used;

- crying is good, it strengthens the lungs;
- crying is childish, you're too old for that;
- the child is father to the man;
- don't go off the deep end;
- self-indulgence is unhealthy;
- letting yourself go makes you weak;
- it's just as well we don't always let you do as you like: you'd come to nothing if we did;
- you're too young to know about that yet.

De Batselier says: "Much human energy is devoted to concealing reality." The reality at issue is the reality of the misrecognition of the true Child in ourselves.

9.2 The ban on 'knowing' in upbringing and education

A child's past goes back to its very first existence, to the phase of total dependence. As we saw in the first chapters, this past goes back even into the uterus. That first affective dependence of the child on its parents makes it possible for the child 'not to know' and 'not to feel'. Biologically, the child can only survive by assuring itself of its parents' care. It is obliged, in a manner of speaking, to allow its parents to parent; it has to adapt itself to them and let them call the figures of the dance. From the other side, the parents use every means at their disposal to convince the child that everything they do is for its own welfare. Their expressed ideal is responsible for the child's idealisation of its parents and for the myth of the happy childhood. The expressed ideal of the child's welfare, conceals the impossibility of the parents letting the child see with its own eyes, hear with its own ears, feel with its own feelings. What it would then see, hear and feel would be a different reality, that is, the truth about its misrecognised and injured parents. But this reality is not allowed to exist and therefore cannot exist. The parents' need to disguise

their own reality stifles the child's right to see what adults are doing with it. So both parties are under pressure not to see, to forget, to repress and to falsify.

The following illustration is drawn from a letter from a person who withdrew from one of my courses after two or three sessions: "... when a particular outlook on life - like the one you bring out in your course - makes me sad and even depressed, I conclude that either I am not yet ready for such a self-analysis, or the course simply doesn't suit me because my world just doesn't include the basic picture you describe. I have tried to take a more objective view and thus to feel less 'affected', but the day after a session I always feel I have a great weight on my mind and I am not too happy for my daily life to be made even more difficult. There are, of course, some things I can use as yardsticks for myself, I certainly don't claim to have come through my childhood and teens unscathed, and there is a great deal in my life that is not what might be expected, dreamed or desired. In other words, life is not always easy or pleasant for me, but I think that on the whole I have learnt to get through the less pleasant moments by relativising them, helped also by a philosophic approach and sense of humour. I felt somewhat out of place from the start in a group of people all of whom had apparently had a difficult childhood and broken relationships with their parents, an experience I do not share. I was fortunate enough to have nice, attentive, tolerant and very loving parents who certainly made mistakes, like anyone else, (also in bringing up their children) but also showed their best sides and faculties through the years... I already realised I was feeling a certain resistance, but now I must admit that resistance has become a battle in which I seem to be on the point of losing myself, not knowing which way to turn. In view of the fact that I have recently become better at working out what is good for me and what not, and to standing up for it, I can recognise that this course is doing me no 'good', however interesting and instructive your presentation. I have drawn my own conclusions and am thus letting you know that I shall not be attending any further sessions... who knows, perhaps we shall meet again one day, a little older, more enriched. Until then." I hope this young, searching woman will find her enrichment.

If a child is brought up so that it does not notice what is being done to it, what it is being deprived of, what it is losing thereby, who it might otherwise have been and even who it in essence is, and if such an upbringing is begun sufficiently early, the resultant adult, despite all his intelligence, will experience the will of the other as his own will. Intimidation will have played a large role in making sure of this 'not knowing'. The growing child makes attempts to emerge from its ignorance. Its signals of discontent about its own well-being often reach the outside world, but they are accepted as 'normal' and thus neither seen nor recognised for what they are. Alice Miller says: "As long as a person is not allowed to see a particular thing, he will pass it over, misunderstand it and be bound in some way or other to resist it." This resistance often comes to the surface in the form of emotion. When a child reacts emotionally, thus signalling its repressed feelings, then the parents are ready with the appropriate jargon to brush aside these expressions: you're over-reacting, it wasn't that bad; that's rubbish, who told you all that stuff; always the same old tune, we don't want to hear it any more; it may be all right for other peoples but we don't expect that sort of thing from you. In these and other similar terms, the parents formulate their resistance to their child's emotionality: its attempt to break open its past. Parents persist in denial and forbid their children to talk about it. This makes it painful for the child to dwell on its hurt. The 'not noticing' becomes internalised. For this reason it is offensive to realise later how much was simply taken over from the parents and how much of oneself has been lost in the process. The past is a closed book. 'Let sleeping dogs lie!', 'You were too young to know anything about it!'

If, however, parents have the uneasy feeling that the upbringing they have administered may have been less than perfect, all sorts of cover-up explanations are always ready to hand: bad company, the negative influence of television, social deprivation, financial need, innate character defects and so on. Causes are sought far and wide but never in depth. All explanations are good as long as they do not drag in the parents' own part in what has gone wrong, as long as the parents' own failures remain hidden. The

explanation for an upbringing 'going wrong' is always sought outside the parents; their parenting cannot be questioned. The 'not seeing' and the 'not noticing' must be preserved at all costs.

The truth is threatening, not only for parents and children but also for their whole circle. Their world would repudiate them if they brought the hidden truth to light. The child, therefore, 'is never allowed to discover (even later as parent) how it was taught not to notice'.

For this reason, adults often need help in discovering the truth. Much of the relevant information concerns the most painful or terrible events which the adults would much rather forget. Bowlby expresses it as follows: "Memories of the fact that you always did it wrong, that you had to look after a depressive mother instead of yourself being looked after, the anxiety and anger you felt when father began to hit you or mother shouted menaces, your feelings of guilt when you heard that the way you behaved had made your father or mother ill, the despair and anger you felt after a loss, or the violence of your unreciprocated longings during a forced separation. Nobody can look back on such happenings without once again feeling afraid, once more angry or once more in despair. No one willingly accepts that it was their own parents, always perhaps loving and caring, who on some occasions acted in a terrifying manner. Nor will parents have been quick to encourage their children to record such events or call them to mind; they will all too often have tried to deny their children's observations and forbidden them to speak of them. As for the parents themselves, for them it is just as painful to dwell on the way their behaviour has contributed and perhaps still contributes to the present problems of the child. All parties are thus under enormous pressure to forget and distort, to repress and falsify, to excuse the one party and to accuse the other."

A child who has been obliged to be silent will later on find it very offensive to have to acknowledge that it was its own beloved parents, who brought it into the profound difficulties it now experiences. If it sees through the myth of the 'good parents', it will be amazed at so much ignorance, so much acute need on the part of its parents; at so much frustration acted out, so much misrecognition repeated. Its amazement will then give way to rage and grief. The 'wall of silence', the encapsulation of the early childhood pain, can continue throughout our lives. To this the words of farewell written by an eighty-five year old woman bear witness. She had the following text published with the announcement of her death: "I hope my last feeling will have been one of thankfulness. Thankfulness for the excellent parents who brought me into the world. Thankfulness for the many people who made my life bearable." So the childhood suffering imposed by her 'excellent parents' was made bearable for her for eighty-five years by other people. The myth persists.

The development of the misrecognised child might be described as follows. At its conception the child is already endowed with the potential to realise its own capacities. In its upbringing its natural expectations and needs are misrecognised and its growth is slowed down or hindered. Yet, it is never allowed to register its misrecognition, not permitted to see it but obliged to regard it as 'normal'. After this it is not permitted to react to its injuries; it must accept the wrongs done to it as a good upbringing. The misrecognition is repelled, the resistance stifled and the child's adaptation leads to memories of a 'happy' childhood. Later on, the misrecognised Child in ourselves attributes pain and difficulties to its own innate badness or to fate. To paraphrase Greta Seghers: nothing makes for so much unhappiness, nothing makes for so much loneliness, as being prevented from speaking out one's own truth: the personal truth about the misrecognition endured, about the loss of the 'real' I.

The effect of 'not being allowed to know' during upbringing is not only felt by the child but also extends to the parents who are not allowed to know what is happening to their child. I came across an instance of this in the osteopath's waiting-room not long ago. A mother was waiting there with her fifteen-month old son. The child had a bad cold and hung round and clung to his mother. He was to be 'tapped' by the

doctor. For the child's so-called shyness came the explanation: 'it's his age'. His chronic cold was described in these terms: 'it began at five months when I stopped breast-feeding him; he went to the creche then. But what else can you expect with all the pollution in the city?' I don't thin this requires any further comment.

As soon as the child is big enough to go to school the process of 'not noticing' is extended by education. Here, besides knowledge and skills, the values and standards of 'poisonous' pedagogy current in society are passed to the child. The child is also on the receiving end of the teacher's anxieties about 'knowing', because the teacher, in turn, will not have been allowed to 'see' in his own childhood. The 'unknowing' teacher's duty is to bring up the children. If required, he has a whole range of measures at his disposition to enable him to carry out his duty. Here too, the child is not permitted to see what is being done to it. Should it get even a glimpse then it is punished. Contradicting, resisting, are serious offenses. The cruelty and wrong done to it by the system - a system constructed by people professionally devoted to pedagogy - cannot be unmasked. Of course there are people who have entered the world of teaching out of 'idealism'. They would like to lead the children in love and patience towards the goal of a successful upbringing. They will tend to rely on reward more than punishment. They will patiently bring the 'naughty' children back into line. But this 'bringing back' has usually nothing at all to do with a return to their 'real' selves, but much more with answering to the model elaborated by the school system, which is in fact the model of 'poisonous' pedagogy: to bring up nice, docile, agreeable children. These nice children will not be able to see, just as their teacher cannot see, what is being done to them. Because the teacher is obliged to conceal his own past and for these reasons cannot be confronted with the loss of his deepest self, he cannot do other than assist the child to remain in ignorance. The anxiety which stems from that loss of self must be repressed. From this position he can do no other than live out his own life on his pupils, handing out praise and punishment on that basis. By chance, a school brochure came into my hands. It carried the following text: "Are you looking for a school at which you learn to see with your eyes, learn to think with your mind and learn to look with your heart? This is our school....."

The school's plus points were listed as: the possibility of obtaining a certificate, two computer classrooms, a language laboratory, a cheap book fund, study-travel from the first year, a good junior library, school sport, mixed education and courses for adults. What has all this to do with looking with your heart? In other words: what has it got to do with 'noticing'? How can you feel what you feel in this place? How can the child live out its own truth here?

If we could simply brush aside the above text as advertising then the situation would not be as grave as it is. Unfortunately, it is the reality of our school system. This school system is given further support by the 'medical services in education'. Medical and pedagogical professionals, sustained by their 'science', hold themselves in readiness to reinforce the not-seeing, the not-noticing and the not-being-allowed to know. Cooperation between these services and the schools strengthens the appearance of their being totally devoted to the well-being of the child. They also involve the parents in diagnosis and treatment. But here too the same motto applies: you are not to notice. This is hidden under the approach of never allocating responsibility either to the parents or to the teachers. The child has a problem and the parents are coping. Parents and teachers are asked to make a little adjustment here and there, to pay a little more attention to the child. But from the child a totally new effort is required, especially aimed at achieving better marks at school. If necessary, a therapeutic programme will be set up for the child. To what end? There is only one goal which would do justice to the confused child: to help it to get in contact with its own misrecognised feelings, to help it to see what it has, up to now, not been allowed and thus not able to see. The menace this would represent for the parents, teachers and counsellors has to be avoided at all costs.

A few years ago, I heard of a theatre company from Ghent called the *Stekelbees* Theatre Group. They were performing a Dutch translation of a play about Hitler's childhood. The play is by the Swedish writer Niklas Radström. This writer has expressly decided to take the side of a gravely maltreated child. The performances were aimed at children of school age. The theatre company had decided to give a number of preview performances for the school staff so that they would be free to accompany the young children through their experience. This assistance seemed advisable to ensure that the children would get help in digesting the play's very serious content and in bearing its burden. Or was it perhaps the unavowed intention of the company to prepare the school staff in advance? I had the opportunity of going to one of these previews. In that particular theatre, the company got no further than one performance. The sparsely represented school staff gave such clear indication of their moral indignation about such 'parental disfigurement' that further performances were no longer considered permissible. 'We can't let our children see this sort of thing!' In another town I went to a performance attended by the schoolchildren. I sat among them. The reactions during the performance were striking: moments of dead silence, moments of discharge in very tense scenes, reactions such as 'my father does that too'. It was clear that the youngsters in the audience readily saw themselves in the extreme situation of Hitler's upbringing. Even if this recognition was at times vague and unfocused, they were clearly calling on repressed images, experiences and feelings. An attempt at a discussion afterwards came to nothing. The youngsters would not speak in public. What I had heard in the darkened hall was not repeated in the light. A 'wall of silence' had been erected. Did their mentors notice nothing or had their own injured child already been called to order once again? Both, probably.

9.3 Repression of 'knowing' in society

Religion and morals

We discover the pedagogic commandment 'You are not to notice' in the old testament. In the story of the creation it already says that the first human people were not allowed to eat of the tree of knowledge. Adam and Eve wanted to be equal with God. For this they were punished and driven out of paradise, and not these two only but also all their descendants. Alice Miller writes: "Is it surprising then that we are willing to take on a hell of blindness, alienation, abuse, deceit, repression and loss of self if only we do not lose the place called paradise, for the assurance of which we have to pay so high a price?" And further: "but what sort of paradise is it where you may not eat of the tree of knowledge, which is to say, be curious, on penalty of loss of love and of being abandoned, of feeling guilty and ashamed?" The Church, a so-called 'godly institution' is appointed to preserve and watch over these and all other 'mysteries or secrets of faith'. According to the old catechism of the Roman Catholic Church we are to 'believe everything that God has revealed and that the Church teaches'. the church floods us not only with commandments and prohibitions which we encounter again in its moral teaching, but with secrets of faith, which is to say 'truths at which we could not arrive by means of our natural reason'. We have to believe without encountering, without knowing. For the purpose of providing a solid base for their world, our forefathers created a god-image already badly afflicted with 'poisonous' pedagogy: an authoritarian, pedagogue of a father. It is a father familiar to us from our own fathers: uncertain, authoritarian, greedy of power, vengeful, narcissistic. Anyone who was really almighty would not need to be worshipped or obeyed; would not need to punish so as to feel good himself. He would not have to penetrate everything, 'even our most secret thoughts', nor would he need to hide himself from us. A truly almighty, good God would be the opposite of the mess fathers make here on earth. We are probably unable to create a different god-image because of the reality of our experiences of parenting. In fact, even this heavily oppressive image was not sufficient to keep people in order. Commandments and prohibitions were necessary to guarantee the safety of this god; commandments and prohibitions which are very far from the natural social feelings of every newborn human child. Among these, two

overlapping commandments form the twin pillars of an oppressive power structure which we can call by many different names: religion, church, belief: names which we can replace by 'poisonous' pedagogy. 'Love one God alone' and 'Honour your father and mother', cover up and legalise the exercise of power by authorities, rulers and upbringers. De Batselier warns us against authority: "Do not listen to those who are clothed in high dignity, for their 'I' is not clothed in high dignity."

The division of good from evil which they propose also bears the traces of vested authority. The great sin is to see through the game. Those in authority may not be questioned for have they not always done what they could in the interests of...? When the abuse of power goes beyond bounds and can no longer be dissimulated, a new cover-up is to hand: forgiveness. Criticism is ruled out and remains a sin. Moral indignation is expended not on the abuse but on those who bring the abuse to light. Those who refrain from criticism and 'believe' without examination are declared saints during their lives and after their deaths. They are the adapted, nice, will-less followers who have stolen this accolade at the expense of their own mental and physical health, at the expense of their mental and physical life. If we examine their lives closely, with 'knowing' eyes, then we soon penetrate to their traumas. Their deeply-rooted guilt feelings, carefully packed round with humility, will betray just how deeply they have become estranged from themselves in order to gain favour from their various gods.

Religion and morals work together to maintain the fundamental attitude of 'poisonous' pedagogy and its basic principles. One of the mightiest weapons holding these in place is the deeply-rooted, cultivated feeling of sin and shame. Not to answer to the desires of the upbringers, the powerful ones, is to sin. They have rights, their subjects have duties. It goes even further. We were the ones who dictated the way our parents behaved towards us: it was we who provoked their anger. Indispensable criticism of the parents by the child, of the powerful by their subjects, of the leaders by their followers, is smothered at birth. Yet this is the only way to become healthy. Alice Miller says: "My just anger makes me strong and alert. I can now see through the lies, because I have had done with forgiveness, with praying, with gambling on chances and with my guilt-feelings about what my persecutors have done to me... I am now of the opinion that the greatest crime is to maltreat children as I was maltreated; to punish them, to forbid them to cry, to speak, to resist, to rebel against cruelty and even simply to see it. It is a crime to train them to the point where they are blind, stupid and lifeless, and then later to deny all of it. "It is difficult to lay aside 'values' learnt at so young an age. "In a religious family, the child who is not allowed to ask questions cannot at first believe that the world is not going to cave in because of its heretical thoughts", thus Alice Miller. We can only experience judgment of this morality later on when we come closer to our own state of need and get on the track of our own repression.

The Church as social institution unconsciously or consciously supports the evil it pretends to fight against. All the misery in the world flows from the destruction of the real Child in each human life. This destruction takes place between two 'truths of the faith', the story of the earthly paradise and that of the last judgment at which the 'good' will be separated from the 'bad'. We are in search of the lost happiness which we have lost in the name of moral principles; the same principles offer us a new substitute happiness, happiness in the after-life, on condition that we willingly and patiently bear our crosses. The Church as social institution summons us to war in the name of God. They set the parents to kill the real Child in the name of ideals of upbringing such as obedience, submission, self-betrayal, feeling guilty. All this we are 'not allowed to notice'. The eighth precept of the Roman Church: 'avoid backbiting and lying', is explained in the old catechism as: "... the secrets one knows must be kept secret: this is required in the interests of society and of every particular person." A corrected version of this eighth precept might read as follows: avoid bringing the truth to light.

The truth about our suffering has to remain hidden. We have to keep 'our secret', that is, the misrecognition of our true I in our childhood, to ourselves. We are not to make it public. And is this

supposed to be in our own interest?

Politics and science

It is not only the Church but also politics which demands the same basic attitude of 'not knowing', believing, trusting, according power. In such a system, through slogans and the show of force, a politician can reach the highest positions of power by a so-called democratic path. Alice Miller comes to the heart of the matter: "Our upbringing offers us a ready-made track upon which one has only to set the train going in order to travel wherever one's greed for power leads one." Such a political system will naturally be unlikely to tamper with methods of upbringing by suggesting a different programme or bringing in different measures. Although a beginning has been made with the law against physical maltreatment (when this can be seen to go beyond the bounds), psychological maltreatment and oppression still goes on, concealed and tolerated under the guise of 'upbringing'.

Science, with its open enthronement of reason, of the intellect, contributes its portion to this concealment. Intellect rules over feeling and doing. Theories help to keep people in a state of ignorance. We are taught that only the intellect safeguards our life, we might say, our survival. Rationalisation, and also materialism (to which we shall return later), are a flight from the total reality of our existence which is made up of feeling, thinking and doing.

The exact sciences, with their intellectual objectivity, keep us at a distance from our existence in the totality of its aspects. Social science sums up our existence in theories: "In the name of objectivity, social sciences have sucked the life out of Reality and destroyed it. What do they teach? That everything is to be divided up and divided out. That quality is a side-effect of quantity. The everything is measurable, countable, divisible, multipliable and subtractable. That Reality can be reduced to what that same science, on its premises, proposes as the truth. That beyond that, nothing exists. That they can predict and programme everything", writes De Batselier. Both forms of science keep us safely away from our painful past. Signals from our body bring us closer to this than will science. It is not the professional or the science which is important, but the truth, the truth which is in ourselves. And this truth, alas, includes a large dose of violence. That violence also is hidden from science. The scientists will continue to look for protection in the nuclear shelters of their useless sham theories and pretend concepts.

