Research in Religion and Society[1]

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Abstract
Whereas the struggle for liberation was characterised by the prominent participation of religious formations vis-à-vis the apartheid state, their significance in the public domain has significantly diminished since 1994. This raises questions not only about the state's relationship and articulation with the religions, but also about the relationship and articulation of the religions with the state and with one another as part and parcel of the one state. This article carefully tries to think through some of the challenges and attempts to provide a way forward. It provides a few insights that derive from the academic programmes developed and scholarly work done by a few colleagues of the discipline of Religion, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College campus. Over the last decade, colleagues have developed programmes that involve all the religions equally, also taking their specific sensitivities and emphases vis-à-vis theoretical generalisations and stereotyping into consideration. The article provides seven seminal perspectives on how this approach could make a seminal contribution to research in the religions. The ultimate two questions that are addressed, therefore relate to both how the religions in the state relate to the state, but also to one another in the state. On both levels, academic contributions to the development of the discourses from within the religions have seminal roles to play.

Keywords: religion, 'pillars of culture', public culture, unity in diversity, common narrative, democratic and human rights culture, moral and ethical code of science, imagining a common future, challenge to religious formations

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Introduction

This article problematizes a few issues that are important for Southern African researchers and scholars of religion and society[2]. One focus concerns the positioning of the religions in terms of their articulation with each other in the state. This is done from a very specific and a very limited South African perspective[3]. My main reason for this is that we should carefully think through not only how the state relates to the religions[4], and the religions to the state[5], but how the religions interactively but also functionally relate to one another as part and parcel of the postapartheid state. They all form part of public culture – i.e. as clusters of institutions with their specific activities in which citizens participate. And, the question

[2] Distinct from problematisations from elsewhere, two of the most central questions in postapartheid South Africa concern research problematisation and knowledge production from within our own context and secondly, the contextual significance and relevance of the knowledge we produce. In this regard, a primary assumption is to ask questions from within our own spaces of action and interaction and produce the requisite knowledge that make constructive contributions to the improvement of the quality of life of our people irrespective of religion, gender, class, or race.

[3] Socio-historically understood, the specific institutional challenges the different SADC, but especially sub-Saharan African states face, differ remarkably. The significance of this article may therefore be applicable to fellow SADC states only in a limited sense.

[4] This topic is normally addressed under the rubric of 'church and state' relations or questions focusing on the variable articulations between the official organs of state and of the religious formations. In his very significant 2013 article, Simanga Kumalo traces some of the dynamics and the organs of state the postapartheid state has instated in its endeavor to bring the religions on board with regard to engaging the social challenges we face.

[5] One of the main outstanding features of the liberation struggle in South Africa, was the very prominent place religious formations had in the struggle for liberation from white racist rule. The question is how this feat can also be replicated in the postapartheid state in the interests of seminal existential values such as freedom, equity, human dignity, social justice and the broader common projects of nation building and state formation.

concerns their specific articulation with the main public cultural systems and structures that all South Africans share – including fellow religions and religious formations.

In academic context, the counterpoint of this question concerns the role of research and the scholarly study of the religions in this nexus. In this regard the main research question is: How do the religions (and their denominations and orders) relate to fellow religious formations, as well as to the common systems and structures we share in society and in the state?

The subsidiary questions are two-fold. *Firstly*, how do the religions relate and articulate with 'public culture'. *Secondly*, and this focus follows on the first one, concerns the seeking of possible points of contact around which one could develop some themes of modicum consensus with regard to the wide diversity of religions, their orders and denominations, and their institutions and structures, as well as the spiritualities[6] we have in South Africa. Given the widely recognised diversity of our society, the concern is that we may lose sight of that which binds us together. In this context, what are the common rationales that all of the religious formations are challenged to confront in our common search for building the postapartheid state? Given this question, I address topics with regard to unity or that which we bind us together or we commonly share[7].

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[6] Cf. *Religion and Spirituality in South Africa* edited by Duncan Brown (2009) for instance in this regard.

[7] This focus does not in any way detract from the main concern of in-equity and in-equality we are faced with in postapartheid South Africa. The question of unity and that which we commonly share precisely aims at providing a few constructive perspectives on where we for all intents and purposes hope to be heading to. As such, it is also a question about the hegemony we need, if we want to radically transform from a state still plagued by the joint legacies of the knowledge and practices of colonisation and apartheid as well as the endemic poverty related to the continuous underdevelopment since 1974 (cf. Terreblanche 2012). In this regard the question concerns especially our indigenous religions and indigenous knowledge systems (cf. Smit & Masoga 2012; Kaya 2013). How can we centrally position the previously disadvantaged religions and religious formations in this common new hegemony such questions presuppose?

