

W. A. LANDMAN'S ONTOLOGICAL-ANTHROPOLOGICAL  
GROUNDING OF THE EDUCATIVE EVENT\*

M. O. Oberholzer  
University of South Africa

In 1979 in the introduction to his article on C. K. Oberholzer as essence-thinker, Professor Landman wrote the following:

“It was this author’s privilege to have dedicated one of his [earlier] publications to his esteemed teacher, C. K. Oberholzer, with the following words:

Dedicated in behalf of a number of thankful students and colleagues, and with particular respect for professor dr. C. K. Oberholzer, on his retirement as professor of Philosophy on 31 December, 1969. Without fear of contradiction it is stated that he is the greatest authority and exponent in South Africa of phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, child anthropology, and phenomenological axiology. Also his existential-phenomenological thinking has exerted and continues to exert a fundamental influence. We are particularly privileged to be students of a teacher who is an excellent scientist and professor and who has a clear and distinct understanding of the deeper meaning of Heidegger’s pronouncement: ‘Ontology is possible only as phenomenology’, with the further implication that ‘phenomenology is meaningful only as ontology’, and also meaningful for the human sciences.”

With reference to his own quotation, Landman continues: “From this it seems that Oberholzer is valued as an essence-thinker, that is, as a thinker for whom the categories ‘phenomenology’ and ‘ontology’ have particular relevance. Especially, it is the category ‘ontology’ (with the related ‘ontic’) that refers to ‘essence-awareness.” (Landman, 1979: 29).

---

\* **Pedagogiekjoernaal** , 1988, Vol. 9, No. 1, 36-48. English translation available at:  
<http://www.landmanwa.co.za/onlandmoo.htm>

In light of the above quotations and Landman's comments on them, it is asserted that whoever wants to follow Landman's way of grounding the pedagogic and whoever wants to walk with him has to do so against the background of C. K. Oberholzer's influence on him and against the background of Landman as a methodologist. At the same time, it also is the case that Landman—as his mentor Oberholzer and also every other scientist—cannot be divorced from the ways of existence and the concrete events of his own time. This is not to say that Oberholzer's influence has forced Landman to slavishly follow him or that the results of Landman's thinking simply is the product of his times. On the contrary, anyone at all familiar with Landman's thoughts will agree that he can make the claim of contributing independently to founding and establishing the pedagogical as an autonomous subject science in this country and that as a thinker of his time he conscientiously reflects on timely problems.

Regarding Oberholzer's influence on Landman, a thorough evaluative comparison cannot be made here. Landman's own evaluation in the above quotation suffices. For the purpose of reflecting on Landman's grounding of the educative event, his reference to Oberholzer's deeper understanding of Heidegger's pronouncement that ontology is possible only as phenomenology and that phenomenology is meaningful only as ontology is of particular importance. Indeed, the two pronouncements mentioned form two corner stones of Landman's thinking that support his total efforts of grounding. However, to these a third thesis is added that is central to Landman's reflections that ground the event of educating ontologically-anthropologically. This third corner stone is that phenomenology only can be implemented as categorical thinking (Landman and Roos, 1973: 38).

Although an intrinsic intertwining among the three cornerstones is indicatable and they jointly lay the foundation for Landman's scientific view, probably he is known in this country (and even abroad) for his extension of the categorical thinking initiated by C. K. Oberholzer.

Regarding the observation that the categorical-problem holds a central position in Landman's scientific view, the following pronouncement is especially clarifying in light of the remarks about the three corner stones of Landman's fundamental thinking:

“Science is a system of judgments about a theme from the life world and confronts that theme, e.g., the pedagogic, in a grounding relationship. This means that such judgments contain the categories that are unique to the particular thematization. Thus, the pedagogical categories, established by reflecting and observing, are critically accountable pronouncements, expressions, interpretations, verbalizations by which something essential, meaningful, fundamental of the reality of educating is manifested, disclosed, uncovered, i.e., is brought to light or appears as it is. In other words, pedagogical categories express something fundamental regarding the pedagogical perspective; that is, pedagogical categories are the fundamental structures of the pedagogical expressed in words. They are the linguistic forms through which the pedagogical manifests itself. They are fundamental interpretations in terms of which the pedagogical perspective can be described in its essentials, in its meaningfulness, in its fundamental nature” (Landman and Gous, 1969: 48-49) (Own emphasis).

