

W. A. LANDMAN: SEEKER, DESCRIBER, AND HERMENEUTICIST IN FUNDAMENTAL PEDAGOGICS*

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Landman with his pedagogical virtuosity not only dominates the stage of fundamental pedagogics in South Africa, but also is known by foreign scholars such as S. Strasser, R. Bakker, M. J. Langeveld, W. Luijpen, J. H. van den Berg and J. D. Imelman. As seeker, describer, and hermeneuticist, Landman (1975a: 15, 16) indicates that names such as “Theoretical Pedagogics”, “Philosophy of Education”, “Principles of Education” and “Systematic Pedagogics” easily give rise to ambiguity, while the name “Fundamental Pedagogics” clearly expresses what is sought, i.e., “fundamental structures, i.e., the preconditions (essences, significant grounds, sense of being) of the pedagogical”.

In my opinion, Landman is primarily an *ontologist*. Although he makes much use of the views of an ontologist, such as Heidegger, his ontology of educating is not Heideggerian. Even so, there is a correspondence between what Heidegger has to say about reality, in general, and what Landman writes about a particular reality such as educating. As an ontologist, Landman emphasizes the ontologically grounded nature of the pedagogical, as a regional ontology, and he searches for the most general structures of the reality of educating.

To find an answer to the question: what is it that makes the reality of educating what it really, essentially is (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 9), Landman directs himself to the reality of educating itself, to seek and disclose, by reflective thinking, pedagogical essences as realities of educating. Therefore, for Landman, pedagogical thinking, as disclosing pedagogical essences, is not naïve but radical, i.e., it is a penetration to the essence of the educative reality. This implies a

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rational deepening and purposeful being-directed to uncovering pedagogical essences. This predominantly rational approach in his pedagogical practice, e.g., gives rise to Landman being able to make a pronouncement such as the following: “Each scientific truth holds as truth until its contradictory can be shown” (Imelman, no date: 165). Thus, pedagogical practice is a scientifically accountable search for pedagogical essences, i.e., for ontic characteristics of the reality of educating which, for Landman (1972: 110) is a thinking search for the ontological, i.e., for:

- (i) the universally valid contents of the ontic structures;
- (ii) the sense of these structures and their contents;
- (iii) the meaningful coherence of these structures and contents.

In this way, essence-blindness in all its forms is overcome, the reality of educating is allowed to appear as it really, essentially is, and educating itself is ontologically grasped (Landman, 1977: 7).

Although there are a variety of ways which provide access to what is sought, Landman (1974: 7) indicates the uncovering of universality requires a method of seeing as a way of knowing which provides access to essences. A particularly meaningful way to acquire pedagogical essence-knowledge is a thinking appeal to the reality of educating itself (Husserl, Heidegger), i.e., “a thinking search for that which makes a particular reality (e.g., educating) what it is and not something else” (Landman *et al.*, 1973: 97). As a searcher for pedagogical essences as they are, Landman (1974a: 54) gives himself the task “to strive for the original, naïve contact with the world which always is ‘already there’ in an inalienable presence.” However, this making present requires a way of thinking which illuminates, creates a way of access to and of addressing what is present (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 7). For Landman, a meaningful way of access, which is such a way of thinking, is a phenomenological approach because it is an essence *unveiling phenomenology* (Landman, 1977: 9), and leads to a *knowledge of essences* (Landman *et al.*, 1975b: 3). The application of this method is only meaningful if its aim is to ontologically grasp the pedagogical and, therefore, Landman (1979: 11) implements the contradictory, hermeneutic, and dialectic methods *as steps of the phenomenological method*. In

these three ways, pedagogical essences are purposefully *disclosed*, *understood* as structures that the pedagogical allows to be, and shows *what function is served by* the pedagogical essences (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 88, 89). The phenomenological method, as an essence-disclosing reflection; thus, for Landman (1972: 122), it is an authentic method of research because it:

- (i) compiles real essentialities and meanings, allows them to appear, lets them be;
- (ii) allows the ontic (what is present) to become and remain unconcealed;
- (iii) leads to grasping a being in its real essentiality, meaning, and coherence;
- (iv) makes understanding possible by taking real essentiality and meaning into consideration;
- (v) by illuminative disclosure, the presence, which is absent (obscured), is released from being concealed.

Landman, the seeker of pedagogical truth, thus, can be viewed directly as “the leading phenomenological thinker in South Africa” (Imelman, no date: 43). Van der Stoep (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: foreword) has such a high regard for Landman as a seeker, and says: “His approach is not only methodologically original and accountable but is fundamentally honest scientifically”.

