

W. A. LANDMAN AS ESSENCE THINKER  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE  
PEDAGOGICAL SITUATION\*

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1. Introduction

As an educationist, W. A. Landman is well known in South Africa and in other countries. Foreign scholars who are very familiar with his works include, among others, S. Strasser, W. Luijpen, R. Bakker, M. J. Langeveld, J. H. van den Berg, C. C. de Keyser, N. Perquin and J. D. Imelman (Kilian, 1977: 48). If it is asked why he is known by these foremost scholars, there is more than one answer. In a pedagogical (i.e., theory of education) perspective Landman especially is known as an ontologist, phenomenologist and essence thinker. On the one hand he has contributed greatly to the pedagogical as a science that merely involves the scientific, but on the other hand also as a pedagogician who is involved with the practice of educating with the aim of improving it. Having said this, other questions arise. Is Landman a philosopher, phenomenologist, subject scientist or practitioner? If his work is read attentively and with insight there is no problem in this regard because he is explicit about it. Even so, sometimes he is incorrectly interpreted which gives rise to unnecessary criticism. For this reason, it is worth considering various aspects of Landman's essence thinking.

2. Philosophical founding

In his search for the essences of the reality of educating Landman wants to find categories with ontological status. To do this he inquires about the deepest grounds of the being of that which is. He states emphatically that ontic reality is what is given as essential, incontrovertible and evident. Thus, he distinguishes between "ontic" and "being" where the latter is being-at-hand

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<http://www.landmanwa.co.za/onlandroos.htm>

(vorhandenheit), occurrent being without which the life world cannot be thought.

The concept “Logos” that especially is used by Heidegger has a particular meaning. If the concept “Logos” is looked at more deeply it quickly becomes clear that it is not a simple concept. Landman describes “Logos” among other ways as: “Laying before: something is ‘laying before’, i.e., it lays itself before a person. This means that the essence (real essentials) of something appears. The laying before is the being of the legein of the Logos and it means to bring to unconcealment. To lay before in unconcealment is to express. Logos is the compilation of laying before, letting appear and expressing everything that is in its totality. It is exposing, manifesting. It is placing in the present the existing and one calls this the being of the being. Logos thus is the letting be of beings in their real essentiality and sense” (Landman, 1974: 1).

From the meaning of the concept “Logos”, as viewed by Landman, it is clear that it not only has to do with disclosing essences but also with their sense and meaning compiled as a totality. Already from these words by him written in the early 70’s his unitary view of the reality of educating is evident. Therefore, it is a pity that still today he is accused of splintering the reality of educating into essences and essences of essences and thus falling into an atomism. It is clear that such an accusation is based on ignorance or because the philosophical background of his thinking is not understood. An even more basic reason is that his work on the event of educating is not understood. In the works of Landman it becomes very clear that all essences of educating must be seen as forming an authentic unity and that the actualization of one essence always must be viewed as a precondition for actualizing another in educative situations. The dialectic-hermeneutic method that Landman uses with the phenomenological method is a further indication that he always views the essences in relation to each other. If one looks at all concepts used by Landman as synonymous with his essence thinking then, clearly, this criticism doesn’t hold water. Here one thinks of concepts that usually stress the unity of the reality of educating such as “meaning and meaningful relation”, “structure”, “co-essentiality”, and “co-existentiality”. Regarding the meaning of the last two concepts, Landman expresses himself as follows:

“When it is said that the real pedagogic essences are co-existential this means that they only exist in relation to each other, however, not in the sense that the reality (actuality) of one is derivable from the other but rather in the sense that one helps actualize the other. The one’s being-there makes the being-there of the other possible. They allow each other to be—the one is a precondition for the appearance of the other. For example, the pedagogic relationship structure (with its essences) allows the sequence structure to be (appear in its fullness), etc. As more of the essences (moments) appear in their reciprocal relations the more clearly the structure, of which they are essences, appears. For example, the more essences (aspects) of the pedagogic encounter become observable the clearer this appears as a structure of the pedagogic situation.

