

## PRELIMINARY REMARKS AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Today, the problem of “the didactic” must be one of the most difficult tasks of pedagogics. A modern didactician no longer can rely solely on his intuitive attunement, pedagogical tact, and practical experience for justifying and motivating his attitude and actions as they are disclosed in his didactic engagement. There can only be valid pronouncements and assured actions when a didactician has mastered teaching theory and practice with insight.

As far as the present study is concerned, the problem is that a didactician must continually be aware that **his work ultimately has a formative aim**. This formative aim is essential because forming (Bildung), as a fundamental given, is manifested from the beginning during a person’s life. However, the concept of forming has a diversity of meanings with which the didactician must thoroughly acquaint himself, especially because the subjective mysteries, as well as the objectifications of reality, as these are found in different cultures, partly determine its meaning.

A closer analysis of the concept of forming shows that one cannot reduce it to the matter of “becoming”, simply because forming always implies the outcome of the course of becoming; in other words, forming does not take its course from becoming, but is manifested in an additional becoming or so-called “development”.

The clear distinction which must be noticed is that forming is not an outward encounter, psychic maturation, or even intellectual growth. For there to be such delineations, the intervention which aims at forming must remain directed to **disclosing** reality for those who must be formed. A person who initiates forming searches for a more comprehensive and more far-reaching participation with reality by a learning person. This additional participation with reality especially is manifested in the mobility in (i.e., the judgment of) such reality being realized to an increasingly greater degree. The judgments a formed person arrives at necessarily are a matter

of values (also norms) which are an inseparable part of reality. Consequently, the state of being-formed (formedness) is seen on the level of the axiological or a life of values. This definite distinction regarding forming also motivates the choice of the title of this study.

As one considers all this, understandably, one is confronted with the question: How is something such as forming, and its outcome (formedness) possible as didactical-pedagogical aims?

A child, as existence, also is “openness”, i.e., he is a formative potentiality in the sense that, irrespective of the quality and quantity of the teaching he receives, he himself must discover the categorical structures of reality and learn to know and recognize them so that eventually he can exceed reality or be able to express a judgment about it. Therefore, a child is **not** in the hands of an educator as clay is in the hands of a potter. Formedness is primarily manifested as a person unconditionally bending to the norms which come to him from reality.

These norms manifest themselves in various respects as transcendental, always valid truths. Thus, each person is aware of religious truths which address him, irrespective of whether he chooses to live by them. In intervening with reality, one continually confronts ethical-religious ideas which already are arranged within a social (juridical) structure. In other words, although honesty need not have a transcendental value for a person, still this does not strip reality of the idea of “honesty”. Understandably, one’s formedness is observable in the ways one interprets cultural material and life structures and gives them form (embodies them) in one’s own life. Therefore, the whole idea of forming involves refining, ordering and deepening a person’s living with reality and the (simultaneous) unfolding and unlocking of his potentialities. Thus, formedness also is a matter of a person’s participation with reality, to the extent that it is a form and way of living. All these things remain moments of an unconditional obedience to the authority of these values. These matters are discussed in Chapter I.

But values do not come within a person’s reach without him first acquiring knowledge about things. If we accept that consciousness

is always consciousness of something, and that knowledge always is knowledge of something, this necessarily determines the **relationship** a person establishes with things simply because reality always is something.

This matter of continual involvement of a person implies that he always is dealing with a world and with things in a field of tension which claims him and to which he must respond. Normally, one notices that this nearness of world and reality to a person differentiates itself in a two-fold way, i.e., he is involved in dealing either with the appeal which other persons or matters (things) direct to him. In its origin, a formative event especially is actualized by means of the experiences a child acquires. Through the “experiencing” person, other persons and matters are placed in a perspective in his own landscape, to the extent that his involvement in that experiencing is meaningful. If his experiencing of reality is not meaningful, his perspective on matters falls through and the act of constituting cannot occur in the same depth and intensity as normally would be or ought to be the case. This reality about which a child acquires experience, however, remains a diffuse quantity for each child until it is categorically unlocked for him in one way or another. This categorical structure of reality is the first (*didaskein*) essence-characteristic of the reality which eventually must be unlocked by each child himself. The disclosure of the categorical structures of reality also constitutes the essence of the phenomenon of learning by which the sense and value of forming become observable as didactical-pedagogical aims. The realization of this learning event usually occurs by the direct confrontation of a child with reality such as, e.g., in a formal school situation. This implies that a formative event is accelerated by directly confronting a child with these categorical structures of reality by educating (teaching) him.