For Landman (1975a: 55), scientific description is “an honest rendering of all the data and an unbiased listening to the speaking matter itself”. Essentially, such verbalizing is phenomenological description which, for Landman (1969: 25), means “the thinking, intuitive viewing of a particular phenomenon and describing its essential characteristics, disclosing what remains invariant, unchanged and always valid”. Thus, as a describer of essences, Landman tries to verbalize what is essential and real of the reality of educating. When the reality of educating is verbalized, it becomes categorized. For Landman (no date: 14), categories are themselves real essences and express real essences. When Landman, the fundamental pedagogician, says or expresses, or describes something, he applies pedagogical categories as means of describing or interpreting, i.e., as illuminative means of thinking. In other words, pedagogical categories, as descriptive means, open ways of

illuminating pedagogical essences (Landman *et al*, 1974:3) because they throw light on the reality of educating in which pedagogical essences “can show themselves as they essentially, really are, and as their *meaning* really, essentially is” (Landman, no date: 17, 18). Such a descriptive becoming visible essentially is:

- (i) the disclosure of the reality of educating in terms of verbalizations true to its being;
- (ii) the verbalization of pedagogical essences, as pedagogical categories for thinking in terms of which the reality of educating can be further reflected on, described, and interpreted (Landman, no date: 13, 14);
- (iii) making pedagogical essences known as meaningful realities by which the grasping and making graspable of the educative reality become possible (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 18).

To find an answer to the question: what is meant when it is stated that *illuminating, creating a way of access, and addressing* are on the same level as explication? (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 5, 6), Landman answers as follows in a few of his pedagogical works:

- (i) *Explicating is phenomenological describing.*

The fundamental pedagogician is a phenomenological being, and this means that he can and will explicate pedagogical essences. For Landman (1975a: 88), the methodological sense of phenomenology “is that phenomenological describing is explicating real essences”. Such explication, as a critical, accountable description of the essence-structure of a particular reality (e.g., the reality of educating), for Landman (1970: 14, 15), is essence-disclosing reflection, i.e., a meaning disclosing, as well as a fundamental structure uncovering reflection. The use of the word “reflection” emphasizes that descriptive explication requires thought-work because “nothing is disclosed or appears if thinking does not let it happen” (Landman, 1970: 13). Thus, explicating, as phenomenological describing, is no abstract process, but is a thought-event by which the reality of educating is reflectively penetrated to unveil pedagogical essences, to verbalize and to grasp them, i.e., to explicate them as they really, essentially are.

(ii) *Explicating is elucidating*

In the phenomenological literature, to explicate means to explain, illuminate, to make transparent, to make present, allow something to come to speech, and allow it to become unconcealed. Thus, explicating the reality of educating is to throw light on it to unveil its sense and being-structures so the essential characteristics of the pedagogical can continually be adequately grasped (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 16, 17).

A precondition for an activity such as explicating is *clarity*. The concept “clarity” means lucidity, purity, discernible, and penetrable. In other words, clarity refers to essence disclosing, to the *quality* of appearance of essences, to essence verbalizing because the appropriate word contributes to the being of a being, thus, to its being present (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 8). In other words, explicating, as elucidating, is designing means for creating ways “along which real essences can move from being concealed to being unconcealed” (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 3). Such illuminating, as bringing to light what is evident (Landman, no date: 9), however, is no passive act but a clear addressing, so that pedagogical essences become clear in their being-so, being-there, and coherence (Landman *et al.*, 1975b: 4).

(iii) *Explicating is bringing to understanding (exposition)*

To understand something is much deeper than to merely know it. For Landman (1974: 6), to understand something means to fathom it, to see it in its ground, i.e., to see and illuminate its real essences. Such a fathoming of the reality of educating, in the deepest foundation of its being, is a phenomenological “seeing” (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 62) by which pedagogical essences are described and interpreted. Thus, to bring something to understanding is much more than mere sensory perception, because it goes to the meaning of its being. However, this meaning does not appear by itself in its being, but must be unveiled by thinking (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 63). Such unveiling by thinking occurs by the phenomenological method, which makes (essences) graspable, “in that categories, as means of explicating, are used to overcome essence obscurity”

(Landman *et al.*, 1974: 7). Explicating, as bringing to understanding, is a *prejudgment-free search* for pedagogical essences (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 65) with the aim of unveiling their meaning and coherence.