The observant reader will have noticed that in the above quotation mention was made of categories, structures and essences. The question of whether Landman is consistent in his use of these concepts among which he distinguishes cannot be answered in detail here because of limited space. For the same reason, how and on what basis Landman's design and use of categories differ from that of C. K. Oberholzer cannot be considered. Within the context of the present theme, however, it is important to indicate that for Landman categories are not merely disclosed in phenomenological ways but also, as illuminative means of thinking, they open ways by which essences can be reached (Landman, Kilian and Roos, 1971: 17). In other words, for Landman there is not only mention of categories of thinking but also and especially categories for thinking and it is just this view that lays the foundation for his structuring of categories: ontological, anthropological and pedagogical.

In agreement with Heidegger, Landman indicates that a person is ontically characterized as ontological because by thinking he can disclose the real essentials of reality. Phenomenologically true-to-reality reflective disclosure and description make something understandable. As indicated, for Landman phenomenology only is able to be implemented as categorical thinking and categories are lights for thinking that can be used by the pedagogician to think about the fundamental structures that ground the appearance of educating as phenomenon. However, the central question for Landman is how this disclosure and description of meaningful structures in terms of categories is at all possible. In other words, in what categories are the pedagogical categories founded? (Landman and Gous, 1969: 53). Since the structures are made present by particular ways of being, in truth this question is about the first fundamental precondition that makes human being possible in all of his ways of being in life reality. Of this question, Landman (on the basis of Heidegger's pronouncements) says there is only one answer, namely, being-in-the-world or Dasein as a meaning-giving directedness to the world and openness with respect to the world. This implies that being-in-the-world is the first category of reality or ground category or ontological category and makes possible all further descriptions regarding human being. The use of the ontological category as a light for thinking makes it possible phenomenologically to disclose further fundamental structures of Dasein. These fundamental structures of Dasein, as anthropological categories, refer to existence as concrete ways of manifesting being human and can be used as lights for thinking to make possible further reflective access to existence. Thus, here is mention of an ontological anthropology, i.e., "... an anthropology that is rooted in reality and not in one or another anthropological conception or unreal person-image" (Landman and Gous, 1969: 53).

From the above brief pronouncements it can be inferred that Landman wants to fathom human being in its existential involvement—of which the pedagogic involvement of an adult with a not yet adult with the aim of the latter's normative future is an example (Ibid: 49). This implies that Landman views the pedagogical as a facet of or perspective on the anthropological and, therefore, the anthropological categories can be used as lights for

thinking to illuminate the pedagogic and to disclose additional pedagogical categories.

Above an attempt was made to show the path of thinking Landman followed in his making the pedagogic (the ontic) ontologically understandable. In this attempt, the three previously mentioned postulates that are the foundation of his thinking purposefully were not subjected to critical evaluation in the light of the views of other pedagogicians. However, this does not mean that all practitioners of fundamental pedagogics, e.g., agree with Landman about the validity of an approach that derives anthropological categories from the ontological and pedagogical categories from the anthropological (Van Zyl, 1977: 107). Similarly, opinions vary regarding Landman's postulating being-in-the-world as the first ontological category on which all other categories are founded (Pienaar, 1975: 14). Because limited space does not allow consideration of the merits of the positions of different-thinking pedagogicians, such considerations are not part of the present task, of honoring Landman. For Landman the crux of the matter is not that there is agreement with him but if and especially how other fundamental pedagogicians account for and ground their standpoints. Whatever the case may be, in the Republic of South Africa there cannot be a return to the state of fundamental pedagogic practice as if a W. A. Landman had never existed.

Now there must be a return to the other introductory observation made, namely, that the results of Landman's thinking have to be evaluated against the background of the times within which he did his thinking. As noted, the practitioner of fundamental pedagogics—as does every other person—must respond to the appeal his times direct to him and his response will give evidence of either a creative or a distorting involvement with reality. Whoever will pay tribute to Landman as a fundamental thinker of the pedagogic is obligated to take into account the demands that his times posed to him.

A typification of one's own times runs the danger of a subjective involvement that can testify to an optimistic or pessimistic attitude that is a tendency merely correlated with the particular attitude. Even so, it is possible to shed light on a few tendencies that enter the foreground in several writings and to call them characteristics of

a particular era. For example, there are authors who believe that tension, anxiety, depression and alienation now lead to an existential frustration that modern man cannot deal with. This existential frustration that some view as the collective neurosis of our times shows a number of clear and inseparable symptoms that are expressed as fear of the future, a cheerless life attitude, an apathetic fatalism and the inability to accept responsibility. For the pedagogician who wants to practice his science on an agogic foundation, it is important to take into account that increasingly more youth have lost their will to give meaning and seek escape either in an apathetic life content or in a pathological pre-occupation with warped life values (Griessel, 1985).

