

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The first task of writing any scientific account is to make sure that the theory expressed is justifiable. To justify the accountability of a scientific theory is complicated in many respects. Without going too deeply into this matter in this introduction to didactic pedagogics, it is noted that the concept “account” means that the author of such a theory is able to explain the origin, nature and ultimately also the methods of verifying his scientific findings. To illuminate this more closely: The scientific results that the scientist has arrived at must include everything that can be said about the terrain of that science. In didactic pedagogics this involves the question of teaching within an educative (pedagogic) situation. This means that everything one can note about teaching, as such, must be represented in aspects of the didactic or teaching theory. Although teaching is a very practical matter, i.e., an activity continually carried out by parents and teachers, all aspects (thus also and especially its practice) remain a theoretical matter until the moment the educator (parent or teacher) starts to act (teach). This theory or pronouncement about the act of teaching must be accountable. This means it must be *true* in the sense that it includes a genuine, accurate description of a particular aspect of reality with which one is involved in direct and indirect ways. The aspect of reality referred to here is teaching. The theory of teaching considered in the rest of this book, therefore, in all respects must correspond to this reality as it *is*. It is understandable that teaching is a factual matter and that the scientist must strictly limit himself to these facts.

Any scientist continually is tempted to describe reality as he thinks it is. Hence, the didactician also is tempted to describe teaching as he *thinks* it is. His personal views of teaching, however, do not necessarily mean that he sees teaching as it actually is. Therefore, it is understandable that if a theorist about teaching abandons this reality, as such, in order to write down his own views, judgments or opinions as scientific, his theoretical results are not necessarily accountable, valid or true.

Therefore, an important criterion for a theory of teaching is that in all respects it must agree with the essence of reality as it is found in the everyday course of a person's involvement with it. Hence, a theory must be a description, explanation and exposition of how teaching appears in the everyday life of people, of its nature, the terrain that it occupies, its limits, what associated scientific disciplines (other subject sciences) must be taken note of in studying this piece of reality (teaching), how knowledge about it can be cast in formal findings, etc.

Only when a scientist attends to these and many additional matters scientifically and gives an account of his basis for arriving at particular results can he claim validity for his theory. Then any other scientist or student also has the right to question or doubt the account the author has given and convince himself of the validity of the theoretical results before him at this particular time in terms of his own knowledge and what is available in the literature. The criteria regarding truth, validity and accountability also hold in studying this book. Whatever is stated here about teaching must be able to stand the test of reality itself. If this is not the case, this implies that what is offered here about teaching in the form of descriptions and explications is not valid or accountable wholly or partly. Thus, this forces the scientist to be involved with essences or essential matters.

It is unthinkable that a person can offer a valid description of a matter such as teaching if he is involved with what is not essential to it. One also can say that a theory of teaching must make pronouncements about the structure of teaching itself. In this context, structure means those original, primary or basic facts by which a matter shows itself as it is. If such a description or theory is complex and difficult to understand, this is because that reality (in this case, teaching, itself) in many respects is complex and difficult to understand. The scientist never tries to obscure or hide what it is about which he speaks. The opposite is true: the scientist makes an honest attempt to illuminate, explain and clarify the reality he is involved with so that it can be understood by others.

In the human sciences this is much more difficult than in the natural or applied sciences. The matters studied by the natural and

applied sciences usually are directly and concretely available. In general, nature is directly observable and immediately present for investigation. By controlled empirical research valid pronouncements can be made and tested or verified by the phenomena of nature itself. If the natural scientist has instruments available by which he can more closely investigate natural phenomena of whatever nature, experiments can be conducted and their results can be logically and systematically written up and he can arrive at scientifically valid findings. By following the same research methods, his results can easily be verified by other scientists.

However, in the human sciences the matter is very different. Here the scientist often is involved with invisible, non-concrete and indirectly available aspects of the reality that is the area of his investigation. For these reasons, it is understandable that here the scientist, in the first place, is not able to arrive at valid scientific results by means of experiments or instruments. As far as educating and teaching are concerned, they are events that one can observe happening. But they are not things or objects such as a flower or a light bulb. Their essence or nature largely is concealed because they are human activities that, for example, cannot be duplicated in a test-tube. Also, these activities are not always uniform or simple. Their origin and nature cannot be determined by concrete measuring instruments. And yet teaching is present in reality as experiencing, lived experiencing, exerting, aiming, etc. Teaching is *there* as a knowable, experiencable and lived experiencable aspect of reality, but it is not there in the same sense that a tree or the construction of a ship is. Hence, the task of the human sciences is to make visible and knowable or to allow these often non-concrete, invisible and concealed matters to appear by describing and explicating *what* and *how* these activities really *are* within the horizon of human existence.

