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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

MINISTRATIVE INSIGHT:
EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AS PEDAGOGIC PRACTICE

by

Philip Rodney Evans

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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DEDICATION

To Rebecca and Simon,
for the all the times Dad was working in his study when
we should have been doing things together.
This study is for you.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to inquire into the meaning and significance of educational administration as an area of professional practice and as an academic field of study. But because the idea of educational administration is already an abstraction a more concrete and specific question is posed: "what does it mean to be a principal, an educational administrator?" In this study it is assumed that inquiring into the meaning of being a principal is at the same time an inquiry into the more broadly defined concept of educational administration.

Beginning with the text of one high school principal, the first chapter offers a rationale for why there is a need to inquire into this question. Specifically it is shown how the text of this principal has become dis-connected from the pedagogic event-fullness that constitutes the lived grounds of his practice. The pedagogic groundlessness of the text thus serves as the necessary pre-text for the study (text) that follows.

The second chapter deals with certain methodological assumptions and implications of the study. In particular it is shown how the question, "what does it mean to be a principal?" cannot be addressed via the imposition of any particular method or methodology, but only via the exercise of the creative (hermeneutic) imagination. This means that whatever truth or truths are revealed by the study cannot be derived (and should not seek to be derived) from any processes of logical inference, public confirmability/disconfirmability, establishment of causal relations, antecedent conditions and so forth. Thus the study raises the question of the meaning of research in the human sciences. It does so, not by considering the purpose of research as a concrete end or analytic topic in its own right, but rather self-reflectively in its own way or mode of proceeding.

Chapter three presents a series of nine actual administrative situations or life-world stories drawn from interviews with practicing school principals. The stories are presented in the words of the principals themselves, rather than in summarized or interpolated form. Each story is given a title or identifier corresponding with the central problematic or issue that is in question in the story. In order the stories are: (1) A Question of Tact, (2) A Question of Childhood, (3) A Question of School, (4) A Question of Burnout, (5) A Question of Supervision, (6) A Question of Trust, (7) A Question of Failure, (8) A Question of Value, and (9) A Question of Practice. Following the presentation of each anecdote, each story is made the subject of a strong reading. This is a three stage process. First, each story is read or interpreted as each principal's personal practical (narrative) definition of educational administration. Second, an interrupted reading of each principal's narrative definition is performed, the purpose of which is to problematize certain features of the principal's discourse. Third, the interrupted readings then become the occasion or focus of an extended strong reading of the text of each principal. The hope is that by approaching each story in a questioning and dialogic way the pedagogic impulse underlying educational administrative work will be revealed.

In chapter four an attempt is made to work out certain administrative competencies that are suggested by the strong readings in chapter three, and to suggest ways in which these competencies could be sponsored in principals. Amongst the several competencies described in this chapter is the need for pedagogic tactfulness in principals, and the capacity to be sensitive to the pedagogic consequences of mood and atmosphere. The chapter concludes with some general reflections on the type of personality that would be appropriate for administrative preparation in education.

Chapter five concludes the study by sketching the outlines of an administrative practice that is educationally grounded. Starting from the idea that administrative practice is, in its most

essential outlines, a pedagogic practice, the chapter explores implications for future research in the field. The study ends with a set of theses or truth claims arising out of the work of this study. A final afterword is appended by way of a concluding postscript.

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In this study thanks are due to many people for their assistance and support. At the top of the list are the elementary, junior and senior high school principals whose stories form such a large part of this study. Without their help and willingness to participate none of this would have been possible. Despite busy schedules they put aside the time to talk to an almost total stranger about their lives as principals. For that I am deeply grateful.

I am also indebted to the Department of Educational Administration, University of Alberta, for granting me the space to engage in what is, in many respects, a decidedly non-traditional piece of research. On a more personal level, I want to thank the members of my supervisory committee for their support and affirmation of this project. First, I wish to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Max van Manen, for his unwavering support for this research over a number of years. Any student would be fortunate to have Max as an advisor. Even more fortunate is the student who can count such a teacher for a friend. I would also like to extend sincere thanks to Dr. Erwin Miklos for his constant encouragement and support over a period of years. It has been no small consolation to have felt the strength of this support from time to time throughout the period of this dissertation. Thanks are also due to Professor Emeritus, Dr. Fred Enns, who in a memorable doctoral-level seminar first made it legitimate to question the assumptions of behavioral science research in education. I also wish to record my indebtedness to Dr. T. B. Greenfield of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, for his willingness to serve as external examiner on the committee. I would also like to express sincere thanks to Dr. Margaret Haughey of the Department of Educational Administration, and Dr. Ken Jacknicke, Chairman, Department of Secondary Education for their contributions in the

final stages of this study. Their willingness to read and respond critically to draft copies of this dissertation at very short notice was much appreciated.

Along the way, many other people have contributed in small and large ways to the progress of this study. As a graduate student in education, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Department of Secondary Education to this work. The tradition of Secondary Education in supporting human-science research is gratefully acknowledged. As a graduate student from the far-off land of educational administration, the opportunity to participate in such a movement was beneficial in the extreme. In this context I wish to thank Professor Emeritus, Dr. Ted Aoki, then chairman of the Department of Secondary Education, for his many gestures of support during the early stages of my research proposal.

Part of the inspiration for this study is attributable to the community of human-science researchers on this campus and beyond. The Human Science Research Conference held annually on different university campuses across North America and Europe, as well as the bi-weekly gatherings on this campus of the Human Science Circle sponsored by Max van Manen, have all been influential in the development of my own thinking and the progress of this study. The richness of dialogue, and the opportunity to "rub shoulders" with graduate students and professors from quite different research traditions has been a highlight of my own graduate experience. It has been *educational* in the best sense of the word.

Finally, as those who have been the route of doctoral dissertations know, the rigours of dissertation-writing sometimes place heavy demands on family and loved ones. This study is no exception. It has been memorable in many respects. But it would have been inconceivable without the help and support of my wife, Pam. She has experienced the

pangs of dissertation-writing as vividly as I have. Without her assistance and encouragement this study would never have seen the light of day. Now perhaps we can move on to other things...

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Chapter I

QUESTIONING THE TEXT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

> To me [educational] administration is by and large management. I don't see a school administrator as being the instructional leader particularly. I'm not an instructional leader, I'm a school manager. I manage.
>
> High School Principal
>
> *(Taped Interview)*

Introduction

What does it mean to be the principal of a school? What kind of practice is an educational administrative practice? These are the central questions that are explored in this study. Specifically this study explores the meaning of being a school principal with the intention of restoring the educative aspects of a school principal's administrative practice to their rightful place and true significance. Why does this need to be done and why do such questions need to be raised? Are there not already many texts written about the nature of educational administration and about the lives of those who occupy this office? In this study my preference is to give a personal response to these questions. I have been a teacher and a school principal, but in the main body of literature on the theory and research in educational administration I have not been able to recognize the basic impulse that gave meaning and purpose to my life as an educational administrator. Moreover, in talking with colleagues about this hiatus between the theory and the life of educational administration I have been confirmed that this impression is a shared one. But rather than criticize the academic field of educational administration for offering inadequate or distorted definitions or conceptualizations of the meaning of being a principal my preference has been to start,

not from theoretical texts, but from the text of life itself. Similarly, with respect to formulating the need for this study I would prefer to refrain from engaging in abstract argumentation. Rather, in this opening chapter I would prefer to show as it were, by listening to the voice of one principal talking about his vocation, why there is a need to ask the question of the meaning of educational administration. Naturally, the discourse of this principal is only a single case, and it is certainly not my intention to suggest that this principal is typical of other school administrators. Rather, I offer the text of this principal as an occasion for raising the question concerning the meaning of educational administration. Of course, it is always possible that the text of this principal may not be regarded as especially problematic. But if that is the case then the need for the study has been strengthened.

In this chapter I have organized the transcribed version of this principal's discourse in order to be able to see the discussion as focussing or touching upon some common concerns and themes. What I hope to provide in the following sections is a kind of problematizing discussion of the principal's discourse. My hope is that by raising questions about one principal's self-understanding of his task as an educational administrator my reasons for engaging in this study will readily come into view.

Listening to the Lifeworld

Thus, in the following pages I would like to listen to one principal, a school administrator, speak of his everyday work and of the way he sees his work. What will emerge is a particular view of administration. It is a particular view because it is a single person's view. It is also a particular view because a certain philosophy of administration is noticeable in the text. This text was deliberately chosen because the view within the text reflects a pervasive

thrust in educational administrative theory that may be referred to as a style associated with management and organization theory derived largely from business administration. It is in the context of this modern movement in educational administrative theory and practice that this study is presented.

It is important to acknowledge in advance that I do not approach the field of educational administrative studies without prejudice. No study is ever without prejudice. And this research is motivated by a deep concern about something that may have been eroded or even forgotten in the broad tradition of modern educational administrative theory and research. Specifically, I intend to show in this chapter how the practice of a management oriented educational administration is already suffused with (1) a certain language, (2) a way of thinking about education, and (3) a devaluing of the vocation of pedagogy that originally animated the profession of all educators. So by listening to the lifeworld I hope to show and articulate the need for the study.

What does it mean to listen to the lifeworld? It means that we begin to take seriously the narrative texts that principals produce in capturing what for them is significant about the lives they lead in schools. In the following pages selections have been made from a series of interview transcripts with a high school principal in order to bring to a level of conscious concern certain issues that arise out of a management-based approach to questions of educational administration. No claim is made that these are the most important issues that could arise in reflecting on such an orientation. Nor is it suggested that the concerns arising here are in any way exhaustive of the questions that one may bring to bear on this approach. The interview transcript was simply searched for significant statements that seemed to cohere around a certain theme or issue. So the following text is offered as a discourse by a principal who presents his views on educational administration with considerable clarity and frankness. Once again I think it is important to state that the views

expressed may not reflect the perspective of other principals. It was not chosen to be representative. Rather it is the particular philosophy which emanates from the text that reinforces the need to raise the question concerning the meaning of educational administration.

Defining Administration

> To me, administration is by and large management; I don't see a school administrator as being the instructional leader particularly. I'm not an instructional leader, I'm a school manager. I manage... When and where necessary we'll modify, we'll change, we'll adjust, we will respond to the consumers of the services, but it's still overall a management process. I delegate the instructional leadership role right down to my department heads -- I expect them to be instructional leaders... I don't work with kids very much, I work with teachers. Their job is to teach and to work with kids; mine is to work with employees... There's no way shape or form I can be an instructional leader for the entire curriculum that's offered here and be expected to know everything about computing science to physics -- it's simply not do-able. So I don't intend to do it, I simply don't... I view the principal's position as that of school manager. I've got all the relationships fixed between the kids and the staff members, and that's the bulk of your instructional process.
>
> I always view the operation of Urban High School as a mini-school system. We hire employees, we provide a service, we have customers called students that we have to service. And I do that in exactly the same way as the superintendent does -- he refers to all our clients as customers. In point of fact it's because we're in the business of providing customer satisfaction that makes our operation no different in the final analysis than Safeway's or McDonald's restaurants.
>
> We lay out the objectives of the school annually and, of course, it is a sub-set of the overall school philosophy. And so we don't talk to people in

terms of personalities or whatever, we talk about what their position is performing and whether what they are doing right now is meeting the objectives of the school... You see every year we have priorities, things we emphasize but they all come under the overall umbrella of the school which is the purpose of the school -- this is why we're here.

I like to let every potential teaching candidate know what the expectations are and sometimes, depending on the candidate, I'll do it in writing -- what the expectations are. I make it very clear that we expect one hundred percent enthusiasm for all these expectations and if you've any doubts about any of them you'd better try West Vincent High or go someplace else. Once you're here I assume you've bought the entire package of expectations, and that you're part and parcel of the answers as well as the problems. And that's the way we treat kids too..... you want to be a student at Urban High? Well you've bought the entire package. You've bought all the rules and regulations, and we never say that all our rules are perfect -- we will accept input about some of our rules and regulations and we will in fact change them from time to time when we get strong enough input -- but still, by and large, if you come here and agree that you're an Urban student then you've bought the entire package. And if you don't buy any one part of the package we very soon part company, and it's either by mutual agreement or the kid is forced out the door.

It really doesn't matter if I'm hiring a teacher or a support staff person. If I don't give them a comprehensive set of expectations and let them know that for these dollars these are the kind of services I want performed during such-and-such time of day... if I don't do that they're liable to be a very unsatisfied employee when they show up having some sort of foggy notion of what's expected of them, and they wind up having things to do that they knew nothing about. Its taken us a while to get there but I think we're moving in the right direction all the time.

In this section a certain philosophical attitude or orientation to educational administration emerges with unmistakable clarity. According to this view the principal occupies a management-based position within an educational hierarchy. While the notion of the

principal as a middle-manager is a fairly well accepted principle of organizational management, here it is expressed with a startling clarity and frankness. In this section we listen to the voice of a principal for whom there are no lingering doubts or concerns for what his task entails. He defines it from first to last as a management process. Throughout this transcript the principal is remarkably clear and consistent about the managerial nature of his role. In this section I would like to consider the implications of this view. Is this what it means to be principal of a school?

What is first of all interesting and revealing is the way in which the principal's discourse is suffused with a business and consumer-oriented terminology. His language is by and large the language of commerce and the market-place. Education (teaching) is revealed in this approach as a kind of commodity exchange in which customers (students) are serviced by employees (teachers) in much the same way as in any other business or commercial organization. And the principal gives examples. So at the root of the principal's approach to administering there is little recognition of the special and distinctive character of schools as unique institutions with a privileged mandate: the education of the young.

The point to be made here is that the principal's personal practical definition of school administration is educationally troublesome. What is troubling is the way the principal defines the nature of the educative relation as just another service to be rendered or as another commercial transaction between two parties. As I shall try to show later in this study the relation between educator and child is in many ways a unique relation, the contours of which have hardly begun to be explored. It is in some respects a delicate, fragile relation which can easily be damaged or crushed out of shape by those lacking an appreciation of its true character. That is why it is important that those in whom we place pedagogic authority have already grasped something of its essential nature.

But the principal is very clear about his administrative responsibility as principal. His task is to manage events rather than respond curricularly or pedagogically to them. It is not difficult to see the way in which a business or corporate ethic saturates the entire text. The relations the principal advocates between students and teachers are essentially exchange relations, trading relations. Education becomes a product to be traded, and school simply the name given to the place where these transactions occur. But as educators we need to raise certain questions about the whole thrust of this approach. For instance, once education becomes defined as a business transaction all that remains administratively is to ensure that the transaction proceeds as smoothly and efficiently as possible. Educational administration becomes ipso-facto a regulatory process--and indeed we will see in the remaining sections of this transcript that a concern for regulation and control dominates the principal's discourse.

By his discourse the principal demonstrates that it is entirely possible to think non-educationally about education, non-educationally about schools, non-educationally about children, non-educationally about curriculum, teachers, teaching and so forth. Essentially this principal sees no difference between managing a school and managing a supermarket. And so the question of what is the meaning of being an *educational* administrator has been completely neglected. If we cannot see a difference then we cannot inquire about the nature of the difference that educational administration makes.

But there is irony in this way of thinking. Precisely what makes an educator an educator is what cannot be delegated, what cannot be renounced. It is not that we are educators here and something else there. There is more than a grain of truth to the notion that once an educator always an educator. To think otherwise is possible only on the basis of a false dichotomy that one can be "in" education without at the same time *being* an educator. The hollowness of this type of thinking becomes apparent in the principal's way of speaking.

The principal's self-styled description of his role as manager approaches the apogee of a certain way or style of thinking as it applies to education.

It is this manner of thinking that needs to be questioned. The need for the study rests on the realization that, though extreme, the thrust of the principal's words is not entirely discontinuous with the thrust of some aspects of contemporary theorizing in the field of educational administration. The lack of an educational focus or interest has been noted by Bates (1984) amongst others. By default, the principal's text raises an interesting set of questions. Can one be a principal without at the same time also being an educator? Is managing education at all the same thing as educating? And can we any longer tell the difference? One way to describe the difference that is at stake here would be to describe it as the difference between the real and something that tries to substitute for the real. If the principal's words strike us strangely perhaps it is because something that was once thought of as foundational for the work of a school principal is missing. The attempt to retrieve what seems to have been lost is the topic of this research and this study.

Sorting out Problems/Images of Childhood

> Right now in our high school I expect my teachers to be the first line of resistance. If a kid starts to miss classes they are bound to make that first phone call home and to inform the parents that if their youngster doesn't start to attend that they'll fail the course. You see, either we change the kid or we get rid of him. We believe that kids have to perform within the framework we establish for them. We expect them to perform to the peak of their abilities, and the negative ones who do not perform, do not get their work handed in -- well, that number is shrinking all the time because of our positive approach to things. We tell kids: We are going to make you a productive person, and either you're going to learn how to be productive here at this location and produce good results for yourself and us, or you're

going to be gone. But you're not going to hang around here and force us to spend forever on you because eventually we draw the line.

The nature of the education business is that sixty percent of your population never need anyone's attention. These are the kids that you just slap a registration form in front of them, give them a course outline booklet and they cruise through and they're never any problem. I'd say another thirty percent are going to need some help. They're the ones who are going to drop a course here and there; they're going to make the odd mistake in registration; they'll get into a little bit of trouble once in a while when they have a temper tantrum and bad mouth a teacher. Now, ten percent of the population -- which for us runs around two hundred students -- well it doesn't matter how many Ph.D's you've got in shrinking heads, it doesn't matter who the parents are, these people are going to be our disaster zone and they will occupy ninety percent of our time. And whether we like it or not that is the nature of the education business, okay? Either you accept that and you figure out neat, crisp, fast, efficient ways of dealing with that problem and stop complaining about it. Or you get out of the business because that's just the way the business is. It doesn't matter whether you're in elementary, junior or senior high school, ten percent of your population is going to cause you ninety percent of your grief -- FACT -- accept it or leave...

When I ran a junior high school I'd trade these bad apples. I'd phone my neighbouring principal and say: Look, I've got an incorrigible kid here and it doesn't look as if its going to work at this location, let's give it one more crack. So we'd say to the parents: Our collection of teachers and our operation doesn't seem to be helping your youngster any longer -- try the neighbouring school. And sometimes it would work out and sometimes it wouldn't. Let's face it, at that age when you hit hormone time it can go either way -- this kind of disease can hit a kid at any time. That's why we put a lot of effort into letting kids know ahead of time what they're getting into. My administrative team is out in junior high schools right now and one thing they're taking with them is the code of behaviour that we expect at Urban High. We say to kids at the outset: If you want to perform like a

sleaze-bag don't even think of coming to our school -- and we'll use that word. If you want to come and slum around well try somewhere else... That's what you have to do as principal.

Let's face it, people in education have to deal with these negative kinds of things. Now, as I told my staff a couple of days ago, how do you handle this type of situation? It takes administrators and counsellors to deal with this element. If you want classroom teachers to focus on educational types of things then you'd better be prepared to budget for and pay for a strong central (ie. administrative) service, because administrators, in high schools at least, get rid of this element -- kids who won't fit the mold. Either they reform it or they get rid of it! That's the job of counsellors and administrators... I calculate that a kid has somewhere between sixteen to nineteen hours each day to be a kid and I have him for six hours. So if they want to screw around, spray painting things, semi-vandalising things, goofing off etc. my job for the six hours is going to ensure that they don't do that around here -- to the best of my ability...

In my junior high school discipline was very clear and easy. I always gave parents an option -- the first instance is between me and the kid but it's documented. The second time something bad happens I contact the parent and give the parents a choice. I say: This is twice and that's twice two much as far as I'm concerned. On the third occasion one of two things is going to happen: either I'm going to suspend your kid for a week and you live with him at home or I'm going to strap him, I'm going to belt him -- take your choice. And in all my years in junior high I only had one parent that said send him home. All the others said belt him. I don't think they wanted their kid at home for a week. But the point is I'd tell the kids. I'd have an assembly for the entire junior high school and I'd say: Hey kids, it's hormone time for the junior highs, here are the rules. Well, the first question is: What happens if you break them? So I'd lay out the consequences and then follow through like death and taxes... And I tell you when I belted a kid there were no re-runs. It was painful punishment and they knew it was coming and the parents knew it was coming, so the whole thing was so cut and dried. I'll give you an example -- the question of

> smoking. First thing the kids want to know is, what is smoking and what isn't? So I just say: Smoking is hereby defined as.... if a teacher says you're smoking on school grounds then you're smoking. Period. It's concluded. It's not open for any more discussion. So if you don't want to get into trouble about smoking, don't even give your teacher a hint of suspicion that you're smoking on school property. It's just that simple.

Anyone with any experience in schools knows that the task of running a large, modern high school can be difficult and demanding at the best of times. So much can and often does go wrong. Even with the best of intentions plans misfire and objectives are thwarted. With so many problems to deal with it is not surprising that an increasing number of administrators decide to return to the relative tranquility of classroom life.

This being the case an important question becomes, how is it possible to avoid becoming worn down? How is it possible to prevent a cynical and embittered quality from entering into our relations with children and young people? For once an educator, especially a principal, allows himself or herself to be overtaken by a certain negativity of spirit then it becomes a serious question how well that person can any longer function as an educator (Bollnow, 1970).

Without doubt a certain tone or atmosphere penetrates, or rather emanates, from the principal's text. At the risk of oversimplifying, it seems almost as if a state of undeclared war exists, as though educational relations involve a perpetual state of siege between adults and young people. It would be a complete mis-reading of the situation to say that this is simply a question of poor school climate, or of a principal who needs to brush up on his human relations skills. Already the problem strikes much more deeply than this. So the principal's text raises certain fundamental questions that need to be addressed. These have to do with the fundamental, pre-requisite socio-emotional conditions or pre-dispositions

that an educator *must* bring to his relations with children for there to be any such thing as successful education possible.

One way to formulate the problem is to say that what is at stake here is a concern for speech, for the way we are to speak as teachers and principals of our educative relations with children and young people. Again, this is not merely a syntactic concern for correct grammar or the pedant's concern for so-called proper usage, but a concern that arises out of the realization that speech is not simply or purely speech but is already and from the first moment an expression of a way of life, an artifact of being, the concrete manifestation of who we are and how we stand in the world. This is why we listen with serious misgivings to the principal as he speaks of "establishing frameworks," "codes of behaviour," "fitting the mold," "lines of resistance," "shrinking heads," "disaster zones," "hormone time," and so on. It would not be good enough to dismiss such speech as mere hyperbole as that would be to overlook the essential connectedness and intrinsic relation between a speaker and that which is spoken.

The question that needs to be addressed is not that we cannot imagine the kinds of situations that could give rise to this kind of speech, but that despite such situations, or rather in the face of such situations how can we remain faithful in our speaking to a pedagogic concern for the personal needs and individual well being of the children in our care? This is precisely the challenge of the educator.

As we listen to the principal in this section a certain philosophy of administration begins to take shape. It is a philosophy which lays great stress on the prevention and suppression of problems in order that teachers can attend to "educational kinds of things." From the point of view of this study this is an interesting and revealing comment that raises a number of questions. What, for example, would count as educational kinds of things? The principal

is very vague about this. A great many unexamined assumptions seem to enter into the principal's rather off-hand use of this phrase. Would we say, for example, that the effort to help early adolescent teenagers at "hormone time" come to terms with their awakening sexuality in a sensitive and tactful way is educational? Is assisting children who have experienced difficulty and failure in schools get turned on to learning, educational? Is helping children from deprived or worse abusive homes work out their latent hostility and aggressive tendencies in a secure yet tolerant environment, educational? Is providing maturing teenagers the space to explore their own unfolding adulthood and independence needs, educational? Is recognizing the child's need to test limits and stretch boundaries as part of an on-going process of self-formation, educational? Is the realization that children inevitably "goof off," "screw up," do wrong things, make mistakes, fall down, need picking up, and so forth, all as part of an on-going process of growing up, educational?

The question we have to face here is, what does it mean to be adult in our relations with children? What are we trying to accomplish in schools? What would constitute a strong response to the seemingly inexorable tendency to bureaucratize educational relations? As educators, we need to ponder these and other questions carefully. In raising these questions I am conscious of being able to do no more than suggest that there is a great deal more to education and pedagogical relationships than is evident in the text of this principal. The challenge ahead is to map out in relation to the concrete situations of practice just what this "more" might consist of.

Dealing with Parents

> You've got to remember that we're dealing with some lower-middle class people. These are kids who've never left the neighbourhood. You see, so many of these people are pushing their kids beyond their level. Like, if

> you've been working for the last thirty years here is your only hope -- your kid has a chance to go to university -- suddenly the school calls and tells you your kid is "goofing off" almost the instant response is: That little bastard I'm going to kill him! They're instantly on your side if you know what I mean... Here the parents are basically on your side and the educator is revered. Again, when we say this is the way it is at university they (the parents) believe you because they haven't been there so they don't know... But when you talk to parents down there, (ie. in an upper-middle class area of the city), many of the parents already have two Ph.D. degrees so you don't have a chance of convincing them about anything because they're already convinced they're right. Here the whole administrative stance is much different... This is one of the easiest administrative situations you could find to be honest with you. Ninety percent of the kids are motivated because they want to progress beyond their family's level and they see education as the key... So they will listen to their teachers -- and again, we have our five to ten percent of losers that we spend ninety percent of the time on. But the run-of-the-mill Joe-average youngster is just never any problem; they want to take full advantage of their opportunities and the only thing they want is to get a really good service to maximize their chances of success.

Parents are often thought of--quite appropriately--as part of a school principal's constituency group. They are, after all, tax payers, supporters of the system of education and the parents of the children attending school. So in many respects it is natural for parents to take an interest in schools and what goes on in them. It is also to be expected--as the principal implies--that parents will want the best for their children and will often see the school as a means by which this can be achieved. So it is not surprising that school principals often find themselves bombarded by a never-ending series of competing requests which threaten to turn the institution of school into an ideological battleground. Still, parents are not the professional educators that school principals are, and so the relation between the home and the school is more complex than the principal's comments might

suggest. I would like to probe this relation in a little more depth in this section in order to show how the kind of relation implied by the principal's comments is in many ways a questionable relation.

This section of the text raises an interesting question: what should be a principal's stand in relation to parental requests and expectations for their children's education? Already a bit narrow this question could well be broadened to include other groups and agencies who maintain a vested interest in schools and what goes on inside them. Conventional wisdom in educational administration seems to support the idea that an important criterion of administrative success is for the principal to be an adept politician with the political skills necessary to balance the competing interests of various special interest groups. This, the argument suggests, becomes all the more necessary as education becomes increasingly politicized. Preparation programs for educational administrators, for example, often include one or more courses on the politics of education which aim, by and large, to provide the conceptual apparatus by means of which the divergent demands of so-called stakeholder groups can be managed. Indeed, the political dimension of the principal's role is now so well entrenched in popular consciousness that it is difficult any longer to bring it to question without appearing to be hopelessly naive. And yet the question remains: what should be a principal's stand in the face of the constant and often competing demands and expectations placed by parents (and others) on the life of the school? Or more specifically, what would constitute a strong (principled) stand in this regard?

A basic point of departure for this study is the realization that a strong interpretation of what it means to be a principal would include the idea that as educator, a principal would be someone who holds fast to an educational ideal. Obviously, this is a vague statement which needs to be fleshed out in somewhat greater detail.

The point of departure for the educational ideal I have in mind would focus on the realization that there is to pedagogy and pedagogical relations a certain inner unity and lawfulness that does not depend on any outside factors or sources of external support. The elements of a pedagogical relationship are neither merely arbitrary nor subject to external definition or constraint, but are already and from the first moment implicated (given) by the fact of pedagogy itself. Bollnow(1987), for example, has pointed out how pedagogical relations and pedagogical situations possess a certain inner lawfulness or intrinsicality that allow us to speak of pedagogy as an *autonomous human science*. In relation to the "virtues" educators need to possess in order to carry out their profession successfully, Bollnow(1979) writes that these (virtues) are "not therefore any requirement imposed from the outside, but attributes which can be derived purely immanently from the nature of the process of education itself" (Bollnow,1979:78).

It is not difficult to see how far the ideas of education presented by Bollnow differ from those of the principal's text. But more importantly, from the point of view of this study, is that the principle of pedagogic autonomy secures a place from which to stand our ground as educators and to resist all those demands and diversionary expectations that impinge on education from without and distract us from our central mission: the education of the young. With the notion of pedagogy as autonomous human science we have the grounds for a re-thinking of the principal's role from small "p" politician to big "E" educator. We should not underestimate the difference that is at stake here. The school administrator can now focus his or her dealings with parents and others on what is decisive pedagogically. This is being educationally responsive, and the principal acting out of a strong sense of what is educationally responsible has now a place to resist various partisan assaults and precisely this *is* the educator's function (Bollnow 1987). It is likely, of course, that this will involve the principal in a certain amount of educational work with and on behalf of

parents to aid them in seeing what is at stake in a given request or set of requests. And inevitably the possibility for conflict and confrontation is ever present. Nevertheless, the principle of pedagogic autonomy returns substance and purpose to the work of the educational administrator. The meaning of educational leadership is replenished and given a new aim and a new challenge.

With these insights we find grounds for a strong version of what it means to be a principal in one's dealings with the wider community. These ideas might suggest that part of the principal's task is to be a pedagogic spokesperson--someone who, better than anyone else in the community, understands pedagogic relations and what they require. The principal becomes someone who takes on the task of articulating these requirements to the wider community. This in itself would be a pedagogic act. At times it would undoubtedly mean taking a stand on behalf of the educative process and against those who see education as serving more limited ends or more prescribed purposes.

The difficulty we face is that education stands in continual danger of being encroached upon or even completely overrun by interests that have little to do with the educative process itself. Bollnow points out how education needs to "free itself from any immediate dependance on life--or better on the particular forms of life--and develop itself first *according to its own intrinsic nature* (my emphasis)." (Bollnow, 1987:112). He writes:

> Education...dare not simply accept orders from any of the great organizations of life, from the state, from political parties, from religious organizations, from economic organizations, and in fact even from parents, as to how it should educate students, or toward what specific goals it should educate. Life in the sense intended here is more than all of these organizational forms. In its responsibility to this "life" education must define itself according to its own nature; it must itself know what its task is, and may not allow this to be dictated by other authorities. Thus in order to be able to serve life in the proper fashion, education must first separate itself (relatively) from the totality of life, it must develop itself in its own nature, in order then to be able to contribute to this life through its own capacities. (Bollnow, 1987: 112).

From the perspective of this study the requirement for being a principal lies in great part in gaining a grasp of just these "capacities." This, of course, is an on-going and never fully realized endeavour. Yet it is in this direction, seeking to develop itself *according to its own intrinsic nature* that the theory and practice of educational administration needs to proceed.

Purpose of Administration

> I think my mission as a school administrator in the whole area of the goals of the school is to support what the nine elected people see as the school district's mission. So my mission is to do what the consumer expects and wants. I see myself as having to be a very well-fitting sub-set of that whole operation. That means such things as honesty, productivity -- do you want us to produce a productive citizen or don't you? That's why I talk to the kids in terms of how they are going to perform in the work-a-day world. If you have a part-time job and you get sick what do you do? You phone your employer and say: Guess what, I've got the plague and I can't come to work today, okay? Should you do anything less for the school? No. It's your responsibility to treat the school in the same way... Our job is to respond financially, respond operatively to the demands that society places on us... So our annual priorities fit and blend and mesh with the trustees' priorities for any given year. And to me that's just sound management practice.
>
> When you first get into this game, and I guess I got into administration about fifteen years ago, I had all these great ambitions about being very visible with kids and teachers and being the instructional leader and so on. But eventually you realize that's just pure fantasy and it's never going to happen to any significant degree. You have to get around to the point of view of thinking of your students as customers, both students and parents as customers, as clients. When you finally come to that realization and design your administration to serve customers, and make customer

satisfaction your main objective -- and that encompasses everything if you think about it, kids having to produce good results on tests, being well behaved -- it builds in all the twenty five dollar ideas we might throw around, okay?

We want to guarantee that we serve the needs of the kids that come to us to the best of our ability, and part of that is making sure we have the right kinds of kids. The way you deliver the services is part of the secret as well. You need to match the program with the operation. We could be the best academic school in the world, but if we attracted nothing but vocationally oriented youngsters the mix would be totally wrong and we would be teaching them things that weren't part of their life-style in any way shape or form... so the main thrust of my administration is customer satisfaction, and along with that automatically comes the prevention of problems... I think that a satisfied consumer in the school is a kid who is performing at the peak of his potential; has got clear direction as to the future; knows what the requirements for post-secondary are; has got access to all the information he or she may ever want; is convinced the instruction he/she is receiving is as good as it can be; feels comfortable in a secure environment; has every opportunity to participate in whatever co-curricular activity he/she wants without any element of harassment, or danger, or discomfort; and I think they have to be aware that the communication link between the school and the home is there -- consistently... Now the other aspect of customer satisfaction is the parent. I think the parent has to feel that the school communicates with them, and that their youngster is placed in a situation that best meets their kid's overall needs.

Why do we engage in educational relations with others? What do we hope to accomplish? This is certainly an important, fundamental question that, in a practical as well as in a reflective way, has to be answered by every educational administrator in his or her career as an educator. In its most basic formulation we might simply ask: why educate? Inevitably this is a massive question which could become a dissertation topic in its own right. All I wish to do in this section is to put forward one or two considerations that seem to emerge

as a consequence of the principal's assumption that the basic purpose of engaging in educational relations is to create "productive citizens." But in so doing I also want to try and show how the principal's answer is in some ways a disappointing answer. It is a disappointing answer because it takes for granted or overlooks a fundamental and basic relation: the relation between education and life.

Within the tradition of the human sciences, education has long insisted upon a primary and irreducible interest in Life--not as in any particular aspect or facet of life (spiritual life, political life, economic life and so forth), but in life in general in all its myriad immensity and fullness. Today it seems that we are apt to take on a more restricted view of life and to speak of life mainly in terms of its objects and enterprises. So, for instance, we will often speak of people who are engaged in religious life, or political life or even academic life, or we will sometimes speak of the life of the mind and imply by this, that the life of the body or bodily life stands as a thing apart with no more than an accidental or haphazard connection to the life of the mind. But from the point of view of this study the philosophy of life that would be appropriate as a starting point for education would be a philosophy that would resist the segmentation and fracturing of life as a false and artificial starting point. From the point of view of this study, a strong interpretation of who and what we are all about as educators would want to take a stand against such specialisms and dualisms as destructive of the very tissue of life that it is the task of education to nourish and sustain.

As educators, we want to hold fast to a notion of life as something that comes before all specialisms. There is a fullness, a wholeness, a completeness to life that cannot be grasped or comprehended from the standpoint of any one specialism or even all combined. And yet it is this wholeness that education aims to serve, attempts to elucidate.

Today there are various views that speak to the relation between education and life. It may be helpful to try and briefly catalogue and evaluate these views along a continuum from weakest to strongest. The weakest version would be one that holds that there is no necessary or intrinsic relation and that education touches life only at its most peripheral and most marginal points and then hardly at all. In this view education is seen not as a source of personal insight and understanding, but rather as a source of personal embellishment. Here the mark of an educated person is found in a deliberately cultivated deportment or attitude, a certain stylized demeanour and concern for manners. At its height this version is institutionalized in the notion of the finishing school. The major point to be made about this view is that it is aimed only at the outside at the level of the skin and is concerned only with external appearances. It either denies that there is anything more to life than meets the eye-ball or else it relegates a concern for the deep interiority of life to other agencies and to other means.