Upbringing, education, science and politics are the framework within which our culture is built. Power and powerlessness dictate the rules of play. Those people who are unable to work using these rules of play, geniuses of creation, bring the weakness of the cultural system to light in a very clear way. The degeneration and marginal lifestyle of many of our artists, both known (Van Gogh, Mozart...) or unknown, are wrongly understood. It is not their creativity, but their repressed affective life, not their intense capacity for work but the misdirection of their own individual characters which brings them to their early deaths. Despite the many volumes devoted to their lives, the agents responsible for their tragedy do not come to light. The narrative of their lives is described as a fateful course, as something unavoidable, as something for which no one else could be held responsible or guilty. Biographers, and journalists too, suffer from the syndrome of 'not noticing', of not bringing to light.

The press, the legal and judicial system and medicine

This seems to be a historical moment for exposing scandals: scandals of corruption, scandals of the environment, shady financial operations and criminal dealings. Yet the greatest scandal of all, the rape of the Child, remains hidden. The *press* is party to this concealment. They do this by trivialisation: 'it isn't news', by drawing a veil over it, by mocking it or calling it in question, by labelling the exposer 'deranged' and accusing them of irresponsible behaviour. Even the self-styled progressive press dares

not begin on this subject. Anxiety for the theme of 'childhood' is not experienced but fended off by all possible means, accompanied by clouding concepts and speculations. The freedom of speech so dear to the press is abandoned as soon as the misrecognition of the Child, of the child in the adult, of the Child in the journalist, comes up. Reviewers, biographers, journalists: all are afraid of the painful, living memories from their own childhoods. If they were forced to live out this fear, then they would acquire the necessary feeling to empathise with the urgent needs of other children. We can assume with certainty that Niklas Radström was able to empathise with his own Child in himself, for he would not otherwise have been able to write such a moving text for his play. Other writers who are suddenly confronted with their childhood suffering reach for a weapon with which to fight against the upsurge of despair. They want to feel 'normal' again. Finally, publication of the truth of childhood will be preceded in many publishing houses by a defensive reaction made up of fear and prejudice. If the financial advantages overcome this reaction, then they publish. Then it is not the child in themselves who is speaking out, but their purses.

Reflection on the *administration of justice* in our society yields the same sad balance. Recourse to the childhood of the suspect is limited to the establishment of 'mitigating circumstances': the words used are neutral and impersonal. Thus, no third parties, and certainly not the parents, are called to account. Parents are seldom called to account in any case. Still worse, they are often perceived as the victims of their own children. In reality, when it was their turn, they were victims of their elders. Because suspects, plaintiffs and those who judge (judges, advocates, the police and legislators) all have the same background of 'poisonous' pedagogy, every judgment will contain an element of 'working off', in the guise of legalisation of punishment. The actors in both the crime and the trial are unseeing people, unknowing people, unaware of what has been done to them. The form in which the destructivity expresses itself, differs. We shall return to this in the following chapter.

Medicine too is confronted daily by the results of traumas from childhood. I can hear my mother still, desperately asking the family doctor: "why is she ill so often? Is she so weak?" The answer from our very committed doctor was: "I don't know either: she is not weak." He didn't know. He couldn't 'know'. His training had not prepared him for this question. Illness is accepted as a normal phenomenon. Children just have tummy aches, headaches, sore throats, loss of appetite, low energy levels, not to mention insomnia. These are 'childish illnesses'. As long as the child is forced to keep silent about all its unsatisfied needs, it can only express these in the form of insomnia, illness and depression. This knowledge is also fended off by the doctors. It worries them too. Their fear prevents them from really listening to the patient. Lack of time is their alibi. Instead of a listening ear for his real trouble, which is the misrecognised child in himself, the patient gets a prescription for medicine or is sent away with the comment 'it's psychological'. This last is really telling him: it's your own fault; solve your own problems. The maintenance of the misrecognition, for example by the prescription of tranquillisers or other drugs, sets the doctor's mind at rest and does the same for the patient's own circle. Yet the patient is inwardly no better for them. A listening ear is one that not only understands the spoken word but also picks up the messages sent out by the injured child. In psychiatry too, this listening ear would do wonders: a great quantity of palliative medicine would never find its way to the patient. The signals sent out by the wounded child would be the yardstick for treatment. But the reality is different. Most doctors behave as if they knew everything, and the patients flounder in ignorance. Medical staff 'need all those weapons: tablets, electric shocks, insulin cures, to be sure that the child shut up in the patient does not begin to talk, does not take the risk of telling its history'. It is thus no wonder that they do not know how psychoses originate. Try to forget, not to know, is what the medical staff, together with the despairing patients, most want to do. The unconscious fear on the part of the medical staff that their own pain will come to life, prevents the patients from screaming out their unbearable burdens. What they can mostly still do is be angry, burst into tears. But even that is hardly allowed. It has a bad effect on their health and upsets the institutional calm of the hospital. Upsetting the institution (or might it be the

staff of the institution?) takes priority over the cry for help of a desperate person searching for truth. Alice Miller's comment is as follows: "The patient is prescribed tranquillisers so that he will be peaceful, so that he will please refrain from getting to the source of his symptoms. I think the problem of health pedagogy lies mostly in the fact that those primarily concerned, institutes and medical staff, do not want to know, on any terms, why people get ill. This refusal has the result that uncountable numbers of chronically ill people 'inhabit' hospitals and prisons for tens of years, that millions and billions are given out by the state, simply in order to keep a secret." And further: "If, one day, the secret of our childhood ceased to have to be a secret, the state would be able to save the millions which are at present invested in hospitals, psychiatric institutions and prisons in order to maintain people's blindness." The pharmaceutical industry flourishes thanks to the 'not knowing'. Robbing people of their past - in extreme forms by electro-shock 'therapy' - is a painful and blatant form of rape. The loneliness, the despair and the confusion of the psychiatric patient are maintained by the ignorance, fear and resultant resistance of the doctors, psychiatrists and staff. The gap between intellect and feeling, a gap which lies at the root of psychosis, can never be closed by way of such an approach. Shall we ultimately succeed through the psychotherapist? Alice Miller does not give us much ground for hope: "Unfortunately, many therapists definitively close off the history of the child." The unconsciously and consciously manipulative methods of psychotherapy, which are accepted as a matter of course by many clients because they are so familiar, conceal the therapeutic triad:

- respect for the parents (does this also mean respect for the therapist?)
- interpreting the client's rightful needs as misdirected passions
- concealment of the real trauma.

Pointing out that the parents also had positive sides is superfluous and useless. The client has never had any trouble with that. His positive experiences did not need to be repressed: they did not threaten his survival. Looking at the parents' positive attitude in the present only plunges the reality of childhood into deeper mist. It conceals the fact that the parents behaved differently with the child at that time from how they later claim to have behaved.

Ignoring the child's rightful needs in the adult client by interpreting them as part of him which cannot be allowed, strengthens his own negative self-image and his self-destructive guilt-feelings. In this way, therapist and client look through the same distorting spectacles which prevent them from seeing the truth. The ignoring, the not-seeing and the not-knowing continue and their destructive effect is maintained. In the therapy, as elsewhere, the crippling fear in both therapist and client, is avoided instead of being brought into the open.

The real trauma is concealed. The connection with childhood is pushed to one side although it is crucially important to help the client discover which situations in the past are connected with his present symptoms. His symptoms are either a reaction to those situations, or side effects of his efforts to survive by not reacting to them.

"Why, in most cases, does the therapist fail to investigate the real traumas of childhood?" asks Alice Miller. The answer is to hand: the client cannot be allowed to unmask the therapist's own objectified life. The client cannot be allowed to dig up what the therapist has buried. To this end the therapist will make his client the object of speculation. The influential time of childhood will be avoided and so remain buried. The client must be socialised or, in other words, adapted. So he must get rid of his symptoms, the sooner the better. There are therefore even methods set up aimed at enhancing 'not seeing' and 'not knowing'. The reality of the present requires us to forget.

Social manifestations of 'poisonous' pedagogy

*"Crime is not one society's subsidiary activities;
society is criminal."*

STEVEN DE BATSELIER

10.1 Inward-turned destructiveness

'Not knowing', 'not seeing', 'not recognising' and 'not living through' everything that is done to the young child, does not lead only to great suffering for the individual person; the community also has to bear the negative consequences. It may be seen as a vicious circle: the injured people make up the society and this society in turn injures the new individuals. The individual acts destructively. Society and its ruling authorities react using power. The individual's destructiveness mirrors his powerlessness. Power and powerlessness act and react in a downward spiral. Each drags the other down. Both are the result of the same disjunction: the alienation of the individual from himself.

The destructiveness of the individual occurs in two forms: one is that of psychological or somatic illness, which results from injury turned inward; the other form is that of violence employed in taking out the injury on other people. Basing ourselves on Lowen, we might suggest that the criminal concentrates on outer reality and closes off the inner world of feeling. The psychiatric patient, or ill person, withdraws from the outer world into an inner reality. In this context, Bradshaw speaks of 'acting out' and 'acting in'. "Acting out is one of the most destructive ways in which the wounded child sabotages our life." In 'acting in', unassimilated emotions from the past are focused on the self. We may wonder whether there are visible trends which might make it possible to predict whether any particular person injured in childhood will become a patient or a criminal. A cautious conclusion might be that one can see a quantitative excess of inward-turned destructiveness among the higher social classes: white-collar crimes excepted, open violence and criminality is less the rule. Power and status give members of these classes a better chance of keeping their outward social faces clean.

The next paragraph deals with inward-turned destructiveness.

Falling ill

In our society, being ill is a fact taken as self-evident. It can happen to all of us. When being ill is life-threatening we are invaded by a feeling of helplessness in the face of fate: it overwhelms us. Doctors come into action, the medical mills begin to turn. If, at this stage, causes are sought, the search is confined to the level of observable, quantifiable defects. In the medical world, a human being is thought of as a machine, be it a very intricate machine, and being ill as a reparable defect in that machine. The doctor is a technician concerned with mechanical dysfunction. If no quantifiable defects can be found, then either some virus or other must be held responsible or the illness is psychological. It is then beyond the technician's scope. At the level of psychological difficulties, the suffering of the

misrecognised Child is even more deeply concealed. If the classic psychiatric methods - having a chat, prescribing medicines, a spell in hospital, more, stronger medicines, and possibly isolation and electro-shock 'therapy' - afford no relief, explanation for the illness is sought in hereditary defects. In this way, the powerlessness springing out of inability or unwillingness to 'see' the destructive consequences of the sufferings of early childhood, is avoided. The 'ill' person is labelled and their healing process blocked. They remain depressive, psychotic or addicted. In the worst case they bring everything to an end by turning their hands against themselves. Inward-turned destructiveness has then attained its most acute form.

W. Vandereycken works with four concepts of illness;

- a) the medical concept of illness: it is attributed to pathological anatomical and physiological findings;
- b) the sociological concept of illness: being ill is socially unadapted behaviour;
- c) the psychological concept of illness: being ill is suffering (experiential), exceptional role behaviour (interactional), inhibited self-development (humanistic), failure of the ego function (ego-psychological);
- d) the juridical forensic concept of illness: being ill is being no longer responsible for one's own actions (not accountable, dangerous).

I start from the psychological concept of illness: being ill has a fundamental connection with 'inhibited self-development': this leads to functional failure of the I and thus to physical and psychological illness. People who have not been forced to abandon their true I, who experience their self as a unity, as a connected whole, who are clearly and consciously familiar with their true life process, who act on the basis of their own thinking and feeling; those to whom living in the fullest meaning of the word is naturally self-evident: such people will have, in my opinion, the ability to succeed in repelling attacks from the exterior. They will be able to close themselves off, factually and mentally from the outside world. Their own identity will allow them to act in their self and from their self. The quietness which rests on the strength of their own being will give them the possibility of leading a constructive life. A well-ordered past contains nothing to be worked off. Like anyone else, 'fully-functional' people can have accidents or be affected by the pollution of the environment. They do not escape the influences which press in from the exterior. However, their psychological strength means that they are strong in the face of psychosomatic illnesses. In contrast, in the case of those who have had to abandon their true I, this will not fail to become apparent. It has to come out, as Marie Cardinal asserts so strikingly in her book 'The Words to Say It'. The symptoms, witnesses to a broken-off development of the self, carry the message that destruction of the self has taken place in the interior. Marie Cardinal cites her suffering patients thus: "I was nobody. I had no desires, no willpower, no preferences, no dislikes. I was a cast made from the human model which I had not chosen and which did not suit me. From my birth onwards, they hammered and chiselled away at me; every day they corrected my gestures, my posture and my vocabulary. My needs, my desires, my temperament were all repressed, dammed up, hidden away, imprisoned... and I was stuffed with respectable ideas. When it became clear that the graft had taken, they let me go and I was pushed out into life." This statement shows how feeling, and thinking, as well as personal action, were destroyed. The consequences of this sort of destruction of the self are not slow to appear. In our society they are visible and tangible as depressivity, melancholy, hypochondria, dejection, anxiety; as unfocused feelings of menace, or phobias; guilt, shame and shyness, despair, uncertainty and feelings of inferiority, loneliness, emptiness, boredom; feelings of pointlessness and meaninglessness, alienation from oneself and from other people.

All these symptoms, which can be seen in the individual who is ill but also in society as a whole, are exhibited in more or less serious forms. The neurotic suffers from anxieties, the psychotic loses contact with reality, the borderline patient lives between dream and reality and the multiple personality - a diagnosis now so much in fashion - has split itself into several lives. Each of these forms tells us something about the nature and gravity of the misrecognition and the time at which it occurred. We have all emerged from childhood more or less injured, wounded and misrecognised, and thus all at least to some degree neurotic. In some cases, the maltreatment, the abuse, the emotional neglect and the rejection may have taken such extreme forms that, to the Child, psychosis or borderline or multiple personality have looked like the only 'solutions'.

Emotional disablement increases. Family doctors are flooded with psychosomatic complaints; psychiatric hospitals are overcrowded; alternative medicine fills the gaps left by classic medicine. In short, 'the well-being and happiness market' is flourishing. And science? Science notes, describes and regulates so that the 'facts behind the truth', as Alice Miller calls them, drown in a welter of fine concepts and theories.

'Being ill' is a progressive process in our society. The government tags behind the facts and tinkers with the system in its financial aspects. Yet these financial aspects would become acceptable if only 'seeing' were accepted. To borrow Alice Miller's words once more: "At present, the State pays for lifelong nursing for invalids and chronically ill patients who could be restored to health by the truth." The pharmaceutical industry continues to flourish. There is a range of medicines for every problem. In this way the original cause of much of our illness remains hidden and the truth about the sufferings of childhood does not have to come to light.

Addiction

Addiction is also a form of inward-turned destructiveness. The body and the spirit are dependent on stimulants. Addicts lose control over the use of the stimulant to which they have become enslaved. They lose their battle with forces within their self stronger than they are. They no longer have any power over their own functioning: they lose their self. Their addiction is a war of annihilation against their true I: total inward-turned destructiveness. In her analysis of the life of Christiane F., the heroin addict, Alice Miller says: "The drug addict punishes himself for seeking his true self - certainly a justifiable and essential goal - by destroying his own spontaneous feelings, repeating the punishment that was inflicted on him in earliest childhood when he showed the first signs of vitality. Almost every heroin addict describes having initially experienced feelings of hitherto unknown intensity, with the result that he becomes even more conscious of the vapidness and emptiness of his usual emotional life. He simply can't understand that this experience is possible without heroin, and he understandably begins to long for it to be repeated. For in these out-of-the-ordinary moments, the young person discovers how he might have been; he has made contact with his self, and as might be expected, once this has happened, he can find no rest. He can no longer act as though his true self had never existed. Now he knows that it *does* exist...."

Addiction thus has a prehistory which the addict hardly feels. Addicts are often quite convinced that they have had an 'ideal' upbringing. Their inner need cannot be experienced because of the idealisation of their parents. The basis of the need is the conflict between the longing for the true I and the necessity of adapting to the wishes and expectations of other people. It is an inner battle of life and death, and the addict seems to have lost the battle. They live out a slow death.

The community takes a selective view of this life and death battle on the addict's part. We look on as

addicts slowly become annihilated by their own destructiveness. Our view is selective in that certain addictions are tolerated and others not. Whatever makes money for the community (read: the stimulants industry and the government), such as alcohol and tobacco, is all right. Even advertising it is all right. Whatever lays too much of a burden on society is not all right.

Suicide

The most extreme form of inward-turned destructiveness is suicide. I get a sour taste in my mouth when people talk about 'a freely chosen death'. As if we choose to destroy ourselves. Would it not be more accurate to describe it as doing away with the remaining carcass? After all, anyone who is suicidal has seen life drained out of them: there is nothing left to do but to bring their sufferings to an end. Suicide is the tragic result of a process of annihilation; it witnesses to advanced degeneration of the 'true' self. The suicide has one remaining weapon of destruction with which to declare war on all the people who have wounded him. But his declaration of war is misplaced: sent to the wrong address. He declares war on himself in order to escape from unbearable psychological suffering; the war is not declared against the originators of his suffering. Because the suicide cannot allow his rage, his vengeance and his hate, out into the open, he wreaks it all on himself. Suicide is the only way out; all other roads are dead ends: nothing pierces 'the wall of silence'. The suicide feels imprisoned and shut off. The fourth commandment cannot be broken. The 'truth behind the facts', *his own* truth about the misrecognition in his early childhood, cannot be spoken aloud.

In his book 'Death by Choice', Dijkstra cites a passage from Nadjezjda Mandelstaum's memoirs: "It is strange that none of us, whether we are disturbed or normal, ever give up hope: suicide is the last resort which we keep in reserve, and we seem to think that it is never too late to apply it. Suicide is the last resort...." Why should a person ever need such a violent solution if not to exit from his own mutilated existence when this situation has become unbearable? Violent pain, deep depression, feelings of hopeless loneliness, feelings of never coming up to scratch, combined with shame and guilt, can become unbearable. When we can no longer find our way to another person, when we belong nowhere, then we may even hope that by abandoning the whole thing we are doing something important which will make us belong at last. It works, for we get posthumous attention. But alas, everything is then irrevocably finished. Those we abandon are left puzzled and 'unknowing' behind us. Society gives comfort with empty words: "it's not your fault, he chose to do it." Science notes the umpteenth 'case' for the statistics. The authorities wash their hands in innocence and are free to continue their rule: no one has to be brought to book for their is no murderer.

10.2 Outward destructiveness

In the previous section we considered the often undiagnosed destructiveness of misrecognised children in whom, under the influence of qualities in themselves and circumstances outside themselves, the misrecognition strikes inwards. The symptoms of illness put us on the track of the wounding, on the track of the loss of the true I.

There is also another category of people in whom destructiveness comes directly out into the open. Not that one can make an essential distinction between the two groups. For the destructiveness springs out of the same soil: working off unfulfilled childhood needs, desires and feelings. Feelings have become emotions, one of which is aggression. When these emotions target other people they leave a trail of social destruction in their wake. Alice Miller calls this 'destructive zeal'. It lurks in those victims of childhood oppression who do not dare, or will not or cannot discover what was done to them as children; they cannot let go of the destructiveness which has its roots in the past, nor come to assimilate their misrecognition. Stettbacher puts it in a nutshell: "Criminality is the perversion of the need for respect." He continues: "If a person is unable to put an end to the murderous hatred generated in the first few years of his life, he will transfer this hatred to everyone with whom he comes in contact."

