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A SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION OF THE CONCEPT “CATEGORY”*

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1. ACCOMPANIMENT

Just as any other scientist, the educationist will **think**. He differs from other scientist only in what he thinks about. The educationist will think about the reality known as educating: the educative reality is the **object of his thinking**. The educationist thinks about educative reality. When the educationist thinks about this reality, he thinks **in terms of** something; for example, just as he thinks about his wife in terms of her appearance, her abilities to prepare food, etc., he thinks about the educative reality not in terms of nothing but in terms of “something”. What is this “something”? In the first place, this “something” is that characteristic of the humanness of persons, which gives a quality to being human, i.e., ACCOMPANIMENT. For anyone who perceives children and adults where they are with each other, it is easy to notice that the children are **led** and **accompanied** by adults. The adults give assistance to children regarding all sorts of matters. The adults are able to give assistance (support, help), and the children have a need for this because they are not yet **independent**. Thus, children are persons who need **help**, and adults are persons who can act as givers of help

* <http://www.landmanwa.co.za/lesing10.htm> (no date); translated by George D. Yonge (2004) [EDITED November 2023]. UPPER CASE and **bold** type appear in original paper. English translation also available at <http://www.landmanwa.co.za/lecture10.htm> and at georgeyonge.net/node/91

(support givers). Then there is mention of CHILD ACCOMPANIMENT.

For someone who perceives adults where they are together in certain situations, e.g., situations of training, situations in which medical, psychological, psychiatric, religious interventions occur, it is noticed that some adults are **led** and **accompanied** by other adults. Some adults give assistance to other adults regarding all sorts of matters. Some adults are able to provide help and give support, and there are adults who have a need for this. Thus, certain adults need support and other adults are persons who can act as givers of help. Then there is mention of ADULT ACCOMPANIMENT.

For someone who perceives adults where they are involved in certain situations (medical, psychological, etc.) with the aged it will be clear that this also involves adult accompaniment, but because the adult is aged, there is mention of AGED ACCOMPANIMENT.

These three ways of accompaniment also can be named differently:

Child accompaniment. The Greek *paidagogia* means leading a child and accompanying a child. *Pais* = child and *agein* = to lead. *Paidagogian* = to lead a child or show the way. *Paidagogos* = child leader. Accompanying then can be described as pedagogics, and the science which is involved with the pedagogical is Pedagogics. Adult accompaniment: the Greek *aner* = man, adult + *agogos* = leader or accompanier. Andragogics + adult accompaniment is based on andragogical insights. Accompaniment then can be described as andragogical with Andragogics as its science. Aged accompaniment: the Greek *geron* (*geroon*) = old man, gray beard, *agein* = to lead. Gerontagogics is the study of support to the aged.

The three mentioned sciences together are known as Agogics, which is involved with the agogical.

Agogics = science of accompaniment

 Pedagogics = science of child accompaniment

 Andragogics = science of adult accompaniment

 Gerontagogics = science of aged accompaniment.

Some educationists summarize these three sciences by the concept EDUCATION. Then, Education is pedagogics + andragogics + gerontagogics. This implies that **education** includes child-, adult- and aged-accompaniment, that it thus is an event which occurs from the cradle to the grave. Education = the pedagogic + the andragogic + the gerontagogic.

The educationist clearly must state with which aspect or aspects of education he involves himself: with the pedagogic and/or the andragogic and/or the gerontagogic, BUT THAT IN TERMS OF WHICH HE THINKS AND REFLECTS AND DOES RESEARCH, is ACCOMPANIMENT. Therefore, for the educationist, accompaniment is a particular **light** by which he illuminates the educative reality (pedagogic, andragogic, gerontagogic reality). He needs this light, and because he is a thinker (reflector), he needs an illuminative way of thinking. Such illuminative ways of thinking are known as CATEGORIES. Without categories, there is a groping in the dark (muddlers work in the dark). Categories are means of illuminating reality to disclose **real essences**: they are ILLUMINATIVE MEANS OF THINKING.

2. WHY THE CONCEPT “CATEGORY”?

There are at least two reasons why some educationists use the concept category. A **general** reason given is that it recognizes the association with the originators of Western thinking and culture, i.e., the Greeks. In the human sciences there is often reference to the Greek origin of concepts. A **particular** reason given is the wealth of meaningful content of their concepts, such as the concept “category”. Several striking meanings follow:

- (i) Categories are the ways by which real essences are reached, by which there is penetration to the essences. A category, thus, opens a way to real essences. Thus, an illuminative way of thinking is created by which essences can come to light (for actualization) and along which the essences can move from being concealed to being unconcealed (= **truth** for the Greeks, which they called *Aletheia*).
- (ii) The Greek *Katagorein: kata + agoreuein*. *Agoro* means the public gathering of persons. It refers to the openness of the discussions.

