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## COMMENTS ON THE DIDACTIC GROUND FORMS: SOME NOTES ON ADULTS AND CHILDREN LIVING TOGETHER

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Typical of the series of major works by F. van der Stoep is his wrestling to loosen himself from schooling's domination by a largely eclectic didactic education in the RSA which characterized it in the 1960's. Within the mainstream of the phenomenological approach, it was clearly he who searched for the universal foundations and origins of the didactic, which could serve as the point of departure for a genuine scientific study of educative teaching. Typical, here, is the question of the universal foundations of methodology--a much more fundamental question than the mere systematization of methods of teaching.

From his first work on a recurring theme, which had been brought up much earlier in didactic education (see Hordt, 1939), Van der Stoep busies himself with fundamental didactic forms, and devotes his attention to this issue in at least six of his major works, a reflection of his attempts to more clearly ground and broaden didactic pedagogics phenomenologically, by breaking out of the stifling effect of limiting teaching to schooling (his last work is devoted entirely to non-formal teaching!).

Already, in his first work, **Didaktiese orientasie [Didactic orientation]** (together with O. A. van der Stoep, 1968), there is a first sense that there are fundamental forms of teaching which can serve a teacher as "teaching possibilities" (p 225), because "The phenomenon that is generally known as teaching is given with being human, and does not arise merely because people establish schools" (p 37). Because an investigation of the origins of the fundamental forms, and a comprehensive description of them is still missing in this publication, his determination of them is so conspicuously unsatisfactory that he doesn't return to them again: programmed instruction, project teaching, team teaching, exemplary teaching, and conversational teaching. Especially because a clear description

of terms is missing, it is difficult to compare the validity of his determination with, e.g., that of Klafki (1963), who specified something entirely different. However, what is already striking is the inclination to think about the fundamental didactic forms in terms of the cognitive, perhaps because of his view that the task of schooling emphasizes "allowing a child's consciousness to develop" (p 28).

His **Didaktiese Grondvorme** [**Didactic Ground Forms**] appeared in 1969, in which, against the background of a fundamental analysis of the didactic categories (with the correlated criteria, principles, and categories of learning), special attention is given to grounding, determining, and describing the fundamental didactic forms [ground forms], as well as describing their relations with teaching methodology.

It is clear to Van der Stoep that the didactic ground forms already appear as "primordial forms" in a person's "spontaneous lifeworld", and appear as "a spontaneous, initial, primary life-form of a person", within which the spontaneous primordial learning intention of a child, as well as the spontaneous helping or teaching activity of an adult appear (pp 50-51). The spontaneous forms of expression of a child's learning intention are: perceiving, playing, speaking, imitating, fantasizing, working, and repeating. The forms of expression of the accompanying teaching intervention of an adult are: pointing out, showing a child how to play, prompting, demonstrating, narrating, giving assignments (setting tasks), and repeating. Van der Stoep calls attention to the surprising agreement, or correlation between these two sets of activities, from which the unity of the activity structure stands out so conspicuously (p 59) that, apparently by only matching the two sets of activities with each other, he is able to determine the didactic ground forms as: play, conversation, example, and assignment (p 103). Thus, he grounds the fundamental didactic forms in the "basic life-forms" of humans, as learning and guiding persons, and finds the unity of the different activities of child and adult in the essential bi-polar unity of teaching itself (instructing and learning) to which they are intuitively attuned. So, for example, an adult's narration, and a child's listening, find their didactic unity as the ground form of conversation, in their mutual directedness.

However, it is conspicuous that there is still a degree of ambiguity, and unclarity with Van der Stoep's formulation: Despite the

extensive exposition of learning, and the spontaneous expression of the learning intention, still he ultimately gives the impression that the didactic ground forms are an ordering of the spontaneous ways an adult helps (p 103). Despite his emphasis on the ground forms, as functional in the spontaneous lifeworld, still he finds a "clear indication" of another kind of fundamental didactic form, i.e., "that which is purposefully created with the aim of giving a deliberate and responsible course to the conscious learning intention in formal situations" (p 103)--something which, however, he does not further clarify at all, and which appears to be in conflict with his own preceding grounding (see also p 139).

Although Van der Stoep sees that the forms of expression of the helping intention are not necessarily, as life forms of an adult, limited to the didactic but, on occasion, also are used for that purpose (p 140), it is conspicuous that he does not think about any other life forms of adults, which also are used for didactic purposes (e.g., admiration). The reason for this perhaps lies in the fact that he has not maintained firmly enough the categorical unity of teaching and learning. Therefore, he looks away from the expressions of learning and teaching intentions, and then passes the two matters by each other.