However, now the question is **how** can a teacher, with good reason, broach these structures and relationships? In the light of our theme, the real problem is this: Does not the exemplary principle have something to contribute regarding the mandate with which didactic pedagogics continually is confronted, and how can this mandate assume possible shape and acquire form within the exemplary idea? Didactic theory must express itself about this. If

the harmony regarding the unlocking of reality for a child and the spontaneous unlocking of the learning person to reality is wanting, necessarily the reflection falls into either a didactic objectivism or a didactic subjectivism.

To eliminate this danger, the harmony of this two-fold matter must be made manifest in a didactic structure. From the spontaneous interests and intuitive venturing into reality by a child, the aim is, by means of of exemplary and typical cases, to bring reality to him and make it understandable so that with such a particular aspect of reality, he can notice and interpret a larger structure regarding the totality of reality.

If this is so, one really can do nothing but reflect didactically on the significance of the entire event of forming, i.e., on a person's spontaneous involvement in this reality. In general, this is known as a question of acquiring experience. Each person necessarily acquires experience, and the possessed experience retained is evidence that he has learned to know reality. A person's spontaneous going out to surrounding reality can be characterized as a matter of acquiring experience. What the nature and depth of experiencing will be has nothing to do with the principle of how one acquires experience. Therefore, **acquiring experience, necessarily is a category of learning**; it is a matter of being involved with reality, i.e., a matter of learning to know reality, becoming aware of it. Consequently, a didactician really cannot give pronouncements about an **acceleration** of "being involved" with reality without creating opportunities for the additional acquisition of experience with respect to reality.

Therefore, it certainly is meaningful that when one holds in view the formative event and a particular formedness as an aim, one also seeks a perspective regarding the question of experience. Thus, the didactician ought to know to what extent the acquisition of experience shows itself as a category of learning within a broader didactic structure. But because acquiring experience is a spontaneous matter and usually is acquired as the situation is lived experienced, in educative planning there only is somewhat of an attempt to guarantee the possessed experience.

In school, this matter is prominently in the foreground. As soon as we formulate learning activities, we notice that the entire tension which exists or is awakened between child and reality is consciously created or planned by an adult. Thus, here we have an analogous structure in so far as a person's involvement with reality is formulated in the spontaneous, everyday lifeworld. In the classroom, a new field of tension is created by which the polar structure first ought to be clear to each didactician before he can know where he must venture. The teacher cannot, in any sense, give valid pronouncements regarding formative thoughts if he does not keep in view this spontaneous involvement of persons in reality as it manifests itself in the structure of experience.

Therefore, it is necessary that, in the exposition of the problem an account also be given of experiencing and its role and significance for school in relation to the question of perceiving and mindful observing (*aanskouing*) as moments of acquiring experience. Acquiring experience always is directed to "something". In this way, a person not only comes to lived experience reality (matters) but also comes to an encounter with other persons who show themselves in the space near him.

Hence, a didactician also purposefully will seek spaces for experiencing, for experienceable contents, and for formative methods in terms of which experiencing can be broadened by mindful observations (*aanskouinge*)\*, illustrations (*veraanskoulikhede*) and structuring. These matters are the focus of Chapter II.