Agoreuein means to speak openly, to make something public. *Kata* means down from above, a view on something. *Kategorein*, thus, means a deliberate view on something to disclose it and make it public, as it is. “As it is” or “as it really is, essentially” can be described by the Greek EIDOS (essence). Hence, a category is a means for disclosing essences. The educationist thinks and, therefore, a category for him is an essence disclosing means of thinking. Since essence disclosing means to illuminate by thinking, a category is an **illuminative means of thinking**, a means for illuminative thought.

Heidegger (Nietzsche II, 1961, 75-76) refers to the fact that, in everyday life, categories are tacitly applied (All persons always think in terms of something). The scientist is aware of the categories he applies, and he applies them radically, i.e., with the purposeful aim of bringing to light the root (*radix*), the real essences of a matter.

3. DO EDUCATIONISTS HAVE AT THEIR DISPOSAL ONLY THE CATEGORY “ACCOMPANIMENT”?

In the preceding sections the category “accompaniment” is described and explained in detail. In the descriptions, phrases such as the following are continually used: “illuminate to disclose real essences”, “ways by which real essences are reached”, “an illuminative way of thinking is created by which essences can come to light”.

The first means of illumination or means of illuminative thinking is **accompaniment**. By applying it as a category (or by its categorical application), real essences are disclosed. EACH OF THESE ESSENCES NOW CAN BE APPLIED AS CATEGORIES and continually new essences come to light. Each essence illuminated has the possibility of being interpreted by the scientist (educationist) and then being applied with the aim of further essence disclosing.

From the immediately preceding section, the following deductions are made:

(i) the educationist has at his disposal an almost endless number of categories (illuminative means of thinking).

(ii) categories, as such, do not appear in the reality of educating. It continually is the educationist who takes a real essence and applies it as a category. In other words, the educationist actualizes an **epistemological** act: he names an essence as a category, and uses it in his search for educative truth (*Aletheia* = unconcealed-ness).

The following ought to be a clear image of essences which appear with the progressive categorical application of essences by the educationist:

A. When there is an accompanying provider of support and a help needing receiver of support (help) with each other, one can say that there is a **relationship** between them. The accompanier and the accompanied come into communication with each other. A bond arises between them. To maintain and strengthen this bond, the following is necessary:

(i) The accompanier must understand (know) the accompanied he will support so that the ways of accompaniment can be appropriate for the one accompanied. It is evident that, e.g., a toddler will be accompanied differently than a high school student, or an adult, or an aged person. Thus, understanding is needed.

(ii) The accompanied, however, also must understand something. He shall increasingly and more clearly understand what, e.g., the accompanier explains, prompts, and demonstrates for him. The accompanier is continually involved in giving explanations (interpretations) of what the accompanied ought to do. The accompanied learns and sees in him what is proper (appropriate, fitting), thus, what demands he ought to fulfill. In other words: he learns from the accompanier to know certain demands of propriety, or to know them once again.

The RELATIONSHIP OF UNDERSTANDING between accompanier and accompanied has to do with two matters, namely:

(i) knowledge regarding the accompanied, i.e., understanding of the accompanied, and

(ii) [the accompanied's] knowledge of what ought to be, i. e., understanding the demands of propriety.

However, it is not enough that the accompanier knows the accompanied he must support and the accompanied knows the demands of propriety the accompanier presents (demonstrates, interprets). The accompanied must trust that the accompanier will be able to accompany him further on his path of life. If the accompanied will doubt this for any reason, his relationship with the accompanier is going to be damaged or it can even cease to exist. On the other hand, the accompanier must trust that the accompanied will accept and use his accompaniment.

The RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST between the accompanier and the accompanied has to do with:

- (i) awaken the trust of the accompanied; and
- (ii) establish trust in the accompanied.

If the accompanier should understand the accompanied well, and take care that he has trust in him, and the accompanied for some reason will not let the accompanier explain or tell him what is proper, the relationship between them will weaken and eventually disappear. Thus, the accompanier must allow himself to say what is proper as someone who

- (i) can speak with authority about the demands of propriety, and
- (ii) gives evidence that he himself obeys these demands of propriety.

The RELATIONSHIP OF AUTHORITY between the accompanier and the accompanied has to do with living together in terms of demands of propriety which are recognized, and which must be obeyed. In summary the actualization of the accompaniment category of RELATIONSHIPS has been demonstrated.