However, the question is whether the essential unity of "didaskhein" cannot be better maintained, if not the life forms of a child and (/or) adult are taken as the point of departure, but rather the joint life forms of a child and adult in the spontaneous lifeworld. In other words, without hypothesizing categorically about either teaching or learning, can a grasp of the didactic ground forms be achieved, if there is a search in the joint forms of interaction of adult and child with the world for joint life forms within which (on occasion) the learning, as well as teaching intentions make their appearance. If this path is followed, then, e.g., Klafki (1963) (a work which appears in Van der Stoep's references), once again, deserves careful consideration: joint play, conversation, celebration, traveling, etc. Although all four of the ground forms identified by Van der Stoep clearly are also forms of living together (i.e., forms of jointly interacting with reality which become unified in the collective directedness of the participants), it is important to question whether the list of didactic ground forms is complete, since his description, especially of Example (p 122), does not allow, e.g., for the inclusion of didactic joint admiration, joint celebration, or joint travel. This omission is even more surprising because a

person, as *Mitsein*, not only is essentially categorized as *homo ludens* (player) or *homo loquens* (speaker), but equally as *homo orans* (worshiper), and *homo viator* (traveler). The result (or perhaps the origin?) of Van der Stoep's limiting the didactic ground forms to the four of concern is, however, an extreme accent on the cognitive which leads to a serious attenuation of didactic pedagogics itself.

Although Van der Stoep shows how the different methods of the school relate to the didactic ground forms (p 141 ff), still he appears to be incorrect about the meaning (i.e., the relevance) this has for methodology. What deserves to be spelled out clearly is just this: the sum of the criticisms against any methodology as such, is its rigidifying effect, the deadly, and mechanistic loss of the dynamic which is the soul of what is genuinely didactic. This dynamic will be lost to the degree that the essential characteristics of the original didactic ground form(s), from which they originate are lost. Without exception, the decrease in the didactic effectiveness of a given method can be traced back to the loss of critical characteristics of the original ground forms. In other words: only a good understanding of the essential characteristics, and nature of the didactic ground forms of the spontaneous lifeworld can prevent the critical dynamic from being lost in the necessary formalization of methods. For example, any variant of the method of play, which does not consider the fact that consciously obligatory participation, which is contrary to its nature, is bound to die. The question of stimulation now becomes one of the core problems of didactics: just as the responses to the content, questions are sought in the elemental, and the fundamental, etc., so one of the fields of response to the formal questions are to be found in the theory of the didactic ground forms.

In 1972, **Didaskein** appeared, in which, finally, it is clarified that "to talk of didactic ground forms implies a theory of the practice of the original experience [of teaching], and an evaluation of its possibilities for implementation in the second order (i.e., school in contrast to the primary or family) situation" (p 80). Thus, there can no longer be mention of didactic ground forms which are designed for a formal situation. Nevertheless, Van der Stoep still has not overcome the duality of "teaching" and "letting learn", with his remark that "the didactic ground forms are...a form of actualizing "letting learn", and other categories connected with the original meaning of the experience" (p 81).

**Die Lessstruktuur** [The lesson structure], written in collaboration with C. J. van Dyk, W. J. Louw, and A. Swart, appeared in 1973. Here van der Stoep accentuates the "complementary relation" of forms of teaching and forms of learning, as a person's forms of living (p 22) in the lifeworld in which the forms of teaching are directed to a child's forms of learning--"The adult takes the life forms that he knows from his experiences and lived experienced world, and uses them to present to a child in the educative situation the contents he considers important" (p 23). Once again, he places the seven forms of expressing the learning intention (perceive, play, talk, imitate, fantasize, work and repeat) along side of the seven forms of expressing the teaching intention (point out, play with/for, tell/say, demonstrate, assign, repeat), and then concludes "these seven forms fall conspicuously into the four mentioned ground forms of play, conversation, example, and work" (assignment) (p 62). However, once again, what is obvious is that what has been said about "demonstrating" and "imitating", as life forms, does not square in any way with his explanation of example, as a ground form (p 76 ff), because it is specifically and only in the latter that the general appears in the specific which it revolves around.

In 1976, **Inleiding tot die didaktiese pedagogiek** [Introduction to didactic pedagogics], co-authored by W. J. Louw, appeared in which there is a complete return to the 1969 position that there "are really two kinds of ground forms which an adult can use, i.e., those which harmonize and link up with the spontaneous learning and teaching, as one encounters in the lifeworld forms of teaching, or ground forms, which are created purposefully with the aim of providing a child's purposive intention to learn a suitable and accountable course" (p 72). Just as earlier, there is nothing more said about the two kinds of ground forms which are "purposefully created", which gives the impression that there is still some uncertainty about the nature of the relation between the formalized, purposefully created methods of teaching, and the didactic ground forms.