If these are some of the seminal questions that confront us, then the main question concerns alternative futures. In this regard, we may be able to learn from especially the European experiments with regard to what has been termed the 'pillarisation' of culture(s).

Towards Research in Religion and Public Culture

The notion of the 'pillars of culture' was popular in Europe during the 19th and early 20th centuries. This was part and parcel of the division of Europe in mainly Roman Catholic and Protestant regions. Practiced especially in The Netherlands, Belgium and Austria, 'pillarisation' meant that religious formations replicated themselves in the public sphere in terms of the secular services it rendered to its religious communities. For instance, each of the Catholic and Protestant formations would have their own religiously-founded political parties, public media such as radio stations and newspapers, educational institutions such as schools and universities, hospitals, banks, trade unions, etc. In short, we could say that each religiously-founded organisation, mainly invested in its own politics, economics, education, morality, aesthetics, kinship systems and obviously, religion[8]. The investment in the development of communities and their wellness beyond religious enclaves, only happened by default, i.e. being part of a specific state. The main needs of the communities were met by religiously-founded and inspired social systems.

In the public sphere, and more particularly on the broader front of the developing nation states, these developments meant that you could speak of religiously-based blocks and their influence but also competition. Each religious formation invested financially in the infrastructures, public services and in teaching and learning benefitting its members while excluding members from rival religious formations. Each invested in its own cultural systems, i.e. the political, economic, educational, moral, aesthetic and family systems, but also in its religious systems. In this environment, the 'pillars of culture' came to signify the main religiously-based arenas in which the nation invested for its own development and then use these as conduits for

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[8] For a brief exposition of the function and impact of 'pillarisation' as it operated in the educational arena, in the Netherlands, cf. Bakker (2013).

developing its international networks. The wide variety of ways in which they invested in these 'pillars' meant that the pillars, together, would uphold the 'house', which constitutes a specifically religiously founded and influenced section of the state (if we have to extend the metaphor). With regard to the nation-state idea, this continued the centuries-old divisions and animosities along religious lines[9].

The excess of such systems is that they continue to foster animosity between religions, unhealthy inter-religious competition with regard to available resources, and actual marginalisation of those religiously-inspired groups which are less resourced than the richer and more prosperous ones. Especially during the twentieth century, this met with much discontent. In time it gave rise to many social-democratic and other non-religiously aligned political parties and organisations coming into being – organisations aimed at serving the people of each country irrespective of their religious persuasion or commitment[10]. These European developments and system of thinking also impacted on South Africa.

Even though the notion of the 'pillars of culture' ideology was not the primary consideration of the architects of apartheid, it obviously fit their ideology of 'Christian-national' education and their 'separate development' blueprint for South African society. In terms of this design, the reasoning for this ideology was that each ethnically separate group in South Africa could develop in its own time and on its own terms by investing distinctly in its

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[9] Cf. especially Platvoet's (2002) extensive essay in which he covers aspects of the history and functioning of pillarization.

[10] Terreblanche (2012:20 - 25) identifies this social democratic period in Twentieth Century European history as stretching from the post-World War II rebuilding of Europe, to the later 1960s/ early 1970s. For about twenty five years, the 'social-democratic consensus' among Western powers impacted positively on economic growth and job creation. From economic perspective, Terreblanche points to especially two 'social democratic contracts', viz.: 1) 'a domestic social democratic social consensus to create greater social justice and social stability in the domestic affairs of all the capitalist countries in the West'; and 2) 'an international social democratic consensus to stabilise capital flows and economic relationships between Western capitalist countries'.