An alternative and slightly stronger view would be one that sees education as preparation for life. In this version education justifies itself in the way that it claims to prepare the way, to make the individual ready for life, for living. But education itself does not claim to be living. In this version we hear a lot of talk of relevance, of "the-world-out-there," of "filling needs," of "fitting in," of "real life," of "the way things really are," and so on and so forth. The basic idea here is to ensure that the child "fits into" an already existing world. And generally speaking, the better the fit the more successful the education is judged to have been. The world-as-given, the world as it already exists, becomes the unquestioned starting point for educational administrative endeavours.

There is much that could be questioned with respect to this view of the education-life relation. Hannah Arendt (1961), for instance, proposes that we are always educating for a world that is getting "out of joint" and that the basic problem in education is simply to

educate so that a "setting right" actually becomes possible. In this section I want to restrict my comments to the image of life that is proposed in this relation. Basically, it is life and not Life that education seeks to prepare for. In practice this version yields a plethora of so-called living skills courses where children (and sometimes adults) are taught how to open bank accounts, how to write cheques, be intelligent consumers, engage in safe sexuality and so on. The point is not that these things are, at some level, unimportant but that in the last analysis life has been robbed of its depthful nature and a trivial version has been substituted. Human living and all that this implies has been reduced to how-to-get-along-in-the-world. Again, the image or philosophy of life that would be appropriate as a starting point for education would not be this.

The point is that both alternatives offer at best instrumental versions of the education-life relation, education as some kind of an aid to living. In all these education is defined as other to life, either as an aid to life, an embellishment of life, or as a preparation for life, but not *as* life. Even recent attempts to redefine the education-life relation under such popular headings as "Education for Life" or as "Life-long Learning" likewise miss the point. While they propose a new relation, what they in fact offer is no more than an extension of existing relations (education as preparation) into the later stages of life.

As educators today we are in need of two things. First we are in need of a *Lebensphilosophie* (Bollnow, 1987:121) strong enough, rich enough, deep enough to sustain our educational work with children and young people, and secondly we need a view of the education-life relation that celebrates the ultimate intrinsicality and indivisibility of that relation. That life without education would be the ultimate scam, and that education for its own sake would be a hollow and meaningless exercise. Education--not as preparation, nor as merely embellishment--but as life, as living, as what makes life liveable and worth engaging in in the first place--this should be our starting point as educators.

With this last point we have secured a place to begin that is very different and far removed from education for productive citizens. From here we can ask, what meaning does educational administration hold in its relation to life?

The fact of the matter, and one of immense importance for us as educators, is that becoming human, fully human, is never vouchsafed by the mere fact of natality. Becoming human is an on-going and in a sense never completed project in which education has much to say and do. *Human* being is not given as such, but is something that has to be accomplished and achieved (Friere, 1970). This is what makes education a central and decisive activity in the life of communities. This is so because education is the only activity, we might say the only practice, that takes this task--the ongoing formation and development of each individual life--as its central and exclusive preserve. This does not mean that other domains (the arts, law, health, politics and so forth), cannot contribute--of course they can and do--but to the extent that they do, they do so adjacently or adjunctly.

For these reasons we can begin to see how the principal's intention to produce "productive citizens" is in many ways deeply problematic, and how it pushes us into a fundamentally questioning attitude. As an educational aim or intention it already aims too low and restricts too much. To be successful education needs to breathe deeply--take in deep draughts of air. I am not being merely rhetorical when I say that to aim too low in our educative endeavours, to be too timid or fearful of what we can and must accomplish is to strangle the educative impulse in its infancy. Part of the problem we face is that our imaginations are too small. We are hardly equal to the task--so we redefine the task. Where humanization (humanizing) was once our goal now "productive citizenry" will do. We use pale pastel shades when we ought to paint in bright vivid oils. We need to think big thoughts. We need to paint in broad brush strokes on a canvas as large as Life itself. Anything less is mediocrity. Above all--and the need for the study rests in this--we need to wonder how we

can foster educators, especially principals, who can think educationally (and not merely managerially) about Life and what the task of living asks of us.

Sources of Insight and Inspiration

> Back in 1979 the School District sent two of us down to California for a week to tour a bunch of schools. That's the way I like to do my professional development. I can't stand conferences -- I think they're an inefficient bleeding waste of time. Usually it's some guy who got his Ph.D. about ten years ago who's still flogging a dead horse, trying to milk another buck out of it. Anyway I can't stand that. Give me a video-tape, give me a school handbook or let me go someplace and watch a school operate... touring schools I've picked up more good ideas that are instantly operative. If I can come away from a place with a document like this school handbook I can go and try it at my own location and that's what counts. And heavens just save me from the "pedagogeuse" -- I don't need it.
>
> I'll do tap dances all over teachers who don't perform on the basis of input that's collected very, very objectively. It's only when we've done total perception checks with all the kids in a series of classes and a common thread comes through about Joe Teach that says: Listen, several of your classes say that you're not giving instructions very clearly, well that has to be a problem. And so we deal with it on that level. You see, it's a consumer kind of thing, there's never anything personable about it... If we identify an area of weakness in a teacher that can be remedied outside the building, that will be done. Usually for Joe Teach we'll get a department head to apply the savvy and correct the faults -- that's the first line of attack. But if we can't do it here -- we may not have the time, resources or the expertise to do it, then we'll draw upon somebody else from outside... Right now I have a science department head whom everybody loves and he loves the kids, they love him, he's a great teacher, but again he has no idea of basic organization and his time management is abysmal. We've sent him to time management workshops... anyway if there was no improvement then the teacher would

be invited to attend such-and-such a workshop to learn the correct skills. Then, if no improvement occurred that would be documented. That's what you have to do in this business to unload a turkey teacher...

I've got a physical education teacher who is personality plus -- he's in the top five percent with the people down in Central Office, they think he's a wonderful department head. But when we check with the consumers of the services right here on location -- which to me is a much more relevant checking thing -- he talks a great show and turns in a pretty good performance, but when you actually check with the consumer they say things like: We should have had more meetings. We check with the financial people, the account clerks, and they tell me that he is one of the most confused individuals when it comes to keeping track of his money, and he's never sure whether he should be debiting expenses against this account or that account. Now we've worked with this man for two or three years on this and the financial people tell me that the situation is essentially unchanged, he still does not pay attention to that area of his work. Now, one of the things it states in our job descriptions is that fiscal accountability is important. When I compare him to my best department head this guy is abysmal in that area... so I'm going to take a look around the school district to see if there's anybody out there who is interested in working here as a physical education department head who is just as good on those other scores, but who will also do this outstandingly well... So I'm doing a very fine tuning kind of thing... Other schools just re-appoint their incumbents year after year even though they know the people aren't doing a good enough job. But they find it impossible to overcome the old personal loyalties. They operate on a friendship basis whereas I don't. I go on objectives; I go on well documented performance reviews and I will relocate people to get a better job done... I don't care who or what the person is but I'll make the match and I don't worry about personalities.

In this section the principal achieves the most explicit expression so far of a certain attitude or school-of-thought towards education and the administration of schools and the supervision of teachers. I will call it the keeping-abreast-of-new-ideas school of thought

where what counts or what seems to be valued in the operation of schools are those ideas which are, as the principal puts it, "instantly operative." These are the ideas or thoughts or suggestions which as the principal implies can easily and straightforwardly be translated into practice. And he gives examples of some of the sources where these good ideas can be obtained.

So not unexpectedly the principal's text reveals a concern for the practical and the expedient, as opposed to the purely theoretic; a pragmatic concern for what works and for what can be made "instantly operative." In this regard the principal is probably a lot like many other practitioners who are rightly skeptical of theory, and of theoretical principles generally. And yet despite the principal's suspicion of theory he can offer little to stand in its place other than rule-of-thumb ideas, tricks of the trade imported from elsewhere and a certain heavy-handed self-confidence that seems to say "I've seen it all. There's nothing you can teach me." Nothing deeper or more enduring than this. So we should ask, if not to theory then where should we turn to locate the insight and understanding--the inspiration in short--that can sustain us in our work as educators?

This is an interesting and important question which I do not intend to pursue in any great depth here. Except to say that what is of chief significance in our pedagogic lives as teachers, parents, principals and so forth is precisely what cannot be put-into-practice, what cannot be made "operative" in the principal's sense of that term. What is first of all required of educators is a certain quality of mind, or rootedness of the emotions, perhaps even a certain way of being-in-the-world in which we are first of all animated by the spirit of pedagogy itself. The responsiveness that a pedagogically sensitive principal would display is nothing that can be obtained from a video-tape or from touring "plants" (schools) in California or elsewhere. Such things are already quite beside the point. Catching the spirit of pedagogy is careful, painstaking work. It can only be done by reflecting sensitively on

the world of childhood and by pondering anew the meaning children have for us in the world that we share with them. The source and point of origin for such reflection and of the understanding such reflection can generate is the everyday lifeworld in which we live and breathe and have our being as parents, teachers, principals and so forth. As a source of insight and understanding this is far removed from the world of video-tapes, school handbooks, school visitations and the like.

From the pedagogic point of view adopted in this study, the principal's sources are not sources at all but dried up springs, empty wells from which nothing of consequence can really flow. As sources of inspiration they are already dead. In the name of educational progress and the search for ever better and improved ideas we seek intellectual nourishment where none is to be found. We need to break the mold, smash the glass and and go back to the source where insight and understanding still can be found. Nothing can substitute for this. That is why for those who still can hear there is an ironic undertone in the principal's words. It is not from pedagogy that we need to be saved, but from the change merchants and innovation salesmen who subvert education in the name of ever new and improved techniques.

Despite the strong language there is a vitally important point in all of this. Part of what animates this research is the realization that what makes many of the newer "innovations" that constantly blow across the educational landscape seem reasonable and plausible is the fact that much modern educational thought is anchored in such thin soil.

The Question of Approach and Method

I realize that the above discussion contains emotive language. And yet educational administration, like all pedagogic work, is a deeply normative activity and so hiding one's

values behind an objective scientific discourse would be inconsistent with the approach taken in this study. Moreover, as I hope to show later, the impulse to be strong in one's orientation to practice is an important methodological feature of this research.

The need for this study, to raise the question concerning the meaning of educational administration, arises not at a theoretical, a political or a bureaucratic level. Rather it arises from the sense of discomfort and alienation one may feel when one orients oneself pedagogically to one's own vocation and all one is left with are stirring feelings and unsettling questions. Is this what educational administration is all about? What really does it mean to be a principal of a school?

In this introductory chapter I have used the voice of one educational administrator as a prompt for raising the question of the meaning of educational administration in the task of being a school principal. Using just one transcript for this purpose has the advantage that what comes through in the content is one, more or less internally consistent view, of educational administration, as consistent as a single person may be, and as it is practiced by that one person. No assumption is made in this study that this administrator is either typical or untypical in the way in which he describes and discusses his everyday professional life. In fact, I would tend to believe that it is safer to assume that all principals are unique in the way that they approach their everyday responsibilities as principals.

The next question, however, concerns the approach one needs to take in order to be able to address questions of meaning and questions of life, questions of the lifeworld of the principal as an educational administrator. It is to this topic that chapter two will be devoted.

Recapitulation

In this chapter I sought to demonstrate the need for the study--not by referring abstractly (or abstractedly) to various critiques or exposes of the dominant traditions of thought that have informed the intellectual landscape of educational administration (although that too would have been possible), nor by engaging in ideological disputes of one kind or another--but more mundanely by considering the text of one principal's narrative account of what it means to be a principal, an educational administrator. In the process I tried to show how something that once was considered foundational for the work of a school principal has been lost--both to the practice of educational administration and to the theory that attempts to inform that practice. I referred to this "something" as a concern for pedagogy and for the difference that pedagogy makes. I also tried to show how far the principal's text is suffused with the language of managerialism and how that language may be inappropriate for those whose vocation is from first to last an educative vocation. I suggested that such language is inappropriate because it offers a distorted picture of the reason for engaging in educational relations in the first place. In addition, I tried to indicate that though in certain respects the principal's text is quite idiosyncratic, in certain other respects the text is by no means incompatible with the thrust of much of modern administrative theory in education. It is not difficult to discern the way in which certain features of modern administrative theory receive their "logical" expression in the text of this principal. By this I do not at all mean to infer that these features have been taken over by the principal in a self-conscious and deliberate manner, only to point out how far the everyday practice of educational administration is already under the sway of a pervasive managerial-administrative ethic which has lost contact with its roots in pedagogy.

So it is in a bid to reflectively recover what has been lost that this study finds its justification and point of departure. This is less a question of being innovative or finding

something new (discovering an important missing variable, for example), than of restoring to educational administration what belongs to it, namely an educative and pedagogic interest in the lives of children and young people--which is the reason for the practice in the first place. In this chapter I tried to draw attention to the irony of being "in" education without at the same time possessing (or being possessed by?) a strong educative interest in children and young people. On the basis of the principal's text it seems necessary to ask: what is educational about educational administration? This is really the question of this study. How can something that once was regarded as essential to the practice be restored? With this question we approach the threshold of a concern for method and for methodology.

Chapter II

METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

The research question I am attempting to work out in this study is pre-eminently a question of meaning, namely: what does it mean to be a principal, an educational administrator? From a methodological point of view this question poses certain difficulties. To begin with there is the problem of how one goes about the task of researching a question which asks for the *meaning* of something. Or at a deeper level we could ask whether this is the kind of question to which an intelligible answer can be given in the sense that there *could be* an answer which goes somewhat beyond individual prejudice or mere personal preference to something more stable and less fluid. Despite these challenges, I hope to be able to show in this study that the question is a researchable question in more than a merely subjective or arbitrary manner, and furthermore that the question is in fact the most fundamental question (from the Latin *fundus*, or bottom), that could be asked in the field of educational administration. From the perspective of both the theory and practice of educational administration the question of meaning is in many ways an inaugural question. The point of view on which this study is based is that the capacity to grasp meaning is what is decisive for practice. Understanding meaning is what in a certain sense rules or governs practice. In this chapter I would like to address certain important methodological and epistemological features of the research question.

The Search for Meaning: An Epistemological Question

Even before we raise the methodological question of *how* to go about the task of disclosing meaning there is the epistemological question of *where* meaning is to be sought. This

question asks: what is the particular habitat or epistemological locale where meaning is most likely to be found? A fundamental insight of this study is that meaning questions can be distinguished from virtually all other kinds of questions that could be asked by reason of the fact that they are, from first to last, practical questions. They reference the idea of the lifeworld (Husserl, 1970). By this I mean to draw attention to the futility of seeking meaning in the abstract, representational world of theory, except at the loss of whatever is truly meaningful. This is not the domain of meaning. Meaning resides in the embodied world of the here-and-now, the sentient, experienced and experienceable world of concrete acts and real events--the world of the pre-reflective, the pre-theoretic (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). There is a constant inner traffic between meaning and the world of ordinary, everyday experience. So when we ask, what does it mean to be a principal, we have to be prepared to relinquish our preoccupation with concepts, models, theories and so forth, in favour of "returning to the world," *zu den Sachen* (Husserl, 1982) that principals actually inhabit--the everyday world of schools, playgrounds and classrooms where teachers and parents, administrators, counsellors and others get together to work out what is best for children.

What sort of world is this? It is difficult to describe. And yet we all know and recognize it instantly because we have all been there, though not all as principals. In part it is the experienced and experienceable world of books and homework and tears and tests; a world of bells and strange smells, of teachers with funny accents and stern looks. It is a world of instant friendships and sudden separations, of little rivalries and contestations, of promises kept and broken, of pledges made and secrets shared. As a child, who has not known the secret joy of knowing the answer to the teacher's question, the unbearable excitement of waiting to be picked, the rush that comes over us as we blurt out the answer--a moment's unbearable suspense until, with a smile, the teacher confirms us in our knowledge. It is for

the most part an ordered and an orderly world, of desks in rows and rules and reprimands. By turns, it is the laughing, crying, teasing, taunting, noisy, high-spirited world of children growing up. Sometimes heroic beyond words, sometimes mean-spirited to a fault. At times a world of deep disappointments and frustrations, and at others, moments of undiluted joy, pure exultation. As a world, it is the inexhaustable source of meanings and ultimate purposes. It is the sentient, perceptible world to which in the end all theory must defer. It is our first home. And yet in many ways it is the most neglected world of all. The world of the here-and-now. The place where meaning lives.

So the important point to be emphasized is that to pose seriously the question of what it means to be a principal, is to be prepared to forego our predisposition for abstract theoretical discourse in favour of being led back by the question to the concreteness and fullness of life itself as the point at which we need to begin. This is very different from most research in education which often starts with a model or conceptual framework of some kind as the point of departure. So the methodological challenge of this study is to get back to life--before it has been emptied and drained of meaning by abstract, representational thinking of one kind or another. This is the methodological challenge of this study: how does one, as researcher, get back to life?

Getting Back to Life: A Concern for the Concrete Situations of Practice

Although other methods and other means may be possible, in this study the challenge of getting back to life was interpreted as a concern for the concrete situations of practice in which school principals are constantly involved. As an ex-principal I brought a certain amount of first-hand administrative experience to this research which was motivated, at least in part, by a certain professional curiosity to see whether other principals had similar

experiences to mine. But unlike a lot of other research in educational administration (see, for example, any number of studies in the tradition of Mintzbergian structured observation) which tends to fragment the world of the principal (for example, by counting the number of "interactions" a school administrator engages in with others, or by measuring the proportion of time a principal spends on the phone, in the hallways, in classrooms and so forth), this research was animated from the start by a concern for the actual administrative situations themselves in their wholeness and completeness. Getting back to life in this sense translated into the problem of obtaining descriptive, first-hand accounts of educational administrative situations. In other words, with stories.

When principals begin to reflect upon their everyday lives as principals, the reflections often take the form of stories. Principals become story-tellers. One principal tells the story of a little grade three girl who lost a package of felt pens, while another is preoccupied with a "burned-out" teacher who was worried that she was "falling apart" as a teacher. In this study it is the stories themselves that constitute the data. This marks a major point of difference between this study and most other forms of educational research which tend to be quite mistrustful or suspicious of stories as a legitimate basis for serious research. To the extent that the concrete situations of practice are viewed as at all worthy of attention they are seen primarily as *sources* of data from which definable and delimitable problems can be extracted and researched without further reference to the situation of which they are a part. This is one reason why the findings of such research are so difficult if not impossible to reintegrate with life.

In this study it is assumed that a concern for story is a concern for life (Barthes, 1986). Stories are neither abstractions from life, nor imitations of life. They do not so much reflect life as much as they *are* life. This is their importance to us as educators. Unlike most positivistically inspired research that tends to fragment life, stories as data have the effect of

integrating part and whole, the contingent and the universal, the descriptive and the normative (Van Manen, 1989). Stories engage us both intellectually and emotionally. The head and the heart. They invite a response. Face to face with the concrete situations of practice we ask what we would have done or how we might have acted in just such a situation. They require from us a judgement. And, most important from the point of view of this study, stories function as experiential case-material on which pedagogic reflection is possible.

So in this study it is the stories or life-texts that are the prime focus of attention. In the next chapter we will examine a number of such stories drawn from the lives of elementary, junior and senior high school principals. No particular claim is made on behalf of these stories except that they are the kinds of stories principals tell. They are offered as the kinds of situations principals deal with day in and day out. And so they tell us something of the reality of educational administrative practice.

Reflecting on the Stories: Developing Pedagogic Tact

I would now like to say something about the purpose of the stories that form the heart of this study and how they will be used in the next chapter. First, it is important to note that the stories are not offered as sample case-studies to which theoretical principles will be applied. Already that would be a major misunderstanding of the thrust and direction of this research. Precisely the point of this study is to show that only by carefully guided reflection on the concrete situations of practice is it possible to achieve the insight and understanding that is essential to educational administrative practice. This means that we have to turn inwards to the meaning-structure within the stories, rather than outwards to an external

(theoretical) source beyond the boundaries of the actual situations themselves. How is this to be done?

Paradoxically, the first thing to realize is that (the method is that) there is no method in the sense of a fixed set of analytic procedures (Gadamer, 1975). At first this sounds a bit nonsensical until we realize that the task of interpreting meaning cannot be reduced to a particular schema or way of proceeding. There is no invariant system or objectively derived method that will assist very much in disclosing meaning. For the question I am pursuing, what does it mean to be a principal, an educational administrator, is not the sort of question to be answered by way of a method of any kind. And yet the fact that the question cannot be resolved into a method does not mean that the question cannot be addressed. That would be to give precedence to the method (form) over the question (substance). All it means is that (giving priority to the question) requires that some other way or means of proceeding needs to be found, a way that in some sense goes beyond method. In this study that way is the way of hermeneutics.

Holding Fast to the Question: The Way of Hermeneutics

It is not my intention in this chapter to go into depth on the history or meaning of hermeneutics. That task has already been accomplished and excellent texts on the subject are readily available (see bibliography). In any case, it is more in keeping with the empirical nature of this research that the meaning of hermeneutics be grasped in the actualizing of its principles (hermeneutics-in-action) than via an abstract exposition of these same principles. Nevertheless, (because the methodology adopted in this study differs in significant ways from the research methodology commonly employed in most studies in educational

administration), it may be helpful to make a few preparatory comments on how the stories-as-data will be treated.

I have already alluded to the fact that in this study it is the stories themselves that constitute the data. This being the case the question that arises is, how are these stories to be treated, how shall they be read? Of course, many different kinds of readings are possible. At one extreme these stories could be read as nothing more than interesting anecdotes with a certain intrinsic interest and appeal but with little in the way of practical or theoretical value. Perhaps even as diversions from the main task of developing a body of empirically validated propositions of use to practitioners. But from the point of view of this study such an interpretation would be quite problematic. It would be problematic because it would not represent a strong response (reading) of the stories. It would not be a strong reading because it would tend to treat the stories as essentially unmotivated, that is, as no more than the arbitrary expressions of intentionless actors and, therefore, as intrinsically meaningless. In this study I would like to try to read the stories in a strong way. This brings up an obvious question. What kind of reading constitutes a *strong* reading?

This question is an important question that gets close to the heart of the methodological features of this research. In this study a strong reading is one which acknowledges the situated and motivated character of the principals' stories. Doing a strong reading means seeing the stories as not merely *descriptive* statements but also as *normative* statements of the way we ought to live (act) as principals. It is as if each principal were saying: "Look, in this situation this is what it means to be a principal..." Reading the stories in a strong way means reading them as each principal's personal practical way of responding to the question concerning the meaning of educational administration. So the stories become in effect recommendations for a certain way of life: for the way we should act (conduct ourselves) as principals. Seen in this light the main research task is to do a strong reading

of each principal's personal practical definition of educational administration. In the next section I will try and address in more detail the question of what a strong reading entails.

Doing a Strong Reading: An Interpretive Activity

Doing a strong reading is from first to last an interpretive activity in which the stories are viewed as lived interpretations (lived statements) of what it means to be a principal. And like other kinds of interpretations it is possible and indeed necessary to see them as more or less accurate, more or less correct--or perhaps it would be better to say more or less complete--interpretations of what it means to be a principal. To be engaged in the practice of doing a strong reading is therefore to be engaged in judging, in rendering a verdict. It is a question of deciding what belongs to a practice, which is also and at the same time a question of deciding what does not belong (Gadamer,1986). This, in effect, is what it means to be involved in a practice--in this case an educational administrative practice. In this study there is at work the basic assumption that the practical knowledge needed to act competently as a principal relies more on the capacity to grasp meaning (a hermeneutic activity) than it relies on the possession of an abstract body of empirically derived skills and knowledge. So now the question becomes, how, or on what basis can we decide what "belongs" to a practice? What guidance is available to us on which to make this decision?

There is a great deal that could and perhaps should be said in response to this question. For the present all I wish to do is point out that deciding what belongs to a practice cannot be done by consulting theoretical sources any more than by offering or positing various definitions of educational administration. We cannot decide *in advance* what belongs to an educational administrative practice by trying to define it ourselves as that would be to suppose that we are in some way responsible for the practice in the sense that the practice

as a practice would already rely for its existence on the twists and turns of human ingenuity. In other words that the reasons for the practice would stem from an activity on our part which means that the practice would be a "made" practice in the sense of something manufactured--the product of human handiwork. Manufacturing literally refers to a making-by-hand, from the Latin manu + facture. In this view the meaning of being a principal would be something to be decreed, as it were, from "on high" as if nothing existed, or as if there were no "meanings" other than those we "decided" should exist. From the point of view of this study such a view would be entirely problematic. We cannot decide on our own what belongs to a practice or how a practice should be constituted because to do so would be to overlook the distinction between what we make and what we do not make. In this study it is precisely a concern for what we do not make, that is for what comes before, for what stands logically prior to any kind of doing (making) on our part that lies at the heart of the research effort. In this study I will name that which we do not make as a concern for pedagogy. In the chapters that follow I will try and show that it is a concern for pedagogy (for what we do not make) that provides the basic normative structure within which an administrative practice in education needs to unfold.

It is now important to consider in more detail the question of what is involved in doing a strong reading and how a strong reading might differ from other kinds of readings that might be possible. In fact this is also the validity question. How is it possible to claim that one reading (interpretation) is any more valid (correct) than any other reading? In what sense could there be a true reading of the principals' stories?

With this question we come face to face with one of the central and decisive questions of the human sciences. In what follows I can do no more than sketch in barest outline the main contours of the so-called validity problem in the human sciences. This is offered by

way of a brief and inevitably oversimplified introduction to the hermeneutic sections that follow in chapter three.

First, there is the view that the meaning of a text is determined by the author's intention (Hirsch, 1976). According to this view the task of reading a text is the process of uncovering what the person writing or uttering the text meant by it. This view to determining meaning seems self-evident. Why should the reader interpret a text differently from the author? Several answers are possible. First, it is quite arguable that a person does not always quite "know" what he or she says (or writes). An author is rarely fully aware out of what cultural, historical, or social context or out of what unconscious or unwitting motivation his or her text is produced. Second, readers very easily construe various meanings from a text even though they know that they must restrain or discipline this impulse. Third, authors rarely elaborate on their text in order to disclose their original intentions. And if they do, then they need not necessarily be trusted that their clarifications are still representative of the original intentions. And fourth, an author's intentions are themselves ambiguous and subject to interpretation.

Secondly, there is the idea that the meaning of a text is determined by an interpretive community of readers (Fish, 1980). According to this view no single person is responsible for the understanding of a text. Every reader is already a member of an interpretive community sharing a language, set of conventions, and discriminating standards of one kind or another. What this approach to reading overlooks, however, is that an original or a creative reading of a text is often compelling to the extent that it is unique and independent of what others have made or would make of the text in a more tradition bound reading.

Thirdly, there is the view that the meaning of a text is determined by a so-called fusion of horizons between the reader or interpreter and the text (Gadamer, 1975). According to this

approach to read a text is to bring one's own historically situated understandings and questions to the text, which the text answers. It is ultimately immaterial what the original (author's) meaning or purpose was for the text. Interpreting the parts depends on one's understanding of the whole and vice versa; this is the image of the interpretive or hermeneutic circle. The weakness of this view is that it could make every interpretation relativistic, subject only to one's historically situated understanding.

As articulated and practiced in this study, the notion of "strong reading" intends to be eclectic with reference to the various theories of reading. None of these interpretive theories are satisfactory taken in isolation. Thus, an additional element is added in the present methodology. Certainly an interpretive reading of the principals' stories must remain sensitive to the intentions of the principals; and yes, to read is also to understand the stories from the point of view of the interpretive community of school administrators. And in this study the texts will also be approached as answers to possible questions that I, as a situated reader, bring to the stories. In addition, however, the principals' stories will be interpreted or read in a pedagogically oriented way. And with this a normative dimension is added to the interpretive process.

Each story will be read seriously--as a serious recommendation for the way we are to go about the daily work of being a school principal. In other words, each story will be treated as a narrative definition of the practical meaning of educational administration. In a manner of speaking, each principal is saying with each story: "See, this is what it means to be a school principal." "This is what a principal does!" "This is how a principal thinks!" The question of the meaning of being a principal is too complex and contingent to be treated at the level of meta-discourse. As we saw in the previous chapter, abstract meta-level talk about the meaning of being a principal cuts itself off from the very life that the discourse

would want to make understandable. And so, abstract definitions of meaning fall short of the significance of the pedagogic sense of the question.

The Need for Overcoming Objectivity

With the question of objectivity we come face to face with one of the most central and decisive questions of this study and of the human sciences generally. Most often the question of truth is formulated as a concern for "objectivity" and the question is posed whether something like objective knowledge is possible within the human sciences. In this study I would like to formulate the problem a little differently: as a concern for the relation between the writer-as-author and that which is written (authored). So in this study the issue of truth, or the possibility of a "true" reading resolves into a particular question, namely: what is the relation between a writer and that which the writer produces?

There are many levels on which it may be possible to respond to this question. On one level we may think of the relation as that between creator and created, or between producer and produced. In this view the writer is someone who is "in charge" of the writing, who in a sense "determines" the writing. The situation of the writer is that of someone who alone determines the work, who is the sole originator of the work. The work begins and takes its point of origin with or from the writer. Here the writer comes first -- there is nothing that comes before or stands behind the writer. Whatever is written owes a duty of thanks only to the writer. Together with the work he or she is original. So between the writer and the written work stands only fixity of purpose, duty, ambition, and will.

In contrast, the relation between writer and work in this study is conceived differently. In this study what is produced in the work is not something for which the author can claim ownership, or even, (in the first instance) responsibility. What is produced in the writing

does not "belong" to the writer in the sense of being something produced or created by the writer and for which one could claim ownership. Rather we should see the writer as someone who stands in a secondary, which is to say subservient position to that which comes first, to that which occupies a more primary and basic location. This makes the writer more of an intermediary or go-between, than someone who inaugurates; more of a messenger than someone to be thought of as the source or originator of what is produced in the writing.

So in this study the relationship between the writer and that which is written is not one of production. It is not a relation of production because in a very real sense there is nothing to be produced. The task which this research sets for itself is that of uncovering or disclosing meanings--which is less a task of producing than (in Heidegger's terms) of showing or revealing (Heidegger, 1977). It is less a task of "arriving at conclusions" than of hazarding guesses and trying to arrive at informed judgements; less a task of positing hypotheses than of sensing the right questions to ask, which questions can lead us somewhere. A whole different attitude to language is involved here. For now between the writer and the text stands not duty but only desire, not fixity-of-purpose and the intention to succeed but only a certain hope and inner conviction, not the will-to-power but only faith and a faint longing. We stand here on the other side of science. A recognition that the will-to-power on which science rests cannot help in this enterprise. And yet as Heidegger has pointed out (Heidegger,1977), for a long time now the way forward has been thought of as the way of science.

I have already alluded to the fact that one way to read the principals' stories would be as interesting anecdotes but bereft of any serious theoretical or scholarly interest. As situations to which we could as researchers remain more or less indifferent. One possibility which would reflect such indifference would be to do a technical reading of the

stories in which case we would treat the concrete situations of practice as no more than "raw data" from which to extract propositional knowledge of one kind or another. For example, it would be possible to develop or identify various types or categories of various administrative leadership styles according to the manner recommended by so-called grounded theorists and others. (By contrast, Blum and McHugh (1984) have pointed out how such a technical reading of situations and events, though the preferred style of reading in the social sciences generally, nonetheless rests upon a naive conception of action, or upon an erroneous conception of the relation between behaviour and praxis). Going a step beyond we could then try to posit or establish certain relations or co-relations between various types or styles of "leader behaviour" and so-called organizational outcomes or school effects. But from the point of view of this study such a technical reading of the stories would be a mis-leading activity. It would be misleading because in treating the concrete situations of practice as nothing more than the raw data on which to perform certain technical operations, the immediately lived and motivated character of the story-situations would be ignored or denied.

A Strong Reading is a Normative Reading

A basic assumption of this study is that to be engaged in the practice of doing a strong reading is to be ethically involved in the stories. This is very far removed indeed from a technical interest for which one can and does remain ethically neutral and methodologically distant. Here the objectivity of the sciences becomes the *sine-qua-non* of effective procedure and the elimination of the so-called "subjective factor" is a primary concern of researchers. Doing a strong reading, on the other hand, calls for maximum engagement and maximum subjectivity. It calls for an ethical and existential involvement in the stories which precludes the possibility of any objective relation. And in fact we can go further.

Doing a strong reading begins by recognizing the absolute necessity of overcoming objectivity and for transcending all objective relations. Precisely here (in the face of the concrete situations of practice), do we encounter the existential limits of objectivity. That is why in the context of this study we need to see objectivity as a limit-situation which has to be surpassed before we can begin to establish the conditions of a pedagogical science adequate to its subject matter.

But this, as it turns out, is no more than the actual condition of practice. Of all people principals are constantly called upon to make decisions of an ethical-moral nature. We do not want, nor do we expect principals to remain "neutral" or "objective" in the face of the concrete situations of practice. Precisely what makes a principal truly a principal is a certain disposition or particularity of interest which enables this or that particular principal to take a stand on the side of the difference that pedagogy makes. A principal who cannot tell the difference between a supermarket and a school is, from the point of view of this study, no principal at all. So we need to inquire critically into all forms of research and theorizing which fail to strengthen our sense of difference.

It is precisely at this point that this study differs from most, if not all other forms of research in educational administration. But this difference does not arise out of a desire for just another new or novel approach to research, but stems rather from the realization that a strong educational administrative practice is from the beginning a committed practice in the sense of an engaged practice. To be truly a principal is to refuse objectivity -- or at least those forms of objectivity that culminate in a disinterested or indifferent attitude to life. Pedagogic acting begins with a refusal.

We stand here on the threshold of an important insight with profound implications for our work in the human sciences. It has to do with the concept of understanding in general and

of the possibility of obtaining any knowledge whatsoever. A fundamental assumption of this study is that acquiring understanding (knowledge) in the human sciences requires a certain attitude or state-of-mind. This attitude is by and large the opposite of that so prized by the sciences in general, namely a detached, objective frame that takes as its mission the dispassionate search for knowledge "for its own sake." At work in this study, by contrast, is the recognition that knowledge in the human sciences (including educational administration) requires not a disinterested or dispassionate attitude but already requires *as a fundamental principle of its methodological procedures* a certain passion (rather than dis-passion), which I have designated in this chapter as the overcoming of objectivity. Now desire and a certain wishfulness enter in as fundamental moments of any and all knowing. The corollary of this is that real understanding in the human sciences is barred to those whose interest in objects extends no further than a purely technical interest. The engaged quality of the present research is therefore not merely a methodological artifact of its own way of proceeding, but rather is to be understood as the pre-condition for any knowing whatsoever. Inherent in this is the realization that the possibility of insight and understanding in educational administration is far from a merely technical or procedural question. Here, as elsewhere in the human sciences, knowledge is inextricably bound up with a certain way of being-in-the-world. Now the question of self, of consciousness, reinserts itself not as a problem to be overcome but as a fundamental principle of knowledge. The implications of this view are amongst the most far-reaching that could be imagined for the practical field of educational administration. Bollnow (1974), claims that while truth (what he calls "substantively demonstrable knowledge") is possible in the human sciences, it is nonetheless not accessible to everyone in the same way "because it is bound up with definite, particular presuppositions within the knowing subject (Bollnow,1974:6)." For Bollnow, the precise difference between the natural sciences and the human sciences is that "in the latter understanding is a matter not of the formal intellect

alone, but of the depth of the soul with all of its forces (Bollnow,1974:6)." In the next chapter I will try to show what difference such epistemological views can make to our understanding of the nature of a school principal's administrative practice.