Violence in society is the bitter fruit of the violence of 'poisonous' pedagogy. Yet this cannot be unmasked. The 'good citizen', represented in the government, gets rid of it by reaching for more of the same: punishments. Even though it is clear that this produces no real result, people continue to apply it. The things which preceded the violent deeds, the conflict situations in childhood, stay essentially out of the picture. The only way in which punishment can be softened is by pleading so-called 'mitigating circumstances'. But such mitigating circumstances lift only the corner of the veil: 'the delinquent comes from a socially weak family' or 'at the time of the crime he was of diminished responsibility' or 'he had a difficult youth'. Using these pointers the judge can classify the delinquent. The worthy citizens of society have their minds set at rest, for the delinquent comes from a different class, not the ruling class. Or he lost his reason at the moment of the crime, and this will never happen to them for they are controlled, well-brought-up citizens. Or he had a difficult youth, which was not their case either, for they had righteous and godly parents.

Criminality, that is, outward destructiveness, occurs in all social circles, because 'poisonous' pedagogy is typical of all classes. The form taken by the destructiveness may vary. More highly gifted people, whether or not from higher levels of society, have different opportunities of interacting with the outside world. They are better at expressing themselves in a semi-adapted manner. They have learnt to polish their behaviour. The more highly-gifted are also cleverer at using defence mechanisms for the purpose of repressing the suffering inflicted on them. On this subject, Carp says: "That the intellectual disposition - in the sense of bestowing the ability to think - tends to have a slowing down or in short a regulatory effect on the life of the passions, is well-known." If such gifted people also come from richer classes, this allows them to live out their repressions by way of 'white-collar' criminality. Their circles are beautifully adapted. Probably neither their father nor their mother is openly and habitually drunk, nor are they acquainted with poverty, while making a career is not difficult for them and their housing leaves nothing to be desired. They thus appear 'perfectly' well brought up and their good, if one-sided, intellectual development permits them to keep everything under control, or so it appears.

However, what they have not been able to escape is the affective neglect of their childhood. Neglect is a concept inherent to 'poisonous' pedagogy and which goes much further than not having enough to eat, or clothes to wear or being taught good manners. It points to deprivation of everything the young, unfolding child needs for its existence. I will repeat this again because I do not think it can be said too often. Terriijn writes that the child "who was already unique at his conception and who after that led a life strictly of his own, has his own time and space horizon as if he were in a sort of private world. Throughout his life his behaviour will be dictated by one motivation. The human being is all 'question'. For he is constituted by needs... which demand satisfaction. But the human person as question also reaches fulfilment through values which either he discovers himself by thinking and experiencing, or are offered him by a stimulating community." A child who is following its own path

does not have values imposed on it. It is offered possibilities amongst which it makes its own personal choices. This means that it will not be interested in destruction, but on the further expansion of its own creative personality. It will not seek satisfaction in seeing others perish.

But the misrecognised and distorted child will, sooner or later, give its life meaning through hate and aggression. When it does this it will seek out like-minded people because of its need to belong. This last, the need to belong, is for many delinquents what pushes them to take the first step towards criminal behaviour. They have not been able to identify with themselves, nor with others who for them are important and positive figures; they now seek something to hold on to in negative, destructive companionship. These two impulses, working off and attempting to belong, will never be sufficiently or adequately satisfied and the delinquents will not reach 'wholeness' along this route. They are even less likely to reach this goal by way of the punishments they are given. They were denied, threatened, misprized and punished in their earliest life; if society repeats this, it is simply pouring oil on the flames. The misrecognised child will continue to be a miscreant adult as long as it is not brought to a point - if it is still susceptible to this - where it can assimilate its misrecognition. For this it does not need the pointing finger of accusation, but an understanding, inviting, listener who knows how to receive the signals from the real child, however minimal these may be. At the same time, the false I which has been built up needs clear boundaries limiting its escapades. I do not mean the walls of a prison. Accompanying the delinquent and setting boundaries for him, asks more of society than the repressive policy now in force. This policy is visible only in an increased police force, more numerous prison staff, better equipment for the judicial system and a few other trivial changes. It is a policy which neither makes the out-of-line individual 'healthy' nor offers society security. The spiral of destruction is not broken. Aggression, violence, criminality will always find out new paths unless they are resolved in the kernel of the injured child itself.

This approach also requires us to turn our whole political system upside down. It demands functionaries to be servants instead of power-seekers. At this point we come to a third social manifestation of 'poisonous' pedagogy: the phenomenon of 'power'.

10.3 Camouflaged destructiveness

In the introduction to his book 'The soft murderers', De Batselier includes a section called: 'By way of accusation'. I have included the complete text because although it was written twenty years ago, it has lost nothing of its force or content. De Batselier begins:

"I recently had a wonderful dream... I had journeyed to a far distant country where once a year the children were allowed to make the decisions in all areas of life. For one day, the adults willingly allowed themselves to be subjected to the daily lot of the children and to obey them. It was always a time of carnival, full of childish enjoyment. When darkness fell the game came to an end, after which everything fell back into the stiff folds of a life of monotony. This year it was different, completely different. The children were very preoccupied and - their serious expressions did nothing to belie it - something very important was afoot. Suddenly I heard the roll of a drum which put me in mind of a medieval execution. Then I saw a procession going past, a very long procession of adults, in handcuffs, flanked on either side by children bearing flaming torches. They were on their way to an immensely vast market place. From the reflection of the burning torches in the children's eyes I could tell that this was not a game, but in deadly earnest. It seemed to be a definitive settling of accounts. In the market place there was a grandstand put together out of heavy, old, oak beams. It was a puzzle to me where the children had found the strength to build such a thing. Because I came from a foreign country and the children set much store by hospitality and I had also, in the interim, made the acquaintance of the President of the Bench - an eleven-year-old girl - I was shown to an observer's seat

from which no detail could escape me. Then I turned to the procession. At its head came the Minister-President, firmly fettered with a separate guard. Then followed what they called the Eminences: church dignitaries, princes, ministers, magistrates, high army officers in decorated uniforms. Then a smaller group with grey and white striped trousers, stiff collars and high hats: these were apparently money magnates and others, bankers, private companies, multinationals. Then followed various groups or companies: the Order of Physicians, the Disciplinary Committee of Advocates, even leaders of Trade Unions. Also the technocrats: engineers, economists, sociologists, psychologists, pedagogues, and finally a whole long row of parents and others with responsibility for children: teachers, directors of orphanages and reformatories,

After the last drum roll died away, the Act of Accusation was read out. This - read out by a lad twelve years old with the voice of a public prosecutor - began something like this: "Mr. Minister-President, you are a murderer. In the economic interests of your friends you sowed death and destruction in a godforsaken country in the uttermost parts of the world..."

In this style the prosecution's speech dealt with all the representatives of social structures: the tone was sharp, the logic clear as glass, the accusation relentless. The difficulty during this trial was that the adults listened and shook their heads and seemed to comprehend nothing of the wisdom and insight of the children... Against the basic case brought - they were all accused of one or other variant forms of murder - the defence seemed unable to make a stand. It attempted to excuse and pleaded ignorance and brought counter-accusations and heaped up a whole series of mitigating circumstances. Finally, everything was blamed on the structures, as if structures were unchangeable monoliths, independent of concrete people...

The Court retired to consider its verdict. When I woke there was the taste of blood in my mouth."

This is De Batselier's fictional act of accusation. Or is it really so fictional?

On many occasions, in and outside my psychotherapeutic practice, I have listened to similar speeches of accusation. The people accused are never present. The victims forget or do not forget, but they cannot get at their 'murderers'. They also find it difficult to locate someone who will plead their cause. For this reason they have to choose whether to take the guilt on themselves or to take it out on other innocent people. How does this happen? We have already seen that destructiveness can turn inwards and lead to illness. Destructiveness can also turn outwards and become aggression, violence and criminal behaviour. There is also a third path, which is unfortunately only too often taken: the legalised exercise of power. Power is the social basis of the dealings of the people in the procession of the accused described above. At this point I shall leave out parents and child-rearers: they have been thoroughly discussed in previous chapters. The wielders of formal power in society are not reacting to their injuredness, they are propagating the sick system of 'poisonous' pedagogy. They have no questions about their own upbringing, they have no contact with their own misrecognition. In this sense they are the illest and the greatest producers of illness. Power-brokers are alienated from themselves, but pass as the 'strong'. These 'strong' people are no longer in touch with their feelings because they do not have the strength to bear their own repressed pain. It is hard to appreciate that reality is so often stood on its head, because the 'strong' decide what the definition of social 'reality' is, by taking care always to be in power. "A society that collapses in horror when someone reveals by what methods the society attempts to impose its will on its members, has lost its feeling for freedom and is bound for absolutism." This citation from Gruen reminds me of the regulation against gathering in groups recently promulgated by the mayor of Louvain in connection with the Pope's visit. His fear of protests and demonstrations weighed more heavily in the balance than our freedom.

The 'strong' cause the greatest damage to the individual and to society as a whole. They too are victims of an alienated development. But they turn their role of victim round into 'pride', pride in

their good, strict upbringing, which has made them into what they now are. It was so good for them! Alice Miller says: "They have no consciousness, no emotional knowledge of the difference it made to them when they, as small, defenceless children were seized and beaten." Without detracting from this statement, I nonetheless want to extend it to all the things adults do, even those of a 'softer' nature, which deprive the child of its own personal quality. Nor is it sufficient to diagnose the facts of this misrecognition; only the experience of the feelings which accompanied it at the time can keep us safe from death-dealing practices. To be proud of being able to ward off your feelings makes you into a dangerous person. "These people, who have no real self, appear only too often to have acceptable feelings, because of their capacity to adapt themselves to the behavioural standards of society. And because they do not know any other feelings than those of vengeance upon everything living, they appear to be untroubled by fear, restlessness and tension. This impresses those people who are overcome by their own fear and tension", so writes Gruen. These 'strong' people ought to be removed from any position in which influencing other people plays any considerable role. In contrast, the exercise of influence from a 'healthy' development would be a blessing for society.

Society needs order. Society needs leaders. Such leadership should, however, be entrusted only to 'healthy' personalities whose development has taken place on the firm basis of their natural qualities and who no longer have any loss or injury to work off. Repressed loss and/or injury, leads to abuse of power whenever 'use' of power is permitted or even recommended. This abuse of power becomes an addiction and the addiction leads in turn to more closing off of feelings. This is a bad handicap for living a fully human life, and a serious incapacity when it comes to influencing other people. Power-addicted people are so preoccupied with their own position that they do not notice what is happening under their rule. Their feeling of inflated self-esteem, their self-satisfaction and egoism, their acute need for admiration, in short their narcissistic pattern of behaviour, sows new seeds of injury and lack of understanding.

These can bring forth only noxious weeds. The noxiousness of the seed is wrapped up in a pretty packet: 'it's for your own good' or 'it's for the good of the country'. The seed presented in this guise easily finds a place to grow and to make it even easier, division is sown at the same time. This division makes room for increase of power. Whichever way the individual turns, he always has to give himself up in the end. There is, in essence, little to choose between right and left politicians. None of them is interested in locating the origins of the pernicious 'seeds of power' they strew around them. They all think 'their' seed is healthy. They cannot think anything else as long as they are unable to return to their childhood. To do this they would have to give up their repressions and lay bare their own uncertainties, based on false elements inimical to their own life. Rather than do this they compensate the resultant void by shows of power. The extreme possibilities of this behaviour can be seen in examples such as Hitler, Ceausescu, Amin and Saddam Hussein. In them there is (or was) no longer any 'healthy' understanding at work. The unconscious urge to avenge early-repressed injuries is irresistible and unlimited. They imagine that it is the 'otherness' of the other which is at the root of their dissatisfaction, of their unfocused unease. They feel betrayed by Jews, by Arabs, by other powerful people, by innocent subjects who fail to pay tribute to their megalomania. They will never acknowledge that their parents are the cause of their unease and their thirst for vengeance; that it was their parents who did this to them: 'nice, respectable, pious, respected, good churchgoing people'.

When deeply injured children acquire power over other deeply injured children who are powerless and uncertain of themselves, then the drama reaches its climax. The danger emanates not only from separate individuals, criminal as their behaviour may be, but must also be sought in the not-knowing of the whole society which affirms these people in the lies they were forced to believe as children. The hesitant and the powerless seek the safety of the ostensibly strong man who arms himself with the power of sanction coupled with the formal power which he takes for his own. Punishment and reward may then sometimes take sinister forms. There is no longer any question of influence based on

expertise and informal authority. We can see this not far from home. Our male society bears clear traces of power politics. Key positions are occupied by rationalists who do violence to the truth about their own past and persist in denying it. People who 'know' and 'see' are not welcome at the top; they are considered unsuitable. The treatment of women in the higher echelons is, I think, a clear instance. Either they become like their dead male colleagues or, sooner or later they have to abandon the field. If they have emerged from their emotional development as extremely strong people and also possess considerable expertise, some women succeed in building up influential positions. I would dare to suggest that there is a striking demarcation line separating male and female forms of expressing the misrecognition they have undergone. In our society, women become less alienated from themselves. The injuries they have undergone remain more visible. They turn their aggression more inwards; they will more easily become depressive than criminal; they are less likely to seek power. Men often hang their entire life on power. What powerful people have in common with delinquents is that they exhibit, to a greater or lesser extent, characteristics of a psychopathic structure, that is, through their alienation from their own suffering they are on their way to losing affective contact with other people. In extreme cases they are, for this reason, capable of anything.

The exhibition of power is as widespread in our society as 'poisonous' pedagogy. Power is seen as normal. The government, pressure groups, institutes and industries, media, scientific institutes and so on, all bear the stamp of a master and man relationship. They all function on the basis of 'not-knowing' what it is really about. Their capacities usually reach just as far as the place where the real work should begin: creating and watching over 'real' freedom.

If we make a critical examination of government policy, we see that what is false continues to exist and that the roots of alienation are not seized, or even signalled. In the field of *health care*, the central position is occupied not by the patient as a person with a life history, but by the illness. The illness is reduced as far as possible to a medical-technical problem; the early childhood roots of much of our 'being ill' are not really grasped. *Educational policy* totally fails to lead to recognition of the originality of each pupil. The system is oriented in a one-sided manner to increase of knowledge; there is no real space for self-realisation. The government's *financial policy* concentrates exclusively on welfare rather than well-being. Earning money has become an end in itself, not a condition for being able to live a 'healthy' life. *Environmental policy* reveals our lack of courage: we do not dare to set limits, limits on economic growth, limits on size. Everything must be possible and on this altar our environment is sacrificed.

Technology is expected to produce 'pragmatic' solutions. The *judicial system* has become more of a procedural battle than a search for just solutions. The strong will battle their way through while the weak be left to carry the can, which is exactly what happens in 'poisonous' pedagogy. Justice in the courts has little to do with the feeling of justice: justice is what the law says it is.

Pressure groups have become much more specialised in lobbying. They have become an uncontrollable and unmonitored power. They support their own interests and get their power from manipulating the media or their members. The members are the slaves of 'their' leaders and are used for the higher purposes of the association to which they belong.

The *media* have seized an absolute power in our present 'information society'. They give us our daily dose of their image of reality, a reduced reality restricted to manifestations of the false I. The media would like us to believe that they are the guardians of 'good' and 'evil'; the ones who know what we need in order to understand our society. But the truth behind the facts of misrecognition and maltreatment is never mentioned: it is not 'news'.

'Poisonous' pedagogy has its social manifestations. It disguises the manifestations of the false I and thus makes us think of them as 'normal'. This is why the traumatising of newborn and very young children remains unacknowledged.

Part IV

THE WAY OUT

CHAPTER 11

'Knowing' means freedom

*"There are sometimes thoughts
which are painful and difficult to form:
these are the most valuable."*

JANUSZ KORCZAK

11.1 Attending to the symptoms

"As long as we suffer from tensions caused by injuries, psychic overloads, or deprivation, our lives are at the mercy of the past." I want to nuance this statement by Stettbacher just a little by changing 'as long as we suffer...' to 'to the extent to which we suffer...'; because this reality is relevant to all of us. We are all more or less weighed down by our past upbringing. We have all emerged damaged from our childhood. No one is free from some degree of neurosis. A certain cut-down of our true self has occurred, so that we have not become the person we in embryo were. The realisation of our natural potential and our own needs and desires has been obstructed.

The alienation which this obstruction has brought about demands a great deal of our energy; energy used up at the expense of the 'healthy' unfolding of our selves. This is the crisis of the misrecognised Child we carry within us every day. To give this injured child our attention is the way to freedom. Because this withdrawn child is still difficult to approach directly, we can try to reach it by paying attention to the signals given by the substitute I which, for reasons of security, has armed itself with negative and destructive defences. These defences have taken shape on three levels: our body often falls ill and/or is blocked; feelings have given way to emotions; our thinking is often confused and exhibits interrupted concentration. In the picture as a whole, gaps have opened between the thinking, the feeling

and the action. Spontaneous expressions of life get wrapped up in abstract concepts. For example, to the question 'How do you like your work' comes the flattened-off reply 'It has to be done'. If we turn our attention to these signals - and thus to the blocked body, the banished feelings and the confused thoughts - then we will be able to retrieve contact with the misrecognised Child in ourselves.

Travelling along this path is not simple. It is a long and difficult way; it is a lonely way. It means living a life which includes 'suffering'. If we know we suffer and we dare to admit this to ourselves and if we dare to see and go on seeing the points where we are weak, healing can occur. A life that has gone wrong can only alter to the degree that we recognise and acknowledge it as such. When we discern and acknowledge our cut-offs and limitations, recognising, for example, our diminished quality of life, our uncertainty, our feelings of superiority or inferiority, our unfocused desires, our fear of loss, our stress, and so on, then we have cleared the field for the needs of the true I, that is, 'healthy' self-realisation. This can be done at any age. As long as we go on seeking out distractions in order to escape our 'true' history, we shall continue to carry our latent dissatisfaction along with us. Some of these latently present feelings of unhappiness in ourselves are sketched by Stettbacher as follows: "It's impossible to love *me*. There is something wrong with *me*. Everyone else is better and more capable than *I* am. *I* am a hateful person. *I* ought to make even more effort but it's ages since *I* have had any inclination to do so. *I* ought to take myself in hand, control myself and keep a low profile but *I* don't even know when or what *I* should do to prevent something terrible happening. It's high time *I* changed. It's *my own fault* that *I* haven't yet found the answer to my problems..." For many of us, in consequence of our distorted childhoods, this description makes up quite a large portion of reality.

This reality can be deciphered if we develop a certain degree of alertness for the symptoms of the injured self. This alertness places the injured person in a position to get to the bottom of their injuries and to rid themselves of the consequences of those wounds. But there must be the desire to know the truth by putting an end to one's restricted, incomplete or disturbed consciousness. Are we prepared to confront the truth, regardless of how it may look? Doubts about our self-evident adult functioning, coupled with a dose of courage to want to bring the truth of our 'defectiveness' to the surface, supplies a perspective for a better future. If not, the present and the future will remain under the curse of our troubled past.

We have said that the violations of the past betray themselves on three levels: body, feeling and reason. If we pay attention to somatic complaints and questionable symptoms in the light of the person's total functioning, we shall open a passage into the secret chambers of that person's repressed and painful experiences. If we pay attention to emotional outbursts of grief, rage, humiliation, injustice, misrecognition, fear, suspicion, vengeance, we shall push open the door to assimilation. The need to let off steam will diminish. All emotions, in particular strong feelings of hate, compulsive avidity and lust and more than ordinary but unresolvable grief are clues to the past. These latent forces of destruction which follow from primary injuries, are dangerous. They are continually ticking away like a bomb which may explode at any moment, wreaking terrible damage. If we pay attention to those twists and turns in our thinking which habitually lead us to do the wrong thing, we shall be led to insights which will free us.