own development – its 'pillars of culture' so to speak. Similarly, this would mean that each ethnic group should invest in and develop its own cultural systems. What was not said in terms of this assumption was that these systems most closely depended on the racist Afrikaner and English apartheid systems and companies – the Mineral Energy Complex (MEC). This meant that only those systems and institutions the protagonists of apartheid ideology wanted to grow and develop, would be invested in. The result the apartheid ideology envisioned, was then a system of separate ethnicities or 'tribes' each with their own pillars of culture – their own semi-autonomous political, economic, moral, education, aesthetic, religious and kinship systems. Moreover, since white hegemony controlled all these cultural systems through its monetary and bureaucratic systems[11] – the resources that became available for investment in one's own culture were owned and controlled by white culture and white capital – this meant that the only culture which could truthfully develop and advance in South Africa was the culture in which white culture capital invested. The apartheid ideology's funding machine obviously only invested in those aspects of culture which benefitted white culture in turn in accordance with the racist ideology of the time. Where investment was made in 'other' cultures in South Africa, this was done only to the degree that it served the racist ideology of apartheid, in the Bantustans and historically black tertiary institutions for example[12]. But this mis-directed ideologically-driven investment in the peoples of South African had its own excess. This is constituted by those cultural formations that were not co-opted into the ideology – which constitutes the majority of the people of the country.

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[11] The most devastating of these were the pass-laws system that controlled and prohibited freedom of movement and association. A national bureaucracy was set up to manage and control this inhumane system in the ministry of one of the architects of apartheid, and later Prime Minister, H.F. Verwoerd. On the one hand it controlled the labour supply to the MEC. On the other hand, it was a major socio-economic system that created state-controlled jobs for whites.

[12] Even here, jobs were reserved for whites, and the local populations of the Bantustans only educated and empowered marginally.

Due to its race-based mono-cultural investments, the house of apartheid ideology failed to accommodate the ethnic, linguistic and religious in one integrated cultural unit. Apartheid's 'pillarisation' of cultures, in fact marginalised the real ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity of the country. The effects of this ideology were that it did not only fail to provide for a unified understanding of the cultural diversity of South Africa. It also failed to draw South Africa's cultural formations closer together in single systems of governance and articulation – democratic systems and structures – that would span across the ethnic, linguistic and religious divides. But this is what we enjoy in our still very young new and democratic South Africa. Since 1994, the people who make up the ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity in South Africa, have the opportunity to foster such unified systems and structures that span our diversity, configure and organise them in single systems that empower and serve all equally[13].

At this broad and general level of abstraction, this means that none of the knowledge and religious systems that exist in the country have had occasion to develop in the public and open democratic systems we enjoy in the new South Africa. This must be qualified though. In distinction to certain Christian and Muslim organisations and institutions, that drew back in their own religious enclaves following the struggle period, indigenous systems developed cultural capital that served the poor and marginalised. This mostly functioned at survival levels of existence. I believe that this constitutes a very important resource for democratic South Africa as well as for eh fostering of related research. The indigenous religions and knowledge systems have had to develop and articulate with a variety of systems in the country – in many cases these have not been researched or developed academically. Except for political formations, and institutions such as burial societies and stokvels amongst others – pioneeringly researched by Prof G.C. Oosthuizen (2002) –

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[13] It is my contention that the most significant system that contributed towards the systemic dissolution of the legacy of apartheid and the initiating of systems and attitudes fostering equity and equal opportunities, is the national education system. The new unified system - which is still plagued by some of the residues of the apartheid legacy, e.g. the different school 'models' still in operation - was the most significant system that drew children together from all walks of life in the same classroom.

the formation of indigenously founded modern systems and institutions during the apartheid era were limited by the apartheid state. Since people did, wanted to and had to engage the modern world, they have had to develop seminal perspectives on a wide variety of issues in the modern public sphere[14]. And here I must mention the pioneering work of Prof G. Setiloane in the still unpublished materials of his later years[15].

If we now skip to today, nearly twenty years after the dawn of our own democratic dispensation, then the question is two-fold.

- *Firstly*, if South Africa's apartheid protagonists of the 1940s and 1950s took the route of race-based investment in the pillars of white racist culture – which meant oppression, exploitation and the cultural production of underdevelopment, poverty and inequality – what should constitute the basic system of ideas that should inform democratic South Africa and what should be the 'pillars of culture'

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[14] Significantly these religious systems could not be confined to only one religion but were 'ecumenical' due to the fact that the poverty and need of people caused by and impacted on by the apartheid state meant that they had to work and live together independent of religious persuasion or commitment. Oosthuizen's research reflects his insights into this socio-economic reality in the religious domain. Cf. especially Oosthuizen (1995; 1996; and 2002). In the first article, he reflect on how this ecumenicty could positively impact the church (in all its denominations and orders); and in the second how the AICs are impacting the 'social environment'. In the 2002 publication, emphasis is on the significance this home-grown ecumenical spirituality has for 'secular empowerment'.

