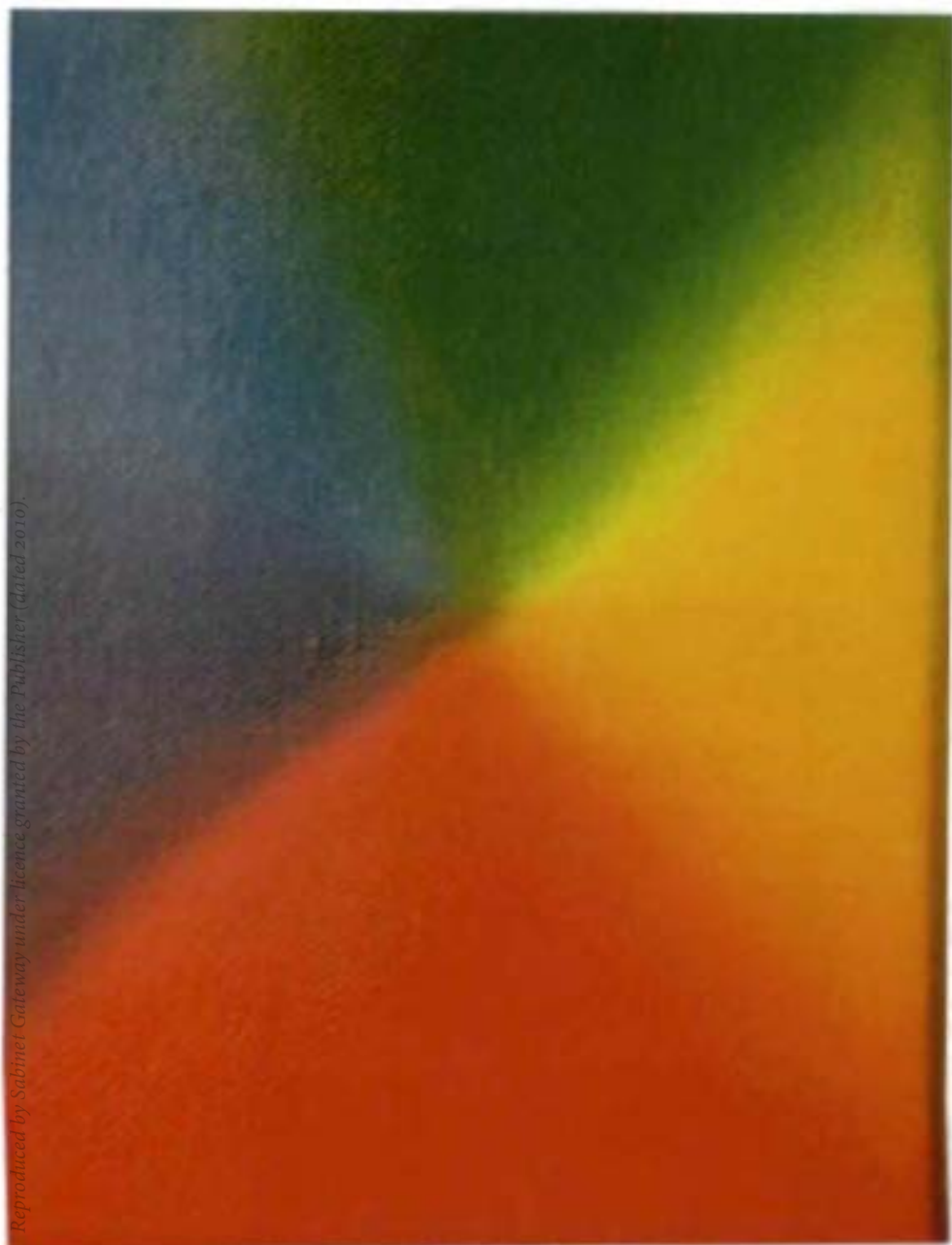


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**Religion
and
Diversity**

**Guest Editors:
Johannes A. Smit
and
*Denzil Chetty***

2009

**CSSALL
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Editorial

Johannes A. Smit

!ke e: /xarra //ke: – ‘diverse people unite’, or ‘people who are different joining together’¹, or ‘unity in diversity’. Launched at Kwaggafontein on Freedom Day, 27 April 2000, our South African motto and National coat of arms symbolise democratic change, the birth of a new patriotism, and a call to the multiply diversity characterising the South African nation, to unite². Primarily referring to the call to unify thought and action³, the motto’s symbols also unify notions of foundation – common sense of belonging and national pride, growth, wisdom, identity, peace – and ascendance – beauty, growth, life and light⁴.

By choosing to cast the new South African motto in the language of the oldest known inhabitants, it signifies our common heritage and the greeting figures our common humanity and equality. Conventionally indicating defence and authority, the shield, spear and knobkierie in their horizontal position, symbolise spiritual defence and peace. If these symbols represent both contemporary and future ideals, they are also relevant in so far as they transcend a past characterised by the misuse of diversity and difference in the production of inequality, and discrimination.

¹ Translation from the Khoisan language of the /Xam people, see <http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/national-symbols.htm>; <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/Communications/Coat%20of%20Arms/coatofarms.htm>

² See the ‘Address by President Thabo Mbeki at the Unveiling of the Coat of Arms’, Kwaggafontein, 27 April 2000 at <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2000/000502438p1001.htm>.

³ For how it links up with the Batho Pele, see <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/symbols/coa/index.htm>.

⁴ See <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/symbols/coa/index.htm>.

Colonising and apartheid political ideologies used the array of differences that characterise South Africa for factional interests, to marginalise and exclude. However, the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles united South Africa's populace in their common resolve to resist and overthrow these illegitimate, racist, and internationally condemned systems. Since its earliest beginnings, the struggle for freedom also projected a new democratic system that would guarantee equality, freedom and dignity in a unified republic. By expressing this call to unity in the language of the /Xam – an extinct language – our national emblem not only calls forth the common memory of this history of struggle and the contributions of our leaders, since South Africa's earliest times. It also signifies that which has been lost irretrievably, the 'minus in the origin'. The birth of democratic South Africa and processes of unification, integration and fusion came at a price. Yet, affirmative and united action in terms of our Constitution and Bill of Human Rights beyond the losses of the past – not least in the area of Religion Education – can build on the foundations of our past struggle to produce the supplements necessary for a united and prosperous nation.

Following nearly a decade-long process of widespread consultation the South African government launched the 'Policy on Religion and Education' at Parliament in Cape Town on 9 September 2003⁵. Recognising the significance of religion in South Africa, and the religious diversity of our country, the state has taken on the responsibility to train teachers and provide education about religion, religions and religious diversity to the nation. The state has recognized the need to have religion taught by properly educated and trained religion educators according to an inclusive religious curriculum. This issue of *Alternation* provides a sample of articles by some of the educators and researchers who participate in this process. Amongst others, they are at the forefront of educating and training prospective teachers and lay the foundations of both Religion Education (RE) and Religion Studies (RS) as school subjects.

Editor-in-Chief, *Alternation*
smitj@ukzn.ac.za

⁵ See Minister Kader Asmal's speech at the launch of the policy at: <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2003/03091712461005.htm>.

Religion in Education: Who is Responsible?

Cornelia Roux

Abstract

Religion in Education¹ (RiE) in South Africa seems to be the playing field of many stakeholders. This subject and/or research domain is hosted in either Departments of Religious Studies in Faculties of Human Sciences or Faculties of Education. During the 'struggle', that is in the past 19 years, many opportunities were created for acknowledging the importance of Religion in Education from a social construct point of view, and many expectations voiced. Religious Studies scholars and educationalists formed committees, produced published academic outputs, presented scholarly research results, put curricula together to replace the previous religious instruction mode of teaching. Since 2003, Religion in Education has a democratic government-approved policy document that enhances opportunities to explore religious diversity and to improve and celebrate respect for diversity. One can argue that religion became a force in education that needed well-qualified academe and teachers to present the new social construct for the teaching and learning paradigm. However, all the above-mentioned forces, opportunities and structures are dismally failing the research domain and the educational responsibility to our diverse society.

¹ Religion in Education (RiE) defines the research domain of religion in schools as subject (Religion Studies) as well as the tertiary subject in teacher training programmes at Faculties of Education (Life Orientation or Religion Studies).

Keywords: Religion in Education, research in Religion Education, hermeneutical responsibility, religion in public space.

Introduction

In this article I would like to present a selected and condensed overview of Religion in Education in South Africa, to build my reflection on research being done in SA and to link it with international debates since 1990. I would like to approach this route in a dual manner: a narrative approach (Elliot 2006), to reflect on academic experiences in RiE (Chase 2003; Clough 2002; Hinchman & Hinchman 1997) and present my final arguments from a hermeneutical perspective. I will take the stance that RiE should re-evaluate its position at tertiary institutions and I will support my arguments on the following:

- Personal experiences and observations on RiE;
- South African initiatives on RiE
- Collaboration and contributions of RiE with international initiatives
- Analyses of a selection of publications on RiE in SA;
- A theoretical underpinning for an academic discourse on RiE with Departments of Religious Studies and Faculties of Theology with future possibilities to enhance the rightful place of this research domain.

Personal Experiences and Observations

In the abstract of this article I stated that RiE in South Africa seems to be the playing field of many stakeholders—many of them with no academic responsibilities. RiE was and will always be a controversial research domain as the understanding of RiE hosts many subjective viewpoints (Küng 1987; 1995; Chidester, Stonier & Tobler 1999; Roux 1995; 1997a; 1997b; 1998a; 1999a; 1999b; 2007b; Roux & Du Preez 2006; Tayob & Wiese 1999). Religion in society and the perceptions of academia, not active in this research domain, influences many stakeholders' standpoints on the academic probabilities of RiE. The tendency in SA indicated that this subject and

research domain is hosted in either Departments of Religious Studies, Faculties of Education or in some instances Faculties of Theology and Religious Studies. Religion educationalists in Faculties of Education in SA involved in teacher training especially, have their own 'struggle'. It is a struggle of surviving misconceptions, hidden agendas and attitudes in academia in general and in Faculties of Education in particular. This 'struggle' is also to acknowledge RiE as an important subject and area of research in education in general and in society in particular. When one argues for acknowledgement, a lot of other issues came to the fore. The notions of the *why* and the *how* seem to be old ideas in new arguments.

My experiences derive first as a teacher in RiE (1973-1977) within the Christian National Education policy in schools (Bible Instruction) and as a member of Curriculum Committees for schools, the Departments of Education and the Afrikaans Protestant Churches. Thereafter being lecturer in RiE since 1978 I hosted many workshops within different religious and cultural and school communities. This journey has given me experiences of both sides of the RiE debate since 1990. I experienced changes in academic debates on RiE introduced by Smart (1971; 1989a; 1989b) and explored the new trends in RiE globally and locally, being part of local and international research projects. With the dawn of the new political dispensation (1994) there was a dire need to re-evaluate teacher training in RiE.

During the struggle of the past 19 years (since 1990) in acknowledging the importance of RiE, many opportunities were created and expectations formed. Religious Studies' scholars and educationalists formed committees, produced published academic outputs and presented scholarly research results internationally and nationally on many platforms (Chidester 1992; Chidester Stonier & Tobler 1999; Institute for Comparative Religion in Southern Africa [ICRSA] 1992; Du Toit & Kruger 1998; Kruger 2003; Steyn 2003). Curricula were put together to replace the previous religious instruction mode of teaching and learning in public schools (a Christian-only curriculum) (Roux & Steenkamp 1995; 1997; Roux 2000; 2003; Stonier 1999; Chiderster *et al.* 1999). International scholars were invited to form research groups with their SA colleagues and many international conferences were organised and outputs published. Scholars in RiE formed international networking groups on religion in diverse economic, cultural, religious and social societies which had to overcome an intolerant past (Weisse 1996b;

Andree, Bakker & Schreiner 1997; Chidester *et al.* 1999; Du Preez [forthcoming]; Ferguson [forthcoming]; Roux 2005a; [forthcoming]). Society expressed the need to form a new democratic dispensation for all its citizens based on the inclusive and democratic constitutional values (SA Constitution 1996; The School Act 1996). The *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (DoE 2000) is another example where democratic values were brought into the education realm. In many ways South Africans took the lead in exploring religious diversity and its values in all its appearances with a tendency to learn from one another and to explore new research opportunities across international borders.

Since 2003, RiE has also a democratic government- approved policy document (DoE 2003a; 2003b) that enhances the above-mentioned opportunities with the possibility to make an impact on society (Chidester 2008; Kruger 2003; Prinsloo 2008; Roux 2007a). This document summarizes the importance of religion in society, adopts a co-operative model for RiE and outlines the professional approaches for teaching and learning as well as teacher training (DoE 2003b). The main aim of this policy is to facilitate the next generation educationally about diversity and the religious realm and reality of SA and the world as a global village. This document was scrutinised by many stakeholders and representatives² of Religious Institutions³. One can argue that with this policy, religion became a new force in education. The need for well qualified academia (as lecturers) and teachers in schools to present a new social construct for the teaching and learning paradigm was well documented and discussed (Ferguson & Roux 2003a; 2003b; 2004; Du Preez & Roux 2008; Roux 1997b; 1998a; 1998b; 1999a; 1999b; 2001; 2005a; 2005c; 2006c; 2007a; 2007b; 2008).

Since 1994 many publications (Mndende 1996; Mitchell 1995; Rossouw 1991; Summers,1992; Summers & Waddington 1996;); empirical research (Roux 1993; 1994; 1996a; 1996b; 1997a; 2004; Roux & Du Preez 2006) and post-graduate studies outlined the importance and processes of RiE in a democratic SA (Baatjes 1997; Braaf 1994; Ferguson 1999; Hoblyn

² This term indicates members who represent the religious affiliations and religious communities.

³ This term includes churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and other well-defined places of worship in different religions and belief systems.

1997; Jarvis 2008; Prinsloo 2008; Rhodes 1997; 2003⁴). Studies undertaken in SA were scrutinized and assessed on their merits to represent the subject matter of a diverse religious education environment. However, all the above-mentioned forces, opportunities and structures are dismally failing RiE as research domain and circumvent its educational responsibility towards the diverse SA religious society. Although the Policy (DoE 2003a) on RiE was approved there is still a reluctance to implement it in schools (Chidester 2003; 2008; Jarvis 2008; Roux 2007a).

I argue that RiE must be rescued from its 'fairy tale' position in the minds of many stakeholders and must be connected responsibly, on a scholarly manner, to its purpose at tertiary institutions. Many processes on RiE in schools and at tertiary institutions are driven by academics not involved in RiE teacher training, for example in theology, law, philosophy, etc. We need to be honest about RiE's current academic stance in SA. Initiatives taken and built up over many years seem not to be sustainable in teacher training. In many Faculties of Education, RiE is outsourced to part-time lecturers or 'unqualified' lecturers, or lecturers in Life Orientation, teaching RiE but not interested to become part of the RiE discourses. The reason, I detected in an enquiry, is that the status of RiE in the school curriculum is transmitted to Faculties of Education. The survival of RiE is constantly under pressure from managers and colleagues at Faculties of Education. The academic discourse of this research domain is questioned. Instead of leading the educational realm in SA, RiE at tertiary institutions is following the processes of RiE set by secondary and primary education as well as the religious and political stances in the public space.

Rob Packard (1990) wrote in the *Oxford Farmington Papers* that he attended a lecture of Ninian Smart⁵ in the same year. The passion for this subject turned out to be Smart's sad news about another Religious Studies department that was about to close.

⁴ Only theses relevant to this article will be referenced.

⁵ Prof Ninian Smart was then a professor in Comparative Religion at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and published widely (Smart 1974; 1989a; 1989b) on approaches and possibilities for RiE.

... [H]e expressed his concern at the closure and instilled in me a sense of importance of the subject that goes beyond the confines of those who actually decide to study it.

Packer says that Smart encouraged them to be the future of the subject. He stated further:

I fear the twin-pronged attack on the subject from those who view religion with disdain and religious groups who want a return to religious instruction, and I think we need to evaluate our own shortcomings about what we have done to the subject (Packard 1990:2).

I detect from this quote that there is nothing new on the horizon—the playing field has just shifted its audience.

A Selection of South African Initiatives on RiE

Two main initiatives commenced in South Africa at the beginning of the 1990s on an inclusive approach in RiE. The one initiative was launched from the *Institute of Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (ICRSA) in 1992 under the directorship of David Chidester from the University of Cape Town. Their initiatives are all well documented and many publications argued for a RiE programme that will not establish again ‘a kind of “religious apartheid” in public schools’ (ICRSA 1992:2). These initiatives were working in the diverse environments of the Cape Town’s southern suburban and township schools. ICRSA’s important contribution was initiating discussions and debate around RiE on many fronts and putting RiE on the political agenda of these initiatives before the democratic elections in 1994. Their involvement on the development of the first draft on a policy document for RiE initiated further discourses and is still a driving force, although not as vigorous as it was before the final policy on RiE was accepted and published in 2003 (Chidester 2003; 2008; DoE 2003b).

The other initiative commenced in 1992 at the Faculty of Education of the University of Stellenbosch. The main initiative driven from Stellenbosch was to explore through empirical studies the understanding of

religious diversity in SA. Although many Departments of Religious Studies at Faculties of Human Sciences at Universities developed and engaged in Religious Studies, teacher training curricula at Faculties of Education and Colleges of Education were mono-religious (Roux 1997a; Roux & Steenkamp 1997). Biblical Studies and Christian religious education (Bible Education) were then the only departure point in the curriculum and for the training of teachers in RiE (Steyn 2003).

The main focus of the research undertaken at Stellenbosch then, was to explore the phenomenon of an inclusive RiE with student-teachers from Afrikaans-speaking Christian communities. Most of the students in the teacher training programmes at this tertiary institution were from the above-mentioned community. One of the reasons was that these communities benefited the most from the pre-democratic political dispensation and policies on religious education (instruction) in schools (Roux 1996b). One could also foresee that there might be a resistance towards an inclusive RiE as the perception prevailed that a multireligious education curriculum is only politically motivated. Perceptions of SA being an only Christian society were a last hope of social survival in the new political dispensation (Chidester 1992; 2003; 2008; Kumar 2006; Mdende 1996; Steyn 2003; Summers 1992).

The debate on religious diversity and the educational responsibility of the school as a public space for religion were the main point of departures of the research projects and many variables were taken into consideration (Roux 2005). Although the policy on religious instruction was mainly applicable to the then Afrikaans and English-speaking public schools in the former Department of Education (Chidester 1992; Roux 2001) schools in different cultural and language communities taught Christian religious instruction (Rossouw 1995). It was then obvious to involve schools in suburban and rural environments within these multireligious and multicultural communities.

The research was defined then within the insider/outside paradigm in the study of religion (McCutcheon 1999; Roux 2001). The research initiatives explored teachers' understanding of RiE; student-teachers as well as learners in primary and secondary schools' perceptions of their own, and religions other than their own (Ferguson & Roux 2003a; 2003b; 2004); developing curricula for multireligious education; exploring teaching and learning strategies; developing phenomenological reflective teaching and

learning approaches (Roux 2006b; 2007b) within a social-construct theory on RiE (Roux 2007a). Theoretical positions, research data and analyses, policy options and developments for a democratic society and RiE were outlined, well documented and published (cf. reference list). It was during this research endeavour that religious institutions of the Abrahamic religions were the most concerned about the input and influence of a curriculum on promoting teaching and learning about social justice and religious diversity (cf. Roux 1997b; Steyn 2003).

The research findings at Stellenbosch were elucidated to Departments of Education at national and provincial levels, the then Colleges of Education, Christian Societies in the Afrikaans and English speaking communities, the Biblical Society and professional Education Societies. Workshops were presented at schools and to religious communities. The educational committees of the then three Afrikaans-speaking traditional churches were targeted with research data to reduce fear and to clarify different options for RiE. It is a fact that some conservative and fundamental Christian communities (Chidester 2008; Du Preez 2009a; Kumar 2002; Steyn 2003) from different cultural groups were lobbying against these initiatives. However, the assumption, as depicted by Steyn (2003), Du Preez (2009a) and Chidester (1992; 2003; 2008) that this was only in reaction to a multireligious policy and clinging to a pre-apartheid RiE policy, is only partially true. Protestant religious instruction was first introduced by Martin Luther in the 16th century against Roman Catholicism in Germany, and secondly Christian National Education initiatives have a very long history in SA dated back to 1861 (Rossouw 1995:2). CNE was part of the grand narrative of the religion in public space in the Cape Colony between 1700 and 1900. The reason was the policies of oppression introduced by the Dutch and British conquerors of the Cape since 1652 on cultures and religions. This dominating stance reflected on the many cultural, religious and political differences.

Only a few educationalists, trained in Religious Studies, taught at two Faculties and Colleges of Education. Two universities' Religious Studies Departments took part in research and instigated processes towards an inclusive approach in RiE, whilst in the meantime Religious Studies Departments, at some universities, closed. This ambivalence created a discourse of scepticism on the future of RiE. Not one Faculty of Theology in

SA took the opportunity to be part of these academic discourses and to reflect with Religious Studies on RiE as 'public space'. Faculties of Theology and many Faculties of Education and Colleges of Education took the option to be silent or to opt for no interaction with these new initiatives in RiE. On the contrary many academics in Education and Theology saw these initiatives as threatening to the position of the religious institution in public space (Braaf 1994; Swart 2003) which involved public schools. A feeling of distrust was created. Instead of using this opportunity to become involved in RiE and making a contribution to the discourse on RiE in an inclusive diverse society (multireligious and multicultural), their silence and vigorous opposition influenced social justice in teaching and learning within the religious realm (Roux 2007a). One may ask the question whether the reconstruction and interpretation of RiE at that crucial point in time could have developed differently if all the stakeholders were part of the deconstruction of and reflexivity on religious education of the previous dispensation. The social construct of schools, religious, cultural and political communities, as well as the input of the printed and visual media, influenced academic scholarship (Boyer 1990), as well as the reconstruction of RiE in academic circles. RiE became part of the political arena and the emotions of broader society and the scientific results of RiE's academic studies were questioned by non-conversant outside forces.

Collaboration and Contributions of RiE-scholars with International Initiatives

Research on RiE in SA, although on a small scale, was disseminated internationally. Collaboration between scholars in RiE started in the early 1990s. There were only three SA members of the International Society of Religious Education and Values (ISREV) a prestigious organisation with membership on invitation only. Fortunately more colleagues joined this international interest group, and in 1995, international collaborations commenced on multireligious education as a result of research publication on the SA contexts.