Overcoming the Epistemological Question through Phenomenological Research

Although not specifically addressed in this chapter so far the notion of trustworthiness arises at this point. In essence this has to do with the "believability" of the research. The question or problem of trustworthiness really answers to the epistemological question: how do I know, or on what basis can I place my trust and confidence in this research? Because this is an important though much misunderstood question I will try and address a few comments to it in the following sections.

First, however, it is important to state that the main purpose of this research is to offer a series of readings or interpretations of the principals' personal practical (narrative) definitions of educational administration. No attempt is made to claim that these readings are the only possible readings, or to suggest that the readings are the strongest that could or should have been made. In different circumstances and given different interests no doubt other readings would have resulted. And yet by the same token the readings are not so arbitrary as to be meaningless. Rather, they aim to be rigorous, in the sense of being disciplined (and thus obedient) readings. They are guided (disciplined) from the outset by a specific intention: the attempt to see in what way the administrative practices of the various principals are (or are not), informed by a pedagogic interest in the situations they encounter. So there is no possibility or intention of a neutral reading of the principals' stories. My aim is rather to read the stories in a pedagogically oriented way. Before that task is attempted, however, it may be helpful to summarize the research procedure used in

this study, and to explain (briefly) how the life-world stories used in this chapter came to be selected.

Background to the Stories

I have already mentioned that, as an ex-principal, part of the motivation for this study came from a certain professional curiosity to see whether other principals' experience of being a school principal was in any way similar to my own experience. This practical interest pointed in the direction of a conversational form of inquiry in which the intent was to engage other principals in conversation on the day-to-day problems and situations they encountered in their work as principals. The first task, therefore, was to identify school principals willing to participate in such a study. A total of seven principals were approached and agreed to participate. No special sampling or selection devices were used. The principals were chosen solely on the basis of their interest in participating and willingness to speak openly about their experiences as principals. Although a concern for level-of-schooling was not considered a pressing feature of this research, in the event it turned out that the participating principals were administrators of elementary, junior and senior high schools. It is important to emphasize, however, that the advantage of having all three levels represented was more in terms of the range and variety of anecdotal data it was possible to collect than for any analytic (statistical or correlational) purposes this distribution made possible. It bears repeating that neither the principals nor the anecdotal material in this chapter were selected via any sampling process or in order to represent any given population, leadership style, curricular orientation and so on. The representativeness of the principals and their stories is not an issue in this study *precisely because there is no attempt to generalize beyond the immediacy and specificity of the concrete situation.* At the same time, however, we should not assume that the principals and their stories are entirely

unique and idiosyncratic. This is not an all or nothing situation. To impose a false dichotomy where one does not exist would be inappropriate and a distortion of the assumptions on which this study is based. The principals in this study are neither typical nor atypical, neither representative nor un-representative. They simply are. And it is with this quality or character of are-ness that this study is primarily concerned.

Collecting the Data: Interviewing the Principals

Once initial contact had been made a preliminary meeting was arranged with each principal in order to discuss the nature of the research in more detail. As a result of the orientation sessions each principal agreed to a flexible schedule of meetings in order to discuss and describe specific events and incidents (chosen at the discretion of each principal), with which he or she was familiar and/or involved. The principals were encouraged not to refer to people (teachers and students) by their real names but to refer to them anonymously. Where (inevitably) actual names (of people and places) were used they have been changed (fictionalized) or omitted entirely to protect confidentiality. The interviews took place within a ten month period and covered schools in a broad geographic region of western Canada. With the exception of one principal who was interviewed twice, each of the remaining six principals were interviewed on three separate occasions for a total of twenty interviews in all. For what reason were these interviews conducted? At this juncture it may be necessary to say something about the nature and purpose of the interviews and the part they played in the research process.

Interviewing the Principals: Not Looking for Information

First, it is important to emphasize that this is not an ethnographic study, nor does it fall under any of the categories of observational research in any of its main or derivative forms: for example, participant observation. Nor is this a case-study in any true sense. The approach taken in this study is broadly phenomenological. This means that the interviews were conceived differently from the role they play in most forms of scientific research. In the first place the interviews were not conceived as a means of gathering information (often referred to as a process of data-gathering), but rather as an opportunity for conversation. Thus, there was no interview schedule or pre-set list of questions to be asked of the principals. As researcher, my task was largely that of finding a place for the conversation to begin and keeping it going, maintaining momentum. Of course, these were not just any old (random) conversations. What made these conversations special and legitimate research activities was their attempt to gain access to the inner-world of personal experience--in this case the personal experience of those with special responsibility for the education of the young. It was just this attempt that preserved the conversations from degenerating into a species of mere chatter. As a side note, it seems to me that the value of conversation (literally, con-versation, as a speaking together), has not been sufficiently realized in most forms of educational research.

Thus the interviews were not conceived as a way of corroborating research findings or of doing so-called perception checks in order to validate interpretive insights and understandings. While it was important to take note of the principals' intentions, purposes, meanings and so forth, it was also important not to be imprisoned by them. Precisely the point of this research was to search for some animating principle or standard against which the principals' concrete performances (their practical acting) could, in a certain sense, be judged. Thus the interviews were seen as a way of extending the conversation. I would

return to the principals not to compare and adjust conclusions, but to eke out the conversation, listen to the end of a story, delve into new realms of experience. More than a mere collector-of-data, I became an interlocutor, drawn (whether I liked it or not) into the lives and activities of the principals. Like the reader of a good novel, I wanted to know what happened next, how this child or teacher had fared, what had become of so-and-so. So this research was not the kind of research to which one could or should remain artificially neutral and detached. As I listened to the principals tell their stories I was reminded over and over of the challenge and complexity inherent in their task.

Once the interviews were completed the next phase of the research was to search the transcripts for significant moments, themes, motifs and so forth. This was an especially illuminating part of the research process. For in reading and re-reading the transcribed material it became clear that at the moment the principals began to speak of their everyday lives as principals, at the moment they sought to bring clarity and intelligibility to the nature of their work as principals, they began to tell stories. And while the stories often began as illustrations or exemplifications of a particular type of problem or concern, still the stories had a dynamic or life of their own such that the most interesting and important questions could be seen as embedded in the fabric of the stories themselves. As a result, the category of story or narrative emerged as a central element in the structure of this study.

Thus the life-world stories that follow in the next chapter are real stories taken from the lives of practicing school principals. They have been edited only insofar as was necessary to maintain narrative unity and readability and to protect the identities of those involved. The nine stories included in this study were selected for no other reason than that these are the kinds of stories principals tell, and that in combing through the transcripts there seemed to be nine events or incidents that possessed what might be described as a certain unity and internal consistency. For the purposes of this research it was important to obtain

descriptions of events (texts) that possessed a basic narrative unity and plot structure. And yet, by the same token, the anecdotal nature of the present data is not artificial data in the sense of its being the result of the research process. Rather, the storied character of this data should be seen as the way school principals ordinarily speak of their everyday lives as principals. In this sense it is possible to say that at its core educational administrative practice has an event-structure that is often overlooked in the more esoteric designs frequently used in research.

There are three phases or moments to the work of the next chapter. The first phase is to present each principal's story in its raw or untouched form. The second phase is to do what I have called an interrupted reading of each story. Because this activity is an important element in the total scheme of this research it may be helpful to offer a few thoughts on the purpose and intentions behind the interrupted readings.

Part of the rationale for doing an interrupted reading is to provide a conceptual bridge or transitional moment between the "raw" stories on the one hand, and the hermeneutic readings on the other. It was felt that, methodologically speaking, the jump from the anecdotal texts to the interpretive readings was simply too great without providing an intermediate phase or stage in the procedings. Thus the interrupted readings stand as a kind of half-way house in the interpretive process between the initial stories and the strong readings. But the interrupted readings are also more than this. In part at least, they also aim to concretize (make visible) the secret movements of the mind that *is* the interpretive process. They are the mind's footprints, tracks in the sand which show that something passed this way. In this research there is no possibility of laying down rules or developing any kind of objective method for the one-best-way to interpret. The interpretive act is a deeply mysterious act that cannot be specified in advance or reduced to a logical system but

can only be revealed in the doing, in the very practice of hermeneutics itself. This is both its challenge and its difficulty but also its value to us as educators.

But there is a less methodological aim or intention that underlies the idea behind the interrupted readings. It has to do with the need to break or disturb (rupture) the placid nature of the textual surface of the stories in order to create a space for the meanings to appear before us. Meanings, after all, do not lie on the surface of life as a ship lies on the ocean. They inhabit the depths and have to be "snagged" and brought struggling to the surface. So beyond a mere procedural device, interrupting the text (from the Latin, *ruptura* meaning a break), is a way of engaging the text in a questioning and problematizing way. But at the same time as the interrupted readings help to "unpack" the text, they also aim to open us, as interested readers, to the meanings and significancies embedded therein.

The third phase of the research process aims to do what I have called a hermeneutic or strong reading of the principals' stories. This represents the hermeneutic heart of the study to which the preceding activities are more or less preparatory. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to specify in so many words how one arrives at a strong reading. But because it cannot be so specified we should not assume that this is a fault or shortcoming of the method. Just the opposite may be true. Doing a strong reading takes us beyond the range of method and methodicalness to that domain where no procedure (no matter how thorough), and no technique (no matter how expert), can suffice. Something else is called for. Doing a strong reading is, in essence, a creative act in which something new is brought into existence. And yet this "bringing-into-existence" is not in the way of a chemical bringing, in which various existing elements are combined or re-combined in a new or different way in order to produce something new. In an odd way there are no existing or preceding elements that could be so combined. So whatever truths or insights are revealed by the strong readings are not truths that could be painstakingly arrived at but could only be

produced by the effort of the creative imagination. This means that whatever the Truth of these truths it cannot be derived and should not seek to be derived from antecedent conditions, establishment of causal relations, processes of logical inference and so on and so forth. Whatever Truth is contained in this study, it is not the sort amenable to proofs (or disproofs) of one kind or another. We are far and away from a land of hypothesis testing, Popperian falsification, public confirmability/disconfirmability and so forth. And yet for all its seeming strangeness it is not such a foreign land after all. If we look closely we may be surprised to find it is our home and native land.

But by the same token doing a strong reading is not unbounded in the sense of being a rampant or licentious reading. Precisely what makes a strong reading strong is its disciplined and bounded character. But this discipline is not the discipline of convention or of formal operations. What disciplines the readings is the effort to be attentive to the pedagogic impulse on which all adult-child relations are (or should be) founded. This is what guides or governs the readings and to which the readings aim to be responsive. To be governed in this sense is not to submit to arbitrary or artificial authority, but rather to the authority of the things themselves.

The actual doing of the strong readings is an activity in which one is bodily (and not just cognitively) involved. In the strong readings in the next chapter I hope it will become clear that a strong reading is not a naive reading in the sense of an uninformed reading, but has to be prepared for long in advance by extensive reading in the philosophical and other literature of those authors who maintain a perspective on, and concern for, lived-experience. And yet the project of this study is not so much to demonstrate an academic interest (or disinterest) in the works of the philosophers and others, but rather to place the insights and understandings such philosophy makes available to us in the service of life itself.

By now I hope I have said enough by way of introduction and explanation to the hermeneutic sections which follow. In the end the interpretive work of the next chapter must stand or fall on its own merits quite independent of the methodological justification I have supplied in this chapter. To the extent that the chapter sheds light and brings into the open something of what it means to be a principal, the chapter succeeds. To the extent that it falsifies or otherwise conceals such meaning, it fails. Fortunately or unfortunately *we* are the only ones who can make that judgement. To abdicate that responsibility is, ultimately, to abdicate ourselves.

Recapitulation

In this chapter an attempt has been made to reflect on certain of the more important *methodological* features of this rese[illegible]. The point was made that the task of addressing the question concerning the meaning of educational administration cannot be reduced to the status of a method of any kind (in the sense of a fixed set of analytic procedures), but is rather to be understood as a broad hermeneutic endeavour in which the principals' personal practical (narrative) definitions of educational administration become (in the next chapter) the focus of a strong reading. Reading the stories in a strong way was justified not as a way of increasing the production of still more technical knowledge (wherewith to address this or that problem of educational administration), but rather as a way of turning towards what truly counts. Two additional points were raised and discussed in this chapter. The first had to do with the central and decisive role of meaning in the formulation of practice. The point was made that (instead of the possession of a body of empirically derived skills and knowledge), the capacity to grasp meaning is what is decisive for practice. The second point had to do with the particular disposition or way in which the researcher disposes himself or herself towards the research question. It was pointed out how the capacity to

grasp meaning (in this research and elsewhere in the human sciences), relies on an attitude of maximum engagement and maximum subjectivity on the part of the researcher. This last point was elevated (beyond being simply a methodological stance of the present research), into a fundamental principle of knowledge in the human sciences.

Thus this chapter is, in certain respects, quite different from most chapters on research methodology which generally lay out the steps and provide a detailed itinerary of the actual research practices. By contrast, I opted to engage in reflective consideration of the way or ways in which certain questions need to be addressed. The difference that is at stake here can best be described as the difference between a concern for *method* versus a concern for *methodology*. An underlying assumption of this study and this chapter is that a preoccupation with research methods and procedures has tended to predominate at the expense of a concern for methodology.

The main point arising from the chapter is the realization that a concern for the question, what does it mean to be a principal, is a problem not of method but of hermeneutics. This means that the insights generated by a deep concern for the question cannot base their validity or their reliability on any technique (no matter how expert), or set of research procedures. Nor should we assume that the only reliable or correct interpretations of the principals' stories are those that conform most closely to the principals' own interpretations. Precisely the challenge of this research is to understand the stories *better* than the principals themselves. This is possible because the "meaning" of the stories does not lie unilaterally on one side or the other, but emerges instead in the dialectical encounter *between* the reader and the text.

Chapter III

LIFE-WORLD STORIES OF ADMINISTRATION: A HERMENEUTIC ENDEAVOUR

The main purpose of this chapter is to present a series of readings or interpretations of the principals' personal, practical (narrative) definitions of educational administration. As a way of proceeding, I have chosen to present the stories in the first-person as told by the principals themselves rather than in summarized or interpolated form. Each story begins with a short quotation taken from the principal's text in order to contextualize the story that follows. There are three phases or moments in the work to be presented. The first step is to present each story in its raw and relatively untouched form. However, as a prelude to the hermeneutic sections which follow, each story has been given a title or identifier corresponding to the central problematic or issue that is in question in the story. In the second phase of the research presented in this chapter I offer an interrupted reading of each principal's story. In this phase the story is re-told but is interrupted (by means of **bold-face** insertions in the body of the text), in order to problematize certain features of the discourse. In the third phase of the research the interrupted readings of each story become the occasion of an extended *strong reading* of the text of each principal.

Life-World Story One: A Question of Tact

> You know it only takes one sort of issue like this to make you second-guess why take all the shit and abuse in administration and why you don't find a job that is less demanding and has more rewards in it. The school staff have been very supportive of us. Even the parents in the community. I probably received thirty to forty letters in support and only two or three in non-support. Without that sort of support I would probably have chosen to pack it in three months ago and told everybody to shove the job.
>
> Senior High School Principal

This particular incident took place in a physical education class when a grade ten boy noticed that his watch had gone astray. Now we do make provision for the security of belongings. Within the gymnasium facility there are locker rooms, and every student has a locker that he should secure. But in spite of that students are irresponsible in looking after their own goods. This kid had stuck his watch in a runner within the gymnasium. Now it happened to be a wrestling unit being taught at that time, and in that sort of unit the instructor is off to one corner of the class and there are a lot of spectators. In other words he doesn't have the close supervision that he would in a regular classroom situation for example. In any event, some time into the class the student noticed his watch had gone astray. He went to the instructor and the instructor tried to recover it as well as he could. His approach was fairly low key: "Okay, you guys, where did the watch go? Is this some kind of a joke? Has anybody got Anton's watch?" The other thing is that this individual is someone who has taken a lot of personal abuse from other kids in the school. He's a very meek and mild kid who would almost cry at the drop of a hat. And so the kids tend to pick on him and, you know, he's very self-conscious and has not had a lot of good experiences within this school, or as far as that goes, with any of his school-life experiences. He's very upset about losing his watch and crying. To have a kid, an adolescent (he's about fourteen or fifteen years old right now) crying amongst his peers -- you can see he is obviously upset.

In any case it just so happened that I was coming from central office from a meeting and my two assistants and I happened to congest outside my office and the teacher was there so he had the three of us as a captive audience to relate the experience. He wanted some help to find the watch and one of the first questions my assistant principal asked was whether the environment was closed (was someone looking after the class right now?) He led us to believe that it was because we had a substitute instructor down there who we thought was

looking after the class at that time, and that as a result no one had an opportunity to leave the gymnasium and dispose of the watch.

So the three of us went down there--to try to recover the watch, and that was the sole purpose of us going down there to try to recover the watch for this kid who obviously was very upset. We did a variety of things: we talked to the kids as a group, we searched through the facility, and so on.

The end of the day was approaching (this was the last period of the day) and we weren't making any progress. We still felt at that time the watch had to be on the presence of one of the students or somewhere in the building. At which time the two of us -- one of the assistants was looking in the locker room -- so the other assistant and I wondered what on earth we could do. I suggested that we start to conduct a search on the clothing of the students. So we took them into the washrooms -- there are two adjacent to the gymnasium facility -- I went into one and my assistant went into the other.

We told the kids that we were going to conduct a clothing search and so we took them into the privacy of an office. We obviously had our suspects, because some kids in our preliminary investigation -- we had asked them who the primary suspects were, and from previous dealings also. Actually, just the day before we caught one of the kids trying to steal a tape from the school library and so that kid is a very suspicious one in this sort of situation. So we called the kids into the office in pairs, and the approach was: "Okay, remove your clothing because we want to check to see if there's anything hidden in your clothing." Some kids bared-all. You know, in other words they didn't take all their clothing off, but they kinda dropped their shorts. We could see there was nothing concealed in there and they pulled them up. Part of the reason for conducting the search was because we wanted to recover the watch for the kid and we felt pressed for time. The

other thing we could have done I suppose was to have involved the parents or called the police and have them conduct an investigation. Anyway we went through the search and discovered nothing and so dismissed the kids.

During the search the kids were very co-operative. There was only one kid who really felt offended by the whole process. He took a personal offence and got on the phone and called his parents. As a matter of fact he was in my group and he says: "I'm not going through the search," and I gave him an alternative. I said: "Either you do the search for me or I'll call the police and they'll do it for me." At which time he begrudgingly complied.

One of the things that didn't come out of the media report--and we intentionally avoided bringing it out--was that the group of kids involved were part of our special education program. And when I say that we have within our facility educably mentally handicapped kids, and we have academic occupational kids, slow learners and more. These are kids who are functioning with I.Q. ranges anywhere from fifty-five to just below normal. You try to avoid that coming out in the press because when you are dealing with those types of kids you don't want to highlight it. Secondly, when you're dealing with that type of parent, (parents of those types of kids), I just think it stands to reason that you are dealing with the lower end of the spectrum intellectually, and you can't always rationalize, you know, or attempt to justify making decisions for what you've done. It puts administrators in an awkward position when you're dealing with clientele of that nature that those things can't come out publicly because it would be used to your disadvantage. It could be understood as treating lower ability students differently than they treat regular students and although that isn't the intent the media would attempt to play upon that.

You see you're always in an awkward situation because you're trying to meet the needs of two groups of individuals. You are trying to meet the needs of the child who lost the stolen article, then you're trying to meet the needs of those children or rather the parents of those children who are suspects. Now as the parent of the child who lost the watch then I'm sure that administrators are expected to do everything possible in order to recover the watch. I know that uppermost in my mind was the importance of recovering the watch.

I know I could have accomplished the same thing and done it, I suppose, without offence and I should have avoided that. Like it was suggested, well, why didn't you have all the boys go to the shower room and take a shower, at which time you could have inspected their clothing. And we could have done that and for certain it wouldn't have offended anybody because showers are expected of kids. So you say: "Okay everybody we'll go to the shower and take a shower. Leave your clothing with us; we'll inspect your clothing." And, of course, there's no sensationalism there because you take away the strip search aspect which is the problem. The other thing we could have done, I suppose, is have them remove their clothing in a more private area and not necessarily in front of us which would have been more discreet. I guess there are other ways of accomplishing the same thing. We just didn't anticipate the reaction we got. Knowing that there is that sensitivity out there, we could attempt to accomplish the same thing but do it a little more discreetly, I guess.

A Question of Tact: An Interrupted Reading

This particular incident took place in a physical education class when a grade ten boy noticed that his watch had gone astray. **[Principal begins to tell his story.]** Now we do make provision for the security of belongings. Within the gymnasium facility there

are locker rooms and every student has a locker that he should secure. But in spite of that students are irresponsible in looking after their own goods. **[Principal feels called upon to provide an appraisal of students.]** This kid had stuck his watch in a runner within the gymnasium. Now it happened to be a wrestling unit being taught at that time, and in that sort of unit the instructor **[the teacher as "instructor"]** is off to one corner of the class and there are a lot of spectators. In other words he doesn't have the close supervision that he would in a regular classroom situation for example. **[The principal implies that weak supervision is part of the problem here.]** In any event, some time into the class the student noticed his watch had gone astray. He went to the instructor and the instructor tried to recover it as well as he could. His approach was fairly low key: "Okay, you guys, where did the watch go? Is this some kind of a joke? Has anybody got Anton's watch?" The other thing is that this individual is someone who has taken a lot of personal abuse from other kids in the school. He's a very meek and mild kid who would almost cry at the drop of a hat. **[Principal offers an appraisal of the student in question.]** And so the kids tend to pick on him and, you know, he's very self-conscious and has not had a lot of good experiences within this school, or as far as that goes, with any of his school-life experiences. **[This child is picked upon because of his "meek and mild" personality.]** He's very upset about losing his watch and crying. To have a kid, an adolescent (he's about fourteen or fifteen years old right now) crying amongst his peers -- you can see he is obviously upset. **[Principal begins to express a sense of how it is for this child.]**

In any case it just so happened that I was coming from central office from a meeting and my two assistants and I happened to congest outside my office and the teacher was there so he had the three of us as a captive audience to relate the experience. He wanted some help to find the watch and one of the first questions my assistant principal asked was whether

the environment **[gymnasium as "environment"]** was closed (was someone looking after the class right now?) **[A certain kind of interest in the situation is reflected in the assistant principal's question.]** He led us to believe that it was because we had a substitute instructor down there who we thought was looking after the class at that time, and that as a result no one had an opportunity to leave the gymnasium and dispose of the watch.

So the three of us went down there to try to recover the watch, and that was the sole purpose of us going down there to try to recover the watch for this kid who obviously was very upset. **[The main task is recovering the watch.]** We did a variety of things; we talked to the kids as a group, we searched through the facility, and so on.

The end of the day was approaching (this was the last period of the day) and we weren't making any progress. We still felt at that time the watch had to be on the presence of one of the students or somewhere in the building. **[A concern for time. Once the students leave the school chances of recovering the watch are much less.]** At which time the two of us -- one of the assistants was looking in the locker room -- so the other assistant and I wondered what on earth we could do. **[A concern for action. Something has to be done.]** I suggested that we start to conduct a search on the clothing of the students. So we took them into the washrooms -- there are two adjacent to the gymnasium facility -- I went into one and my assistant went into the other.

We told the kids that we were going to conduct a clothing search and so we took them into the privacy of an office. We obviously had our suspects, because some kids in our preliminary investigation -- we had asked them who the primary suspects were, and from previous dealings also. Actually, just the day before we caught one of the kids trying to steal a tape from the school library and so that kid is a very suspicious one in this sort of

situation. **[The principal recommends a certain attitude towards children.]** So we called the kids into the office in pairs, and the approach was: "Okay, remove your clothing because we want to check to see if there's anything hidden in your clothing." **[The principal outlines the procedure.]** Some kids bared-all. You know, in other words they didn't take all their clothing off, but they kinda dropped their shorts. We could see there was nothing concealed in there and they pulled them up. Part of the reason for conducting the search was because we wanted to recover the watch for the kid and we felt pressed for time. The other thing we could have done I suppose was to have involved the parents or called the police and have them conduct an investigation. **[Principal wonders whether other means might have been better.]** Anyway we went through the search and discovered nothing and so dismissed the kids.

During the search the kids were very co-operative. There was only one kid who really felt offended by the whole process. He took a personal offence and got on the phone and called his parents. As a matter of fact he was in my group and he says: "I'm not going through the search," and I gave him an alternative. I said: "Either you do the search for me or I'll call the police and they'll do it for me." At which time he begrudgingly complied. **[A certain view of pedagogy emerges in the principal's words.]**

One of the things that didn't come out of the media report and we intentionally avoided bringing it out, was that the group of kids involved were part of our special education program. And when I say that we have within our facility **[school as a "facility"]** educably mentally handicapped kids, and we have academic occupational kids, slow learners etc.. **[the kids are categorized . . .]** These are kids who are functioning with I.Q. ranges anywhere from fifty five to just below normal. You try to avoid that coming out in the press because when you are dealing with those types of kids you don't want to highlight it. **[. . . and judged on the basis of their categorization.]**

Secondly, when you're dealing with that type of parent, (parents of those types of kids), I just think it stands to reason that you are dealing with the lower end of the spectrum intellectually, and you can't always rationalize, you know, or attempt to justify making decisions for what you've done. **[A certain stance is recommended here towards the way one deals, as principal, with parents.]** It puts administrators in an awkward position when you're dealing with clientele **[children as "clientele"]** of that nature that those things can't come out publicly because it would be used to your disadvantage. **[Principal adopts a particular attitude to administration.]** It could be understood as treating lower ability students differently than they treat regular students and although that isn't the intent the media would attempt to play upon that. **[Principal adopts a certain attitude to the way an act might be perceived. A concern for marketing.]**

You see you're always in an awkward situation because you're trying to meet the needs of two groups of individuals. You are trying to meet the needs of the child who lost the stolen article, **[the principal assumes the watch was stolen.]** then you're trying to meet the needs of those children or rather the parents of those children who are suspects. **[Children as suspects.]** Now as the parent of the child who lost the watch then I'm sure that administrators are expected to do everything possible in order to recover the watch. I know that uppermost in my mind was the importance of recovering the watch. **[The principal expresses a view of pedagogy here. The task is to recover the watch.]**

I know I could have accomplished the same thing and done it, I suppose, without offence and I should have avoided that. **[The principal engages in reflective re-construction of the incident.]** Like it was suggested, well, why didn't you have all the boys go to the shower room and take a shower, at which time you could have inspected

their clothing. And we could have done that and for certain it wouldn't have offended anybody because showers are expected of kids. **[The principal sees the real problem to lie in the offence that resulted.]** So you say: "Okay everybody we'll go to the shower and take a shower. Leave your clothing with us; we'll inspect your clothing." And, of course, there's no sensationalism there because you take away the strip search aspect which is the problem. **[The principal considers other ways in which the situation could have been handled.]** The other thing we could have done, I suppose, is have them remove their clothing in a more private area and not necessarily in front of us which would have been more discreet. I guess there are other ways of accomplishing the same thing. We just didn't anticipate the reaction we got. Knowing that there is that sensitivity out there, we could attempt to accomplish the same thing but do it a little more discreetly, I guess. **[When the principal reflects on the situation he considers the difficulties to lie in the choice of means rather than the intentions of the act.]**

A Question of Tact: A Hermeneutic Reading.

In this incident the principal finds himself fact to face with a not uncommon situation in schools. The principal tells us a student has been irresponsible with his belongings and now his wrist watch has gone missing. The problem for the principal is how to find the watch and return it to its rightful owner. He is quite explicit about his responsibility here. He puts himself in the place of the boy's parents. "Now as the parent of the child who lost the watch then I'm sure that administrators are expected to do everything possible to recover the watch." So what is first of all interesting is that the principal has no real doubts about what should be done in such circumstances. The aim is simple: to recover the watch. Although later in the story the principal begins to question the means by which such an end

is to be accomplished there is no wavering or questioning of the fundamental rightness of his intentions. One way or another Anton must get his watch back.

This, in brief, seems to be the essence of the situation as it is encountered by the principal. In this section I would like to read the principal's story as a tacit recommendation to educational administration. In other words I wish to read the story not as just any story but as the principal's answer to the question: what does it mean to be a principal? Except, of course, that this is by no means a consciously worked out or rationally derived answer. Rather, what the principal's story represents is a kind of pre-reflective, or better a lived response to the question of what it means to be the principal of a school. In other words I want to treat the principal's response to the situation not as *any* course of action but rather as a *preferred* course of action; to see the principal's response not as *arbitrary* but as *motivated*. It is as if the principal were saying to us: "This is the way, as principal, you deal with the problem of a missing wrist watch. This is what it means to be a principal."

> So the three of us went down there to try to recover the watch, and that was the sole purpose of us going down there to try to recover the watch for this kid who obviously was very upset. We did a variety of things; we talked to the kids as a group, we searched through the facility, and so on.

What is the principal recommending to us here? Of course, it is difficult to know for sure. Is he saying that the good principal is the one who is prepared to take a stand on behalf of some young person who through no fault of his own has been in some way victimized? We all know the child who for one reason or another always finds himself the butt of other children's scorn and practical jokes. Is Anton such a child? At any rate the principal is called upon (or feels called upon), to take a stand on behalf of this boy and do whatever can be done to equalize the power relation that exists among the peer group. This child needs befriending. By his action the principal announces his distaste for any kind of clique-

ishness or scapegoating. This is a child after all who is constantly "picked on" and so the principal uses his power on behalf of the powerless. Is this not a pedagogic act?

But, of course, other interpretations may also be possible. Maybe the principal is worried that if this incident is left unpunished and ignored it will be an invitation for similar situations in the future. Time to draw the line now. Principals after all are expected to maintain a semblance of discipline in their schools. How is this to be done if not by clear demonstrations of what can pass as acceptable behaviour inside the school? A certain harshness or show of force now will pay dividends over the long term in the way of helping establish discipline and firm administrative control. So if not pedagogically inspired is there not an element of wordly wisdom in the principal's actions in this case? Shouldn't we see this as just part of the nature of administrative work?

But if we leave for a moment the methodological difficulties involved in knowing what is going on inside the principal's head, we are still left with the question of the principal's stated goal in this instance, namely the problem of finding the missing watch. While the principal puts this forward as the unquestioned objective of his ministrations, "it was the sole purpose of us going down there," we have to ask whether this is all that counts in this situation.

The principal then makes a decision. Time is short and still no sign of the watch appearing. Something has to be done. So the boys are taken into the washrooms and made to remove their clothing.

> So we called the kids into the office in pairs, and the approach was: "Okay, remove your clothing because we want to check to see if there's anything hidden in your clothing." Some kids bared-all. You know, in other words they didn't take all their clothing off, but they kinda dropped their shorts. We could see there was nothing concealed in there and they pulled them up.

Here we come face to face with what is in many respects the central issue of the story, namely: how does one act as principal in a situation such as this? In other words we are asking, what would be appropriate here for someone who is an *educational* administrator?

Already the question points us in a certain direction. What makes the question a possible question seems to rest on the realization that something is in error here, that somehow or other the principal's response falls short of what we might expect in such circumstances. But what does it mean to "fall short"? Fall short of what? Already in this way of speaking there is implicit the idea of a certain standard against which action in the world can be measured. Not, of course, in any precise quantifiable sense, that would be absurd. But more in the way that the standard provides us with something from which we can take our bearings. Like a star in the night sky the presence of the standard helps us navigate through an uncertain and often-times confusing world. What kind of standard is this? How do we know when we have grasped it correctly?

This is not an easy question. The standard we are alluding to does not often nor easily swim into view. It prefers hiddenness and concealment to unconcealment. It shows itself only at rare moments. More often when there are breaches than when it is realized. That is why the standard is often mis-taken for something else. It is nothing if not elusive. Let me try to be clearer.

We could, for example, in the present case see the principal's action as falling short from some kind of legal standard. We could say, for instance, that the principal's action fell short of a proper understanding of the legal rights of students; that in requiring students to remove their clothing this was in some way an abridgement or infringement on individual human rights. That some kind of legal code that spells out what one can and cannot do under such circumstances had been violated. And, indeed, there would be undeniably a

certain correctness to this view which would or certainly could become grounds for action against the principal.

But the legal standard is not the first nor even the most important standard that is at stake here. I want to propose that before, or in advance of any legal standard still there is a further (unnamed) standard which claims a higher allegiance from us. What kind of standard could this be?

To consider this question we need to look a little more deeply into the situation itself. What do children learn when they are made to undress as part of a search for a missing wrist watch? What is the principal really saying to such children? Isn't he accusing the children? In a way what the principal is saying is, " . . . you could be a thief too!" So what the principal creates or establishes is the idea that no-one can be trusted. Very likely this is the way in which the boys in Anton's class experience the principal's demand that they remove their clothing: that is negatively, as doubt, mistrust, disrespect, everyone is a potential thief, and so forth. What happens to education in such surroundings? What pedagogic possibilities exist here? Does the principal have a sense of the way his actions are experienced in the lives of the children in his care?

These are important questions. They get close to the heart of the question we are pursuing here. After all, the standard to be aimed at is not a legal standard nor even an academic standard, but rather a pedagogic standard. This is what the principal in reality falls short of. And yet it is precisely the grasping of this standard that enables an educator to be educator.

> During the search the kids were very co-operative. There was only one kid who really felt offended by the whole process. He took a personal offence and got on the phone and called his parents. As a matter of fact he was in my group and he says: "I'm not going through the search," and I gave him an alternative. I said: "Either you do the search for me or I'll call the police and they'll do it for me." At which time he begrudgingly complied.

Undeniably a certain view or attitude to pedagogy emerges in these lines. In a sense the principal's words raise the question of what it means to act pedagogically. We ask: How can a principal or other educator who uses threats and acts on the basis of a position of superior power claim a pedagogic relation? Adults who deal in ultimatums, who say in effect "Do this or else . . ." remove from the child a necessary area of choice-making that is essential to healthful growth and maturation.

Our aim here, we need to remind ourselves, is not to be unnecessarily critical of the principal's actions when we all know how difficult it is to act appropriately at all times. Judgement calls are never easy at the best of times. But it is a question of doing a strong reading of this situation in order to strengthen our grasp of what it means to be principal. We need to ask whether careful reflection on such situations could yield deeper insight into the question of what being a principal calls for.

Unmistakably something is missing here. It is not just that it is crassly inappropriate to demand that children remove their clothing, but more profoundly something is lacking that belongs to the heart of the educative enterprise. Schools, after all, are not merely learning places where you go to learn spelling and arithmetic, science and social, for example. More fundamentally and more basically they are also pedagogic places. And this means that whatever goes on in schools should invariably seek to secure and affirm and strengthen and enhance the child's slowly emerging sense of self-hood. Anything that weakens or erodes the strengthening task of schools or which sows the seeds of suspicion or mistrust is from the start likely to be mis-educative. Of course, this doesn't mean that we should throw out all standards, or that a certain wordly wisdom is unimportant or that naivete is its own reward. But what it does mean is that what makes the cultivation of a healthy realism possible and supportable in the first place is the presence of a certain founding optimism or belief in the ultimate dignity and nobility of the human enterprise. Why else would we

educate? This is why we feel a vague disquiet as we listen to the principal's reflective account of the situation. A diffuse cynicism penetrates every fibre of the principal's story through and through; a certain nihilism is at work here; higher values are losing heart. As educators we have to ask about the pedagogic consequences of such an attitude and such a spirit. From the pedagogic perspective adopted in this study, it is doubtful whether anything the least bit educative can survive such a climate of cynicism and mistrust. So we need to consider more carefully the pedagogic consequences of this kind of atmosphere.