[15] In these just more than twenty still unpublished papers from the 1980s, Setiloane pioneeringly and critically and constructively reflects on topics in need of research development from within African context. These include African religious engagements of the social significance of the ancestors, African community, the family in Africa, *Ukubuyisa*, Civil Authority, the secular, land, African traditional views on death and dying, relations between the Methodist Church and AICs, the continued significance of the traditional World-view in African culture, the need for the developing of a bio-centric Theology and ethics, and how Ubuntu challenges the corporate sector.

of the 'house' of the new democratic South Africa in which the country should invest? Alternatively said: Does modern South Africa have a common house which should be upheld by investing in a commonly-shared and not religiously-exclusive, pillars of politics, economics, aesthetics, morality, kinships systems and religions?

- *Secondly*, given our ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse national constitution – established and entrenched by the apartheid ideology – what are the main challenges facing us if we want to foster and invest in a common modern South African culture? What are the main challenges of producing the conditions of possibility of the acceleration of development, equality, social justice and the recognition of human dignity and wealth creation – especially in those communities that suffered most severely under the racist oppression of apartheid? Do we not need a home-grown social democratic consensus with one or two of our own African social-democratic contracts that could equally serve us in nation building and the developing of our countries and communities?

On the *first question*, the answer is clear. Citizens should invest in a common public culture and not a sectorally-committed and sectorally-driven one. In our sphere of influence, we, the academic researchers and educators of South Africa, should draw on our common South African Constitution and develop its foundational ideas in terms of our own research and education. If we have to talk about the pillars of culture, we should talk about a common national culture with common national pillars of culture, namely politics, economics, education, morality, aesthetics, religion and kinship systems. This means that we should collectively invest in the pillars of culture, of the 'house' which is South Africa. If this means that more investment is needed in certain geographical and sectoral areas than others, then we need collective commitment to that. Ultimately, such investment should be characterised by leaders who should produce the requisite conditions of possibility for the acceleration of development, equality, social justice and the recognition of human dignity, and wealth creation in our generation.

The *second question* equally, already has its own answer embedded in the history of our discipline. In order to answer it, we need to draw on and

continue to develop the initiatives researchers and scholars took with regard to our discipline. Prof Gabriel Setiloane was the first who initiated the founding of a Department of Religious Studies at the University of Botswana in 1969, and Prof G.C. Oosthuizen, the Department of Science of Religion two years later at the erstwhile University of Durban-Westville. On one level, we need to continue to study their seminal contributions to the beginnings of our discipline that unifies people across ethnic, linguistic and religious divides in the African context. On another level, we need to continue the seminal contributions of a wide variety of scholars and researchers who actively participated in our discipline since the 1970s. There are a wide variety of issues and concerns that need to be further developed to their full conclusions.

If these are the common objectives, then we could equally ask what the role of the religions and research in religion is in terms of such broad scholarly goals and ideals.

The Challenges Faced by Research in Religion and Public Culture

If 'religion' as collective noun includes all the religions and religious formations of southern Africa, what is the role of religion in the acceleration of development, the fostering of equality, social justice and the recognition of the dignity of all, and wealth creation in our generation? And, if we have such expectations of our religions, what is the role of the academic study of religion in this broad-based cultural endeavour? My contention is that we as researchers and scholars of religion should be at the forefront of answering these questions.

Firstly, given our history of racist exploitation, underdevelopment and the unequal distribution of power, we, the people of South Africa, is underdeveloped in terms of how we collectively understand the significance of our religions in the public sphere[16]. Institutionally our religious formations

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[16] Cf. Smit and Vencatsamy (2013) for some initial analyses with regard to the articulation of Religion with fellow disciplines in the Humanities and Smit [2014] with regard to the intellectualising of the religions in the context of the developing discourse on Religion and Society.

are unable to comprehend the fact of working collaboratively in terms of addressing issues of national concern – be they political, economic, educational, moral, social, aesthetic, or related to health and wellness. Our religious formations are often not able to comprehend that we have a common obligation to collectively address such issues. They also do not have the requisite discourse in terms of which to envisage and practice such collaboration.