Another group of researchers conclude that change (especially its nature, tempo and radicalness), in addition to blessings, also have caused disruptions in human ways of existing and that particular changes even have degraded human being to a confused stranger in his world (Greyling, 1985). In line with this view it is said that a crisis in orientation now characterizes Western man, a crisis that manifests itself as a crisis in value orientation (See Brezinka, 1986: 11-12). However, for the fundamental thinker it is important to distinguish between symptoms and fundamental causes of particular tendencies. Then the question is what lies at the foundation of, e.g., modern man's experiences of existential frustration and the crisis regarding what really is valuable for his ways of being. Against the background of a tribute to Landman as scientist and always mindful that this attempt at typifying contemporary times is precisely what (among other things) has determined his status as an academic, there is reference to two main streams of thought that have been at the root of a Western view of reality since World War II, namely, Rationalism and Individualism (See Brezinka, 1986: 15-23).

Rationalism, as an absolutizing of reason, manifests itself in a limitless trust in science as a rational matter and especially in its application as technology. However, when the boundary of scientific knowledge is not respected, it supplants all other forms of knowledge such as, e.g., religious and life-view "knowledge" as supra-rational matters. Instead of recognizing the values of the latter knowledge-as-conviction for orienting and rooting human

beings, they then are contested as troublesome obstacles hindering the so-called “enlightened consciousness”. The denial of non-rational truths, however, leaves a hiatus in human ways of being that cannot be filled by anything else and this leads to being anchorless. Hand in hand with this, the ideal of tolerance is abused. In the good name of scientific tolerance, intolerance with respect to religious and worldview matters is justified and dissimilarities concerning the standards of truth of different views and standards of values for different ideals are ignored.

The second intellectual stream that parallels but yet is integrated into the course of rationalism and lays the foundation for the uncertainty of values in contemporary times is individualism. This is an absolutizing of individual’s rights and interests at the cost of community interests and a binding with community norms and obligations. For advocates of individualism, the latter bindings refer to a restriction of the individual’s personal “room for play” and “self-determination”. Under the influence of individualism “deliverance” and “emancipation” are catchwords in educating; “indulgent” is equated with “democratic” and “strictness” with “cruelness”.

It cannot be denied that on the basis of the aggrandizement of the rational, our times are not faulted regarding human knowledge. That there are many fewer persons who really understand on the basis of considering fundamental values is equally true. From the application made of current pedagogical thinking it appears as if there are enough pedagogicians who busy themselves with rational constructions about so-called “relevant matters” (that frequently are aimed at the short-term teaching problems of the day) but few who are prepared to look past “clever” recipes for the here and now and to think through the pedagogic-perennials as what is universal-valid.

That Landman has a very high regard for critical thinking that lays the foundation of science is beyond all doubt. That he does not absolutize or one-sidedly elevate the rational merely to a guiding principle or criterion for human ways of being also can be seen from the distinctions he makes, e.g., among the pre-scientific, scientific

and post-scientific as well as from the recognition he gives to a view of (philosophy of) life (See Landman and Van Zyl, 1975).

For Landman the primary aim of fundamental pedagogic thinking is not to improve practice as a search for a theory about a practice for a practice; also it is not a search for recipes for use in the classroom. It was already contended that today the latter “search” has become popular as a result of the high premium that has been placed on the usability and applicability of scientific knowledge. Landman has not chosen this popular way of thinking that makes one-dimensional knowledge available with the aim of using it for the sake of better control by virtue of a will to power and a false hope in human reasoning (See Smal, 1982: 43). Landman has chosen the arduous phenomenological way of thinking in order to more deeply inquire, with openness and scientific fidelity, into the essentialities, as grounding matters, and to ultimately disclose their sense and their meaningful relations (Landman and Roos, 1973: 98). Such disclosing requires a disposition to listen to more than only a rationally explainable reality. Indeed, human being is addressed by more than just beings and Landman is thoroughly aware of this.

Thanks to the nature of the grounding way that Landman has chosen to travel—a way in which the dictates of existential thinkers and especially their emphasis on the fact that existence is a stepping-outside-of-oneself as an intentional reaching out for ... meaning—he is not able to endorse the obfuscations of Individualism (See Landman, Kilian and Roos, 1971: 104 et seq.).