These are not trivial observations. They drive to the heart of what it means to be an educational administrator. They cannot be ignored without at the same time placing in jeopardy one's claim to be an educator. Yet the question remains as to whether the principal grasps or realizes the significance of these questions. There is a question of pedagogic competence here.

It is in this sense that the principal raises what is probably the central question of the piece. Namely, what does it mean to act pedagogically with children? Or we could ask: What does pedagogic acting require of us? First, pedagogic acting is more than just a state-of-mind. It takes work, action and a certain way of seeing. What is first of all required is a certain empathetic grasping, really a seeing or a sensing, of how it is for a child, of the way in which a child or young person experiences a given event or situation. This is a kind of first requirement or pre-requisite for pedagogy. It is really that capacity to enter the world of the other--not out of idle curiosity or as a mere spectator--but more pedagogically in a way that makes us wonder, "If I do this, or if I say that, how will it be received in the life-world of this child? How can I act in such a way as to point this child in the direction of the healthful living that is deservedly his so that he can grow toward responsible adulthood?"

But it is a pointing and not a forcing. There is an unmistakable invitational quality to pedagogic acting. It cannot be a forcing because the growing child must have available to him the space to choose his own way even at times in the face of the way of the educator and the educator's world. The educator must not rob the child of the possibility of coming to a stand even if the place of the stand is other than the educator might himself have chosen. To do so is to rob the child of his history-making possibilities. True education has more to do with freedom than with authoritarian approaches. But this is taking us quite far afield.

For now we can say that what enables an adult, teacher, parent or principal, to intervene pedagogically in the life of this or that child is a certain thoughtfulness and tactfulness. A parent or principal has to know when to speak and when to hold silent; what to mention and when to slide over and leave something unsaid. And for better or worse there are no rules we can formulate to serve as infallible guides in such matters. It is more a question of who and what we are than of possessing vast amounts of externally derived knowledge. There are no short cuts here in the way of reaching the goal of pedagogic acting.

And yet this is what the principal seems to be recommending to us -- that as principal one can choose to deny or ignore the reality of the pedagogic relation one stands in with children. But are we really so free as the principal's story would have us believe? That in fact there is no requirement for pedagogic acting. Or is this freedom already an illusion made possible only on the basis of a certain indifference, a certain forgetfulness of what the task of educating calls for? In the context of this study, pedagogic thoughtfulness and tactfulness is sustained by a certain kind of seeing, listening and responding. Out of this basis of thoughtfulness, tact in our relations with children may grow.

Life-World Story Two: A Question of Childhood

> You've got to remember that I've got two hundred and fifty kids in this school, and while I don't want them all sitting with their feet flat on the floor and their hands on their laps and all writing the same way, still I think that there are behaviours that are acceptable and behaviours that are not acceptable when you're running an organization like a school. And that in terms of the non-acceptable ones, the school has the responsibility to set certain standards which are common to every school not just our school. The things that don't go are such things as swearing in class, not doing your work -- or whatever it may be. Such things are not correct. I think that part of my job as principal is to work on changing these kinds of behaviours.
>
> Elementary School Principal.

We have this situation with Ryan, a little guy who is repeating grade one again this year. Last year his behaviour in school was unbelievable right from day one. He was totally, totally disruptive in the classroom. He has trouble staying on task for more than two or three minutes. He's a very spoiled child and I guess he's kind of made up his mind from watching his older brothers and sisters that he shouldn't have to go through all this education to get where they're at. He's picked up some language from somewhere and quite often sits there and says: "Jesus Christ, why do I have to do this stuff?"

His teacher tried very hard but it really wore on her. We tried all kinds of things. We tried to get him to stay on task and get motivated. But everything that is kind of normal in a child who wants to learn just wasn't there. So after a while the teacher got frustrated with him and so the child was spending a lot of time outside the classroom. Finally the teacher brought him down to the office to do some work under closer supervision.

In the end we called in the parents to try to discover what kind of background this child had to help us structure some kind of program that would be appropriate for him. Basically we went through the year and didn't accomplish a whole lot in terms of modifying his

behaviour. We determined through tests that he had average or slightly above average intelligence. So he's quite capable of doing the work, it's just that he refused to do it.

Like I said, we tried everything with him. We've had him tested. We've had him working in the resource room. We even took him into the office and shook the hell out of him, but just nothing works -- absolutely nothing works. But now this year he's got an entirely different style of teacher and its worked a lot better.

We have a policy at this school which doesn't allow a student to have the same teacher two years in a row. So this year he's got a very highly structured teacher who operates a very, very strict environment. The kid really doesn't get away with anything. As a result I haven't seen him hardly at all this year. But the times that I have seen him have been more to remind him what the consequences will be if he doesn't conform. Strict in class and strict when he comes to the office. It's not a question of giving him a pat on the back, because he doesn't like that sort of thing. It never works with this kid.

I guess the last weeks or so haven't been so great. So I started reminding him about what the consequences of his behaviour would be because of all the things he was doing -- sitting there and pouting, and not wanting to do his work and swearing about this or that. He was doing this in class. But the teacher has been keeping me informed. It hasn't been serious enough for him to be dealt with by higher authorities. This time it was. He had a swearing bout or something. So I dealt with him and reminded him that he was behaving like a two- year old. And I kept saying to him: "I must be dealing with a two-year old." In thirty minutes I must have said that about fifty or sixty times . . . So after a while he was just getting mad, he was getting really mad at me, and boy was I happy to see that . . .

. . . I wanted him to get mad because if he's not mad about being called a two-year old then I'm lost -- what do I do next? You know? Here you're saying . . . you pretend you're this

kid and I keep telling you you're a two-year old. I always say you're behaving like a two-year old. I started to ask him, I said, "How old are you?" He said, "Six, almost seven." I said, "Well why are you behaving like a two-year old?" I said, "When you throw a temper tantrum, when you tell the teacher you don't want to do your work, when you aggravate the other kids, well you're behaving like a two-year old. Now I'm going to keep calling you a two-year old until you can control it and not behave like a two-year old." Well I guess he went back to class, and this happened early in the morning yesterday, and he was real good then all day, and he was again today. How long it will last I don't know. I'm not expecting it will last all that long. I am expecting I will have to repeat that scene with that child quite a few times.

A Question of Childhood: An Interrupted Reading

We have this situation with Ryan, a little guy who is repeating grade one again this year. Last year his behaviour in school was unbelievable right from day one. **[The principal names Ryan an unbelievable child.]** He was totally, totally disruptive in the classroom. He has trouble staying on task for more than two or three minutes. He's a very spoiled child and I guess he's kind of made up his mind from watching his older brothers and sisters that he shouldn't have to go through all this education to get where they're at. **[The principal offers an explanation for Ryan's behaviour. He is a spoiled child.]** He's picked up some language from somewhere and quite often sits there and says: "Jesus Christ, why do I have to do this stuff?"

His teacher tried very hard but it really wore on her. We tried all kinds of things -- tried to get him to stay on task, get motivated etc.. But everything that is kind of normal in a child who wants to learn just wasn't there. So after a while the teacher got frustrated with him

and so the child was spending a lot of time outside the classroom. Finally the teacher brought him down to the office to do some work under closer supervision. **[The principal raises a question of childhood. He asks, what is normal in a child?]**

. . . in the end we called in the parents to try to discover what kind of background this child had to help us structure some kind of program that would be appropriate for him. **[The principal sees the development of a program as a solution to the problem of Ryan.]** Basically we went through the year and didn't accomplish a whole lot in terms of modifying his behaviour. **[The goal is behaviour modification.]** We determined through tests that he had average or slightly above average intelligence. So he's quite capable of doing the work, it's just that he refused to do it. **[The principal sees Ryan as a bright child but he has a bad attitude.]**

We tried everything with him. We had him tested. We had him working in the resource room. We even took him into the office and shook the hell out of him, but just nothing works -- absolutely nothing works. But now this year he's got an entirely different style of teacher and it's worked a lot better. **[The principal tries to turn Ryan on to learning. He tries to find what will 'work' for this child.]**

We have a policy at this school which doesn't allow a student to have the same teacher two years in a row. So this year he's got a very highly structured teacher who operates a very, very strict environment. **[Note the formalized language here: Ryan has a highly "structured" teacher who "operates" a strict "environment."]** The kid really doesn't get away with anything. As a result I haven't seen him hardly at all this year. But the times that I have seen him have been more to remind him what the consequences will be if he doesn't conform. Strict in class and strict when he comes to the office. It's not a

question of giving him a pat on the back, because he doesn't like that sort of thing. It never works with this kid. **[The principal sees his task as providing continuity of experience for the child. A stable, predictable "environment" is what will 'work' best.]**

I guess the last weeks or so haven't been so great. So I started reminding him about what the consequences of his behaviour would be because of all the things he was doing -- sitting there and pouting, and not wanting to do his work and swearing about this or that. He was doing this in class. But the teacher has been keeping me informed. It hasn't been serious enough for him to be dealt with by higher authorities. This time it was. He had a swearing bout or something. So I dealt with him and reminded him that he was behaving like a two- year old. And I kept saying to him: "I must be dealing with a two-year old." In thirty minutes I must have said that about fifty or sixty times . . . So after a while he was just getting mad, he was getting really mad at me and boy was I happy to see that. **[How does a principal stand to the situation between child and teacher? What should the relation be? The principal sees his role as intervening only as a case of last resort.]**

You see, I wanted him to get mad because if he's not mad about being called a two-year old then I'm lost. What do I do next? You know? **[Is a hostile relation better than no relation at all? Could it be a platform on which to build?]** Imagine you're this kid and I keep telling you you're a two-year old. I say: "Look, you're behaving like a two-year old." I started to ask him, I said, "How old are you?" "Six, almost seven." So I said, "Well, why are you behaving like a two-year old? When you throw a temper tantrum; when you tell the teacher you don't want to do your work; when you aggravate the other kids, well you're behaving like a two-year old. So I'm going to keep calling you a two-year old until you can control it and not behave like a two-year old." **[The principal is**

saying in effect that this is the way to handle the 'problem' of a spoiled child.]

Well I guess he went back to class, and this happened yesterday morning, and he was real good then all day, and he was again today. How long it will last I don't know. I'm not expecting it will last all that long. I am expecting I will have to repeat that scene with that child quite a few times. **[The principal realizes he will have to repeat the treatment several times before Ryan is cured.]**

You've got to remember that I've got two hundred and fifty kids in this school, and while I don't want them all sitting with their feet flat on the floor and their hands on their laps and all writing the same way, still I think that there are behaviours that are acceptable and behaviours that are not acceptable when you're running an organization like a school. **[Being principal means you are reaponsible for running an organization.]** And that in terms of the non-acceptable ones, the school has the responsibility to set certain standards which are common to every school not just our school. The things that don't go are such things as swearing in class, not doing your work--or whatever it may be. Such things are not correct. I think that part of my job as principal is to work on changing these kinds of behaviours. **[The principal makes explicit what is required in the way of being principal. The statement forms a meaning-horizon within which the principal's response to Ryan's disruptive behaviour becomes intelligible.]**

A Question of Childhood: A Hermeneutic Reading

The principal immediately sketches the case. He describes Ryan's behaviour as "unbelievable." What was unbelievable about it? Ryan was totally disruptive and had

trouble staying on task for more than two or three minutes. So first what is noteworthy about this story is that the principal has a notion of child and childlike behaviour that has no place in it for someone like Ryan. We can imagine that the principal has seen a range or scope of differences among children but Ryan obviously falls outside of this range. What kind of behaviour could a child display that is simply not believable for a principal? Surely a principal must have seen many children and would not easily have his beliefs about the pe[illegible]le behaviours of children disturbed. So what does it mean for a principal to name a certain child or childlike behaviour unbelievable? What kind of administrative evaluation is recommended in the principal's story about his work? It would not do to say that this principal is simply using a colloquial expression, that he is careless with his words, that he means only that this child needs a pedagogic nudge in the right direction. There is no denying that the principal takes Ryan's case seriously and that there are serious consequences for this "little guy" in grade one.

What else is involved in the principal's dealing with the child? The principal makes a kind of diagnostic statement. Again we want to read this as a recommendation. To be a principal is to be able to diagnose what a behavioural problem consists of. We could imagine a whole range of possible interpretations of what is the matter with Ryan. But the principal puts it very plainly. "He is a very spoiled child," and then he makes a "guess." The child is modelling himself on his older brothers and sisters. And it is clear that the principal does not think much of them either. Then the principal notes how Ryan must have picked up some language because the child will say, "Jesus Christ, why do I have to do this stuff?" We realize that it is not just a matter of having picked up some language. A whole attitude is revealed in Ryan's "Jesus Christ . . ." So what we see in the first paragraph of the principal's story is that a principal, in the daily routine of things, is called upon (or feels called upon) to make appraisive judgements about the nature of childlike

behaviour, diagnostic judgements with respect to the nature of a child's way of being and what constitutes normal childlike conduct.

This seems to be the fundamental question that underlies much of the principal's talk. It forms a kind of unspoken horizon within which the story unfolds. In a way the principal is saying that to be a principal is to ask the question of the nature of children. Not in any elusive, theoretical way, but more mundanely in matter-of-fact terms he asks, what is a child? What belongs to a child? He asks this question not--in the first instance at least--as it relates to all children, but as it relates to this particular child. In this case, Ryan, the little guy, ". . .who is repeating grade one again this year." It is this question that gives sense and intelligibility to the telling of the story.

But at the same time as he raises the question the principal also responds to it. That is, he provides us with a possible answer to the question of what makes a child a child. We "see" his answer in the way that he calls Ryan a "very spoiled" child. This is not an altogether unexpected answer. We can imagine what a child like this could be like. And yet what does it mean to name a child spoiled? Aren't we passing a judgement on a child when we do this? Indeed we are. And yet if we are attentive to the principal's words this, he tells us, is precisely what a principal must do to be a principal. To be a principal is to constantly appraise the childlike-ness of children. To see and to judge, as it were, the child in the child. And for this principal this child is spoiled.

But what does it mean to say spoiled? What kind of "diagnosis" is at work here? Don't we say "spoiled" when we mean that a child has had things too easy, has always had his own way, has learned to expect a return on life out of proportion to the effort invested? Isn't a spoiled child one who has never known challenge or the importance of striving? Someone who has never encountered adversity? Could this be the situation of this child? Maybe it

is. We don't really know. All we have are the principal's words. But something troubles us. If an educator sees a child and sees something that troubles him isn't he expected to do more than pass a judgement on that child? Isn't he expected to see his judgement as a call to action, as a formulation of the child's need by means of which the educator tries to provide that which is lacking in the child. A spoiled child, after all, needs us as much as every other child. Maybe more so. So what could be the pedagogic meaning of this situation? One possibility might be for the principal to see that what is needful is for this child to confront difficulty, to come face to face with situations that require from Ryan a show of effort. Perhaps, too, the child needs to experience disappointment and denial. The principal might say, "What I really need to do is find (or create) situations that require from Ryan a certain toughness, a certain show of effort. This is my task, my challenge, as educator."

We want to keep reminding ourselves of the need to do a strong reading of the principal's story. In a certain sense we want to try to understand the situation better than the principal himself. We need to keep in mind that throughout the story the principal is implicitly telling us this is what it means to be a principal. His dealings with Ryan represent not just *any* course of action but a *preferred* course of action. It is as if the principal were saying to us, "Look, this is how, as principal, you handle the problem of a spoiled child. What you should do is . . ." It is in this sense that the principal raises what could be the central question of the story, namely: what is normal in a child? And for this principal failing to stay "on task" and using inappropriate language in the classroom places Ryan beyond the norm, outside what is to be considered "normal" in children.

What other types of administrative competencies are recommended to us in this story? In the third paragraph the principal tells us that in order to get a sense of who this child is we need to look into his biography, so that we can understand him better and help him

appropriately. And yet the language of "behaviour modification," "determining intelligence," "structuring programs" and so forth strikes us strangely. What kind of interest in children does this language reveal? Where is the child in such language? It is also interesting that the principal thinks that Ryan's "problem" can best be solved through a "program" of some kind. There seems to be a belief here that greater maturity for this child can be somehow organized into existence.

Part of the task of being principal is searching for what "works" with or for a particular child. The principal runs a series of intelligence tests on Ryan which show him to have average or slightly above average intelligence. So it appears as if the problem lies in the area of motivation. The problem is how to get Ryan turned on to learning.

Of course, this is much easier said than done. And for Ryan nothing seems to work. In desperation the principal takes Ryan into his office and confronts him with his immaturity. He accuses him of acting childishly and behaving like a two year old. Not unexpectedly Ryan resents this treatment especially in view of the fact that what he desperately seems to need is to be thought of as grown up. Although we cannot be totally sure, it seems as if the real problem with Ryan is that he sees his situation as a grade one student as something beneath him. So now we face a pedagogical question: how does one, as educator, deal with the problem of a precocious child while at the same time maintaining the priority of the pedagogic relation?

Again, we want to see the principal's story as a kind of recommendation. A precocious child has to be cut down to size. The principal is called upon (or feels called upon) to see that the child's mental and psychological outlook match chronological development. Certain attitudes and states-of-mind belong to six year olds, certain other attitudes to seven year olds, eight year olds and so forth. The principal seems to be implicitly telling us that

the effective principal is the one who knows not only what is appropriate for each level but who acts so as to ensure that behaviour -- within reasonable limits -- conforms to each level. Ryan's behaviour appears to the principal to fall outside the developmental norms for grade one children. Is this why the principal names Ryan an "unbelievable" child?

But let us look a little more deeply into this naming. What makes such a naming possible? A child's "believability" references the idea that a child's child-likeness is to be established in terms of certain norms or expectations (standards) for what is to be considered appropriate for each stage in development. Proper growth and development are represented by the progression through successive stages of ever increasing sophistication and complexity. This is as true in the area of cognitive development (Piaget) as it is in the area of moral reasoning (Kohlberg). In a Piagetian or Kohlbergian world we see the child not in his concrete individuality but rather *in terms of* a previously determined category or stage of human development. When the principal accuses Ryan of being "disruptive," calling him an "unbelievable" child for whom "nothing works," when he belittles Ryan calling him a two year old as part of the attempt to make him grow up, we have to wonder whether the principal is really seeing Ryan, or whether he sees Ryan merely as *an instance* of some tacitly held belief-system of what a child of this age should be like. Is this what it means to be an educator? In a way the principal is saying that it is. This is his version of what it means to be a principal, an educational administrator.

At issue here is the question of childhood itself. What is a child? Underlying the principal's actions in this story is a whole theory of childhood and child development. Moreover, it is a theory of social-emotional development that is quite capable of accounting for both normal and abnormal development. What this line of theorizing makes possible is the separation of healthy from un-healthy development. Balanced or normal (healthy) development is that which follows in more-or-less linear fashion each successive

developmental level of the various stage theorists and others. Such theorizing furnishes criteria against which the child can be sized-up, measured and parceled out to various remediating agencies of one kind or another. Our very perception of the child, indeed of childhood itself, is already schooled by the existence of developmental categories to which the child is, by his very nature, expected to conform.

But again we want to try to approach this situation in a strong way. What could that entail? A strong reading of this situation would want to try to grasp the constructed nature of Ryan's so-called "disruptive" or aberrant (unbelievable) behaviour. A strong reading would want to try to understand that this way of describing Ryan's behaviour is more an artifact of its own way of thinking and speaking than an immanent element of the behaviour itself. A strong reading would want to begin to see how Ryan's "unbelievability" is a socially constructed thesis without any foundation in the ontology of childhood. What we begin to see is that in refusing to ground itself ontologically, the principal's self-reflectiveness ultimately fails to represent for us a strong version of how one ought to speak pedagogically of this child. A strong version would want to make clear that quite apart from the situation itself, it is the principal's own reflection-on-the-situation that is an issue for us. That in accepting uncritically the socially prescribed thesis (concerning the childlikeness of children) the principal forecloses on the possibility of approaching Ryan pedagogically. A pedagogical approach always begins and takes its point of departure from the concrete situatedness of this or that particular child.

What notion of principaling is being recommended to us here? Should we see this as a strong approach to questions of educational administration? Of course, it is not so difficult to see how the principal could see his responsibility this way. On his side are many common-sense understandings and taken-for-granted notions concerning the place of schools in the lives of children, the task of teaching, the role of the principal in maintaining

discipline, and so on and so forth. But when the principal speaks this way do we hear him speak as an educator? Is this the voice of someone with a pedagogic interest in children?

For those of us in educational administration this raises an important question. What kind of interest ought a principal to have in children? In what relation does a principal stand to children? Let us say, provisionally at least, that from first to last a principal ought to be animated by a pedagogic interest in children. But this too begs the question. What does it mean to say that a principal should be animated by a pedagogic interest in children and young people? Fortunately or unfortunately this is a question which cannot be answered abstractly, outside the concrete situation in which an adult encounters a child. There are no universal formulations to be applied in such matters. Every situation is in a certain sense unique. This makes us, in one sense, constant beginners. All we can say in the present instance is that a pedagogic interest would make it impossible for a principal (or other pedagogically oriented adult) from ever belittling a child, calling him down, diminishing his stature, weakening or attempting to weaken his slowly emerging sense of self-hood. Whatever other interest might be at work here it could not be a pedagogic interest.

This is why it is ironic to hear the principal speak of his responsibility for certain "standards" when his own story of Ryan reveals a certain lack, a certain misunderstanding of what a more pedagogic standard would require of him. This is what a strong reading of this situation would want to make clear. And at the same time to see that a pedagogic standard is not simply one among many. It is not just that there are numerous standards from which we are free to pick and choose. A pedagogic versus an academic standard for example. A strong reading would wish to take a stand against any possible relativizing of such standards. It would want to assign pride of place to the pedagogic standard as that which comes before all other possible standards that could command a claim on us. As the standard against which all others must finally be measured. The standard of standards. An

educator would see this. Seeing this is what grants to someone the possibility of being an educator. We are in the presence of a dialectical relation here. There is nothing metaphysical or mysterious about this. It is a realization embedded in our ordinary, everyday experience of the world; knowledge grounded in experience itself. As such it stands *before* all logic. The realization that is at work here is not one that is amenable to proofs or deductions or rationalizations of one kind or another. It is a realization (knowledge) that is simply *there* before any manipulating or figuring or reckoning on our part. As such it can only be grasped, not constructed. By the same token it is knowledge which while it may be obscured for a while or perceived only dimly can never be permanently overshadowed.

Life-World Story Three: A Question of School

> In about forty minutes I have a parent coming in my office whose child was suspended along with another student -- though for the second student the case was totally different. This was two days ago when I dealt with a major disciplinary matter. In both cases the offence was the same -- the use of abusive language and challenging the authority of the teacher, in one case in the classroom and in the other case in the gym. So for me that was something I had to be concerned about, and it takes up a good chunk of my time.
>
> Junior High School Principal

In the case of the first student, we had an assembly last Tuesday morning to introduce the new principal. So students were expected to go down to the gym, homeroom by homeroom under the supervision of their teachers. Now on his way down there was one student who was chewing gum. Now chewing gum is a minor offence so far as the school is concerned. But we feel there are times when it could be allowed and not at other times, depending upon the circumstances. Anyway, in this case a student was chewing gum. I don't know whether he was blowing bubbles into other people's faces, but the teacher told

him to spit it out. Anyway he decided to defy the teacher and was not very co-operative and gave the teacher a hard time. He wouldn't obey the teacher and was reluctant to leave the gym. At that point the homeroom teacher stepped in and said to the boy: "O.K., go and spit your gum out," which he did. When the boy came back the homeroom teacher said: "O.K., now for the rest of the assembly you sit by my side," so he could keep a little closer supervision on him. Then the boy said: "Fuck off," you know, or something like that . . .

Now, in my value system this kind of abusive language has no place in school. It has no place in the upbringing of a child. I mean, I know kids use it on the streets; they use it amongst themselves. It is one of the ways kids in junior and senior high schools want to prove themselves to their peers, and it becomes one of the ways by which they become accepted. I know this as an educator having worked with these kids. But all that said, still I cannot control what goes on among the peer relationships. But when it comes to school, well that's a formal place and such language cannot be tolerated. It's demeaning from my value system. Then when kids use that kind of language in the presence of a teacher it shows a lack of respect for that teacher and that teacher's authority. And the kids know that we are consistent in our treatment of that kind of abusive language. In my books the use of abusive language is a major offence. So at that point I told the guy that he's suspended for three days.

Of course,he said that he didn't say "fuck off" to the teacher, he just said it in frustration. That may be so -- I'm willing to accept that. But on the other hand any expression of his frustration in the presence of teachers and other students -- in other words in a public place -- is not acceptable.

To me it is important to make a distinction between a public behaviour and a private behaviour. We have even said that such language is not acceptable even among the peer group within the school confines. Suppose a teacher is passing by and he heard a student conversing with his peers and such language is used, we would still punish them. You see, within the confines of the school in any relationship be it student-teacher, student-student, whether in the hallways or classrooms or anywhere in or around the school, such language cannot be used. Because I'm sure parents do that at home -- most parents do -- because they attach a certain sanctity to the home. Likewise the school has a certain decorum. It is a learning place where you learn the right things and we discourage learning wrong things.

If the school is to be a real place of learning then it must command respect, just like churches command respect. You go into a church and right away it commands respect. When you go into a home -- and I talk about homes as we traditionally know them -- it commands a certain respect. And even a business place. Let's say you walk into a banker's office, it commands a certain respect and decorum and standards of behaviour. And I put schools in the same category. In other words it is a place whose decorum is defined in terms of certain standards that are expected. And as a principal I am responsible for creating this kind of environment -- this decorum. I'm in charge of that.

A Question of Respect: An Interrupted Reading

In about forty minutes I have a parent coming in whose child was suspended along with another student -- though for the second student the case was totally different. This was two days ago when I dealt with a major disciplinary matter. **[The problem is regarded as a breach of school discipline.]** In both cases the offence was the same -- the use of abusive language and challenging the authority of the teacher, in one case in the

classroom and in the other case in the gym. So for me that was something I had to be concerned about, and it takes up a good chunk of my time. **[The principal sees a need to stand up for the authority of the teacher.]**

In the case of the first student, we had an assembly last Tuesday morning to introduce the new principal. So students were expected to go down to the gym, homeroom by homeroom under the supervision of their teachers. **[Principal enters into a story illustrative of his rule as disciplinarian.]** Now on his way down there was one student who was chewing gum. Now chewing gum is a minor offence so far as the school is concerned. But we feel there are times when it could be allowed and not at other times, depending upon the circumstances. **[The gum rule is introduced. Applying rules to concrete situations is always tricky.]** Anyway, in this case a student was chewing gum. I don't know whether he was blowing bubbles into other people's faces -- **[The principal assumes it was not just chewing gum.]** -- but the teacher told him to spit it out. **[The teacher applies the rule.]** Anyway he decided to defy the teacher and was not very co-operative and gave the teacher a hard time. **[The student tests the flexibility of the rule.]** He wouldn't obey the teacher and was reluctant to leave the gym. **[The principal sees the problem as one of obedience.]** At that point the homeroom teacher stepped in and said to the boy: "O.K., go and spit your gum out," which he did. When the boy came back the homeroom teacher said: "O.K., now for the rest of the assembly you sit by my side," so he could keep a little closer supervision on him. Then the boy said: "Fuck off," you know, or something like that . . .

Now, in my value system this kind of abusive language has no place in school. It has no place in the upbringing of a child. **[The principal expresses a view of school and of pedagogy.]** I mean, I know kids use it on the streets; they use it amongst themselves. It is one of the ways kids in junior and senior high schools want to prove themselves to

their peers, and it becomes one of the ways by which they become accepted. **[The principal acknowledges that language has social value.]** I know this as an educator having worked with these kids. But all that said, still I cannot control what goes on among the peer relationships. But when it comes to school, well that's a formal place and such language cannot be tolerated. It's demeaning from my value system. **[Principal expresses a view of schools and what the idea of school stands for.]** Then when kids use that kind of language in the presence of a teacher it shows a lack of respect for that teacher and that teacher's authority. **[Principal recognizes that authority can be weakened.]** And the kids know that we are consistent in our treatment of that kind of abusive language. In my books the use of abusive language is a major offence. So at that point I told the guy that he's suspended for three days. **[The principal aims to be strong in standing up for the authority of the teacher.]**

Of course,he said that he didn't say "fuck off" to the teacher, he just said it in frustration. **[The student's point of view is noted . . .]** That may be so -- I'm willing to accept that. But on the other hand any expression of his frustration in the presence of teachers and other students -- in other words in a public place -- is not acceptable. **[. . . but not considered relevant.]**

To me it is important to make a distinction between a public behaviour and a private behaviour. We have even said that such language is not acceptable even among the peer group within the school confines. Suppose a teacher is passing by and he heard a student conversing with his peers and such language is used, we would still punish them. **[Principal expresses a view of language. Language can be guaged outside a concern for its referent.]** You see, within the confines of the school in any relationship be it student-teacher, student-student, whether in the hallways or classrooms or anywhere in or around the school, such language cannot be used. Because I'm sure

parents do that at home -- most parents do -- because they attach a certain sanctity to the home. **[Home as a special place.]** Likewise the school has a certain decorum. **[School as a special place.]** It is a learning place where you learn the right things and we discourage learning wrong things. **[Principal expresses a view of school: school as a place of moral learning.]**

If the school is to be a real place of learning then it must command respect, just like churches command respect. **[The principal likens a school to a place with spiritual value.]** You go into a church and right away it commands respect. **[Church as an icon of religious values.]** When you go into a home -- and I talk about homes as we traditionally know them -- it commands a certain respect. **[Home as an icon of familial values.]** And even a business place. Let's say you walk into a banker's office, it commands a certain respect and decorum and standards of behaviour. **[Bank as an icon of commercial values.]** And I put schools in the same category. **[The principal aims to be strong in his orientation to the notion of school. Schools are special places.]** In other words it is a place whose decorum is defined in terms of certain standards that are expected. And as a principal I am responsible for creating this kind of environment -- this decorum. I'm in charge of that. **[The principal expresses his view of principaling To be a principal is to orient decisively to certain scholarly standards. School as a scholarly place.]**

A Question of Respect: A Hermeneutic Reading

In this story we find ourselves in the presence of an everyday school situation. A rebellious teenager decides to break the rule which forbids chewing gum in school. He becomes verbally abusive and insulting when he is told to throw out his gum. What began

as a straightforward case of rule-breaking has turned into something much more serious. For the principal it has become a major disciplinary matter that can no longer be ignored. Something important is at stake here. The principal seems to feel that decisive action is called for. So the student is taken to the principal's office and given a three day suspension. It seems as if the problem can now be considered solved.

In a nutshell this is what the principal seems to be recommending to us, that to be a principal means being ready and willing to stand guard over the moral tone of the school. If a school is to be truly a school only certain things should occur. Swearing at teachers and chewing gum in public in violation of the rules are ruled out as an affront to whatever it is that makes a school truly a school. What the principal seems to be saying is that to be an educational administrator requires first of all a grasp of what it is schools stand for, not in any technical sense, but rather in the way that we would wish to ask why we should have schools in the first place. And secondly, as the principal makes plain, it requires the taking of a stand on behalf of, or in the service of, this understanding. The principal shows us that there is a kind of protective quality to the work of educational administration. The principal is called upon to defend what it is that makes a school a special and distinctive kind of place. The task is now that of excluding all those activities that cannot be collected under the idea of school. A certain kind of understanding is required.

But let us return to the incident in the gym. The situation is in many ways classic. A restless adolescent decides to test the limits of the gum rule in full view of teachers and other students. We can well imagine the flagrant, even ostentatious way in which this could have been done. A chance for glory perhaps? In the eyes of the principal this seems to be a clear-cut case of insubordination that cannot be tolerated. It was, he says, "a major disciplinary matter" that could not be ignored. And yet at the same time do not educators need to ask about the conditions under which growth in self-awareness can be achieved?

The question for educators is: how can responsible adulthood become a real possibility for those children with whom and for whom we stand in a pedagogic relation?

As educators we realize that growing up and becoming mature is never the result of the passive accommodation of the self to the contours of an already existing world. Where such accommodation occurs, it leads rather to an abbreviated sense of self, a truncated consciousness which never becomes aware of one's possibilities for becoming. Real growth exists in a reciprocal, or better, a dialectical encounter with the world in which limits and boundaries are seen not as immutably fixed, points-of-reference to which one must somehow accommodate oneself, but rather as that which must constantly be striven against. It is only through such striving, such testing-of-limits that one becomes, in a sense, fully human. Paradoxically, it is in our encounter with limits that we become aware of the limited yet at the same time limitless-ness of the world. The human project of growing up requires by its very nature a constant encounter with limits, a constant pushing or testing of limits as part of the vocation of becoming truly human. The existence of limits, of limitation, can in this sense be seen as pedagogically necessary--part of the stuff of which pedagogy is made. The absence of limits means the absence of striving. A truly unlimited world would preclude the very possibility of pedagogy. That is why those who would advocate total freedom for children have already forgotten that it is only in our experience of limitation that full humanization can become a possibility for us.

How does this relate to the situation in the gym? It seems that for this principal it is the rule that counts. It is the rule as the concrete expression of limitation to which one must orient. But already what is missing here is the sense that the rule (experienced as limitation) is already something essential to growth. A recognition that education in a deeper sense requires the continual questioning, probing, testing of limit as a condition of its own existence. As a process of self-formation, education begins and takes its point of departure

in the dialectical interplay of self and world. Only when we encounter world as world, as that which offers its own resistances do we ourselves become aware of the boundaries and thus possibilities of our own existence. We ex-ist.

This is the pedagogic significance of rules. It is not--as some of the more radical critics of education suggest--that children would be better off without them; that all we need to do is throw out the rules and children would be freed to grow unfettered and untrammelled. But it is to say that the rules themselves are not the things. This is what a strong reading of this event would want to make clear. That for an educator more is involved here than just the repairing of a broken rule. To see the situation in such terms is already to have overlooked the antinomous character of education. Nothing needs to be "repaired" because in a sense nothing has been "broken". Breaking and repairing are not ; that have little to do with a pedagogic sense of the relation we stand in to children

We can now pose the question as to whether the principal understands the situation in such terms. Although there is some evidence in the story that the principal understands that the swearing was the result of the boy's frustration he is not ready to permit such understanding to interfere with his task of maintaining acceptable behaviour in school. For this principal any expression of frustration in the presence of teachers and other students is simply not acceptable and must be punished.

Is it then a question of conventionality, of ensuring that students understand and abide by socially approved standards of behaviour? In a way it is and in a way it is more than that. Teachers, after all, are people "in authority" and the use of such language in or around the presence of a teacher could be seen to constitute an erosion of such authority. To be effective authority is often thought of as something that needs to be guarded and protected. Because it is vulnerable it must be shielded from attacks and encroachments of various

kinds. Only when it has been "secured" can it do its work and perform its effects. That is why the principal tells us that in his books the use of abusive language is a "major offence. . . that cannot be tolerated."

But what is it precisely that such language abuses? For the principal it seems to be a threefold abuse. Such language abuses not only the teacher and the teacher's authority but also (and more importantly) the overall tone or pedagogic atmosphere of the school. It is this (last) abuse that constitutes, for this principal, the heart of the problem. "The school has a certain decorum" says the principal, "it is a learning place where you learn the right things and we discourage learning the wrong things."