In 1997, initiated by ICRSA, an invited group of eight countries from Africa, Britain, Europe and Scandinavia made an effort to put the different

issues on diverse religions in education on the table and discuss research taken by all these participants (Chidester *et al.* 1999). The discourse on RiE became more international and many countries struggled with an approach in RiE on the inclusion of diversity and simultaneously honouring the particular. It became clear that there were no differences on concerns regarding RiE internationally; however the context of the previous political system instilled a deep divided understanding of what was needed in RiE in SA schools. The IRED group⁶ (*InterReligious Education and Dialogue*) became also a force of interest and importance. More SA scholars at tertiary institutions joined this discussion group and cutting edge research regarding RiE was shared. It is however interesting to note that participants and members of this interest group consist of RiE-educators, psychologists, theologians in Practical Theology (Netherlands), researchers, lecturers, curriculum developers and post-graduate students. This interest group became a forum that enhanced the possibilities of research in RiE especially between Southern African countries and countries in Britain, Europe and Scandinavia (Wisse 1996b). These initiatives were not only fulfilling its goal, but many articles, books and conference publications brought important RiE issues to the fore (Andree, Bakker & Schreiner 1997; Chidester *et al.* 1999; Wisse 1996b; Roux 2005a; TerAvest & Wisse [forthcoming]). Although denominational religious education organisations planned conferences and took part in RiE discussion, the formal tertiary collaboration was mainly done within a tertiary collegial discourse.

Other initiatives and collaboration were interaction with the Nürnberg initiatives (Lähnemann 1998), the University of Warwick Initiatives (Jackson 1997; 1999), Hamburg Initiatives (Doedens & Wisse 1997a; 1997b); Comenius Institute Munster (Schreinder & Spinder 1997), and Leuven (Belgium) initiatives (Pollefeyt 2007; Roeben & Warren 2001; 2008;). It is well known in RiE academic circles that Britain has had a very strong group of scholars on RiE since the 1980s. Scholars (Jackson 1997) questioned the phenomenological approach from ethnographic research to curriculum development and the implications of an interpretative approach. As Britain became part of the enlarged European Union, issues about

⁶ Countries taking part were Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Namibia, Botswana and SA.

religious diversity and the importance of religion in diverse cultural societies in Europe were defined and sponsored (cf. REDCo-projects⁷). SA scholars in RiE were invited to publish in one of these publications (Roux, Du Preez & Ferguson 2009) and it is further testimony that RiE in SA contributed to international discourses.

RiE scholars in Southern Africa (Botswana, Namibia and Zambia) also published widely and promoted a similar RiE stance as in SA. Their contributions on empirical research on RiE are noteworthy and reflect an intensive research on the social cohesion of RiE in religious and culturally diverse societies⁸ (Imbunya 2008; Timile 2008).

An Analysis of a Selection of Publications on RiE in SA

In order to introduce a theoretical underpinning for RiE and to open up a discourse with Departments of Religious Studies and Faculties of Education and Theology, I took the liberty to identify the undermentioned categories on publications in RiE in SA. I did not include any publication on the philosophy of religion that mentions RiE, or legal issues on the Policy (2003a), or any publication of specific religious institutions. However, I analysed two postgraduate studies, one in educational psychology (Walton 2002) and the other in theology (Swart 2003), which contributed to my arguments. Publications underscoring the conservative Christian school communities that portray notions imbedded in the previous CNE policy are not included. I am not arguing for a stance in RiE where there should be no interaction and discourses with philosophy, anthropology, school law or any other field of interest. I acknowledge interaction and collaboration as one of the most important aspects of research. I wanted to concentrate mainly on the educational discourses and contributions of empirical research which strengthen the theoretical arguments and outcomes on RiE and teacher training.

⁷ The REDCo-projects (2006-2009) were sponsored by the European Union and many publications on the stance of *Religious Diversity and Education in Europe* were published (see reference list).

⁸ For the purpose of this article the research and postgraduate studies done in these countries will not be discussed.

The period before the announcement of the Policy (DoE 2003a, 2003b), research and publications were mainly on issues relevant to the academic discourses for an inclusive RiE policy. Thereafter publications underpinning theory for curriculum development, teaching and learning theories and strategies, philosophies and policies in RiE were of high standard and contributed to the vigour of the research domain.

The identified categories are:

- *Religion and politics in public life from apartheid to democracy* (Chidester 1992; 2002; 2008; Chidester *et al.* 1999; Roux 2001, 2004; 2007a; Tayob & Weisse 1999).
- *Academic discourse on the relevance of an inclusive RiE* (Ferguson 1999; Jarvis 2008; Roux 1995; 2001; 2007a; Swart 2003).
- *Theoretical underpinnings for the social construct from a historical and contemporary SA society* (Braaf 1994; Du Preez 2009a; Roux 2006b; 2007a; Steyn 2003).
- *Empirical research on teacher training and students' understanding of multireligious education* (Ferguson 1999; Roux 1996a; 1996b; 1997a; Roux & Du Preez 2006).
- *Facilitation and mediation of RiE at tertiary institutions and teacher training* (Ferguson 1999; Ferguson & Roux 2003a; Du Preez 2009b; Roux 2006c; 2007b; 2009b).
- *Empirical research on learners' understanding of RiE from Grade 1-12 (primary and secondary schools)* (Snyders 1999; Baatjes 1997; Hoblyn 1997; Rhodes 1997; Roux 1993;1994)
- *Empirical research on teachers' perceptions and professional development for RiE, from deeply rural, small towns (platteland), township, suburban and metropolitan schools* (Du Preez 2008; Du Preez & Roux 2009; Roux 1997b; Walton 2002)
- *Processes on the development of the Policy on RiE* (DoE 2003a), *from a philosophical and theoretical stance to practical implementation strategies* (Prinsloo 2008; Chidester 2003; 2008).
- *Critique and academic discourses on the development of RiE as part of Life Orientation in the school curriculum* (Christiaans 2006;

Chidester 2003, 2008; Roux 2000; Rhodes 2003; Rhodes & Roux 2004; Du Preez 2009b)

- *Theory, research and epistemologies in RiE* (Kruger 2003; Kumar 2006; Roux & Du Preez 2006; Roux 2007a; Du Preez 2009b)

The discourses in the above-mentioned categories were done with such rigour that the printed media also reported on some of the empirical findings. The debate on RiE became part of religion in public space and the academic discourses were kept well and alive. The world events in 2002 with 9/11 and the issues thereafter brought also a new dimension to RiE. The awareness of the diversity of religions became a force, some laden with negative perceptions. RiE research took this sad world event and turned it into opportunities for research in teaching and learning (Roux Smith Ferguson Small Du Preez & Jarvis 2009) and to foster respect for diversity (Roux 2007c; Du Preez 2006; Roux, Du Preez & Ferguson 2009).

However, I detect that since 2008 a few publications, dissertations and theses in RiE and Religious Studies did not portray new research or theoretical notions as one should expect in a subject domain currently under threat. I sense a lack of new ideas and arguments. My reason for taking this stance is that some articles, theses and publications seem to repack old ideas in new bags, with arguments relevant before 2003. I identify research undertaken without taking note of the vast body of knowledge produced over the past 19 years. There is also repetition of arguments in current publications. For ethical reasons I will not quote or reference my concerns. I want to argue that if RiE is under threat, as outlined and argued in this article, scholars in RiE and Religious Studies need to produce cutting-edge research; if not, the question to be asked is, are we our own enemies?

Theoretical Stance of RiE; Religious Studies and Practical Theology

In my own research since in RiE 1984, I have studied different theories, processes and research in RiE. I tried to understand the process of being a researcher in RiE that is important to the hermeneutical and social construct of the school community, and the development of the whole person in a

religious community and its responsibility toward social justice (Roux 2009b; Roux Du Preez & Ferguson 2009; Roux *et al.* 2009). In essence RiE has always being part of a conflict between *scholarship* as outlined by Boyer (1990) and the understanding of religion in the *public space*, defined here as the school environment. As a lecturer and researcher in RiE for 30 years I have seen the transformation of RiE and the academic scholarship in the reconstruction of RiE. What if forces like departments of Religious Studies and departments of Practical Theology (Faculties of Theology) and Faculties of Education adopt a responsibility as collaborators of religion in public space and guard RiE as a research domain as well as its scholarly inputs? There are many arguments from scholars in Education, Religious Studies and Theology against this notion. RiE should be 'independent' from any theological and religious influences and doctrines as argued by Cush (1999), Chidester, (2003; 2008), Chidester *et al.* (1999), Kruger (2003), Kumar (2006), Roux (2001; 2007a) and Steyn (2003). I adhere to this notion and remain cautious of my argument that a theology in one religion has the propensity to support different religious contexts and content. However within the reality in SA on RiE, the debate should be opened for an inclusive approach of Religious Studies and Theology towards RiE. This notion is not unfamiliar when one explores the work and research of international scholars in Religious Studies and Practical Theology (cf. Doedens & Weisse 1997a, 1997b; Roeben & Warren 2001; 2008; Pollefeyt 2007) and a few others. My arguments are that the core sciences need to explore and underpin the educational domain of RiE. Theology and Religious Studies are the origin of religion in private and public space and need to develop and support a full hermeneutical circle.

There are no fixed examples when analysing the contexts and interface between RiE and Religious Studies and/or Theology in Australasia, Britain, Europe, Scandinavia and Northern America. RiE is structured according to the context and challenges of a specific society, be it secular, mono- or multireligious. Feinburg (2006:125) quotes Jean-Jacques Rousseau who advised that 'children must be allowed to grow up free of religion instruction until they were able to decide moral issues on their own terms'. It is also true that religions are not the only source of spirituality, value and morals for society (Hull 2000; Kumar 2006; Roux 2006a). This is the reason why people believe that education should be a 'religion-free zone'. This

debate on a 'religion-free curriculum' in education has been shown not to be sustainable in many countries and SA is no exception.

In his book *Rationality and Religion: Does faith need reason?* Trigg (1998:10) argues that people with deeply opposed thought and comprehensive doctrines could live together under the same constitution. Trigg (1998:9) questions the notion whether a 'religion binds a society together, and that an official religion was essential'. He further discusses the reality that, for example, immigrants coming to the USA and England are questioning the place of religion in society. He argues later (1998:13) that religion 'be excluded from the public sphere because of its essentially controversial nature' (cf. Küng 1987) which is applicable to all religions and worldviews. It is true that religion in public space has been challenged in post-modern societies, and that theology's stance on religion in public space will differ from the main purpose of RiE. Küng (1987:xiv) however states in his book *Christianity and World Religions* that 'ecumenism' should include 'the inhabited world' and one can argue that we all live in a global community of diverse religions. In the social world the boundaries between religions are fading and as Küng (1987:xiv) argues 'a consensus should be possible among representatives of various religions' because we are all on a way to 'a greater truth' (Kruger 2003; Roux 2007a).

According to Lähneman (1998:112), there are circles and systems in society that work together, and that education is just one of those parts. I want to argue further that these systems are intertwined with one another to such a degree that religious institutions and their dogma cannot be separated from the discourses in public spaces and their influences in schools. This does not mean that religious instruction, as defined by religious institutions, is part of RiE in public space (public schools) but should be recognised as part of the circles in society.

The SA Constitution (1996) and Policy on RiE (DoE 2003a; 2003b) recognise religion as integral part of society and therefore RiE needs to deal with religion in public space. I argue that there is a dire need to embrace hermeneutics as methodology of understanding in order to comprehend the social construct of society (Roux 2007a). This notion has implications for the responsibility of Religious Studies and Theology towards RiE. Religious Studies and Theology at tertiary institutions have a responsibility towards RiE. The notion that these three sciences are not intertwined is a

misconception. The subset between RiE, Religious Studies and Practical Theology is superficial as all three domains contribute to religion and worldviews in public space. Coherent collaborations can contribute to understand the different spheres and contexts of religion in public space. Roebben argues (Roebben & Warren 2001:268) that:

practical theology research in the field of religious education tends, moreover to constitute a significant catalyst for the development of theology itself.

These realities occur in the multireligious education environments and the practical issues of religion in modern life in SA. It will be important to challenge the position of fundamental theologies and the implications thereof on RiE. Discourses might elevate the tension of RiE in public schools as well as the implementation of the Policy (DoE 2003a) at present. The question remains: What messages do Theology and Religious Studies send to our multireligious communities?

A Hermeneutical Circle

I want to challenge the three sciences to further take up a social hermeneutical responsibility towards RiE in our religious diverse society. The cultural and social orders in the post-modern 21st century need a hermeneutical understanding of the context of texts in historical contexts. These 'grand narratives' should be imbedded in sound curriculum discourses. Curriculum development and research also constitute the 'art and science of interpretation' which is the central enterprise of education (Roux 2007a; Slattery 2009). Hermeneutics, social construct, multiculturalism, social justice, human rights values and praxis are important issues in RiE (Lombaerts & Pollefeyt 2007). One is aware of the vast complexities in teaching and learning RiE, especially with an audience of learners and its social construct of religious and cultural diversity. I argue that:

[S]tudents and teachers are constantly involved in dealing interactively with the content and text that they interpret from their own and others' perspectives. The action (*praxis*) that they apply, in

whatever way in the teaching and learning environment, becomes a direct product of a hermeneutical exercise (Roux 2007a:471).

In the SA education system the underlying principles and outcomes of the curricula in schools are knowledge, skills and values. In RiE these principles are imbedded in understanding the *I* and the *Other* (Roux 2008; 2009b; Levinas 2006). Hermeneutics in RiE is a learning process by

asking original questions and generating information which can be used to broaden one's own knowledge and open discussion or dialogue with *the Other* (Roux 2009b).

It is also true that hermeneutic inquiry has the propensity to infuriate and incite those from traditional stances, especially in RiE. Slattery (2009:115) constitutes the importance of the 'hermeneutical circle' in post-modern curriculum development. He states that a

post-modern community of interpreters and teachers will enter the hermeneutic circle and engage in each other in the process of understanding the text, the lived experiences and the self in relation to the Other (Slattery 2009:141).

Scholars in all three domains should become part of a 'community of practice as researchers' as Descombe (2008:278)⁹ argues that

... communities of practice should be open to change. The changes are that there will be some movement between communities and that researchers might well belong to more than one community at a time.

⁹ Descombe argues his notion of 'Communities of Practice' within a mixed methods approach, and on the practice-based research paradigm of T.S. Kuhn 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University Press. I took the idea of this argument of a community of RiE researchers as a basis for interaction between three sciences.

Descombe further quotes Morgan (2007:62) and Kuhn (1970) that there should be a 'sense of shared beliefs amongst members of a speciality area' and that there should be 'an understanding for the claims of another'. I regard the professional body of knowledge of religion in public space as a 'community of practice' driven by inquiry in RiE. The collaboration and/or collective responsibility as service providers for religion in public space need to be further explored.

Conclusion

Why were the initiatives between 1990 till 2008 so successful in RiE in SA? The answer is simple. RiE was, in 1990, also on the threshold of a new dispensation. The dawn of the new political democracy in 1994 kept research and publications in RiE alive. Working towards a new Policy in RiE (DoE 2003a) initiated new research endeavours. The small group of scholars at Faculties of Education encouraged young researchers to become part of the vibrant national and international debates. Many books and articles were published, proposals compiled and funding to conduct research received. International recognition and well sought-after bursaries (Deutsche Auslandsche Auslands Dienst: DAAD) and tertiary prestige bursaries received by postgraduate students contributed to the development of the knowledge production in RiE. However, within our own scholarly encounters, we did not have the support of many colleagues at Departments of Religious Studies or Faculties of Education and Theology to embrace RiE. In retrospective it seems that RiE fought a lonely battle at some tertiary institutions. Cutting-edge research of 17 years at a Faculty of Education was shut down because of short-sightedness and perceptions that RiE research was part of a 'lonely ranger' research approach. Young scholars in RiE are not acknowledged and old practices that anybody can lecture religion, even at tertiary level, prevail. RiE in the public space seems to be forever the layperson's pulpit. It seems that the sad story told by Ninian Smart in 1990 is also pertinent for RiE in SA in 2009—and nobody is taking notice—so what went wrong? The 'force' becomes a 'fairy tale' and academic scholarships regarded as 'hobby horses'. These actions will impact further on RiE and influence the contextualised social environments. RiE is the force that fosters respect and tolerance for religious diversity in educational environments in

South Africa's multireligious and multicultural society. SA is currently inflicted by religious and cultural xenophobia—and who will take responsibility?

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School for Curriculum-based Studies
Faculty of Educational Sciences
North-West University (Potchefstroom-Campus)
cornelia.roux@nwu.ac.za

The South African Policy on Religion and Education (2003): A Contradiction in a Secular State and Age?

Paul Prinsloo

Abstract

Traditional definitions and prescriptions of 'secular' are increasingly being questioned as religion re-emerges as an important element of the public sphere in different nation-states. Secular nation-states with official policies of freedom of religion are increasingly challenged to redefine assumptions about the public role of religion. South Africa is not an exception as regards the definition and redefinition of the role of religion in the public sphere. In the pre-1994 dispensation there was freedom of religion, but South Africa claimed to be a specifically *Christian* state, in which a specific version of Protestant Christianity informed apartheid policies and legislation. Christian National Education (CNE) furthermore deliberately endorsed and promoted this version of Protestant Christianity and excluded other Christian denominations, other religions and African traditional religion from curricula, access to learners and representation in curricula. The new South African Constitution (1996) guarantees not only religious freedom, practice and expression but also freedom from coercion. The question that arises is how to address religion in the context of school curricula.

The National Policy on Religion and Education (2003) actively promotes the role of religion in education and teaching about religion, but also embraces teaching about secular worldviews. Despite being biased towards religion, different groups have contested and still contest the Policy. These groups use concepts like 'secular' and 'secularisation' interchangeably to mean 'anti-religion' and even atheism.

This article interrogates the location of the Policy within the context of the so-called secularity of the South African state. It concludes that the notion of South Africa as *secular state* does not find any support in the Constitution or the Policy. The notion of South Africa as *secular state* is therefore without official grounds. Both the Constitution and the Policy *purposefully* celebrate religion and the role religion can play in a constitutional state. Evidence from the Constitution and Policy suggest, rather, that the state is biased *towards* religion.

Keywords: Postsecular, religion education, religion, secular, secularisation, secularism.

Introduction

Modernity has (at least in the North Atlantic discourses) been associated with disenchantment with a world that has, as proposed by Max Weber (e.g. 1976), become increasingly secular, that is *less religious*. The secularisation thesis argues that,

society is on the road to irreversible or reversible secularisation and that, because of this, religion is in decline at the level of social process, or individual consciousness or both (Hanson 1997:159).

A number of authors (e.g. Boeve 2004; Byrnes & Katzenstein 2006; Habermas 2006; Keddie 2003; Kyrlezhhev 2008) have explored the secularisation thesis and have contested its range and definitions and examined the *re-emergence* of religion in some contexts (the notion of postsecularism).

As populations become increasingly diverse due to global migrations, the diversity of religions is challenge accepted traditional assumptions about religious freedom, democracy and the secular state. Late in 2009 Switzerland (a secular state with religious freedom) voted against the construction of minarets. Though the Muslim population represents between only 4% and 5% of the population, the referendum reflects changing notions of religious freedom in secular states.

In the South African context, the post-1994 democratic dispensation introduced a major departure from the previous period in which, although

religious freedom was allowed, a particular *Gestalt* of Christianity informed apartheid policies, legislation and curricula in schools. In 2003 the *National Policy on Religion and Education* (Republic of South Africa 2003)¹ was accepted. As an educational policy document, the Policy differed from the pre-1994 dispensation in which Christian National Education (CNE) informed school curricula to the *exclusion* of other religions. The only religion taught and endorsed during school hours was a specific version of Protestant, reformed Christianity. The new Policy (2003) introduced curricula in which learners are introduced to a variety of world religions (including African traditional religion). Paragraph 5 (2003:9) of the Policy states:

Under the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion, the state, neither advancing nor inhibiting religion, must assume a position of fairness, informed by a parity of esteem for all religions, and worldviews. This positive impartiality carries a profound appreciation of spirituality and religion in its many manifestations, as reflected by the deference to God in the preamble to our Constitution, but does not impose these.

It is crucial to note that the Policy describes the relationship as 'neither advancing nor inhibiting religion' and assuming a 'position of fairness, informed by a parity of esteem for all religions, and worldviews'. The Policy (2003:9, paragraph 5) describes the state's position on religion as 'positive impartiality [carrying] a profound appreciation of spirituality and religion in its many manifestations, as reflected by the deference to God in the preamble to our Constitution' but also indicates that it 'does not impose these'. Although the Policy is positively impartial with regard to religion, it states clearly that teaching about religions has an *educational* purpose in stark contrast to the *confessional* nature of the way in which Christianity was taught prior to 1994².

¹ Hereafter referred to as the Policy.

² For a comprehensive and critical overview of the Policy, see Prinsloo (2008).

The formulation of the Policy was deeply controversial and various stakeholders from various faith communities contested the different drafts (Prinsloo 2008). Though the final Policy was supported by all major religions, the Policy is still, more than five years since its implementation, controversial and contested. While different religious groups contested the Policy *during* its formulation, recently the debate has been re-opened with individuals outside the traditional religions complaining that Christianity is still enshrined and privileged in some public schools in South Africa despite the Policy (Hawkey 2009).

The latest debates have raised the question of whether the Policy allows for a situation in which some religions may indeed be privileged above others. The earlier and recent debates illustrate the confusion about the scope of South Africa as a secular society with different stakeholders claiming either that secularism means being *anti*-religion and promoting atheism or that the Policy actually *promotes* religion against secular worldviews. Both the proponents of the Policy and its opponents base their claims in specific understandings of South Africa as a 'secular state'. It is therefore crucial to explore the scope of South Africa as secular state and determine whether the Policy is possibly a contradiction.

In this article I will first clarify my use of the terms secular, secularism, postsecularism and secularist. I will then explore the Policy within the context of the broader discourses on/in (post)secularism, internationally and in the South African context. Following this exploration of the Policy, I will go on to provide a brief overview of the public and media debates surrounding the formulation of the Policy as representing glimpses of the confusion about the 'secular' nature of South African society. I will conclude by analysing the Policy's approach to the paradoxes of the secular state and to the role of religion *and* other worldviews.