Co-essentiality means that one essence has its own being-such-and-such in relation to the being-such-and-such of the other essences, however, not in the sense that the being-such-and-such of one essence can be derived from another but in the sense that one essence contributes to allowing another essence to appear in its unique being-such-and-such. Each essence possesses its own being-such-and-such in relation to other essences. For example, the relationship of trust is what it is connected essentially to the relationship of authority. Thus, if there were no connection between trust and authority the relationship of trust would be different. For example, the essence of trust “taking action” (i.e., “active acceptance”) cannot appear in the absence of the essence of authority “being told” because an educator’s refusal to tell a child what he ought to do, or “being told”, will lead immediately to alienation which is an essence of mistrust [distrust]” (Landman, Van Zyl, Roos, 1975: 1).

For Landman Logos is the key to unlocking real essences and because for him categories are being-oriented, he also sees them as illuminative means of thinking of the Logos (Landman, 1974: 3). His search for fundamental-pedagogic essences, thus essences that are grounded in that which is (ontic), involves an ontological

grounding of the pedagogic. In order to now find categories with ontological status, in the first place he inquires about the existence of Dasein. Viewed in this light, Fundamental Pedagogics is fundamental only if it is grounded in the ontological category, namely, human being-in-the-world. By inquiring further into the various ways in which human being is in the world he can distinguish additional specialized anthropological categories in terms of which the pedagogic, as a strictly human matter, can be reflected on. Through this ontological-anthropological approach Landman was in a position to disclose the fundamental-pedagogic structures as generally valid, necessary, and indubitable essences of the pedagogic situation.

Summarizing the philosophical founding, it can be said that Landman continually presented himself with the aim of the ontological understanding of the pedagogic phenomenologically. For him, meaningful reflection on the Fundamental Pedagogic is only possible if it is grounded in the four fundamental corner stones, namely:

- (i) Ontological understanding is possible only phenomenologically;
- (ii) Phenomenology is authentic only if it leads to ontological understanding;
- (iii) Phenomenological thinking is categorical thinking;
- (iv) Pedagogics, as essence pedagogics, makes use of steps of thinking that fulfill particular requirements, namely, scientific necessity and philosophy of life permissibility (Landman et al, 1975: xix).

From what has already been mentioned, it appears that the ontological-anthropological grounding of the pedagogic and the phenomenological way of thinking are inseparable with regard to Landman's essence thinking. A few thoughts follow on the phenomenological method as a way of thinking for disclosing pedagogic essences.

### 3. Phenomenology as a way of thinking

As already indicated, Landman wants to illuminate the reality of educating in its totality so that its essences with their meaningful

relations and possible preconditions can be noticed. He views the method that makes this possible as a “noticing-method”, which the phenomenological method is and the point of departure is reality itself (reality of educating as it is rooted in life reality) (Landman, 1974: 9). Also, he describes Fundamental Pedagogics as essence-pedagogics because one of its tasks is disclosing fundamental-pedagogic essences. The means he uses for disclosing essences are categories that, in their turn, are viewed as being-oriented or expressions of being. Landman expresses himself about this as follows: “Logos is the key to unlocking (defining, particularizing) real essences and because categories are being-oriented they are means of defining and unlocking; i.e., categories are the illuminative means of thinking about the Logos” (Landman, 1974: 3). In relation to the reality of educating, he states the task of the pedagogician as follows: “For his illuminative thinking of the reality of educating he needs lights for thinking. Such lights for thinking are known as categories and without categories there would be groping in the dark. Categories are means for illuminative thinking in order to disclose real essences (fundamentalia): they are illuminative means of thinking” (Landman, Roos and Van Rooyen, 1973: 3). Landman also uses other terms for categories that clearly describe their essences such as “means for creating access to essences” or “means for expressing disclosed essences”.