Secondly, given the fact that we come from a history where the religions were not challenged to think and intellectualise their involvement in the modern public sphere from within their own traditions and texts, all the religions to various degrees, find their own critical and interpretive tools with regard to their interpretation of their religions in terms of the challenges in the modern public sphere deficient[17]. Our intellectual and scholarly study of or development of our intellectual traditions associated with our religions are underdeveloped. Even though we may hold that they are sufficient and that they in principle carry the fundamentals of our beliefs and hopes – our religious foundations of meaning – they are not sufficiently developed to fully engage the specifically postcolonial and post-apartheid modernising challenges our region faces[18].

Thirdly, the scholarly discourses surrounding our religions are not sufficiently engaged in the requisite areas and fields, to provide academic

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[17] It is my contention that the best way to engage this challenge, is to draw on the seminal insights and scholarly work of Ninian Smart (1973; 1997). Smart's distinctions between the worldview 'dimensions' of beliefs, narratives, moral values, rituals, organizational structures, experiences and symbol systems provide a helpful tool to constructively engage the critically constructive conceptual development of our religions in terms of the modern challenges we face. Whereas Smart still stayed within the confines of 'beliefs' or broadly speaking 'the religious' – which includes secular worldviews deriving from Marxism and Communism for instance – the challenge is to develop these to engage the common social challenges all people from the religions face, e.g. with regard to the development, conflict, the environment, urbanization, gender, modernization, and the media for instance.

[18] But see Smit [2014].

support, mentorship and guidance to the religions in engaging our modern world. (This is a major drawback of the phenomenological approach to the study of religion.) It is a central challenge to the academic study of religions to foster and produce the intellectual and scholarly theoretical frameworks necessary for the full participation of the religions in the public sphere. The requisite developing and fostering of such intellectual frameworks should serve the religious believers of our country to fully engage the challenges posed by our democratic dispensation in intellectually-informed ways[19]. The way to do so is to interlink and articulate the requisite knowledge traditions in the Arts and Humanities and our religious traditions and texts[20]. The most obvious area which could be affected would be in the service professions[21]. Similar effects and influences could obviously also be created in other relevant areas in the Arts and Humanities (cf. Smit and Vencatsamy 2013).

Religion in Public Culture (in Southern Africa)

Given the current post-apartheid and post-military challenges southern Africa face, there is much optimism. This mainly derives from the cessation of militarised hostilities and the constructive engagement of the re-building, local investment, development and modernising of our region. A not insignificant promise concerns the infrastructural development envisaged by our government, as became evident in the 2012 State of the Nation address of President Zuma. If we can talk of opportunities, the promise is that there will

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[19] In this regard, it is not the secular development of scholarly discourse but the developing of concepts and insights from within the religions that are needed. This approach and the engaging of this challenge go beyond the dated work of Russell T. McCutcheon (1999) on the 'insider/ outsider' question in the religions.

[20] With regard to indigenous religious and knowledge systems, it was especially Prof Gabriel Setiloane who pointed the way as mentioned above. His intellectual endeavours of the 1980s can truly be regarded as one of the forerunners in this regard.

[21] My argument with regard to the promotion of indigenous languages can in this regard equally apply to African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and African Religions (cf. Smit 1997).

be many. Furthermore, and this from the perspective of our religions, the religious formations themselves constitute a rich heritage to accompany these envisaged developments. To be kept captive by a narrow scientific and technocratic vision of the world and of the challenges of our region is not an answer. The collective indigenous but also intellectual and academic development of the religions as intimated above constitute a rich resource for the developing of the religions as a constitutive part of the modern intellectual capital we have in the country. From our discursive developments of our religions, we can expect the interdisciplinary inquiry necessary to accompany these developments and modernisation of our region. Given their investment in people's meaning and value systems, it is though incumbent on the religions to explore and develop their significance in the various areas of culture the envisaged socio-economic development will impact on – including institutions and the various forms of intercultural exchanges in the public domain. The religions need to accompany the people in the constructive engagement of the socio-economic transformation of our region away from the legacy of poverty and underdevelopment to equality, social justice, human dignity and wealth creation.

Since religions are most closely associated with people's identity and how people see themselves, it is especially important to study this connection throughout the next phases of the developmental processes that will impact our region. Below, I provide a few even provisional pointers in this direction.