It is here that the principal begins to come to grips with the question concerning the nature of school. He raises a crucial question. He asks: what does school name? What makes a school uniquely and identifiably a school? Here (and in the lines that follow) we encounter a concern for whatness. The principal expresses a concern for what makes a school a *school* and not some alternate form of social organization. It is a concern for difference. At the same time the principal is implicitly recommending that this is what educational administrators must do. To be a principal, in other words, is to raise the question concerning the special meaning of school. It is to ask ongoingly about the special nature of school as that to which one must orient as principal.

To be a principal then, is to orient oneself to questions of whatness. And when this principal addresses the question of the meaning of school he formulates and expresses certain feelings and dispositions. He speaks of a particular kind of tone or atmosphere that a school (to be a school) must possess. In other words, he makes topical for us his version of what a school is, and, at the same time, his version of what (commensurately) a principal must be.

In the mind of this principal there exists an indissoluble reciprocity between the notion of principal and the idea of school. A reciprocity born not of any kind of theoretical formulation but of life (experience) itself. To be a principal, in other words, is to havea special sense of the essence or particularity (the what-ness) of schools. And for this principal the question of what-ness is bound up not solely with the idea of school as a learning place, but more importantly with the idea of school as a learning place "where you learn the right things and we discourage learning wrong things." In short with the idea of school as morally oriented. As educators we sense here that the principal has grasped something exceedingly important about the nature of schools and the task of administering them.

We see here the principal reaching toward a more profound and basic notion of school. His talk is animated neither by considerations of a technical nature nor by managerial preoccupations of one kind or another, but by a more foundational attempt to come to grips with what it is that makes a school truly a school. But the question is difficult. We are on slippery ground here. It is not easy to grasp what constitutes the essence of school. Yet what the principal seems to be saying is that what makes a school truly a school is the presence of a certain atmosphere or ethos which commands by its very presence a certain attitude or state-of-mind. A certain discipline perhaps? A discipline by which one orients to the value of learning as that which is worth orienting to. It is a discipline which, at the same time as it opens one to the value of learning, also sponsors an understanding of the conditions learning imposes. For the principal this ethos or atmosphere is inseparable (we might say indistinguishable), from the idea of school. It is what a school must have for it to be truly school. In a sense, it is what school names. To be a principal is not only to recognize that this is so, but to act so as to bring into being (incarnate) this atmosphere, this collective consciousness.

And yet when the principal begins to reflect on his role as principal he thinks largely in terms of his responsibility for maintaining or producing a certain kind of learning environment within the school. "And as principal I am responsible for creating this environment, this decorum. I am in charge of that." For the principal this "decorum" is necessary if the school is to be "a real place of learning." And although we do not know for sure, it sounds as if this environment is roughly equivalent to abiding by certain rules and regulations, (not chewing gum; not using abusive language anywhere in the school), and to maintaining, amongst other things, certain status differentials between students and teachers: "When kids use that kind of language in the presence of a teacher it shows lack of respect for that teacher and that teacher's authority." Maintaining an "environment" of this kind is what the principal says being a responsible administrator is all about.

And yet a somewhat troubled notion of school emerges in these lines. We might make a distinction here between orienting to what we might regard as a pedagogic standard and orienting to that which the standard produces. And for this principal what the standard produces seems to be a conventionalized sense of schools as places that exude a certain scholarly tone, insist on the importance of status differentials, refuse to allow children to chew gum, use bad language and so on and so forth. As places, in short, that possess what the principal calls a certain "decorum." Of course, we must be clear that what is at issue here is not whether such features are bad or wrong or somehow inappropriate--this is not the question--but whether they *in themselves* constitute the reality of the way we are to speak of schools and the task of administering them.

But let us return to the situation in the gym. The principal tells us a grade nine boy is guilty of using abusive language in the presence of teachers and other students. Of course, we cannot be pleased this has occurred. But what is it precisely that such language abuses? For the principal it seems to be a threefold abuse. Such language abuses not only the

teacher and the teacher's authority, but more importantly it abuses the overall tone and decorum of the school. For the principal such language cannot be tolerated because it strikes at the heart of the very idea of school as a special place with its own ethos and way-of-being. What such language shows is a disrespect for what it is school stands for: ". . . a place where you learn right things."

This is not an uncommon view of schools. We can see how the principal might understand schools in this way. And yet something is still pedagogically troublesome. As educators we need to remind ourselves of the importance of doing a strong reading of the situation. Doing a strong reading is not a question of being ultra-critical or pedantic. The attempt is not to find fault when we all know how difficult it is to act appropriately in all circumstances. Principals are human too. But it is a question of adopting a committed stance to questions of educational administration and of searching for some animating principle that could serve as a common orientation to the everyday events and incidents that confront us as educators.

What would a strong reading of this situation entail? In my view it would involve the recognition that in place of a pedagogic orientation what we see the principal orient to is a certain image or appearance of pedagogy rather than pedagogy itself. A kind of pedagogic facade. We see this in the way that the principal regards the student's swearing as "a major disciplinary matter" and as something that "challenged" the authority of the teacher. And yet from a pedagogic perspective we would want to see this situation less as something that threatens the teacher's authority, than as something that is constitutive of it. In a sense as the raw material of which pedagogy is made. It is what enables a pedagogue to be a ped-agogue. A pedagogically sensitive teacher is less likely to say, "You cannot use such language in my presence--it is insulting and demeaning to me and erodes my authority as a teacher," as much as he or she is likely to realize that as a developing teenager it can be a

very belittling experience to be treated as a child and yet put down in full view of one's friends. A tactful and understanding adult realizes the child's need to save face in public, and that the act of swearing at a teacher could well be an unreflective response to such a need. As educator, he or she sees the task as trying to save the situation in such a way that growth can occur and the pedagogic relation preserved.

We need to ask what is exemplified by the principal's story? What administrative practice is being recommended here? In a sense what this principal appears to be saying is that to be an educational administrator is to orient not to any kind of pedagogic standard, but rather to that which stands in place of a pedagogic standard, namely to a set of rules: do's and don'ts. Or as the principal prefers to call it, a certain decorum. But while the principal seems to recognize that schools embody (or should embody) certain values (schools stand for some-thing) there is a question here of what these values might be. We might say that while the principal grasps the iconic character of schools that for which the icon stands as icon slips through his fingers. What remains is a mere semblance (outer casing) of the thing itself. Yet the power of any icon derives not from the icon itself, (for in itself it is no-thing), but from the animating idea (spirit, vision) which in-forms it and from which the icon draws its strength, its shape, its power.

The point for us as educators is that without a grasp, however tentative, of this in-forming vision behaviour becomes ritualistic. Behaviour becomes ritualistic insofar as it forgets or fails to remember that behind the icon lie deep human needs that give form and shape and justification to the icon in the first place. And with this forgetfulness comes the danger that the icon may come to rule the vision. Then the vision can exist only in an attenuated (which is to say distorted) form. In an age consumed by various forms or styles of technicist thinking it seems we live perpetually in the shadow of this danger.

But the vision needs help. It needs ministering. Left to its own devices it cannot do so well. To work its effects it needs a certain space free from encroachments of one kind or another. In a sense this is what the idea of school provides--a space within which the informing (pedagogic) vision can be ministered to. This is the principal's charge. It is what in a deep sense he is charged with. Pedagogy is not something that stands at our command to be put to use whenever the occasion serves. It is not use-full in the same sense that we might find a tool or implement useful. Pedagogy does not serve our purposes so much as we serve (minister to) it. In a curious reversal, pedagogy turns the tables and makes of us the instruments of its accomplishment. This is why we need to see a pedagogic orientation less as something we are "in charge of" than as something that charges (empowers) us.

How much of this does the principal see? Or does his preoccupation with the idea of school as a "formal place" where certain things "cannot be tolerated" overwhelm a more primal pedagogic sense of schools as places that exist to allow children to come to terms with themselves and the world around them? This is not to say that certain rules may not be required or that a certain tone or decorum may not be warranted. But it is to say that neither the rules nor the decorum are the things themselves. This is not what schools ultimately stand for.

This is what a strong reading of this situation would want to make clear. It would wish to do so not from any desire to be needlessly cynical or nihilistic in any way, but rather from a desire to strengthen our grasp of what it means to be a principal. This, after all, is the primary and basic question. It comes before all those other, more ephemeral questions which ask, for example, about the role of the principal or the functions of the principalship. And yet it is a question which is seldom asked in any thoughtful or self-reflective way. Is this because we feel we know the answer? Or is it perhaps because we feel the question

will yield little in the way of useful knowledge? Either way it remains neglected and unasked.

And yet in another way the question is inescapable. I am thinking here not so much in terms of various kinds of conceptualizations that have been developed, but rather about the way in which the question, "what does it mean to be a principal?" is ongoingly answered by principals in their everyday encounters with students, parents, teachers and others. In a much less self-conscious way, principals answer the question every day in the way that they deal with troublesome students, insistent parents and anxious teachers for example. Or with the "problem" of gum-chewing, or the "problem" of abusive language for instance. Of course, such answers are always provisional. By their very nature they can never exhaust the totality of what it means to be a principal. And yet being a principal does not mean just anything. This is precisely the point of this strong reading, to try to work out in relation to a concrete situation of practice just what it does mean to be a school principal. I would call this activity decisive in the way that it yields the practical wisdom needed to act competently in everyday practical situations. And yet strangely, it is the most neglected and forgotten activity of all.

Life- World Story Four: A Question of Burn-Out

> My major problem at the moment is a grade five teacher on staff who has reached a burnout stage. This is a teacher who has been totally competent for over ten years. But recently a combination of children in the classroom and her own personal space, well she started experiencing some problems this year. I've worked with her through the kids, and I've worked with her by going into the classroom and assisting in the classroom and tried to be of some service there. I've worked giving her some extra time. I've taken her children -- I did a magic circle session with the class just to remind them about observing silence when someone is speaking; giving a person your attention when they speak; speaking only once; raising your hand and being recognized in some way before speaking out -- these are the kinds of things the children were doing or rather not doing. And it's not like the teacher didn't have classroom control, but somehow just everything went.
>
> Elementary School Principal

Anyway she reached a point where she couldn't hack it any more. Everything piled up in her own sphere. She ended up questioning her own ability and so on. She went off on a sick leave and saw a doctor and he told her she was burned out. I continued to keep in touch with her by phone and she had a period of about three weeks off work. In the interim I had another substitute who was a very good teacher who was in working with the children and it was tough on her. Anyway she mustered it out and did a creditable job but you could see that she wasn't totally satisfied -- she was teaching because she likes to teach, she doesn't need the money. Then the regular teacher came back and things seemed to be okay for a while. Then I observed her physical appearance and noticed that she was just a little bit more withdrawn, a little bit more inward. You could see how her body wasn't at attention, let's put it that way. She was inward--her shoulders were forward and you could see the worried look on her face. I talked to her about it and I said: "You don't look well--you really don't look well" and a week ago she phoned in sick.

But what happened the day before was that a couple of children weren't getting their work done. One was always forgetting his work, and on this occasion she got kind of frustrated with this one boy who usually brings his lunch and she asked him if he was here with his

lunch and he said that he had his lunch with him. Anyway she told him to go home at lunch time and bring back his work. At this school we have a policy that we contact the parents before any child leaves the school whatsoever, and as a veteran teacher she should know that. But she forgot or conveniently forgot. Because of the situation she was more uptight than she normally would have been. Anyway she sent him home. In the afternoon he didn't show up, and we couldn't contact him at home and neither could we contact the mother, and the child still didn't show up. So the teacher was quite worried about this and knew she had erred in her judgement and it probably compounded things. I talked with her after school, I said: "You know you shouldn't have done that, you really shouldn't have done that." And although I didn't think of it at the time, that might just have been the last straw . . .

Anyway it is important for me not to work from a threatening premise even on something as serious as this. I always prefer to work in conjunction with the teacher, and she didn't have any fear of me or of administration or anything like that. But she was concerned she had done something wrong and that something might have happened to the child and that was her biggest worry. So I said: "I'll keep trying from here. You go home and keep phoning from home and when you get some action please phone me at home." And she did. When she phoned me that night I said: "That's great--all's well that ends well." I said to her: "The thing you have to realize is that you're not the only person who's made that mistake." I didn't want her to feel insecure about her job--at least that's what she was communicating to me--and I didn't want her to feel any more down. I said that its happened in our school several other times. Its happened to just about every teacher at one time or another and ninety-nine times out of a hundred nothing happens--the kid scoots home and brings back the book. However, she didn't come in the next day and in retrospect I thought that experience might have had something to do with it. But in talking

to her subsequently it was just one more thing. She lost confidence in herself as a teacher. And it wasn't an overnight thing. It's just been building since the beginning of the year. Basically, it's one of those melds of kids and situations that doesn't come up all the time. She's had two years of a lot of personal problems, and she's a teacher who doesn't stand back. She's involved with her kids, and that costs, that really costs--that extra personal care that she's been giving.

Without going into too many specifics she's been trying to help a girl who has been sexually assaulted by her father. The teacher has been working with the ups and downs of that child, that child's mother, that child's aunt for over six months now. At the beginning the teacher came to see me and we looked at some social agencies that could help the family. But what is the teacher to do when the child comes up to her and says: "I've been dreaming again last night"? Or as this little girl said to her: "My uncle is going to come over and stay with us for a while." It's pretty hard for the teacher who sees that child every day to just shrug it off. The teacher doesn't say: "Well, forget it and talk to the social worker I arranged for you." You just can't. You have to open yourself up and try and help that child and that's what the teacher did. So there's all those kinds of things that she's had on her back besides regular teaching and it has cost her. It has really cost her.

And like I say, she is a very good teacher, perhaps too good in many ways--took too much to heart. But I don't know who in that situation wouldn't have done the same. And she was also a bit of a perfectionist and set very high standards and always expected good quality work from her children of whom about one-third just don't have the ability or the background to achieve that. So we worked at different things. I observed her and pointed out that perhaps she was being just a little bit too negative. She would take away points from the children--like she would dwell on the negative aspect of things. So we went to a point system. The kids never got any points deducted but they'd gain points for being and

sitting quietly; being helpful to a classmate; not talking out of turn, etc. etc.. And as a matter of fact I won't take the credit for this idea either. That was an idea I stole from elsewhere. I have no qualms about beg, borrow or stealing ideas from wherever. . .

I was talking to her last night and she was feeling pretty good--but when she's down, she's really down. She'd go to an in-service, she was telling me, and she'd look around and see all these teachers and in her mind--and I can put myself in her place--when a person loses faith and confidence in themselves, she'd look around and say to herself: "Gee, look at all these good teachers and then there's me having all this trouble." She'd never see that other teachers had trouble, and we all do from time to time.

I know it might sound funny but the last thing I told her was: "Remember Linda, we love you, you know. We care for you. To hell with the classroom--these kids will survive, but right now you are the most important thing." In my job I know I have a responsibility to those children, but I feel I also have a very big responsibility for our staff, and Linda is an integral part of that and I really feel a caring that she gets back as a whole person again--and she's not that far away from it, that's the thing. But she will need help. I have a very good liaison with the doctor she's under. He's been in contact with me so I feel very comfortable with the whole thing. The doctor has been very open, and as I say we all try and work together -- the husband as well. I don't know what it is--maybe it's my countenance or my voice, but I find I have quite a lot of that 'father- confessor' role over the years. I've often wondered if I invite it--though I haven't been so much a 'father-confessor' to Linda as I have to other staff in the past. People come to me with personal problems--problems from outside of school, these kinds of things.

A Question of Burn-out: An Interrupted Reading

My major problem at the moment is a grade three teacher on staff who has reached a burnout stage. **[The principal renders his diagnosis. He recognizes the teacher as someone who is burned out.]** This is a teacher who has been totally competent for over ten years. But recently a combination of children in the classroom and her own personal space, well she started experiencing some problems this year. **[Being a principal means knowing one's teachers. Being able to see the problem in light of the whole person.]** I've worked with her through the kids, and I've worked with her by going into the classroom and assisting in the classroom and tried to be of some service there. I've worked giving her some extra time. I've taken her children--I did a magic circle session with the class just to remind them about observing silence when someone is speaking; giving a person your attention when they speak; speaking only once; raising your hand and being recognized in some way before speaking out--these are the kinds of things the children were doing or rather not doing. **[The principal speaks of his work as principal. The principal stands in a double relation--to the children and to the teachers.]** And it's not like the teacher didn't have classroom control, but somehow just everything went. **[The principal expresses a view of teaching here--somehow there was nothing left of teaching.]**

Anyway she reached a point where she couldn't hack it any more. Everything piled up in her own sphere. She ended up questioning her own ability and so on. **[The teacher began to question her teaching.]** She went off on a sick leave and saw a doctor and he told her she was burned out. **[Questioning one's practice is linked to burn-out.]** I continued to keep in touch with her by phone and she had a period of about three weeks off work. In the interim I had another substitute who was a very good teacher who was in working with the children and it was tough on her. Anyway she mustered it out and

did a creditable job but you could see that she wasn't totally satisfied --she was teaching because she likes to teach, she doesn't need the money. Then the regular teacher came back and things seemed to be okay for a while. Then I observed her physical appearance and noticed that she was just a little bit more withdrawn, a little bit more inward. You could see how her body wasn't at attention , let's put it that way. She was inward--her shoulders were forward and you could see the worried look on her face. **[The principal sees the signs that tell of a teacher who is suffering from burn-out.]** I talked to her about it and I said: "You don't look well--you really don't look well" and a week ago she phoned in sick. **[The principal confronts the teacher with his reading of the situation.]**

But what happened the day before was that a couple of children weren't getting their work done. **[Principal begins to narrate an incident illustrating the teacher's problems as a teacher.]** One was always forgetting his work, and on this occasion she got kind of frustrated with this one boy who usually brings his lunch and she asked him if he was here with his lunch and he said that he had his lunch with him. Anyway she told him to go home at lunch time and bring back his work. At this school we have a policy that we contact the parents before any child leaves the school whatsoever, and as a veteran teacher she should know that. But she forgot or conveniently forgot. Because of the situation she was more uptight than she normally would have been. **[The principal points out that the teacher's lapse is related to the fact that she was more "uptight" than usual. To be a principal is to be ongoingly involved in rendering value judgements of one kind or another.]** Anyway she sent him home. In the afternoon he didn't show up, and we couldn't contact him at home and neither could we contact the mother, and the child still didn't show up. So the teacher was quite worried about this and knew she had erred in her judgement and it probably

compounded things. I talked with her after school, I said: "You know you shouldn't have done that, you really shouldn't have done that." **[The principal censures the teacher for her violation of school policy.]** And although I didn't think of it at the time, that might just have been the last straw . . . **[The principal senses his lack of tactfulness in this situation. Given the chance he would probably handle it differently next time.]**

Anyway it is important for me not to work from a threatening premise even on something as serious as this. I always prefer to work in conjunction with the teacher, and she didn't have any fear of me or of administration or anything like that. **[The principal expresses a view of the relation between principal and teacher.]** But she was concerned she had done something wrong and that something might have happened to the child, and that was her biggest worry. So I said: "I'll keep trying from here. You go home and keep phoning from home and when you get some action please phone me at home." And she did. When she phoned me that night I said: "That's great--all's well that ends well." I said to her: "The thing you have to realize is that you're not the only person who's made that mistake." **[The principal expresses a view of pedagogy here. The teacher's mistake was a pedagogical error.]** I didn't want her to feel insecure about her job--at least that's what she was communicating to me--and I didn't want her to feel any more down. I said that it's happened in our school several other times. It's happened to just about every teacher at one time or another and ninety-nine times out of a hundred nothing happens--the kid scoots home and brings back the book. **[The principal attempts to lessen the teacher's sense of failure by pointing out that this is a common mistake amongst teachers.]** However, she didn't come in the next day and in retrospect I thought that experience had something to do with it. But in talking to her subsequently it was just one more thing. She lost confidence in herself as a

teacher. And it wasn't an overnight thing. It's just been building since the beginning of the year. **[The teacher lost confidence in her own practice.]**

Basically it's one of those melds of kids and situations that doesn't come up all the time. She's had two years of a lot of personal problems, and she's a teacher who doesn't stand back. She's involved with her kids, and that costs, that really costs--that extra personal care that she's been giving. **[The principal expresses a sense of how it is for this teacher. He has knowledge of how the teacher is experiencing her personal space as a teacher.]**

Without going into too many specifics she's been trying to help a girl who has been sexually assaulted by her father. The teacher has been working with the ups and downs of that child, that child's mother, that child's aunt for over six months now. At the beginning the teacher came to see me and we looked at some social agencies that could help the family. But what is the teacher to do when the child comes up to her and says: "I've been dreaming again last night"? Or as this little girl said to her: "My uncle is going to come over and stay with us for a while." It's pretty hard for the teacher who sees that child every day to just shrug it off. The teacher doesn't say: "Well, forget it and talk to the social worker I arranged for you." You just can't. You have to open yourself up and try and help that child and that's what the teacher did. So there's all those kinds of things that she's had on her back besides regular teaching and it has cost her. It has really cost her. **[The principal expresses a strong sense of pedagogy in this paragraph. He sees that teaching is always more than a techne. A pedagogically sensitive teacher cannot ignore the deep needs of a child.]**

And like I say, she is a very good teacher, perhaps too good in many ways--took too much to heart but I don't know who in that situation wouldn't have done the same. And she was

also a bit of a perfectionist and set very high standards and always expected good quality work from her children of whom about one-third just don't have the ability or the background to achieve that. So we worked at different things. I observed her and pointed out that perhaps she was being just a little bit too negative. **[The principal examines the situation and renders a judgement. The source of the problem is the teacher's style of teaching.]** She would take away points from the children--like she would dwell on the negative aspect of things. So we went to a point system. The kids never got any points deducted but they'd gain points for being and sitting quietly; being helpful to a classmate; not talking out of turn, etc. etc.. And as a matter of fact I won't take the credit for this idea either. That was an idea I stole from elsewhere. I have no qualms about beg, borrow or stealing ideas from wherever. . . **[The principal offers hints on how the teacher might improve her craft.]**

I was talking to her last night and she was feeling pretty good--but when she's down, she's really down. She'd go to an in-service, she was telling me, and she'd look around and see all these teachers and in her mind--and I can put myself in her place--when a person loses faith and confidence in themselves, she'd look around and say to herself: "Gee, look at all these good teachers and then there's me having all this trouble." She'd never see that other teachers had trouble, and we all do from time to time. **[The principal tries to situate the teacher's troubles in the context of other teachers who experience similar difficulties.]**

I know it might sound funny but the last thing I told her was: "Remember Linda, we love you, you know. We care for you. To hell with the classroom--these kids will survive, but right now you are the most important thing." **[The problem of burn-out is posed in terms of the kids on the one hand and the teacher on the other. In the interests of saving the teacher the principal is prepared to hold in abeyance**

his interest in children.] In my job I know I have a responsibility to those children, but I feel I also have a very big responsibility for our staff, and Linda is an integral part of that and I really feel a caring that she gets back as a whole person again--and she's not that far away from it, that's the thing. But she will need help. I have a very good liaison with the doctor she's under. He's been in contact with me so I feel very comfortable with the whole thing. The doctor has been very open, and as I say we all try and work together--the husband as well. **[A question of relationship emerges here. In a sense the principal responds to the question, how should a principal stand to a teacher?]** I don't know what it is--maybe it's my countenance or my voice, but I find I have quite a lot of that 'father- confessor' role over the years. I've often wondered if I invite it--though I haven't been so much a 'father-confessor' to Linda as I have to other staff in the past. People come to me with personal problems--problems from outside of school, these kinds of things. **[A confessional role is recommended here. The good principal is the one who can contextualize the doubts and fears that are the inevitable accompaniment of everyday living and teaching.]**

A Question of Burn-Out: A Hermeneutic Reading

This principal's story is about a teacher who has been "totally competent" for many years, but who has now started experiencing problems in the classroom. The principal describes it as a case of teacher burn-out. The teacher reached a point where she "just couldn't hack it anymore." The question for the principal now turns on how best to aid the teacher in her hour of need.

As with the other stories in this chapter, a strong reading of this anecdote requires that we see the principal's narrative as a kind of recommendation to educational administration.

The principal is recommending through his story how an educational administrator should stand in a certain working relation to a teacher. In a way he is saying this is how, as principal, you stand to a teacher. What is this principal's practical definition of such a relation? More specifically, how should a principal stand in relation to a teacher who is burned out?

First, we see that the principal describes how he stands in relation to the teacher by recounting how he stood in for her "by going into the classroom ... to be of some service." But a principal is not merely a substitute and that is evident when he says "I've worked with her through the kids." So in a way this administrator says that a good principal stands in a double relation: on the one hand to the children and on the other hand to their teacher. In this case the principal shows how he ministers to the children by working through (influencing) the teacher and how he ministers to the teacher by working through the children.

But once the medical doctor has officially diagnosed the teacher's problem by naming it "burnout," the principal appears to reinterpret his double relation to teacher and children. In a way he seems to disconnect the relation because the very thing that gives significance and meaning to the double relation is now in question: "somehow everything went." But what went? The principal takes note of a variety of factors: the teacher's physical appearance, factors having to do with "her own sphere," and her demeanor (worried look). The principal tells the teacher that she looks sick and the teacher takes a week off work.

It is ironic that the teacher finds herself in further trouble, not because she violated some pedagogic principle but because she ignores a school policy (rule) that is meant to safeguard pedagogic principles. The teacher made a student live up to his responsibility (a

pedagogic principle) but in so doing she placed the school in (albeit a remote possibility of) legal jeopardy. Something might have happened to the child on his way home during school time. And, of course, the principal and teacher are rightly worried about the child's absence during the afternoon. They are not only worried about the child but also about their own accountability.

The principal's reproachful blaming of the teacher (while exonerating himself on account of school policy) might, in his own words, have been "the last straw" that brought the teacher to her breakpoint. But in attending to the principal's story it is still difficult to perceive what exactly is involved in this teacher's burnout experience. What causes the breakdown? Is it something "heavy" like too much work, too much output of effort? Or in contrast, is it less a case of breakdown but rather that something essential to teaching has been lost? The principal cites the teacher's own words, saying that "she lost confidence in herself as a teacher." A person who has lost confidence can no longer believe or have faith in something that was of value. In a way the teacher can no longer believe in her own teaching. She now stands in a broken relation to teaching, or at least to the value that gives teaching its pedagogic significance.

The principal muses about the past love or care this teacher was able to give to children--a pedagogic care that, according to the principal, went beyond the call of duty ("that really costs--that extra personal care"). He contrasts that with her present negativity. And he recounts how he has traded her some of his own techniques, a point system for instance, to help her stand in a more positive relation to the children. Could this be the crucial issue of this story: the teacher has somehow burned out her relation to pedagogy and thus can no longer believe in herself as a teacher, and in the children's educability? But what does the principal do? He tries to help her by relating to her in a personal way, "we love you, you

know... we care for you" rather than by relating to her by trying to restore the value of children and pedagogy . "To hell with the classroom."

This is what a strong reading of the situation would want to make clear. Central to the work of principals is the task of reconnecting teaching to its pedagogic core. Much more is involved here than questions of technical competence. What this teacher seems to need above all else is a reason to believe in her work as a teacher. That somehow she can make a difference in the lives of the children in her care. Why else would we wish to become teachers in the first place?

There is no question here about the commitment and devotion of this teacher to her work as a teacher. What we are presented with in this story is a picture of a caring, compassionate teacher who is very much involved in the day-to-day lives of the children in her care. She is, in the principal's words, ". . . a teacher who doesn't stand back."

Is the problem that of a teacher who cares "too much," of standards set unrealistically high? A teacher with too much heart? It would not be hard to imagine how a teacher with high ideals and a strong sense of vocation could encounter frustration, disillusionment, even at times an overwhelming sense of pointlessness to her work as a teacher. And certainly there is evidence in the story that this is just the predicament of this teacher. So is there not an element of pragmatic wisdom in the principal's advice that the teacher adjust her expectations, her level of aspiration, to conform more closely to the "realities" of the situation? Teachers have no divine power. They cannot play God. In a way the principal is saying that to be a good principal is to help reconcile the aspiration and idealism of the teacher to the sober realities of the practical situation. Only so much can be accomplished. It is futile to expect more. Being a principal is knowing when the limits of possibility have been reached.

One possible interpretation is to see this principal standing to the teacher as the practical-man-of-affairs, someone who knows the world (including children) and what the world allows. He knows its limits and its capabilities. He understands its shortcomings. He is, in short, a realist. Someone with both feet planted firmly on the ground. He seems to see his task as that of articulating his version of the world to teachers who might otherwise aspire too highly. So there is a strong pragmatist strain to his work as principal as well as to his reflective analysis of this situation. It is not that he is opposed to what this teacher is trying to do, only that he thinks she is attempting too much, taking her work a shade too seriously. When the crunch comes and the teacher is finally overwhelmed by the enormity of the task that confronts her, there is a kind of retreat to managerialism on the part of the principal. He cites school policy and the fact that there has been a break in procedure. The teacher is reprimanded and made to feel guilty for sending the child home in breach of the rule. This is something she ought not to have done.

There is no doubt at all that in the principal's mind that the teacher has made a mistake--and it is administratively important for him that the teacher see it also as a mistake. When the chips are down he sides with the world. At his disposal are all the common sense, everyday notions of what it means to be a teacher. He offers helpful hints on classroom management techniques and a good deal of supportive rhetoric "Remember, Linda, we love you... ." But what he cannot do is what in a sense he is most called upon to do. He is unable to respond pedagogically. He responds not as educator, but rather as a manager of education. He does not side pedagogically with this teacher. His entire recollective account of this incident begins and takes its point of departure with the idea that the teacher is in error, that some kind of pedagogic lapse has occurred. But what is the mistake here? What lapse has occurred? From first to last the teacher has been inspired by a pedagogic interest in children. Although we do not have the full picture, it certainly seems from the

story provided by the principal that the teacher has been animated by a desire to do the best by the children in her care. Isn't this what we expect of a teacher? So despite the principal's words it seems that everything has not gone. In fact the most important thing, namely an orientation to what we may call a certain pedagogic standard, has been safeguarded.

It is ironic in a way how this teacher has come to doubt her own capacity as a teacher. The principal tells how she attends in-service sessions only to come away more despondent than ever. Something, it seems, is undermining (or overwhelming) the teacher's intuitive sense of her relation to children. As educators we should ask: what is the first moment or impulse that enables one to enter into a certain kind of relation with children?

And yet there is no denying how easily this teacher seems to have become convinced of her lack of fitness for teaching. What is the source of this feeling? Where does the doubting originate? For the principal the problem resides primarily in what might be termed a lack of so-called classroom management skills. It is the teacher's craft that is faulty. She needs help in improving her classroom management skills. So the principal decides to take over the class in order to demonstrate effective teaching techniques. And in many ways this seems quite consistent with the thrust of much of the modern literature on so-called instructional leadership.

It is interesting that the principal sees the problem of burnout as a largely technical problem. The teacher's teaching can best be rescued if she masters additional techniques. It is essentially a question of engineering. Is this the problem, or would it be better to see the burnout more the result of a kind of hopelessness, an inability to feel any longer that one can make a difference as a teacher? Hope is an important pedagogic principle. It refers to all that gives us patience, tolerance and belief in the possibilities for the children we teach.

Without hope and the belief that somehow we can make a difference, a pedagogic difference in the lives of children, teaching soon degenerates into the merest semblance of teaching. In the end it really becomes a kind of dissembling. What would it be like to be a teacher or administrator without hope? To get up each day and go to work not really believing in the significance of what we were doing? Teaching children not because we thought we could make some kind of difference in their lives but because we stood in a contractual relation to them. Going through the motions. Would this be teaching?

Hope grants meaning to our pedagogic living with children. It enlivens. What hope gives us is this simple confirmation: "I will not give up on you. I know you can make a life for yourself." When we can no longer say this, when we cease to hope, then whatever else we may be we are no longer true teachers. We have ceased to be pedagogically present to children. What sustains a teacher in the face of the appalling difficulties she encounters almost daily? What, for example, do we say, and how is it possible to "teach" a child who has been sexually abused by her father and who dreams about it every night? What do we see in the eyes of such a child? What can we say or do that would be in the least bit helpful? These are not futile questions. They are seminal questions. Questions of life. And yet we see how very different they are from the technical questions and concerns that dominate the horizons of this principal. The question for educational administrative theory is how these questions might be re-animated in principals and prospective principals.

Life-World Story Five: A Question of Supervision

> Over the last two years our superintendent has asked us to formulate objectives that we would aspire to and hopefully achieve as an administrator within the system. And one of the things I put down was that I would like to do some clinical supervision. Now once again that was something I was introduced to at university when I took my masters, but I haven't done very much of it. So really my time in the classroom hasn't been as much a

supervisor as an assistant and a comrade, and as a co-teacher and a co-worker. I think the teachers are more comfortable with me in that role.

Elementary School Principal

In fact I wouldn't call what I'm doing clinical supervision. All I'm doing is planning a lesson with them, and I really don't even have the idea of clinical supervision in the back of my mind. What I have in mind is that we're working together on a lesson where I'm going to assist that teacher; where I'm going in and either we'll both make a short presentation to the children then we'll break into small groups--that sort of approach.

Still, like every principal, I've had occasion to approach a staff member in terms of what I guess you would call a chastisement. And in a way you would call that an evaluation--I'm observing behaviour, I'm evaluating it and I'm acting on it. It happened today in a way. A teacher was going to send a note home to some parents, and in this school I ask to be informed of all communications that go home. It just takes me a second to read them.

What happened was that the parent asked the teacher to itemize her son's behaviour and so she recorded all these things that the child had done and had written them down and was going to send them home. Now we have here a child here who is probably in the educably mentally handicapped or perhaps trainably mentally handicapped area and really should not be in the grade one program. If a person sat down and read all those things: (1) he glued himself to his seat; (2) makes spittle and wipes it over another child's face -- and there are seven or eight of these things. What I try to do is put myself in the place of that parent and I see this note coming home--everything documented. So I said to the teacher: "Why don't you phone the parent and get a feeling for them. Talk to the mom and say you asked me to do this and I have recorded his behaviour and here's some of the things you should be aware of." Well, when we phoned the parent we never went through the whole list. The parent is in such a state: the husband's just been made redundant; they have very little

money; they don't know where their food will come from, and the whole thing has been compounded by having a son who also has been diagnosed in this area. So the teacher got a feel for the home situation and knew that it wasn't going to do any good at this moment to itemize twenty different things that the parent's going to come down on that child. Instead she said. "Reward him. Tell him that he's been on time . . . So that at least we end with something positive." And she came back afterwards and we talked and she said: "Thanks we did the right thing. If I'd sent that note home the child would have been beaten-on; the parents would have been upset; the situation here is not going to change appreciably because of me doing this."

So there's an instance where I don't have to be a know-it-all. It's not like I'm after everything that teachers are doing. Like, I give a cursory look to a note if they're planning a field trip so I can say to the kids: "Hey, I see you're going on a field trip tomorrow." Or I see the parents, (I'm in a small school and the parents are my interest too, I know all my parents by sight and by name), and I can say: "Hey, I see you're driving for the field trip," because I've seen their name. To me that's very important. I put as one of my goals when I came to this school--I've lived in this area and the school has always had that quality about it that it was just there--and what I wanted to establish in our school was a sense of community, a sense of belonging, a sense of pride and worth. And I think, I really believe, that we're getting there. I know our parents feel that way.

