

Professor W A Landman  
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## DIALECTIC METHOD: A PARTICULAR TRIAD

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## THE ONTOLOGICAL-ANTHROPOLOGICAL-PEDAGOGICAL TRIAD

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE FIRST LEG OF THE TRIAD: THE ONTOLOGICAL

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.landmanwa.co.za/lesing04.htm> (no date but latest reference is 1990). [Translated by George D. Yonge in 2004]. **English translation** also available at:  
[http://www.landmanwa.co.za/lecture\\_04.htm](http://www.landmanwa.co.za/lecture_04.htm) and at [georgeyonge.net/node/31](http://georgeyonge.net/node/31)  
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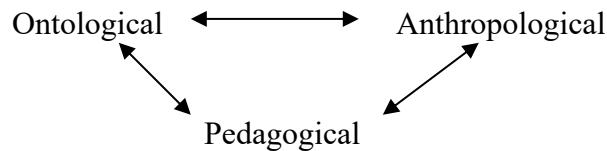
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#### Dialectic method: A particular triad



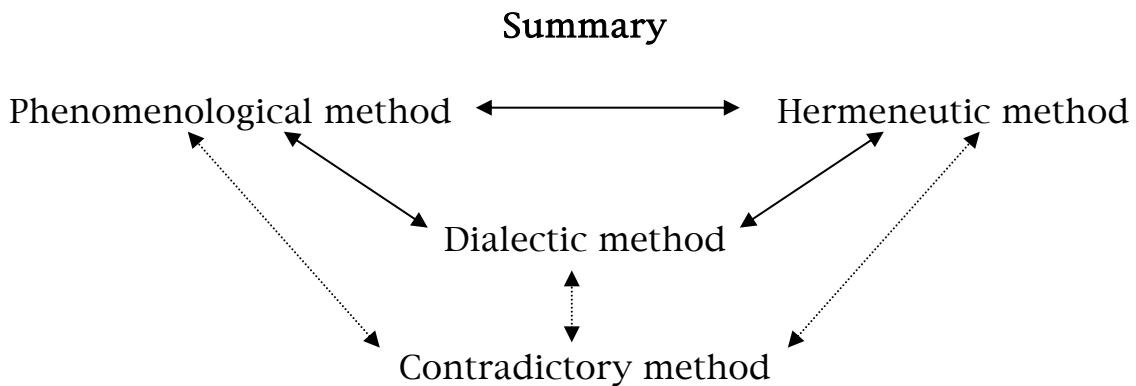
### INTRODUCTION

The phenomenological, hermeneutic, dialectic, and contradictory methods form a particular unity, because all four claim to be faithful to reality. In addition, the phenomenological method is **hermeneutic** in nature, because essence disclosing can be viewed as already interpreting (giving meaning to) reality. The dialectic method also is **hermeneutic** in nature because the interpretation of reality (as being in movement, thus, as living) is carried further. The contradictory method is **hermeneutic** in nature since the appearing meanings become clearer when looked at next to their contradictions.

The hermeneutic method has **phenomenological** traits because the disclosed essences are what are interpreted. The dialectic method has **phenomenological** traits because its movement is a movement of disclosed essences. The contradictory method has **phenomenological** traits because it calls into appearance the contrasts of the disclosed essences.

The phenomenological method has **dialectic** characteristics, since the disclosed essences are ways of living, which implies living movement which progresses as a triadic rhythm. The hermeneutic method has **dialectic** characteristics, since giving meaning (interpreting) is a particular way of living which is roused (this is when essences are seen as ways of living) to intensify and strengthen them, and this allows for the increased liveliness of the essences. The hermeneutic method also has **dialectic** characteristics because each time the question “what is served by this essence” is answered, a movement from one essence to another is actualized (this movement is called a “meaningful relationship” or coherence). The contradictory method has **dialectic** characteristics, since each possibility stated, or its contradictions, or itself, can be put forward as a possible alternative to a manifested essence.

In summary, the following is presented:



1. The phenomenological method makes the hermeneutic method possible because it is the disclosed essences which are interpreted.

2. The hermeneutic method intensifies the phenomenological method, since it demands that disclosed essences have real essence status.
3. The phenomenological and hermeneutic methods simultaneously pass over into the dialectic method since it is the interpreted essences (essences with clearer meanings) which the dialectic movement makes meaningful.
4. The phenomenological and hermeneutic methods both are retained in the dialectic method. Ignoring the phenomenological method leads to the fact that there can be no guarantee that the reality which must be put into motion has essence status. Ignoring the hermeneutic method leads to the fact that there can be no guarantee that the essences which must be put into motion are the most meaningful for the selected movement. (Selection of essences occurs in terms of their meaning for the problem solution striven for in the investigation).
5. When a “short cut” from phenomenology to dialectics (i.e., eliminating the hermeneutic) is chosen, there is no guarantee that the essences offered for dialectic movement will be the most meaningful (for the problem solution aimed at).
6. When a “short cut” from hermeneutics to dialectics (i.e., eliminating phenomenology) is chosen, there is no guarantee that what is given meaning (i.e., what is interpreted) has essence status.