(iv) *Explicating is conversing*

Conversation is primarily dialogic. In a scientific conversation, this does not involve talking for the sake of talking, but to learn, to communicate, to express. Such dialogic expressing, communicating is not a haphazard, self-evident matter but a meaning-giving activity by which reality becomes meaningful to a person. Thus, explicating as conversing is a dialoguing where speaking and responding (or the reverse) occur with the implication that understanding is much more than mere words and sentences. Indeed, it is a dialogic searching for pedagogical essences, speaking pedagogical words, as real expressive words which truly say something and corroborate the reality of educating (Landman *et al.*, 1973: 156, 167). Such corroborating means thoughtfully listening to the language of the phenomenon of educating itself; in other words, it is an expressing in terms of verbalizations, true to its being, by which the reality of educating is allowed to bring itself to speech. Explicating as conversing, thus, is never merely word meaning, etymological derivations, reduction or simplification but an *essence analysis* with the aim of understanding pedagogical essences with their meaning and coherence (Landman *et al.*, 1972: 121).

Explicating as conversing is also a facet of pedagogical conversing, which is realized among various *essence-aware practitioners* of the pedagogical disciplines (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 183). In this dialogue, the reality of educating, and the various pedagogicians form a unity of reciprocal implications, and the pedagogical essences are addressed, discussed, and spoken through (see below). For Landman (1972: 129-122), this points to:

- a) *addressing* via a pedagogical (i.e., a phenomenological) perspective, which results in pedagogical categories with ontological status;

- b) *discussing*, via a dialogic, dialectic, contradictory, and hermeneutic discussion to arrive at a phenomenological verification of pedagogical essences;
- c) *speaking through*, via a radical thinking penetration to pedagogical essences with their meaning and coherence.

(v) *Explicating is phenomenological interpreting*

An author describes how a particular aspect or moment of reality appears to him/her with the aim of grasping it. The interpreter explicates a conception of reality, as he/she discloses it in words. To now phenomenologically interpret this primordial phenomenon, as verbalized via the use of language, the whole must be understood from its parts, and each part from the whole (Landman *et al.*, 1973: 160). This part-whole relationship points to a structural equivalent, which, generally, is relevant for that particular moment of reality. This means that, to interpret phenomenologically, i.e., to explicate, the interpreter must:

- a) go to the primordial phenomenon, thus, to the reality of educating itself as it is realized in educative situations in the lifeworld;
- b) genuinely understand the pedagogical essences, with their meaning and coherence. In this way, general talk (chit-chat) is prevented, the reality of educating appears as it really, essentially is, and in the interpretive conversation, the way to disclosing essences, as a way to truth, is proclaimed. Thus, the reality of educating must not and cannot ever be interpreted in isolation from the universal lifeworld in which it is rooted, because a fundamental pedagogician, isolated from the reality of educating, is no longer a pedagogician, and a fundamental pedagogics, which is denied its rootedness in the lifeworld, is neither pedagogics nor fundamental (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 94-97).

In the light of the above discussion, Landman, as seeker, describer, and hermeneuticist, fully practices fundamental pedagogics, because his disclosing and describing of pedagogical essences flow from an ontological understanding of them. His search for, description, and understanding of pedagogical essences, and

essences of these essences, not only guarantee the openness of fundamental pedagogics, but ensure that a terminology is constructed which is distinguishable from and is recognizable by other established (academic and other) media.

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AUTHOR'S ENGLISH SUMMARY
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To reach a conclusion regarding what makes the educative reality what it really, essentially is, W. A. Landman turns to the educative reality to reveal pedagogical essentials by means of reflective thought. The practice of pedagogics, as scientific practice, implies a search for pedagogical essentials, thus, for those ontic characteristics which are to be revealed, i.e.:

- (i) the universally valid content of the ontic structures
- (ii) the significance of these structures and contents
- (iii) the coherent meaningfulness of structures and contents.

Landman subscribes to the phenomenological method as a meaningful method for acquiring knowledge regarding essentials, since it aims at being a revealing phenomenology, and science of essentials. To grasp these essentials ontologically, Landman also incorporates the contradictory, hermeneutic, and dialectic methods, as steps of the phenomenological method.

For Landman, scientific description implies phenomenological description which, in turn, implies the description of characteristics of a particular phenomenon. Thus, in his descriptions, Landman uses pedagogical categories, as descriptive means to reveal pedagogical essentials as they really are.

To supply an answer to the question: what is implied when it is stated that revealing, creating a means of entry, and addressing are on the same footing as explanation, Landman's answer, among others, is as follows:

- (i) Explanation is phenomenological description
- (ii) Explanation is elucidation
- (iii) Explanation is exposition
- (iv) Explanation is conversation
- (v) Explanation is phenomenological interpretation.