However, this turn differs from the previous identification of a child's learning activities. Now, the spontaneous learning activities of a child are stated broadly as perceiving, experiencing, objectifying, thinking and languaging, (and) the spontaneous assistance which correspond, also are stated broadly as indicating, showing, prompting, demonstrating, narrating, giving assignments, and repeating" (p 73).

This difference is already suggested in 1969 in **Didakiese Grondvorme** [Didactic ground forms] by "especially three basic forms of activity ... i.e., perceiving, experiencing, and objectifying", identified as the foundation of learning. On the one hand, earlier it is viewed that three of sixteen categories are more significant than the others (viewed from the theory of categories, according to which each is essentially valid); on the other hand, it seems strange that categories (which normally describe the essential nature of a matter) are viewed here as activity forms.

However, if there is a move to the systematic pronouncements (p 131 ff) of the didactic ground forms, then the "ways of expressing his/her achieving consciousness by a child's learning activities" (p 139), once again, are identified as perceiving, playing, talking, imitating, fantasizing, working, and repeating which, in connection with the earlier determined forms of expression of the teaching intention, lead to the already familiar didactic ground forms (play, example, assignment and conversation)--although it is said with justification that the didactic ground forms are the activity forms for "allowing learning" (p 69).

Here, the reader cannot escape the impression that uncertainty prevails regarding the nature of the differentiations and connections between the "expressive forms" and "categories" of learning, and between the "learning activities" and the "modes of learning". In **Die Lesstruktuur**, specific modes of learning, indeed, are identified as perceiving, thinking, and remembering, which show a *prima facie* correspondence with the later determination of the learning activities, as perceiving, experiencing, objectifying, thinking, and languaging, while there also is conspicuous agreement with the categories of the activities of learning.

In 1984, a radical revision of **Inleiding tot die didaktiese pedagogiek** appeared in which the didactic ground forms are considered once again. Here it is stated clearly that the origin of the didactic ground forms is in the lifeworld of an adult "allowing learning", although, at the same time, this certainly can also be the forms of a child actualizing learning (p 59), and the earlier mentioned "two kinds of fundamental forms" are repeated unchanged. However, an interesting difference is the following: "Should one state broadly the spontaneous learning activities of a child as perceiving, experiencing, objectifying, thinking and attending" (note that

linguaging has been replaced by attending), the spontaneous assistance which corresponds to these, also broadly stated, are indicating, showing, prompting, demonstrating, narrating, giving assignments and repeating. It is obvious that if one orders these seven forms of assistance, they can be divided into four larger structures (p 62), i.e., play, conversation, example, and assignment. No other mention is made of the "expressive forms of the learning intention" which appeared in the main work (1976). And finally, what in 1968 were called fundamental didactic forms (team teaching, programmed instruction, etc.) now are called teaching strategies.

The results of Van der Stoep's struggled thinking are uncritically followed by Harmse, H. J. (1982), Stuart, J. F. et al. (1985), Steyn, I. N. (1982), and Louw, W. J. et al. (1983), and mainly by Gous, S. J. (1972), where, perhaps erroneously, "self-doing" is typified as a fifth fundamental form. However, none of these authors have continued to build on Van der Stoep's basic work—which itself is an indication of the formidable nature of his work. Cawood, J. et al. (1980) state, without sufficient discussion, "when the interaction between the teacher and learner in relation to the learning content is used as a criterion, it is axiomatic that there are three basic methods, i.e., lecturing (one-directed communication), conversing (two-directed communication), and self-doing (the learner's self-activity)" (p 24). And, without sufficient discussion, Strydom, A. H. (1981) distinguishes among "general methods of teaching", i.e., lecturing, conversing, self-doing, and experience-directed methods (p 113). However, "self-doing" must be doubted as a didactic category, until the essential complementarity of this activity (i.e., the didactically directed co-doing of adult and child) is clearly indicated, and if it isn't, it is merely an "assignment", or child exploration (which does not display the didactic category of teaching/allowing learning/unlocking reality).

It seems to be clear that didacticians feel a need for principles of ordering for systematizing teaching methods, but only Van der Stoep tried a radical ordering which, simultaneously, can be a grounding, and a vitalizing for didactic pedagogics, and for didactic practice.