Comment: Both 5 and 6 are viewed as impoverished ways.

7. The contradictory method serves (in a triadic connection), particularly, to verify by, e.g., asking (and answering) the following questions:
  - i. Does a particular essence have real expressiveness in terms of problem solution, or does its alternative have solution power? Can this essence merely be omitted with respect to the problem solution sought?
  - ii. Does a particular attribution of meaning (interpretation) have real persuasive power in terms of problem solution, or does its alternative have greater effectiveness? Can this interpretation (giving

meaning) merely be ignored regarding the problem solution sought?

- iii. Is a particular dialectic movement which is chosen really the best (most adequate, most salient, most meaningful), or is it a possible alternative which deserves this description? Is it not necessary that the chosen dialectic way be taken up in solving the problem?

## **THE ONTOLOGICAL-ANTHROPOLOGICAL-PEDAGOGICAL TRIAD**

### **Introduction**

Now it has become necessary to return to the title of this paper. The question which must be answered is what do the triadically structured methods make of the ontological-anthropological-pedagogical triad?

The answer is found in the following two scientific judgments:

- Ontology is only possible as phenomenology (Heidegger)
- Phenomenology is only meaningful as ontology (Landman).

### **THE FIRST LEG OF THE TRIAD: THE ONTOLOGICAL**

#### **Ontology is only possible as phenomenology (Heidegger)**

Only with a phenomenological approach can real essences be adequately disclosed.

Comments:

1. Restated: Ontological understanding is only possible with a phenomenological approach.
2. The “only” can refer to a method monism, or even to methodological arrogance. “Only” can be substituted by the concept “most effectively”, which has been done for many years. With this, the possibility is offered that essence disclosure also can occur by other methods. In the

- introduction to this paper, it is indicated that the hermeneutic, dialectic, and contradictory methods can make a meaningful contribution to essence disclosure and elucidation. There also are other methods which can make such a contribution in their own unique ways.
3. This thesis reformulated: Ontological understanding can occur most effectively by applying the phenomenological and kindred methods, as well as methods which are applied in such a way that they respect the
    - premise that subjective experience is meaningful and reliable data for understanding reality (Verma & Beard, 1987).
    - focus on the meanings which have occurred for the person so involved. The search for meaning leads to disclosing suppositions in concepts, categories, and methods. The emphasis is on how a person gives meaning to the world around him (Shipman, 1985: 11, 13, 14).
  4. The thesis can be elucidated further by precisely indicating what is meant by ontological understanding: Ontological understanding occurs when it is noticed that essences are existentialia, i.e., that they really exist in the human lifeworld, and this means they function (Marten, 1972: 17, 79) there in ways which cannot be thought or acted away, and that they possess **ontological status** (Heidegger, 1963: 57). This means that knowledge of such existentialia (essences as ways of living) is a precondition for understanding the human lifeworld.

Ontological = ontos + logos. *Ontos*: these essences satisfy the demands of reality, in the sense that they have reality status, i.e., the status of necessarily existing, and they make reality itself visible. *Logos*: these essences satisfy logical demands because, by thinking them away, one can no longer reason logically (in accordance with logic). The most effective methods to practice *ontos* and *logos* is the phenomenological (phenomeno-logos) and kindred methods (Landman, van Zyl & Roos, 1975: 6).

In science, an **ontological approach** refers to an essence-seeking approach. That is, the scientist who works ontologically strips the phenomena (appearances), which he investigates, of all incidentals. He pushes through to the essence of such appearances. He carries out a radical (to the roots: L. radix = root) investigation, and describes the matters as they themselves are, elucidates them as such, and illuminates their coherence. To do this, he needs the phenomenological and kindred methods (Van Rensburg & Landman, 1990: 152).

To exercise *ontos* and *logos*, in the form of the phenomenological and kindred methods, the scientist must satisfy a particular requirement. This requirement can be called the **ONTOLOGICAL CATEGORY**.

Being-in-the-world is a primordial characteristic of a human being and refers to the totality of relationships designed by him in his life reality. Being-in-the-world, or *Dasein*, is the universal precondition for being-human-in-life-reality. Dasein-in-general, with its meaning-giving directedness and openness to the world (intentionality-existentiality), therefore, is the first reality, ground, or ontological category. **This means** that no description in which a human being is viewed as a world-less subject can be valid. Whoever asks about the humanity of a human being must begin with his being-in-the-world, because by this, all further thinking about him is possible (Landman, 1969: 22-23), and this holds for understanding the second leg of the ontological-anthropological-pedagogical triad.