Methodology

In the literature review which follows, I will focus primarily on discourses in and surrounding the notion of secularism and postsecularism. The Policy is located in the interstices of education, religion and politics, and therefore the notion of the 'secular' forms the background to all three of these contexts. With the acceptance of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act

No. 108 of 1996)³, South Africa opted for a *secular* education curriculum—not advancing any religion but also positively impartial towards religion. In the public discourses surrounding the formulation of the Policy up to the present day, secularism has been and is still differently interpreted. Many stakeholders claimed the term meant state-endorsed atheism and an anti-religion curriculum while the present debate (Hawkey 2009) implies that Christianity is still privileged.

The Constitution, various documents, and speeches by state officials all provide insight into the notion of South Africa as a ‘secular’ state. I will analyse the Constitution, a selection of documents and speeches by state officials, and the Policy to gather and present a conclusion on secularism as it functions in these documents. I will then briefly analyse the notion of secularism as it has functioned in the public debates surrounding the formulation of the Policy and finally analyse the Policy’s position on secularism. These analyses will provide a foundation for some concluding remarks.

Terminology Clarification

Given that the crux of this article is whether the Policy is a contradiction in South Africa as a ‘secular’ state, it is necessary to clarify my own understanding of ‘secular’, ‘secularism’ and ‘secularist’ as some authors (eg Prozesky 2009) differentiate between these terms. Table 1 gives the individual definitions of ‘secular’, ‘secularism’, ‘secularist’ and ‘secularisation’ as provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2009).

Secular	Secularism	Secularist	Secularisation
Belonging to the world and its affairs as distinguished from the church and religion; civil, lay, temporal. Chiefly used as a negative term, with the meaning non-ecclesiastical, non-	The doctrine that morality should be based solely on regard to the well-being of mankind in the present	An adherent of secularism.	The conversion of an ecclesiastical or religious institution or its property to secular possession and use; the conversion

³ Hereafter referred to as the Constitution.

religious, or non-sacred. Of literature, history, art (esp. music), hence of writers or artists: Not concerned with or devoted to the service of religion; not sacred; profane. Also of buildings, etc., not dedicated to religious uses. Of education, instruction; Relating to non-religious subjects. (In modern use often implying the exclusion of religious teaching from education, or from the education provided at the public expense.) Of a school: That gives secular education. Of or belonging to the present or visible world as distinguished from the eternal or spiritual world; temporal, worldly.	life, to the exclusion of all considerations drawn from belief in God or in a future state.		of an ecclesiastical state or sovereignty to a lay one; an instance of this.

Table 1: *The distinction between secular, secularism, secularist and secularisation*

These definitions concur with other definitions (e.g. the *Merriam Webster dictionary* 1992) and form the general basis for literature on religion in the public and national spheres. Although there is general agreement on these terms, the relationship between secularism and religion in different national contexts does fluctuate according to country (e.g. Spohn 2003). For example, secularism and religion as they intersect in the context of India (e.g. Ganguly 2003; Pantham 1997; Upadhyaya 1992) differ radically from the

gestalt this relationship has in the context of France (e.g. Freedman 2004; Gökariksel & Mitchell 2005), Turkey (Gökariksel & Mitchell 2005), the rest of Europe (e.g. Byrnes & Katzenstein 2006) and the Americas (Juergensmeyer 1993; Philpott 2002).

Although none of the definitions of secularism and secular give any hint of *opposition* to religion or 'anti-religion', authors (such as Prozesky 2009) and popular opinion tend to see 'secular' as being in opposition to religion (see e.g. Henrard 2001: 54). Given the recent ban on the building of minarets in Switzerland, it is quite possible that secular could, in future, increasingly come to mean 'anti-religion', or at least anti any other religion than Christianity. In view of the reality of the variety of gestalts of secular in the international domain, and for the purposes of this article, I propose that the term 'secular' means, in line with dictionary definitions, a position that is neither *against* nor *pro* religion.

Having clarified my use of the term 'secular', I will now explore the notion of the secular and postsecular in the context of North Atlantic discourses before briefly looking at the discourses in the South African context. These discourses provide a crucial background in determining whether the Policy is a contradiction in the context of South Africa as secular state. These discourses also provide useful background for understanding the present-day discourses on the role of religion in South African public schools.

Secularism, Postsecularism and the (Re)Turn of Religion

There seems to be agreement amongst a number of authors (e.g. Kyrlezhev 2008; McLennan 2007; Taylor 2007; Ward 2004) that the modernist claim or expectation that religion would disappear as humanity progressed has been proved wrong. Ward (2004:3) states:

What characterises this 'postsecular' condition is not simply the refusal of religion to go away but, more significantly, the new public visibility of religion. And it is at this point, the point where religion has a public voice, that religion becomes political again.

Boeve (2004:15) writes that '[m]odernisation in Europe has caused a *transformation* of religion, not its disappearance' (2004:15; italics in the

original). Boeve (2004:20) also suggests that understanding secularisation as a linear progression

is far too simplistic a reflection of the current state, even if one would substitute the 'post-Christian', or 'pluralistic secularist' position, for the atheist stance.

He (Boeve 2004:20-21) goes on to say that

Christianity has not been replaced by a secular culture, but a plurality of life views and religions have moved in to occupy the vacant space it left behind as result of its diminishing impact.

Without exploring the historical development of the term 'secular' in detail, it suffices to say that from the nineteenth century onwards the concept was used to describe the 'belief that religious institutions and values should play no role in the temporal affairs of the nation-state' (Keddie 2003:14-15). Keddie (2003:16) indicates that present-day use of the term 'secularisation' refers to:

- an increase in the number of people with secular beliefs and practices;
- a lessening of religious control or influence over major spheres of life;
- a growth in state separation from religion and in secular regulation of formerly religious institutions and customs.

Taylor (2007) indicates that the term 'secularisation' in general refers to the move from a situation in which 'the political organisation of all pre-modern societies was in some way connected to, based on, guaranteed by some faith in, or adherence to God, or some notion of ultimate reality' to a situation in which 'the modern Western state is free from this connection' (Taylor 2007:1). He (2007:2) also explores a second meaning of secularisation, namely that of the general 'falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to Church'. A third possibility for understanding current secularisation is as follows:

[t]he shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace (Taylor 2007:3).

Secularism has often been understood as a backlash against religious abuses and practices, especially in Europe, while the *return* of religion is described as a reaction against secularism. This reaction is understood as postsecularism (as described for example by Habermas 2006; Harrington 2007; Lafont 2007). In a flux reminiscent of Boeve's (2004) fluid model for understanding current changes in the religiouscape, there are signs of a response to postsecularism in the form of a militant (or even fundamentalist) turn to atheism and publications 'celebrating' the possibilities atheism or anti-theism holds (Gray 2008, online). While Keenan (2002:280) celebrates the end of the 'stranglehold of the secularisation thesis upon sociological imagination', Gray (2008, online) writes,

[a]n atmosphere of moral panic surrounds religion. Viewed not so long ago as a relic of superstition whose role in society was steadily declining, it is now demonized as the cause of many of the world's worst evils.

The reason for this 'moral panic', according to Gray (2008, online), is the 'sudden explosion in the literature proselytizing atheism'. Gray is referring mainly to the publication of the works of Dawkins (2006), Hitchens (2007) and others. Gray also acknowledges the publication of counter arguments—for example the works by Alister McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion* (2007), and Charles Taylor, *The Secular Age* (2007)—stating

[t]he urgency with which they produce their anti-religious polemics suggests that a change has occurred as significant as the rise of terrorism: the tide of secularisation has turned.

Although the above contestations provide a background to exploring the notion of 'secular' in the processes leading to the formulation of the

Policy (2003) and its contents, most of this discourse is alien to Africa and South Africa, as indicated in a letter by De Gruchy (2009) to the *Mail & Guardian* (23-29 January 2009). De Gruchy (2009:19) laments the *Mail & Guardian's* 'fascination with an Anglocentric debate when there are so much fascinating questions about religion going on here in South Africa'. Kumar (2006:274) suggests that in the South African context religious pluralism and secularism are 'two sides of the same coin'. Kumar (2006:275-276) questions the supposedly 'neutrality' of South Africa's Constitution in awarding equal status and representation to all religions, for example the growing Pagan community and the Church of Scientology, and alludes to the clear 'Christian overtones' of the Preamble to the Constitution and the National Anthem. Referring to the Preamble of the Constitution, Prozesky (2000:44) laments the 'lapse' of the theistic invocation in the Constitution.

Secularism in the Constitution, Speeches, the Public Discourse and the Policy

In this section I will first explore the notion of secularism as it appears in the Constitution and various speeches by state officials, documents and processes *preceding* the Policy. I will then explore the notion of the 'secular' and secularism within the Policy itself.

Secularism in the Constitution

Starting with the Preamble to the Constitution, it is obvious that the notion of South Africa as 'secular' state is not as clear as one may presume. The Preamble (Republic of South Africa 1996:1243), after situating the Constitution against the historical development of democracy, commits itself to:

- Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;
- Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;
- Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and

- Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

The Preamble closes with 'May God protect our people' in seven languages. This immediately raises the question of why a secular state would evoke God's blessing (also questioned by Kumar 2006 and Prozesky 2000). In addition, the word 'secular' does *not* appear in the Constitution. So where does the notion of South Africa as a 'secular' state come from? Before exploring this, it should be noted that the Constitution is clear that it provides space for religious practices, but also protects citizens from hate speech and coercion. In Section 9.3 the Constitution guarantees protection against unfair discrimination on the grounds of a number of characteristics, including religion. Although Section 15 guarantees freedom of religion, Section 16 prevents the advocacy of hatred on the grounds of, *inter alia*, religion. Section 31 guarantees that the Constitution protects communities' right to enjoy 'their culture, practise their religion and use their language' and to form communities based on these.

With no evidence for South Africa as a *secular* state in the Constitution as its founding document, it appears that the notion of a secular state has a broader and more complex history.

Secularism in the Processes Leading up to the Formulation of the Policy

In 1992, Omar *et al.* (1992) published *Religion in public education: policy options for a new South Africa*. In the same year, in preparation for the democratic transition, the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI) explored alternatives to the system of religious education endorsed by the apartheid regime. NEPI (1992) agreed that the previous dispensation had to change and three options were considered:

- *Option 1: Eliminating religion entirely from the school curriculum.* 'NEPI concluded that neglecting such a principal feature of South African life would not do justice to the importance of religious diversity in the nation's history and society' (Chidester 2006:66).
- *Option 2: Establishing parallel programs in religious instruction,*

developed by the different groups themselves. This option was also not considered to be viable as it would entrench a kind of 'religious apartheid' and students would be required 'to study a single-tradition religious education program devoted to particular religious interests' (Chidester 2006:66).

- *Option 3: Introducing a program of multi-religion education that would teach students about religion 'rather than engaging in the teaching, confession, propagation, or promotion of religion'* (Chidester 2006:66).

In 1993, Judge Albie Sachs (1993:171) indicated that a strict separation between religious and public life would have resulted in severe discomfort, because religion 'bound us together and gave us a sense of strength and comfort'. In choosing between the different options of a theocratic state where religion and state overlap, or a strictly secular state where these two domains are separated, Sachs (1993:171) opted for a third possibility where state and religion are recognised as separate spheres, but with 'a considerable degree of cooperation and interaction between the two'. Interestingly, Sachs's motivation for choosing the third cooperative model provides insight into the later formulation of the rationale for the Policy. Sachs (1993:171) states that the majority of South Africans belong to one or other faith:

It is not something that one wants to deny or lament. It is an important part of our reality. If an appropriate relationship can be established, it can be a source of tremendous upliftment for the whole of society, and a means of helping us to establish the maximum input for tackling and resolving the considerable problems facing our country.

In 1997 Krüger proposed different models of religious education. In the proposal, he refers to the formation of the *Independent Forum for Religion in Public Education* in October 1993. The group consisted of

about thirty representatives from various churches and various departments of Religious Studies and Biblical Studies at universities and teachers training colleges in various provinces (Krüger 1997:1).

The purpose of the group was to discuss 'the future of religious education in South African schools' and 'to promote the formation and implementation of a new Policy' (Krüger 1997:1). Krüger (1997:1-3) describes points of departure which acknowledge religion as a 'given' in South African society; the power of religion 'to motivate and inspire people, and to provide vision and hope'; religion as part of the identity and security of individuals and groups of people; and the multi-religious nature of South Africa. While parents are responsible for religious nurturing, it would be unfair to expect them to provide information on religions different from their own.

In 1996 both the National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996) and the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) were published. In 1997 Curriculum 2005 (Grades 1-9) was published for comment and outcomes-based education (OBE) launched. In August 1998, the Minister of Education, Sibusiso Bengu, appointed a Ministerial Committee to look into the diverse ideas and approaches of religious communities and their outcry against developments. In January 1999, the *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Religious Education* (1999) was published which states that the confusion and controversies surrounding the issue can be attributed to two ways of understanding religious education, namely,

- educating learners to *be* religious; and
- educating learners *about* religion and religions (1999:10).

A new Minister of Education, Prof Kader Asmal, was appointed in 2000⁴. On 6 May 2000 a Ministerial Workshop on Religion in Public Education was held in Pretoria. As a result, a *Working Document* (2000) was formulated which proposed a model of religious education as 'education about religion, refraining from a specific religious purpose, but led by general educational interests' (2000:2). It further proposed that religious observances should be treated 'as not being part of public school's activities' (2000:2). The *Working Document* (2000) also aimed at resolving the tension between the different options for religious education.

⁴ For a critical discussion on the legacy of Minister Bengu see Jansen (1999). The appointment of Minister Asmal was a significant turning point in the processes resulting in the Policy under discussion.

In July 2000 the *Draft Religion in Education Policy* was circulated and made available for public comment. From early 2001 the public discourses surrounding education in South Africa and more specifically the role and person of Minister Asmal took centre stage. Examples of headlines at the time include 'Asmal Braak Gal oor Christene', (Politieke Redaksie, *Beeld* 22 Maart 2001), 'Christelike Toorn Ontvlam teen Asmal' (Politieke Redaksie, *Beeld* 23 Maart 2001) and 'Groot Grief oor Asmal en die Christene' (Gunning *Rapport* 25 Maart 2001). Although these three articles do not have anything to do with the draft Policy, they indicate how many Christians (and Afrikaners) felt about Asmal. The public press presented a tainted view of Asmal⁵ as Minister of Education and driver of the processes to formulate the position of religion in education. The public fall-out over Asmal's remarks was soon used to raise a general question about his proposals for religion in education. On Saturday 24 March, *Beeld* published an article written by Prof Pieter de Villiers entitled 'Asmal uit pas met die wêreld' (De Villiers 2001:9). The article's main thrust is to cast doubt about Asmal's 'true' intentions. Among a number of allegations, De Villiers (2001:9) stated that Asmal wanted to force an 'inter-faith' approach on schools which would be value-neutral. De Villiers also cast doubt on the *intentions* of several scholars of religion who were co-opted by Asmal and on their academic and research standing. De Villiers's second argument was that international developments indicated that the ethos of specific groups should be allowed to dictate the curriculum and how schools are run.

Minister Asmal responded to these allegations in a letter to *Beeld* (24 March 2001, no page number available) in which he encouraged and invited debate and refuted the allegations made by De Villiers (2001). In this letter Asmal states that the draft Policy is not 'value-free' but embodies the specific values,

of being factually informed about others in an unprejudiced manner, real understanding of them as human beings, tolerance, acceptance

⁵ It is difficult to ascertain to what extent Prof Asmal's specific role directly influenced the Policy and the processes and debates surrounding it. From these and other newspaper articles, it is clear that in his role as Minister of Education, he was considered controversial.

and a spirit of co-operation between all the groups of our society (Asmal 2001, no page number available).

Asmal went on to reiterate that the government and religious bodies operate and should operate in two different spheres. With regard to De Villiers's allegation that Asmal was proposing an 'inter-faith' approach, Asmal acknowledged that dialogue between faiths should be encouraged '*but that such an initiative falls outside the responsibility and mandate of the state*' (Asmal 2001, no page number available). De Villiers also alleged that the draft Policy (and Asmal) were out of pace with developments in the rest of the world. Asmal countered with a number of international examples that point to the contrary.

Between 15 August and 11 December 2001, Minister Asmal held nine extensive consultations with leaders from various religious organisations, as reported on in an *Analytical resumé of discussions between Minister Asmal and religious leaders on the matter of religion in education* (dated 13 December 2001). The *Analytical Resumé* (2001:3) indicates that

virtually all religious leaders expressed an understanding and appreciation of the Minister's intent that all future citizens should be educated about the various religions constituting the pluralistic national religious mosaic.

It (*Analytical Resumé* 2001:4-6) also notes some misunderstandings and clarifies the Policy's intention regarding these. The misunderstandings included concerns that 'the policy may be driven by a "secularist" animosity towards religion', that 'the policy will result in renewed caricaturing of some religions' and that the new policy was aimed at, or would result in, a syncretistic 'New Age' mixing of religions, and that 'inter-faith' religious views would be foisted on pupils (*Analytical Resumé* 2001:6-8).

The articles and public debates were full of evidence that there was considerable confusion in the use of terminology and concepts. Contributors used terms like 'syncretism', 'secularism', 'neutrality', 'democracy', 'multi-religious' and many others with a range of different meanings. In some cases the 'incorrect' use of a term could be excused, but in many cases terms were misused by informed people.

Secularism in Speeches by Government Officials

We now turn to some public statements made by government officials about the notion of a 'secular' state. In a keynote address in Durban on 21 October 2000, Mr JS Ndebele (MEC for Transport in the province of KwaZulu-Natal) stated that whereas the apartheid regime was a 'white Christian nationalist state', the new South Africa represented a 'secular state'. He defined a 'secular state' as a 'state in which the right to practice religion as personal choice will be respected and valued, without prescribing one specific religion' (Ndebele 2000, online). The MEC of Agricultural and Environmental Affairs, Mr. Narend Singh, stated on 21 April 2001 that: 'No single religious orthodoxy is likely to prevail, which is almost certainly one of the reasons why the constitution-makers opted in 1993 for a *secular state*' (Singh 2001 online, emphasis added).

In his address to the Student Christian Organisation in Bloemfontein on 8 July 2001, the Deputy Minister of Education, Mr. M. Mangena, stated that,

[t]he principles that the new Constitution embodies, establishes *this country as a secular state*, but one which is not at variance or in conflict with religion—the state which allows religion to flourish and to grow (Mangena 2001, online, e.a.).

He does not mention the word 'secular' again and in the rest of the address explores the need for education in South Africa to take on the responsibility to teach children 'about religions'. He emphasises the differences between religious education, religious instruction and religion nurture (Mangena 2001, online).

Although the Constitution does not refer to the state as 'secular', these quotations from government officials point to another interpretation. In stark contrast to these statements, Minister Asmal posits the notion that South Africa is 'not a *secular nation*' (Asmal 2003, online, e.a). Asmal further posits that the new democratic dispensation has opted for a co-operative model which allows for church and state to exist in harmony in different spheres but to collaborate in areas of shared interest, like education. In stark contrast to accusations that the Policy was the vehicle for banishing religion from schools or enforcing secular values, Asmal states clearly that

the Policy encourages 'the revitalisation of religion in our schools' (Asmal 2003, online).

Secularism in the Policy

I will now analyse the Policy itself and look at the definitions formulated by the Policy which provide a way 'into' understanding the Policy's view on the relationship between the secular state, religion in the South African public sphere and the national education curriculum.

The Policy (2003:30) defines 'religion' as follows:

Religion is used to describe the comprehensive and fundamental orientation in the world, mostly with regard to ideas of divinity, spiritual and non-secular beliefs and requiring ultimate commitment, including (but not restricted to) organised forms of religion and certain worldviews, as well as being used collectively to refer to those organisations which are established in order to protect and promote these beliefs.

This definition of 'religion' contains the following elements:

- It is an orientation which is both comprehensive and fundamental.
- This orientation mostly refers to ideas of divinity, spiritual and non-secular beliefs.
- This orientation requires ultimate commitment; it includes (but is not restricted to) organised forms of religion and certain worldviews.
- This definition also encompasses those organisations whose sole reason for existence is to protect and promote these beliefs.

The definition is fairly clear on what it includes. It is wide enough to encompass all the world religions. From the definition it is also clear that the major defining factor seems to be the dichotomy of secular and *non*-secular. Non-secular beliefs and worldviews are included in the definition of 'religion'. It is not clear whether non-secular encompasses worldviews or whether non-secular refers only to beliefs.

In the 'Foreword' to the Policy (2003:2; e.a.) the Minister makes it clear that South Africa is *not* a secular state. He states: 'We do not have a

state religion. But our country is *not a secular state* where there is a very strict separation between religion and the state'. The Policy (paragraph 3; 2003:8) itself goes on to describe its view of a secular state and the implications of such a state for the relationship with religion:

A modern secular state, which is neither religious nor anti-religious, in principle adopts a position of impartiality towards all religions and other worldviews. A separationist model for the secular state represents an attempt to completely divorce the religious and secular spheres of a society, such as in France or the United States. Drawing strict separation between religion and the secular state is extremely difficult to implement in practice, since there is considerable interchange between religion and public life. Furthermore, a strict separation between the two spheres of religion and state is not desirable, since without the commitment and engagement of religious bodies it is difficult to see us improving the quality of life of all our people.

The Policy contends that a secular state is 'extremely difficult to implement in practice, since there is considerable interchange between religion and public life'. Such a strict separation is also not necessarily desirable, since it is difficult 'to see us improving the quality of life of all our people' without the 'commitment and engagement of religious bodies'. The Policy does however acknowledge that secular worldviews are a reality in the present South African context and that tolerance between religions also extends to the relationship between religions and secular worldviews. Paragraph 14 states: 'Religion in education must contribute to the advancement of interreligious toleration and interpersonal respect among adherents of different religious or secular worldviews in a shared civil society'.

Besides requiring that learners be taught tolerance towards religions *and* secular worldviews, the Policy (2003:12, paragraph 14) also prescribes that any overt or covert 'denigration of any religion or secular world-view' will not be tolerated. The Policy therefore not only acknowledges the reality of secularism, but also guarantees that secularism, as a worldview, will not be denigrated. The Policy (2003:16, paragraph 29; *italics added*) also goes one step further in stating that children will be exposed not only to different religions but also to secular worldviews:

We believe we will do much better as a country if our pupils are exposed to a variety of religious *and secular belief* systems, in a well-informed manner, which gives rise to a genuine respect for the adherents and practices of all of these, without diminishing in any way the preferred choice of the pupil.