In light of the nature of the descriptions that follow in the other chapters, it is meaningful to go still further into this topic and explain it more fully.

Teaching is a human action. This type of human activity *is* real: people are continually involving each other in teaching. We observe

this event but cannot always account for what we actually see. To understand the problem better, we can compare it to human thinking. A person thinks but we cannot directly perceive how he thinks. All that really is available for observation is the results of his thinking. These results appear, e.g., in terms of what he remembers and in light of what he wants to achieve or understand. We can perceive that someone is thinking; thinking is a real activity.

In the same way as with teaching and thinking, a person continually involves himself in certain aspects of reality. He continually builds up relationships with reality on the basis of the ways he involves himself in general human activities in the world. Here the scientist must observe teaching in terms of his own experiences and decide what the nature of this activity really is and then systematically plan his investigation of its nature and essence and write up his results.

The aim of a theory of teaching, therefore, is to offer a description and explanation of a particular activity by which a person continually enters into a relationship with the reality surrounding him. The point of departure for doing this is very simple. It involves the fact that a person is (exists) in the world. He lives in the world as a person. This implies that he is in a definite relationship with everything that surrounds him and by which his activities are motivated and directed. Because this statement (a person exists in the world) is the basic or primary point of departure for any theory about human beings, it warrants closer examination.

To say that a person is in the world implies that we are aware of the humanness (humanity) of persons and especially that we, as persons, only are aware of everything that surrounds us from a human point of view. A human being cannot exceed the boundaries of his humanness; i.e., he cannot live other than as a human. All of his experiencing is human experiencing and his knowledge of things only represents human knowledge. A person is conscious of reality (the world) to the extent that a *human being* can be conscious of it. Our humanity, therefore, really is a barrier that no person can exceed during his lifetime. Consequently, it is meaningless, for example, to try to understand the humanity of persons in terms of

the animal-ness of animals. No scientist can learn something *essential* about human existence, as such, by e.g., studying animals.

This implies still more. A person appears in the world as a participating and acting being. He continually is involved with the things that surround him. This reality with which he is continually involved is diversely rich and often very complex. Thus, the nature of his involvement with it is equally complex and varied. A human being does not live in *simplicity* but in *multiplicity*. In other words, a person's involvement with reality has a multi-form character; it varies not only in accordance with the individual person's own nature (personality and interests) but also in accordance with his situatedness and the demands it makes on him, and to which he must act and respond.

The statement that a person is “being-in-the-world” is the primary scientific pronouncement about all human activity. Formally, this is known as the first ontological category. This statement (category) is the primary means of thinking in terms of which a human being’s involvement with reality can be investigated and described. The importance of this matter for establishing a didactic theory will become clear in the following chapters.

From this first, basic pronouncement, a second matter arises that is of paramount importance for a theory of teaching, namely, the question about the nature of the relationship that necessarily exists between person and world. This question is of particular importance for a theory of teaching because, in its essence, teaching continually aims at changing this person-world relationship, e.g., on the basis of the fact that, in teaching, knowledge about reality is communicated.

In order to build up a relationship between person and reality, a teacher must have fundamental insight into this matter. A careful consideration of this relationship really indicates only two possible approaches for investigating it. One possibility is to proceed from the standpoint that there is a clear, objective and noticeable distance between “person” and “world”. This is the view that “person” and “world” have completely separate identities and that each can be studied and explained in isolation from the other. By

implication, this means that “person” and “world” essentially have nothing to do with each other, and that scientific findings about persons can totally ignore the fact that they are in the world and still give valid scientific explanations. The same standpoint can be held regarding the matter “world”.