Blessed are those who see! Once we have started on the pathway to 'seeing', the pathway to 'knowing', we can experience how liberating it is. Yet it is a difficult step to open the door to the truth of our childhood. The truth is locked up in the body of the misrecognised child for, in the beginning, the child's consciousness refused to take any notice of it, fearing that if it did it would cease to exist. The little child would not have survived if it had been obliged to live out its traumas in full consciousness, if it had doubted its parents. "What remains is the vicious circle of repression: the true history, which is repressed by the body, produces symptoms in the hope that it will at last be acknowledged and taken seriously. But the consciousness refuses to take any notice of this, just as it did in childhood, because it learnt at that

time that repression would save its life and because no one has told it that the adult person will not be bound to die from knowing about this history; that on the contrary, knowledge of the truth will restore him to health", thus writes Alice Miller. Yet to doubt their own parents is for many people a crucial risk. The inner battle between liberating insight and the fear of not existing apart from the parents can absorb a great deal of energy, but overcoming the repression resolves the crippling situation of the 'false' self and thus makes it possible for energy to flow freely. The symptoms, at the physical, feeling and rational levels, melt away like snow in the sun.

This alteration also frees the channels to liberating, outgoing relationships. Other people, in particular our children, are no longer there to serve us; we no longer use them or bind them to us because of our emotional need. We also cease to take part in the 'false self game' played by the others. We are no longer irritated by the otherness of the other, but keep ourselves detached from their 'false' satisfactions. We no longer use other people, nor allow ourselves to be used under false pretences.

Attending to the symptoms is the first step towards finally settling accounts with illness, addiction, neurosis, hate, abuse of power and violence.

The final settlement also deals with restricted self-esteem, with depressivity, with shame, with identification with idealised people (including parents and child-rearers). It is letting go of trust in and adaptation to other people's standards and needs. Permitting the truth to appear leads to healing. This letting go is diametrically opposed to the 'forgetting and forgiving' held up to us by morality and religion. Forgetting and forgiving is just the same as nursing illusions. Alice Miller puts forgiveness on a par with poisoning. To offer our parents forgiveness implies that we give ourselves and others short measure, and our children will bear even more of the brunt. The guilt feelings we wish to spare our parents will travel with us through our lives and we shall heap them on the backs of our children. Judgment and forgiveness are in line with one another. They are external actions which do not lead to inner health.

'Knowing', allowing and assimilating the pain suffered in childhood are designated as the way to health. The injured child still wants to make its most deeply denied natural needs known to the true I. Allowing this to happen runs up against an inner dread: the dread of complicated pain. If we persist in bottling up this pain behind all sorts of perversions, the natural needs remain buried. In order to avoid misunderstanding, the word perversion is used here not only nor certainly primarily to mean sexual perversions. Everything that we foster in order to keep repressed feelings and experiences in obscurity, can come to the surface as perversions. For example, to bring a child into the world as camouflage and compensation for what one feels is missing in oneself (and this is very often done) is clearly a perversion. In this context I am sad to think of the numerous artificial operations carried out in our present society to enable people to have a child after all. The urge to 'have' a child is very strong. If bearing a child is not within our natural capacities there is only one healthy reaction: to mourn that loss. In the name of the unborn child I want to thank all those who have the courage to do this. On the other hand, the incapacity to reproduce can be a symptom of the injuries of the past. Consideration of the deeper-lying mental and psychological causes and the broader, physical, stress factors may also start a process leading to complete healing. Healthy parenthood may then become a possibility.

11.2 The healing process

In our society, the word 'healing' is so firmly associated with doctors and medicine that we are hardly able to imagine that there are other paths to obtain it. This is connected with the fact that being ill is attributed to a defect in the physical functioning of the human person. There is a counter current known as alternative medicine. Here, medicines are replaced by preparations, herbs, massage and suchlike. Another possible route is by way of meditation, of symbols with double meanings, of relaxation of body and mind. With all respect for this search for alternatives, I cannot omit my doubts about their capacity to produce permanent and complete healing. Although 'alternative' methods of healing do consider the patient as more of a totality, insight into and empathy for the damaging effect of 'poisonous' pedagogy on body and mind is missing. The ill (= the disturbed, the injured) person can only be healed from inside and must do it himself. Other people, with their simple or far-fetched theories and assistance can only accompany him in a useful way if he makes his decision and actively seeks to bring about change in his life. The first priority in this change is openness, openness towards one's own suffering and towards the history of that suffering and with regard to the people responsible for the misrecognition.

The 'enemy' must first of all be diagnosed and acknowledged. The primary injuries must become clear. As soon as we dare to confront the past, we create the basic conditions for beginning the healing process. This confrontation may seem unbearable. It is not a simple matter to have to realise that we were not really loved, that we were ignored, used, threatened, frightened, beaten, humiliated and sent away at moments when we wanted love. But the healing process requires us to let go of our illusions, the illusions of a more or less rose-coloured childhood, those of a more or less successful journey into adulthood. The process of healing demands that we should become aware of the situation of dependence in which we, as tiny children, were delivered utterly and absolutely into the hands of our parents, and in which we became cross, sad and uncertain of ourselves. We ourselves wanted to forget that cross, sad, uncertain child: that was our contribution.

Retrieving contact with that child rouses defences. We want to keep on living in the present because we underestimate the power of the past. The worst advice is found in the cliché: 'What's past's past: you just have to learn to live with it.' Better is: 'look carefully at your past and learn to live without fear'. The energy we use in learning to submit to that pain and fear, is utterly wasted. We would do better to invest in tracing and getting rid of our gnawing unease. Becoming conscious is the first step in the healing process. Daring to examine our own disarray is a necessary step but not sufficient in itself. If we let the traumas of which have become conscious become simply 'stories' and use them to get yet more attention for the substitute I we have built up, then we are putting up a new barrier, a new layer of camouflage. It distracts us from the process of assimilation. Only 'living through' the trauma leads to freedom.

By seriously and determinedly, bit by bit, taking responsibility for ourselves, and by allowing the old pain to reach us once again in our living through of the experience, we are healed. We shall have to bring the baby's needs back into 'lived experience'. Its greatest need was to be allowed to 'be there', not to have to do anything. This fundamental need is repressed when the baby adapts to needy parents. Bradshaw writes: "It is the child's inborn right to expect unconditional love from its parents, but no single adult partner will be able to give us unconditional love." We have to bring the very small child in ourselves in contact once more with its own desires, its own will. Certain questions will put us on the track of our ersatz desires. What do I really need? What are my compensatory habits? Do I eat when I am not hungry, smoke, drink, tell myself to be brave, indulge in excessively helpfulness? The very small child in us also has a great need to express its own will. Bradshaw talks about 'practising fighting according to the rules'. He writes: "Keep your distance except when your Child is maltreated, in whatever way. In that case, fall back or seek protection." We cannot deal with everything at once. Bit by bit the pain must be absorbed through moments of liberation. The old must pass into the new in equilibrium. Assimilation requires

time. The child has gone through too much misery to let all of it come through at once. Rage, fear, pain, indignation, doubt, grief must be faithfully recognised, acknowledged and expressed so that they can be laid to rest. At the same time a process of growth will start in the disturbed child whose 'healthy' development was blocked the first time round. The strangling ties with our parents must be broken. Bradshaw makes the following reflection: "You must realise that the worst of your fears has already happened to you. Through your entanglement in your relationship with your parents you have been violated and left in the lurch." Adult children have to break out of the following vicious circle: wrong feeling, wrong thinking lead to wrong action; this leads to feelings of guilt, feelings of inadequacy, megalomania etc.; these feelings in turn produce wrong thinking and action.

Becoming 'healthy' means that we have to allow all the perceptions and feelings we have in us to exist and not repress them, and at the same time notice when, where and with whom they are aroused. Our old experiences, which motivate our lives, must come to the surface. The traumatising happenings from the past must be consciously and actively lived through once again.

'Living through' does not mean that we have to go and take out these feelings on our parents or child-rearers. This is both pointless and fruitless. If our parents or child-rearers are still the people they were, non-adult children of 'poisonous' pedagogy,, then this sort of confrontation may even block the healing process for us. As soon as the healing process frees us from our parents we become able to leave them as they are, and go on our way by ourselves, not allowing ourselves to be used or taken in by them any more.

'Living through again' means that we are working with memories. The most negative memories, in particular, will often have become unconscious or semi-conscious. Our 'interior' knowledge has to be made conscious. The goal here is not for the objective facts to come to light but for the subjective experiences from that time to become available to us. Take care: our past is an actual past, it is alive in us *now* and has an effect in the present. It is not an imagined or invented past, but a past now being lived through in the here-and-now. It is important that we ourselves should become advocates of the misrecognised and injured Child in ourselves, that we should look after ourselves. In this way, the overload on our consciousness caused by the fear which has arisen as the result of much pain and guilt, can be lifted.

In order to strengthen our 'interior' knowledge we can run through the various stages of our life history. We can question ourselves about each period and allow ourselves to receive whatever comes up in the way of memories, images and feelings. For this purpose we might refer to Steven De Batselier's book, 'The Ecstatic Person' and to Bradshaw's 'Homecomings'. De Batselier sums up the stages of our life as follows: the foetus taking shape, the child needing help, the playful child, the bold, dreaming adolescent, the young adult-in-the-making, the daring adult characterised by love, strife and suffering, the aging mature person. Renewing our contacts with our own selves, especially with the unborn, very young and young child, will allow us to function as a new parent for ourselves. Working with the child in each phase of development can produce lead to sweeping changes in a short time.

We can question the child about each phase of our lives. What was its role? What rigid roles did it take on itself in order to preserve the family equilibrium? The super-responsible, the super-achiever, the under-achiever, the rebel, the over-zealous person, the carer, the black sheep or the good girl? When we get a clear view of these roles we shall see that they didn't work. When we play a role, our authentic selves are more and more pushed down into the unconscious. Over the years we become addicted to our roles. As long as we continue to play such roles we shall remain in a state of mental woundedness. And the feelings which the child has but which it has to repress in the interests of its role: what are they? They are feelings which will seem strange to us at first; will seem not to belong to us. If I have always played

the role of a good girl, 'being cross' will seem alien to me. What arouses different behaviour in me? How do I feel when I attempt to lay aside my role?

Building up communication with the misrecognised Child in this way will lead to greater consciousness. It will bring us to look after and offer security to the neglected Self. When the child in our self is tired, hungry, discouraged, sad or lonely, we must talk to it, listen to it. Paying attention to the Child in our self and spending time with it at moments when it is suddenly attacked by boredom, by fear, by loneliness, will put us on the track of the old woundedness. A rejection, an exaggerated reaction, a defeat in competition, a sudden appeal or an emotional event can bring our *now* in contact with the painful situations of the misrecognition we originally experienced and repressed.

If we do not run away from these contacts, but look on them as salutary opportunities to live through our repressed feelings, our old wounds will be healed. In this context, safe surroundings are enormously important. Bradshaw speaks of finding a 'new family'. The old family is not normally recommended. "If your original parental family has not been helped to move on in the interim, it is almost impossible to get support from members of that family for your own process of renewal.... they often feel that they themselves are threatened by the fact that you are doing this, because by giving up your old roles within the family, you are upsetting the rigid balance of the family system. You have never had the chance of being yourself before. Why should they suddenly let you do that now?" Taking leave of dependence on the quasi-secure parental family is often a breakthrough to self development on the part of the wounded child.

The attention we pay to the baby, toddler, infant or schoolchild in ourselves, opens healing perspectives. We can welcome the baby, support the toddler in its autonomy, back up the infant as it takes more and more initiative and allow the schoolchild to make mistakes. All this allows our basic, pent-up and neglected needs to breathe. The energies which are freed by this process give our life a new quality. Henceforth we no longer need any camouflage either for ourselves or for others. The others are no longer a threat because they cannot unmask us. We ourselves are in the process of removing our masks. We no longer mislead other people by our guarded reactions or by overstressing side issues. What we say and do will be identical with what comes up from within us. The little word 'but' will lose one of its uses. Exclamations such as 'I do agree, but...' or 'I am against that, but...' will increasingly vanish from our conversation. We shall dare to be clear, to have our own opinions, even on such inflammatory subjects as euthanasia. We shall not take half-hearted attitudes like 'I am against euthanasia because it isn't carried out carefully enough'. We know where we stand and are able to be unambiguous about it. Because self-development includes 'real' freedom, we respect the freedom of others, we respect the choices made by others, including the choice for a gentle death. We no longer preach to each other because we are not obliged to conceal our 'true' motives. We do not allow ourselves to be put out but hold on to what feels 'good', what is 'right'.

The process of becoming conscious followed by assimilation also heals us of judgment, either of ourselves or of other people. Judgment gives way to understanding. This sort of understanding begins when we have been able to contact our own urgent needs and through them with the needs of other people. Sympathy with the false I disappears in favour of understanding how it came into being. Our understanding the difficult struggle kept up by the misrecognised child looking to be healed, keeps the process of healing going. It prevents us from turning back to a world full of addiction, morbid cravings for attention, the unnuanced clamour for the rights we claim are ours (here, our assertion is serving as camouflage), in short, it prevents us becoming rigid once again. Feeling, as the perception of an internal, physical movement, brings calm and suppleness.

The process of healing becomes visible on all fronts. Stettbacher speaks of putting an end to a number of

'syndromes'.

"There is an end to ...

a compulsion to serve, when the person no longer has to serve unwillingly and unconsciously;
the compulsion to keep silent; the antithinking compulsion; the antifeeling compulsion; the antisensing compulsion, when the person concerned can freely choose whether he will keep silent, speak, think, feel or sense; when he can enter into and shape experiences involving his feelings and senses as may be appropriate to him, without being constrained by fear;

when there is no further unconscious compulsion to follow, "love," serve, need, undergo, despair, hate, rage, be irate, lament, resign oneself, obey, fear or be exhausted;

when it has become possible for him to shape life in a free, conscious and resolute manner and to dare to love what is really worth loving."

11.3 Freedom

"If through a long-term process, a person is able to live through the experience that he was never loved as the child that he was, but only on account of his achievements, successes and qualities, and realised that he sacrificed his childhood years to this 'love', then he will be deeply shocked in himself. But a day will come when he will feel the desire to stop searching for love. He will discover in himself the need to be his own true self without having to earn a love which despite all his efforts, finally leaves him essentially empty-handed because it is concentrated on the false I which he has just begun to shake off"; thus Alice Miller. A day will come when the child will be free and will no longer have to divide itself into parts. The slogan 'Everything must be possible' will then disappear; things either can or cannot be, the totality of the person will make this clear. The freed Child in our self will know its own boundaries and limitations, it will live out and be able to live with its failures and its grief, it will bear responsibility in proportion to its own size. Its needs will be satiable. Values will appear in areas previously governed by commandments, prohibitions, laws, rules and taboos. Good and evil will no longer be divided out to 'good people and bad people' but will be part of everyone's ordinary human existence. Where division ruled, union will appear, union in oneself, union with nature, union with the surrounding world. From its feeling of healthy belonging the freed child will be able to make friends with other freed children. They will inspire each other to further unfolding. Freed from addiction, from stress, from the career rat-race, from importance, envy, exploitation and competition, the 'healthy' I will be able to work constructively on life as it suits it. Stettbacher promises us: "You will once more be able to feel your natural needs. You will try to satisfy them and no longer have to run after surrogate needs. Inappropriate defensive attitudes will disappear. You will no longer be enslaved by any sort of illusions. You will be able to organize your life in accordance with your own capacities and in the interests of your own well-being."

And he adds: "Hearing can be restored to the psychologically deaf, the power of speech to the psychologically mute, sight to the psychologically blind."

The freed person's encounters will be calm, their reactions healthy and constructive. Peacefully living together is enriching. Where there was dependence is now love, where exploitation, real interest. The meaningfulness of life overflows in creative actions. There is a transition from survival to living through. People who are 'freed' no longer run away from themselves. An open spirit and an open heart will take up their positions in a healthy body. Sleep will no longer be disturbed, nor will it need to be imposed by extrinsic means. Because the past has been laid to rest and the inbuilt defence mechanisms have crumbled away, the experience of the full breadth of the present moment is possible. This opens new perspectives on the future. We no longer need to insure ourselves against every contingency; the reality of our own existence gives us security for the future. The true I will be able to cope with moments of loneliness; there is no more room for the loneliness of self-isolation. Freed from the false I, the impasse of the

misrecognised Child in our self has been broken; we have chosen once and for all for freedom, for happiness, for openness, and rejected lamentation and despair, the walls of exclusion and self-isolation. "You are awake to your Self once more, to life, accessible to the most direct experience, now, without a past, without memories of the bitter aftertaste of the brew of your cultural heritage. You are once again a Human Being, fully human, together with millions of other people in all their rich differences of race, language, skin colour and cultural variation on that unique human theme: *live, be there, experience like a Child of the Cosmos*." This is the message of Steven De Batselier. The ecstatic human person has been born.

Fear and defensiveness will give way to openness, understanding and acceptance. The true I will not feel the need to pretend to be other than it is, or to play a role. Jealousy and seizing possession will cease to exist. The boundaries of the Self will guarantee respect for the boundaries of the other. In the certainty of this safety we can experiment with our own abilities. The 'being', the 'being there', the 'being present' will cause illusionary securities to disappear and make the Self resistant. The contact with the Self, the feel of being allowed to be there and the certainty that we can stand on our own feet, will restore contact with the original giftedness. Instead of a flood of emotions, intense feeling will make the body tingle again. It will be impossible for the people round about not to see that the original child is alive once more.

Many people may find this alteration suspicious because they will want to use their distorted view of reality to explain and judge this new reality. To cite De Batselier once again: "No, Ecstatic Human Person, you no longer belong to the respectable, and well-brought-up who invest all their energies in their own respectability but are no longer free to measure the dance of the stars by the yardstick of their wide-flung arms. You live above despair and normality, because you have discovered the width and depth of your own inner spaces, as endless as the expanding universe. Because your experiences break through all the boundaries of socially-acceptable reality. Because all your inbuilt defence mechanisms have fallen away like blinkers. Because you know you are inhabited and borne up by the Spirit which inhabits your soul as living experience."

Bradshaw describes the new freedoms of the Child 'made whole' in ten lines:

- the whole child is allowed to feel what it feels;
- it is allowed to want what it wants, it is allowed to desire the impossible;
- it is allowed to see and hear what it sees and hears;
- it is allowed to have fun and play (needing nothing is an adult form of play);
- it is allowed to tell the truth always and everywhere;
- it is allowed to draw boundaries, sometimes it can postpone its desires and live with the image of not enough;
- it is allowed to take responsibility and to take the consequences for what it does, not for what others do; it learns to 'act' instead of 'react' to what other people do;
- it is allowed to make mistakes;
- it is able to respect the real in other people;
- it is allowed to have problems.

The child 'made whole' is the way to contented adulthood. Being adult means: possessing one's own strength and finding happiness in it. Our surroundings, the people and the circumstances, will then fall into place. It means possessing the 'freedom to' which is to say, the freedom 'in me'. This in contrast to the 'freedom from' which points to something outside me. Blessed are those who see, blessed are those who know, blessed are those who are truly free.

CHAPTER 12

Mourning as an opportunity for healing

"The mourning process is the legitimate expression of grief that we have consistently avoided via our neuroses."

J. BRADSHAW

12.1 Loss and longings for the lost Self

Mourning, a sense of loss and longings are three facets of an indivisible whole.