Paragraph 62 ensures that students who hold 'secular or humanist beliefs' will not be forced to participate in any activities where they may feel denigrated or compromised:

The separation of learners according to religion, where the observance takes place outside of the context of a school assembly, and with equitably supported opportunities for observance by all faiths, and appropriate use of the time for those holding secular or humanist beliefs (2003:26).

Paragraph 64 further guarantees parity in the allocation of resources 'with respect to religion, religious *or secular beliefs*' (2003:27; emphasis added). Though secular worldviews may 'naturally' be part of the rest of the school curriculum, the Policy specifically describes its inclusion of secular worldviews as a feature of how the Policy views Religion Education. Paragraph 29 (2003:16) refers to the fact that pupils will be exposed to 'a variety of religious and secular belief systems'. It furthermore undertakes to teach *about* 'secular values' in paragraph 30:

By teaching about religious and secular values in an open educational environment, schools must ensure that all pupils, irrespective of race, creed, sexual orientation, disability, language, gender, or class, feel welcome, emotionally secure, and appreciated (2003:17).

It would seem from the Policy that learning *about* secularism can be seen as being part of the scope of the Policy's understanding of the range of the curricular content. *The Policy is however clear that it is biased towards religion.* Paragraph 2 states 'we therefore promote the role of religion in education' (2003:7) and 'genuinely advance the interests of religion' (2003:7).

Concluding Remarks

This article started by interrogating the notions of the secular and postsecular as inappropriate descriptors for the South African context. Although there is ample evidence for secular influences in contexts like Asia, Africa and South America, these societies do not fit neatly into categories of secular and/or postsecular. Religion in these contexts has always been and continues to be an integral part of broader society. With regard to Taylor's (2007:1) definition of secularism, the article has found that though it may be true in Western contexts that the connection between religion and state has ended, the co-operative model the Constitution adopted suggests that in the South African context, the notion of secularism is *different* from that in the rest of the Western world.

In addition, South African *society* does not qualify as secular (Henrard 2001), but deeply religious. The only sense in which secularism as suggested by Taylor (2007:3) may have some significance is his third option, namely that secularism may mean

[t]he shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.

The recent issues raised about the privileging of religion in schools (Hawkey 2009) points to this notion of secularism as proposed by Taylor (2007).

The notion of South Africa as secular *state* also does not find any support in the Constitution, the Policy or the opinion of then Minister Asmal who was seminal in the Policy's formulation and processes. The statements made by various government officials do however indicate confusion about the use of the term 'secular'. Based on the evidence, the notion of South Africa as *secular* state is without official grounds. Both the Constitution and the Policy purposefully celebrate religion and the role religion can play in a constitutional state. Evidence from the Constitution and Policy (2003:2, 7) suggest rather that the state is biased *towards* religion.

Based on the evidence provided, I propose that South Africa is neither a secular state nor (post)secular in its philosophical and societal self-definition and roots. The Policy is therefore not a contradiction in terms.

As the notions of secularism and postsecularism evolve in the international domain in different nation-states, it is clear that the role of religion in the public sphere may increasingly contest traditional definitions and assumptions about freedom of religion, democracy and secularism.

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Directorate: Curriculum and Learning Development
Unisa
prinsp@unisa.ac.za

Historical Context of Religious Conflict and Religious Education Curriculum

Fred Sheldon Mwesigwa

Abstract

The main intention of this paper is to examine the multi-religious nature of Ugandan society, the un-healthy relationship between members of the different religions, the limitations of the current religious education curriculum to promote unity and harmony, Uganda's cherished educational and political goal and finally the requisite need for curriculum review. The paper begins by tracing the failure to have a multi-religious 'conscious' Religious Education curriculum to the historical-political and religious conflicts that gave birth to a denominational and 'divisive' educational system. The paper probes the religious landscape of Uganda and identifies and discusses key theoretical concepts that underpin the religious education debate in Uganda. Through this exploration, it will be established that Uganda is a multi-religious country that is dogged by religious discrimination and intolerance. Against this background, a critique of promoting a confessional CRE and IRE curriculum in religiously founded public schools will be given by illustrating the limitation of CRE and IRE text-books in promoting unity and harmony. Finally the paper will recommend that curriculum review is the way to go and the main objective of such curriculum should be to promote respect and tolerance and/ or understanding of other people's religious traditions.

Keywords: religious conflict, religious discrimination, religious intolerance, confessional CRE and IRE, national unity, harmony, multi-faith RE.

The onset of foreign political interest groups and religious denominations marked a period of intense competition for converts that resulted in the religious and political wars between 1888 and 1892. While African traditional religion(s) was the main religious tradition subscribed to by Africans before the advent of foreign religions, Islam was introduced in Uganda in 1844 by the Muslim Arabs, Anglican Christianity in 1877 by the British Church Missionary Society (CMS) members, and, Roman Catholicism in 1879 by the French White Fathers (Oded 1995; Kanyehamba 1998; Welbourne 1968).

The establishment of formal education in Uganda was linked to denominational identity, a factor that continues to significantly affect the administration of educational institutions and the development of the RE curriculum¹. The primary aim of missionary education was not the promotion of a secular curriculum but the conversion of, as many people, as possible, and, provision for spiritual growth through the triune mode of instruction, conversion and formation of character (Hansen 1984: 249; Sekamwa 1997) Muslim parents on their part, sent their children to Quranic schools where they were exclusively exposed to Islamic religious faith and practice.

The major breakthrough in designing a joint syllabus was early 1970's when Roman Catholics and Anglicans put together secondary and primary school ecumenical Christian Religious Education syllabuses. In 2001 the Ugandan government, for the first time, attempted to replace the confessional IRE and CRE with Moral Education in religiously founded public schools. The recommendations of the Educational Policy Review Commission as expressed in the 1992 Uganda Government White Paper on Education introduced Moral Education as a new subject on the curriculum to be taught alongside Religious Education. As for secondary schools, RE was recommended as an optional subject instead of a key alternative subject. The government's uneasiness with CRE and IRE is its failure to address the multi-religious nature of the religiously founded public schools.

¹ The majority of primary and secondary schools are religiously founded but grant aided by government and therefore also public education institutions. The influence of religious foundation bodies is significant since they influence who becomes the Head-teacher and whether religion is taught or not in the schools.

The overwhelming protest by religious leaders and other religious interest groups against introducing Moral Education from 1999 to 2001 culminated in government's rescinding of the decision thus an impasse. It is against this background that I probe the salient features of the religious education landscape in Uganda that will make a case for articulating the most appropriate religious education curriculum for primary and secondary schools.

Evidence for Religious Diversity in Uganda

Uganda is a multi-religious country and the multiplicity of religious traditions is reflected in the table showing religious composition (see table at end of text). Although Christianity and Islam are the 'recognised' religious traditions in terms of RE curriculum arrangements, there are other religious traditions in Uganda. The 2002 population statistics census results are inadequate in pointing out the religious composition of the country since they do not include Buddhists, Sikhs and other 'minority' religious groups and African traditional religion continues to be a dominant force in the lives of Ugandans although this cannot be captured by statistics. Mpagi (2001:4) stresses the binding note of the African traditional religion as belief in a supreme being, the creator and the concept of the living dead. The different tribes in Uganda have variations in their articulation of the concept of the Supreme Being and the place of the living dead (Byaruhanga n.d.: 10). Mpagi (2001:4) and Magumba (2002:28) argue that although ATR only remains with a small number of followers, its influence remains deeply rooted in people's hearts. Similarly Waliggo (2001:3); while arguing for the inclusion of ATR on the curriculum for CRE in African schools refers to African traditional religion's 'ubiquitous presence in the world view of parents and children'. The continued influence of this religious tradition on the lives of many Christian and Muslim followers as attested to by Mpagi and Waliggo, alongside its being subscribed to by some Ugandans makes it one of the major religious traditions.

The Islamic religion was introduced in Uganda In 1844 by Arab traders in Buganda, the central kingdom from which it was to spread to the rest of Uganda and it was therefore the first religion to be introduced from

outside Uganda. According to the 2002 population and Housing Census results (see Table 1 at end of report), 12.1% of Uganda's population is Muslim and this makes the Islamic religion the second biggest religious tradition in Uganda.

Christianity is dominant religious tradition in Uganda as per the 2002 population and housing census results since it comprises 85.2% of Uganda's population. The census results indicate that the Roman Catholic Church membership comprised 41.9% of Uganda's population and the Church of Uganda (referred to as Anglicans in Table 1) 35.9% of the population. Whilst the Roman Catholic Church and Church of Uganda are the two main Christian religious traditions, the Christian religious tradition is a diverse community of believers as evidenced by the statistics (see table at end of text).

Evidence of Curriculum Limitations and Conflict

Confessional Religious Education is the type of education found in Uganda's religiously founded public primary and secondary schools. Confessional RE is an approach of teaching about religion that promotes one particular religious tradition (Chidester *et al.* 1994; Jackson 1997). The confessional approach has as its main intention the affirming of students within their respective religious traditions as evidenced by main aim of CRE and IRE syllabuses which is, the promotion of spiritual growth within the Christian religious tradition and the Islamic religious tradition, respectively (Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa 1974; Quraishy 1987).

The confessional approach to religious education was promoted in British maintained schools in 1970's and was described by the Schools Council Working Party members thus:

This begins with the assumption that the aim of religious education is intellectual and cultic indoctrination (Schools Council Publications 1971:21).

Exclusiveness and indoctrination is therefore central to a confessional approach to RE. The students are meant to appreciate their own religious tradition and not to be exposed to other religious traditions. This type of

religious education promotes a superiority attitude among students of a particular religious tradition against others and this normally breeds classification and relationship to people in light of their religious identity. It is for this reason that in Britain like in some other countries, including South Africa, a multi-faith approach to teaching religion in schools has been adopted since it takes into account exploration of other religions and the attendant benefits.

Multi-faith RE describes the type of RE that is overtly concerned with the exploration of different religious traditions. It is a term that is synonymous with the debate concerning the teaching of RE in community schools of England and Wales. One major characteristic of these schools, as is the case in Uganda, is that many of them are funded by government but comprise students from different religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Reference to a multi-faith RE or a phenomenological RE is to be appreciated from the standpoint of 'phenomenology of religions' concern in trying to understand another person's religious life 'through laying aside one's own presuppositions, and through empathizing with the 'insider' experience' (Jackson 1997: 14). While multi-faith RE refers to study of other people's religions, phenomenology may be said to be concerned with how other religions can effectively be studied. The two are therefore closely related as expressed by Watson (1993: 43) that 'phenomenological RE is referred to loosely as the multi-faith or world religions approach'. One of the key objectives of a multi-faith RE is to enable students to engage with religion as a reality of human experience instead of being viewed from the perspective of a particular religious tradition and this is what is referred to as promoting the understanding of religion.

Understanding of religion is normally presented by RE scholars as providing for student's thinking about religious issues as opposed to being inducted into a particular religious standpoint. The SCWP members explain it thus:

Although the term understanding of religion is not directly defined by scholars, its objective is reflected as enabling students to think about religion instead of being passive recipients of religious information (SCP 1971: 37).

The active participation of students in reflecting on religious issues is discussed by Holley (1978: 19) and Watson (1993: 42) who consider it a source of promoting an independence of mind among students who can in turn draw conclusions from what they study. This means that students are able to explore religion, understand it (without undue influence from the teacher or any other authority) and draw their conclusions about religious issues. In other words there is room for respect and/ or tolerance of the 'significant other'.

'Respect and tolerance', as a phrase, refers to a situation where a person has a positive attitude towards other people's religions. It is a secondary aim of a multi-faith RE. The underlying principle is that people need to hold the religious beliefs of others in high esteem instead of having a low opinion about them. As a consequence the assumption is that this situation can lead to good interpersonal relations between people of different religions. Respect and tolerance of other people's religions is therefore an antidote to religious discrimination and intolerance.

Respect and tolerance are expressed as an aim for secondary school IRE (UNEB: 1996: 49). Although no accompanying explanation is given about their meaning, they are written from a context where a Muslim student is expected to develop a positive attitude towards other people's religions. Scholars of RE articulate the phrase respect and tolerance differently. While Arthur (1990: 43) uses the phrase to portray the positive attitude that can be developed towards other people's religions through a multi-faith RE, Watson (1993: 43 and 1993: 44) uses respect and tolerance in different contexts to express them as key objectives of a multi-faith RE which enables one to develop a positive attitude towards the religious beliefs of other people.

Although the Ugandan Christian Religious Education (CRE) primary and secondary school aims attempt to address exploring of other religions (and this seems to be a 'cosmetic' reference to religious dialogue to convince the government about 'a multi-faith element'), the text-books do not address this aspect as observed by Mwesigwa (2003) in respect to primary school CRE²:

² Christian religious denominations in Uganda are so diverse and there is unhealthy relationship expressed in different forms among different religious

The Joint CRE pupil's books for primary schools, in line with the intentions of the Joint CRE syllabus are overtly concerned with the promotion of the Christian religious tradition through emphasis on common Christian religious beliefs, practices and values. Since the concept of unity in diversity is downplayed and exploration of other religions is not provided for, the pupil's books may raise challenges for Christian and Islamic religious unity especially in the multi-religious schools (Mwesigwa 2003: 142)

The Ugandan CRE text-books for primary and secondary schools therefore cannot be a good medium of addressing religious discrimination and intolerance between Christians and Muslims or even among the different Christian religious denominations. Similarly and perhaps even more worrisome is that although the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) aims have provision for exploration of other religions, the text-books not only aim at enabling students to grow spiritually in Islamic religion, but also use offensive language to Christians when discussing Christianity.

The content of Islam Book one illustrates the spread of Islam in Arabia by citing incidences where prominent Christians approved of Islam and/ or accepted Islam as the only true religious tradition (Quraishy 1987: 21). The text-book goes further to explain how Prophet Isa (Jesus) was the forerunner of Prophet Muhammed and Islam is described as the perfection of the religion of God left incomplete by the Prophets before Muhammed (Quraishy 1987: 1). The content of secondary IRE text-books paints a picture whereby a Muslim student will look down upon a Christian student and consider his or her religion superior to Christianity. Such an approach to RE curriculum cannot promote respect and tolerance except negative attitude like religious discrimination and intolerance.

Religious discrimination is one of the possible products of an exclusivist curriculum. Religious discrimination refers to the preferential treatment of a member (or members) of a particular religion of another member (or members) of the same religion to the exclusion of another (or others). The issue of religious discrimination in Uganda is mirrored in the

groups such as Roman Catholics and Anglicans towards Pentecostals and vice-versa; the different Pentecostal churches etc.

historical and current religious political conflicts. It is for this reason that it is an issue of major concern addressed by the Ugandan constitution.

Chapter four of the 1995 Ugandan Constitution entitled *Human Rights and other freedoms* expresses the equal respect and dignity to be accorded to people. Article 21 of chapter four expresses the need for safeguard against religious discrimination, alongside other forms of discrimination and in part it reads:

A person shall not be discriminated against on ground of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion, or social or economic standing, political opinion or disability (LRC 2006: 39).

Religious discrimination is presented as one of the social evils that the laws of Uganda do not allow. Religion in Uganda has continued to be a source of polarization in social, economic and political life of the nation. Despite several joint ecumenical efforts among the different Christian religious traditions, the relationship between the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans has always been an edgy one³.

In 1999, a test case of President Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement government's preference of Anglicans to Roman Catholics came up when the press reported that the Roman Catholic leader Cardinal Emmanuel Wamala led a delegation to appeal to the president following the closure of fourteen Roman Catholic founded Primary Teacher's Colleges (PTC's), leaving only seven open. On the side of Church of Uganda, twenty two Primary Teacher's colleges (PTC's) were left open following the re-structuring exercise. Although the government denied political religious influence in the decision to close the Roman Catholic colleges, later following religious-political pressure, an updated Uganda Parliamentary report on restructuring of Primary Teacher's colleges and National Teacher's colleges dated 18th April 2000, specified that six Roman Catholic PTC's previously closed by government, had been re-opened.

³ It is common practice in Uganda for many people to recognize and subsequently relate names to religion. The majority of parents normally give their children Christian names that are in line with either Roman Catholicism or Anglicanism or for Muslims, Islamic names.

Although the Muslims constitute 10.5% of Uganda's population, they are a significant religious force in Uganda's social, economic and political life. From colonial times, Muslims have always complained of being discriminated against by the Christians by denial of key political positions, educational opportunities and economic benefits. The New Vision 18th December 2008 carried an article whereby a former Allied Democratic Front (ADF) rebel chief was quoted saying, 'When I was recruited, I was told that we were going to fight to get a Muslim president since Muslims in Uganda have all along been marginalized'⁴.

The un-healthy relationship between Muslims and Christians, real and perceived needs to be addressed through curriculum efforts whereby young primary school pupils and secondary school students can grow up engaging in dialogue and having respect for each other irrespective of religious tradition. During my field work research in 2003 I interviewed primary and secondary school students in Mbarara district of western Uganda and discovered that there was no good relationship between them, with many intolerant of each other, a case in point was the use of derogatory language when referring to their colleagues who belonged to other religions (Mwesigwa 2003)⁵ The students negative attitude to members of other religions suggests the breeding of an intolerant society.

Religious intolerance refers to behaviour of a religious person (or particular religious group) towards a member of (or members of) another religious group that reflects or expresses the incompatibility of members of different religious traditions. The *Collins Paperback Dictionary* (1995) defines the adjective intolerant thus 'refusing to accept practices and beliefs that differ from one's own.' The refusal to accept each other's religious beliefs and practices may be covert (as reflected in certain actions of individuals towards people of other religions) or overt (clearly expressed as

⁴ Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) is a military wing of a Muslim led and dominated rebel group that is fighting the current NRM government of President Y.K. Museveni which they argue is Christian led and dominated.

⁵ According to the New Vision 4th July 2007 a riot in Moyo that resulted in four fatal casualties, took place between the Christian and Muslim students of Ituala S.S.S, following disagreement on slaughter of animals for school meat by non-Muslims.

shown by some statements made about other people's religions or through religiously motivated violence).

While there seems to be a thin dividing line between religious discrimination and intolerance, religious discrimination can be argued to breed religious intolerance as illustrated by the Muslims in Uganda whose out-cry of being discriminated against has resulted in disliking their Christian counterparts and thereby resorting to armed conflict. It is against such a background that the Uganda government has been systematically trying to remove religion from the curriculum to an extent of now making it optional since it has ramification for conflict.

Conclusion

Mindful of the religious diversity of Uganda, the multi-religious nature of schools, the foundation body conceptualization of the purpose of religious education and the resultant uneasiness by government over a single-faith RE promoted by the religious leadership, it is imperative that all key stakeholders jointly work on revisiting the current curriculum concerning teaching religion in schools and designing new curriculum to address the multi-religious nature of society and school context without fully ignoring the interests of the foundation bodies. A compromise can be reached in designing new curriculum since the ultimate goal of addressing religious discrimination and intolerance, two of Uganda's greatest social ills, is desired by all stakeholders and any attempt to ignore it, is likely to be costly in future in terms of strained human relations and thereby development efforts. The promotion of national unity and harmony, Uganda's most cherished political ideal and the first national goal of education will only be possible if there is a curriculum review to resolve the contradictions.

Religion/ Denomination	Number	Percentage
CATHOLICS	10,242,590	41.9
ANGLICANS	8,782,821	35.9
MUSLIMS	1,758,101	12.1
PENTECOSTALS	1,129,647	4.6
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS	367,972	1.5
OTHER CHRISTIANS	286,581	1.2
BAHAI	18,614	0.1
OTHER NON- CHRISTIANS	159,259	0.7
TRADITIONAL	241,388	1.0
NONE	212,388	0.9
ORTHODOX	4,738	0.1
TOTAL	24,433,132	100

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Senior Lecturer and Dean Faculty of Education and Arts
Uganda Christian University
fsmwesigwa@educ.ucu.ac.ug

Ideological Posturing and National Curriculum Policy: Exploring Dual-Mode Religious Education for Secondary Schools in Malawi

**Reshma Sookrajh and
Macloud Frank Salanjira**

Abstract

This article draws from a large study that examined the understandings of selected stakeholders of the dual-mode Religious Education curriculum policy change for secondary schools in Malawi. It explores some of the insights on the impact of ideology on curriculum policy through the use of two sets of ideological constructs, namely, mono-faith and multi-faith RE and confessional and non-confessional RE. These constructs also forms the theoretical framework of this article. Insights gained through the use of a phenomenological methodology engaged a multi-category elite sample of Ministry of Education officials, secondary school head teachers (principals), and leaders of nationally organised faith-communities. The findings suggest that conflicting ideologies create contradictions for the introduction of new curriculum policy.

Keywords: Ideology, religious education, mono-faith, multi-faith, confessional, non-confessional, dual-mode R.E.

Introduction

The dual-mode Religious Education (RE) curriculum policy change was introduced in Malawi in 2001 as a replacement of a multi-faith RE

curriculum (O'Dala 2001; Salanjira 2003). In 2000, the Ministry of Education introduced RME as a multi-faith curriculum to replace Bible Knowledge (BK) as a mono-faith curriculum (Salanjira 2003). It was a continuation of the RE curriculum changes that had already taken place in primary school teacher training colleges in 1987 (Phiri 1988) and primary schools in 1991 (Ministry of Education 1991; Salanjira 2003). However, when the change was extended to secondary school level in 2000, the Christian faith-communities opposed multi-faith RE in favour of mono-faith RE while the Muslim faith-community supported the curriculum change. It was because of that controversy that the Ministry of Education introduced a dual-mode RE curriculum policy in 2001 (O'Dala 2001).

The term 'dual-mode RE curriculum' is used here to describe a curriculum based on two parallel syllabuses, namely BK and Religious and Moral Education (RME). BK is mono-faith, drawing its content from the Bible as the scripture for Christianity. On the other hand, RME is multi-faith, with its content 'cutting across the three major religions of Malawi, namely Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religions' (Ministry of Education 1998: iv).

The term religion is used, here, in its generic sense to encompass all various forms, expressions, manifestations, or traditions of religion in its diversity (Harrison 1990; Sharpe 1986; Preus 1987). RE can be based on one or several religions.