It is meaningful that a didactician must take note of the whole matter of the categorical unlocking of reality, but also of concepts such as mindful observing (*aanskouing*), lived experiencing and encountering to be able to make accountable pronouncements about the forms and ways a child must acquire experience. His presentation must be such that the experiential structure of a child not only will grow more extensive but also in quality so that

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\* The Afrikaans word "*aanskouing*" [German "*aanschauung*"] is a key concept and is difficult to translate into English. It is a very special way of observing something to get to its foundation. See Van Dyk's discussion on pages 94-96. I have chosen to translate *aanskouing* as "mindful observing" and sometimes as "true observing". G.D.Y.

eventually he will show an image of formedness. Where this image of formedness also is not guaranteed in formalized situations (the school), it is the task of the didactician in his designs to state beforehand the formed human image as an aim. It is only a person who designs the situation who can, to some degree, try to guarantee this matter. For actualizing his formative aim, a didactician must seek, in the formative structure which he has brought about, what will be a functionally fruitful intervention regarding the whole idea of a formed person.

Since the 1963 appearance of Copei's work, "Der fruchtbare Moment im Bildungsprozess" (The Fruitful Moment in the Formative Process), didactics has been aware of a formal theory of the fruitful moment. Copei had, for the first time, formally established the theory of the fruitful moment as a matter about which a didactician must be aware when he designs learning situations. He must search for opportunities for fruitful intervention with an eye to realizing his aims such as the entire problem of forming, but also the problem of experiencing becoming visible and being able to be brought into motion.

The whole formative ideal, as it must manifest itself through the structure of experience, is a matter of using particular situations in conscious ways such that the systematic and orderly unlocking of reality is accomplished. Therefore, a didactician must implement practically the fruitful moment, as a theory, to give a greater range to his conscious as well as nonconscious interventions. Therefore, each teacher, in pursuing the formative aim, must take note of the so-called fruitful moment. However, this fruitful moment does not appear on its own in the classroom, because a child does not yet possess the insight into the structures and relationships of reality which enable him to use such a fruitful situation spontaneously and intuitively. The idea of the fruitful moment is didactically meaningful only if a didactician can succeed in designing a situation which directs an appeal to a child such that he spontaneously ventures with respect to such a structure. The fruitful moment, therefore, is a matter of didactic insight and unlocking reality for a child rather than a compulsory theory; it is a view that places the involvement in the matter in the foreground as a stronger requirement of didactic practice than what otherwise is possible.

Now that he has taken note of the fruitful moment and all aspects which go with it, a didactician is faced with the question of “how”: **How** can he constitute a fruitful moment in his design, and **how** can he realize this constituting?

There are a variety of problems in the modern practice of teaching which hinder constituting the fruitful moment, among which are aspects such as the deluge of [too much] learning material, an encyclopedic knowledge of reality and the chronological structure of presentation which, for traditional reasons, have become so accustomed that one can hardly think them away. These are but three important factors which work against constituting a fruitful moment. If we now consider the principle of exemplary teaching and learning as this is expounded in the modern literature, one really cannot deny that it holds possibilities for neutralizing the deluge of [too much] learning contents and curricula, partly closes the encyclopedic knowledge of reality and the chronological presentation without impairing the extent of a child’s insight into reality. Without atomizing, one can be led to a general grasp of the categorical structure of reality which also makes reality more meaningful because a deeper study of a good example (exemplar, type) of a particular reality structure inserts a child’s “learning to know” reality within a more limited space without restraining his mobility in the greater space. This problematic is dealt with in Chapter III.

With this, if a didactician works from the idea of forming through the acquisition of meaningful experience to the use of the fruitful moment in a didactic situation, he can do nothing more than consider an exemplary presentation and mode of learning. Hence, the aim of this study is to show, from insights into the total event of forming, through acquiring meaningful experience, and using the fruitful moment during the didactic, how this can lead to an exemplary form of unlocking reality and how such a didactic principle of teaching and learning can greatly neutralize a variety of didactic problems.

Consequently, in the last Chapter (IV) these possibilities and variants of the exemplary principle are discussed. It also is hoped

that this study is followed by studies in separate subject areas to show how one can, from a general didactic point of departure and particular didactic insights, build a structure in a particular teaching area so the contents can be implemented more meaningfully in a particular lesson situation.