

LAUDATIO JACQUES CARPAY

Marc Spoelders

Jacques A.M. Carpay's formation at the University of Amsterdam included, next to Psychology and Education, General Linguistics and Slavonic Studies. His mentors in the latter domains were Reichling and Jakobson (and/or their disciples) who brought him, from the beginning of his university studies onwards, in intense contact with the complex problem of meaning, its intersubjective creation, and the investigation of the mechanisms which are at the root of it. In this respect Jacobson's approach led Carpay via Peirce's ideas to the work of Vygotskii and Bachtin which, also, focused on the dialogical nature of thinking. In these approaches thinking is conceived of as a form of internal speech. *Ergo*, an empty head does not think and thinking always is a kind of conversation with a real or a virtual partner.

Subsequently, the theme of internal speech guided Carpay to the investigation of the genres of argumentation and reasoning in the context of formal and informal learning, in and out of schools. Hence Carpay's interest in the intrinsic relationship between components of language mastery and cognitive and social functioning and participation of man in a variety of social contexts. At the beginning his research followed a psychological line of approach. Through the works of Bachtin, Bernstein, Bourdieu, and Foucault sociological, *viz.* socio-cultural points of view were integrated. This resulted in a broad spectrum investigation of the causes of failure at school, *viz.* the conditions for enhancing the outcomes of formal and informal learning.

With this spiritual legacy he entered the (roaring) sixties. From that period onwards Carpay has devoted himself to interdisciplinary research into the learning of children and youngsters in basic education (4-16 years) from an emancipatory viewpoint, inspired by Dewey* and Vygotskii. Their view of the relationship between instructional

psychology, on the one hand, and learning, language and cognitive psychology, on the other, served him as a line of action for education.

From his retirement onwards he has mainly been occupied with socio-cultural, (second order) research of the conditions, *viz.* psychological or sociological bottlenecks which inhibit attempts to 'lift up' people living in the margin of society. For leading and being led are no longer evident in the control over turn taking in society. Hence the discomfort concerning a science- *viz.* élite- dominated order of thinking, speaking, do's and don'ts in our ICT society, is at the heart of his research.

In terms of Aristotle's idea of democracy it is Carpay's conviction that it all boils down to the problem of leading and being led, and to the distinction between facts and opinions. In other words it has to do with the distinction between, on the one hand, the nature of the answer to a question and, on the other hand, the answer to the question whether the answer is to one's liking. In short: how should the control over speaking be organised when anyone may join in?

Or more specifically, which self image should the future élite have in a society which has evolved from a command household to a negotiated, polyphonic one?

The question of who has a say over (and of) the order of thinking, speaking and doing - as meant above, and its embedded question of the self image of the talking professions, leads to a new view on the formation of future citizens in general, and of intellectuals more in particular. The delicate subject of the nature of knowledge and, especially, how it should be dealt with in the varied echelons of society is of great importance at this juncture. For the terms of top-down and bottom-up thinking moves in conversational interactions have to be regauged. This has to be done in a context in which the spoken word predominates the written word. Hence, according to Carpay, learning by doing needs to be replaced by learning by taking part in. However, how can we remain on speaking terms when a bird is known by its note, and a man by his talk?

In line with Dr George Sarton, Jacques Carpay is in search of a new humanism, he has a synthesising mind, and is able to open a person's

eyes. He stands on the shoulders of his predecessors, drawing from the *fontes perennis* of his discipline. Thus, as Chair of the Comenius Foundation he tries to harmonise the universal insights offered by this great educationist with the variety of present (educational) thought, speech and action.

The scientific oeuvre of Emeritus Professor Carpay shows that there is a single ('A1') road map for academic success. In order for the human sciences in general, and educational sciences more in particular, to survive academically, keep their originality and creativity, routings marked in a format only suitable for the positive sciences will not suffice. Indeed, for 'A1' unreachable or unsuited territories having high educational potential will then no longer be investigated nor scientifically mapped.

A meaningful scientific and academic activity in the educational province which is not tributary to improper output criteria is not only possible – as Jacques Carpays' work bears witness of- but, indeed, highly needed, not in the least in light of the responsibility for the education of future citizens.

Bio-bibliographical note

J.A.M. Carpay (1933) studied at the University of Amsterdam (Linguistics, Slavonic Studies, Psychology and Education). After having been a part-time teacher and school counselor (1955-1969) he became a collaborator of Professor C. van Parreren at the Psychological Laboratory of the University of Utrecht (1969-1977). In 1975 he obtained a PhD in Social sciences (University of Utrecht). From 1977 till 1993 he was professor of education at the Free University Amsterdam. Emeritus Carpay remains active internationally through guest-professorships and invited lectures at congresses. He is chairing the Comenius Foundation (Naarden, the Netherlands).

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*In *I knew a phoenix. Sketches for an autobiography*, Dr George Sarton's daughter, the world-famous writer May Sarton describes vividly her experiences at Shady Hill, a Dewey inspired school in Cambridge, Mass. I bought this brilliant book in 1984, while staying at the Harvard Ed.-School, after having visited George Sarton's former office in the Widener Library. During one of Jacques' stays at the Department of Education—where he lectured on Dewey- I loaned the novel to Jacques. It started up a discussion on George Sarton and his work which resulted in Jacques' nomination, many years later, as a Sarton-medallist by the Faculty of Psychology and Educational sciences.