This article draws from a major study which focused on contesting spaces in the understandings regarding the dual-mode RE curriculum policy change for secondary schools in Malawi using the perspectives of leaders of nationally organised faith-communities, Ministry of Education officials, and secondary school head teachers (principals). The overall purpose in the major study was to explore how these three elite categories of research participants understood the introduction of the dual-mode RE curriculum. In this article, the ideological impact on curriculum policy is examined, using the case of the dual-mode RE curriculum for secondary schools in Malawi, which was introduced in 2001. It begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework used. The methodology which was driven by a phenomenological approach is then presented. Thereafter the findings which consist of several themes are represented followed by the conclusion.

Theoretical Framework

The impact of ideology on education is universally accepted and any national educational system, with its curriculum, is acknowledged as a reflection of ideologies of dominant and influential groups in society (Apple 2008; 2004; Bertram, Fotheringham & Harley 2000; Chisholm 2005; Glatthorn, Boschee, & Whitehead 2006; Kelly 1999; Lawton 1983; Matheson 2004; Meighan 1986; Sutton & Levinson 2001; Vincent 1995). Educational ideologies stress, among other things, the value dimension of knowledge and exert a great influence on the type of curriculum design used, the stated purpose of the curriculum and the nature of planned learners' experiences (Lawton 1983). This article explores the impact of ideology on national curriculum through the use of two sets or binaries of ideological positions that serve as its analytical framework. It is suggested that the curriculum of Religious Education (RE) is one area where the impact of ideology can easily be noticed.

There are several senses associated with the term ideology (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1980; Althusser 1971; Apple 2004; Gergen 2006; Kelly 1999; Marx 1972). One sense takes an intellectual posture, describing ideology as a science of ideas while another sense takes a political stance, conceptualising ideology as a political doctrine (Vincent 1995). Althusser (1971) observes that ideology works by disguising its ideological nature, becoming, in the process, naturalized, automatised and common sense. When this happens, people become ideologically positioned as independent of ideological determination (Fairclough 1995). In another sense, Fairclough (1995) speaks of different locations of ideology in language practices that are closely related to the concept of hegemony or domination as proposed by Gramsci (1971). To that extent, Fairclough (1995: 82) argues that 'discoursal practices are ideologically invested in so far as they contribute to sustaining or undermining power relations'. Thus ideological differences have led to educational contradictions in the dual-mode RE curriculum and are, in themselves, a manifestation of attempts to sustain or undermine domination. Furthermore, for some scholars, like Marx (1972), ideology denotes practical ineffectiveness, an illusion and loss of reality while others conceptualise ideology as a set of beliefs and values held by a group of people about a social phenomenon (Apple 2004; Gergen 2006; Kelly 1999).

Within the context of education, an ideology can be described as a set of beliefs and values held by a group of people about what education should be in schools (Kelly 1999). Since ideologies are reflected in any curriculum (Lawton 1980; 1983), it follows that each subject or body of subjects offered in any country reflects beliefs and values about what education should be in that subject or body of subjects.

The theoretical framework for this article draws from the notion of ideology, with a focus on two binaries in the area of RE curriculum theory and practice. These are, namely, mono-faith versus multi-faith and confessional versus non-confessional ideologies. It is suggested that the conflict between these two sets of ideologies can lead to the adoption of a curriculum policy with educational contradictions, and the dual-mode RE curriculum policy for secondary schools in Malawi reflects such contradictions.

A mono-faith ideology supports RE that draws its content from one religious or faith tradition such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or African Religion at the exclusion of other religions. The term African Religion is used for African Traditional Religion since it is increasingly becoming more favoured than African Traditional Religion, among some scholars, because of the negative connotation of the word 'traditional' (Steyn 2004). Mono-faith RE is also described as single-faith or single-tradition programme (Chidester, Mitchell, Omar & Phiri 1994). On the other hand, a multi-faith ideology supports RE which draws its content from many religious or faith traditions. RE informed by this ideology is also described as multi-tradition approach (Chidester *et al.* 1994). This article argues that the impact of mono-faith and multi-faith ideologies is reflected on the dual-mode RE curriculum.

A confessional ideology conceptualises RE as a religious activity, aimed at leading learners to a confession of, and a commitment to, a particular faith while a non-confessional ideology aims at developing in learners critical knowledge and understanding of RE as a crucial dimension of human and social life (Carr 2006; Chidester *et al.* 1994; Grimmitt 2000; Hull 2007, 1984; Summers & Waddington 1996; Wood 1984). Thus in the case of mono-faith and multi-faith ideologies, the impact of confessional and non-confessional ideologies can be easily noticed in the educational contradictions embedded in the dual-mode RE curriculum.

The substantial claim in this article is that the dual-mode RE curriculum reflects a conflict of ideological posturing about the role of RE in public schools among the influential stakeholders in Malawi. Such ideological conflict can result in educational contradictions about the role of RE in public schools. The dual-mode RE curriculum for secondary schools in Malawi represents a case where mono-faith and multi-faith as well as confessional and non-confessional RE ideologies are at work. Educational contradictions are created in terms of RE curriculum theory and practice. Such contradictions are also reflected in the understandings expressed by the three elite categories of research participants namely, Ministry of Education officials, secondary school head teachers, and faith-community leaders.

In terms of research on RE curriculum theory and practice, studies have largely focused on the debates surrounding many areas. Some foreground confessional and non-confessional pedagogy of RE (Carr 2006; Grimmitt 1987; 2000; Shepherd 1984; Wood 1984) while other highlight various conceptions of teaching and learning religion, in public schools, such as those portraying RE as a religious and an educational activity, or sacred and secular activity (Hull 1984, 2007; Sendor 1983; 1984a; 1984b; Sherman 1988; Smart 1998); different RE curriculum options for public education (Carr 2006; Chidester *et al.* 1994; Grimmitt 2000; Hull 2007; Slattery 2006; Summers & Waddington 1996). There are also those who emphasise RE approaches such as 'a single-tradition approach, a multiple single-tradition approach, and a multi-tradition' (Chidester *et al.* 1994: 19).

There is even an attempt, among some scholars, to differentiate between the terms 'religious education' and 'religion education' (Chidester *et al.* 1994; Steyn 2004). The former is used to describe RE as a religious activity and the latter as an educational activity. However, the commonest term used by many scholars is 'religious education'.

Furthermore, research in the field reflects a variety of conceptions about the teaching and learning of RE in schools (Hull 1984; 2007). The conceptions differ according to historical and socio-political contexts that RE is intended to serve (Chidester *et al.* 1996). From the review of literature it can be suggested that there is no universally accepted conceptualisation of RE for public schools. The various conceptions are problematic issues for RE curriculum policy in contemporary society and need attention of scholars if the teaching of religion is to remain meaningful in our contemporary

society (Slattery 2006). Commenting on RE as a contemporary problem, Wardekker and Miedema (2007: 76) observe that:

In the present time, the goals, contents, and position of religious education in schools are by no means self-evident. Instead, religious education has become a prime example of an area of which even its right to exist is contested between various groups with an interest in education.

It is to that extent that the dual-mode RE policy is a prime example of a curriculum as a hotly contested space (Apple 2004) and a 'battleground of competing influences and ideologies' (Kelly 1999: 167). For instance, the BK syllabus is mono-faith while the RME syllabus is multi-faith in approach. These two approaches reflect different RE conceptions. Since mono-faith RE involves the teaching and learning of religion based on one faith while multi-faith RE draws its content from many faiths, the inclusion of BK and RME in the school curriculum can be seen as an attempt to cater for groups of people with different ideological positions.

Furthermore, mono-faith and multi-faith RE differently determine the pedagogy of RE. The term pedagogy is used here to denote the theory of teaching and learning religion, encompassing aims, curriculum content, and methodology of RE. Grimmitt (2000: 1) defines pedagogy as 'a science of teaching and learning embodying both curriculum and methodology'. From the literature it can be suggested that whatever the definition of pedagogy, its fundamental concern is to relate the process of teaching to that of learning on the part of the learner (Simon 1981).

In pedagogic terms, mono-faith and multi-faith as well as confessional and non-confessional ideologies reflect what various groups, with an interest in education, believe and value to be the role of RE in public schools. The mono-faith ideology supports teaching and learning that helps a learner to have knowledge and understanding of one religion or faith. As a single-tradition programme, it can take different curriculum forms, with different intentions. Chidester *et al.* (1994: 42) aptly observe that:

Some single-tradition programmes are designed to encourage in pupils a particular development in faith. Other programmes place

greater emphasis upon the study of doctrinal, textual, or historical content. Still others seek to balance an academic study of the religious tradition with faith development. This variety in single-tradition approaches has been particularly evident in programmes of Christian religion education. In principle, however, this range of options for single-tradition approaches could be found in the development of religion education programmes designed to serve the religious interests of any faith community.

Various single-traditions reflect different ideological positions about mono-faith RE in public education. On the other hand, multi-faith ideology espouses RE pedagogy based on many religions, aimed at helping learners to develop wider knowledge and understanding of religion. Chidester *et al.* (1994) describe this pedagogy as multiple-tradition approach. It seeks to provide learners 'with an opportunity to learn about religion by studying many religions' (Chidester *et al.* 1994: 45). Thus, in pedagogic terms, any RE curriculum policy reflects an option about the teaching and learning of religion informed by one or many ideologies.

Understood from a perspective of politics of the school curriculum, BK and RME can be perceived as two oppositional spaces accommodating competing ideologies and demands about what should be taught as RE in the public schools. In the main, the theory of politics of the school curriculum, maintains that different people informed by different ideologies, contest, influence, or attempt to influence, the conduct of education in the school (Apple 2008; 2004; Chisholm 2005; Cornbleth 1990; Glatthorn *et al.* 2006; Iannacone 1983; Lawton 1980; 1983; McNeil 2006; Thomas 1983).

Methodology

A phenomenological methodology (Creswell 2003; Haralambos & Holborn 1991; Patton 2002; Pollio, Henley & Thompson 1997; van Manen 1990) was used to explore the understandings regarding the dual-mode RE curriculum policy change for secondary schools in Malawi. Perspectives of Ministry of Education officials, secondary schools teachers, and leaders of nationally organised faith-communities were used within an interpretivist paradigm. Qualitative data was generated using in-depth interviews with a purposive

sample of nine Ministry of Education officials, as curriculum policy-makers and bureaucrats; and six leaders of nationally organised faith-communities, as stakeholders in education whose public theology influences public policy. de Gruchy (2007) maintains that public theology refers to the relationship between theology and politics in specific locations. More specifically, it is used here to denote how theology influences public policy in education.

In addition, a questionnaire was administered to a purposive sample of 54 secondary school head teachers. The head teachers were requested to describe, in detail and in writing, their understanding regarding the dual-mode RE curriculum policy change. The questionnaire was used instead of in-depth interviews because of the relatively large size of the sample compared to that of Ministry of Education officials and faith-community leaders. As leaders in making curriculum decisions and choices at school level, the head teachers were a rich source of information on the dual-mode RE curriculum policy.

To supplement data generated through the in-depth interviews and the questionnaires, a review of documents was conducted. Rich qualitative data was produced from sources such as circulars, minutes on RE curriculum meetings, and newspaper articles commenting on the controversy surrounding the policy change from mono-faith to multi-faith RE curriculum in Malawi (Chitosi 2000a; 2000b; O'Dala 2001; Semu 2000). Thus, although in-depth interviews are recommended for a phenomenological study (Creswell 2003; Patton 2002; Sarantakos 2005), questionnaire and document analysis were used on the basis of their strength to generate data on the understandings regarding the dual-mode RE curriculum.

Inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006; Marshall & Rossman 2006) was used to analyse selected data from the sources mentioned. For anonymity and confidentiality (Terre-Blanche, Durrheim & Painter 2006), code names have been used in reporting the findings. For the nine Ministry of Education officials, codes ranging from MOE-1 to MOE-9 have been used while codes ranging from FC-1 to FC-6 have been used for the six nationally organised faith-communities, and codes ranging from HT-1 to HT-54 for the 54 head teachers.

Research Findings

The findings are represented as contesting spaces in the understandings regarding the dual-mode RE curriculum policy change for secondary schools in Malawi based on the understandings by the Ministry of Education officials, faith-community leaders, and secondary school head teachers. The major theme emerging from the findings include conflicting ideological posturing which leads to power struggles in claiming space in the RE curriculum.

The dual mode RE curriculum policy provides for two curricular spaces: one for BK as a mono-faith syllabus and another for RME as a multi-faith syllabus. Because of the curriculum's dual-nature, educational contradictions are created with respect to ontology, epistemology, and methodology of RE in public schools.

Ontologically, the BK syllabus is mono-faith in nature, conceptualising RE as a subject based on one religion, perceived as appropriate within a given historical and socio-political context. Epistemologically, mono-faith RE promotes an exclusivist curricular space, where acquisition of knowledge and understanding of one religion is promoted. In terms of methodology, mono-faith RE employs an exclusivist approach, with closed methods of teaching and learning religion. Such methodology does not promote dialogue across difference since it does not give room to discussion of RE content from other religions.

On the other hand, the RME syllabus is multi-faith in nature. Its ontology conceptualises RE as a subject based on many religions, accepted as valid truths in their own right and space. Its epistemology, promotes a curricular space, where critical knowledge and understanding of religion as an important dimension of human and social life is cultivated. Methodologically, it adopts multi-tradition approach and its 'primary aim... is to provide students with an opportunity to learn religion by studying actual religions' (Chidester *et al.* 1994: 45). As such, it employs methods that promote open discussion of RE content drawn from many religions, thereby cultivating dialogue across difference (Marshall & Oliva 2006; Skrla & Scheurich 2004).

The claim here is that the two syllabuses making the dual-mode RE curriculum were included to meet ideological differences about RE curriculum theory and practice. Consequently, educational ambiguity was

created about the role of RE in public schools. Their inclusion also contradicted the national goals of education in Malawi.

The notion of dominant ideologies shaping national curriculum was reflected in some of the understandings. The one faith-community leader (FC-4) acknowledged the introduction of the dual-mode RE curriculum as a product of the dominant ideologies of the time, as follows:

Moreover—may be what I can say is the whole essence of education is intended to meet a political agenda. Because education is provided, is defined by the elites. It is defined by the politburo. The package—what you call a curriculum—is defined by people who are privileged to make decisions for others. ...In fact the advantage we have now is that we are in a democratic situation where, although the key people may choose what to teach, the general public can voice their concern and reject; the way they rejected the policy of 2000 (Interview FC-4).

One head teacher (HT-16) indirectly alluded to the dominant ideologies of those who were in power at the time the dual-mode RE curriculum was introduced as follows:

It is unfortunate that after the teaching of BK in schools for many years then somebody just thought of introducing another subject which is contradicting with BK just for the sake of accommodating the unknown reasons to the Malawians (Questionnaire HT-16).

The above view was informed by the history of RE in Malawi. Since the introduction of western formal education by the missionaries from the 1870s (Banda 1982), mono-faith RE was taught in both primary and secondary school schools, based on the Bible as the scripture for Christianity (Nankwenya 1977; Salanjira 2003). Thus, multi-faith RE was understood as an unfortunate development, contradicting mono-faith RE. This can be seen as a case of ideological conflict about RE curriculum theory and practice in public schools.

One faith-community leader (FC-2) pointed out the influential position of the Christian faith-communities in determining the dual-mode RE curriculum as follows:

The Church was protesting the removal of Bible Knowledge and completely replacing it with Religious and Moral Education. So that is why they [BK and RME] were placed side by side (Interview FC-2).

Thus, the dual-mode RE curriculum policy change was partly influenced by the ideologies of the Christian faith-communities who opposed the replacement of BK with RME in schools. It was also partly influenced by the government ideology of teaching religion in schools, using a multi-faith approach and as an educational, not a religious activity (Hull 1984a). The multi-faith RE approach was also supported by the Muslim faith-community.

In addition to the mono-faith and multi-faith ideologies, confessional and non-confessional RE ideologies were reflected in some of the understandings regarding the dual-mode RE curriculum policy change. Each of these two ideologies stands for a distinctive way of conceptualising the teaching of religion in schools. The former conceptualises RE as a religious activity and the latter as an educational activity. Thus, the conflicting demands for confessional or non-confessional RE allow for the impact of ideology on RE curriculum.

For instance, some understandings emphasised the confessional view of RE, as evident in the comment by one faith-community (FC-2), which had this to say (Minutes of the first national consultative meeting 2000):

[FC-2] does not accept the pedagogical approach that only imparts knowledge without conversion. To [FC-2] conversion and teaching are complementary.

The above view illustrates a case of contestation of non-confessional RE in favour of confessional RE. With a confessional RE ideology, a multi-faith approach to the teaching and learning of religion in public schools would not be supported. This is because multi-faith RE aims at helping learners develop knowledge and understanding of religion as a social phenomenon, without

leading them to a confession of faith. By extrapolation, it can be argued that, the Christian faith-communities, apparently, understood the BK syllabus as a means for conversion among learners. As such, any pedagogical approach without conversion was not in line with their confessional RE ideology. However, although the Christian faith-communities understood BK as a means for conversion, the syllabus itself did not have that as its aim (Ministry of Education 1982a; 1982b).

The confessional RE ideology resonates with Hull's (2007) learning-religion approach which involves the situation where a single religion or faith is taught. In that approach, learners 'are expected to participate in the beliefs and practices of the religion being taught' (Hull 2007: 4). The goal is to enable the learners to come to believe in a religion or to strengthen their commitment to it (Chidester *et al.* 1994).

Another insight is that the Christian faith-communities clearly declared that their view of RE was different from that of the government. For them RE in public schools was to serve their evangelical aim of converting the learners. For the government, it was to promote knowledge of religion as an important dimension of human and social life, without privileging any religion. The following extract shows the confessional view of the Christian faith-communities (Minutes of the first national consultative meeting, 2000):

The Christian organisations also observed that the Christian Churches have invested a lot in the country all for the purpose of upholding the name of Jesus. Christian schools, as part of the Christian Church investment cannot be used for the teaching of ATR (African Traditional Religion) or Islam.

Thus, the teaching of religion in schools was largely viewed by the Christian faith-communities from a confessional perspective. By implication, BK was understood as confessional and RME as non-confessional in approach. The above extract also reveals an exclusivist attitude towards other religions in the public school curriculum.

However, not all faith-communities were informed by a confessional ideology of RE. For instance, one faith-community (FC-1) expressed a non-confessional conception of RE, as evident below (Minutes of the first national consultative meeting):

To [FC-1] schools are not intended to preach about and convert people to particular religious faith, but rather to transmit knowledge for widening the intellectual scope of children.

The above view was non-confessional and a liberal conception of RE. As an educational activity, the aim of RE should be to help learners develop critical knowledge and understanding of religion as a dimension of human and social life. It should enable learners to appreciate how religion helps some people to find meaning and purpose in life, and how religion affects the world and society in which we live (Steyn 2004).

The data also implies that not all faith-communities are informed by a confessional ideology in their conceptualisation of RE for public schools. As Steyn (2004: ix) observes, learners 'should be able to empathise with the other ... and have some idea of what it means to be, for instance, a devout Africanist, Christian, Jew, or humanist'. From this perspective, RE can provide opportunities for learners 'to gain educational benefit from the study of religion' (Hull 2007: 4).

The non-confessional RE ideology resonates, to some extent, with Grimmitt's (2000) learning-about-religion and learning-from-religion approaches. The learning-about-religion approach is descriptive and historical in nature and is against mono-faith RE. As Hull (2007: 3) observes, it

... is often motivated by the desire to create a purely educational form of religious education, one which will not be open to the charge of indoctrinating or giving an unfair advantage to any particular religion.

Another insight is that since the dual-mode RE curriculum accommodates two contradictory spaces—the mono-faith space and the multi-faith space—the mono-faith space can be described as confessional and the multi-faith space as non-confessional. Thus, although the dual-mode RE curriculum may not be charged of indoctrination, it can be criticised for giving an unfair advantage to Christianity over Islam and African Tradition Religions. This is because while Christianity is exclusively covered in the mono-faith space (BK), it also shares the multi-faith space (RME), alongside Islam and African Traditional Religions.

A case of power struggle created by ideological conflict can be noted in the findings with regard to the introduction of other faiths in the multi-faith space. The Christian faith-communities contested RME and understood it as an attempt 'to wipe away Christianity' (Questionnaire HT-15). In this case, the change from mono-faith to multi-faith RE curriculum was in conflict with the ideology of the Christian faith-communities. Their conception of RE was informed by the need to promote faith. On that basis they contested the change, turning RE curriculum into a 'battleground of many competing influences and ideologies' (Kelly 1999: 167).

In addition, some ideological views portrayed the dual-mode RE policy as a recipe for confusion. For instance, one head teacher (HT-9) observed that:

The change will bring confusion in this country. Only BK should be taught. RME suited the previous regime for the reason best known to the leaders (Questionnaire, HT-9).

Another head teacher (HT-5), commenting on the policy's divisive effect on Christians and Muslims in public schools, had this to say:

While I may not be comfortably and competently aware about the rationale of introducing this [policy], in reality it has, to some extent, polarized the schools according to faiths. Those perceived to be predominantly in Christian domains have emphasised on [BK] while those in Moslem regions opting for RME. Even teachers in these areas are inclined to these perceptions similarly (Questionnaire, HT-5).

From the data it is evident that the policy change was perceived as a liability for Malawi's education system because it had polarised schools into those that favoured BK and those that favoured RME. Such polarisation defeated government's purpose of aligning curriculum to the political vision of maintaining peace and unity among people (Harley & Wedekind 2004). It had the effect of creating religious apartheid among schools (Summers 1996).

However, since RME covers Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religions, it is not correct to claim that it is for Muslims. In fact,

it is BK that privileges the Christian faith-communities, as it is only based on the Bible, as the scripture for Christianity. The Christian faith-communities' resistance of RME reflected their unwillingness to have other religions included in the school curriculum. Ideologically, such resistance could be influenced by what D' Costa (1986) describes as an exclusivist theology of other religions. In the main, this theology accepts Christianity as the only valid means of gaining salvation. As such other faiths are not accepted as valid in own right and space (Kraemer 1962).

The findings demonstrate how ideological differences created mixed reactions about the dual-mode RE curriculum conflict. For instance, commenting on differences in ideology about RE between Christian and Muslim faith communities, one Ministry of Education official (MOE-2) had this to say:

In fact it depended or it depends on where you belong to, if say for example you are a Muslim and then with the introduction of Religious and Moral Education, where the teaching of Islam was included, those people were happy. They thought probably their wishes, you know, were considered. But those that were coming from the Christian background, they thought that probably that was an attempt to convert some Christians. ...but there was misunderstanding, a lot of misunderstandings, especially from those people that did not know why the change. They thought that...the government was trying to convert people through education (Interview MOE-2).