Yet, there must be a return to an observation made earlier: the strong cognitive accent of Van der Stoep's orientation and description of the didactic ground forms. Just as he retains

objectifying as a category of the activity of learning (after he has rejected the clearly invalid "scholasticized" (?) categories of 1969 in his 1976 work), indicates that he has not yet completely unrooted himself from his earlier scholasticizing, so also his descriptions of the didactic ground forms show how he has a primarily cognitive focus on the didactic. Therefore, he can think about neither the learning nor the teaching activities outside the cognitive. And consequently, he does not think didactically about important forms of living together, such as admiring, and celebrating: by their nature, they are directed rather to pathic involvement, than to objectifying, and thinking. In this respect, Van der Stoep's (perhaps not universally valid) view of the nature of the activity of learning have even placed limitations on his thinking.

Perhaps, it must be accepted that, in addition to play, conversation, example, and assignment, there also are other primary forms in the primordial situation of adult and child doing things together within a teaching situation, where an adult's teaching intention, and a child's learning intention find expression. Should these forms be disclosed, the methods anchored in them possibly can work more strongly against the loss of an existential dynamic which so often characterizes the modern school. In this respect, it serves to emphasize how ineffective the methods of the modern school often are for bringing about bonding--bonding to values, ideas, matters, and even persons.

If the primordial situation is viewed analytically, then it is conspicuous that, very often, adults purposefully make use of participatory forms of living (in addition to play, conversation, assignment, and example), by which a child participates by spontaneously learning. The difference between these forms of living, and examples (such as assignment and conversation) is that a child is not an objectifying perceiver and does not join in by thinking and/or languaging, but as a non-objectively involved participant. Although Van der Stoep shows an intuitive attunement to this (see 1973, 22), he cannot reconcile this systematically, because of his inability to think didactically about the non-objective and non-cognitive. Certainly valid, in this respect, is celebrating (see Hordt, 1939 and Horney, 1963), while Klafki's (1963) addition of traveling and esthetic creation deserve further investigation--each viewed as a primordial form of living, as doing things together. It is ironic that the only one of his didactic ground forms in which non-objective learning sometimes has a prominent role, i.e., play, is also



the one which is continually described in such a way that it is an adult's joining in (i.e., playing for [showing], which functions best as playing with), which is inadequately described didactically.

Finally, there is appreciation for Van der Stoep's insight that the didactic ground forms can only be grounded in the primordial forms of living and, in this way, can fruitfully influence methodology, and for his determination of conversation, play, example and assignment as such didactic ground forms, and for describing these forms in their essential nature. In addition, there is appreciation for his pioneering trailblazing, with respect to founding the didactic in a scientific way, and for the way in which the didactic ground forms are placed within the context of categorical descriptions of teaching, as well as learning; yet, the last word about this has not yet been spoken. There must be a fresh look at the fundamental [ground], and lifeworld nature of all the forms of living [being brought] together within which the didactic can come to expression, and its meaning for enlivening the teaching methods of the school must be spelled out so the preconditions for the purposive design and use of the various methods can finally be ascertained.

In this way, this didactic theory can come to fruition in those "experiential contexts ... that, because of the nature of the matter, are the only way in which an original practice can be described for execution" (Van der Stoep, 1972, 160).

### Summary

The theory of the didactic ground forms (German: Grund-formen, Afrikaans: Didaktiese grondvorme) is a recurring theme in the works of F. van der Stoep. This article traces the development of his treatment of this theme through his six major works from 1968 to 1987.

Appreciation is expressed for his formidable attempts at founding school teaching methods universally in the primary teaching-learning activities of the lifeworld of persons, as well as for the possibility it opens to counteract the loss of dynamism which occurs all too frequently when teaching methods are necessarily formalized. Van der Stoep started from an intuitive feeling for the existence of such didactic ground forms, and eventually finds that the primary teaching activities of an adult [parent] (i.e., pointing

out/at, playing with/for, telling/saying, demonstrating, assigning, and repeating) correlate well with the primary learning activities of a child (i.e., perceiving, playing, talking, imitating, fantasizing, and repeating). These primary teaching activities can be condensed to four didactic ground forms, i.e., play (Afrikaans: spel), conversation (Afrikaans: gesprek), assignment (Afrikaans: opdrag), and example (Afrikaans: voorbeeld).

However, it is suggested that Van der Stoep probably made two fundamental errors, restricting the range to largely cognitive forms (in their description), and taking the teaching activities of an adult as his point of departure. Instead, the range of teaching should also include the non-objectifying modes, and the starting point should be those primary activities in which adult **and** child sometimes conjointly engage for didactic purposes. Thus, it becomes possible to look anew at those didactic ground forms which appear in the pre-Van der Stoep literature, such as Hordt (1939: celebration: holiday and ceremony), and Klafki (1963: joint travel, joint artistic enterprises, etc.).

In this way, methods may be developed for those areas in which schools are traditionally weak (e.g., bonding), and existing cognitively oriented methods may be enlivened and, thus, strengthened.

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