A sense of loss indicates something we have lost, something we once possessed. We can never really miss something we have never possessed, of which we have no real notion. What we miss, we once, even if unconsciously, thought of as part of ourselves. The loss evokes unmistakable longings in us. Longings for what is lost, longings for what is desired, longings for what has not been fulfilled, longings for the development which was broken off. Liedloff calls this the search for lost happiness. The deepest loss in our life is that we have lost part of our soul. The piece of our self which we lost, very early, or perhaps a little later, is what Riemann describes as "feeling that we are loved unconditionally, just as we are, and experiencing that our presence, what we have to give, what we are, makes the other person just as happy." According to him, it is what we lived out in our earliest childhood years that we now want to retrieve. In contrast to Riemann, I would not speak of our earliest childhood years but rather of our earliest childhood minutes, hours, weeks. The great drama of our loss of soul is that it usually happens very early indeed. Lies Bruggeman describes the search for lost happiness as "people's struggles to find in their loves 'the lost paradise' of the very first love." These are lifelong struggles. We may even say that life itself seems too short to bring us to the happy ending. Does this mean that we believe in reincarnation or in an afterlife? The fundamental loss of an unviolated Self will lead to an unquenchable longing, a longing that streams out into both time and space. Wholeness will be sought both from the future and from other people. As we have already seen, the baby's adaptation to the reality of its mother, at that moment sole representative of the whole of the world outside the child, is the first and worst cause of the loss of oneself. In Gruen's words: "... if adaptation to social reality [to the mother, GS] demands that the soul be split and this becomes the basic principle of the development, the person becomes bad [alienated, GS]. He will then have continual problems in taking possession of himself, in particular that part of his inner self which has been stolen away and which he seeks outside himself." Having missed the parental love we should have received, we find ourselves trying to retrieve this love throughout our lives, not only from our actual parents, but also from all the people with whom we form any sort of affective relationship. But it is not possible for that childhood gap to be filled: it is irrevocably past. What we did not receive in the way of 'real' love and attention in our earliest childhood, and before, we cannot retrieve as adults now. All we can do is to mourn that loss. In so doing we are seeking not to 'retrieve', but to make the pain present now. Bradshaw writes: "If we give our [wounded, GS] Child free rein, we shall drive our friends and dear ones to despair with our endless series of needs." The compulsive longing to make up what we missed in this way makes us dependent: it ties us to other people and thus becomes

our prison. Only by abandoning the search for affirmation of our parents' love can that tie be broken, can we loose ourselves from compulsive dependence. We must say goodbye to that unfulfilled childish expectation. This is a necessary condition for embarking on an adult process of maturation. It is this goodbye that requires an active process of mourning. If we do not say farewell to the painful loss we experienced in our earliest moments of life, then we shall continue caught in a chronic mourning process which began with the first misrecognition of the child by its mother. Perhaps the chronically painful loss suffered by many among us explains the popularity of Christmas. It feeds into our nostalgia for the unviolated Child. Should it not be the feast of the 'lost' Child in ourselves?

In Chapter Five we considered the various stages of the mourning process. We have also seen that a mourning process not properly followed through can lead to a situation of chronic mourning, and stop for ever at the stage of feelings of mourning, loss and longing. When we lose someone we love, we go on longing for what we have lost outside ourselves. When we lose our I, we are plunged permanently into a state of emptiness and unconscious desire. The first shock, which took place in the first days of our life, in or outside the uterus, unconsciously sets in motion a process of chronic mourning. This first shock may be caused by the sudden severance from the mother, immediately after the birth. It may also be caused by the withholding of the breast or by regimented feeding times. Later, a premature transition from breast-feeding to the bottle, often coupled with delivery into the hands of other carers, can be shocking for the baby who has until then been allowed to experience the wonderful pleasure of intimate union with its mother. These are just one or two examples from the inexhaustible range of 'child-degrading' interventions in the life of a very young child. 'Child-degradation' is not too strong a term for something which deranges the whole of the child's remaining life. What the child goes through at that moment and which it is not yet able to grasp as knowledge or express in language, is so threatening to its life that it can do nothing else but keep this event, and all succeeding denials by its mother, firmly suppressed in the unconscious. Even later, when its development makes it possible for it to 'understand', its defences will make sure that this painful episode in its history remains forgotten. The unconscious has absorbed the blow. For years we live in an atmosphere of unreality. Keirse makes the following remarks on the subject of experiencing loss in later life: "People feel they are living in a vacuum, in emptiness. It is exactly as if they were no longer alive, but are weighed down under the crushing burden of unbearable loneliness and emptiness from which they never emerge." These words seem to me to apply very accurately to the chronic feeling of someone who has in great measure lost himself because his first essential basic needs were denied. The following fragment also applies very well to less acute cases: "She suffers from depression, apathy, loss of appetite, insomnia. She is constantly in tears. She feels incredibly tired, and cannot focus her attention on anything for very long and also exhibits all sorts of physical complaints."

The child now, and later the Child in the adult, will continue to feel a certain sense of protest but will not be able to place it. The unconscious remains closed as long as no conscious, active mourning follows. The protest will be smothered by guilt feelings. Why haven't *I* made more of my life? Why didn't *I* listen better to my parents? However tragic it may be, the parents get off scot free. They are idealised. This too stifles the protests of the misrecognised Child. It is ashamed of its ambivalent behaviour: wanting and not wanting, seeking and fleeing. Protest, feelings of guilt, idealisation, shame, ambivalent behaviour, these are all symptoms of an unrecognised mourning process. Because the loss of the Self happened so unconsciously, conscious mourning is difficult and laborious.

Keirse says: "Every situation in which people lose something which they experience as essential in their lives, can be followed by a mourning process." I should like to add: *must* be followed by a mourning process. Because the young or very young child cannot yet consciously mourn, and does not later get the opportunity to do so because of its parents' denial, the putting off of mourning leads to the chronic, pathological grief described above. This grief, which is extremely basic, takes many forms: aggression,

guilt, shame, neurosis, depression, hallucination, psychosomatic complaints, fear, despair, idealisation. They are expressions of the feelings of 'the void' which result from absence of love and misplaced or surrogate love, and from later incapacity to distance oneself from these feelings. These feelings of 'the void' are not so much to do with objective facts as with a general feeling of being misrecognised and rejected.

The depressive person wants someone to be there all the time; the schizophrenic person is afraid of a closeness which may lead to a repetition of the violation of his trust; the fearful, dependent person does not dare to be himself: being like all the others gives him security; the despairing person clings to outer realities: work, relationships, power, career, money. Gruen distinguishes two trends in despair: "Such despair means that your own interior becomes alienated from you whether your personality develops in the direction of rebelliousness or of adaptation to accepted norms. You hold on to outer forms, whether they tally with the ideology current in society [the parents, GS] or with one completely opposed to it. Because you are estranged from your inner life which therefore strikes you as formless and anarchistic, and for this reason threatening, you hold on literally to outer forms with the idea that you have an identity to maintain."

The rebelliousness *can* lead to authenticity but must in that case provoke an inner shift. That is to say,; living through the mourning must come to replace the working-off reactions of despair. Adaptation never leads to reality, or identity. If the rebellion does not succeed, adaptation will come after all. We give up on the process of renewal and the loss of and longing for the 'true' Self, continues to dominate our life. The longing for the biological parents continues to camouflage the inner longing for a mother, a father, who will come along and give the Child in our self what it has a right to expect. The discovery that the child in our self knew only too well how to adapt itself to what seemed to be love in order to get 'love', can be the new shock which starts us on the process of active mourning. Gruen says: "You must first come to the end of your tether, learn that you are a slave - in whatever respect - before you can have an appetite for freedom."

Schellenbaum expresses it in this way: "Everyone loves me, except one person. This one person who fails to love the speaker, was first the father or mother, then the partner or a business acquaintance, or someone who forgot to invite me, or the secretary who asked for a rise, or the apprentice who goes home ten minutes early every evening, or the chef who didn't greet me today, or my daughter who wants more pocket-money." He calls this mode of behaviour "a fruitless effort to assimilate a permanent injury." If, as children, we did not receive the right sort of love and attention we needed, we continue to be hungry for love and are therefore quite prepared to take on defective love. The fear of losing others will be greater in proportion to the amount of our Self we have lost. The other people are never more than a replacement for the first mother-child relationship. Our basic grief for the lost Self gets more space to the extent that we come to see and experience that our 'adult-child' problems are to do with what was done to us early in life and what we have not been able to let go of because of our fear. Our psychological and relational problems are not to do with what we really are, nor with what we might potentially realise, but with our very earliest misrecognition, with the loss of our Self. The fear of coming anywhere near the loss is extended as anxiety that we shall lose everything we have built up (through our false I). That all this was a surrogate for the loss only becomes clear as, little by little, the true Self acquires enough room to manifest itself. If this does not happen, then stagnation instead of growth will set in on a permanent basis. In the worst case, we can only hope that the superstructure that has been erected becomes unstable and topples in the face of some unexpected event of great import against which the false self is no longer proof: for example, exhaustion, the loss of a loved one, physical degeneration, the threat of illness, material deprivation and so on.

The symptoms of the loss of the true I differ in men and women. Although women look for

compensation for their loss as much as men, their search seems to lie more in line with the loss itself. They look for a new, secure existence. Men search more wide of the mark. They look rather for 'change' and 'distraction' in the outside world: a different job, working harder, new surroundings a long way away. They even want to go to other planets! In doing this they are trying to make a definitive break with their past. They hide away their vulnerability just as they do in their relationships. They make up for their loss of Self by addiction to women. As long as they are 'carried' and 'directed' by women, they often give the impression of being healthy, independent, decisive people, afraid of nothing and they look down on their partner with her emotional reactions. When they cannot control their own emotions it is the fault of other people. 'Mourning' usually lies well outside their field of vision. Men are less often seen in the therapy room. If they are confronted by an immediate loss, for example the threat of divorce, they may perhaps embark on a behaviour-modifying therapy. They prefer not to explore the damaged world of their feelings. They mostly avoid any reflection on the past, which means they have to do without the healing effect this can have. Men are also more fearful of being unmasked, either by themselves or by others. "This fear springs from the multitudinous distortions of reality which are required in order to form and maintain the protective layer... It is difficult to say what he (the neurotic personality) is most scared of: being unmasked by himself or by someone else. On the conscious level he takes most care in relation to other people, and the more he externalises his fear, the more desperate he is to prevent other people seeing through him... Fear of being unmasked may be experienced as an unfocused feeling in the patient that his life is based on pure bluff, or can target a quality which has little to do with the weak point from which the fear really arises." Although, in this passage, Horney is not speaking expressly of men, I think it applies particularly to them. Women are more liable to sell themselves on the basis of the unfulfilled layer of themselves. Men seem to spend their whole lives 'skating on thin ice'. This is often visible in the way they hold themselves. Widely-planted legs, hands in trouser pockets, head held high, cheeks drooping: these are the silent witnesses to a life without substance.

For man or woman, a 'healthy' mourning process can offer new perspectives for the future. It gives our self an empathetic feeling for our own situation. Mourning a loss can lead to real healing. Alice Miller warns us: "People who have once looked through an opening will not be able to bear the existence of the useless wall any longer! We no longer derive any satisfaction from continuing to look for what we have lost either in our children or in other people."

12.2 Security in which to live through our experiences

"Mourning is something that cannot be done alone: it must be done with other people." Although Keirse is talking about 'mourning someone', I want to underline that what he says applies equally to mourning 'oneself'. If we are to go back to our Self, and get in touch with our true I, we need 'containment', which means, to cite Bion [in Cluckers, GS]: "a person who is in a position to receive, keep and carry chaotic feelings and sensations for you". For a time, as we come to ourselves and regain our self-possession, we need that other person; someone who will 'receive and welcome', gather up and keep safe what we are no longer able to carry by ourselves. In short, we need another person to provide us with security. This is one of the basic conditions for re-embarking on self development. A place must be created in which mourning can be done. The true I, in its misrecognised form, has to be supported. It needs security as it plunges into the terrors of an unwearying chase to bring down 'false certainties'. "Offering yourself the possibility of a Self based on truth is a mighty enterprise", says Gruen. He continues: "It is anything but easy and most of us avoid it, because we assume that we shall not get into trouble as long as we are obedient, because this is what we have been promised." We make use of this 'assume' because it comes in handy; our fear of the truth scares us off and we do not have sufficient security to contain the fear. If the security necessary to the return to the lost Self is lacking, alienation will increase. Some people 'choose' to bottle up this alienation inside themselves (neurotics); others work it off on their surroundings (overt or

hidden criminals); others take refuge in sublimation (saints and mystics) or in a fictional world (psychotics) and finally there are the artists who behave in a 'disturbed' way: for example, Van Gogh, Mozart... The people in all these categories are running away from the helplessness of their lost I. Only in conditions of security can we gradually experience that we are not annihilated if we dare to face and examine our helplessness. Security is necessary for us to be able to acknowledge, allow and dare to speak out about certain things, for example: my father and/or mother did not love me, even though they may have thought they did. This idea can be so terrifying that we hardly dare express it at all. Schellenbaum writes: "I was not loved and that is still the case. This is a truth which also holds for people who are loved too much or loved in the wrong way. Lack of love has many faces." The same lovelessness, translated into 'sham love', is at the root of the destructive forces which wound the child. Sham love is feigned love, love of oneself (giving in order to receive). However, sham love sends messages which are very precisely registered by the young child. At that moment it can do nothing with them: its dependence forces it not to attend to what it unconsciously knows but rather to accept the sham love as it is. Something is better than nothing. This truth applies more or less to all those of us who have been brought up by the use of 'poisonous' pedagogy. This is our primal grief. Much security is necessary before this grief can be allowed to surface and find expression. All of us are to some degree able to talk *about* it, 'yes, but...', 'on the one hand, and on the other hand...', and objectivise it, but to 'let it come out' demands directness and implies no restrictions.

Security is necessary if we are to be able to express the still unspeakable pain of the first period of our life. At first, it will be impossible to say what happened to us as embryos and small babies. Stories about the later feeling of rejection, about the later facts, often distract us from the source of the suffering. They may form an alibi for the unspeakable pain of the rejection dating from our earliest childhood. Incidents from later stages are comprehensible. But the basically rejecting attitude of the mother and/or father before the period when the child could put words to them (unborn and newborn children) has devastating consequences for later life, which can neither be grasped nor understood. 'Not to have been loved' is synonymous with 'being rejected'. This is the prime cause of the lack of basic trust with which we have all been afflicted. What we have missed we resolved to the extent that we work actively and intensively with the pain of the rejection. Once again, this mourning process requires security, and for this, at least at first, we have to bring in other people. Alice Miller writes: "In order to begin such a confrontation with the painful truth we need the support of people who know that what was formerly considered a sin, that is, criticising your own parents, is our only chance of becoming healthy."

What sort of people will such 'containing' people be?

They will:

- not allow themselves to be dragged into the chaos, fear and grief;
- not mix up their own chaos, their own fear and their own grief with ours;
- make it possible for us to discuss and assimilate our most unbearable feelings; nothing must be left unnamed;
- be able to create a resting place in moments of fear-ridden confusion;
- be able to help us retrieve our lost self-esteem;
- accept us in our moments of helplessness without shutting us up in that helplessness;
- help us to name our feelings;
- enable us to distinguish important issues from side issues;
- listen to the hidden message which we are often communicating through our words and actions;
- be able to diagnose a mourning process or sense of loss;
- be able to set boundaries, without stopping us short or inhibiting us, so that we do not drown in our own emotions.

Security requires presence. In our society, when we think of mourning we often couple it with the idea of

`comforting'. I should like to separate these two concepts because mourning does not require consolation but does require security. Security guarantees space and safety for bringing out difficult and threatening pain. Comfort works as a salve; it calms the storm; it can also obstruct the process of mourning. Sensitive presence to what is happening in the other person, provides security and invites the other to stay close to their pain while I am with them. Comforting has more to do with those who give comfort than with the mourner. The comforter finds it difficult to allow the grief and pain to exist because it call up grief and pain in himself.

Next to security, the second condition for facing up to our misrecognition is to have a fixed point in the here-and-now. For this, Winnicott [in Vertommen, GS] uses the term `holding'. This concept essentially calls up the ideas of keeping, providing support and caring. A trusted person who has us in their keeping provides us with support through their quiet, reliable presence. They do not leave us in the lurch when we have difficulties, but stay with us in painful, grief-filled and angry moments. They draw safe boundaries or, at certain moments, when we need them, set limits. `Holding' also implies a guarantee of security. The presence of a `holding' figure is not only an actual, physical presence, but also a forceful, empathic availability. A fixed structure, in the sense of stable relationships and a sensible daily schedule, also provide `holding'. A `holding' person, together with a structure, make it possible for us to use other people as a mirror. They show us what is going on in ourselves; we are able as it were to look at ourselves from a distance, which is less frightening. In this way a certain distance starts to intervene between ourselves and our fear. We are not longer identical with it; *we have a problem* but *we are not that problem*. We are no longer the same as our fear, our doubt, our uncertainty, our pain. It again becomes possible to discern, name and situate what is going on in us. Our reason can take its rightful place, in balance with our feeling. Our intellect will no longer dominate or drive our feelings away; our actions will be harmoniously guided by them both. In this way we shall be able to experience increasingly and ever more deeply that we can share and show our wishes and desires, our confusion, our fear and our uncertainty, without being overwhelmed by them or rejected by other people.

With sufficient security in the form of a created structure and the helping hand of the `containing' person, a basic feeling of trust in oneself and in the world around one can start to grow. Our grief and despair can then appear for we have the certainty that things are not going to get out of hand. This is what happens when we consciously choose to be on the side of the misrecognised Child in our self. This misrecognised Child feels that `a witness who knows' has taken it by the hand. After reading Manfred Bieler's book: `Still as the Night. Memories of a Child', Alice Miller wrote: "He gave his hand to the child he once was and together with that child revisited the forgotten hell... He was able to do that because he had a grandmother who sometimes took him under her wing and protected him from his parents, thus acting as a helping witness... Many maltreated children have never experienced that and so remain unaware that they would have deserved and received such help if only someone in their circle had been less heartless and ignorant. Bieler's grandmother also showed him by her love that he was worth loving because she liked him. All this made it possible for Manfred Bieler to risk confronting the pain of his childhood, not to betray it utterly and to tell its tale. People who have had no helping witness in their childhood would not be able to do that." To the extent that we can still find an open ear and an understanding heart which offer us security, we can still recover the suffering that was done to us from its petrified state. For Bieler, a `seeing' grandmother did even better; she had been able to prevent the misrecognised Child from years of self-neglect in the form of constructing a `false', disturbed I. Between the old and the new there is now a gap, for there was no properly developed true I behind the false I. Our `real' feelings do not just appear all at once in adult form. We have a pre-eminent need for security during this process of exchange. Security to `see' what we were not allowed to, and thus could not, `see', security to feel what we were not allowed to, and therefore could not, feel, security to act in harmony with our `seeing' and our feeling. The person who offers us this security, is the `good' helper. Much can then be restored in this safe place in which the adult woman or man can give her or his child protection

and support.

12.3 Mourning as an active process of assimilation

Mourning the loss of something or someone outside oneself and mourning the loss of the Self are not exactly the same. A 'healthy' mourning process can get hung up and be twisted into pathological mourning. Mourning can stagnate and pass into a state of continuous mourning. This is the case where the misrecognised Child remains caught in its misrecognition and rejection. Breaking through this block requires active mourning. In itself, time does not heal wounds. Derksen says: "Mourning is an active process and requires energy and effort from the person concerned." In discussing this mourning process we shall use the same stages as we used in Chapter Five. The assimilation process works in the same way. The difference lies in the final result. At the end of an ordinary 'healthy' mourning process the mourner finds a *new* reality. At the end of the process of mourning the loss of Self, it is the *old* reality, the true I, which is rediscovered. After the loss of something outside ourselves, the reorganisation we undergo consists of letting go of what has been lost; but after the loss of our true Self we are concerned with letting go of our defences, of the feeling of loss, and with retrieving what is lost: the Self. The completion of the work of mourning thus lies in the rediscovery of the lost object (oneself), a redistribution of the inner world and a new turning towards the exterior.

Let us first go back to the various stages of the mourning process now adapted to the assimilation of the I-loss.

The shock of realising our I-loss can occur at the moment when, in our adult life, we are confronted with our repressed experiences. This confrontation may be triggered by an event which we cannot master. Such a searing event may cause actual pain which, in turn, calls up old pain. Although there may seem to be no direct connection with the event, we are confronted with old pain which has suddenly broken through. Consciously or unconsciously, old hurts will surface.