Another official (MOE-5) at one education division concurred that there had been mixed reactions to the policy change as follows:

There are really mixed reactions from the community and hence ... the fuss that was there in the community. In fact the community even up to now is still not too sure of what really is the way forward to this new approach But I should believe that probably any new change is subject to be resisted up until the whole community would really understand how it was...prepared. But right now may be the problem that I can see here is that the community was not involved in

the initiation stages of this new approach. It is like we as curriculum developers just came up with the idea and developed the material. Then later on we thought of sensitising the community when the material was already there. So that's why may be this really brought ... an uproar from the society (Interview MOE-5).

A Ministry of Education official (MOE-9) suggested that,

... whenever you are bringing change there are some quarters of the society that will resist. And with this one, there is a very good percentage of people resisting it. For instance, when we had Bible Knowledge only, the Muslim students...some of them were willing to take the subject and were writing examinations. But when it came to this RME, the Christians...refuted it completely such that the candidates that write the exams, probably we can say not much- not many of them are Christians (Interview MOE-9).

It is evident that mixed reactions were created because some people understood the curriculum as a means for conversion while others understood it as an educational activity. The inclusion of Islam in the multi-faith syllabus was perceived as an attempt to convert people to Islam Yet it can be supposed that people should have been suspicious of BK because of its mono-faith approach. Probably this misunderstanding was a cover-up for hegemony by people resisting the introduction of Islam and other religions in the school curriculum. For a long time, in the history of education in Malawi, RE was based on the Christian faith. With that background, the introduction of other religions in the RE curriculum could easily be understood as an attack on the hegemony enjoyed by the Christian faith.

Another insight emerging from the data is that schools tended to prefer BK to RME. Such preference might reflect a contesting space in the dual-mode RE curriculum policy change and, therefore, politics of the school curriculum.

Commenting on the apparent contestation of the dual-mode RE curriculum policy change one Ministry of Education official (MOE-3) observed that:

Of course schools have made it open. They have made [both] subjects available. But practically, to a greater extent, most opt for Bible Knowledge for obvious reasons. I think because of their religious inclinations, most opt for Bible Knowledge. Of course there are cases here and there where you have students learning Religious and Moral Education, but they are very rare...To a greater extent, it is still Bible Knowledge which seems to be taking an upper hand (Interview MOE-3).

Another Ministry of Education official (MOE-7) also minimised the policy's value due to the apparent contestation at school level as follows:

The only visible thing is that Christian schools are choosing BK and where there are predominantly...Islamic communities they are choosing RME because of the component of Islam. So probably that can tell the reaction that the other community doesn't want their students to learn the... philosophies of the other religions. ... In secondary schools, the reaction is just choice of subjects: Christian schools choosing BK without consultation, without remorse (Interview MOE-7).

One Ministry of Education official (MOE-1) explained the cause of the policy's mixed reactions as evident below:

It is really viewed with mixed reactions. One thing for sure is that the two [BK and RME], since they are dealing with issues to do with faith and especially for the young people, the worry with the society is, if we begin offering RME which taps issues from different faiths...aren't we in one way going to convert the young ones at that level? Won't they be confused at that level to say they are learning about these things from this faith, that faith, that faith?...So the worry with society is...the young people might get confused because every faith would want its young generation to really know or learn about things from their own faith (Interview MOE-1).

There is an obvious lack of clarity about the educational value of the dual-mode RE curriculum policy change. The mixed reactions reflected lack of understanding about what the curriculum sought to achieve in terms of education. Underpinning these mixed reactions could be the conflict between ideologies about confessional and non-confessional RE; a conflict between promoting faith, on the one hand, and critical understanding of religion as an important dimension of human and social life, on the other.

Apparently, the policy was misunderstood in that BK was taken to be for Christians and RME for Muslims. To that extent, the policy had created what Summers (1996: 11) describes as 'religious apartheid' in schools. However, the policy only stipulated that both BK and RME should be offered in schools as optional subjects not that BK is for Christians and RME is for Muslims. One obvious point here was that the curriculum policy change was subject to various interpretations.

It was also surprising and somehow misleading that the RME syllabus was taken to be for Muslims, yet it covers the three main religious traditions of Malawi, namely, Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religions (Ministry of Education, 1998). Such a misunderstanding could be due to the apparent conflict in the conception of RE. For instance, the Ministry of Education conceptualised RE as an educational activity while the Christian faith-communities conceptualised it as religious activity. In that sense the mixed reactions reflected the tension between the secular (educational) and sacred (religious) understanding of RE. One point to be noted here is that unless such ideological conflict is resolved, the dual-mode RE curriculum policy change will continue to be contested by various groups speaking at cross-purposes.

Conclusion

The article examined the impact that ideology can have on curriculum theory and practice within a given historical and socio-political context. By exploring the dual-mode RE for secondary schools in Malawi, it has been demonstrated that ideologies do not only reflect the influence of dominant groups in society but also what such groups believe should be the value of education in society. One major impact of ideology on national curriculum policy is the creation of educational contradiction in an attempt to

accommodate competing ideological positions about what should be taught in schools. The dual-mode RE curriculum for secondary schools in Malawi has been discussed as a case of curriculum containing educational contradictions which arise out of ideological posturing.

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School of Education Studies
Edgewood Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Sookrajh@ukzn.ac.za

Faculty of Education
Chancellor College
University of Malawi
mfsalanjira@yahoo.com

Thinking about Knowledge amidst Religious Diversity: Epistemic Relativity and its Impact on Religion in Education

Petro du Preez

Abstract

In this article I explore the notion of epistemic relativity and its impact on Religion in Education. I argue that epistemic relativism in the study of Religion in Education has the potential to stimulate critical dialogue about religious content and assist interlocutors to balance their commitment to their own truths and beliefs and openness to the truths and beliefs of others. This includes an exploration of the relationship between social constructivism and epistemic relativism, as well as a realist response. A case study provides examples of how some of the theoretical notions unfold in practice.

Keywords: Religion in Education, epistemic relativity, social constructivism, realism, profound dialogue.

Introduction

Teaching and learning multireligious content is a complex matter. Lecturers often have to deal with students who enter classrooms with snippets of 'knowledge' that are generally framed by their own fears, misconceptions and/or personal 'truths' (Roux & Du Preez 2006). One way of meeting the challenges this presents is through reflecting on the processes of epistemological realisation, specifically in terms of the social constructivist theory of knowledge. Epistemological realisation, or the morphosis of knowledge systems in Religion in Education, is multidimensional and is

often accompanied by epistemic relativism. This is mainly because of the plethora of religious truths and beliefs about religions—whether in education or beyond—which characterises a religiously diverse postmodern society. In searching for a way of helping us deal with student's fears, misconceptions and/or personal truths, this article explores the question: *What is the impact of epistemic relativity on the study of Religion in Education?*

First, attention will be given to the social constructivist theory of knowledge and how this leads to epistemic relativity. The position I take is that relativity in the epistemology of the study of Religion in Education should not lead to epistemophobia (cf. Boghossian 2006) of knowledge regarding different religions, and could be essential for the survival of Religion in Education. This is because Religion in Education necessitates that people acknowledge the diverse knowledge systems underpinning religions and belief systems.

In this article I will explain my understanding of epistemic relativity as a spin-off of social constructivism. I will also discuss the realist position in this debate. I will draw on my own classroom praxis to provide examples of some of the theoretical notions as well as on one narrative obtained from a student involved in a pre-service teacher training programme in Religion Education. These examples should not be seen as proof of the theory, but as indications of how the theory takes form in a particular context. The theory and examples will also be used as a backdrop to the concluding suggestions given regarding the significance of epistemic relativity in the context of the study of religion in education.

Theoretical Background

In this next part, I explore the theory underlying epistemic relativity. This will include the identification of two forms of epistemic relativity in the context of religion; an exploration into the the nature of knowledge and epistemic relativity in the study of Religion in Education; and a realist response to epistemic relativism. Finally, the implications of this theoretical exploration for the study of Religion in Education will be discussed.

Relativism Explored

Questions on relativism are not new to philosophy. Both Siegel (1987) and

Baghrarian (2005) discuss how the early Greek philosophers grappled with the notion of relativism and how since then it has often been viewed negatively or even with profound scepticism. This stems from the assumption '... that relativism cannot be correct, for it succumbs to a self-destructive, self-referential incoherence' (Siegel 1987:xiii).

I would argue that abhorrence of relativism has lessened with the rise of a linguistic turn in philosophy. This shift is evident in the second half of the twentieth century among French thinkers such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Louis Althusser, Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, and Pierre Bourdieu (Delanty & Strydom 2003:321-329). The linguistic turn in philosophy (or post-structuralism), amongst others, elevated anti-foundationalism and subjectivism (Delanty & Strydom 2003:365), as well as the relative nature of cognitive, moral and aesthetic realities (Baghrarian 2005:6-7). Post-structuralism advocates scepticism about all aspects of the world and sees all judgements as relative and worthy of deconstruction and could therefore be described as second order relativism (Baghrarian 2005:9) in which everything is viewed relatively.

Baghrarian (2005:5) discusses the varieties of relativity in terms of two questions: [1] *what is being relativised?* and [2] *what is the context of relativisation?* Regarding the first question, she differentiates between *cognitive relativism*, which includes relativism about truth, rationality, epistemic and conceptual notions; *moral relativism* and *aesthetic relativism* (Baghrarian 2005:6). With regard to the second question, a distinction is made between *subjective relativism* that proposes that an individual decides what is relative; *social relativism* which is based on the idea that relativity depends on social, cultural and historical conditions; and *conceptual relativism* that focuses on relativising ontology and conceptual schemes (Baghrarian 2005:7). The discussion on the varieties of relativity is important because of the many shapes that have been adopted and the ways in which these forms are often conflated (Baghrarian 2005:5). The above exploration on the varieties of relativity will be used in the next section to differentiate between the forms of epistemic relativity in the context of religion.

Two Forms of Epistemic Relativity in the Context of Religion

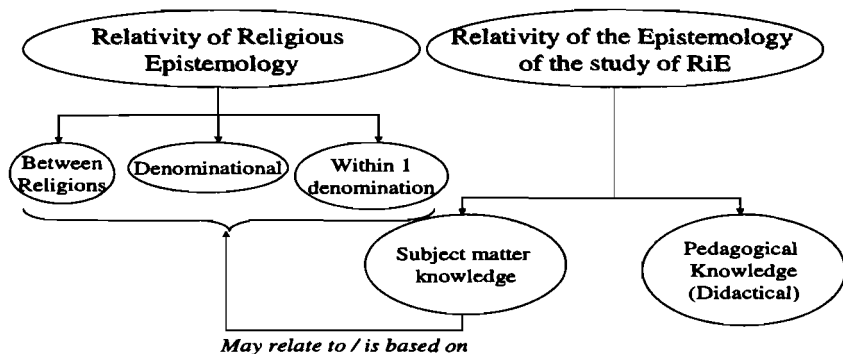
To facilitate a theoretical exploration of epistemic relativity in the context of religion one needs to differentiate between the *relativity of religious epi-*

stemology and the *relativity of the epistemology of the study of Religion in Education*. The first refers to the relativity regarding religious knowledge and truth (Baergen 1995). Just as there are differences between people belonging to the same culture about what constitutes knowledge and truth (Du Preez 2008; Dhillon & Halstead 2005), so too there are epistemic differences between adherents of the same religion or belief system. Such differences are often reflected in the establishment of different denominations, but are also found among people in the same denomination. In relation to Baghranian's (2005) varieties of relativism, the relativity of religious epistemology is a variety of cognitive relativity with specific reference to alethic relativism (relativism of truth). The centrality of alethic relativism also brings about the moral relativity underpinning this form of epistemic relativity. Here the context of relativisation is both subjective and social relativism.

The second form of epistemic relativity—*relativity of the epistemology of the study of Religion in Education* is biarticulate. On the one hand, it denotes the *pedagogical knowledge* that student-teachers need to master in order to present Religion in Education lucidly and, on the other hand, it refers to the *subject matter knowledge* regarding different religions (Raths 1999). The subject matter knowledge may relate to varying degrees to the relativity of religious epistemology because it is based on the episteme of the broader field of religion; whereas pedagogical knowledge constitutes the teaching-learning and facilitation of the subject matter knowledge. Pedagogical knowledge is subject specific and belongs to the realm of education in general. In terms of Baghranian's (2005) varieties of relativism, subject matter knowledge is much the same as the relativity of religious epistemology as discussed above. However, pedagogical knowledge in the context of religion embraces the rational and epistemic aspects of cognitive relativism, in addition to aesthetic relativism. This is because pedagogy represents a scientific study of education that can be rationally justified and epistemologically supported (McMillan & Schumacher 2001) and that is strongly influenced by aesthetic relativism (Greene 2008). The context of relativisation is conceptual relativism because of relativity of conceptual schemes and ontological views that underpin educational discourses (Blake, Smeyers, Smith & Standish 2005). Both these forms of epistemic relativity might also be influenced by other forms of relativism. However, for the

purposes of this article, only epistemic relativity in the context of Religion in Education will be considered. The diagram below illustrates the forms of epistemic relativity in the context of religion in education.

Diagram 1: Forms of Epistemic Relativity in RiE



There has been a great deal of work on the theory underlying cultural relativity and the relativity of religious epistemology (Dhillon & Halstead 2005; Du Preez 2008). Many of the notions regarding cultural relativity also apply to the relativity of religious epistemology. One criticism against cultural relativists (and by implication 'religious relativists') is that they view cultures/religions as being hermetically sealed and thus fail to acknowledge the complexity embedded in cultures/religions (Dhillon & Halstead 2005:157). Not much theoretical work has yet been done on the topic of the relativity of the epistemology of the study of Religion in Education. For that reason, towards the end of the article specific attention will be given to the pedagogical value of relativity for the study of religion in education.

Epistemic Relativism of Pedagogical Knowledge in Religion in Education: A Social Constructivist Approach

An exploration of the nature of epistemology in the study of Religion in Education must be preceded with an exploration of the influence of national

and international trends. For that reason, Outcomes Based Education will be discussed next as an example of a national trend, and the social constructivist approach will be described as an international trend that could affect the epistemological realisation of Religion in Education. The introduction of Outcomes Based Education in South Africa nationally came with a 'new' theory of the nature of knowledge (and methodology), i.e. the social constructivist theory. New is placed in inverted commas because, social constructivism has been criticised as not being new at all. Terhart (2003:42), for example, argues that,

... instead of a genuine creation of a new didactics, we see in constructivism the familiar, old, and romantic conception of learning and teaching well-known in 'progressive education' (*Reformpädagogik*). These ideas are presented in a new language....

In terms of the nature of knowledge, social constructivism centre on the assumption that knowledge of the world and the self is embedded upon communal interchange (Gergen & Gergen 2003:2) which is inevitably open to a variety of relativisms (Baghramian 2005). The study of Religion in Education was (and still is) directly influenced and shaped by this theoretical approach and its underlying assumption(s) and problems.

In broad terms, the social constructivist approach and its revolving assumption(s) about knowledge have gained prominence as a result of two critical international discourses, both strongly influenced by post-structuralist thought. Firstly, Boghossian (2006:5-6) argues that *post-colonialism* has brought with it the idea that '... there is no such thing as superior knowledge only different knowledges, each appropriate to its own particular setting'. Secondly, he postulates that *feminist epistemology*, with its commitment to situated knowledge that reflects the position of the knowledge producer and his or her historical and contextual situation, has also contributed to the heightened status social constructivism enjoys (Boghossian 2006:6). He argues that these two discourses have created a 'social dependence conception of knowledge' (Boghossian 2006:6) and that it is exactly this notion that brings about the '... many different yet equally valid ways of knowing the world' (Boghossian 2006:6). Boghossian, therefore, takes the position that social constructivist theory leads to epistemic relativism.

Realism, Social Constructivism and Epistemic Relativism: Critiques and Examples

In the next section, I will explore the realist response to epistemic relativism as evidenced by social constructivism. This argument concerns realist contentions against relativists in general (Edwards, Ashmore & Potter 2003) and specifically the feminist-realist response to constructivist views (Hepburn 2003). Realists argue that '... an external reality exists which is independent of human consciousness yet can nevertheless be known' (Delanty & Strydom 2003:376). Gergen and Gergen (2003:228) argue that realists consider that the world cannot be constructed in any way one wishes to for two reasons. Firstly, there are inevitable realities that one must confront and, secondly, constructed realities have to be tested against these inevitable realities. On the contrary, Edwards, Ashmore and Potter (2003:236) state that '[r]ealism is the rhetoric of no rhetoric, marshalled in favour of one particular claim against another'. They conclude by saying that relativism at least provides one with a plethora of positions to argue for or against, whereas realism principally induces one to commit to one particular stance (Edwards, Ashmore & Potter 2003:236). Hepburn (2003:237), who agrees with the latter argument, explains the different anti-relativist arguments in four points. These four points includes the following: the choice between versions; textual idealism; feminist commitment; and influencing the community (Hepburn 2003:238).

The first point refers to the view that relativism cannot provide a basis for choosing between moral and political perspectives or between the claims made by different people (Hepburn 2003:238). Realists expect a basis or foundation from which to choose. Relativists, on the other hand, adopt an anti-foundational position and draw on a wide range of possibilities (Hepburn 2003:239). The second argument that realists would posit is that relativists are not in a position to explore real, worldly phenomena because of the anti-foundational nature (Hepburn 2003:240). Hepburn (2003: 241) rejects this view, arguing that an anti-foundational stance does not necessitate an idealist stance that denies the existence of a range of objects. The third point concerns commitment, specifically at the epistemological level. Hepburn (2003:242) explains this as follows:

When a relativist takes sides in a dispute some kinds of commitment

are involved Taking sides does not involve abandoning relativism ... taking sides does not mean that the relativist may not dispute what the sides are and how they are constituted

The last point of realist critique is concerned with the seeming difficulty that relativists have in persuading the research community, and beyond, of their claims (Hepburn 2003:243). Hepburn (2003:243) draws on constructionism, poststructuralism and discursive psychology to demonstrate relativist's ability to justify their beliefs. She concludes by arguing that '... relativists may be in a stronger—and more intellectually honest—position to deal with the many contingencies, arguments and agendas ...' (Hepburn 2003:244).

In order to contextualise some of the arguments provided thus far, I will draw on elements of my own praxis as a lecturer of Religion Studies to pre-service teachers. This praxis might also provide some context for the narrative case study to be discussed next. My classroom discussions with students are mainly related to topics such as discourses in Religion Studies in diverse educational contexts, trends in religion in society in general, and how religion is personally experienced by people. One of the things that has emerged clearly during these discussions is that knowledge has become even more relative as a result of postmodernity, of living in an information and communication age and of the ever increasing popularity of the social construction of knowledge. I have discovered that many students find it extremely difficult to deal with epistemic (and moral) relativity. Some students just accept the relativity and 'move on'; whilst others apprehensively contest it. Examples of the first two of these possible reasons for the increase in relativity will be provided next.

The students often describe how they encounter learners who have their own 'personalised or self-constructed religions'. Examples of this are learners who claim to be spiritualists or pagans in the broader sense of the words. These learners adopt elements of the religions and/or belief systems they like and ignore what is not to their liking. The growing trend towards customised religions contributes to the relativity of beliefs and consequently to epistemic relativity. Mason, Singleton and Webber (2007:174) state that

[a] large proportion of young people [are] moving between alternatives, especially during their teenage years. Most of this

movement appears to be away from traditional spirituality, either toward eclectic blends of mainstream and New Age spiritualities, or more frequently in the direction of secular indifference.

Another example is the very different ways that the media interpret situations and/or concepts and sometimes distort reality through generating ill-conceived 'truths'. Such distorted realities and ill-conceived truths are widely available and are often uncritically adopted by people, thus strengthening the notion of the relativity of knowledge. A popular example of this is the erroneous way that the *jihad* has been portrayed in the popular media since the September 11 attacks. This erroneous portrayal of *jihad* can even be found in a South African text book for intermediate and senior phase learners. Dangor (2005) and Bardakoğlu (2008) both address this issue by extensively describing the different dimensions of *jihad* in an attempt to challenge or eradicate misconceptions about this concept.

In response to the above two examples, realists would argue that both the situations are the results of relativist's rejection of the foundational nature of knowledge. I would argue that if we desire to live in an environment where no one metanarrative dictates our thoughts we ought to embrace this inevitable relativity. Embracing relativity does not mean one (whether a lecturer, student or learner) should naively accept relativity or commit to everything that is relative. Rather, it means that one should critically and convincingly adopt a position and then continue to investigate the other positions to avoid stagnation and dispel ignorance. This process of continuous scrutiny of possibilities makes it possible to be more informed when one 'personalise[s] a religion' or reads various media texts.

In the next section, I will indicate what I think the implications of these theoretical notions are for the study of Religion in Education. Thereafter these theoretical notions will further be expanded through applying it to a narrative case study.

Implications for the Study of Religion in Education

Firstly, despite the criticisms against social constructivism (Terhart 2003; Hacking 2003), I would argue that this approach has the potential to complement the study of Religion in Education. I think that many criticisms against social constructivism are based on a one-dimensional understanding

(often a Vygotskian understanding) of this approach (see for example Bencze 2000; Delanty & Strydom 2003). Delanty and Strydom (2003:372-374) discuss the various origins of the notion of constructivism and show how the original view of this notion (that was framed by logical positivists' understanding of meaning as constructivist) is insufficient to justify contemporary understandings of constructivism and their strong emphasis on reflexivity. Those involved in Religion in Education as a dimension of human and social sciences cannot ignore the fact that social constructivism provides a space for social actors to challenge the traditional view of truth, knowledge and objectivity as static. Challenging these traditional views is an important way of avoiding having any one metanarrative dominate the study of Religion in Education. Social constructivism also assists those studying Religion in Education to learn about this discipline within a familiar social and historical context.

Secondly, a realist fixation with foundationalism and 'inevitable realities' could also be questioned. My questions would be: *Can there be any inevitable realities in a religiously diverse society?* And: *Whose inevitable realities will count as foundational when constructed realities are tested?* (cf. Southard & Payne 1998). In my view, a realist position in the study of Religion in Education might—deliberately or inadvertently—endorse the superiority of 'one knowledge' or metanarrative. I would suggest an anti-foundational approach to the study of Religion in Education so as to enable an epistemological view that can cope with rapidly changing and evolving circumstances on the political, social and/or economical front (Du Preez 2009). Such an anti-foundational approach also enables those involved in the study of Religion in Education to gain a wide spectrum of options as well as opportunities to justify their positions.