As already indicated, the pedagogic categories used by Landman to reflect on the reality of educating have reality-status because they are grounded in the deepest foundations of what is; that is, they are ontologically, anthropologically grounded. Thus, it is necessary to scientifically follow the phenomenological method and use the steps of the phenomenological reduction to reach the essences of educating, not only to know more about the reality of educating but also to improve the practice of educating. In a number of places Landman states in plain words that the task of Fundamental Pedagogics lies not only in disclosing fundamental-pedagogic essences but after disclosing essences, through practical study the essence-knowledge must be used to improve the practice. This means that the Fundamental Pedagogic also must shed light on its own becoming a practice. Whenever there is mention of improving practice there also necessarily is the question of for whom the practice must be improved. The “for whom” points to the practice

being improved for someone in concrete educative situations that, once again, points to a philosophy of life interpretation of the event of becoming a practice. Where there is mention of a philosophy of life, sometimes Landman is criticized on political grounds, as if he has a specific philosophy of life to prescribe for practice. (This is discussed later).

By throwing light on becoming a practice, it can be further improved by using the essences as criteria in terms of which the practice can be judged with the aim of improving it. Much research has been carried out at a variety of universities where aspects of the reality of educating were evaluated by using pedagogic essences as criteria.

Unfortunately, still today there is a good deal of misunderstanding with respect to Landman as a phenomenologist. Many times this is because the question of method is not separated from phenomenological philosophy. For him, and the way he uses phenomenology, it really only is a matter of a methodology.

The scientific nature of the way Landman uses the phenomenological method sometimes is doubted because in addition to scientific necessity he also poses the demands of one's philosophy of life permissibility in applying the phenomenological steps of thinking.

The following valid critique is expressed by P. G. Schoeman regarding a scientific approach to the reality of educating:

“Can it not be possible that the actual starting-point of all scientific (i.e., theoretical) enterprise is to be sought in a dimension of man's existence which is considerably ‘deeper’ than that in which his rational activities are executed? In other words, can man's reason (analytical mode of his existence) really function as a substance, i.e., an sich\* (sic), independently of the rest of his existence? Indeed, these questions undoubtedly merit a critical interpretation into the nature of all theoretical thoughts in general, and the

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\* an sich = German for “in itself”. (GDY)

epistemological bases of Pedagogics in particular. For it is regarded as a pre-condition for the practice of science to exclude all vestiges of sterile metaphysical speculation from one's theoretical (scientific) account of pedagogic reality, and an austere and critical attitude regarding the very roots of one's scientific pursuits should be viewed as the condition sine quo non for scientific respectability" (Schoeman, 1982: 25 in English).

In this article Schoeman's solution to the problem in the above citation is not dealt with but rather the focus is on Fundamental Pedagogics, in general, and Landman's treatment of the problem, in particular.

Fundamental Pedagogics rejects absolutizing reason as a form of rationalism. As an ism this form of absolutizing is a way of being unscientific. Landman stresses that, in addition to scientific necessity, as a rational aloofness, the demand on the researcher of philosophy of life permissibility is an equiprimordial factor. The synchronization of scientific necessity and philosophy of life permissibility is a particular appeal that the researcher (scientist) has to satisfy in order to meaningfully disclose essences. Scientific necessity means that the steps of thinking used must give rise to essence disclosure and verification of essence-status since only steps of thinking contributing to these results can make the claim of necessity. Philosophy of life permissibility means that a pedagogician might not exercise steps of thinking that conflict with his own philosophy of life because then he would be untrue to himself (Landman et al, 1974: xix).

On the other hand, there is defense against the objection about the absence of a religiously grounded motive for using the phenomenological method. "At bottom, this also is the reason why a reconciliation between phenomenological essence pedagogics and scriptural educational theory (as a sort of second phase) cannot succeed in the long run: the phenomenological method and the scriptural approach are, respectively, rooted in a religiously grounded motive that essentially excludes (estranges) one from the other" (Van der Walt, 1983: 154-155). That such an objection is valid when there is mention of phenomenological philosophy

cannot be denied. However, where this involves the use of a method, this objection cannot be upheld. Indeed, there is no objection to using an experimental method that does not claim to be religiously grounded (De Wet, Monteith, Steyn, Venter, 1981: Chapter 6).