If the worst comes to the worst, the *denial* often expressed in terms like: 'yet it wasn't that terrible', 'but my parents did their best', 'they didn't know any better', 'I can't really blame them...', may go on for a lifetime. The tale must somehow be interrupted: it was in fact very terrible. Bradshaw says: "Being mentally wounded because your parents did not allow you to be the person you were, is the worst that can happen to you." He uses some examples to make this clear. "When you were cross they never failed to say: never dare to take that tone with me again! This made you understand that you were not permitted to be yourself and being cross was absolutely out. With fear, grief and joy it was exactly the same. It was wrong to touch your vagina or penis, even if it made you feel good. It was wrong to think the minister, the rabbi or the priest was boring. It was wrong to think what you thought, to want what you wanted, to feel what you felt or to imagine what you imagined. Sometimes it was even wrong to see what you saw or to smell what you smelt. It was wrong to be different and so to be yourself." That was also our reality.

Allowing our own *rage* is the next step in the mourning process. In the assimilation of the loss of our true self in our childhood, allowing our own rage is a laborious step. All our life we have learnt to keep silent, not to rebel. The fourth commandment, honour your father and mother, has left its mark, as has the idealisation of parents and the covering up of trauma. It demands a complete U-turn not to lay the guilt for the I-loss on ourselves but to attribute responsibility for the loss of our natural needs and expectations to our parents. Yet rage and hate are essential feelings in the assimilation of misrecognition.

The grief which shows itself here as pain and melancholy becomes self-evident when the rage has been

given its chance. We feel we were betrayed; we mourn for what could have been if we had remained our true selves. We cry over our unfulfilled desires, our unrealised creative impulses, our neglected needs. This grief can be very intense and last for a long time. It is, after all, the grief of years. We bottled it up because we could see no way out of the impasse, because we could not 'see' where that grief came from.

After the grief comes *regret*. During the grief for missed chances in our childhood, during our lamenting that we were left in the lurch, that we were injured and misrecognised, it is important to see that we do not become blocked all over again by feelings of guilt. The Child could not do anything other than what it did; it could do nothing but take cover and adapt, for it had to survive. The reason why it did not retrace its footsteps sooner, as soon as it had stopped being physically dependent, was connected with its feeling of insufficiency. Because of this feeling, the Child has always seen its false identity as its true I. Yet, in this phase, it is difficult to begin a confrontation with the false part of oneself. It is perhaps the most difficult part of the mourning process. Mourning the I-loss leads to the ultimate freedom: the meeting with the true I. Now we have to attach ourselves to that true I.

The final stage of this mourning process is therefore *attachment*, in which it differs from the usual mourning process during which we are required to let go. The skirmishes between the destructive impulses of the false I and the positive impulses of the true I are won more and more often by the true I. This is not a final state, but rather the beginning of a lifelong process towards completion. A person in the process of self-realisation is always on the way. He is constantly in movement, in process. He is discovering his own capacities, his own true boundaries. He is enamoured of his inner freedom and calm and will devote all his energies to fostering and guarding them. The path to the restoration of contact with the true I is a laborious path, with many traps and pitfalls. We may need a guide to help us on the way.

With or without professional accompaniment, a first obstacle must always be cleared by the suffering self. It must choose to take the path to assimilation. It is responsible for its choice. It can no longer hide behind clichés such as 'traumas are best forgotten: it's no use raking up the past'. If 'raking up the past' means bothering other people with it in the hope of getting back what is missing, then this advice has truth in it. Merely 'raking up the past' only obstructs the process of assimilation. A change of the second order such as exchanging one compulsive behaviour for another or polishing up the false I by 'learning' to be assertive, is not making a choice for the truth. A change of the first order is actually to experience and assimilate one's original, repressed feelings and thus discover the true self.

The adult child cannot go on expecting other people to look after it without itself incurring damage. It must have the courage to summon itself to life and dare to want to get rid of the terrors which haunt it. The adult child, accustomed to having a certain sympathy with itself, must learn to set aside time, attention and space for the hankering, neglected and misrecognised Child in himself. 'Self-pity' then turns into 'self-empathy'. Self-pity pushes the cause of its unhappiness on to its surroundings or fails to get beyond the story of its inauspicious youth. In this situation we are avoiding having to look at our own inhibitions, our own fear. Self-pity gives us a certain satisfaction and we are then inclined not to change anything, not to 'assimilate' anything. We are then perfectly prepared to keep 'safely' away from the Self. We continue to adapt to other people but run away from our own fears. Taking a step back from ourselves and setting the mourning process in motion, means that we consciously move towards the unknown Self and cease to circle round our fear of becoming our true selves: this gives us confidence. Circumnavigating our fear only gives us false confidence. Letting go of such false confidence heals a deep anxiety. Taking a step back from ourselves also means not wanting always to be loved and well thought of, not wanting always to be seen and acknowledged. This detachment favours the Self. Some 'adult children' are inclined to get caught in the feeling that no one loves them at all. Schellenbaum remarks: " As long as the feeling that no one loves you goes on - although it may not correspond to

reality - it means that you yourself will not be in a good enough state to love." The false I must have courage enough to dare to renounce this surrogate love, the not-being-loved feeling. This will become possible through gazing steadily at the profound experience of early rejection, reliving it and thus assimilating it. In this way life can take a new direction. Keeping the pain of rejection warm through addiction, in order not to have to go any further, keeps us victims to the repetition compulsion. Reliving the experience brings us close to the primal feeling of 'I am', the feeling that pulls us out of the isolation, the forsakenness and the rejection. We can now be human with other people. Aloneness belongs with being human, but not loneliness.

To sum up, we can say that mourning is taking a step back from the false I, from self-pity, from childish securities, from running away, from distraction, from control patterns and addictions. Mourning leads to freedom, to growth, to the unfolding of the self, to creativity, to Life. Between chronic mourning and freedom stretches a long and laborious path. We shall often sit by the wayside feeling ill, tired, exhausted, fearful and confused. But with our own courage, and with other people's help, we shall slowly but surely gain in confidence and be able to raise our eyes more and more often to the wide horizons opening before us.

CHAPTER 13

Towards an anti-pedagogical psychotherapy

*"As long as there are enough psychotherapists
who have understood, out of their own experience,
the dynamic of the maltreatment of children,
the vicious circle of the destruction of human people
can be broken."*

A. MILLER

13.1 The therapy, the therapist and the relationship

Injury and misrecognition in childhood can take so high a toll of the individual that professional help is required for healing to be reached. Even if a person has emerged from childhood less severely injured, such a choice can be very fruitful. In other words, to the extent that we feel that we are not making the best out of our life, to the extent that we suffer from dissatisfaction with ourselves and waste our energy on this feeling, we need help. Help may be sought in all sorts of forms. A friend, a partner, a good colleague or neighbour can provide very valuable assistance in times of stress, overload or sorrow. Front-line helpers, nursing staff and social workers are trained to provide support in the emergencies which, at certain moments, tax us beyond our strength. For a limited period they will take care of some of our troubles. However, when the complaints point to deep-rooted and chronic psychic struggle, then psychotherapy is more appropriate.

I am often asked what I do as a therapist. When I have given the clearest answer I can, my questioner is usually amazed and comes back at once with a further question: "Can anyone go into therapy then?" That is true: anyone *can* go into therapy, for everyone has incurred at least some bumps and scratches in upbringing, especially in our society. However, everyone does not *have to* go into therapy; it is a matter of personal choice. Yet, if we are to get even our minor bumps and scratches well repaired, 'expert' repairers should be called in. How one can recognise these 'experts' is dealt with a little later on; my first concern is to describe what I understand by therapy.

In the world of psychotherapy it is often hard for either the clients or the therapists to see the wood for the trees. There seem to be as many sorts of therapy as therapists. So we need to strive for maximum clarity. For me, 'psychotherapy' is the access road to the misrecognised Child in ourselves. Via the reliving and the assimilation of old traumas, old injuries, woundings and humiliations from the foetal and childhood stages, the healing of the individual can take place. My proposition is that any form of guidance which does not aim to heal the misrecognised Child, does not deserve the name of psychotherapy. Types of guidance and support which do not lead to resolution of damaging experiences from childhood, work in a misleading and camouflaging manner. I shall explain this proposition below.

As appears from the contents of this book, our life is predominantly directed and often dislocated by forces which we have never been able to grasp and of whose existence we are now quite ignorant. Every

correction of the compass misses the mark and thus risks sending us off on the wrong course. Such correction comes down to exchanging one upbringing system for another. Fromm writes in his book 'Fear of Freedom': "Only a psychology which utilizes the concept of unconscious forces can penetrate the confusing rationalizations we are confronted with in analysing either an individual or a culture." We find little of that nature in the many definitions proposed for psychotherapy. Whole series of volumes are devoted to the theme of psychotherapy; they mostly contain confusing rationalizations of the real problem.

If the client starts to behave in an altered fashion or to interact better with his surroundings, or obtains a better insight into his own functioning, this is still not evidence that he has become more in touch with the Child in himself. As long as he has not come to the heart of his emotional problems, the compulsion to repeat will continue to do its work.

Van der Ploeg gives the following description of psychotherapy:

"All psychotherapies, of whatever school, share certain characteristics: (a) between the client and the psychotherapist there is a relationship which can be characterised by the words 'warmth' and 'trust', (b) the psychotherapeutical relationship and the process contain a promise of help, and (c) the activities undertaken by the psychotherapist and the client are designed to produce maximum opportunities for change." Change suggests improvement, but what improvement is he talking about? Better behaviour? Better talking? Better thinking? Better feeling? It seems to me that psychotherapy is too often focused on 'correction'. The client has to be corrected in the way he thinks, feels and acts. Yet the therapist must not correct the client; even the client must not correct the client. The therapist offers the client the opportunity to get rid of the false self which has been built up. Correction as change does not heal but leads to more adaptation. In order not to lose the therapist's goodwill, the client often adapts himself once again, telling the therapist only what is acceptable to the therapist. Then the therapy becomes a repetition of the parent-child relationship. Clients who have been able to go through the 'upbringing' of the therapy successfully, leave with a repolished and even more adapted false I. We have already seen that 'adaptation' in childhood has been our greatest source of suffering. It is precisely adaptation that set off our complaints. Trying to lay these complaints to rest using the same weapon brings more suffering.

Every type of psychotherapy should be centred on the person and not on the complaint. Psychotherapy does not aim at adaptation, either of behaviour, or thought, or feeling, but envisages the cleansing and unfolding of the client's deepest centre. At this centre lies the possibility of growth and development. Most therapists, alas, 'cover up' the maltreatment and abuse of the child or allow it to be buried under the adaptations of early childhood. Letting the past sleep comes down to robbing the client of his past. Alice Miller calls this, rightly I think, a form of rape. Going back to the past does not stop at merely recalling facts; more important is for the repressed feelings to be actively lived through once more. Only living through the old feelings will cleanse the inflicted wounds. If therapists make a habit of neglecting the real maltreatment which occurred in the past, they will attach undue importance to the client's complaint at the same time leaving him alone with his trauma. This happens with therapists who are obstructed by their own unresolved past, or by the adaptive theories they have constructed on the basis of the mistakes in their own children's upbringing, or by both at once. If they have managed to adapt their own babies to a fixed feeding schedule and times of rest, and trained their young children not to cry and to control their bodies so as to be 'clean', and if, without being forced to do so, they have confided their babies and toddlers to baby-carers (so that they could continue their therapeutic work!) - if any of these is true - then when they meet their clients they will not be open to the story of their lives.

When the therapist is not interested in the real pre-history of the client, the latter will need symptoms in order to communicate what cannot otherwise be disclosed. The client already occupies a difficult, ambivalent position: he wants to communicate his trauma, but he also wants to respect his parents. If this

ambivalence is not recognised in the therapy, the client will not be able to speak out. Worse still is when the therapist, by means of manipulation - because he is clinging to what he sees as *the* reality - deprives his client of the opportunity to express himself. Where then is the misrecognised Child to look for healing? This manipulative attitude, which belongs to 'poisonous' pedagogy and is expressed in the fourth commandment, is to be found in many psychotherapeutic methods and in many therapists. Such manipulation has a scientific name: the 'therapeutic method'. The paradoxical approach of the gestalt theory, the communication techniques of the system approach, the interventional approach of hypnosis, and behavioural therapy's renewed upbringing method, are all so many examples of manipulations, repetitions of 'poisonous' pedagogy. "When, in contrast, a person is in despair from childhood onwards because he is not permitted to live out his entire truth, he will need someone who will first of all put him in touch with himself, and who does not see him as an object of socialisation... An effective therapy is not a continuation of upbringing, but an exposure of the injuries sustained in upbringing, so that the consequences of these injuries may be brought to an end", thus Alice Miller. The therapy should focus on the client as he now feels but always with reference to the origin of this feeling in the past. The therapy should not be out to 'solve problems' but, as Carl Rogers puts it: to "accompany the individual personality in its growth."

People whose early childhood history of development was a favourable one do not enter therapy. They will certainly encounter problems but will discover how to solve them with or without assistance. 'Getting stuck' in the true sense of the term, goes back to fundamental blockages from early youth. Traumatic effects are not inherent to situations like death, divorce or loss of a job, but are the consequences of an early loss of personal bearing-power, a bearing-power which is of particular importance in these situations. The difficult situations into which a particular person always seems to be getting, and his characteristic reactions to them, point not so much to the situations themselves as to the person's experiences with attachment figures from his childhood.

I want to relativise the importance of the techniques used by the therapist. Any technique which does justice to the misrecognised Child, which helps the client to get in touch with his own misrecognised Child, to live out and assimilate the suffering from his childhood, is a 'correct' technique. Against this, any technique which represses the Child and its feelings, or increases forgetting and forgiving, which covers up the truth behind the facts, which neglects and belittles childhood suffering, is wrong. The myth of forgiving, of reconciliation with the parents, is a false representation of the facts. When the child no longer has to repress its unresolved rage against its parents, reconciliation becomes possible. If this is not permitted, then there is false peace and a false I. A moralising call to forgive is murderous for the injured child.

Going more deeply into the details of childhood is an important element in a disclosing psychotherapy. Events, situations, images and expressions betray the climate of 'poisonous' pedagogy in which the client has been brought up. They come nearest to the client's original experience. The exploration and naming of this climate prepares the way for the exploration of feelings, repressed or unrepressed. The exploration of feeling should be a priority in psychotherapy. Thinking and doing will automatically become 'healthy' in harmony with healthy, 'real' feeling. In psychotherapy it is the client's inner world which matters most. According to Dijkstra, the accent: "should not lie on what the client says, but on how he uses his inner feeling when he speaks." Dijkstra defines the result of successful therapy as "having one's affective life more at one's disposal."

To draw out feeling from the chaos of emotion is to create unity from multiplicity and at the same time thinking and doing are cleansed and brought into harmony. From this harmony, unity (the rigid pattern) is brought to multiplicity, space is created and an equilibrium comes into being between the open and the closed, between adaptation and exercising influence.

Perhaps the following approach to psychotherapy in our present society will reflect something of the shifts which can take place. Alienating, 'male' values such as ruling, quantity, domination and competition give way to 'female' values like feelings, the inner world, growth and quality. This points to a process Rogers describes as "from fixedness to openness, towards freeing oneself from structures and old attitudes, towards a different way of living the self and towards a different mode of action." By freeing the misrecognised Child in himself, the client can start to unfold as a 'fully functional person'.

In illustration of what a disclosing, assimilative therapy can be like, I will include a fragment from 'The Pain of Rejection' by Peter Schellenbaum. "On a particular day I observe something which had not struck me before, although it had always been there. In the man opposite me, who is starting to cry in despair about his unhappy relationships, I suddenly see the small baby whose mother doesn't really love him. I base my observation partly on external symptoms: the helpless, despairing tone of the suppressed crying, the uncoordinated spastic movements of the limbs, the total weakness of the collapse. These are symptoms of complete dependence. Intuitively and spontaneously I ask him whether he would like to lie down. Immediately, without saying a word, he does so. He continues to say nothing and gazes before him as if he cannot bear to lose the thread of what is now happening. The suppressed sobs break out into an agonized howl of utter abandonment. Shuddering convulsively, he tries to gather himself up. He opens and shut his nervously shaking hands. All at once he is once more overpowered by total helplessness. This is repeated several times. He squirms, writhes and twists in continuing convulsions. His crying becomes ever more despairing.

I am deeply affected by the attempts of this baby to get his mother to the point where she will at last take him in her arms, carry him and rock him. There is nothing I can do except be part of his painful efforts, stay with him and stand beside him. ... I softly suggest that he should fold his hands on his belly and breathe deeply. Again and again he gathers himself up as if he were calling desperately to his mother, but he slowly but surely becomes more quieter as he feels the contact with his belly. It is as if he is beginning to reach equilibrium and to pay attention to himself again. ... The spastic movements slowly die down and he begins to relax. His energy flows in flatter, slower waves. An atmosphere of inner closeness and pleasant liveliness begins to spread around. The man goes on crying quietly. His expression is one of happy relaxation. I turn away from him, let him lie a little longer and then suggest that he should get up and come and sit opposite me." At this point I will break off Schellenbaum's account of disclosing therapy.

On the basis of what has been said above I come to the following description of what I call an antipedagogical therapy. The underlying *assumption* of the antipedagogical psychotherapy is that emotional difficulties originate in injury, wounding, and neglect, in short in misrecognition of the natural needs and expectations of the 'real' child during the prenatal and earliest childhood periods of life. The *aim* of antipedagogical psychotherapy is to assimilate the traumatising of a 'normal' upbringing, to break through the client's idealisation of his parents and to discover the client's own natural needs and desires. The aim is thus to break down the triad of 'poisonous' pedagogy (see Chapter Seven). Antipedagogical psychotherapy is primarily a therapy of exposure and exploration. The *means* used by this form of therapy is the exploration of feelings in the here-and-now, in process of which they are brought into contact with their childhood roots. Once again living through and thus assimilating the old feelings will finally lead to liberation, to freedom from the coercion of the false self and to discovery of the authentic being of the true self. It will lead to self-realisation.

How can such an antipedagogical psychotherapy work? It seems to me that there are three essential components: the quality of the therapist, the quality of the relationship and the capacities of the client.

The therapist

The world of psychotherapy is a world of 'schools' and 'currents'. Every therapist seems to create their own 'school'. In the training course for psychotherapists, much time is spent on the study of the professional literature and also of techniques. There is also quite a lot of emphasis on skills. There is supervision, intervision, and the therapy of learning. Training for psychotherapy has become a whole market area. All these developments which it seems to me are mostly extensions in width rather than depth, are unable to replace what is most essential for a therapist: the assimilation of his own childhood traumatisation. However vast his intellectual knowledge, if the therapist does not come to terms with his own traumatised upbringing, all his knowledge will be of very little value. Denial of one's own misrecognition seems to me to be a serious barrier to entering the profession of psychotherapy. In this case, the therapist will always run the risk of being unable to free himself from 'poisonous' pedagogy and may then offer moral advice rather than space for assimilation. If he has not yet recognised, acknowledged and assimilated the fear and pain stemming from his own childhood, and has not therefore consciously dealt with them, he is in the same boat as our parents: full of goodwill but not yet mature enough for the job. If the therapist works on the basis of respect for parents, he will also be respected; if he hides his own traumas, his client's traumas will also remain hidden; if he, the therapist, is not familiar with his own natural needs and desires, his client will not be able to uncover his natural potential either.