5. The thesis, “finally” formulated:

An essence-seeking scientific approach can occur most adequately (satisfactorily) when the phenomenological and kindred methods are applied.

**Phenomenology is only meaningful as ontology (Landman)**

Only that scientist (researcher) is a phenomenologist who can decisively explicate, explain, and give reasons why a science is primarily essence-seeking, thus, is thinking which will understand ontologically (understand essences, their sense and coherence) against the universal lifeworld, as the background for thinking (Landman, 1969).

Comments:

1. This thesis stated differently: Phenomenology is only authentic if it leads to ontological understanding.
2. The qualification “only” is maintained here because, if a phenomenologist will attain anything other than ontological understanding, he will fall into a **phenomenologism**, and/or a phenomenography (flashiness which cannot stand up to any verification). **Phenomenologism** refers to giving preference to words and statements which describe superficial sensory experiences, which can only be verified by direct sensory perception (Polkinghorne, 1983: 63).

This thesis reformulated: Phenomenology (and kindred methods) is only authentic if it leads to ontological understanding, as well as to understand “ontology” in the ontological-anthropological-pedagogical triad, **and** the relations which it has with the **anthropological** and the pedagogical.

## THE SECOND LEG OF THE TRIAD: THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL

### Introduction

The scientist’s (researcher’s) being-in-the-world makes it possible for him to contribute to a realistic and meaningful problem solution (as research aim), in methodologically accountable ways, by means of **essence intervention**.

The researcher’s being-in-the-world is a **human** being-in-the-world, and this means that this humanness will interest him, in particular. In other words, the **anthropological** comes into his scientific field of



vision. The following questions now force themselves into the foreground:

- i. What does the concept “anthropological” mean, especially in terms of that clearest form of scientific practice known as research?
- ii. What is the meaning of “anthropological,” as the second leg of the ontological-anthropological-pedagogical triad? In other words, what does ontological-anthropological (also anthropological-ontological) mean?

### **The concept “anthropological”**

Being-in-the-world is a primordial characteristic of being human. Therefore, any scientific thinking always begins with his being-in-the-world. Proceeding from being-in-the-world, therefore, a human being is methodologically compelled to begin with a human being as a totality, because he enters his relationship with his world as a total being. Anthropologically oriented reflection proceeds from the human to the human. The point of departure is the specific humanness of a human being and, in the progression of the reflection, he is viewed in his humanness. This has to do with the humanness of humans. The human being is fathomed in his existential involvement, such as with values and their implied norms.

The researcher who is going to work phenomenologically (and with kindred methods) thinks anthropologically, and one who is going to work non-phenomenologically thinks non-anthropologically or, at most, from an anthropological conception as a naïve, biased standpoint. Thus, for example, the psychoanalytic approach, indeed, is anthropological. in the sense that Freud talks of human being, and his experiences with humans (Vermeersch, 1967: 165). This approach to being human, however, decidedly is of an unreal, biased, human image, i.e.,

that a human being is driven and imprisoned by drives (Frankl, 1949: 12-13). Consequently, it is also incomplete and incorrect to speak only of the “anthropological”. The “anthropological” must be qualified and the phenomenologist does this with the adjective

“ontological”. Then, this has to do with an ontologically oriented anthropology.

The researcher who is going to work phenomenologically strives for a radical elimination of biases contained in numerous anthropological concepts, and he reflects **ontologically-anthropologically**. Concrete reality and reflections on it are viewed against the universal life reality as background, i.e., opinion-free, and with all anthropological concepts disengaged.

The researcher who is going to work phenomenologically is strongly addressed by the anthropological and, therefore, in his reflecting, he applies anthropologically justified illuminative means of thinking (categories). Anthropological categories are illuminative means of thinking which are designed in phenomenological ways from the human order of being, and are concrete manifestations (expressions) of human being-in-the-world (Dasein). These categories refer to existence as a concrete way of manifesting being-human, they form a meaningful whole. and they make reflective access to existence possible (also pedagogic existence) (Van Rensburg & Landman, 1990: 12).

The real human being (Anthropos) as he appears in life reality in his concrete multiplicity and complexity, thus, in his existentiality, is an intentional being whose sense of being-there in life reality is expositoryly describable through implementing anthropological categories. These are categories which apply exclusively to the humanness of a human being. If categories from a non-human order of being are implemented in the human order of being, an ungrounded equating of two non-comparable terrains occurs, as well as unscientifically overstepping boundaries.