A Question of Supervision: An Interrupted Reading

Over the last two years our superintendent has asked us to formulate objectives that we would aspire to and hopefully achieve as an administrator within the system. And one of the things I put down was that I would like to do some clinical supervision. **[Principal's goal is to practice clinical supervision.]** Now once again that was something I

was introduced to at university when I took my masters, but I haven't done very much of it. **[Supervision is something you do.]** So really my time in the classroom hasn't been as much a supervisor as an assistant and a comrade, and as a co-teacher and a co-worker. **[Supervising is contrasted with different roles.]** I think the teachers are more comfortable with me in that role. **[Principal realizes that supervisory acting creates a strained relation.]**

In fact I wouldn't call what I'm doing clinical supervision. **[The principal begins to question supervision.]** All I'm doing is planning a lesson with them and I really don't even have the idea of clinical supervision in the back of my mind. What I have in mind is that we're working together on a lesson where I'm going to assist that teacher; where I'm going in and either we'll both make a short presentation to the children then we'll break into small groups--that sort of approach. **[To be a principal is to engage in team teaching with pedagogic intent.]**

Still, like every principal, I've had occasion to approach a staff member in terms of what I guess you would call a chastisement. **[A Principal is not afraid to exercise authority.]** And in a way you would call that an evaluation--I'm observing behaviour, I'm evaluating it and I'm acting on it. **[Principal evokes a more traditional image of supervision.]** It happened today in a way. **[Principal begins to relate an illustrative anecdote contextualized by his interest in the task of supervising.]** A teacher was going to send a note home to some parents and in this school I ask to be informed of all communications that go home. It just takes me a second to read them. **[Principal bureaucratizes his approach to task of supervising.]**

What happened was that the parent asked the teacher to itemize her son's behaviour and so she recorded all these things that the child had done and had written them down and was

going to send them home. **[Teacher was going to "tell all" by written note.]** Now we have a child here who is probably in the educably mentally handicapped or perhaps trainably mentally handicapped area and really should not be in the grade one program. **[The child is seen by the principal in terms of established categories.]** If a person sat down and read all those things: he glued himself to his seat; makes spittle and wipes it over another child's face--and there are seven or eight of these things. What I try to do is put myself in the place of that parent and I see this note coming home--everything documented. **[To be a principal is to be capable of imagining a parent's response.]** So I said to the teacher: "Why don't you phone the parent and get a feeling for them. Talk to the mom and say you asked me to do this and I have recorded his behaviour and here's some of the things you should be aware of." **[Principal encourages dialogue.]** Well, when we phoned the parent we never went through the whole list. The parent is in such a state: the husband's just been made redundant; they have very little money; they don't know where their food will come from, and the whole thing has been compounded by having a son who also has been diagnosed in this area. **[Principal shows awareness of the child's larger life-world.]** So the teacher got a feel for the home situation and knew that it wasn't going to do any good at this moment to itemize twenty different things that the parent's going to come down on that child. Instead she said. "Reward him. Tell him that he's been on time . . . So that at least we end with something positive." **[Principal tells of the teacher's new found tactfulness.]** And she came back afterwards and we talked and she said: "Thanks we did the right thing. If I'd sent that note home the child would have been 'whaled-on;' the parents would have been upset; the situation here is not going to change appreciably because of me doing this." **[Principal claims his share of credit for the good result.]**

So there's an instance where I don't have to be a know-it-all. It's not like I'm after everything that teachers are doing. Like I give a cursory look to a note if they're planning a field trip so I can say to the kids: "Hey, I see you're going on a field trip tomorrow." **[Principal states the importance of seeing what goes on in school . . .]** Or I see the parents, (I'm in a small school and the parents are my interest too, I know all my parents by sight and by name), and I can say: "Hey, I see you're driving for the field trip," because I've seen their name. **[. . . and seeing parent involvement.]** To me that's very important. **[To be a principal is to be able to see what goes on.]** I put as one of my goals when I came to this school--I've lived in this area and the school has always had that quality about it that it was just there--and what I wanted to establish in our school was a sense of community, a sense of belonging, a sense of pride and worth. And I think, I really believe, that we're getting there. I know our parents feel that way. **[The principal speaks of a larger vision -- a kind of super-vision]**

A Question of Supervision: A Hermeneutic Reading.

In this story the principal begins to concretize certain ideas about the nature of supervisory work, and his own orientation to supervisory relations with teachers. He begins by reflecting on his work as principal and sees the supervisory role as only one among various possible roles that he could play. He sees other possibilities for acting such as the notion of principal as co-teacher or co-worker. We notice too that when the principal speaks of his supervisory role he emphasizes the "doing" quality of the role, "I haven't *done* very much of it." This in itself is an interesting way of speaking. Could it be a tell-tale for the way we think of supervision as something we *do* as oppose to something we *have* ? There would surely be a big difference here. To speak of supervision as a "doing" is really to speak of it as a kind of practice, as something that has to be put-into-practice. In any case

the principal's interest in "doing" clinical supervision seems sponsored more by sources outside the school, (the superintendent and work done at the university), than from the mundane experience of everyday life in schools. It sounds as if for this principal there is a sense that he somehow *ought* to be doing clinical supervision, that this is something expected of him as principal.

It is easy to see how in the second paragraph of the story the principal's everyday experience as principal causes him to question the meaning of supervision. We begin to glimpse a certain tension between certain common-sense understandings of what being a principal calls for, and certain other more formalized (abstract) ideas.

In the principal's description of what actually transpires in a supervisory session the notion of supervision is given quite a different slant. It harks back to the idea of principal more as co-teacher or co-worker. The principal implies that to be a principal is to understand that one is first of all an educator in the sense that he (or she) is someone with a deep interest in helping children grow and learn and in trying to bring about those conditions that allow learning to happen. Of course, this is much more easily said than done. These conditions do not just occur by accident. A certain kind of understanding or vision is required. A kind of super vision perhaps?

Still, the principal also realizes that from time to time situations do arise which call into question the possibility of a fully democratic relation. Part of being a good principal requires that one not shy away from exercising authority when the occasion calls for it. One sometimes has to intervene. For the principal the question of relation, of how and when one goes about the task of intervening seems to be an important one which is not easily resolved. While he would like to be a co-worker or co-teacher it seems that at times more

is called for. Once again, there are no easy answers or simplistic formulas to be followed as a way out of this dilemma.

The principal now begins to tell an illustrative anecdote contextualized by his interest in the task of supervision. The main elements of the story are a teacher, a note and a misbehaving student. What is interesting here is the way in which the principal is able to contextualize the event and begin to see the consequences of sending the note home. He sees little pedagogic value in sending home a long list of childish misbehaviours. "What I try to do is put myself in the place of the parent." What conclusions would they draw? What perceptions would they form and how could they contribute to a deeper understanding of their child? The principal seems to be concerned here for the preservation of a certain quality of relation between parent and child. And it seems that his concern for dialogue, "Talk to the mom... get a feeling for them," shows a certain kind of thoughtfulness and a more than bureaucratic interest in the child. Maybe the principal also sees the meaninglessness of an itemized list of so-called misbehaviours. Stripped of its living context, in what way could such a list be helpful?

What we see at work here is the principal effortfully involved with the whole child. Although other interpretations may be possible what we seem to see is the principal concerned with the child as more than just a name in a register or class list. For better or worse he arrives in school each morning the agent of a complete life-history and as an educator the principal senses the need to have an awareness of the child's larger life-world. Pedagogic acting requires that we see the child not as a bundle of characteristics but rather as an initiative of relationships to a world where he chooses and by which he is chosen.

But this is taking us quite far afield. Let us just say that for this principal there exists the requirement to see the child in all his concrete situatedness. That is why, presumably, he

encourages the teacher to talk with the parents rather than sending the note home. The principal sees that the kind of interest he has in the child cannot be satisfied outside a dialogical relation with the child and his parents. Home and school must dialogue, not merely "communicate."

It is easy to spot a certain tactful presence on the part of the teacher in this story. Having got a "feel" for the situation it now becomes impossible for her to deliver the bad news. As a good teacher she searches for something constructive to say. At least the child has been conscientious about arriving on time for school.

There is an important pedagogic point here. Educators are not in the demolition business. Their task is always to help strengthen and build. The impulse to end with "something positive" is an impulse which lies close to the heart of a pedagogic orientation. Of course, we all know how difficult this can be at times. Children who glue themselves to their seats and wipe spittle over other children at first glance do not offer much to build on. And yet this is precisely the challenge of the educator. The true educator is the one who despite constant setbacks and disappointments perseveres in the belief that she can make a difference in this child's life, that through her efforts the child can be helped to become all that he or she can become. We all know the enormity of this challenge. What sustains the teacher in her task?

There is an unmistakable pedagogic quality to the teacher's tactfulness. It is not just a question of public relations or of merely being politic about things. Together with the teacher we sense that nothing pedagogic would be served by a recounting of the "facts" of the child's behaviour in the classroom. The principal sees this. He helps the teacher to see that preserving the pedagogic relation, (between parent and child, between teacher and child, between the home and the school), has a higher claim on them than simply reporting

on the child's "actual" behaviour in school. This is not a question of being dishonest or untruthful but of seeing that there is a higher truth that has to be served in the way of understanding that whatever hurts the pedagogic relation damages the chances for the educator to be educator--to make a difference in the life of this child.

In a sense this is what the principal is recommending to us. To be a principal requires a certain kind of seeing whereby we are enabled to see (visualize) the larger whole that is to be served in the ministering. It is this grasp of the whole that counts. This is what it means to be a principal. A certain vision is needed. In fact a kind of *super* vision.

Now it is no longer so easy to speak of supervision as something one *does*, so much as something one *has*. As the practice of a certain kind of thoughtfulness, supervision in this sense has as much to do with who we are as with what we do. For a principal or other administrator to have *super* vision doesn't make one *other* than a teacher so much as it makes one *more* of a teacher. The old idea of the principal as the teacher's teacher or *principal* teacher may be worth re-discovering.

What point have we arrived at here? It is difficult to know for sure, and yet to be supervisor in this sense is not necessarily the person who can "do" clinical supervision or who has at his disposal various kinds of so-called conferencing skills. Instead the supervisor is the one who has the larger vision, who can see more, and more deeply of what is at stake in a child's education. The supervisor is not one who can see anything and everything, that would be hardly human, but he or she is someone who tries to see the whole child, with all of his or her limitations and shortcomings, that is the object of our ministrations.

In a nutshell this seems to be what the principal is saying or recommending to us. What he offers is a living definition of what it means to be a principal which in this case references

the need for a certain kind of seeing or understanding. It is not difficult to see how far this living definition of supervision departs from more modern (theory based) conceptions with their attendant notions of hierarchy, power, position, knowledge, expertise and so forth. In fact we would do well to ask whether anything the principal exemplifies for us still remains in contemporary models of supervisory practice. Have we managed to cloud a view that once was clearer? Where is the vision in contemporary models of supervision?

Life-World Story Six: A Question of Trust

> For a school this size we don't get too much pilfering. I could tell you the three or four children we have to watch. And you have to realize their home situations too. Like this one gal I was telling you about -- well we just plain didn't know why and she needed some help. But the others that I know of are kids who don't have much, they are really crying out for attention. Children in that category.
>
> Elementary School Principal

Just the other day Leanne, one of our grade three girls, brought a brand new packet of felt pens to school for an art project the kids were going to work on. By noon when she went to check inside her desk the felt pens were missing. So here we are stuck with a missing twelve-dollar package of felt pens that had disappeared from the classroom. The teacher came to me and asked what are we going to do?

Anyway, I went into the class and talked to the kids and I said that we'll let you go home and think about it. We'd been talking about trust and friendship and caring so I went over that with them and how even though we can't be the best of friends with everyone we can treat them with respect and that's respecting their property as well. And I gave them the opportunity of bringing the pens back the next day, and ninety-nine times out of a hundred things do show up--particularly at the elementary level. Anyway that's how I approached it and I'd just love to say they've shown up but they haven't and they were taken a week ago.

It's funny, though, because during our prayer time this morning--I always ask if there's anything the kids would like to say as a thought for the day or as a prayer--and one kid says: "Well I'd like you to think about my auntie who's having a baby and I hope everything goes well for her," and we had some other things like that. And then this one kid chimes up: "And I really hope that Leanne's felts show up before Easter." So it's not out of their heads yet either and there is a change. Now if they don't show up in the next few days, what I'll do is I'll get her some felts from the school budget or as I've done in the past, I'll get them myself. I'll find some way to help her--maybe not the same set of felts she had before but I'll give her something to replace them.

We have a gal here that I've been working with for a year and a half now and that includes working with her mom because we found out that she was a bit of a 'taker', a bit of a 'klepto' (kleptomaniac). We have referred her and a doctor has been working with her over the last year. She's in grade six. You see that poster on the wall over there? Well that one was brought to me by the little girl who was doing all the stealing. She and a friend brought it in for an Easter gift for me about this time last year --I didn't question her where she got it from!

You see those cars on the window ledge (the principal points to eight or ten tiny model cars sitting on the window ledge in his office), those were all things that were stolen by kids and when I went to return them at the store the owner told me to forget it. He'd written them off. So I brought them back, and from time to time I'll use them as a special reward for a kid who has really made an effort.

One of the things that we try to do here is to build a sense of trust in our school that we can leave something down. I'll really compliment kids and I'll tell them all the time--that's great, someone's left a pencil in the library--they'll bring me the pencil rather than put it in

their pocket. I think that if you reinforce that good behaviour--like I say I'll give the kid a hug and say: "Hey, I'm so pleased that you saw the right way to do it this way--rather than put it in your pocket or keep it or give it to someone else. Now we'll make an effort to find out who it belongs to and if we can't find out then you can have it." And it's happening. I've got a drawer full of watches. The only surprising thing is that no-one has come to claim them.

A Question of Trust: An Interrupted Reading

Just the other day Leanne, one of our grade three girls, brought a brand new packet of felt pens to school for an art project the kids were going to work on. **[The principal sketches the story.]** By noon when she went to check inside her desk the felt pens were missing. So here we are stuck with a missing twelve-dollar package of felt pens that had disappeared from the classroom. The teacher came to me and asked what are we going to do? **[The principal now faces a situation which calls for a response.]**

Anyway, I went into the class and talked to the kids and I said that we'll let you go home and think about it. **[Principal describes his way of responding.]** We'd been talking about trust and friendship and caring so I went over that with them and how even though we can't be the best of friends with everyone we can treat them with respect and that's respecting their property as well. And I gave them the opportunity of bringing the pens back the next day, and ninety-nine times out of a hundred things do show up--particularly at the elementary level. Anyway that's how I approached it and I'd just love to say they've shown up but they haven't and they were taken a week ago. **[Not always do things work out as hoped for.]** It's funny, though, because during our prayer time this morning--I always ask if there's anything the kids would like to say as a thought

for the day or as a prayer--and one kid says: "Well I'd like you to think about my auntie who's having a baby and I hope everything goes well for her," and we had some other things like that. And then this one kid chimes up: "And I really hope that Leanne's felts show up before Easter." So it's not out of their heads yet either and there is a change. **[Principal sees that personal growth has taken place.]** Now if they don't show up in the next few days, what I'll do is I'll get her some felts from the school budget or as I've done in the past, I'll get them myself. I'll find some way to help her-- maybe not the same set of felts she had before, but I'll give her something to replace them.

We have a gal here that I've been working with for a year and a half now and that includes working with her mom because we found out that she was a bit of a 'taker', a bit of a 'klepto' (kleptomaniac). **[The story of Leanne's missing felts triggers thoughts of other children who have 'taken' things.]** We have referred her and a doctor has been working with her over the last year. She's in grade six. You see that poster on the wall over there? Well that one was brought to me by the little girl who was doing all the stealing. She and a friend brought it in for an Easter gift for me about this time last year--I didn't question her where she got it from! **[A certain tactfulness emerges in this last line. It would be pedantic to ask where the poster came from.]**

You see those cars on the window ledge (the principal points to eight or ten tiny model cars sitting on the window ledge in his office), those were all things that were stolen by kids and I went to return them at the store and the owner told me to forget it. He'd written them off. So I brought them back, and from time to time I'll use them as a special reward for a kid who has really made an effort. For a school this size we don't get too much pilfering. I could tell you the three or four children we have to watch. **[Knowing which children to keep a special watch for is part of being a principal.]** And you have to realize their home situations too. Like this one gal I was telling you about--well we just

plain didn't know why and she needed some help. But the others that I know of are kids who don't have much, they are really crying out for attention--children in that category. **[Principal tells of the need to see the whole child--the embodied being in her concrete situatedness.]**

One of the things that we try to do here is to build a sense of trust in our school that we can leave something down. I'll really compliment kids and I'll tell them all the time--that's great, someone's left a pencil in the library--they'll bring me the pencil rather than put it in their pocket. I think that if you reinforce that good behaviour--like I say I'll give the kid a hug and say: "Hey, I'm so pleased that you saw the right way to do it this way--rather than put it in your pocket or keep it or give it to someone else. Now we'll make an effort to find out who it belongs to and if we can't find out then you can have it." And it's happening. I've got a drawer full of watches. The only surprising thing is that no-one has come to claim them. **[To be a principal means working towards a certain set of relations and creating a certain tone or atmosphere inside the school.]**

A Question of Trust: A Hermeneutic Reading

It is interesting in a way that the principal chooses to tell this story of Leanne's missing pens. At first glance it would seem to be the most mundane of incidents, hardly worth repeating. And yet as the situation unfolds something important seems to be at stake in the story.

The principal sketches only the barest outline of the story. Still it would not be difficult to imagine Leanne's feelings at losing something she prized. Does the teacher have a feel for the child's loss? At any rate the matter is turned over to the principal who now finds

himself encountering a situation to which he must respond. Action of some kind is called for. What will the principal do?

Of course, many avenues are open. It wouldn't be hard for us to imagine how a busy principal might choose to ignore the whole thing. Principals after all are often expected to deal with much more serious problems than this. Maybe Leanne has a history of being careless with her belongings. Though hard, maybe this is a valuable lesson for Leanne and the other children to learn. In the "real world" things also "disappear." At least this time it is only a package of felt pens that has gone missing.

Other ways of seeing the problem are also possible. Maybe the principal feels a sense of outrage that someone would dare to steal from someone else. In the real world there are serious consequences for people who steal. Children have to find out all about such things sooner or later. This is in the child's interest after all. Or perhaps the children are encouraged to "tell on" their friends. Maybe somebody saw someone take Leanne's pens in which case the correct thing to do is tell right away. And we could go on and on. But already we see that all kinds of responses to the situation are possible. Which shall we choose? What would constitute a principled response in this situation?

First what is noteworthy is what the principal does not do. We note that in this situation there is no frantic searching of desks, emptying of pockets, school bags and so forth, in a vain attempt to recover the felt pens come what may. Instead what we seem to see is the principal engaging the children in quiet conversation about friendship, trust and caring and at the same time tactfully opening up a space for the felt pens to be quietly returned. If someone has taken Leanne's pens they will surely know the right thing to do. And, of course, the possibility also exists that the pens may have been simply lost. In any event the felt pens are not returned.

And so we have to ask, has the principal failed? Were there other steps he could and maybe should have taken? Was he being simply naive in his expectation that the missing pens would be found? Should we accuse the principal of being ineffective here?

Once again we want to see the principal's story as a kind of recommendation to educational administration. In a way, what the principal displays is his understanding of the fact that stealing is experienced very differently in the lives of eight year olds than in the world of more mature adults. So he does not use the heavy word theft. Instead he patiently talks to the children about friendship and caring and sensitively awakens in them a feeling for the way Leanne is probably feeling right now. He expresses the hope that before too long Leanne will get her felt pens back. He communicates his belief and sense of confidence in the children.

There is, undeniably, a certain trustful expectation on the principal's part that the children in Leanne's class will know what is right to do. His words and his demeanour combine to express a certain faith and confidence in the children. His tone is altogether affirming. What is mercifully absent on the principal's part is any note of cynicism or doubt that the children can or should be trusted. There is instead a confirming quality to the principal's actions. His belief in them helps to con-firm each child's sense of his or her own worthwhileness. Of course, this is what educators should do. Pedagogy has an unmistakable confirming quality about it.

What would the opposed actions be like? Can we imagine a principal with a cynical or suspicious attitude going into Leanne's classroom? Someone determined to get to the bottom of this situation at all costs. Perhaps having the children empty out their pockets, school bags and so forth? What would an experience of this kind be like for children?

What would they learn? How would this be in any way a confirming experience? Even if the felt pens had been found, would anything educational have been accomplished?

For children principals are important people. They embody the adult world. For many children, teachers and principals are their first "adult" encounters outside the immediate circle of family and friends. So the way in which a principal enters the lifeworld of a class of grade three children is not without certain consequences. Children learn much from such encounters.

So what the principal is really saying is that to be a principal requires a certain kind of orientation to events of this kind. Not any kind of orientation will do. The goal is not merely to get the felt pens back although that, of course, would be nice too. But something more is called for. Let us say that there is first a requirement for the principal to approach the situation pedagogically. Not as policeman, nor as judge, but first of all as educator does the principal encounter this event. We see the kind of difference that this makes.

> It's funny, though, because during our prayer time this morning this one kid chimes up: "And I really hope Leanne's felts show up before Easter." So it's not out of their heads yet and there is a change.

It is interesting how in a world of behavioural objectives, mastery learning, competency-based instruction and the like, the principal has an intuitive feel for a very different way of understanding the purpose of schooling. At least one child has changed. The principal's words have not been without effect. Under what taxonomy of learning objectives shall we place the growth that has occurred here? In what sense could this "learning" have been planned for? In what way and by what means could it be measured? What "program" could have been devised to bring this "learning" into effect?

In a roundabout way the principal's words call into question much of the currently popular behavioral-science approach to understanding the educational process. We begin to sense the alien nature of much contemporary educational theorizing that turns everything it touches to object, to objectness. The Midas touch. Here, by contrast, we come face-to-face with the living pulse of human growth. Who would deny that in the child's innocent words something powerful and deep is stirring? Who would deny the humanism, the broadening and deepening of human sensibilities of which we get the merest glimpse is happening before our eyes? And yet, if we take the principal's words seriously, this is what it means to be a principal. To be a principal in the strong sense is to have a feel for the deep meaning of education. To understand how education can never be reduced to behavioural objectives, management by objectives and so forth, without the risk of losing all that is human and pedagogic in schooling. This, in a sense, is what the principal is recommending to us. This is why the principal is not especially worried about recovering the missing pens. If they don't show up he'll get some for Leanne from the school budget or he'll buy some himself. Something more important than getting back the lost pens is clearly at stake here.

It is interesting how the story of Leanne's felt pens triggers in the principal's mind thoughts of other children and situations in which things have gone astray. In the story of the little girl who was "a bit of a taker" for example. We note here how when the little girl brought the principal a poster as an Easter gift, despite some obvious misgivings, the principal avoided asking where it came from. Is this good administration? Should he perhaps have quizzed her about this? What sense of responsibility is being displayed here?

In a sense these questions go to the heart of what it means to be a principal, an educational administrator. It wouldn't be difficult to imagine how another principal might see his first responsibility as that of finding out if the poster had been stolen. We can imagine how this

line of questioning might proceed. But what would be involved, or rather what would be overlooked, in this case? As educators we have to begin with the meaning or intended meaning of the child in a given situation. What is it like for a child to arrive at the principal's door bearing a gift for the principal? What kind of act is this? An act of friendship, of love, of courage perhaps?

Of course it could be some, or all, or none of these. And yet meanings are not so inscrutable. The good principal who knows children will have a fair idea of what a given act intends. And in this case it would be obviously pedantic to inquire where the posters came from. Such a line of inquiry would plainly be at odds with the child's intended meaning in the situation. It would be pedagogically destructive. So despite his suspicions, or rather let us say in the face of his suspicions, the principal accepts the gift along with its intended meaning. The child is confirmed. A pedagogic relation exists.

We can now pose the question concerning the nature of the trust or belief that a principal places in the children in his care. Again we want to see the importance of doing a strong reading of this story, in the sense of trying to understand the situation better than the principal himself. How can this be done?

We start with the idea that the origin of the principal's sense of trust and confidence in children does not lie in a kind of naive sense of goodness, in the impossibility of children ever doing wrong things. Children are every bit as human as the rest of us. There is no romantic belief in a Rousseauian vision of the moral superiority of children in the principal's story. Like most principals, this principal "could tell the three or four children we have to watch." Like every school, there is a certain amount of "pilfering" that goes on. So what is interesting and at the same time pedagogically important is that the principal's trusting is not founded on a lack of understanding or knowledge of children, that is it is not

naively based, but rather begins and accepts at face value a vision of the child with all of its imperfections and shortcomings and yet still maintains a vision of the possible, of what this child can be helped to become. It is not as if the principal *ought to have known* the felt pens would likely not show up, but that *in spite of*, or rather *in the face of* this knowledge, he continued to manifest the confidence he had. And yet even this way of speaking is a problem for us. It is not that the principal revealed or displayed or otherwise manifested a certain faith or belief in the children in his care. Already this would be to succumb to the objectifying tendencies inherent in our very way of speaking. What makes an educator an educator or pedagogue a pedagogue is the impossibility of acting other than out of a deep belief or faith in each child's possibility for becoming what he or she can in fact become. This is nothing to be revealed or displayed. It is only to be lived. Even to speak of it is to run the risk of fossilizing that which lives only in its being. That is why it would not be quite right for an educator to speak of the need to *place* his or her trust in this or that child. Although appealing, it is not so much a question of *placing* trust as of accepting the impossibility that an educator could ever encounter a child outside of a relation of trust and expectation.

As educators we recognize that education in a deep sense rests upon a certain attitude of trust or faith which the educator has for this or that child. That education is no longer possible once that trust has been eroded or withdrawn. This is what the principal exemplifies in his story. Certainly it is a much stronger notion of trust than simply giving a child a hug to reinforce good behaviour, although that is part of it too. But what the principal's notion of trust ultimately touches upon is nothing behavioural. In the end what it references is something that strikes much more deeply at the core of our being itself.

Life-World Story Seven: A Question of Failure

> Last year we had a major problem with some parents who were adamant that their child was not going to repeat grade one. This was a child of average or slightly above average intelligence who just refused to do the work. He was also very disruptive in class.
>
> Elementary School Principal

Early on we determined that a big part of the problem was the boy's father who is totally non-supportive of the school. He falls into a European stereotype. He is a fellow who has emigrated from his homeland and who has made a tremendous financial success of his life, and who will not accept any kind of overtures from the school that say his child is experiencing any kind of difficulty. If the child is having difficulty at school, it must be your fault. There's nothing wrong with my child --it's your fault right from the word go. And that child knew the way his dad felt. Anyway, by the end of the school year this boy still lacked basic word recognition skills, vocabulary skills, comprehension skills and all the rest that go into basic reading skills. So even at the end of grade one he was still not testable on some of our tests.

Anyway the parents said that they wanted to do absolutely everything to make sure he did not have to repeat the grade. We said that he had not got the skills now at the end of June. So they said: "We will hire a tutor for the summer. Can you find us a tutor?" So we found a reading specialist who worked with him an hour and a half per day for six weeks in the summer, and got him beyond the pre-primer level and into the primer level. But if you saw her report--it described the same kinds of things that we had experienced with him in school. She spent a long, long time just trying to establish herself and trying to modify some of the behaviours, through rewards, through punishments, through whatever system she could think of--getting this child to stay on task and do what was expected in order to achieve the levels of proficiency that are involved in going to grade two. At the end of the

program she felt that he had made some progress off the scale to the primer level though not quite to the grade two level in standardized reading tests. So at that point (he's a little guy physically) so on a physical level, on a social level, and on an academic level, I decided it would still be better for him to repeat grade one again this year. And so I told the parents he was still going to have to repeat the year.

Still the dad didn't accept it. But at the meeting he turned to his wife and said: "I'll go along with whatever you want to do." And she said, "Alright, then I would like to see him repeat." She said, "These are the professionals and they should know what's best." And there was the teacher, the school counsellor, the resource room teacher and now the tutor who were all saying basically the same thing.

But this has caused quite a bit of strife in the family because just today she was in school and I asked her and she said her husband still hates her for that decision. He still doesn't accept it because he sees it as failure and that's a word he never likes to use. Anyway I tried to explain to her that they really shouldn't see it as failure. I certainly don't see it that way. Rather than failing a year it's just taking him two years to do one. That's not failure. Just slower progress.

A Question of Failure: An Interrupted Reading.

Last year we had a major problem with some parents who were adamant that their child was not going to repeat grade one. **[The principal begins to sketch the case.]** This was a child of average or slightly above average intelligence who just refused to do the work. He was also very disruptive in class. **[The problem begins with a child who is reluctant to learn.]**

Early on we determined that a big part of the problem was the boy's father who is totally non-supportive of the school. **[But the problem is more complicated. The boy's father is uncooperative.]** He falls into a European stereotype. He is a fellow who has emigrated from his homeland and who has made a tremendous financial success of his life, and who will not accept any kind of overtures from the school that say his child is experiencing any kind of difficulty. If the child is having difficulty at school, it must be your fault. There's nothing wrong with my child--it's your fault right from the word go. **[The principal sets the problem with the boy in the context of the child's home life.]** And that child knew the way his dad felt. Anyway, by the end of the school year this boy still lacked basic word recognition skills, vocabulary skills, comprehension skills and all the rest that go into basic reading skills. So even at the end of grade one he was still not testable on some of our tests. **[Being a principal means knowing what is to be expected of a child of a particular age level.]**

Anyway the parents said that they wanted to do absolutely everything to make sure he did not have to repeat the grade. **[The parents express a certain attitude to education here.]** We said that he had not got the skills now at the end of June. So they said: "We will hire a tutor for the summer. Can you find us a tutor?" **[Is there a fear of failure here?]** So we found a reading specialist who worked with him an hour and a half per day for six weeks in the summer, and got him beyond the pre-primer level and into the primer level. But if you saw her report--it described the same kinds of things that we had experienced with him in school. She spent a long, long time just trying to establish herself and trying to modify some of the behaviours, through rewards, through punishments, through whatever system she could think of--getting this child to stay on task and do what was expected in order to achieve the levels of proficiency that are involved in going to grade two. **[The principal expresses a certain view of education here.]** At the

end of the program she felt that he had made some progress off the scale to the primer level though not quite to the grade two level in standardized reading tests. So at that point (he's a little guy physically) so on a physical level, on a social level, and on an academic level, I decided it would still be better for him to repeat grade one again this year. And so I told the parents he was still going to have to repeat the year. **[The principal weighs the information and makes his decision. The boy stays in grade one.]**

Still the dad didn't accept it. But at the meeting he turned to his wife and said, "I'll go along with whatever you want to do." And she said "Alright, then I would like to see him repeat." She said, "These are the professionals and they should know what's best." And there was the teacher, the school counsellor, the resource room teacher and now the tutor who were all saying basically the same thing. **[Has the issue boiled down to a power struggle? Who will have the last word?]**

But this has caused quite a bit of strife in the family because just today she was in school and I asked her and she said her husband still hates her for that decision. He still doesn't accept it because he sees it as failure and that's a word he never likes to use. Anyway I tried to explain to her that they really shouldn't see it as failure. **[Principal questions the meaning of failure.]** I certainly don't see it that way. Rather than failing a year it's just taking him two years to do one. That's not failure. Just slower progress. **[Principal takes on the task of trying to reconcile the parents to the decision that has been made.]**

A Question of Failure: A Hermeneutic Reading.

In a way the situation is fairly clear cut. By the end of the school year a grade one boy has not mastered the basic skills that would allow him to move up to grade two. There may be

many reasons for this. The principal implies that the child, let us call him Kenny, has not really tried and that there are problems in the relation between home and school. So the principal has the child tested and examined by various educational specialists. The results seem quite conclusive. According to all available objective data Kenny is not ready to be promoted. On the basis of the evidence the principal decides that it will be better for Kenny to spend another year in grade one. The principal meets with the parents. He tries to convince them not to see this as failure but to think of it as just "slower progress." In any event the decision is made and Kenny is going to have to repeat the year.

In many respects the situation is now considered closed. A rational decision has been made. Hopefully Kenny will do better second time around. The decision upholds not only the institutional values and structures of the system but the principal can also claim the decision to be in the best interests of the child. But more significantly we don't really get a sense from the principal's story that it was an especially difficult decision to make, in the sense that the principal agonized over the question of whether to retain Kenny in grade one. What was troublesome was convincing the parents, in this case especially the father, that it was the right decision to make. And clearly the father is still unconvinced. To him his son has failed. But while the parents' antagonism certainly complicates the issue it is not really part of the decisional calculus. It is an extraneous feature which, while it has to be dealt with, cannot be allowed to interfere with the rational process of decision making. Again, the objective evidence is quite conclusive. Kenny does not have the skills to move on to grade two.

In a nutshell, this seems to be what the principal is recommending to us. That to be a principal means being capable of making difficult decisions based on objective evidence and then standing firm in support of the decision. This is classic administrative theory. And part of the art (or science) of decision-making lies in knowing what elements of a

situation are to be part of the decisional process, and which are merely peripheral features. Good administration requires that we separate the key from the not-so-key features. It is as if the principal had taken a sharp knife and carefully trimmed off all the internal relations within the home (the child's life-world) as immaterial or irrelevant to the task at hand, that is deciding whether Kenny should have to remain another year in grade one. What he is really saying is that while it is possible to be sympathetic and take note of such factors, in the final analysis, administration in the sense of decision-making, belongs to the realm of objective data, hard-nosed facts that alone furnish the criteria for defensible decision-making. In this the principal can be seen to be at one with the mainstream of contemporary administrative theory.

Still the principal is very likely correct in his view that in some objective sense Kenny may well be better off spending another year in grade one. Parents after all are not necessarily the best judges of what might be the best for a particular child. Often times their very closeness to children makes it difficult to see what could or should be done. This is not through lack of concern or lack of care, in fact often just the reverse. Part of the essence of being a parent is the tendency to see one's child one-sidedly.

So there is a question here of who can see more clearly what is best for a child. And what the principal is saying is that sometimes parents are short sighted, that their very closeness to children (in this case Kenny) gets in the way of a clearer and therefore truer view. And in a way he is probably right. While parents and professional educators are similar in that both stand in a pedagogic relation to children, still it is true that for educators it is undoubtably a more distant relation. Though educators stand in place of the parents still they are not parents. We do not expect quite the same kind of care or attentiveness from a teacher as say from a parent. But in return or in place of relinquishing a certain depth of care we expect something else. We expect from educators by reason of the more distant

relation a more contextualized or let us say a more balanced appraisal of this child's potentialities. The educator sees this child, but inevitably he sees this child in the context of all the other children he knows or has known. This gives the educator a certain perspective or wide-angle view of the child which may not necessarily be available to the parent. But with this perspective goes a certain responsibility. Let us say it is the responsibility to help contextualize for the parent a broadened view of how this child's needs can be best served. A dialogic relation is called for.