Rombouts calls the nourishing soil required for empathy in therapy "the openness in the therapist's own life". By this he means being in affective touch with one's own experiences of life together with receptivity to what comes from outside. "Empathic receptivity to the client's world is only possible as a natural, unforced attitude, if it connects with a more inclusive, open attitude of life towards one's own inner and outer world." But an empathic attitude is only possible if the therapist himself has been cleansed of his old injuries. 'Empathic interventions' can result from training, 'being empathic' must be recaptured. The therapist must be inwardly and outwardly consistent: that is to say, he will be favourably disposed to the feelings which arise in him and whatever he says and does will correspond to the movements of his own feelings. This implies that 'being human' and 'being a therapist' are in harmony with one another and in harmony with the true self. Wijngaarden says: "If our therapy has a positive result, we move towards differentiated forms of mental health, not only because of the therapeutical convictions we have applied or the school to which we belong, but *also* because of the person we are." I would claim that the *most* important factor in the process of facilitating healing is the person the therapist is: not the character of that person, as Wijngaarden claims, but the nature of their contact with their true self. Dijkstra points out that therapists should not too glibly assume that they already fulfil Rogers' 'conditions' and therefore have nothing to do but perfect all sorts of 'techniques'. The conditions Rogers lists as necessary to psychotherapeutic assistance are: empathy, realness and openness. In my opinion it is a long time before the psychotherapist *is* empathic, real and open. He may well do his best to *act* with empathy, realness and openness, but I am afraid this will not actually help the client. The most important thing is not the therapist's skill but the maturity of his personality. I think, therefore, that candidate therapists who present themselves for training, should have made sure that they have first assimilated their past by means of disclosing therapy. this seems to me the most essential condition for admission to training in psychotherapy. An obligatory course in 'learning therapy', inserted later on in the course, cannot fill this gap. Dijkstra writes: "I should like more guarantees that before someone with these extras [skills and techniques, GS] starts practising, it should at some point have been ascertained that he *is* integrated, receptive and empathic. The professional quality demanded by Rogerians must be sought in the first place in the personality of the therapist and the climate he creates around him and not in his knowledge about pathology, therapy techniques or whatever else." Only therapists who themselves live a real life will be able to bring their clients to life again. Only in as far as the therapist has reached through to those of his own experiences which have been driven down into the unconscious, will he be able to bring his

client to consciousness. In a disclosing therapy, the client can go no further than he is allowed by the space afforded by the therapist. But, sadly, it seems that many therapists are still running away from their own truth. Their training and their scientific leanings cover over their own childhood history. Doctors and psychiatrists prescribe medicines through which their clients' histories are destroyed and at the same time kill their own life histories. Psychotherapists gloss over their fear of being exposed by the client by using concepts such as the client's resistance and the client's projection and by so doing deaden themselves to their own resistance.

Resistance to 'treatment' on the part of the client is a real possibility. It can serve a twofold purpose. It can be the false self's struggle for its own survival, but may also be a positive result of the parent-child relationship, in which the therapist is placed in the position of parent. Projection occurs when the client begins to create scenes in therapy. The client is repeating his early childhood situation and the therapist is being given the role of the often negative parent. In this way the client is communicating his earlier reality, a reality which was often very dramatic. If the therapist classifies this as 'misbehaviour' or 'acting out' he is reflecting a pedagogic attitude. "If the analyst [the therapist, GS] is still caught in the compulsions of his own upbringing, he will tell his supervisor or colleague how 'impossibly' his client is behaving, how much repressed aggression there is in him and from what unbridled passions this arises, and he will ask his more experienced colleagues what the aggression indicates and how he 'can bring it to the surface'. But if he can feel the nature of his patient's suffering, then he will stay with his premise that the behaviour manifested by the patient is a communication, a language in which he is relating events about which he cannot and, at present, must not speak in any other way", thus Alice Miller.

Instead of attributing all sorts of defects to the client and blaming him when he goes beyond the usual boundaries of the

therapy, the therapist tries, with the client's help, to understand the earlier situation. At the same time, the therapist communicates his own boundaries. He will not give the client the illusion that he is always available, a trap into which inexperienced therapists can easily fall. If the client's childhood is kept in mind, projection will not be seen as denoting resistance, but as the outward expression of what is really being lived through. The therapist will then not feel 'got at'.

Finally, I want to sketch briefly the sort of person an antipedagogical therapist ought to be. He is someone who is for the most part at one with himself, and is therefore transparent to the client. He has a rich experience of life because he has assimilated his own 'traumatic history'; he is not dependent on recognition; he can apologise for mistakes he makes; he is not dependent on addictions or control patterns. For such a therapist there is certainly still a future, even if the authorities have can find no place for him. More important still, there will be a future for the clients who seek help from this therapist.

The relationship

"Living life to the full is essentially relationship." This assertion from Dijkstra sets us on the track of the second grand component in the therapeutic situation. Dijkstra continues: "Experiencing oneself in all sorts of ways in an emotionally meaningful relationship with the therapist is the active ingredient in the therapy." The interpersonal contact between therapist and client is the primary means of resolving the intrapsychic, inner conflicts. The fruit of this healing process is that all other contacts will also eventually become more supple.

In order to bring this relationship into being, the client must trust the therapist. Where the therapist is transparent, real and empathic, he will give rise to such trust and create the 'right' climate for self-discovery and personal development. The therapist who hides himself from his client, both with regard to his own 'being' and to his care or exasperation about the client, will give the client the feeling of having landed up once again in the old situation with his parents. Those were the people who pretended that they loved him when what he experienced was a deep-seated aversion to his own 'being.' The therapist is unconditionally 'for' the client's true self. In antipedagogical therapy, the therapeutic relationship cannot be a conscious or unconscious repetition of the parent-child relationship of the client's upbringing. The therapeutic relationship will be marked, on the therapist's side, by security and safety, by recognition and acknowledgement, by worth and respect and by trust in the client's natural capacities for growth. In short, the therapist creates conditions in which the client can at first attach himself and later on detach himself. The therapist is available and reponsive, which is how the parents should have been in the client's childhood. A therapist does not fall into repetition; he does not 'bring up' the client anew, but allows what 'really' grows in the client to grow.

The relationship with the therapist should not be an end in itself: the therapist is not a substitute parent. The therapeutic relationship must bring the client to pay attention to himself, to his own inner process. The external communication must not get in the way of the internal communication.

I cannot describe the relationship between therapist and client better than does Rogers when he says: "If I can create a relationship marked on my side by:

- realness and transparency, in which I lay bare my true feelings;
 - giving the other person warmth and accepting and valuing him as an independent individual;
 - feeling my way towards a capacity to see him and his world as he himself sees them,
- then the other person in the relationship:
- will experience and understand those aspects of himself which he previously repressed;
 - will notice that he is becoming more integrated and in a better state to act purposefully;

- will become more like the person he would like to be;
- will increasingly follow his own path and develop more and more self-confidence;
- will become more his own, unique person, better able to express his own particularity;
- will be better at understanding and accepting other people;
- will be better and more easily able to deal with the problems which come up in his life."

13.2 The psychotherapist as advocate of the Child

The relationship Rogers describes will be feasible if the therapist becomes the advocate for the Child in the client. He will be capable of taking on this role in so far as he has settled with his own past. The misrecognised Child needs an advocate. If it does not find one, it will never be able to get near the deepest pain of rejection. It will then often seem that the pain is not there.

I think Schellenbaum draws the wrong conclusion in the following passage: "In some cases it is difficult, sometimes even impossible to find a connection between the pain of rejection and the people round about an individual. Although this seldom happens, when it does, the source of the pain appears to lie more, or even entirely, in the personality of the unloved person. the pain is then less the fault of or even not to be looked for at all in connection with people from his past. I know cases in which people have lived and died in a state of advanced isolation without this being attributable to deficiencies of parental love." Later on he contradicts himself: "Anyone who is finally able to live through the suffering of his first years under the sympathetic gaze of another person later on in life, takes a step beyond his suffering: he discovers his strength. He can now give himself the affective support, warmth, reliability and satisfaction of his basic needs, which his mother or father withheld from him."

The antipedagogical therapist is the advocate of the true Child in the client. This means that the therapist:

- encourages the client to discover the misrecognition of his earliest childhood through concrete memories, images and other experiences;
- returns to the client in a digestible and livable form, everything the client indicates as indigestible and chaotic, by giving them a place in the client's life history;
- brings the client to feel that all feelings have the right to exist, including the feelings (which may be negative) the client has about the therapist;
- helps the client to break out of his idealisation or extenuation of his parents by looking at them realistically and allowing himself to experience the pain of knowing that his parents only loved him 'conditionally';
- gives the client the feeling that he is protected against the destructive forces which might hurt him or other people if the entire extent of his injury were to be revealed;
- allows the client to see and feel that he should not feel ashamed of what was previously done to him;
- allow everything to happen in the therapy room and refrain from inciting the client to act out his experience either to his parents or elsewhere;
- supports the client in uncovering his own 'real' needs and desires, especially the need for 'real' love and attention.

With this advocate at work for the Child, the therapeutic process becomes a matter of descending, hand in hand with the client, into the walled-up cellars of childhood; of retrieving, step by step, the 'forgotten' and 'banished' experiences of his life; of allowing all dimensions of the reliving of these experiences to be there. The therapist stays with the client in order to carry through the quest and bring it to a good conclusion. The therapist is the 'helping' and 'knowing' witness for the 'child-who-no-longer-knows'. Only if the therapist "can feel what his client is suffering, a suffering that the patient himself cannot yet feel, will he stick to his premise that the manifest attitude of the patient is a form of communication", thus

Alice Miller. He will keep everything in his heart without judgment.

Alice Miller wonders why, in most cases, the analyst [therapist, GS] does not investigate the real trauma situation of childhood. According to her, psychotherapists fail to pay attention to the early childhood misrecognition because of:

- the unresolved idealisation of their own parents;
- the limitations of the theory they have learnt about;
- most of all, the fear of being confronted with their own traumas;
- the absence of critical doubt about existing dogmas.

The fundamental cause of the 'therapeutic' misrecognition of the Child in the client can therefore be traced to 'poisonous' pedagogy once again. I should add a fifth cause for the therapist's failure: the fear of being confronted with one's own attempts at parenting. Having children of one's own can be a serious handicap to working through one's own childhood suffering and thereby also to the exercise of the calling of psychotherapist. Having children of one's own carries the risk that the idealisation of one's own parents will be kept going. Their own difficulties and frustrations in rearing children make parents feel allied with their own parents. Instead of choosing for the Child in themselves and in their children, parents and therapists choose to be on the side of the child-rearers, in this case their own parents.

"If the analyst [therapist, GS] is in the sway of the taboo of the fourth commandment he will, despite all the trouble he may spend on reconstructions, enter into a covenant with the judgmental parents and against the patient, and will sooner or later try to bring the patient up by appealing to his understanding of his parents", warns Alice Miller: a warning which often seems to fall on deaf ears. The theme of the client's conscious and unconscious dealings with his own children, especially his unborn and newborn children, is often avoided by the therapist. Because he cannot identify with the child in himself, he cannot identify with the Child in the client nor with the child behind the client. The client who is really searching for himself will also question his own mode of being a parent. If the therapist ignores this he will be guilty of double negligence.

The client can expect the psychotherapist to be a supportive companion who understands abandonment, neglect, maltreatment, abuse and confusion. Lowen asserts: "A therapist who does not see his clients' pain, who does not feel their fear and their struggles to stay [and to become, GS] mentally healthy in an environment which threatens to drive them mad, cannot give practical help to his clients in their narcissistic [the false self, GS] disturbance."

The therapist will not, as advocate for the Child, abruptly shatter the wall of resistance erected by the false self. He will, purposefully but very tactfully attempt to take the false self with him on the way towards the banished but true self. If necessary, the therapist may take initiatives to this end, provided the therapeutic relationship is strong. The therapist will continue to 'direct' the therapy, in spite of great potential resistance on the part of the client. Because of early childhood experiences, the client may be afraid of losing control as much in therapy as well as elsewhere. Drawing a parallel with what happened to him before, he may see the therapist as wielding power. He is afraid of being used again as he was treated before. This is the real problem of projection. The therapist can only approach this problem in good faith in so far as he is free from any need to exercise power springing from his own unassimilated past and therefore does not do so. With a 'growing' therapist the therapeutic situation is the right place for the client to discharge his old injuries. The client can then gradually give more freedom to his repressed feelings and his control of them, because the therapist provides him with the security to do so. The security will be sabotaged if artificial and dangerous means which oppress or terrorise the Child are used again: for example drugs, L.S.D., hypnosis, isolated birth experiences, Speyer-type therapies, in short, any tools which are forced accelerators of the process. In an antipedagogic, disclosing therapy, the

therapist moves steadily towards his goal, which is to free the misrecognised and tormented Child from its old pain. This he does slowly and calmly, taking account of the anguished defence, and keeping the therapeutic relationship in view. He does not let himself be carried along by the client's false I. He persists in fighting for the injured Child in the client.

The role of advocate for the Child must gradually be transferred to the adult client himself. He must gradually acknowledge the effects of parental power in his babyhood and childhood. Thus he learns to experience that he is the only one who can be of any help. He will look at and feel all the circumstances of his childhood years which were inimical to life. He will have the immediate, actual experience that he has not been spared serious pain stemming from his childhood. He must plunge back into the jungle of the past. Stettbacher describes psychotherapy as:

- managing to express how one is feeling,
- describing the effects this has,
- questioning the consequences and persons involved in order to
- put one's own needs into words.

The client needs the help of an advocate to break through the strong impulses which have been created by his upbringing and so to lay bare the hurts and injuries he has suffered. In this manner the consequences of the upbringing are brought to an end. Effective psychotherapy is thus neither an extension nor a repetition of upbringing. If the psychic wounds are to heal, we must go down into a deeper layer of consciousness: to the place where the Child itself was lost. Cluckers describes the therapist's role as advocate in terms of 'containment'. He says: "We define containment in a therapeutic relationship as follows: it is the creation of a psychic space in which every communication, however confused and painful, is received, kept and 'mentally digested' by the therapist, with the purpose of stripping the feelings of their unbearable quality, allowing them to take a translatable form and giving them a place in the patient's world of experience." An effective therapy is first and foremost concerned with the client's experiential world and with the history of his life, and certainly not explicitly with his life schema. The way the client lives, which has much to do with the false I he has built up, only comes into play when the route to the true I is badly obstructed.

To be the advocate of the injured Child in the client is not always a simple task. Those people who, despite neglect by their parents, had in their childhood other grown-ups on their side, a grandmother for instance, are already somewhat familiar with the advocate's role. Others, not having had that advantage and not knowing that such a 'fellow human being' could exist, will find it more difficult to believe in solidarity. They often fail to enter therapy at all. If they do, then the therapist will have a very painstaking and extremely delicate task to perform in becoming advocate for the encapsulated child and avoiding getting caught up in the struggle with the false I.

13.3 Empathy with the true I

From 'knowing' to 'experiencing' is a long and laborious path. To know that we have had a distressing childhood and to be able to talk about it and to be able to shed tears over it is still not the same as going through the pain again in reenaction. The false I can make good use of its tears to demand sympathy for its present situation, without in the least setting about the mourning process. In order to prevent this process of assimilation, the false self may simply continue to react to other people, the therapist included, who had no part in what he was made to suffer in childhood. It is therefore very important that the therapist should be critical with regard to his 'fellowship' with the client. Although on one side it demands much 'understanding' for the child become an adult, with its unreal behaviour, its resistance, its control patterns, its addictions and so on, on the other side he must preserve his 'empathic feeling' for

the misrecognised Child in the client. The antipedagogical therapist 'understands' how the false self arose in the client, but he has, beyond everything, empathy for the neediness and pain of the misrecognised false I. To this end the past must always be really present. The wound cannot close before it has been cleansed.

In the first stage of therapy, in which the building up of the relationship takes an important place, openness to everything the client brings is of very great importance. Later, the therapist's empathy must constantly be directed to the injured, misrecognised Child in the client. In the 'client-centred' type of therapy, a 'constant focus on the client's inner frame of reference' is spoken of. This point of departure can be misleading. Empathy with the misrecognised Child will not necessarily exclude a confrontation with the false I of the adult. This confrontation demands great care from the therapist, that is to say, respect, a feeling towards the origin of the false I, patience and warmth. This carefulness can later be taken over by the client himself; under these conditions he will gradually become able to examine the various aspects of his dysfunction and thus clear the route to the truth in himself. Empathy with the misrecognised Child in the client is impossible without confrontation with the false self that has been built up. If the therapist avoids this confrontation and shows empathy for the client's present existence, a new addiction of the false I may appear. The experience of loving attention in therapy can then lead to a perpetual search for this experience. In this way the client drifts away from the trail he has uncovered and which leads to the true I. I think Rombouts is skating on thin ice when he says: "In my opinion, the therapeutic welcome is also concerned with the client's particular way of functioning: the greater or lesser predominance of certain functions, the particular rhythm of life, and so forth." The danger lies, I think, in the term 'acceptance'. If by this he means 'not judging', then I am with him; if he means 'acceptance' and acceptance in the unconditional sense, it seems to me that this is not appropriate in the face of the 'predominance of certain functions'. I can follow Rombout's reasoning where he says: "But on the other hand, empathy is also to do with the power of the imagination, with the possibility of - in the extreme - creeping into someone else's skin, seeing the world through his eyes, experiencing from the inside what he is living through", at least if this 'from the inside' stands for the misrecognised Child in the client. The antipedagogical therapist does not just blindly follow the client's internal frame of reference; he 'understands' the situation of the false I but he 'feels' with the true Child in the client.

The object of psychotherapy is to put the individual in touch again with his true I, that is to say, get rid of his facades. The real, original feeling must be made free once more. To this end, in the first instance, the emotions have to be discerned. The discernment goes in stages: from 'talking about them', from 'feeling' to expression. For example, fear can burst out into 'shouting out', grief can burst out in 'crying one's heart out'. Simply going on talking about it may result in entrenching the unresolved feeling even more firmly. The false I is polished up, the true I remains hidden. It is not the 'talking about' that leads to healing, but the living through once again, the actualisation in all its facets, from within boundaries which offer safety. It is important that the therapist should have a good critical feeling for the true and the false in the client. An example of this is the ability to feel the difference between the 'spontaneous' and the 'impulsive': the spontaneous comes from the true I, the impulsive from the false I.

According to Rogers, and here I am in absolute agreement, everybody has everything they need within them in order to be a 'fully-functional person'. But for this to come about there has to be 'unhindered opportunity for growth'. For the unborn and newborn child, this opportunity for growth contains a double assumption: first, the absence of hindrance ('poisonous pedagogy'), and second, the presence of an dialogue in the framework of a reciprocated encounter with an open adult. If both these conditions are met, the child will grow healthily. For the adult in process of repairing injury, however, the situation is somewhat different. However essential the encounter with the other person, the therapist, may be, his openness is not sufficient to produce the healing effect in the client. Rogers' optimism is entirely appropriate to the child who has not yet been injured. Later the false I may also choose stagnation, even

despite a good therapist. Knowledge and the ability to identify with the origin, development and tenacity of the false in the client and the courage to confront him with this, are necessary. The tenacity is indeed examined in most therapies, often even given much too much emphasis, while the inception and development of the false I get too little attention. By giving such exaggerated and one-sided attention to the client's present tenacity and to the pattern of his life now, therapists are actually busy polishing up the false self. The energy is freed in order to puff up the image.

Concentration on the inception and the development of the false I is the prime means of discovering the true I. By this means, the original energy can be retrieved through resolution. Clients in great need of safety and security can be very compelling and demanding and try every trick in the trade in order to obtain their unfulfilled longings. Clarity and the setting of boundaries on the part of the transparent therapist will prevent him from falling into a trap which would disadvantage the client in the painful hunt for his true self. Renewing contact with the true I has to take place through profound resistance. This resistance expresses itself in bodily muscle tension and psychic denial. Getting through this will mean: daring to let go. The therapist's empathy has its effect is the client can mobilise this daring. If this result fails to appear, and the client continues to clamour, this should be taken as a possible contra-indication for continuing the therapy. A contra-indication may sometimes be so apparent at the first interview that it may seem doubtful whether therapy can have any effect. I have listed here a number of important symptoms which make disclosing therapy extremely difficult or even impossible. Unfortunately, the client is no longer in a state to enter into any relationship:

- he exhibits strong psychopathic traits, all feeling has gone;
- he is severely narcissistically disturbed and does not want to give up his image or his surrogate solution;
- he is very rigid, cannot let go;
- he is extremely aggressive, a danger to himself and to others;
- he is unable to take responsibility for himself any longer.