Even at this early stage it is clear that this view is directly in conflict with the first ontological category (i.e., being-in-the-world) because neither person nor world can be thought of as being separate. Surely, a person cannot exist or be thought to exist outside of the world. For this reason, the second possibility is valid, namely, that “person” and “world” essentially assume and imply each other. Person and world represent an inseparable and necessary unity of a fundamental nature.

The core question of this whole matter revolves around the assumed *relationship* between “person” and “world”. The “relationship” that is assumed here becomes clear when one understands that “world” implies the totality of reality with which a person becomes involved as long as he lives. The relationship between person and world always has to do with the meaning of a person’s existence, i.e., the meaning of his involvement with reality by which he lives. For this reason, a person cannot be divorced from or thought of as separated from his world; also the world cannot be thought of as separated from a person. By the nature of this matter, a simple and everyday experiential fact that everyone can confirm is that a person necessarily is involved with things of the world and that these things really cannot appear outside of his involvement in or his consciousness of them (in the form of contents). “Person” and “world” are essentially dependent on each other. They form a unity like two sides of a coin.

It has been indicated that “world” is a comprehensive, all-inclusive concept. In fact, the world, as such, is interminable. No person can grasp or command everything with which they can become involved. A person’s everyday involvement in the world indicates that every person, strictly speaking, lives in his own world, i.e., among the things he knows and is familiar with. Outside of this field of involvement of known and familiar matters, of things he has experienced and with which he feels comfortable and safe, he and

the rest of the world are relatively foreign to each other. For many persons the world ends at the boundaries of their town or city in the sense that beyond them the world doesn't exist because they are completely unaware of it. At the same time, one also must realize that familiarity with the world differs from person to person. For this reason, "world" cannot be a constant factor in any description because the horizon of familiarity and mobility in reality (the world) varies from person to person.

This holds true as far as the *scope* of a person's involvement with reality is concerned but not for the *nature* of this involvement. All persons are only involved in reality as persons. They play, mourn, work, bring up children, etc. These ways of being involved are valid for everyone. Each person ultimately creates or constitutes his own world in light of the fact that the things surrounding him are known and meaningful to him. In this way, every human being possesses his own world of known and meaningful things and this world is delimited by a horizon that demarcates the unknown. As a person broadens his horizons by learning or experiencing, the world in which he lives expands. Also the horizon of our world is not a constant factor and is continually being enlarged by our greater knowledge through study, wider experiences, accepting greater responsibility, etc. Consequently, for each person, "world" really is an extremely personal matter: it is a horizon of known, familiar and meaningful things (contents) in terms of which he lives as he does. His lifestyle is closely related to his world.

Therefore, it is quite correct to speak of a person's own life world as the horizon of the things he knows, understands and is familiar with. From experience we also know that this life world is not merely present to each person from birth. Indeed, each child is born into the world but he has the task of eventually constituting a life world for himself by giving value and meaning to particular things. Formally stated: each individual person creates or constitutes his life world on the basis of the meanings with which he is accosted and the sense he gives to them.

The concept "world" must not be interpreted simply as a place or space. "World" means a known reality. Apart from being a place or space, "world" is a matter of contents, meanings, preferences,

awarenesses, experiences and choices, etc. Thus, it is clear that it is not a matter of objects or concrete things. Its scope includes *everything* a person is aware of—his own interiority as well as surrounding external things.

In this light, it is understandable that a person, in the midst of all that surrounds him, has a perspective on the world or reality. He views or sees it in a particular perspective that is of decisive importance for the meanings that he attributes to the world. Coupled with the fact that each person constitutes his own life world, the implication also is that each person holds a particular life- and world-view as this is shown in his likes and dislikes, among other ways. This life- and world-view (philosophy of life) also is closely related to his awareness of a reality over and above himself as a person, i.e., a reality that transcends him. This phenomenon is common to all cultures and is not easily explained scientifically. It is closely related to the nature and ways he gives meaning to his own existence and his own destiny.

Each “candid” scientist who studies the human being and his activities knows that a philosophy of life provides the ultimate content and indicates the meaning of human existence, in general. As Afrikaners, we fearlessly hold a definite philosophy of life, namely, a Christian National, or, more specifically, a Calvinist one. As a philosophy of life, it incorporates the views of our existence as a true belief in the Trinity God who has created everything and reigns over it. Thus, the content of this philosophy of life is not only a sure knowledge of His manifestations but also the firm belief that our being in the world is under His rule and guidance as the highest authority.