So now the educator faces a double challenge. Not only is he charged with doing what is pedagogically right for this child (having Kenny repeat grade one for example), he has also the responsibility of interpreting his insight, his version of what is needful for this child, to the parents in such a way that the parent can also come to see the rightness and desirability of the educator's action. The educator, in this case the principal, becomes at the same time the educator of the parent. A double relation of pedagogy exists here. But, of course, the possibility always exists that the educator may fail. That, despite his best efforts and intentions the short-sightedness of the parents cannot be overcome. Is this the situation of this story? According to what the principal tells us the father has a strong dislike for anything that resembles failure. As a self-made man he cannot abide the prospect of having his son fail at the first hurdle. And significantly, the child knows the way the father feels. Not unlike many Europeans of his generation the father may see failure at school as the road to diminished life-chances and a second class future. Of course, we don't know for sure, all we have are the principal's words. But it certainly seems possible that the father's stubborn refusal to allow Kenny to be put back into grade one could be motivated by a sense of hope and concern for the long term welfare of his child. But however that may be, what is certain is that the father views repeating a grade as failure, so inevitably Kenny will encounter the experience of being seen and thought of as a failure by his father.

So now we encounter our first pedagogic question. If, despite the so-called objective evidence, Kenny's father acts towards his son as someone who has failed, and if, as seems likely, Kenny then internalizes his father's sense of failure as also his own failure, then what have we done to this child and how is he better off than if, realizing this, the principal had allowed him to go to grade two? In other words the question to be asked at this point is: what has been accomplished if the combined actions of home and school have served only to stamp the idea of failure deep into the consciousness of this child? What gains have been made? How is it going to be possible to reanimate in Kenny the idea that he is in fact capable? So while the principal formulates the problem in terms of certain objectifiable criteria, (Kenny's performance on various objective tests), it seems as though other more subjective considerations are ignored.

So here we are with the parents on one side and the school on the other and the child and his interests lying somewhere between. Has this incident turned into a power struggle? Again, we want to remind ourselves of the importance of doing a strong reading of this situation. This is not a question of "siding" with one side or the other, but it is a question of trying to see what is at stake in this situation as a way of strengthening our grasp of what being a principal means in such circumstances.

In other words, we are asking whether in the context of this situation it is quite enough for the principal to remain bureaucratically on the side of so-called objective data? Certainly it would not be difficult to imagine situations in which it might be best, maybe the only alternative, to have a child repeat a grade even in the face of the desires or wishes of the parents. Often times the professional educator can see better what is good for a child over and above the parents' seeing. And yet even if this were true in this case, as educators would we not want to ask what could be the best decision for Kenny himself? This, after all, should be our central concern. Not the father's intention nor even the institutional or

organizational values of the school but the child himself. In other words, it is to the child and the meaning that repeating or advancing would have for him that we should turn to find a basis for decision-making in this context. And this, of course, is less an objective than a subjective issue.

This is why it is inappropriate for the principal to attempt to resolve this conflict at the level of power or on the basis of purely objective criteria. What the principal in a certain way shows us is that decision making that aspires to be pedagogic must begin from within the existential life-world of the child. It must take account of the existential moment and of the way in which that moment inserts itself into the totality of meaning-structures that constitute the existence of this child. This does not mean that we do only what the child would have us do, or that we meekly acquiesce with the child's longings or desires. But it does mean that pedagogic acting requires that we begin by formulating a sense of how it is for this child, of the way a particular event or occurrence is likely to be experienced in the total life-context of this child. Educational decision making or policy making needs to begin and take its point of departure from within the existential landscape of childhood. Not to do this is to run the risk of developing policies and procedures which fail to connect or do justice to the personal becoming of children.

Life-World Story Eight: A Question of Value

> Last night I received a phone call at home from my guidance cousellor who was here finishing up some work quite late. Apparently one of our students and one of his friends who was here because we have a computer club that operates until 4:30 pm., well our caretaker caught them jamming a piece of wood in the lock of a back door of the school, and they (caretaker and school counsellor) made the assumption that the wood was being used to prevent the door from locking, presumably so these kids could get back into the school later. Anyway, one of the kids took off but the other kid didn't and the only person in the school with any degree of authority was the guidance counsellor. The boy would not tell who the other boy was and

was very arrogant, insolent and rude with the caretaker and the guidance counsellor and so they left and I had to see the boy this morning.

Junior High School Principal

Anyway here was a 14 year old, grade nine boy telling me in my office that it isn't his responsibility if someone wrecks the school. He said he told his buddy not to jam the lock, and that he was trying to remove it when the caretaker saw him. So I said: "Who is this kid so we can talk to him," and he said: "I can't tell you that because he's my friend." But I said: "What if he'd come back into the school and wrecked it, you'd have been accountable and responsible." He said: "It's not my responsibility if he wrecked the school." I said: "But your parents are paying taxes, and if there's vandalism in the school and we have to take money to repair it and that means less books for the school." And he said: "Well that must be your responsibility because it's not mine." And I said: "Are you telling me that if you saw someone climbing into a house about to set fire to it and he was a friend of yours, you wouldn't tell on him?" He says: "Yeah, that'd probably be right." Then I said: "What do you consider your role as a citizen to be?" And he said: "To do the things I like and enjoy and mind my own business and let other people do their thing."

This is really frightening to me. I just couldn't believe what I was hearing. So I placed him under a five day suspension. The father is employed as a chef of some kind and the mother is a private nurse. I phoned several times and couldn't get anybody at home, but I've got to have the parents in because this kid is showing very dangerous signs; very dangerous signs. You know the kind of kid who would not hesitate to kick a door down, or a window. And I haven't checked my car but maybe all my tires are flat by now. But when a kid outright tells you he doesn't care what happens to public property, to his house or your house--and he's a nice looking kid which kinda surprised me. But just brutal! To me this kid has just got some kind of mis-concept of basic right and wrong. At least that's

my first impression. That's why I suspended him so he could do some thinking about this thing.

I had an experience in another school where I had to repair nine hundred dollars worth of locks, 'cause kids jammed them with gum and that money came out of a fund which we had to buy uniforms and other things for the kids. So I'm not comfortable with this kid. You know, if you were my neighbour and I went out of town and you see someone breaking into my house--that's a wrong behaviour to expect from people in a society and I expect that whether it's your friend or your son, for you to do something about it. So here's a kid who's fourteen years old and in four years is going to be of the age of consent. Scary!

You see, to me the school is a part of the socialization process. It's part and parcel of the expectations of the community. The school should extend and reinforce the community expectations and the home expectations. Parents have a right to expect this. It's what schools are for.

A Question of Value: An Interrupted Reading.

Last night I received a phone call at home from my guidance cousellor who was here finishing up some work quite late. **[The principal begins to tell the story.]** Apparently one of our students and one of his friends who was here because we have a computer club that operates until 4:30 pm., well our caretaker caught them jamming a piece of wood in the lock of a back door of the school, and they (caretaker and school counsellor) made the assumption that the wood was being used to prevent the door from locking, presumably so these kids could get back into the school later. Anyway, one of the kids took off but the other kid didn't and the only person in the school with any degree of authority was the guidance counsellor. The boy would not tell who the other boy was and

was very arrogant, insolent and rude with the caretaker and the guidance counsellor and so they left and I had to see the boy this morning. **[The principal now faces a situation to which he must respond.]**

Anyway here was a 14 year old, grade nine boy telling me in my office that it isn't his responsibility if someone wrecks the school. He said he told his buddy not to jam the lock, and that he was trying to remove it when the caretaker saw him. So I said: "Who is this kid so we can talk to him," and he said: "I can't tell you that because he's my friend." **[Child stands up for the value of friendship.]** But I said: "What if he'd come back into the school and wrecked it, you'd have been accountable and responsible." He said: "It's not my responsibility if he wrecked the school." I said: "But your parents are paying taxes, and if there's vandalism in the school and we have to take money to repair it and that means less books for the school." **[Principal stands up for the value of property.]** And he said: "Well that must be your responsibility because it's not mine." And I said: "Are you telling me that if you saw someone climbing into a house about to set fire to it and he was a friend of yours, you wouldn't tell on him?" He says: "Yeah, that'd probably be right." **[Is this an example of a miscarried conversation? Is there dialogue here?]** Then I said: "What do you consider your role as a citizen to be?" **[An interesting question. The principal asks quite an abstract question that presupposes a willingness to enter the conversation at a theoretical level. In essence the principal asks: give me your theory of citizenship. For the child is this a situation of theory or a situation of life?]** And he said: "To do the things I like and enjoy and mind my own business and let other people do their thing." **[The child gives his theory of citizenship.]**

This is really frightening to me. I just couldn't believe what I was hearing. So I placed him under a five day suspension. **[The principal rejects the child's theory.]** The

father is employed as a chef of some kind and the mother is a private nurse. I phoned several times and couldn't get anybody at home, but I've got to have the parents in because this kid is showing very dangerous signs; very dangerous signs. You know the kind of kid who would not hesitate to kick a door down, or a window. And I haven't checked my car but maybe all my tires are flat by now. **[The principal sees this child as potentially ungovernable. He is an amoral child.]** But when a kid outright tells you he doesn't care what happens to public property, to his house or your house--and he's a nice looking kid which kinda surprised me. But just brutal! To me this kid has just got some kind of mis-concept of basic right and wrong. At least that's my first impression. That's why I suspended him so he could do some thinking about this thing. **[Being a principal means being able to recognize the signs of a dangerous or disordered personality.]**

I had an experience in another school where I had to repair nine hundred dollars worth of locks, 'cause kids jammed them with gum and that money came out of a fund which we had to buy uniforms and other things for the kids. So I'm not comfortable with this kid. You know, if you were my neighbour and I went out of town and you see someone breaking into my house--that's a wrong behaviour to expect from people in a society and I expect that whether it's your friend or your son, for you to do something about it. So here's a kid who's fourteen years old and in four years is going to be of the age of consent. Scary! **[The principal sees the situation with this young person over against a generalized view of society and the responsibilities inherent in social living. In a way he raises the question of the purpose of schooling.]**

You see, to me the school is a part of the socialization process. It's part and parcel of the expectations of the community. The school should extend and reinforce the community

expectations and the home expectations. Parents have a right to expect this. It's what schools are for. **[The principal theorizes about the purpose of schooling.]**

A Question of Value: A Hermeneutic Reading.

The principal immediately sets to work to outline the details of the case. Two boys are caught in the act of jamming a lock presumably so they can get back into the school at night. It looks suspiciously like a case of attempted vandalism. Clearly it is not the kind of situation that can just be ignored. Something needs to be done.

So the next morning the principa. egins to question one of the boys about the incident. The youngster is defensive if not slightly belligerent about it. He claims to have been trying to prevent the jamming of the lock and that it was his friend who is really the culprit. But then, significantly, he refuses to give the name of his friend when asked to do so by the principal. Then follows a long altercation between the principal and the boy which is noticeably counter-productive. Eventually the boy is handed a five day suspension.

This in a nutshell seems to be the essence of the situation as it is presented to us by the principal. We want to know what is going on here. We want to know what the issues are. We want to know in what way there is an educational, or better, a pedagogic quality to the principal's actions in this case.

We note first the rather un-dialogic, tension-ridden nature of the exchanges between the principal and the student. Clearly, there is little in the way of real conversation here. To the principal the issue is fairly clear cut. Here is a student who appears to have no respect for public or private property and who when quizzed about it displays frighteningly anti-social tendancies. The principal sees the task of trying to inculcate a certain respect for

social and community values which, after all, are part and parcel of the socialization process of the school.

So there is a definite pedagogic purpose behind the principal's questions. Clearly the questions are intended to point the way to a heightened sense of personal and social responsibility on the part of the fourteen year old. Naturally schools should aim in this direction. So the questions in this way are good questions. And yet they backfire, they do not hit home. The student replies in a way which discloses his unresponsiveness to this line of questioning.

What is interesting in this situation is the way in which the principal formulates a sense of this young person as someone who is basically unprincipled, as someone who wouldn't hesitate to kick down a door or smash windows if the need arose. And this is not just hyperbole. There is no doubt that the principal takes the student's behaviour very seriously. What the principal is saying is that this child is amoral and has no values. He is dangerous precisely because he is value-less.

And yet at the same time we can see how this might not be the whole story. What do we say, for example, about a child who refuses to tell on his friend? Is this the act of an unprincipled child? So while the principal orients to the value of property, the boy it seems orients to a value of a very different kind. What the boy stands up for in a sense is the value of friendship. Let us say that what the child puts first is the importance of human relations.

In a sense this is what we are faced with in this situation. The principal values property and the boy values human relations, but the principal cannot see this and thinks the child is amoral, that he has no values at all. But now a third question or value arises. It is the value or significance of pedagogy itself. This question has to do with the way in which the

principal formulates a sense of this child as someone who is, let us say, chaotic, anarchic--as someone who is fundamentally ungovernable. From the discourse of this principal it seems difficult if not impossible to do anything constructive for such a child.

So the child is shut out from those who ought to be in a position to help him most. Of course, the principal can claim to be acting for the public good, and that he is simply being "realistic" in his assessment and treatment of this child. And in a way he does just this in his suggestion that the school should extend and reinforce community expectations and the expectations of the home. But there is a bigger and more important point here. A school is not simply an extension of the home, nor is it the community writ small. Already this would be a major misunderstanding of the place and location of school. In being neither home nor community, it (the idea of school) occupies a middle ground of its own. It is a place where we introduce children to the world, but it is not the world. We do the idea of school great injustice when we think of it as simply a microcosm of the real world. This being the case we cannot base our actions or our conceptions of what is appropriate or inappropriate behaviour on the norms and values that inform the conduct of the "real" world. To do so would be pedagogically inappropriate. It would be to deny the very idea of school its internal validity, a validity which cannot be claimed and must not be sought in the general world of grown-ups.

Many consequences flow from this with implications for the present situation. For now all I wish to point out is that to be truly a principal would be to recognize the special place of schools as occupying a location somewhere *between* home and the world. It would mean that what goes on in schools draws its logic and its justification primarily from its place *between* and only secondarily from the extremities of home on the one hand or world on the other. This places the school principal in a special position. To be truly a principal is to understand how the deep structure of educational activity can only be arrived at through an

attentiveness to childhood and the educational process itself. Seen in this light we see how misplaced are analogies that try to link school and world, and how the standards that govern behaviour in the adult world cannot be used as a resource to structure educational activities.

So while the principal needs to hold to his adult value as a value worth holding, we also see the requirement for him to recognize the child before him as a child in the process of becoming. This, in a sense, is why we have schools, so that children who are not yet adults can "try on" the values of the adult world in a sympathetic and forebearing way. Not to see schools in this way is, in essence, not to see children, or at least to see children as no more than small adults. The difference being only a matter of size. As educators it is important for us to see the problematic character of this view and the anti-pedagogic vision that informs it.

Life-World Story Nine: A Question of Practice

> I had to deal recently with a young lady who is fifteen years of age and who was out of school most of last year. She was completely beyond her mother's control, (she is a single parent). She did not come to school, was not legally exempt, but if she appeared at the front door of the school with her mother she would disappear out the back door, and we spent a lot of time trying to track her down.
>
> Junior High School Principal

At this time she has accumulated some thirteen zeroes in her four academic subjects because her presence in the school seems to accommodate some need. I'm not sure what that need is -- probably the need to take the pressure of her social worker off her back as well as from her mother. She pretends to accept the responsibilities of a junior high school student but at this time she has six truancies. She disappeared yesterday when she signed out of school and wrote down "I'm hungry." Hungry for what I'm not sure! But the excuses are

all indicative of the non-performance of a junior high level student who is, let's say, misplaced.

This is a constant thing. These kids have identified themselves as kids who can't do well in school. There are funds available for these kids and they may go the route of getting bursaries from the government in an effort to continue at school, but sometimes they misappropriate those funds. It's another way to get money to drink and do whatever else they have to do.

So unfortunately, as a school administrator, I'm now making decisions that could terminate a stream of life for a kid and I don't believe my job is to make lifetime decisions on kids. But yet when they play havoc with the school and interrupt the learning process for twenty nine other kids in their class, and break all the rules by wearing jackets into class as if to indicate I'm only here until I choose to leave. So sometimes I use a 'lamb of slaughter' and eliminate that kid from the class in order to protect the other thirteen year olds who have a legitimate right to learn . . .

So these kids place me in an untenable position so I'm fighting that. Which means that this morning I had two class visitations scheduled to do teacher observations and try to evaluate teacher performance --I'm trying to do a file on all the teachers for the Board, and so the morning was shot. Next thing I knew it was twenty minutes to twelve. I had done nothing I had planned to do. So I had wasted many, many dollars of taxpayers' money who expect me to have an educational institution that is positive and one individual used up enough money for two or three kids for the morning.

And when I say wasted time I make reference to the positive time when I could be assisting to improve the expertise of a teacher if I have that kind of knowledge which would enable me to do that --and I do have some training that would help me. So when I say wasted

what I mean is here I am hunting for a lost child which is a job for the police. I'm assisting in establishing a control device and support system for the mother who is supposed to have control of the kid before she gets to me. In that sense I'm saying that what I have to do and what I perceive is my job as an educator are two totally different things.

A Question of Practice: An Interrupted Reading.

I had to deal recently with a young lady who is fifteen years of age and who was out of school most of last year. **[The principal tells his story.]** She was completely beyond her mother's control, (she is a single parent), she did not come to school, was not legally exempt, but if she appeared at the front door of the school with her parent, she would disappear out the back door, and we spent a lot of time trying to track her down.

At this time she has accumulated some thirteen zeroes in her four academic subjects because her presence in the school seems to accommodate some need. I'm not sure what that need is -- probably the need to take the pressure of her social worker off her back as well as from her mother. **[The principal offers his hypothesis to explain the girl's behaviour.]** She pretends to accept the responsibilities of a junior high school student but at this time she has six truancies. She disappeared yesterday when she signed out of school and wrote down "I'm hungry." Hungry for what I'm not sure! But the excuses are all indicative of the non-performance of a junior high level student who is, let's say, misplaced. **[The principal questions the intentions of this student. School is no longer a meaningful place for this girl.]**

This is a constant thing. These kids have identified themselves as kids who can't do well in school. There are funds available for these kids and they may go the route of getting bursaries from the government in an effort to continue at school, but sometimes they

misappropriate those funds. It's another way to get money to drink and do whatever else they have to do. **[The principal recommends a certain pragmatic attitude to administration. The good administrator is the one who knows what makes children tick.]**

So unfortunately, as a school administrator, I'm now making decisions that could terminate a stream of life for a kid and I don't believe my job is to make lifetime decisions on kids. But yet when they play havoc with the school and interrupt the learning process for twenty nine other kids in their class, and break all the rules by wearing jackets into class as if to indicate I'm only here until I choose to leave. So sometimes I use a 'lamb of slaughter' and eliminate that kid from the class in order to protect the other thirteen year olds who have a legitimate right to learn . . . **[Being an administrator means that at times you have to be prepared to sacrifice the interests of one child to safeguard the interests of the majority of the children. A question of control begins to surface here.]**

So these kids place me in an untenable position so I'm fighting that. Which means that this morning I had two class visitations scheduled to do teacher observations and try to evaluate teacher performance -- I'm trying to do a file on all the teachers for the Board, and so the morning was shot. Next thing I knew it was twenty minutes to twelve. I had done nothing I had planned to do. So I had wasted many many dollars of taxpayers' money who expect me to have an educational institution that is positive and one individual used up enough money for two or three kids for the morning. **[A certain theory of administration emerges in these lines.]**

And when I say wasted time I make reference to the positive time when I could be assisting to improve the expertise of a teacher if I have that kind of knowledge which would enable

me to do that -- and I do have some training that would help me. So when I say wasted what I mean is here I am hunting for a lost child which is a job for the police. I'm assisting in establishing a control device and support system for the mother who is supposed to have control of the kid before she gets to me. In that sense I'm saying that what I have to do and what I perceive is my job as an educator are two totally different things. **[A certain tension emerges in these lines. Clearly the principal has an image of what it means to be an educator yet this image is confounded or placed in question by the reality demands of the concrete situation. Let us say that his theory of principaling is continually tested by the practice.]**

A Question of Practice: A Hermeneutic Reading.

Unmistakably a certain tension emerges from the principal's story. It seems to be a tension between a certain image or idea of what being a principal ought to mean and the day-to-day reality of the work itself. In one sense it is the classic conflict between image and substance. So the principal has a certain theory of administration (an espoused theory) which includes such things as classroom visitations, teacher evaluations, teacher effectiveness and so forth. Yet what he finds is that his theory is constantly confounded by a stubborn reality which somehow refuses to fit into the tidy framework of the theory (theory in use). And it is interesting that when image and reality, (theory and practice), clash it is not the theory that is questioned so much as the practice. So now the practice (which in this story is exemplified by the story of the fifteen year old) is what is problematic and what has to be straightened out so that the practice-as-informed-by-theory can proceed as the principal obviously thinks it should. This is why, presumably, the principal is so obsessed with the thought that he is "wasting" time and money when he finds himself having to deal with the messy problems of day-to-day life in schools.

What is the principal recommending or exemplifying here? In a sense we could say that he is recommending a certain attitude to theory in this story. In essence what he is saying is that the good administrator is the one who stands more on the side of theory than on the side of practice. The good administrator listens to the voice of theory and tries so far as possible to bring the messy and often times unpredictable world of practice in line with the theory. In its most basic formulation what the principal is really saying is that the problem is practice and the solution is theory.

In a way the principal raises the question: what is practice and how could there be a rational practice that is not informed by theory in the usual sense of the term? It would be a worthwhile project to see how this might be possible but this is not our task here. In this section I would like to examine some of the consequences of this (theoretical) thinking particularly in light of the situation of the fifteen year old, whom I will call Chrissy in this story.

We note first how the principal formulates Chrissy's problem very precisely. She has "accumulated" some thirteen zeroes and six truancies. She plays hookey constantly and refuses to take her responsibilities as a junior high school student seriously. Then the principal takes on the role of amateur psychologist and comes up with various hypotheses to explain her behaviour. But the bottom line seems to be that there are some students who just cannot fit into the regular routine of school. These are the so-called deviants or hell-raisers. In the words of the principal, "..they play havoc with the school and interrupt the learning process." When this happens the administrator's responsibility is clear. The principal has a duty to step in and stop the trouble in the interests of the other children who are not so troublesome and who have a "legitimate right to learn." So to protect the interests of the many, Chrissy becomes a "lamb of slaughter."

Of course we can easily understand how a student like Chrissy could be a problem for the school. It is an undeniable fact of life that children like Chrissy exist and make the task of teaching very difficult. It may even be the case, as the principal suggests, that this student is misplaced and that school can no longer be a meaningful place for her at this point in her maturing process. So a child-sensitive principal would want to see this situation not just in terms of adolescent irresponsibility or as an instance of simple-minded refusal to conform, but rather would be challenged to see in Chrissy a picture of a maturing teenager who has reached a point in her own development that requires her to question and even doubt the validity of certain institutional structures and rules. He would be challenged to see in Chrissy a portrait of a child who now needs to be provided a certain healthful space for the questioning and asserting of the self-hood that is rightfully hers. And if in the final analysis the school has not and cannot find this space then it seems that the principal is challenged to consider what alternatives could be meaningful for this child. But the theory gets in the way. Kids like Chrissy place the principal in an "untenable position." Although we don't know exactly what the principal means by this it sounds as if he feels that dealing with students like Chrissy interferes with the real work of school administration.

> Which means that this morning I had two class visitations scheduled to do teacher observations and try to evaluate teacher performance -- I'm trying to do a file on all the teachers for the Board, and so the morning was shot. Next thing I knew it was twenty minutes to twelve. I had done nothing I had planned to do.

What are we to make of this talk of the "real task" of school administration? Where does this image or theory of administration come from? It certainly seems to have no warrant in the spontaneous happenings of everyday life in schools. Is it perhaps an illusion? A patina of rationality masking the smelly, sweaty, conflict-ridden realm of day-to-day living from which we would vainly try to avert our eyes? Does administrative responsibility live only

in well planned "visitations," completed files of teacher evaluations and the like? Or is there more to the work of being a principal than is suggested by the principal's words?

But the principal is quite explicit. Dealing with children like Chrissy is a waste of time. Time spent dealing with such students is really unproductive. And yet we should pause and consider the principal's recommendations more deeply. What the principal's words point to is a vision of schooling--or let us say education--which has no place for the testing of rules, probing of limits, or the assertion of self in other than organizationally approved ways. In this vision conflict is necessarily bad. It stands in the way of the work of the school. But the work of the school is not simply to school, it is also and more fundamentally to educate. And education in a deep sense rests on the dialectical interplay of certain founding antinomies. Only when we confuse education with schooling is it possible to overlook the antinomous structure of all pedagogic situations.

How does this relate to the situation of Chrissy? A pedagogic orientation to this situation would want to begin by recognizing that a certain rebelliousness, a certain testing of rules, probing of limits and so forth is part of the normal process of growing up. How else is it possible to arrive at a state of true maturity? In a sense we could say that Chrissy challenges us to see that education in its deepest sense can never be simply planned or organized into existence. It requires something more, something deeper. Something more pedagogic. What I am saying is that despite appearances, Chrissy's rebelliousness, her refusal to play by the rules may be her way of coming to terms with herself and the world around her. Her way of establishing a certain sense of self-hood, of refusing anonymity. Her way of finding herself.

> So when I say wasted what I mean is here I am hunting for a lost child which is a job for the police. I'm assisting in establishing a control device and support system for the mother who is supposed to have control of the

> kid before she gets to me. In that sense I'm saying that what I have to do and what I perceive is my job as an educator are two totally different things.

What is interesting is the way in which the principal should think of this as "wasted" time. What theory of administration is required for us to see such efforts as a waste of time? And the principal calls Chrissy a lost child. In what sense is she lost and lost to what? Although in a sense it is clear that Chrissy is lost to the regular curriculum, as educators we have to wonder whether she is also lost to a sense of independence and growth. In other words we should ask whether her difficult behaviour could not be her way of finding herself and her place in the world, appropriating her own existence, becoming a person. But the principal takes her behaviour very literally. She has thirteen zeroes and six truancies. She is a lost child. Not much to be hoped for here. Best to get on with other more productive activities.

In a nutshell this is what the principal is recommending to us. Part of the task of being a principal is recognizing the signs that tell of the futility of further effort. After all, there are other students and other affairs to which the principal is duty bound to attend. And fairness requires that they be allotted a certain amount of attention also. But still the question persists: if a child gives up on school do we give up on that child? Once a child has been "written off" how is it possible any longer to approach that child pedagogically? Who then is really lost?

This is not an altogether altruistic question that could only be posed by some naive idealist with no real concept of life in schools. The Chrissies of this world are pedagogically difficult. The point is not that we wish to condone, much less applaud, such behaviour only that we wish to see it pedagogically in the context of a young girl struggling towards her own sense of adulthood. Clearly Chrissy is not mature and adulthood still a distant goal. But the pedagogic challenge is to formulate a view of her truancy, weak academic

performance and so forth as a step or phase on the way to a full or fuller sense of her own self-identity. An educator who was truly an educator would see this. The pedagogic requirement for this is that we not take Chrissy's behaviour too literally, but that we see it in the context of a much deeper, more inward struggle of a young girl's quest for adulthood. The challenge to do this is the challenge of pedagogy itself.

Recapitulation

The main research task undertaken in this chapter was the attempt to read the principals' personal practical definitions of educational administration in a pedagogically oriented way. This was described as a hermeneutic activity to which a normative dimension has been added. The hope was that by engaging the stories in a strong way the pedagogic foundations of a principal's administrative practice would become clear. Once again, however, it is important to state that the intent was not to undermine nor to be unnecessarily critical of practice when we all know how difficult practical acting is at the best of times. Without doubt, the task of being a school principal is amongst the most difficult and challenging that could be imagined. It calls for qualities and abilities far beyond the average. And yet, by the same token, we ought not shirk the difficult and demanding task of searching out the foundations on which a stable and lasting practice can be built.

Attention now turns to the possibility of recapitulating the contents of this chapter. While it would be possible to endlessly recapitulate the approach and the methodology used in this study, the *contents* of the strong readings are not amenable to this kind of recapitulation. When we try to say what it is we know, or when we try to take in hand the contents of this knowledge we find that there is nothing there. *There are no contents that could be recapitulated.* In this study we find ourselves in the presence of a form of truth or knowledge which cannot be severed from the process or method by which such knowledge

is produced. A kind of knowledge that cannot be hoarded or stockpiled. So we should ask: what kind of knowledge is this knowledge, and what kind of truth is this truth that cannot be accumulated, that seems so strangely resistant to accretion?

It is beyond the scope of this study or this chapter to embark on a long exploration of this question. However, it is important to note that whatever insights and understandings come to be for us in this chapter, this coming-to-be could not be arrived at via any forceful and impatient process of scientific experimentation, methodological manipulation of data and so forth. Such a process is more likely to push such understanding beyond reach than permit us to enter into proximity. To enter into proximity we must expect to wait. Patience, waiting and a certain devotion to the question take the place of method. Much could be said about what is needful for such knowledge to arise and for what such knowledge requires of us. In each and every case we would likely find ourselves questioning current research practices, and even what we understand by research itself, in a profound and fundamental way.

Chapter IV

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE

The purpose of this chapter is to explore more fully the consequences that flow from the work of the last chapter for educational administrative practice. In the first part of the chapter an attempt is made to work out the nature of the administrative competencies suggested by the strong readings. This is followed in the second half of the chapter by suggestions for ways in which the competencies identified could be sponsored in principals. So the thrust of the chapter is to try to sketch the contours of a distinctly *educational* administrative practice. However, since the idea of educational administration is already an abstraction the question has to be posed as it pertains to a particular kind of educational administrator: the school principal. What do school principals practice? How is a school principal's practice constituted?

This is obviously a broad and difficult question. It is not easy to say with any sort of certainty or finality what a principal's practice entails. And yet to the extent that we actively seek in university programs to prepare principals to take on the task of principaling we presumably have in mind some notion of what the practice consists of, in the sense of what it includes and what it excludes. It is just this type of understanding that makes possible the existence of a field of study in the first place. In other words, we could say that the field of study of educational administration stands as an answer to the question, what is the practice? Each theory of educational administration stands as a *partial* answer to the question of practice since the truth of the matter is that the living practice is inevitably so much larger than any theoretical formulation such that any theory or set of theories runs the

risk of simplifying (if not actually falsifying) our understanding of the practice as it exists in life.

From the work of the previous chapter we can see how the principals' stories, taken as a whole, map a set of practices which, while they do not in any way exhaust the totality of educational administrative practice, nonetheless they imply something quite fundamental about the nature of the practice itself. They point a way. They are suggestive (rather than definitive) of what would have to be encompassed in anything approaching a competent educational administrative practice. Moreover, we note that the practices suggested by the stories are not the result of any disembodied process of conceptual analysis, but have their origin and point of departure in the life-stories of the principals themselves. They are practices anchored in life.

One of the results of doing a strong reading of each of the principals' stories is that one gains a view of how each practice implies a certain competence (we might call it a skill or capability), that would be required if the practice were to be realized (practiced) in a strong way. So the aim of doing a strong reading was not to be destructive of practice so much as to stand with practice (on the side of practice) in the way of wanting to see what would be required to convert such practices into strong practices. This is not a hostile act. It is, instead, a deeply constructive activity. Its aim is to help strengthen and build. What was sought in the previous chapter was not a negation of practice so much as an understanding of how a strong (oriented) practice could be constituted. And an oriented practice refers to one which orients itself to its centre, to its heart; to a practice which centres itself around what makes it a necessary and inevitable practice in the first place.

The challenge then is to give thought to the types of competencies that a truly oriented practice would require of us. This is the task of the present chapter. In this chapter I will

attempt to make a beginning in articulating what administrative competencies are (what they might look like), and how they could be fostered or developed. What is offered here is inevitably tentative and incomplete rather than a fully worked out program of action.

Reflecting on Administrative Competence

As the story of the missing wrist watch demonstrates, part of the skill of being a school principal lies in knowing just how seriously a situation should be taken. Bollnow (1989b) refers to this sensibility with the notion of humor: Humor is "an inner balance and a distance which allows the adult to see things with a sense of relativity which for the child appear absolute and insurmountable in the momentary situation" (p. 21). For the boy who lost the watch it was a disturbing incident. But in the scheme of things it was not a *deeply serious* event in the lives of the children. Yet, the principal went to great length to lend weight to the incident. We might say that the principal erred in improperly assessing the gravity of the situation. And thus the principal's actions became more controversial than the significance of the original event. From Bollnow's point of view the principal lacked perspective or humor, not in the sense that he did not know how to laugh or how to make fun of things. But in the sense that he could not demonstrate a sense of relativity appropriate to the situation. "Humor is the 'gift of the light hand' in dealing with the vulnerable child" (Bollnow, 1989b, p. 22). It is the sensitive competence of tact. A good principal will ask, does this situation require a light touch or a heavy hand? Would it be better left untouched altogether? What kind of touch is needed? As educators we know that getting the right touch can be crucial. This raises an interesting question. How does this or any other principal know just what kind of touch is called for?

The capacity to be sensitive to situations, to know what kind of touch is needed, I will call tactfulness after Van Manen (1988). Tact (from the Latin *tangere*, meaning to touch), is

related to tactile meaning sense of touch. For instance, we often say that if we want to know what to do (how to act) in a given situation we have to get a "feel" for the situation, we need to get "in touch" and there is more than a grain of truth in this idiomatic way of speaking. But how does one go about acquiring a "feel" for a situation? What does getting "in touch" actually require of a school principal?

First, gaining a practical sensitivity to a situation obviously involves more than simply a mental or cognitive awareness of the "elements" or "components" of a given situation or event. Getting a feel for a situation in this sense is much more in the way of a bodily (tactile) thing. It is more of a bodily attunement to the situation at a whole (Levin, 1985). So to stand in a tactful relation to someone or something is to stand in a certain physical relatedness to the person or event. This is very different from having a merely mental or a purely intellectual apprehension of things.

Getting a feel for a situation also implies a sensitiveness to mood or atmosphere. It is an attentiveness to the quality of what Bollnow (1960) calls "lived space." Homes, living-rooms, bars, churches, offices, marketplaces, sporting-events, classrooms, principals' offices, all have their own characteristic "feel," a particular atmosphere that in a certain way "belongs" to them and without which they would not be what in fact they are.

As educators, teachers and principals, we need to be attentive to the quality of lived space. What is space? Space is not just mathematical or dimensional space. We do the idea of space a great disservice if we think of it in negative terms as an absence, a lack, an emptiness, or if we think of space predominantly as something that makes possible the separation of physical objects. This is true for the school too. School space is not merely the structure minus the materials. School space is already and from the very beginning organized, structured, filled up, charged, bristling, as it were, with its own distinctive

quality. Moreover, the lived space of the school is characterized by a certain atmosphere, there is a certain quality or feel to it.

We climb the stone steps of the old cathedral and pass beneath the high arch. The solemn silence of the dark interior presses in on us from all sides. The quietude of reverence surrounds us. No words are spoken. Only the silence speaks. It is a language of the felt. A language of the skin. We "feel" it. Its words are unmistakable. Here, only certain thoughts are possible.

The experiential qualities of space are real phenomena. And it is just this ability to sense a mood, to feel atmosphere, to be open, pervious as it were, to the textuality of context that gives us the basis for knowing how to act, for knowing what is appropriate under a given set of circumstances. The result we call tactfulness. This is why tact is not merely an embellishment or behavioural gloss but is rather a way of knowing, perhaps even a way of being. It is a special kind of pedagogic competence. So a tactful principal will know just when something should be seen and when to avert his or her gaze; when to speak and when to hold silent; when to notice something and when to refrain from noticing. What tact makes possible is a certain quality of relatedness that allows someone to be simultaneously close yet distant from the other. In a tactful relation one avoids being intrusive, of intruding. One yields to the other the necessary life-space that is needed for that life to unfold. It is a relation in which I am guided in my actions by a desire to protect the sphere of the personal, to leave in-tact the living-space of the other as the space that is needed if that life is to develop as it should. There is to tact, a sort of holding back, a restraining of one's natural desire to act now or to behave impulsively or in a way that would be experienced as interfering. Tact is that quality of letting-be, of something that respects the nature of things. And yet this restraint, this "letting be" does not arise out of indifference or passivity but is founded from the beginning on a concern for the possibility

of relatedness, for the possibility of achieving a relation in which I am first and foremost animated by a concern for the well-being of the other.