Empathy for the true I which is in hiding behind the misrecognised Child in the client, demands a large dose of sensitive attention from the therapist; attention which is paid to the 'shouted down' Child in the client. We may even say that the extent to which the 'shouting down' can be observed in how the client uses his voice. People either shout down themselves and others when they are not close to their own feelings, or little sound comes through at all because they feel they are not allowed to be heard. Lowen says: 'Seen from a psychic point of view the throat opens the path to the heart and the feelings which have their seat in the heart....' To reach that heart and those feelings is the content of antipedagogical disclosing psychotherapy. However, if a person has reached an advanced stage of 'loss of feeling', this is to say, his impulses are empty of any feeling, then the healing process of the injured Child is extremely difficult, if not impossible. According to Lowen, everyone has the potential to bear responsibility for their own life. I want to nuance this assertion. 'In potential' that is to say, originally, everyone does have the capacity to take responsibility. But the Child in the client may be so emotionally killed by neglect and maltreatment that this responsibility can no longer be borne. Keeping the false self going seems the only way of surviving. The possibility of this capacity has lapsed.

Psychotherapy is in essence, mourning as a means of renewal. It is allowing the misrecognised Child in ourselves to speak, allowing its grief and rage without punishing or rejecting it for these feelings. Psychotherapy is acquiring trust in the true Child who lives in us; it is becoming its companion, its advocate in the struggle against the facades and camouflages of the false I. I want to end this chapter with Bradshaw: "The good news is that by working through our deep-lying basic grief, the natural process of healing starts to work. Mourning [psychotherapy, GS] is a healing experience. We shall all be healed in a natural way if only we can mourn." The support of an empathic, real and open antipedagogical therapist can help us do this.

Postface

A NEW SOCIETY

*"To understand the dynamics of the social process,
we must understand the dynamics of the psychological processes
operating within the individual,..."*

E. FROMM

At this moment I feel a sense of unity with the reader who has ventured with me as far as this. Together we can now sigh: and now what?

The first step might be to follow the advice of Alexander Pope when he says: "A man should never be ashamed to acknowledge that he was wrong; he is only saying in another way that he is wiser today than he was yesterday."

We now 'know' that we were in any case wrong to abandon, oppress or humiliate the Child in ourselves. We 'know' that we were wrong to force the Child in ourselves to be silent, to conceal our true feelings and desires and to continue to cover up the 'secret' of our childhood. We now 'know' that there is a way out, an escape from the blockage, from the pent-up emotions, from the grandiosity and the depression. It is possible to get rid of childhood repressions. What we did not 'know' yesterday we 'know' today; there is no need to be ashamed of that.

But we should be wronging the Child in ourselves if we were to go on behaving as if we did not know, or if we stopped at rational knowing. Such rational knowing would lead at most to criticism of others, but is essentially unfit to do anything about our alienated feeling. Neither we ourselves nor the people round us will reap living fruit from it. Nor will society be any the healthier. Here we have come to a fundamental connection: if we want to make the world a better place to live in, both for ourselves and for other people, our first task is to work on ourselves. If we want to free others, then we must first free ourselves from the graveyard of the false I. If we want to save others from their pain, then we must first fly to the aid of the child in ourselves. If we want to give others a voice, then we must first allow the Child in ourselves to be heard. If we want to help others to live according to their own capacities, then we must first become acquainted with our own identity. In short, if we want to bring others to live true and authentic lives then we must give the Child in ourselves room to live according to its natural capacities and expectations. Responsibility for *life* begins with responsibility for *my* life.

To live is to grow, to become aware, to transcend the superimposed false I in order to become oneself. Becoming aware is the rebirth of the true I, the I that is allowed to see what it sees, to feel what it feels, to think what it thinks. The beginning of the revolution is to become aware; the path is assimilation through mourning; the end of the road is liberation. So we come to total reality: a healthy individual contributes to the healing of the surrounding group, whereby the surrounding group becomes capable of fulfilling the needs of the continuum of each of its members, so that these in turn may help to maintain the health of the totality of society.

A concrete example will illustrate this. An adult woman who has kept or restored her harmony with the Child in herself will articulate outward demands, on her partner and on society, which will make it possible for her to give her child, born or unborn, the best possible chance of staying in contact with itself. She will require society to give her the chance to be with her child for the first two years of its life. The events of her own life will have given her a feeling for the affective expectations and needs of her own young child. She knows that she wants to be at hand to provide a sensitive response to its signals. She will put her child at the centre without having to interrupt her own development as woman. To this end she will ask her partner to support her, and also to build up affective contact between the child and himself, and not to leave the supervision and care of their child to her alone. She will require society to facilitate her period of leave from work, without loss of income and with the certainty of subsequent employment, until the child is able to do without its mother's presence all the time. I have called this 'an' example, but, for me it is more than that; all the foregoing contents of this book bear witness to my complete conviction that the problems of individuals and of society as a whole spring from the misrecognised child in us all. It is not 'having' a child which should elicit payments from the State (maternity allowance, child allowance) but 'being' for the child which should be stimulated by special leave of absence for parents, at least until the child is two years old. A television newsreel recently mentioned a new deal in insurance: parents can take out insurance against their child being ill; payment is in kind, that is, the insurance will pay for 'professional' care. Is this cultural progress in a civilized country?

A further attack on the value of a child cannot be a step forward for society. If misrecognition of the child continues, then alienation will go on increasing, doctors will have even more work, prisons will overflow, mental hospitals will stay full and the need for distraction, excitement and sensation will grow. The inner silence of 'being' will be replaced by the clatter of 'being busy'. If we continue to misrecognise the Child in ourselves, community will not be in a position to progress.

Individuals, parents, all those concerned with bringing up children, together with the community as a whole, should be focusing on the child *now*, not on good citizens for tomorrow. The foreground of our lives should be occupied by the small, the strong and the interior rather than by might, domination and outward show.

Because it is so blatant, I must relieve myself of one last example of alienation. The modern patriarchal world is dominated by outward appearances, by show, by the image, by images. Film stars, models, heroes, sports heroes, politicians and power-brokers, media figures, all these define the contours of the world. They hold up an image of what we should most desire. A recent blatant instance hit the peak of alienation. In Brazil, three days of mourning were held for the sports hero Senna. In a country where millions of homeless children are left to their fate and roam the gutters and refuse heaps, where street children who are a nuisance to commerce are systematically exterminated by hired murderers - in such a country - three days of national mourning were announced for a sports hero who went tearing after his own self image in high-speed racing. No tokens of mourning for the street children, nor for the innumerable 'Sennas' who have hidden away their hurt Child behind glitter and fame against which they have no 'good place' to screen them.

A 'good place' is a place with safe frontiers. In a world made up of alienated individuals there is a strong drive to push out the frontiers or even to deny them. Breaking records - or boundaries - is the sign of ultimate success. Yet breaking through frontiers does not mean freedom, but a loss of the feeling of self. "Individuality and particularity are founded on acknowledged, accepted frontiers and restrictions", says Lowen. The acknowledged, healthily developed individual is able to accept and respect natural frontiers and restrictions. A 'healthy' community will reflect this. It does not invite its

members to violate the boundaries but makes clear that every violation is an unhealthy reaction to an experienced loss.

What should we now do to grow towards a new community? The small, the pure, the true, the strong, the receptive must be restored to honour. For this the listening ear, the seeing eye and the living body of each individual is a necessary and sufficient condition. This means, in a nutshell, seeking contact with the misrecognised Child in ourselves.

Back cover.

The Misrecognised Child in Ourselves is not a book about bringing up children. It is a book about the Child in ourselves as adult persons and about the effect of our own upbringing on our personal development. Our childhood experiences have a decisive impact on later life. In our prenatal existence we were already wounded and damaged by the misrecognition and failure to take account of our natural expectations. Our vitality, which relies on free contact with the true I, has been blocked. Misrecognition betrays itself most clearly in our compulsion to suppress emotional pain. We have learnt to bury our deepest feelings and longings. The concealment of pain and the idealisation of our parents, together with contempt for our own natural needs, are at the root of every type of upbringing. They lead to the formation of the false I. The way out of the impasse of alienation is to liberate the true I and this comes about through mourning the loss of our true identity.

The Misrecognised Child in Ourselves is an honest book clearly based on the rejection of every form of repressive upbringing and the implicit defense of the affective interests of the child before and after birth. It is a controversial book in that it throws a merciless light on the roots of our system of upbringing and demonstrates what 'poisonous pedagogy' does to people and to society.

GABY STROECKEN (Sint-Truiden, 1935) has worked as teacher and social worker. She studied criminology in Louvain (Belgium) and psychology in Groningen in the Netherlands and also trained in client-centred psychotherapy. She now has her own psychotherapy practice. She gives lectures and courses and is chairwoman of the Association 'Perspectives for the misrecognised child'.

Literature.

- Andriessen, H., *Volwassenheid in perspectief*. Dekker & Van De Vegt, Nijmegen, 1984.
- Baartman, H., *Opvoeden met alle geweld*. Uitgeverij S.W.P., Utrecht, 1993.
- Bettelheim, B., *Niet volmaakt maar goed genoeg*. Contact, Amsterdam, 1990.
- Bowlby, J., *Verbondenheid*. Van Loghum Slaterus, Deventer, 1983.
- Bowlby, J., The role of attachment in personality development and psychopathology. In: Greenspan, S. en Pollock, G., *The course of life; vol I: Infancy*. International Universities Press, Madison, 1989.
- Bradshaw, J., *Wanneer koesteren hoop betekent*. Het Spectrum, Utrecht, 1992.
- Brazelton, T. en Cramer, B., *De eerste band*. Bosch & Keuning, Baarn, 1990.
- Brody, S., Psychoanalytische theorieën over de ontwikkeling en ontwikkelingsstoornissen bij het jonge kind; een kritische evaluatie. In: *Psychotherapeutisch Paspoort*, 2, 1984.
- Bruggeman, L., *Rouw*. Doktoraalskriptie KUN, Nijmegen 1982.
- Cardinal, M., *Het moet eruit*. In de knipscheer, Haarlem, 1982.
- Carp, E., *Een visie van de psychopatholoog op de criminologie*. Criminologische monografieën, nr 15. Acco, Leuven, 1975.
- Chamberlain, D., *Goed geboren worden*. Ankh-Hermes, Deventer, 1990.
- Chapman, A. en Chapman, M., *Harry Stack Sullivan's concepts of personality development and psychiatric illness*. Brunner/Mazel, New York, 1980.
- Chodorow, N., *Waarom vrouwen moederen*. Nijgh & Van Ditmar, Amsterdam, 1989.
- Cluckers, G., 'Containment in de therapeutische relatie: de therapeut als drager en zingeveer'. In: Vertommen, H., Cluckers, G. en Lietaer, G., *De relatie in therapie*. Universitaire Pers, Leuven, 1989.
- Cluckers, G., Meykens, S., Monthaye, M., Smis, W. en Verschuere, R., *Steungevende kinderverpsychotherapie*. Van Loghum

- Slaterus, Deventer/Antwerpen, 1986.
- De Batselier, S., *Impasse*. De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, Antwerpen/Amsterdam, 1972.
- De Batselier, S., *De Zachte Moordenaars*. De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, Antwerpen/Amsterdam, 1974.
- De Batselier, S., *De extatische mens*. De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, Antwerpen/Amsterdam, 1976.
- De Batselier, S., *Passage 144; terug naar de baarmoeder*. Soethoudt, Antwerpen, 1979.
- De Coster, W. en Verhofstadt-De Denève, L., *Handboek voor ontwikkelingspsychologie*. Van Loghum Slaterus, Deventer, 1983.
- Derksen, J., Bouts, M. en De Lange, P., *Begeleiden van sterven*. Cahiers ouderdom en levensloop, Van Loghum Slaterus, Deventer, 1976.
- Diekstra, R., *De zelfgekozen dood*. Ambo, Baarn, 1983.
- Dijkstra, C., *Rogeriaanse Therapie*. Swets & Zeitlinger, Amsterdam/Lisse, 1989.
- Erikson, E., *Identiteit, jeugd en crisis*. Het Spectrum, Utrecht-Antwerpen, 1977.
- Erikson, E., Elements of a psychoanalytic theory of psychosocial development. In: Greenspan, S. en Pollock, G., *The course of life; vol I: Infancy*. International Universities Press, Madison, 1989.
- Freud, E.W., Prenatal attachment and bonding. In: Greenspan, S. en Pollock, G., *The course of life; vol I: Infancy*. International Universities Press, Madison, 1989.
- Fromm, E., *De angst voor de vrijheid*. Bijleveld, Utrecht, 1976.
- Gordon, T., *Luisteren naar kinderen*. Elsevier, Amsterdam/Brussel, 1970.
- Görtzen, R., *Weg met de opvoeding*. Boom, Meppel/Amsterdam, 1984.
- Graves, P., The functioning fetus. In: Greenspan, S. en Pollock, G., *The course of life; vol I: Infancy*. International Universities Press, Madison, 1989.
- Grof, S., *Op de drempel van het leven*. Kosmos, Utrecht/Antwerpen, 1990.
- Gruen, A., *Verraad aan het zelf; Een pleidooi voor autonomie*. Anthos/In den Toren, 1987.
- Haley, J., *Stategieën in de psychotherapie*. Bijleveld, Utrecht, 1982.
- Heeremans, A., *Goede ouders bestaan niet*. Nelissen, Baarn, 1991.
- Hiddema, F., *Bruine terreur door zwarte pedagogie*. Ad. Donker, Rotterdam, 1985.
- Horney, K., *Onze innerlijke conflicten*. Bijleveld, Utrecht, 1945.
- Huygen, B., *Wat mensen niet willen weten*. Uitgeverij De Ster, Breda, 1982.
- Jackins, H., *Het menselijke aan de mens*. De nieuwe vooruitgang, Amsterdam, 1983.
- Janus, L., *Hoe de psyche ontstaat*. Het Wereldvenster, Houten, 1992.
- Kaplan, L., *Die zweite Geburt*. Piper, München, 1989.
- Keirse, M., *Psychosociale aspecten van de patiëntenzorg*. Acco, Leuven, 1992.
- Kohut, H., *The analysis of the self*. International Universities Press, Madison, 1989.
- Korczak, J., *Hoe houd je van een kind*. Bijleveld, Utrecht, 1986.
- Leboyer, F., *Geboren worden zonder pijn*. Servire, Katwijk aan zee, 1989.
- Liedloff, J., *Op zoek naar het verloren geluk*. Servire, Katwijk aan Zee, 1991.
- Lietaer, G., Van Praag, Ph. en Swildens, J., *Client-centered psychotherapie in beweging*. Acco, Leuven/Amersfoort, 1984.
- Lietaert Peerbolte, M., *De foetale psyche; inleiding tot de prenatale psychodynamica*. Soethoudt, Antwerpen, 1979.
- Lowen, A., *Narcisme*. Servire, Cothen, 1991.
- Mahler, M., Pine, F. en Bergman, A., *The psychological birth of the human infant*. Basic Books, New York, 1975.
- Maslow, A., *Motivatie en persoonlijkheid*. Lemniscaat, Rotterdam, 1981.
- Matthijs, F., *Het kind centraal*. Garant, Leuven/Amersfoort, 1991.
- Middelkoop, P., *Een onmogelijk verleden*. Lemniscaat, Rotterdam, 1993.

- Miller, A., *Het drama van het begaafde kind*. Het Wereldvenster, Bussem, 1982.
- Miller, A., *In den beginnen was er opvoeding*. Het Wereldvenster, Weesp, 1983.
- Miller, A., *Gij zult niet merken*. Het Wereldvenster, Houten, 1983.
- Miller, A., *Zelfkennis in ballingschap*. Het Wereldvenster, Houten, 1989.
- Miller, A., *De gemeden sleutel*. Het Wereldvenster, Houten, 1989.
- Miller, A., *De muur van zwijgen*. Het Wereldvenster, Houten, 1990.
- Montagner, H., *L'attachement, les débuts de la tendresse*. Odile Jacob, France, 1988.
- Munnichs, J., en Uildriks, G., *Psychogerontologie*. Van Loghum Slaterus, Deventer, 1989.
- Parkes, C.M. en Stevenson-Hinde, J., *The place of attachment in human behavior*. Basic books, New York, 1982.
- Prekop, J., *De kleine tiran, tot hoe ver mogen kinderen gaan?* Uitgeverij Helmond, Helmond, 1990.
- Renggli, F., *Angst en geborgenheid*. Ambo, Bilthoven, 1977.
- Riemann, F., *Psychologie van de angst*. Servire, Cothen, 1990.
- Rogers, C., *Mens worden*. Bijleveld, Utrecht, 1978.
- Rombouts, J., Een empathische relatie. In: Vertommen, H., Cluckers, G. en Lietaer, G., *De relatie in therapie*. Universitaire Pers, Leuven, 1989.
- Schellenbaum, P., *De pijn van de afwijzing*. Kosmos, Utrecht, 1989.
- Seghers, G., *Hoe moordend is mijn school*. Manteau, Antwerpen/Amsterdam, 1990.
- Solter, A., *Baby's weten wat ze willen*. De Toorts, Haarlem, 1991.
- Stettbacher, J., *Als lijden al zin heeft*. Het Wereldvenster, Houten, 1990.
- Sullivan, H.S., *Begrippen voor een toekomstige psychiatrie*. Ambo, Bilthoven, 1975.
- Swildens, H., *Procesgerichte gesprekstherapie*. Acco, Leuven/Amersfoort, 1988.
- Swildens, H., *Leerboek gesprekstherapie*. Acco, Leuven/Amersfoort, 1991.
- Tietze, H., *Signalen uit de moederschoot; de verborgen ontwikkeling van het ongeboren kind*. Gottmer, Haarlem, 1985.
- Terriijn, F., *Psychologie en criminologie. Criminologische monografieën*. Acco, Leuven, 1975.
- Vandereycken, W., *Basisbegrippen van de psychopathologie*. Acco, Leuven/Amersfoort, 1986.
- Van Campenhout, E. en Baets, F., *Strategie van de (pre)natale ervaring*. Soethoudt, Antwerpen, 1980.
- Van Egmond, G., *Bodemlood bestaan*. Ambo, Baarn, 1987.
- Van der Ploeg, H.M., *Psychotherapie*. Samson Stafleu, Alphen aan de Rijn/Brussel, 1985.
- Van Krogten, I., *Fobieën, Het Amsterdamse Fobieënproject*. Van Loghum Slaterus, Deventer, 1984.
- Van Nijnatten, C., *Psychodynamische ontwikkelingsmodellen*. Boom, Meppel/Amsterdam, 1992.
- Veldman, F., *Haptonomie; wetenschap van de affectiviteit*. Bijleveld, Utrecht, 1987.
- Vertommen, H., Cluckers, G. en Lietaer, G., *De relatie in therapie*. Universitaire Pers, Leuven, 1989.
- Verny, Th en Kelly, J., *Het geheime leven van het ongeboren kind*. Elsevier, Amsterdam/Brussel, 1981.
- Vossen, T., *Zichzelf worden in menselijke relatie*. De Toorts, Haarlem, 1976.
- Wijngaarden, H., Client-centered therapie: een eigen identiteit? In: Lietaer, G., Van Praag, Ph. en Swildens, J., *Client-centered psychotherapie in beweging*. Acco, Leuven/Amersfoort, 1984.