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1   Unity in Diversity

It is true that religions normally have holistic views of society. Modern scientific and ideologically-constructed political systems have tried to do the same. This brought the religions in conflict with these systems. The question we need to ask is whether it is possible to ask of religions to see themselves as inhabiting and participating in our pluralistic modern public culture together with and alongside other religions. If we have to develop a holistic system of society, it should be inclusive of diversity. This means that we do not have religion-specific or discipline-specific problems but cultural problems that the religions and disciplines share and that one could challenge

them to engage collectively. This means we move away from a hegemonic view of society where one religious formation determines public culture, but also from a fragmented view of society where the diversity is not acknowledged, or if it is acknowledged, suppressed[22]. The common phenomenological significance of the religions is herewith acknowledged as well as their sharing of certain values as well as rituals and even beliefs[23].

2   A Common Narrative

The equal recognition and participation of the religions in public culture then means that one does have a holistic and integrated expectation of society, even though it be inclusive. In Southern Africa, it is the narrative of equality, equity, dignity and social justice which has as aim the liberation of all humanity to their true potential beyond the strictures of the hegemonic systems of exclusion, suppression and repression. In their own ways, the religions and the denominations/ orders share this narrative[24]. If we would succeed in this endeavour, we would have to explicate the relations between

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[22] Cf. Smit (2009) where I have tried to briefly outline the significance of our Constitution (1996) vis-à-vis the system that the apartheid governments developed, inculcated and promoted.

[23] An important rider to this perspective is that the different 'dimensions' of the religions – to use Ninian Smart's 1997 notion – do not function with the same strength, or intensity, or do not have the same significance in the different religions and within the religions, in the different religious denominations and religious orders. The weighting of each of the dimensions are not the same in all religions; and the weighting is also not the same in each order/ denomination within a religion. Smart failed to bring this sufficiently to the fore, even though his book's main contribution was in its exploring and survey of the wide variety of beliefs related to a wide variety of worldviews.

[24] We could here also look at similar integral emancipatory narratives dating from the time of the ancients, traditional African knowledge systems, but also more recently, some of the classical scholarly traditions, such as those emanating from Critical Theory amongst others.

notions of self, culture and society, as well as history[25], along lines which together constitute a common contemporary but also historical narrative[26]. Such narratives of origin, developments and potential futures would necessarily have to be interdisciplinary and they have to be developed as contributions coming from within the different religious formations.

3   A Common Scientific Project

Given the task of developing a common scientific discourse which is inclusive of religious diversity, it stands to reason that it should be developed from within qualitative conceptual and theoretical paradigms of analysis and interpretation, include critical philosophical, and ethical and moral reflection, and combine with methodologies and approaches in the domain of empirical and quantitative research. A primary objective of the development of such a public-focused discourse or discursive formation would mean that it is developed by researchers and scholars in religion and culture. However, it should not only be practiced by these researchers in the echelons of higher education and learning, but equally practiced by public intellectuals as part and parcel of public culture. In other words, its primary audience does not remain with the experts and within the walls of academe and exclusively learned societies and academies. Rather, it aims at the training of public

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[25] For some of the latest critical reflections on these themes, cf. especially the volume edited by Jones and Mtshali (2013), their editorial, as well as the essays by Matolino, Dastile & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Oyowe, and Idoniboye-Obu and Whetho.

[26] Even though it does not include African perspectives, I find the collection of essays edited by Shaun Gallaghar (2011) helpful in so far as they transcend earlier and outdated theoretical reflections on perspectives of the 'self'. Cf. the contributions in Gallagher (2011), and especially Barresi and Martin on Western theories of the self; Cassam on the embodied self; Campbell on personal identity; Shechtman on the narrative self; Pacherie on self-agency; Shoemaker on the moral responsibility of the self; Gergen on the social construction of the self; Hermans on the dialogical self; Lawlor on the postmodern self, focusing on 'anachronism' and powerlessness'; and Code on the self, subjectivity and the instituted social imaginary.

intellectuals as well as the production of an educated and informed intellectual public or citizenry. This however does not mean that these public cohorts should not be trained in the requisite technical concepts and vocabulary. Far from it. It means that they should have been educated in the appropriate culture-analytical and critical hermeneutical theories and concepts with which they can collectively analyse and interpret the public cultural complexes society is confronted with[27].