The reason some scientists apply natural science categories to humans is because they have assumed that there is only one reality, i.e., that reality disclosed by the natural sciences. In this way, the anthropological space, which is an existential space, is reduced to a geometric space (Binswanger, 1964: 23-33), and this leads to objectifying being human. Such objectifying, because of the use of categories which are irrelevant for understanding the humanness of human beings, leads to a severance of the human-world relationship

(Nota, 1965: 32), and this results in a fragmented human who is diverted from and deprived of reality. Further, this leads to depriving him of his existentiality.

### **The concept “ontological-anthropological”**

An ontologically oriented anthropology is a human science directed to an ontology of being human. This means that being human is described opinion-free, and in general, because whoever conceals human reality itself in any way ends up with a view that leads to the destruction of what essentially is. The phenomenological description is a describing and explicating of being human. Therefore, there also is mention of an ontological-phenomenological<sup>2</sup> anthropology in which the phenomenon of being human is brought to light. This has to do with the anthropological, i.e., with the meaning of the being-there of the concrete human being. Thus, ontological anthropology means that the human being is viewed in his existential totality (Landman, 1969: 20-21), also there where he is involved in **pedagogical situations**.

### **THE SYNTHESIS OF THE ONTOLOGICAL-ANTHROPOLOGICAL-PEDAGOGICAL TRIAD (Landman & Roos, 1973: 65-67)**

The authentic pedagogician knows that, because he wants to understand the pedagogical (accompanying a child), he must bring to light its essential characteristics. He must bring to light the pedagogical essences which are hidden in the reality of educating itself. To bring these essences to light, he must use the category “the pedagogical” as an illuminative means of thinking.

The question which he must now ask himself is “what preconditions must I satisfy to be able to use this category?” Then, he sees that this application is not possible if he isolates himself from the reality of educating itself, because then he cannot illuminate it. Thus, he must be **in** the world with the reality of educating, which is embedded in it; otherwise, this reality remains hidden for him. **Being-in-the-world**, thus, is the first precondition for using the

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<sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking “ontological-phenomenological” is a tautology but Landman uses it for emphasis (GDY).

category “the pedagogical”. By stating his being-in-the-world as the first precondition for his scientific practice (applying the category “the pedagogical”), he overcomes the split between person (thinker, scientist) and world (reality). In other words, being-in-the-world is his first means of illuminative thinking: illuminative thinking of the first precondition which he must satisfy to use his category “the pedagogical”. It also can be said that being-in-the-world is the **ontological category because** it makes possible all further ontological pronouncements about being human, thus, also being human in pedagogical situations.

The pedagogician now knows that his own being-in-the-world is a precondition for using his category “the pedagogical”. Now, he can use this category to illuminate ‘being-in-the-world’. Immediately, he sees that there are several human ways of being-in-the-world. To use the category “the pedagogical”, he is forced to select from the various ways of being human, with the aim of a further radical investigation of them. Namely, he selects those ways which are pedagogically meaningful, thus, those which have relevance for the being-with of educators and children. The following are four ways of being human, from a great number of possibilities, which can be selected:

1. being-in-a-meaningful-world
2. being-with
3. temporality
4. being-someone-oneself

Once again, the category “the pedagogical” is used to investigate the ways of being human to determine their essential characteristics, which can be pedagogically meaningful. From an almost endless variety of possible essential characteristics, the following are noted:

1. *Being-in-a-meaningful-world refers to the following ways of being human:*
  - a. giving meaning on one’s own responsibility
  - b. moving as a breaking away from a lack of exertion
  - c. embodying norms

2. *Being-with* refers to the following ways of being human:
  - a. venturing with each other
  - b. being grateful for security
  - c. taking responsibility for relationships
  
3. *Temporality* refers to the following ways of being human:
  - a. hoping for the future
  - b. designing possibilities
  - c. fulfilling destination
  
4. *Being someone oneself* refers to the following ways of being human:
  - a. respecting human dignity
  - b. assuming the task of self-understanding
  - c. assuming freedom to responsibility.

Now the pedagogician sees that he must use his category “the pedagogical” once again. This time, he uses it to allow the **pedagogical significance** of these ways of being human to appear. Hence, now there is mention of:

1. giving meaning-with-**increasing**-responsibility
2. **gradual** breaking away from lack of exertion
3. **exemplifying-and-emulating**-norms
4. **pedagogic**-venturing-with-each other
5. gratitude-for-**pedagogic**-security
6. responsibility-for-**educative-relationships**
7. hope-for-**future**-adulthood
8. design-of-possibilities-to-**adulthood**
9. **gradual**-fulfillment-of-destination
10. **increasing**-respect-for-human-dignity
11. achieving-adulthood-through-**increased**-self-understanding
12. **conquering**-freedom-to-responsibility.

Now the pedagogician can decide to elevate these pedagogic ways of being (educative activities) to illuminative means of thinking for

him, thus, to **pedagogical categories** and, with this, the ontological-anthropological-pedagogical triad is completed.

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