It is important to remember that the pronouncements of a life- and world-view have unconditional validity and its authority is absolute. As content, it is particularly Christian, Scripture bound and, therefore, paired with our deepest convictions about the manifestations of God in the Scripture and in nature. All forms of our general human existence in the course of our daily life are filled and colored by these contents. The important fact is that our entire “being-in-the-world” must be interpreted in its light.

A child is born into the complex relationships of a meaningful “being-in-the-world” as totally ignorant and immobile regarding our multi-dimensional existence—but in the world. The fact that he is there presents an educative task to his parents, i.e., the task to support and guide him to become a proper adult. How this matter is related to a theory of teaching is explained later.

It is remarkable that the general statements about valid theoretical pronouncements, and the few related facets or deliberations discussed, now have acquired a particular complexion. Before a closer description of the matter “teaching” can be broached and explained further, this orienting introduction still needs to further clarify a few other things to put into perspective what is to follow.

The findings provided above about the relationship between person and world within the frame of reference of a philosophy of life certainly imply that any science dealing with human beings (in this case pedagogics) must give a necessary and clear indication of a view of being human or a (philosophical) anthropology. Outside of the question of the essence of being human the matter of the person-world relationship cannot be dealt with easily because the meaning of human existence immediately would fall through. Outside of the pronouncements of a philosophy of life it is not possible to keep in focus a human being as a structure-in-function as well as an acting *person*. Consequently, the connection between a view of being human (a philosophical anthropology) and a philosophy of life is that they provide an answer to the question of the meaning of human existence in general and in particular, respectively.

As far as educating is concerned, this is an extremely important matter. An activity such as educating is meaningless if an educator does not purposefully try to help create in the child a *specific* human image as he becomes adult. Thus, (philosophical) anthropology is of fundamental importance when educating and teaching are described. The fundamental significance of a human image that is striven for is that the concept “human being or person” does not have a static, sterile meaning. On the other hand, a person *is* in the world but, on the other hand, he *becomes*

different, and also he ought to become different. This statement is a greater task for the child than anyone.

Another aspect that essentially affects the person-world relationship is that everyone lives within the limits and under the authority of particular norms. These norms or standards serve the purpose of providing definite indications or guidelines about what is and is not proper. The questions of how a human being *is* (exists) and how he *ought* to be are questions that cannot be separated from each other any more than the concepts “person” and “world” can be. A person appears in his life world in accordance with the totality of his activities. These activities are subject to the authority of particular norms such as religious, judicial, economic, social and political considerations, to mention a few. Consequently, the “is” and the “ought” are undeniably related and form a unity without which the image of a person does not appear. The implication of the fact that a person is in the world really is obvious. To be a person in the world is a matter of elevating and ascending. The child has the task of becoming different in a variety of respects on the basis of an increasing involvement and participation in the activities of life and world (life world).

To try to separate “person” and “person image” would have the same scientific effect as trying to separate “person” and “world” from each other. It is true, however, that there are a wide variety of “human images” available, for instance, the Christian, naturalistic and humanistic, to mention only three. How these appear and what their influence is on describing the person-world relationship are not directly relevant here. What is of great importance is the fact that a human image must always be present in any explanation that considers a person in the world. Therefore, it is understandable that in founding, describing and explaining a theory of teaching this matter continually will crop up directly and indirectly and will exercise an extensive influence on the theoretical formulations and relevant particulars connected with a philosophy of life.

Another matter that was mentioned only in passing must now be carefully considered. Previously there was reference to the person-world relationship as a matter of meanings. Indeed, the question of a person-world relationship simply does not emerge outside of

meanings. If one looks at this more closely, the above statement really implies that “world”, along with place or space and objects, also is a matter of *contents*. In the daily course of a person’s life, the spatial aspect and things or objects that appear understandably cannot be ignored. This spatial facet of his existence and the objects with which he is continually involved, however, are not the only, and often not the most important things with which he is involved. Therefore, “world”, above all, implies for a person contents in terms of which he arrives at his own ordering of everything that surrounds him in accordance with the *meanings* he attributes to them. Constituting a personal life world assumes that it really is a response to the question of the sense and meaning of reality as contents.