B. The perceiver who has noticed that there must be relationships between an accompanier and an accompanied can also note that these relationships are not always equally strong. Thus, there is a course from less strong to continually stronger, and from very strong to less strong. Hence, there is a movement (course) of the relationships which one can call a sequence (course). The following

are possible ways in which the relationships show movement or a course:

- (i) The accompanier-accompanied relationships begin when they are aware of each other's presence: an ASSOCIATION between them becomes possible;
- (ii) The association becomes more close, intimate, private and deepens into an ENCOUNTER;
- (iii) Now the accompanier makes a choice that he is going to take the responsibility to intervene in the accompanied's ways of living if this should be necessary. He also decides to help the accompanied pay attention in responsible ways to the intervention and to make something of it. This means that MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY for INTERVENTION is accepted [later called ENGAGEMENT];
- (iv) Then the accompanier must proceed to actual INTERVENTION with the accompanied by, e.g., disapproving or approving what he has done;
- (v) After this, the accompanied, in the presence of the accompanier, takes an opportunity to think about what was approved or disapproved and make a choice about them. This means that a RETURN TO ASSOCIATION has become necessary; and
- (vi) Sometimes the accompanied must have the opportunity to act in the physical absence of the accompanier. He does this with respect to the choices he has made regarding what is approved or disapproved. Then he must again look for the presence of the accompanier: PERIODIC BREAKING AWAY is often needed.

In summary, the actualization of the accompaniment category of COURSE (SEQUENCE) is demonstrated.

C. The perceiver who has noticed the relationships themselves and their course, also can note that accompaniers and those accompanied are active together. They perform all sorts of activities together, some of which seem to be meaningful in supporting the accompanied. The relationships between accompanier and accompanied, which take a certain course, are characterized by certain activities, i.e.,: help for the accompanied

- (i) with the MEANINGS he attributes to the reality around him;
- (ii) to be ready to live with EXERTION;

- (iii) to live in accordance with particular demands of propriety (norms), i.e., his ways of living must be characterized by a particular NORMEDNESS;
- (iv) to VENTURE into the unknown reality;
- (v) to be GRATEFUL;
- (vi) to accept ACCOUNTABILITY (responsibility) for the relationships in which he finds himself;
- (vii) to have HOPE for the future;
- (viii) to actualize his potentialities, i.e., to DESIGN them;
- (ix) to gradually FULFILL his destination;
- (x) to have REGARD (respect) for his own being a person and for other persons;
- (xi) to UNDERSTAND and to JUDGE himself; and
- (xii) to acquire authentic FREEDOM.

In summary the accompaniment category of ACTIVITIES is demonstrated.

D. The perceiver who notices that the being together of accompanier and accompanied

(a) is carried by certain relationships;
 (b) shows a course; and
 (c) thrives through the involvement of certain activities, also can observe the following: i.e., that the accompanying of the accompanied is not aimless but is AIM DIRECTED. The aim of the accompaniment is the BECOMING ADULT (to a continually increasing degree) of the accompanied and, indeed, a continually more complete adulthood, which is characterized by

- (i) a MEANINGFUL life in which one gives an account of choices and actions, and in which what is valuable is actualized;
- (ii) a life which is led properly through SELF-KNOWLEDGE and SELF-JUDGMENT;
- (iii) a life which proceeds as a WORTHWHILE way for a person to live;
- (iv) a life where INDEPENDENT and RESPONSIBLE CHOICES and ACTIONS are meaningful in terms of the demands of propriety;
- (v) a life in which there is an identification with demands of propriety (NORMS) which are accepted as highly valuable;

(vi) a way of living which is defined by an obedience to values which a person is obligated to make actual and which is essential for authentically being a person. That is, life is lived in the light of a PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE.

In summary, the accompaniment thought category of AIM is demonstrated.

The educationist can apply the accompaniment category of relationships and then the following essences are disclosed: understanding, trust, authority. Each of these essences then can be categorically applied and additional essences will appear. The same can be done with the accompaniment categories of course, activities, and aim.

Each time it is an essence or group of essences (structure) which is applied by the educationist in his progressing disclosure of essences. He resolves to give essences or structures categorical status.

All educationists apply categories, and it is immediately clear, when a text (book, article) is studied, what categories a particular author uses, even though he does not specifically use the concept “category”.

In summary, the essences of accompaniment **are appearing lights** of the reality of accompaniment because, in their absence, only darkness and not understanding prevails. The characteristic of essences, as appearing lights, makes it possible to acquire knowledge of the reality of accompaniment in the light of such an essence. This means that an essence lends itself to use as an illuminative means of thinking, as a category.

If an educationist considers that he is involved with a real essence, and he finds that this supposed essence does not have the possibility of being used as an illuminative means of thinking, i.e., for further disclosing essences, the possibility is very high that he is not involved with a real essence.