Landman also is criticized on the basis of mainly political motivations by implying that it is scientifically not permissible to apply scientific insights to serve the matter and practice of Christian National Education. This type of criticism appears clearly in the summary presented below:

“The article in questioning the validity of the Fundamental Pedagogicians’ claim to derive their education theory from the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl and Heidegger, focuses chiefly on the work of W. A. Landman (1977). While Pedagogicians do, indeed, borrow phenomenological terminology, this terminology is, in the author’s opinion misappropriated, and the resultant distortions bring phenomenology into disrepute among readers unacquainted with its seminal texts. Husserl’s usage of the term ‘reduction’ is compared with Landman’s application of it, as are Heideggerian terms like ‘everydayness’ and ‘idle talk’ with Landman’s deployment of them. The legitimacy of the Pedagogicians’ invocation of writers like M. J. Langeveld is also questioned. The author, having applied criteria derived by Kevin Harris (1979) from Lakatos’s theory of science (1970) to Pedagogical theory, concludes that this theory is ideological in the pejorative sense of the term in that it is pseudo-scientific, non-progressive, and designed to serve a particular interest group” (Fouche, 1982: 159 in English).

Nowhere in the Fundamental Pedagogic literature by Landman and his co-workers is it suggested that the pedagogic principles with which it deals are derived from the philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger. Concepts used by these two appreciated philosophers, indeed, have given rise to the development of Fundamental pedagogic thinking. That Fundamental Pedagogics is no applied Husserlianism or Heideggerianism especially is clear to the reader who studies this literature without naïve prejudgments. The

Husserlian and Heideggerian concepts used to initiate the design of an autonomous Fundamental Pedagogics were not adopted willy-nilly in terms of content. In addition, M. J. Langeveld's importance for Fundamental Pedagogics is not unacknowledged (Kilian, 1977: 42-55). Fouche's reference to pseudo-science and to terms designed merely to serve the interests of a particular group apparently refer to the criterion of philosophy of life permissibility. This critic does not take into account the universality of philosophies of life (Pienaar, 1983: 132). Fouche also does not take into account the possibility of the development of a way of thinking from Husserl's rationality via Heidegger's *Befindlichkeit* (attunement) to affectivity and further to life philosophy.

#### 4. Summary

Landman practices Fundamental Pedagogics on a phenomenological foundation as essence pedagogics. He involves himself in the reality of educating and he is attuned to the scientific-necessary and philosophy of life permissible disclosure of pedagogic essences with the aim of improving the practice of educating. In this way he succeeds in eliminating the unreal and actual gulf between science and philosophy of life. In his Rectoral address, Heidegger states that the will to essences is the will to science (Nicholson, 1987). This is clearly evident in Landman's essence thinking.

#### Author's English Summary

##### W. A. LANDMAN AS ESSENCE THINKER WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE PEDAGOGICAL SITUATION

In the context of pedagogics W. A. Landman is known as an ontologist, phenomenologist and essence thinker. He has contributed significantly toward the science of pedagogy and as pedagogician has endeavored to improve the educational practice.

However, Landman's works are not always accepted without criticism. On the one hand the scientific character of his work is held in doubt because he asks about the philosophy of life permissibility of each phenomenological thinking step, and on the

other hand he is criticized because of the absence of a religious motif in his application of the phenomenological method.

A study of the objections that are raised against Landman's way of applying the phenomenological method indicate that they rest upon the misunderstanding of not separating the method question from the phenomenological philosophy. In fact, for Landman the phenomenological way of working is entirely a methodological issue.

One could say that Landman practices fundamental pedagogics on a phenomenological basis as essence pedagogics. He concerns himself with the pedagogic reality and is attuned to the scientifically necessary and philosophy of life permissible revealing of pedagogic essences, with a view to their becoming practice. In this way he succeeds in closing the gap between science and philosophy of life.

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