Perhaps one can better understand this by proceeding from the fact that the world (its spaces and objects) speaks to human beings. Other persons, distances, surfaces, perspectives and things (objects) direct an appeal to a person. This means that each of these makes certain demands of a person in that he is forced to give particular meanings to them (to reality). If one now considers that each of these aspects that appears in a person’s life world really are present in reality, this means that the way they come to light in his own life world shows a definite and necessary correspondence with the meaning he attributes to them within the framework of his own existence. Understandably, this is extremely subjective: persons, matters and objects really appear to us in the way we see them. Consequently, the meanings that we attribute to them are closely interwoven with the way they are placed in our landscape or placed there by us. For this reason we see all of these things as a whole, i.e., as a coherence of meaningful and, therefore, as important things that appear in the life world. The view that the person has of reality, in the totality of its coherencies, is called his landscape. “Landscape”, therefore, is the cohering particulars of a person’s life world. A person’s landscape really is his particularized life world.

If one takes all of the above into account, it also is understandable that the contents of the life world do not have the same meaning (sense) for all persons. The coherencies of reality do not appear the same to everyone. Also reality does not have the same impact on all people and its meaning is not interpreted by all in the same way. A churchyard does not make the same impression on or have the same

meaning for everyone. The meaning given to it is highly personal. Hence, in terms of these meanings, “world” changes into a life world and into a landscape, as indicated above. The importance of this is that everything that appears on a person’s life horizon really becomes a matter of *contents*, i.e., meanings, sense and coherencies.

This is of fundamental importance when the person-world relationship arises within the framework of teaching. It is obvious that all teaching occurs in terms of contents. These contents appear in reality as meanings and by teaching they must be placed in a definite frame of reference based on the philosophy of life of those involved in teaching. Thus, it is such an important task of the one who teaches to determine what reality *is* present to offer in the teaching situation. For this reason teaching is of decisive importance for the person-world relationship and for designing or constituting an individual life world.

From the above, two important matters come to the fore that really are the keystones of every didactic theory. The first is that a person is in the world in particular ways, i.e., in terms of clearly knowable forms of living. This is the basis for what in didactic theory is described and explained as the “form” of teaching. To further explain this here will take up too much space. The essence of this is that a human being exists in the world and becomes involved in reality in terms of certain ways or forms of living.

The second important matter is that reality eventually appears to persons as particular *contents*, i.e., as meanings, sense and coherencies. In a theory of teaching this aspect continually arises as a matter of teaching content or learning material. Just as “person” and “world” are an indivisible unity, the matter of form and content have a necessary relationship that underlies a theory of teaching. Teaching always aims for an equilibrium and harmony of these two matters in the life of the one dependent on the teaching. Within an educative context this involves educative aims that must be achieved by teaching. It is against this background that the problems of a didactic theory must be weighed and investigated. The important thing is that this does not represent a detached or separate aspect of a person’s involvement with reality but actually is part of a whole that previously was described briefly as a person

“being-in-the-world”. By this, the explanation must be accountable, i.e., it must disclose what actually *is*.

The aim of this introductory, orienting chapter is to present a framework within which the reader can understand the descriptions, explanations and reasoning in the following chapters. In the literature mentioned in the bibliography there is indubitable evidence of various approaches to didactic theory; in fact, there are many different didactic theories. The fact about which we must be certain is this: there may be a multitude of approaches, scientific findings or theoretical opinions about teaching written down, but *there is only one teaching*. No matter how much a scientist might try, he cannot describe or explain what doesn't exist. Thus, different teachings do not exist in reality. Teaching is a single, unique activity that appears in the totality of human experience. *During all times and in all places teaching appears the same for all people, but it also can be actualized in terms of different contents* (for example: life- and world-views).

When we speak of teaching, as such, we are dealing with something that is universally valid. As soon as contents arise, we are in the realm of the specific and what is particular, especially as far as the contents appear in the life- and world-view of a particular society, group or nation. All findings about teaching, *as such*, therefore, must be universally valid. As to *what* must be taught (content), understandably, there are a great many opinions. This is why every country or region compiles its own curricula to insure that those contents (aspects of reality, norms, values, etc.) deemed to be important are taught systematically.