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A concise description of *gestion mentale*

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Part A – the core: *To what does the term 'gestion mentale' refer?*

The mind of the learner in the act of cognition, as researched by Antoine de la Garanderie, is known under the term: *gestion mentale*.

In *gestion mentale*, learning is considered from the point of view of what goes on in the mind of the learner. This study also takes account of the intentions that generate and direct these mind processes.

The tool used to open this arena is *introspection*. Through introspection the workings of the mind which underlie our thinking are brought to consciousness. *Gestion mentale* is essentially a descriptive discipline, observing mind processes and elucidating their inherent structure.

In this procedure, an unorthodox element arises in that the subject matter being observed is inside one's own mind, and every person needs to rediscover the facts for her- and himself. These facts have to do with how meaning arises in the mind, or one could say, with the meaning of meaning.

Gestion mentale was developed in relation to pedagogy, however, it has also added a new chapter to the field of phenomenology in philosophy, and has important implications for psychology. Its development within the field of pedagogy has lent it an empirical dimension atypical, perhaps, of Gallic thought. Propositions made take the form of hypotheses which need corroboration through observation of specific acts of learning.

Part B – impact on teaching: *In what manner does 'gestion mentale' redefine the task of a teacher in the classroom?*

1. **HELPING PUPILS DISCOVER HOW THEY REACH MEANING**
A teacher assists the pupils to take cognisance of those processes going on in their minds that are effective for them when confronted with specific tasks of learning. Discovering the variety of ways in which their classmates learn helps pupils recognize their own specific strengths and resources; it allows them to streamline their own mind processes so as to find for themselves, what is most natural and achieves the desired results.

2. OPENING POSSIBILITIES WHEREBY PUPILS REACH BEYOND THEIR FORMER LIMITATIONS

A teacher helps pupils discover how to enlarge the range of their learning possibilities. The fact that a person is good at one task and weak or incapable at another is seen to be the reflection of the mind's bias for certain patterns. The itinerary of thought patterns can be influenced and expanded to include abilities that were previously out of range or were rejected as unappealing. These could be: learning by heart (e.g. a poem), coherent retelling of a story, working with numbers, grasping relationships, applying and discovering rules (e.g. grammar), and even such skills as drawing or singing. Just as teachers can learn how to expand their own potential, they can assist their pupils in doing the same.

3. ENGAGING THE PERSONAL INTENT OF EACH PUPIL TO ACHIEVE A PARTICULAR RESULT

In presenting information, an essential feature of the teacher's objective is to engage the learner's personal *intent*, or 'projet' as it is called in *gestion mentale*. Familiarization with the manner in which intention functions in the learning processes of an individual enables the teacher to encourage the intent of the learner - be it to understand, or memorize, or reflect, or move beyond what is given and thus think creatively, or, simply, to pay attention.

4. NURTURING THE DIFFERING COGNIZANT STRUCTURES OF THE PUPILS

A teacher is consciously able to adapt the presentation of material so as to accommodate the needs of pupils who process information along paths quite alien to those that teacher uses. This requires knowledge of the mind's opposing either/or pathways to meaning, of how moments of understanding arise in the mind through a personal bias for one of two mutually exclusive options. This binary structure has been traced and elucidated in the work of Antoine de la Garanderie. This ability of a teacher to recognize and work with a pupil's particular structures of meaning tends to generate a sense of self-worth and purpose on the part of pupils in difficulty.

5. REDISCOVERING THE SENSE AND PURPOSE OF PEDAGOGY

In my experience, there occurs a very gradual change in attitudes of teachers who work with *gestion mentale* - namely, increased respect for their colleagues as well as for the pupils. This may be attributed to a newfound sense of direction which allows them to perceive more clearly their own achievements as teachers, as well as those of their colleagues and pupils. The result, frequently, is a shared feeling of encouragement.