The last sentence also brings me to my third argument. One's epistemological position which derives from one's ontological stance directly influences one's methodological and ethical views. For example, if a teacher views a child as a *tabula rasa* that has to be filled with knowledge, it is likely that such teacher would also view him/herself as an authoritarian figure that has to deposit (one-dimensional) knowledge by means of a methodology that enables the teacher to remain in control (Freire 2009). Approaching the study of Religion in Education from a social constructivist position, on the other hand, presupposes the use of certain methods such as cooperative learning

(Slavin 1991; Bitzer 2001) as well as dialogic approaches (Weiße 1996, Alexander 2006, Du Preez 2008). The aim is to offer learners options and opportunities—which is possible when epistemic relativity is present—to explore options, engage in dialogues and to justify their positions.

Fourthly, embracing relativity does not inexorably lead to a position where one is bereft of moral fibre. On the contrary, as was established earlier, it is in fact mandatory to commit to a position and then to question differences of opinion and how they are constituted (Edwards, Ashmore & Potter 2003:237). Informing students about reasoning processes in situations that are characterised by relativity might give them opportunities to practise their reasoning skills. In the light of the many religious disputes in our society, such exercise might benefit students (and learners) and simultaneously bring about higher levels of religious literacy (Goldburg 2006; Roux 2007).

To put it briefly, the value of epistemic relativity in the study of Religion in Education deserves careful consideration. Epistemic relativity may generate discomfort and/or discontent amongst some, but it should be remembered that learning often takes place when we are taken beyond the borders of comfort.

The Case Study: One Narrative

In the last part of this article I describe the methodology, methods and procedures associated with conducting a narrative case study before describing and analysing the narrative to demonstrate how some of the theoretical notions operate in practice.

Methodology, Methods and Procedures

The use of narratology has become all the more popular since the late sixties and is associated with the trend towards biography in social science research as well as to autoethnography as described earlier (Patton 2002:115, 116). Conceptually it is linked to hermeneutics, phenomenology and interpretivism (Patton 2002:115). Narratology, or narrative analysis, gives credit to people's stories or lived experiences and simultaneously gives these stories the status of scientific data (Patton 2002:115). Elliott (2006) offers five themes that concern narrative research. Two themes which were directly useful in this

inquiry are: '[a]n interest in people's lived experiences and an appreciation of the temporal nature of that experience' and '[a]n interest in process and change over time' (Elliott 2006:6). A narrative approach seems best suited to investigate an example of how epistemic relativism in the study of Religion in Education in a diverse society such as South Africa unfolds. This is because it allows the researcher to gain insight into a person's experiences—in this case the experience of a student regarding epistemic relativity—and to detect changes that might occur regarding one's epistemological stance.

The narrative data to be described below is a fraction of the data that was accumulated in the course of a year. One student studying a course in Religion Studies as part of her degree in Education spontaneously started to write letters to me (the lecturer) about her lived experience of the discussions during classes. The narrative writing was thus informally produced. After she gave permission to use the letters as data, I obtained some biographical background from her in order to further contextualise her experiences. An unstructured interview was also conducted to give her the opportunity to explain some of the experiences that were not clearly expressed in the letters. Thereafter, a summary of the data was made under the following two headings: [a] biographical information and [b] knowledge and relativism. This summary, together with some of my initial interpretations, was given to the narrator to assess and to add important issues that I seemed to have disregarded and/or to remove any misinterpreted inferences. Although many more clusters could have been made, I decided to focus only on knowledge and relativism since it featured so much during the entire narrative and to narrow down the scope for the purpose of this inquiry.

Narrative Description

a) Biographical Information of the Narrator

Biographical information about a narrator is important since it gives one a glimpse into the 'life lived' by that person (Chamberlayne, Bornat & Wengraf 2000). In this section I will explain this narrator's story and, at times, quote her directly. All her correspondence were written in Afrikaans and later translated into English. As mentioned earlier, the narrator (from this point, student) had an opportunity to view the translations and preliminary interpretations to confirm their authenticity. In the paragraphs that follow I will highlight several moments in this students' lived experience that,

according to her, influenced her ideas about relativism and knowledge in terms of religion to varying extents.

This student's Christian religion shapes her daily life and interpretations of the world around her. Early on she makes it very clear that her existentialist nature is probably due to her father being a Dutch Reformed minister and that religion is something that she often thought about and sometimes discussed with others. She describes how her own family are firmly Dutch Reformed, but that they also differ in opinion from the dogma of this denomination in some instances. At times she details examples of such differences and argues that such diversity is normal, healthy and correct. She mentions that it is unfortunate since diversity often causes people to abandon a denomination and adopt other ways that suit them better. On more than one occasion she gives examples of people she knows who had different views and consequently became religiously more extreme and/or fundamentalist in their thinking and doing.

It is worth noting that this student did some 'church-hopping' (attending services at Christian denominations) in mid-adolescence. She says that she did not do this to seek a better church, but because she found it quite interesting and that she was very curious. Already at that stage she was starting to examine the differences amongst Christian denominations critically. She says,

I wondered why we are Dutch Reformed and why this denomination is more correct in its way of interpreting the Bible than other denominations ... (Funnily enough, during this whole denomination issue I never wondered about other religions.).

She concludes by mentioning that this experience has taught her to think and listen critically when exposed to other denominations or religions.

She makes it very clear that she is not a Christian or Dutch Reformed because of her father's occupation, but because she chooses to be a Dutch Reformed Christian. Her discussion reveals that in late adolescence she critically examined her reasons for believing in Christianity. On another occasion, she states that she considers herself to be emotionally very independent of her parents, especially in the way she thinks about things. She believes that her father did not indoctrinate her and mentions that although

she has learnt a lot from him she believes that her opinions and views have been arrived at independently. She also writes:

because I'm so sure about my beliefs and why I believe what I do, I feel free and open towards investigating other religions. I also feel that I do not have to let go of my religion and beliefs

Finally, this student often discusses her thoughts about Religion in Education with other people in order to gain various viewpoints. She contends that she constructs knowledge when she obtains as much information about something as possible and then draws conclusions. For example, she contacted a minister so she could share some of her thoughts with him. This appears to have been a very enriching experience.

b) Knowledge and Relativism: Through the Looking Glass of the Narrator

On the topic of knowledge and relativism she argues that one cannot generalise when speaking about any religion because people are so diverse and unique. In her writing she says: '... it just seems that people are so different and everybody interprets things different—it is so relative ...'. She also once asked me: 'Do you think that everything gets more relative, or do people just become more self-centred and self-informed?' Later in her writing she expresses her annoyance with relativism and states: '... the 'fact' that everything becomes more relative—I hate it—I feel that there must be a right and wrong, but I understand that everything is all the more relative'.

After she had had an opportunity to view my translations and preliminary interpretations of her narrative for a second time, she commented on what is quoted above by writing:

I did say this, but actually I mean that there must be some 'limitations'. One cannot just individualistically interpret things because everything is relative—one has to search more widely for other perspectives in order to justify oneself.

She later stresses this point:

If you truly want to have a thorough understanding of something, you must get as many other perspectives as possible. Relativism is just as problematic, but I do not know whether it could or should be resisted. And this is problematic to me because I am a black and white person in the sense that things are either right or they are wrong. But there are also many grey areas in my life For instance, I wonder what knowledge is and what could be viewed as knowledge and what all the knowledge I construct in the religion class entails.

She concludes on a more positive note by expressing the excitement she feels when contemplating relativity and how the thing she initially hated now intrigues her. When I asked her how she experiences knowledge construction in the sea of relativist options, she replied as follows:

I feel like a bottle of Champagne that's been opened. When the process started, I wasn't able to stop it. And if questions arise now, I cannot just leave them—I have to pursue them.

Regarding the latter analogy she added the following comment after her second look at the narrative:

Yes, definitely! I realise that relativism is a reality, but this does not mean that I hold fast to all that is relative. I have to understand something as thoroughly as I can ... I discover different perceptions and opinions, but eventually I construct my own opinions and knowledge—so, obviously my questions are instigated by relativism!

Analysis and Interpretations

According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993:242), the process of analysing data requires one to compare, contrast, aggregate and order the data and then to begin with certain interpretations. The selection of narrative data that was obtained from this narrator was viewed as a nexus made up of different links. The links were not interpreted in isolation, but in unison. In this regard Mouton (1996:169) states that,

[t]he overall coherence and meaning of the data is more important than the specific meanings of its parts. This leads to the use of methods of data analysis that are more holistic, synthetic and interpretative.

With this in mind, I considered it important to look at the progress reflected in this student's thought processes. In the remaining part of this section moments that indicate progress and change in this student's thought processes will be highlighted and interpreted within the framework of the theory explored earlier.

From the biographical information it is clear that this student intuitively considered epistemic relativity long before she was introduced to this course in Religion Education. This is clear in her descriptions of her interpretation of her denomination against the interpretations of others, and also in relation to other denominations. The relativity that she experiences and expresses in her early writings are clear examples of the *relativity of religious epistemology*. These intuitive reflections on the relativity of religious epistemology not only seem to have created opportunities for her, but allowed her to become critical of her own religion and denomination and that of others (Roux 2007). The student often emphasises the necessity to have various opportunities and/or opinions to choose from. In my view, this is a preliminary acknowledgement and/or intuitive valuation in her journey towards accepting relativism.

This initial and intuitive response and acceptance of relativity becomes a highly contested matter for this student. Something that she later 'hates', but that remains intriguing to her (otherwise she would not have continued reflecting upon it). During the abomination stage she finds herself in the middle of the realist versus relativist debate when she describes her liking in definite boundaries between right and wrong and then later acknowledge the existence of 'grey areas', or that which is neither right nor wrong but dependent on a particular context. However, she begins to reflect upon this predicament and then appears to lean toward relativism with its various options, although she makes it clear that relativism must have proper justification.

What is evident from this narrative is that dealing with relativity requires not only introspection or reflection, but also interaction with others. The fact that the student spontaneously started to write these reflexive letters

demonstrates her introspective and reflective disposition. It appears that this process enabled the student to articulate her concerns or thoughts about relativity in preparation for taking a position. Furthermore, interaction with others, or as she puts it, 'getting as many other perspectives as possible', seems to be a way for her to justify her position in the different options. These requirements could be met by a social constructivist position that promotes interactive learning and frequent reflection on contents and/or situations.

Earlier Hepburn (2003) was quoted about relativist's commitment and simultaneous openness to assess various options. What is evident from this narrative is that the student balances commitment and openness quite well when she says,

because I'm so sure about my beliefs and why I believe as I do, I feel free and open towards investigating other religions. I also feel that I do not have to let go of my religion and beliefs

It could be argued that adopting a relativist disposition requires one to be certain or clear about what one is committed to and open to justifying and investigating other positions (cf. Du Preez 2007).

With regard to the argument about foundationalism versus anti-foundationalism, this student has Christianity as her 'foundation', but makes it clear that her foundation in Christianity may be different from that of others. In saying so, she acknowledges that there might be more than one foundation. Arguing in this way she acknowledges the fact that religious foundations are not necessarily one-dimensional and anti-relativist.

I would argue that the greatest value of relativism for the study of Religion in Education is that it could bring a dialogical character to the classroom. As the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (2001: 23) points out, dialogue is simultaneously needed and lacking in education in South Africa and should be promoted as a value. Relativity could introduce the questions that dialogue requires and thus assist students to engage in dialogue and to construct knowledge. From the narrative above, it seems that the anti-foundational pedagogical stance underpinning relativism also has the potential to stimulate students' curiosity and encourage intellectual sobriety.

It is furthermore important that the lecturer assist student-teachers

not merely to reflect and discuss the relativity of religious epistemology, but also to enter into dialogues about the relativity embedded in pedagogical knowledge and subject matter knowledge. The latter is an ongoing discourse that depends on the vigorous inputs from practitioners. It could be argued that emphasis on the latter form of relativity could result in a teacher corps that operate as reflective practitioners in a community of practice (Wenger 2006).

Conclusion

What emerges from this inquiry is that neither tacit acceptance of relativity nor denial of its reality is desirable. I would argue that the perplexity that many experience when exploring the implications of relativity probably results from being unable to deal with and balance openness to other truths and knowledge constructs and commitment to their own truths or knowledge constructs. It is not only important to be able to balance openness and commitment, but to rationally and reasonably address contradictions in this regard. This might, in the words of Hepburn (2003:244) put us in 'a stronger—and more intellectually honest—position to deal with the many contingencies, arguments and agendas'.

In educating pre-service teachers, the focus should be on exposing them to a variety of opinions and providing opportunities for them to make persuasive arguments for the positions they adopt. Giving them such opportunities and making them aware of the pedagogical value of relativism in Religion in Education might encourage them to use the same approach in their praxis, which could bring about a society in which its members are able to rationally justify the positions they adopt and remain in constant dialogue with others about them. Although this approach might initially generate discomfort and discontent in a classroom, it could be argued that in such circumstances we give an opportunity to our students to make sense of their snippets of knowledge, to face their fears and to take different positions so as to eradicate misconceptions and ill-conceived truths as far as possible.

In conclusion, epistemic relativity in the context of the study of Religion in Education could be very helpful in that it could open possibilities for profound dialogues amongst students. Finally, I suggest that we expand this discourse and consider the following: *If there were only one right or wrong, black or white, only one metanarrative in our classrooms, how would*

we be able to justify diverse epistemological realities, which often reveal itself in the multiplicity of grey areas in our lives.

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School of Education
Faculty of Educational Sciences
Northwest University (Potchefstroom Campus)
petro.dupreez@nwu.ac.za

Religion Education as Praxis: Voices and Narratives on Teaching and Learning Experiences

Cornelia Roux

Abstract

The increasing importance of Religion in Education (RiE¹) is reflected in many national and international forums and research projects. Many teacher education students have to traverse the boundaries of their own religious, cultural and social contexts to participate in liberal academic discourses and explore the distinctive field of study of and research in RiE. This article presents the original and full narratives of two postgraduate students of their paradigmatic transformation as a result of becoming acquainted with the epistemology of teaching and learning religion in education². Their reflections provide an opportunity for critical elaborations and commentaries on the content and teaching strategies introduced in the undergraduate module. The narratives also recount the story of their journey to becoming postgraduate students and young researchers. In the second part of the article the lecturer, as mediator of teaching and learning, reflects on their narratives. This is done within a feminist research paradigm using narration and reflexivity to engage in self-critical sympathetic introspection and autoethnography as outlined and described in Roux (2007c) as a means of exploring the students' experiences of religious diversity and its impact on RiE.

¹Religion in Education (RiE) in this article should also be read as *multireligion education modules* in teacher training.

² The narrators who participated in this project are: Shan Simmonds and Ezanne Strydom.

Keywords: Narratives, Religion in Education (RiE), student teachers, teaching and learning, experiences, young researchers.

Introduction

Over the past ten years in South Africa, most postgraduate students in RiE at tertiary institutions have been lecturers at Faculties of Education or tertiary religious seminaries. The PhD students currently enrolled in postgraduate research are mostly lecturers in teaching positions at their own tertiary institution. Very few BEd-honours, MEd or PhD students are doing research in RiE at Faculties of Education. This research field is clearly underrepresented in educational research, with little prospect of students becoming researchers and/or academics/lecturers. Evidence of this is that at some tertiary institutions there is no interest in making provision for research in this field at postgraduate level. At a few teacher training tertiary institutions, undergraduate year-modules and main subjects have even been reduced to semester courses. This ignores the implications of the Policy Document on Religion Education (2003), which stipulates very clearly that RiE is an important core part of the National Curriculum Statement of South African schools and the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (2001). The need for qualified teachers in primary and secondary education demands that there be appropriate undergraduate modules taught by specialists in the field. In addition, there is a need for students with the propensity to become postgraduate students: research projects in RiE³ are vital and to become 'qualified' lectures and scholars at tertiary institutions. It seems that Faculties of Education and/or Theology and Religious Studies in South Africa have not taken account of the high profile the field enjoys at universities in other parts of the world.

During the past six years, the main author of this article has found that students who were high academic achievers were interested in becoming

³ Many tertiary institutions abroad deliver appropriate numbers of postgraduate students and are involved in projects on Religion Education, e.g. The *Warwick Religion Education Research Unit* at the University of Warwick (Britain); and the work being done at the Faculty of Education (University of Hamburg, Germany). Many other examples can be given.

postgraduate students in Religion Education. Three of these students, for example, were *cum laude* students in their respective BEd programmes and achievers of vice-chancellor's and other academic undergraduate and postgraduate awards. They also received international bursaries⁴, prestige bursaries from the tertiary institution as well as from parastatal institutions like the National Research Foundation (NRF) to do their postgraduate studies. There can be no question of these students' ability to become highly effective and successful postgraduate students and researchers. The undergraduate module on RiE, which was a compulsory module at a particular SA University, has been taught since 1994. The students who shared their narratives enrolled as first year-students in 2004. They started a year after the National Policy Document on Religion Education (September 2003) was implemented by the South African Department of Education (DoE).

The Research Question and Assignment

Socio-historical contextualization of RiE is important for religion educators and researchers. One needs to understand one's own frame of reference and the way in which research and teaching and learning in religion is constituted. With this in mind, research questions were posed to BEd-honours students who wanted to do further study the following academic year. The assignment was to write a narrative on their own religious, cultural and social contexts and to present theoretically grounded arguments for partaking in projects or further research in this field of study.

These two questions were posed:

- How do teacher-education students who want to enrol in postgraduate studies cross boundaries set by their own religious, cultural and social contexts.

And:

- How do teacher-education students engage in liberal academic discourses and explore the distinctive field of study of and research in RiE?

⁴ Recipient of *Deutscher Akademische Austausch Dienst* (DAAD) funded by the German Government (2007).

The two students chosen for the project had presented their narratives as a paper at a national academic conference during their BEd-honours year. In my theoretical underpinning of the research, I took the stance, as defined by Elliot (2006) that the validity of the narrative depends in part on the research question when it addresses issues of the social and cultural world in which the person lives. The academic culture and environment in the class created by the analyser and specific events in the students' undergraduate study year, rather than a response over a lengthy period, was the key element.

The students' papers were exceptionally well received by senior academics and this compelled me, their lecturer, to reflect on and analyse their narratives from a feminist research paradigm, employing narration and reflexivity that engage a self-critical sympathetic introspection and autoethnography. (Roux 2007c:508). The theory embraces personal reflections on the remarks and an understanding of one's own ontological meaning of life with *reflexivity* as an important part of understanding the social construct of one's own experiences and insight about the 'other'.

Narrative as a Process for Assessing an Introspection and Autoethnography

One can argue that a narrative gives cohesion to our lives and our culture where one can recall one's history of peoples and ideas in 'popular tales'. Narratives open a way of imagination to the world and can awaken new sensibilities to approach the past, present and future.

Narratives in social sciences have been used to connect events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood through its relation to that whole (cf. Abbott 2002; Elliot 2006). According to Hinchman and Hinchman (1997:xvi),

[N]arratives in human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it.

One should argue that there is a true and authentic voice in which we can gain access to understand the epistemology, processes and reasons which

results in 'a change of meaning and judgements that can be communicated' (Elliot 2006:9). I take the view of Elliot (2006:39) that sociological insights can be gained from the narratives and that the two narratives elaborate on the social context in which they were produced and reflect on the processes involved (Song 1998:104).

I also argue that a hermeneutic approach needs to be adopted in social sciences and narratives, especially in RiE. One needs to develop a detailed understanding of how the participants make sense of the world in which they live (Ricoeur 1981; Elliot 2006; Roux 2007b; Jessop & Penny 1999). It is an ever-changing process of giving priority to and understanding the production of the social world. The narrative reflects previous cohesion in our lives and our culture, religions and belief systems. Narratives make it possible to understand the history of peoples, their popular stories and ideals. Narratives also awaken new sensibilities to the past, present and future. It creates opportunities to explore the meanings of concepts and distinctions for individuals so they can examine the way in which they may be evoked or resisted, as well as experience a variety of social settings and experiences. It is a way for the students to make sense of their experience, construct the self, and create and communicate meaning of academic experiences (Chase 2003; Josselson, Lieblich & McAdams 2003). The academic setting of the students in the BEd Programme in Religion in Education, also called Religion Studies⁵ was particularly appropriate because it presented new experiences and challenges.

In analysing the two narratives, I adopt the approach that the social construct of the participants is vital. Elliot (2006) argues that the importance of the narrative for social constructs should also be understood to constitute individual identities. Narrative-based research focuses on the individual's subjective interpretations and the meanings they make of their lives. Life stories locate, display, evaluate and impart information to social sciences (Baerger & McAdams 1999; Clough 2002). These ontological narratives can

⁵ The content of Religion Studies in the programme is more academic than the requirements set for content in outcomes 2 of the Life Orientation Learning Area. *Religion Studies* is a year module on RiE from a multireligious, theoretical and practical perspective based on current international and national tendencies and empirical research.

also help students in teacher education, especially in RiE, to compile and define the multiple identities and roles of teachers in education (Doyle & Carter 2003; Smit & Fritz 2008; Jessop & Penny 1999). This argument is especially applicable to postgraduate students who are becoming young researchers in RiE.

Two Narratives

The two narratives will be presented with the theoretical underpinning selected by the students for their respective narratives. These narratives were individually constructed to the extent that each individual had no influence on the other's reflection. They thus provide an opportunity for each student to 'describe how "their" lives take on meaning through the means by which they are told and retold' (Bruner 1987:13) through their reflections from the time of being a student to becoming a young researcher in RiE.

The students' narratives and self-reflections will be given in full and in their own language and writing style, before I continue my argument and reflect critically within a feminist research paradigm, using narration and reflexivity to engage in self-critical sympathetic introspection and autoethnography (Roux 2007c). The reason for not presenting a summary of the narratives is to present the reader with a full description of the students' own research journey. I am also of the opinion that this approach embraces the feminist research paradigm of autoethnography.

The first narrative identifies how pre-service teachers as individuals progress and grow in terms of different phases identified according to Boutte's (1999) and Roux's (2005) stages of multicultural growth. The student re-interprets these stages of multicultural education within multireligion education (Religion in Education). Prominence is placed on the value of multireligion and how RiE impacted on her pre-service teacher training. She also reflects on how the facilitation strategies influenced her to do postgraduate studies. The second narrative argues firstly that pre-service teachers should make a *paradigm shift* from Religious Education to Religion in Education (Religious Studies in Education), and secondly emphasises the importance and relevance of RiE.