4   A Common Democratic and Human Rights Culture

In addition to developing public discourse with regard to the religious traditions, their interlinking, and their significance, it would also lead to the fostering of a democratic and human rights culture. Not only are the variety of diverse religious formations recognised publically; the people who belong to them, are committed to and believe in their tenets and practice their rituals, are equally recognised and acknowledged as equally human in all aspects of human life, endeavour and aspirations[28]. It would also mean that the educated public are full participants in the public discourse on the various issues

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[27] It stands to reason that this endeavor is not the private privilege of academics. As pointed out above already, much of such activity has already been engaged in by people in society, especially people from indigenous and traditional cultures. The reason is that our fellow citizens who have suffered most under the oppressive systems of apartheid, have had to negotiate and constructively engage these systems of power, in many cases, for survival's sake.

[28] Cf. the volume titled *Engaging New Analytical Perspectives on Gender in the African Context* brought together by Sithole, Muzvidziva and Ojong (2013) and especially contributions by Sithole, Ojong, Muthuki, and Muzvidziva. Cf. also the very significant work Cornelia Roux has done in terms of the fostering of a Human Rights culture as it articulates with Education. Cf. Roux (2009) and especially the references to her seminal contribution of the developing of the discourse with regard to Religion in Education. Cf. also Roux, Du Preez and Ferguson (2009); and, Roux, Smith, Ferguson, Small, Du Preez and Jarvis (2009). With regard to gender, cf. Roux (2012) and Simmonds and Roux (2013).

society is confronted with. It therefore follows that it is incumbent on academe to train and produce intellectuals who can function as public intellectuals with regard to the areas in which they specialise for their research. Together with these intellectuals, religionists are therefore not the sole experts but form an integral part of the intellectual citizenry focused on matters of common concern in society at large. These may range from the wide variety of social problems emanating from poverty, xenophobia, the prevalence of HIV/ Aids, the phenomenon of street children, the variety of problems related to drug abuse experienced by people in society, family violence and abuse amongst others.

5   A Common Moral and Ethical Code of Science

Following from the above, is that we do not opt for a scientific system in line with the previously valorised positivist quantitative scientific approaches in the Arts and Humanities which leave a very large part of what actually concerns human society and human life – the 'Humanities' – unengaged. But we also do not opt for an exclusively religiously-founded or moral-ethical system which dominates other moralities and their associated religious and moral-ethical systems. For the positivists, we need to say that, their so-called positivist commitments include moral values, norms and commitments – namely to exclude, ignore and negate that which are central to the full complexity of human life and endeavour in their research projects. The Arts and Human Sciences should not try to avoid or purge the presence of moral values and norms in their research. Rather, the presence and function of value judgements and norms in so-called objective science need to be fully recognised and acknowledged. We should admit to the value-laden and ideological nature of scientific ideas and projects – that they promote specific worldviews with their accompanying beliefs, and practices. They are never value-free[29]. The assumptions underlying the theoretical and conceptu-

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[29] Cf. especially the little work that contains some of the seminal ideas dating from 1973 of the French philosopher of Science, and lecturer of Michel Foucault in the 1950s, Georges Canguilham – *Wisenschaft, Technik, Leben: Beiträge zur historischen Epistemologie* (2006). It also contains a German translation of his report on Michel Foucault's main Thesis for his doctoral degree (1960), which deals with this same problematic.

al explanatory models of a science represent the outlook, expectations and future prospects and expectations of a specific group in that society. At base, they are in the service of a specific social formation or more particularly, a socio-economic community. We should acknowledge the fact that so-called objective science expresses and propagates a vision that serves societies mostly only sectorally. The scholarly community practicing that science is its vanguard. This is even more true of religious worldviews. Given that religious formations have their own religion- or order- or denomination-specific moral and legal value systems, they, too, should equally recognise that their sectoral worldviews should not be regarded as the be-all and end-all of the whole society. As such, they should acknowledge the role and function but also the limitations of such values in both private and public culture[30].

6   Imagining a Common Future

In terms of the ideological-critical views of someone like Althusser for instance (cf. Smit 2010), such an approach would mean that religious scholars and intellectuals would imagine themselves not as the sole beneficiaries or protagonists of only one religion and culture within the state, but in fact of many[31]. From their perspective, the ways in which they would imagine themselves would reflect and represent the diversity in society without advancing one at the cost of another, or seeing the one as superior

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[30] In South Africa, it is especially prominent in that religions and their orders or denominations are determined by their historically-produced social location, with the accompanying structural features related to class, gender, ethnicity, etc. To some degree this has changed since 1994 due to migration and the freedom of movement and settlement that came with our new democratic dispensation.