The observation made earlier was that Landman’s way of thinking can be understood best if it is considered against the background of his methodology. Indeed, on the basis of Landman’s strong epistemological attunement in the annals of pedagogics he is known as much as a methodologist as a pedagogician. From his writings it is clear that the ways in which he searches for the pedagogic-essentials are just as important as what he ultimately finds. It would even be in line with his thinking to assert that what is found (in a search for the invariable-pedagogical) is determined by how it is subsequently investigated (De Jager, Oberholzer and Landman, 1985: 66). For Landman the generally valid, the consistencies, the necessities of the educative event only are found by



phenomenologically grounding this event in the ontological-anthropological. And Willem Adolph Landman is honored for the fact that he persists in the activity of grounding in a time that places great confidence in technical-manipulative knowledge, that he continues to search for essentials without ignoring actual problems that society calls forth for scientific investigation within a functional connection.

#### SUMMARY\*

##### W. A. LANDMAN'S ONTOLOGICAL-ANTHROPOLOGICAL GROUNDING OF THE EDUCATIVE OCCURRENCE

Landman's grounding of the educative phenomenon rests on three corner stones viz. that Ontology is only possible as Phenomenology, that Phenomenology is only meaningful as Ontology and that Phenomenology can only be implemented as categorical thinking. For him categories not only bring to light the essentials of a particular being but can also be used as thinking aids to illuminate additional essentials. For Landman the central question is: which categories ground the pedagogical categories? In answering this question it is apparent that in Landman's thinking a structuring of categories can be distinguished, viz. Ontological, anthropological and pedagogical. Being-in-the-world (Dasein) is the first ontological category that makes all further descriptions of man possible. These descriptions of man are called anthropological categories and they can be implemented as illuminating aids to bring to light the pedagogical categories. Thus, an ontological-anthropological-pedagogical hierarchy of categories is constituted.

In this essay it also is argued that Rationalism and Individualism are trends in the contemporary life world that conceal fundamental structures and in so doing confuse modern man. In this light, Landman should be appreciated as one of the few fundamental thinkers who have constantly thought through to the essences of phenomena and who have not yielded to the appeal for more one-dimensional technological knowledge. Landman has chosen the arduous phenomenological approach to ground the phenomenon of

---

\* Author's English summary. It is edited slightly and the spelling is American.

educating in the ontological-anthropological, and for this he is honored.

## REFERENCES

- BREZINIKA, W. (1986), *Erziehung in einer wertunsicher Gesellschaft. Beitrage sur Praktischen Pedagogiek.* Munich: Ernst Reinhardt.
- DE JAGER, P. L., OBERHOLZER, M. O. AND LANDMAN, W. A. (1985), *Fundamentele Pedagogiek: wetenskap, inhoud en praktyk.* Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel.
- GRIESSEL, G. A.J. (1985), *Lecture: Die wil tot singewing as oplossing vir eksistensiele frustrasie.* Institute for Continued Training. University of South Africa, 18 September.
- GREYLING, D. J. (1985), *Lecture: Mens en wereld.* Institute for Continued Training. University of South Africa, 18 September.
- LANDMAN, W. A. (1979), *C. K. Oberholzer as essensie-denker.* In Smit, A. J. (Ed.), *Die agein perenne.* Studies in die Pedagogiek en die Wysbegeerte. Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik.
- LANDMAN, W. A. and ROOS, S. G. (1973), *Fundamentele Pedagogiek en die Opvoedingswewrlikheid.* Durban: Butterworths.
- LANDMAN, W. A. and GOUS, S. J. (1969). *Inleiding tot die Fundamentele Pedagogiek. ('n Poging tot fundering).* Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel.
- LANDMAN, W. A., KILIAN, C. J. G. and ROOS, S.G. (1971), *Denkwyses in die Opvoedkunde.* Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel.
- LANDMAN, W. A. and VAN ZYL, M. E. J. (1975), *Inleiding tot 'n uitleg van Protestantwees en die betekenis daarvan by die opvoedlike inhoudgewing, Pedagogiekstudies,* No. 80. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- PIENAAR, J. J. (1975), *Die Temporaliteitsbegroning van die Pedagogiek.* Inreerede D9. University of Port Elizabeth. Port Elizabeth: Bumleys Printing Works.
- SMAL, P. J. H. (1982), *'n Kritiese besinning oor die vormende bydrae van die Fundamental Pedagogiek tot 'n perspektiefverruimde denkhouding by die onderwysstudent teen die agtergrond van die moderne tydsgewrig.* Unpublished D. Ed. dissertation, University of Port Elizabeth.
- VAN ZYL, P. (1977), *Opvoedkunde: Deel 3. 'n Handleiding vir nagraadse studente.* Johannesburg: Boekhandel De Jong.