4. IS THERE A HIERARCHY OF CATEGORIES?

This question is one about the possibility of a hierarchy of categories, i.e., a first category and ensuing ones.

In the above explanation, **accompaniment** is discussed as a category for the educationist which creates an illuminative means of thinking, along which the essences of accompaniment, can move from being concealed to being unconcealed. Are there categories which are possible preconditions for the origin of the category of accompaniment? This question is answered as follows: The educationist (as an accompanist) begins his thinking work via the following **preconditions**:

- (i) that the scientist who will describe and interpret, must allow the reality to be expressed. This means he begins with the reality itself, and not elsewhere.
- (ii) that his scientific practice is not possible if he isolates himself from reality (e.g., the reality of accompaniment).
- (iii) that to disclose essences is only possible because of his being-in-the-world. Above and beyond reality is isolation or separation which makes any intervention with the world (reality) impossible.
- (iv) that being-in-the-reality (world) is the foundation on which all thinking about persons (also persons in accompanying situations) is possible.

These four preconditions are a description of a particular category which can be called the **first category of reality**. Some would call this category **the ontological category** for the following reason:

The thinker's being-in-the-world makes ontological understanding possible, i.e., authentic understanding of a matter because the real essences (and their coherencies) of it are brought to light. In his thinking description and interpretation (i.e., in practicing his science), he will remain true to reality. Thus, he will not make pronouncements which do not fit reality. He will illuminate knowledge which is true to reality.

Subsequently, the educationist proceeds to a closer examination of the various ways in which a person is in the world. As the practitioner of a human science (accompanying science, Agogics), he has an interest in the ways a person is in the world. He has a

particular interest in those ways of being a person which might have significance for understanding accompaniment. He uses the ways of being a person in his further reflection. Then, these ways of being a person become **anthropological categories** (anthropos = man, person) for him. The following anthropological categories can be distinguished: being-in-a-meaningful-world; being-with; temporality (historicity); being-someone-oneself.

Then, the educationist notices that he is not interested in all possible ways of being a person. He is selective, and specifically looks for ways of being a person in accompaniment situations (agogic situations). In what form do the selected ways of being a person appear:

* Being-in-a-meaningful-world appears in agogic situations in the form of:

- Giving meaning
- Exerting
- Normedness (Exemplifying and emulating norms)

* Being-with appears in agogic situations in the form of:

- Venturing
- Gratitude
- Accountability

* Temporality appears in agogic situations in the form of:

- Hope
- Designing possibilities
- Fulfilling destination

* Being-someone-oneself appears in agogic situations in the form of:

- Respect for human dignity
- Self-understanding
- Freedom to responsibility

Thus, this **path of thinking** is ontological categories, anthropological categories, agogical categories, without one set of categories being inferred from another, but are **grounded** by it:

* Because of the ontological, the anthropological is possible.

* Because of the anthropological, the agogical is possible.

5. WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA?

It is agogical categories which allow agogical essences (with their coherencies) to appear as they really are so that companions can actualize them with those accompanied. It should now be logical and acceptable that the way and quality of actualizing agogical essences must be evaluated (critically judged). In other words, the way and quality must be judged in terms of criteria.

Agogical essences which are made present by categories must be judged in terms of criteria. Criteria put the actualization of agogical essences in an **evaluative field of light**. Then it comes to light whether there are agogically accountable actions or not. What is really occurring here is that categories are given an evaluative meaning. Categories for evaluating are called criteria. The question is how do categories for making (essences) present (essence disclosure) become categories for evaluating, i.e., criteria? The answer is by reformulating categories in the **form of questions**. For example:

Agogical categories

Exertion: The accompanied must be helped to use his powers and do his very best in everything he tackles. He must do the following:

(a) **Move to exertion:** Lack of exertion must be replaced by a willingness to proceed to do meaningful deeds.

Agogical criteria

How strong is the accompanied's will to act and the quality of the companion's support?

Does the accompanied experience the possible acts (deeds) as meaningful for him?

How ready is the accompanied to exert himself?

(b) Overcome passivity: To not want to act and participate must be disapproved and the accompanied's attempts to become involved must be agreed with.

Agogical criteria

How clear is the accompanier's disapproval of passivity to the accompanied?

What is the quality of the accompanied's attempts to be involved?

How sharp and clear is the accompanier's agreement?

6. CONCLUDING COMMENT

Categories and criteria for the Agogician and the agogical practitioner are a *sine qua non* for meaningful pedagogic, andragogic, and gerontagogic leading and accompanying which might be called authentic educating.

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