[31] At this level, we could address the common ideals (and practices) enshrined in the Constitution. Jarvis (2009a; 2009b; 2013) has been dealing with this challenge at the level of the multi-religious classroom and how the teacher (and pupils) could articulate their own understanding amidst diversity. It stands to reason that to limit her arguments only to the school level, is reductionist. It certainly also has purchase in the university lecture hall.

and the other inferior. They would function with the general commitment to all in the sense that at the broad-based phenomenological level, all the religions and religious formations provide people with the same webs of meaning and significance and should be recognised as such[32].

7   The Challenge to Religious Formations

Viewed from within each of the religious traditions, this means that they engage in a two-way conversation. The *first* is focused internally, on a dialogue with the religious tradition and tradition streams within that religion and its orders or denominations and how they relate and link up with the commonly shared public culture. As certain tradition streams originated and developed in history in certain circumstances, current circumstances which are similar to such circumstances would activate those tradition streams which are relevant today. This may equally render some that certain social formations currently adhere to, redundant or unnecessary. Moreover, as this happens our own generation would add to the interpretation and significance of these (re-)activated traditions streams in our commonly shared culture formation[33]. The *second* is a public conversation and focused on the conversation between the different religious formations and their traditions and texts. Given certain public indicatives, the challenge is to engage them collectively. This, however, should be done in terms of a commonly-shared, developed as well as contested conceptual and theoretical discursive grouping of knowledge – with the related notion of projecting its future potential in enhancing and advancing the quality of life of the people of South Africa and all who live in it. This is the major challenge ahead.

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The vision is then of the functioning of a common, integral and even syn-

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[32] Even though it only has one contribution from Africa, that of Wiredu – I find the collection edited by Chad Meister (2011) helpful. Cf. especially the essays by Marty, King, Griffiths, Swidler, Beyer, Yancey, Smith and Vaid-yanathan, Wiredu, and Anderson.

[33] This has been the approach of the discipline of Religion and its programmes at the University of KwaZulu-Natal for the last 10-plus years.

thetic public culture in which religion is not suppressed or marginalised or relegated to the private sphere but fully acknowledged as a constituent significant and equal participant in public culture. Granted that its public nature derives from the numerous institutions, structures and systems the religious and faith-based organisations create to care for their adherents, but also to serve the broader communities, it is especially public, because of the publically-developed concepts and theoretical approaches in academia and by intellectuals. This obviously does not mean that all the religious formations do not also have elements that remain privately or communally believed and practiced. Participants in the public domain, therefore, speak from within their religious traditions as members of that tradition (which could obviously include a secular tradition). Since the point of departure is that of the recognition of diversity, this, approach also means that it would not lead to a certain form of social schizophrenia, where religious people must leave their religious convictions at the gate or at the door so to speak. It is rather an inclusive view of society that does not repress and exclude but includes in an integral, holistic and integrative manner.

For religious-specific research focuses, this means that, from within each of the religious traditions, we have developed the concomitant understandings that can school and educate our next generation in fully recognising both their citizenship, as well as their religious formation as part and parcel of public culture. The webs and networks of meaning and significance are developed in such a way that their systems of beliefs, narratives, values, rituals, symbols and religious experiences form part of the common cultural heritage. It also follows that for some (in certain geographical areas for instance) there would be greater convergence in the view and experience of their meaning system. The fact, however, is that these would link with both the public cultural formation as well as the own religious formation in its own ways[34].

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[34] Oosthuizen's work has been a very significant forerunner, especially his Research Unit for the Study of New Religious Movements and Independent Churches (NERMIC). Cf, his brief explanation of the rationale and research focus of NERMIC in Oosthuizen 1990b. Cf also his seminal essays of 1985; 1987a; 1987v; 1987c; and 1987d. With our own intellectual endeavour, we have obviously moved far beyond his seminal contributions.

We should, as religionists and citizens, aim to clarify and interpret the public cultural vision from within each religious tradition and formation and develop this vision for our lives in South Africa. How do our specific ideas of equality, freedom, dignity, and social justice inform and shape our social systems and lives? How do they inform our understanding of self and community? And, what are the social transformations we need to effect in our systems and institutions to give full expression to the ideals, values and hopes expressed in our constitution? Ultimately, as we embark on this road as researchers and scholars of religion, how should we engage the public conversation many talk about and be publically accountable? Not only how we participate but the fact that we are engaged, become an issue of public accountability.

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