Standing in a pedagogic relation I am drawn to the other as to someone who needs my help, my involvement in order to become all that he or she can become. This is not an indifferent relation. In a pedagogic relation I can no longer simply turn my back and walk away. This is what separates pedagogic tactfulness from the more everyday forms of social or general tactfulness. Part of what makes an educator an educator or a pedagogue a pedagogue is that capacity to see the as-yet-unrealized-possibilities-for-becoming that slumber within the child. And yet, though this perceptiveness is essential, this "seeing" is still not enough. For now the educator is called on through his or her work or actions, to awaken the other to those latent potentialities which he or she now actively seeks to evolve through work. For this the educator needs above all to be tactful if pedagogic practice is not to be experienced as interference or as meddling. The principal needs just the right touch, to be able to strike just the right tone in his or her dealings. This is what tact allows. It allows the possibility of relation, of being "in touch" with those with whom we stand in a pedagogic relation. Tact is the basis of contact.

It is generally well known how teachers encounter more frustration and disappointment in their work than most other occupational groups. This could be due to many factors but perhaps one reason could be found in the nature of the work itself. Teaching is an especially exposed activity. The true educator cannot hold back. Encountering children pedagogically requires an engagement of the whole person. In the encounter the educator is challenged to reveal more of himself or herself and his or her inner nature than in any other occupation. To be successful the educator has to identify with the existential situation with all the strength at one's disposal and with all the power of one's true convictions. Anything less will not hit the mark. More than heavy teaching loads, late-night marking,

extra-curricular tasks and so on, this is the real cost of education. Again and again teachers encounter situations where only the power of their inner convictions and strength of their sincerity can carry them through. It is this vulnerability, this exposure of the self that the educator is challenged to show that weighs so heavily. This is one reason why teachers such as the one in the principal's story can so easily become dispirited and burned out. Spirit is important. The true principal is the one who can re-inspire a dispirited teacher. This is very far removed indeed from a concern with so-called motivation skills or learning techniques for how to motivate teachers. A different order of understanding is involved here.

In the regular course of everyday life principals are constantly called upon to adjudicate value conflicts of one kind or another. Part of what it means to be a school principal is having to decide what is right what is wrong, what is good what is bad, what is appropriate what is inappropriate and so forth. And these decisions are never abstract decisions but are rather decisions grounded and required by the concrete immediacy of actual events and situations. For instance, when a child is sent to the principal's office that often implies a moment of moral decision, that a judgment of some kind is about to be rendered. So the task of moral reasoning, making moral judgements seems in many ways central to a principal's practice. In the story of vandalism the principal has to decide upon the value to be placed on the moral imperative of being loyal to one's friend over against the value to be placed on treating public property with due care and respect. He is called upon to allocate value. What shall the principal do? How (on what basis) can he or she decide? What is the principal's practice in such circumstances? Of necessity, the principal becomes involved in judging the child and rendering a verdict on the moral issues involved in the boy's behavior.

Education is from the first a normative practice. Despite modern attempts to turn teaching into a largely technical activity, schools have always been involved in questions dealing with the moral life of children. And fundamentally all curriculum practices involve questions of worthwhileness, goodness, appropriateness, and so forth. Teachers, especially principals, are often thought of as people who may be relied on to take a stand on various moral questions, especially those that bear upon the moral life of the child. Education in its broadest sense has long maintained its right to participate in the process of conscientization, the forming of an individual in the full (moral) sense of the word. The notion of punishment and of punishing received its justification from a vision of education which saw itself as intimately involved with the moral life of the child, that is with the process of character formation. It was in this sense that schools could claim to be a preparation for life--not in the narrower vocational sense that now prevails--but in the sense of preparing a child to stand in life where standing in life implies a readiness to celebrate life's joys as well as a preparedness to withstand the vicissitudes that human living inevitably implies. So in the previous chapter the principal's *practical* definition of educational administration as a morally oriented practice is by no means misplaced. We may even wonder whether the principal has grasped something basic to the practice that has been lost to more modern forms of educational administration.

So part of the competence that is needed to be a principal involves the realization that education in its deeper sense is a fundamentally moral endeavor. Schools are not just places where children learn math and science, for example. More fundamentally they are places where children learn to become someone, where "becoming someone" now implies what has long been thought of as a process of moral and personal growth: a process of conscientization in the full sense of the word. The real problem, however, turns on the question of how to involve children in a process of personal, moral and intellectual growth?

How is personal growth possible? Part of the competence of being a principal is the posing of this question, but part lies also in the way in which a principal attempts to answer it.

These questions are, of course, amongst the most difficult that could be raised. And yet such questions are central to any adequate formulation of administrative practice in schools. In this section I can do no more than sketch the broad outlines of the direction in which answers to such questions should be sought. A fuller treatment of these questions, while beyond the scope of the present study, would be a major contribution to educational administrative theory.

What special competence is required here? By what manner or means can an educator, a principal, contribute to the moral growth of a child? If the moral growth one seeks is to be a real phenomenon and not merely a show or pretense of growth then its source must be located deep within the psychic consciousness of the child. It cannot be an external attachment of this or that particular value from the outside as through some process of persuasion or worse, a coercive process of some kind. In the case of the student who broke into the school, the boy must be brought to a situation where he can come to see *for himself* the value inherent in preserving things held in common as a value worth preserving. But to be morally valuable the value must be freely chosen. It must be freely entered into as the conscious act of a free agent freely choosing.

We come close here to an essential part of an educative (pedagogic) relation. Namely for the principal to see that the child must have available to him the social-psychological space to arrive at his own moral conclusion and that the educator must not rob the child of the opportunity of coming to a stand even if the place of the stand is other than the educator would himself have chosen. In what position does this place the educator? Does this mean that the educator must stand idly by in the face of whatever moral direction the child seems

headed? Of course, the educator is no mere moral spectator but actively seeks to engage the child in a process of moral reflection not simply so the child may become "clear" about the consequences of holding to this or that value, but with the active intent that the child will take up the desired (desirable) value. So the educator as pedagogue tries to steer the child in a particular direction but always in the knowledge that the choice of final destination remains with the child. It is this realization (I will call it this competence), that saves education from degenerating into a species of indoctrination.

But the principal's practice in this situation implies a further competence which relates to the idea that moral growth cannot be compelled, cannot be forced. If it is to occur at all it must arise naturally and of its own necessity from within the recesses of human consciousness. It cannot be contrived. It is just this feature of moral growth that gives rise to a necessary element of risk that attaches to all truly educative activities. There is no possibility here that the educator can guarantee the success of his or her efforts. Because the child must be free to choose there remains always the possibility that the child may choose despite, or even in the face of the intentions and wishes of the educator. The educator may fail. This possibility is what weighs so heavily in all educational activity. For the risk of failure is not merely an ancillary or incidental feature of education but belongs to it as part of its essential structure. It is just this aspect of educational work that cannot be planned or calculated away but remains nevertheless a risk which the educator must be willing to embrace. The educator's willingness to do so we can call a certain kind of pedagogic competence.

But there is still a further competence arising from the principal's story which relates to the place and function of punishment in the overall upbringing of a child. In the principal's story a boy has been caught red-handed jamming a door lock with the apparent intention of getting into the school later in the day. The experience of "being caught" now

fundamentally alters the modality of the way in which people, events, relationships, and so forth, are experienced. Now the world and everything in it are experienced from the point of view of the one-who-has-been-caught. Is this pedagogically significant? A pedagogically sensitive adult realizes that it is likely that a certain shamefulness, a certain consciousness-of-having-done-wrong now permeates the child's experiencing of the world. The experiencing ego now encounters the world on distinctly different terms. Psychologically, this places the one-who-has-been-caught in a position of extreme vulnerability; points of contact between self and world are stretched thin, even to the breaking point; relationships that were firmly grounded in respect, mutuality and so forth, become tentative and fragile. Defending the exposed ego now becomes the mainspring of action.

The point for pedagogy is to understand how far this altered state of consciousness acts as an impediment for the restoration of pedagogic relations. A pedagogically sensitive adult understands the importance of assisting the child to regain the earlier state of consciousness in order for the world to be once again encountered on its own terms. And here we approach for the first time what we might regard as the pedagogic justification for punishing. Here punishment has a certain pedagogic value in providing for a form of atonement by means of which the child is provided a means of paying off debts. It is a way of "getting out from under" a means by which the full potency of pedagogic relations can be restored. From the child's point of view it is extremely important that such opportunities be granted so that he not be condemned to labour indefinitely under the educator's "bad opinion" of him. This is certainly part of the larger pedagogic competence that is implied by the principal's story--namely to see that when punishing is called for, what calls for punishment is a pedagogic understanding of the child's need to return to an earlier state of consciousness characterized by a free and open relation with the world. It

need hardly be said that this is very different from punishing for retributive reasons, to demonstrate a power relation or to convince a child of the wrongfulness of his or her actions.

Part of the difficulty we face as adults and as educators, is that as we grow older we inevitably become more and more removed from the phenomenological world of children. In time, adult ways of seeing, feeling, perceiving, experiencing and so forth, push aside our awareness (remembrance) of the ways-of-being of childhood. For many of us childhood becomes a remote and alien landscape--a world we no longer inhabit. Or perhaps childhood is seen as the adult world in embryo and the child no more than an adult-in-waiting. But such views lack pedagogic awareness. They take the world of mature adulthood as the starting point, as the taken for granted standard by which all others are to be judged. They are adult-centered views. But childhood is not merely a rehearsal for adulthood; it does not simply anticipate the world of grown-ups. A child encounters the world unambiguously as a child and not as a would-be adult. The structures-of-consciousness of childhood possess their own validity and integrity, their own form of rationality, even their own lawfulness. They do not simply mimic the structures-of-consciousness of adulthood. To stand in the world as an adult is a very different experience from standing in the world as a child. Two quite different worlds are involved here. This realization qualifies as a further administrative competence.

Part of the competence of being a principal consists in being able to create a pedagogic space for children. This is the true test of a principal or educational administrator. More than bureaucratic capacities or management organizational skills of one kind or another it is this competence that is decisive for principals. In the context of this study the question arises out of all, but especially out of the story of the boy who swore at his teacher. In this story we were able to see how the principal formulates a notion of school that places a

premium on form (image) rather than substance. The principal has a set of rules: no chewing gum, no bad language, and no wearing skimpy shorts, all of which are efforts to secure the right kind of scholarly atmosphere. The point is not that this is necessarily wrong or somehow inappropriate, but rather that what the principal is unable to grasp is that no amount of rules will do the trick. Pedagogic space cannot be secured by rules or admonitions of various kinds. It can only be secured by those who are themselves animated from the first by the spirit of pedagogy itself. That is why in the final analysis pedagogic space can never be planned or organized into existence. If it is to exist at all it can only be lived, and has no existence outside of that living. That is why we can say that pedagogic space is immanent to its own ontology. The recognition of this truth we can call a certain kind of administrative competence.

What kind of space shall we call pedagogic? This is an interesting, though at the same time very difficult question. Like most questions it is a lot easier to say what kind of space is not pedagogic than to say what is. Probably the biggest mistake we make in education is to imagine that space is something that can be safely ignored as something that is at best peripheral to the task of educating children. We all know how schools differ dramatically in the quality of the tone or atmosphere they exude. I can well remember, for example, the bleak and rather forbidding nature of the school I attended as a child: the sombre, high-ceilinged classrooms with their scuff-marked floors, narrow windows, and heavy wooden desks lined up in immaculate rows. There, at the beginning of each school year, we were given our assigned, never-to-be-varied locations. Talking was strictly forbidden. To speak at all required that we put our "hands up" and wait to be acknowledged by the teacher.

The pedagogically important point is not to be merely nostalgic, nor unnecessarily critical of schools and their ways, but rather to recollect how school space is never experienced by children as simply or purely space. Space always has a certain ambiance or tonal quality to

it that is instantly recognizable. So school space can be experienced by children as warm and inviting or as cold and cheerless; as joyous or as joyless places; as bleak and forbidding or as filled with warmth and the sheer joy of existence; as lifeless and dreary or as demanding, exciting, inspiring places; as spirited or spiritless; as caring or as indifferent places. Or more naively, and perhaps more child-ishly, as simply good-places-to-be, as against not-such-good-places.

The important point is that atmosphere (mood) is a pedagogically potent phenomenon. It is not just that a warm, inviting atmosphere is something it is nice to have, as the icing on the cake, or as that which makes the "real work" of educating students at all palatable. Already this would be a serious mis-reading of what the task of educating calls for. If schools are to become the pedagogic places we wish them to be then a concern for the way(s) children experience the space that is school is singularly important.

Contemporary versions of educational administration are, for the most part, quite indifferent to the lived-space of schools. Preparation programs for principals generally do not concern themselves with questions of space, mood, tone, atmosphere as well as all those fundamental emotional conditions and sentient human qualities which form the basis of every pedagogical relationship. And yet these are all questions which are foundational for our pedagogic work with children. Today they are lost questions. And yet, as I have tried to show in this section, they are central to any serious analysis of what the task of being a principal calls for.

Part of the problem we face is that the process of education has come to be thought of as analogous to a type of making or producing. And yet pedagogic space cannot be created in the same way we might go about the task of bridge-building or furniture-making for example. In these activities the task is very largely that of assembling the necessary raw

materials and applying the correct craft. Not that such activities are ever easy or simple, often they are highly complex, specialized activities in which outstanding craftsmen know their material and what potentialities belong to it. But nonetheless, the process of building a bridge or making a fine chair is still essentially a technical activity in which the task is approached in a step-wise fashion (first you do this, then you do that), in light of the availability of raw material and the presence of the necessary skill and knowledge. What we usually mean by craft. But creating pedagogic space is an activity of a different kind. It is not a craft in this or any other sense.

How education could come to be seen in this light (as a kind of craft) remains a yet unanswered question. However that may be, it nonetheless remains decisive that so long as pedagogic activity is seen as a type of making or producing (manufacturing), certain kinds of questions never appear into view. The challenge in one sense is to reanimate in principals and other educational administrators a concern for the pedagogically important questions. What is required is a re-orienting of basic assumptions in a most fundamental way. In the next section I want to address the question of how this could possibly be done.

How Can Administrative Competence Be Sponsored in Principals?

Herbart argued that it is the extent to which a principal has been able to cultivate a sense of pedagogic tactfulness that distinguishes that person as a good or bad educator (van Manen, 1988). Part of the skill of being a principal consists in being able to enter into the child's subjective experience of things. A child-sensitive principal will have a good idea how a word, a look, a glance, a frown and so forth, is likely to be experienced in the life-world of a child. This is the starting point for tact. Without a grasp of the child's subjective experience it is difficult if not impossible to formulate a pedagogically appropriate

response, our efforts miss the mark and we lose the chance to make a pedagogic difference in the life of this or that child. This is why one of the most important ingredients of tact is the capacity to enter into the child's subjectivity--not out of idle curiosity, but in order to formulate a response that would take into account the lived meaning of an event as the place where we need to begin.

This is one reason why principals need to study children. Principals need to engage in lifeworld studies in order to come face-to-face with the structures-of-consciousness that belong to childhood as a distinct life-phase. They need to do studies of the way children experience time and space, for example, as well as the ways children experience the myriad phenomena that constitute school life. Such studies have value in re-animating in principals consciousness of a life-phase from which they are increasingly alienated. The point is not that we wish to relinquish our status as adults and somehow become as children. That would be foolish. Only that we wish to place our adulthood in the service of a pedagogic understanding of children, and that means a re-turn to the existential landscape of childhood in order to begin with the child's subjective experience of things.

The point for tact is that it can never be realized or achieved in the abstract. Tact in principals is unlikely to be developed by studying various abstract theories of children or childhood, anymore than by examining the linguistic history or epistemology of tact. If tact is to be acquired at all, it can best be done by turning to the actual, concrete, sentient, lived world of children and by reflecting pedagogically on practical experience. A principal who reflects on his or her practical experience is not just retro-actively making pedagogic sense of experience. Whoever reflects on experience re-appropriates experience in new embodied form (Van Manen, 1988). This is very different from possessing vast amounts of abstract or externally derived knowledge. Once I have experienced something or once I have approached or dealt with a child in a certain way, then my pedagogic reflection on the

experience has the effect that the total situational, sentient, cognitive, emotive, esthetic, spiritual and physical quality of this experience now bears the reflective impression of a certain pedagogic meaning or significance.

It would be only too tempting to conceive of tact as a set of practical skills or competencies which, once properly researched, could be systematically outlined and then taught to beginning teachers or principals. But the route to tact is not so easy. This is partly because we are not dealing here with a particular behavioural skill or item of scientific knowledge. Nor can tact be produced on demand as if by some conscious effort of the will. To the extent that it exists at all it is always and already present needing only circumstance to reveal itself. There is no duality here. Tact as knowledge cannot be stored away ready to be "on call" whenever the occasion serves. It is not that there is us and then there is tact. Tact is not so much in (or out) of us so much as we are in tact. That is why tact cannot be taught as such. It cannot be reduced to the object of some didactic process. Unlike technical skills which can be passed from hand to hand, tact as an outgrowth of a certain disciplined sensibility can only be acquired through a rigorous process of self-formation. Ironically, this is what the classical conception of education as *Bildung* (Bollnow, 1988) always sought to achieve before it was overtaken by the more narrowly conceived modern notion of education as the acquisition of skills and knowledge.

But to say that tact cannot be taught directly is not to say that the conditions for its acquisition cannot be provided. If tact cannot be taught directly perhaps it can be taught indirectly. As I tried to show in the last chapter the raw materials for its acquisition are all around us in the form of the everyday situations (stories) that principals have to deal with. The stories-as-data are the starting point for hermeneutic reflections which in turn open up the possibility for new insight and deepened understanding. It is the application of this kind of disciplined reflectivity that gives us the possibility of sponsoring tact in principals.

For example, if a concern for pedagogic space is to be fostered in principals and other educational administrators then such people need to engage in descriptive (phenomenological) studies of the lived space of schools. Such studies need to be phenomenological because our interest in lived space is not simply a taxonomizing interest--as would be the case, for example, if we were interested primarily in inventory work on the various "types" of lived space as a prelude to some later "explanatory" study. Already this would reveal a certain kind of interest in children and the spaces they inhabit. On the contrary, our interest in descriptive studies is animated from the first by a pedagogic desire (interest) to know what kind of spaces children experience as good spaces. We want to know what (in the experience of children) constitutes good space.

If principals are going to be able to inspire others, then they themselves need to possess that certain excellence that is teaching. They have to be people who are themselves animated from the first by the spirit of pedagogy. Pedagogic competence is not acquired in the abstract, but is achieved in the sentient world of the here and now where an adult encounters a child in a sympathetic yet demanding way. The difference that pedagogy makes cannot be hoarded away, but must constantly be replenished in pedagogic activity itself. Much like body-tone or muscular fitness, staying in good pedagogic shape requires constant exercise of the pedagogic facility. That is one reason why principals who become administratively disconnected from teaching stand in peril of loosing their pedagogic touch. Sensitivities atrophy. That is one reason why principals need to remain teachers at heart and in practice.

By being disconnected from teaching, principals tend to become disconnected, not only from the children or students, but also from the teachers. And yet, the principal derives an important part of his or her mandate from the notion of principal as the first teacher, the old notion of headmaster. And so a principal should be someone who knows how to

invigorate, or perhaps re-invigorate, teachers. This is not done simply by sending teachers to inservice sessions or workshops on so-called stress management techniques. Nor can a principal remain aloof or indifferent to the fate of teachers on his or her staff. It is not enough for a principal to have a well developed repertoire of behaviour management skills but more profoundly a principal should be someone who understands that all truly significant pedagogic effects occur in the realm beyond the borders of rationally planned action. So we should ask, what makes a principal an inspiring leader?

An inspiring principal is not necessarily the person with an eloquent command of language or well developed communication skills. Nor, is inspiration likely found in the jargon of modern administrative theory, as someone who can clarify goals or mobilize resources. To (in)spire is literally to breathe into someone the breath or spirit of pedagogy itself. This is what an in-spirational principal can do. A principal who is a true leader is someone who can enthuse a spirit of pedagogy in teachers. Today the notion of enthusiasm has entered the literature of teacher effectiveness in a big way. Enthusiasm, so we are told, is one of the hallmarks of an effective teacher. And yet the notion of enthusiasm has a deeper foundation than we often realize. An enthusiastic teacher is not simply someone who can put on a big display and gesticulate grandly to suit the demands of the moment. Buried within the word itself (enthusiasm from the Greek, *enthousiasmos*), is the Greek root *theos* or god. To the Greeks, to be enthused or enthusiastic was literally to be possessed by a god; to be taken over, inhabited by a power not of our own making.

It is difficult any longer to speak of teachers or of teaching as something needing to be possessed, taken over. In the modern age of science the idea has something rather vague and mystical sounding to it. And yet teachers who are true teachers, parents who are true parents are those who are literally inhabited by the spirit of pedagogy. Needless to say,

enthusing teachers with the spirit of pedagogy cannot be done in any technical or step-wise fashion.

Finally, there is the question whether anyone and everyone who aspires to administration would be suited to become a principal. One of the conclusions of this study is that people with dogmatic tendencies or who manifest a predisposition for authoritarian modes of conduct would not be appropriate as principals. Rather, they must have a certain openness of understanding. The quality of openness and breadth of understanding I have in mind (which is really a kind of a tolerance), generally comes from having lived deeply in the way of having experienced the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows that are the inevitable accompaniment of living. The call here is for a certain flexibility of outlook that would be the reverse of any form of ethno-centrism or ego-centrism, or centrisms of any kind. What kind of curriculum could be devised to sponsor this? In one way it would be the curriculum of life. The qualities needed for successful administrative practice in schools belong most often to those who have truly lived, that is who have themselves undergone many experiences and who are in the best sense experienced people. And yet this alone would still not be sufficient. It would not yet be enough simply to have lived--as if "having experiences" can vouchsafe for anything outside itself. What is called for is that quite different capacity to reflect on life, to develop a certain reflectiveness, a kind of self-reflectivness which makes our life with children its object.

So the real question is, what kind of professional education can sponsor this? What kind of pedagogic practices can lead in the direction of thoughtful, self-conscious actors? What kind of education can stimulate a self-reflective quality in principals? Of course, it is always possible that for some persons at least no education can do this. We need to face the possibility that there are individuals who are so fixated in their views and so dogmatic in outlook that education cannot prevail. Here is a case for the careful screening and

selection of those in whom we wish to place pedagogic authority. Candidates admitted to a preparation program in educational administration ought to be those who give evidence of a certain openness and receptivity to new ideas and points of view. They need to be thoughtful, sensitive people. It is not quite enough that they bring with them years of practical, on the job experience but more importantly that they bring also a willingness to put this experience on trial, to allow it to be put to the test and where necessary allow newer and deeper understandings to replace earlier ones. In short such people will need to be educable.

Recapitulation

In this chapter a preliminary attempt was made to work out certain of the administrative competencies that flow from the strong readings of the previous chapter. Clearly, these are not *behavioural* competencies of the kind with which the field of educational administration is more or less familiar, but belong rather to a different order of human experience. From the point of view on which this study is based, these *ontological* competencies are the more primary and basic competencies. They do not exclude or reduce the importance of so-called behavioural competencies, so much as they act to create a context of meaning within which to better understand the place, role and function of behavioural competencies. In the second part of the chapter suggestions were made as to how these ontological competencies might be sponsored. The chapter concluded with some thoughts on the type of personality appropriate for administrative preparation and how such person-ality relates to the acquiring of the designated competencies. Once again, it is important to note the inevitably tentative and unfinished nature of the work of this chapter. And yet, though tentative and provisional the chapter nonetheless points a direction in which future research might usefully proceed.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION:

EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AS PEDAGOGIC PRACTICE

In this study an attempt has been made to restore the adjective "educational" of the phrase "educational administration" to its rightful meaning and significance. This was argued to be important since the study of educational administration has been moving ever closer to the more general disciplines of business administration and organization theory. Thus the language of commerce and organization theory has become a powerful jargon by means of which educational leadership makes sense of educational realities at the level of schools and classrooms and educational policies at the level of public and political life.

However, the main thrust of this study has not been to criticize, nor even to prove the validity of the hereforementioned thesis. Already there has been an active (though limited) literature that has been exercising such a criticist function (e.g., Bates, 1984, 1986; Greenfield, 1975, 1980, 1986; Sergiovanni, 1980, 1985, 1986; Vandenberg, 1982). Though helpful and important in drawing attention to the limitations inherent in behavioral-science approaches to educational administration, much of the critical literature is pitched at a theoretical or even meta-theoretical level with the result that it is often unclear how such work can contribute to a *practical* understanding of what it means to be a principal. By contrast, the intent of this study has been to go beyond criticism in order to explore a way in which the practical, concrete, everyday educational discourse by school principals can be studied in order to formulate approaches by means of which such discourses and such practices can be strengthened. Such phenomenological hermeneutic is assumed to bear

consequences for the way that educational administration may be differently understood and practiced at the academic and at the school level.

The thrust of this study has been to show that the deep significance of the task of the school administrator or principal is to be found in the pedagogic ground of its vocation. And so when we listen to stories by principals, we attempt to discern in what way the stories show pedagogic weakness and in what way they may be strengthened as examples of administrative practices. The methodology for engaging in this inquiry has been presented as a practical hermeneutic (reading) of the texts of life. And an attempt has been made in this study to demonstrate the nature of the "stages" of hermeneutic reading of the principals' stories. These stages were not just offered as a way of exposing research procedure. Rather, they were offered in the hope that the textual and dialogic quality of the stories in their different modalities would have the effect of leading toward a deepened understanding of the pedagogical impulse of administrative practices.

Educational Administration as Pedagogic Practice

Throughout this study there has been the general assumption that current interpretations of administrative practices in schools have stressed the managerial and organizational nature of educational administration to the detriment of the curricular and pedagogic aspects. This has led to insights into the nature of educational administrative practice that are *at best* partial and one-sided. For some time now educational administration has developed as a separate and independant field of study in almost complete isolation from the *familia educatio*, prefering to regard itself as part of a general science of administration. This development has been made possible by the belief that the work of the educational administrator is *in principle* different from the work of teachers and other educators, and that as a consequence a separate practice exists complete with its own syntactical structure, set of common

problems and concepts, modes of inquiry, agreed upon procedures and so forth. The conclusion of this study would tend in precisely the opposite direction. Educational administration is better thought of not as an-*other* practice, separate and distinct from curricular or pedagogic practices but rather as extensions and intensifications of these same practices. As these practices writ large. This does not mean that we should be organizationally or administratively inept, only that we recognize that a strong administrative practice in education would be a practice suffused from the beginning by the impulse of pedagogy. For educational administration to become a strong practice with the capacity to contribute seriously to the work of educators it needs to be reconstituted from the ground up as a pedagogic practice.

As I have tried to show, the development of a pedagogically-oriented educational administration does not yield a new or hitherto unknown practice. Rather it yields to the practice what truly belongs to it, and what constitutes its ground and first moment. Rather than venturing into unknown territory the experience of reconstituting educational administration in pedagogic terms is more like coming home. Finding one's feet. Seeing the ground we stand on in a new light. And yet, oddly enough, for us it is experienced as a kind of adventuring. Writing this thesis can be likened to a kind of homecoming.

There are many implications stemming from the work of this study. The first of them would be the need to look afresh at what the task of educating children calls for. Educational administration cannot afford to ignore this question. We can no longer be satisfied with half-truths, language that does not disclose, or that in the name of progress degrades old truths to the status of meaningless trivialities. Something important is at stake here. Hard won insights are in danger of atrophying. As a first step we need to map the contours of the practice, not in the sense of establishing "boundaries" but in the sense of seeing *on what* the practice stands as well as *for what* the practice stands. I do not know

how easy this will be. We will need to learn, or perhaps re-learn, to look again with unencumbered eyes on the world that lies at our feet. Nothing less will suffice.

In place of a preoccupation with method and procedure we will need a persistent asking of the big questions. For instance, we should ask, why do we educate? For what reason do we engage in educational relations with others? What meaning do children have for us in a world we inhabit together? What is the relation between education and life? Between old and young? What is the nature of pedagogic relations? What really does it mean to be principal of a school? And so on and so forth.

By contrast, today in educational administration we have opted for method and methodology as the preferred means for improving practice. Abstract technique rules as the *sine-qua-non* of truth and truthfulness. A certain cynicism reigns regarding the practical utility of questioning. We have become suspicious of thought. In this study I have tried to demonstrate the ultimate impracticality of such views.

In the end I am conscious of having been able to do no more than raise certain questions concerning the meaning and significance of educational administration that it seems necessary to raise. The motivation for these questions arises not at a political or theoretical level, but rather at the level of ordinary everyday experience in order to try to see empirically, *at the level of actual practice*, wherein the deep meaning and significance of educational administration might be found. Revealing meaning was understood in this study as a practical hermeneutic in which the researcher is normatively involved with the substance of the research questions.

Finally, the category of *meaning* opens up onto a fresh field of fertile new questions that are of decisive importance for the work of principals and other educational administrators. This is because a concern for meaning *is* a concern for practice. There is no duality here. It

is precisely the capacity to grasp meaning, to decide on some basis what does or does not belong to *a practice* that is decisive for practice. It is what in a certain sense rules or governs practice. The category of meaning is what gives *the very idea of practice* its coherence and intelligibility, and what makes it possible to refer to a particular practice as an obedient (as opposed to a disobedient) practice. In the end it is what saves this or that practice from being a mere series of events or conglomeration of jumbled up actions.

At the same time, a concern for meaning will not yield the possibility of predicting or controlling practice in the way of a positive science of educational administration. Yet this is less a limitation of the study than a recognition of the fact that the attempt to master practice in this way is, in any event, an ephemeral and unachievable goal. The living practice of educational administration is inevitably so much larger and more elusive than any theoretical formulation could be. Furthermore, we need to see how in educational administration the attempt to *construct* a field of study based on a "body of knowledge" or set of propositional findings already diverts our thinking onto the wrong path. In this study I have tried to show how far removed from any kind of *constructing* is the task of sponsoring pedagogic vision in principals. Within the human sciences the aim is not so much with controlling or otherwise *dominating* practice, any more than with building abstract and artificial "bodies of knowledge" of one kind or another, but rather with *serving* in the sense of *ministering* to practice with a renewed vision or sense of the good that is to be served in the ministering. What more could a fully developed practice of educational administration ask?

AFTERWORD

Several years ago, when I embarked on a period of doctoral study, I could not have foretold what lay in store. I could not have guessed at that time that I would be writing this afterword as the last act (for now) of a long, at times painful, at times ecstatic process of self-world discovery. Much has changed, and yet for all that, much remains the same.

On reading early drafts of this dissertation, friends and colleagues have drawn attention to what they see as a certain harshness of tone or unsympathetic rendering of the predicament of the principals in this study. The accusation seems to be that I have tended to judge the principals and their actions without being sufficiently sensitive to the actual, real-world context in which the task of administering schools occurs. "The agony of being a principal isn't here," a respected colleague commented. I am grateful, indeed, for such candid and well-intentioned responses.

It is true. The research could and perhaps should have been more sympathetic. In this study there is little direct description of the sweat and the stress, the tension and the pressure that is part and parcel of the task of being a principal. As this is not an ethnographic study, I have done little "to get inside the skin" of the principals and to chronicle the sleepless nights, the missed lunches, the myriad problems large and small that all combine to make the job of being a principal a difficult and challenging task. And yet despite this omission I am not entirely sanguine about the auspices on which such critical observations by colleagues rest. For it seems to me that such criticism has once again begun by accepting, at face value, an applied-science, problem-solving orientation to (the relation between) research and practice that this study attempts to make problematic. It is not that I wish to

slight practice nor to suggest that there are no good principals, but rather to point out that more is involved than being either sympathetic to the plight of principals, or to adopting a problem-solving orientation to the concrete situations of practice. Being "critical" is precisely the point of this study and the point at which the assumptions on which it is predicated, diverge most markedly from those that underpin the field of study at large. One of the important implications of this research is to show that the relation between the *study* of educational administration (as exemplified, for example, in the work of this dissertation), and its *practice*, has not been adequately grasped when viewed in terms of the traditional categories of theory and practice, that is as an essentially problem-solving relation.

This is tantamount to saying that the field of study of educational administration does not exist simply and solely on the basis of its alleged capacity to help sort out and make more manageable the actual situations and conditions of practice. Educational administration is *not* an applied science. For so long as the field of study sees this (in so many sundry ways) as its dominant relation, for so long will it remain in a purely technical relation to its practice, and for so long will its potential contribution to practice remain unrealized. If I am seen to have been critical (perhaps too critical) of the principals' practices in this study, perhaps this only underscores once more how far the field has drifted away from serving the real needs of practice. Certainly, a central assumption of this study is that the only way to strengthen such practices in any truly meaningful way is through a searching and *critical* examination *of the actual situations of practice*. In this regard we should note the origin of our modern words "critical" and "critique" in the Greek *krinein*, meaning to separate out or to purify. Interestingly, as Otto Bollnow (1987:1) points out, this is also the origin of our modern word, "crisis." In this study the aim is not to be destructive of practice so much as to engage in a process of *de-construction* in order to discern the invisible contours and deep

configurations of the practice. This is an act of a very different kind and one which leads to very different consequences.

We do this study a disservice if we regard it as written in a spirit of cavalier indifference to the actual conditions and situations of practice. Yet such reactions and responses are not without their own pedagogic value in pointing once again to the need for renewed questioning of the very grounds on which the study of the practice of educational administration stands. It bears repeating, that from the point of view on which this study is based, we do not study practice simply to help solve (even if this were possible) the infinitely extendable problems of practice. Already that would be to restrict too much, and to place unacceptable limits on the need for graduate study in the field. This is another way of saying that the need for study rests not on the narrow ground of efficiency and effectiveness considerations, as much as on the need to discern more clearly on what and for what the practice of educational administration stands. This task still awaits its commencement.

THESES

1. *When principals tell "stories" about their daily jobs then these anecdotal texts may be considered as narrative definitions of the "practical" meaning of being a principal or school administrator.*

2. *The task of research in the human sciences calls for maximum engagement and maximum subjectivity.*

3. *An engaged attitude is not simply a methodological device but rather a fundamental principle of knowledge in the human sciences.*

4. *The capacity to grasp meaning is what is decisive for practice. This is a phenomenological hermeneutic activity from the ground up.*

5. *The normative basis of educational administration is located in the pedagogic ground of its vocation.*

6. *The intent of theory and research in educational administration lies in overcoming neutrality and in replacing all "objective" relations with the existential relations of pedagogy.*

7. *Reconstituting educational administration as a pedagogic practice does not yield a new or unknown practice. Rather it cedes to the practice what was already there as its ground and first moment.*

8. *Strong practices are more obedient than masterful. This is as true in educational administration as elsewhere.*

9. *Strengthening a practice is a problem not of memorization but of memory.*

10. *Remembering what belongs to a practice is a caring act. It is the act of making whole.*

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