Narration and Autoethnography (Student A)

I was privileged to do a BEd programme at a tertiary institution in which the Religion Studies module (multireligious education) was presented in the 3rd year.

- *My perceptions on the module content and relevance*

When this module commenced all students received study guides containing relevant, core information. We started off exploring 'religion as a study of science'; clarifying concepts such as fundamentalism; the insider-outsider debate and the paradigm shift teachers need to make in teaching and learning religion. We studied six religions practised in South Africa (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and African Religion), their histories; theories; structures; beliefs; curriculum theories; teaching and learning theories; religious and spiritual development etc. (Read, Rudge, Teece & Howarth 1992:9). The study guide thus contextualised the theory of what I believe represent current relevant and appropriate beliefs and practices. These beliefs and practices are influential in the modern world and at the same time form part of a coherent system or worldview. I argue that it is much easier to give expression and to relate to the theory than using theory that is irrelevant in today's society. The structure and design of the module made it evident that all the content, included in the module was relevant and 'closely linked' so that the correct conclusions could be drawn (Read *et al.* 1992:9). I found that the content made me want to read more.

- *My experiences of Religion Studies and a description of the phase developments I discovered*

My confused perception of Religion Studies in Education (multireligious education) meant that I was taken aback by our first formal lecture. Roux (2006:1294) states that 'encouraging students to explore the phenomena of religion may inflict a feeling of disillusionment, especially if they are from an exclusively monoreligious environment'. Studying and understanding other religions, emphasizing descriptive historical facts rather than spiritual growth and the exploration of a faith by which to live may be part of this disillusionment. I felt a sense of fear and doubtfulness during the first lecture. Fear in this instance can be defined as fearing that in multireligious

education the content would disturb my own religious beliefs. Doubtfulness was closely connected to this fear—the reason being that I feared that if I experienced these feelings, what would the response of the learners that I would have to teach be. I argue that I did not feel secure nor did I have any self-confidence with regard to this module,

[F]eeling safe is one of the most important aspects to be considered when any multireligion content is presented in a classroom. As religion is an emotive topic, it should be clear that in a school environment where different religions are facilitated, reactions and questions should be put across concerning the issue of feeling safe and secure (Roux 2006:1299-1300).

I wish to explore the arguments above in association with Bouttes's (1999) stages of multicultural growth, adapted by Roux (2005). These arguments can be described and related to *Phase One* of these stages. In this phase one defines the emotional response of the learner to differences as being fearful, with perhaps even a sense of rejection, still taking the view that we are all the same. Therefore the religiosity⁶ of other person(s) had not yet influenced the perception of my own being, not to change me but to enable me to understand. I still struggled with the fact that 'my perception is the only one that is correct' (Boutte 1999:29). Consequently, according to Boutte (1999), I was taking a risk, even while still deciding if I would let this module and the content change my perceptions.

As the class progressed over a few months I started to feel more comfortable, but not safe as yet. My changing perceptions of other teacher-students within the classroom motivated me to be more interested in my classmates' beliefs systems and religious convictions. As a person, I always thought that I knew my religious background relatively well, but I obviously had not taken note of the other student-teachers around me and their

⁶ 'Religiosity' can be described as a state of being affectedly or extremely pious; sanctimoniously religious. However according to Roux (2007a:112) there is also as a wider element of understanding involved. 'Religiosity' can in RiE also be understood as the holistic approach of a person towards religion.

perceptions of their belief systems and religious convictions. Now I began to realise that not only do we have a diverse society, but this diverse society is present within the lecturer room. I could, in retrospect, deal with diversity to some extent and during my teaching practice I managed with ease within a multireligious and multicultural school. But when I had to facilitate religious or spiritual component I tended to be avoid dealing with it properly, hoping that the learners would not engage into a discussion that embraces religious or spiritual components. My argument is that I had the knowledge about religions in theory but had never engaged with these at first hand. The reason for not engaging could be that I was scared of interaction and of answering questions. This according to Boutte (1999:29) places me in the second phase of multicultural growth, where my perception was now of being one of many. My emotional response then to these differences, which still existed, was that of interest, awareness and openness. I therefore wanted to research and learn more about other religions (theories and social contexts). I can argue that this feeling personally enriched me.

As explained, I felt more comfortable as the months progressed. The decisive moment came after the class took a research excursion to different places of worship. I came to realise that as an educator and citizen of a diverse society, I need to know the theories of other religions and be able to appreciate and become actively involved with them. Boutte (1999:27) argues that unless educators are willing to examine and change their attitudes, multicultural (multireligious) education will not be effective. In other words the research excursion made it possible to place all theory in perspective, consequently changing my attitude, towards other religions. This research excursion made me feel connected towards the teaching of the content of the module. The reason for using the expression *connected* and not *emotional* would be that you can connect to a situation without being emotional thus the connectedness or rather within this example a sense of perceptive understanding came when we visited the Madrassa school. While we were at the school, we watched the educators' teaching and learning their learners about Islam and being a Muslim. I, as an educator, could connect to them although this was a different context—the religious school setting as opposed to a public school. After this research excursion, we were expected to do a semester assignment. We had to design lesson plans and integrate all of the knowledge we already had about other religions (Roux 2007a). This started

to interest me to such an extent that a colleague and I put questionnaires together and conducted a small-scale empirical study on how different principles in schools interpreted Religion Education within the school curriculum. I can now argue that I had reached *Phase three* according to Boutte (1999:29). He describes this phase as (the) perception that is busy changing and improving, the emotional response towards these differences is now of respect, appreciation and enthusiasm. For the first time I felt equipped to learn from other religions and to engage actively in acquiring more knowledge of other religions.

- *The value of this exercise for me as a pre-service teacher*

The module has had lasting value for me as an individual and pre-service teacher. It taught me about religions, other than the one that I practised, existed and made me an extended professional⁷ towards diversity within the society even if I did not feel I could achieve this in the beginning:

one can assume that (student-teachers) professional abilities will increasingly come to the fore as they gain more experience through practice and as they gain knowledge (Roux 2007a:120).

I also felt that I had been equipped with the necessary knowledge and so gained the ability to teach learners with confidence about other religions. I was not only able to respect learners of different religious persuasions, but to enable learners to treat each other with respect. My perception towards diversity changed immensely and I could relate to other people by feeling connected to them as we *'are all the same'*. It made me realise how important it is to understand and treat people with respect within society: knowing that it makes a big difference for learners to feel respected and accepted within society. Read *et al.* (1992:4) describe this in these terms: 'The focus is therefore on religion as a living and contemporary aspect of life, rather than as a subject for purely historical study'. I argue that Religion in Education taught me to apply values in our diverse society: values such as

⁷ Educators relying on their rationality just as much as on their intuition; and who value theory as important to their practice. Du Preez (cited Evans 2002:124).

empathy, respect and accountability. As Read *et al.* (1992:3) argue, as [students] mature, it is important that they assume responsibility for themselves and for their own actions, that they act in a responsible way towards each other and that they are given the opportunity to reflect on the important spiritual and moral questions they will encounter.

• *Facilitation strategies that have influenced my journey*

The facilitating strategies⁸ used in class were exceptional. Read *et al.* (1992:3) emphasize that the teacher of Religious Education should be concerned to encourage and promote an open, critical and sympathetic approach to the subject. This implies that the teacher will require just those qualities in his or her approach. It is an approach based on a willingness to enquire and to raise questions without necessarily arriving at firm and conclusive answers. At the same time it requires a commitment to the value and the importance of the enquiry, and conviction that it is worthwhile for the teacher as well as for the educator.

The lecturer at the tertiary institution that taught us, had just these above mentioned qualities, she encouraged an environment of openness, empathy, respect and responsibility towards the module. Her commitment towards and knowledge of the content of the module were impeccable. I felt I could trust her and her knowledge. Roux (2007a:120-121) argues that you as a lecturer should take the religious development phases of the student teacher into account, and it is of great importance to foster a healthy relationship between the lecturer and the students in this module: responsible presentation of multireligious programme is absolutely essential.

I was thus strongly influenced by my lecturer. To help the pre-service student teachers overcome fears and negative perceptions towards the study of religions other than their own, positive motivation and encouragement are imperative in assisting them to make a paradigm shift. Although the lecturer provoked us into responding by introducing controversial arguments, she always remained positive, motivating and encouraging the class to engage constructively in debate. With this being said

⁸ These facilitation strategies can be seen as discussions, debates, co-operative learning, reflections, extra reading and discussions on articles and policies.

it brings me to another facilitation strategy that influenced me immeasurably.

Discussion and debate played a big role within the class, the arguments and opinions formulated between students were of great value. The lecturer led these discussions and debates in a particular direction so we could see the relevance of the arguments within the specific context. This context varied from issues of faith within the media to how should we respond to certain problems regarding religions within a classroom context. Thus, the arguments and perceptions formed during discussion and debates educated me to closely observe the point of views and perceptions of others. I saw the purpose of these experiences, which influenced me to view other people as human beings in their own right and to listen to them. In most cases it is possible to construct and extend one's own knowledge and form new arguments through listening to other people's arguments. Ferguson & Roux (2003:294) argue that, interaction should provide mediated learning that includes an intention by the lecturer (mediator) to assist the student to transcend his or her immediate needs or concerns.

Furthermore, the student should also understand how issues, activities or information are interconnected and become capable of transferring knowledge from one context to another (Feuerstein cited in Ferguson & Roux 2003:294).

I could also recognise the following strategies in our discussions and classes:

Mediation on intent occurs when the mediator deliberately guides interaction in a chosen direction by selected objects or topics and then focuses the students upon them. Mediation of intent would also include the purposeful sharing of the learning programme's goals by the tutor/mediator in such a way that the recipient of mediation responds as part of an interactive process (Ferguson & Roux 2003:293).

Another facilitation strategy that influenced me was the use of relevant academic articles. All of these articles related to religion and education were related to practice. As already mentioned the lecturer had a very good relationship with her students. Having an open-door policy, she always

made time to discuss these extra articles given to us, if needed. By reading about certain issues within religion and education in more depth, I gained so much knowledge and insight that I wanted to know more. Consequently, it influenced me to study further and to read more. Not only did the reading influence me, but also the knowledge and enthusiasm of the lecturer influenced me to want to know more thus reading and then to study further.

Narration and Autoethnography (Student B)

My contribution in this narrative is to explore reflection-for-action and reflection-on-action as I have experienced it. '*Reflection-For-Action*' entails for me 'reflection before the anticipated experience occurs' (Killion & Todnem 1991 in Fallon & Brown 2002:39) where as '*Reflection-On-Action*' draws on the idea of 'reflection after the moment' (Schon 1983 in Fallon & Brown 2002:39).

- *Reflection-for action*

My first impression as a student was that the compulsory module, Religion Studies in Education presented in the third year of my study, was going to be what many students refer to as a '*free*' period. This resulted from my interpretation of this module as being one in which bible stories and relevant religious festivals would be discussed, and where we would not actually have to think critically or apply content knowledge. It should be remembered that my perception was based on a monoreligious outlook, namely Christianity, and limited by my monocultural ideals and upbringing. It could perhaps be said that my view of this module was two-fold. It involved the idea of Religious Education⁹ and not Religion Education¹⁰ or Religion in Education

⁹ **Religious Education** is about nurturing a religious consciousness and some believe this is the duty of a specific religion through their religious institutions (churches and mosques, for example) (*Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* 2001:43).

¹⁰ **Religion Education** aims to provide knowledge about different religions with the intention to create a deeper sense of self-realisation and a broader civil toleration of others (*Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* 2001:45).

(RiE) as well as a preconceived idea of what was actually happening in schools.

This preconceived idea can be seen as related to the idea of heroes and holidays (Gordon 2004). Teachers might have the perception that Religion Studies in Education (multicultural and multireligious education) is about teaching learners about festive holidays such as Human Rights Day, Christmas and Hanukkah as well as celebrating heroes on public holidays. Therefore the misconception that 'many people first think of lessons in human relations and sensitivity training, units about ethnic holidays, education in inner-city schools, or food festivals' (Nieto 2000) underpinned my understanding. Such a view of multicultural and Religion in Education (multireligious education) creates a profound misconception about its meaning and purpose. This resulted in people (such as myself) being totally convinced that one can adequately promote multiculturalism by celebrating cultural diversity and food festivals.

- *Reflection-on action*

I was taken aback by the content that was presented in the module material, when we were first presented with our '*yellow books*'. My inexperienced nature got the better of me when it became clear exactly how much there was for teachers to consider about Religion Education (multireligious and multicultural education). The vocabulary on its own required a mind shift and the terms presented in the content slowly became overwhelming. My paradigm shift began when I recognised the necessity for change to take place as 'a new way of thinking about old problems' (Roux 1998:85). This shift led to new insights and explanations which resulted in distancing me from my original perception of this module as a 'free' period and waste of time. Rather, it led me to become more and more inquisitive and interested. This was further re-enforced by the realization that

looking into the future from one's old paradigms will not help to shape the future, but will filter other incoming experiences in such a way that creative thinking may not take place and opportunities may not be grasped (Roux 1998:85).

As a result, I began to spend more of my time debating with BEd 3 outsiders¹¹ on their opinions and views on for example, religious fundamentalism and the insider/outsider theory of understanding religions and Religion Education. This created an opportunity for me to explore people's diverse perceptions and, together with this, create my own knowledge and understanding through the implementation of alternative patterns or models of solving problems. In this way, shifting away from the boundaries of my 'old' paradigms, in the hope to generate 'new' insight and enlightenment, further guided my development as a future educator in a diverse South Africa.

We were given two very interesting assignments to complete during the module. This led me to explore what was happening in schools. A colleague and I went to a Waldorf school and various monoreligious and multireligious schools in the region, where we conducted interviews and completed questionnaires with school principals or heads of departments. We wanted to explore relevant educational aspects we identified such as what educators currently view as the educational goals of the learning area, Life Orientation. I set out to find whether my theoretical BEd 3 module was actually realised in practice in the schools' curriculum. I adopted the view of

shifting to a more balanced approach of teaching, which places more emphasis on understanding subject matter, (where pre-service) teachers must learn more about the subjects they intend to teach, and how students learn these subjects (Garet, Porter & Desimone 2001:916).

Garer *et al.* (2001:916) also state that '... [T]he continual deepening of knowledge and skills is an integral part of any profession'. This further emphasised the necessity for us to explore the practical world of teaching as a means of reflecting on a fundamental and integral part of deepening our

¹¹ **An outsider** in this context refers to any individual who is not part of my own BEd 3 year student-group—thus any individual who does not study with me.

knowledge. The experience proved to be remarkable in the sense that the schools were accommodating and generously shared their ideas. It created an atmosphere for us, as students, where we could reflect on and further explore the link of what we were studying in the module and what was actually happening in the schools.

I took a personal interest in studying the different religions. The detailed information became relevant for me, not only as part of making provision for our so-called 'rainbow nation', but also as meeting the requirements stipulated in the National Curriculum Statement and Policy. It also became contextualized in the framework of values, morals, human rights and the important role it contributed to create and promote respect and tolerance for all persons, irrespective of their religious or cultural beliefs. For the first time in my experience as a pre-service teacher, the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (2001) featured specifically in this module in the BEd-programme. This put into perspective the need for values in the curriculum and to

inculcate a sense of values at schools intended to help young people achieve higher levels of moral judgement. [Recognition] that education does not exist simply to serve the market, but to serve society, and that means instilling in pupils and students a broad sense of values (*Manifesto* 2001:iv).

I internalised the ways in which the *Manifesto* suggested ways of promoting the values of the South African Constitution (1996) through the educational system, and especially introducing Religion Education in schools. I think I can concur that I could successfully recognize the significance and the need for understanding other religious and cultural education in schools. I grew in my relationships towards others as I developed a new found respect for people belonging to religions and cultures other than my own.

During the visits (research excursions) to various religious places of worship, I discovered the ways each religious institution created a safe environment, where I could feel comfortable to ask questions and share my ideas. The pictures in my memory of the experience of being in a Temple and reaching an understanding of the complex principle of the Deities in

Hinduism seemed to be uncomplicated; I found them fascinating. When asked to compile a self-reflection journal of my experiences of this research excursion, I found my responses very different from my original approach towards religions. We were invited to explore and interact with teachers and learners in the Madressa-school at a Mosque, where the children recited scriptures and the teachers demonstrated their teaching ability. This allowed me to connect with them professionally, although I am an outsider to their religion. There was a common element of sharing education (teaching and learning). In this regard, I recognised the educational value that this experience created for me to relate to the *understanding* taking place in practice. I appreciated the different religious ways of life; what they are and the role they play in society. I could no longer be prejudiced and critical, but recognised the need to be more reflective. This encouraged me to relate my experiences and reflections gained through the religious research excursion to my role as a pre-service educator and maybe researcher. It began to give meaning to the notion of 'understanding theory through praxis' (Roux 2006:213)

There was a massive amount of content in this module, which made the exam a big challenge. The knowledge that I gained served me well when I taught religion in the Life Orientation learning area during my school practices.

I also spent a great deal of time observing teachers teaching religion as part of Life Orientation. I identified successes and failures and this encouraged me to investigate approaches to teaching religion during my school practices. While developing my own lessons, I combined content knowledge and research I had done as part of independent study of teaching and learning theories and curriculum development. I thus gained new skills and knowledge which guided my practice in the classroom.

Reflections on our Narratives (Students A & B)

In reflecting on our attempts to write reflexive narratives of our experience as student-teachers of the Religion Studies in Education module, we noted some of the main differences between our narratives. As young researchers, we also pose the following question to our readers: *How important is it to*

take notice of the different stages of multicultural religion growth and the paradigm shifts that pre-service teachers have to make?

- Is it sufficient to have an individual with the right mindset to teach Religion Education or do we need to take the pluralistic society in consideration?
- How would taking notice of the different stages of growth and the paradigm shifts pre-service teachers have to undergo help to meet the need for appropriate Religion Education in the South African schools?

We would like to explore these questions further as part of our journey as postgraduate students and young researchers.

An Analysis of the Two Narratives

Position of the Analyser

I was the senior researcher and also the lecturer presenting the Religion Studies module in teacher education. One can argue that this double role influences the analyser's position (Smit & Fritz 2008:98). Ribbon & Edwards (1998) state that there is a tension and discomfort, but also a source of insight being an observer and listener.

We may thus shift uneasily between the position of participant and observer/listener, constantly reflecting upon how we know about things and how we view knowledge produced (Ribbon & Edwards (1998:2).

This insight informed my role as analyser of the students' narratives as I sought to gain insight into their experiences and perceptions. It was clear from the narratives that the students' gained knowledge on religious diversity during the year. After reflection, I decided not to analyse the processes of the narratives but to concentrate on the progression of knowledge construction for becoming young researchers in RiE.

Evaluation, Analyses and Meaning of the Narratives

There are a number of different approaches to analysing narratives. Labov & Waletzky (1967), for instance, describe three viewpoints from which to analyse narratives, namely meaning, structure and performance. *Meaning* defines the content, chronological as well as evaluative, depicting the experiences of narratives in the students' lives. The *structure* is the way in which the story is put together and the *performance* is the interactional and institutional context in which the narratives are produced, recounted and consumed.

In the case of this research, the form and structure of the narratives were not important: the assignment essentially represents the theoretical notions of the students' own journey. It was interesting to note that they start their narratives with their experiences on the first day in the Religion Studies in Education class. Both students express their feelings about and perceptions of the content of the subject, as well as the outline of the content, amount of work and academic standard. It is clear that the students' expectations of the subject and real experiences differ immensely from the expected outcomes of the subject.

Leiblich Tuval-Maschaich and Zilber (1998) see narrative research as focusing on *content* or *form*. It suggests a holistic analysis in understanding the individuals' way of putting the narrative together. A holistic analysis preserves the narrative in its entirety and understands its complete entity. Categorical analysis (Elliot 2006 38), on the other hand, is when the text is classified and placed in categories. In the case of this research, a holistic approach was used to analyse the narratives. Students were expected to narrate their personal journey in the form of an academic exercise. The two aspects of the assignment have different theoretical underpinnings, but form a unit when put together.

Linde (1993:163) sees beliefs and relations between beliefs in terms of a *coherence system*. The coherence system provides extra resources for creating narratives' linkages and allows 'causal connections that would not be available using common sense'. It is a useful means of placing the individual within specific historical and cultural contexts. It also offers a means of developing a better understanding of the link between expert forms of coherence systems and their popular offshoots. Each narrative describes the student's individual connection with her research journey within her own

specific historical and cultural context. The narratives also provide the connections between their research journey and their understanding of theory and praxis. At the same time, they reflect their personal feelings and their exploration of their growing professionalism as teachers in training. Both narratives give a holistic and coherent view of the influences of teaching and learning RiE.

The two narratives can also be seen as a form of *impressionistic tale* (Van Maanen 1988:102). My reasoning is that both these students, in order to meet the assignment, had to interpret and articulate their narratives from a theoretical point of view. In *Narrative One* the student reflects and interprets her own growth within the different stages of growth in multicultural education and interprets it from her religious context (Boutte 1999; Roux 2005). The narrator defines her own growth and understanding of differences as 'being the same'. This opens a new debate on understanding 'the other'. In many publications on understanding *the other* (Du Preez 2008; Levinas 2006; Roux 2007c) scholars gave philosophical and theoretical accounts and empirical analyses of the need to understand individuals who differ from one's religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This understanding of *the other* seems to be more important when teachers as agents need to facilitate Religion Education, world-views and values; and where there should be a deliberate openness and sincerity to diversity and the plural make-up of students in their classrooms. This argument may also apply to this young researcher. We are inherently not all the same and to only focus on sameness denies the immense challenges that we encounter, not because of sameness, but because of diversity.

In *Narrative Two* the student recalls her first expressions at the beginning of the study year and explores *reflection-for-action* and *reflection-in-action* in RiE as two theoretical notions to describe the processes to become a young researcher.

An *interpretative analysis* of the narrative aims at understanding how the subjects make sense of events and experiences and require descriptive contexts (Eliot 2006:37). One of the issues in analysing and understanding narratives is that researchers are seeking to explore 'privately' based knowledge and personal understandings, and then reconstitute them within publicly based disciplinary knowledge (Ribbens & Edwards 1998:13). Ribbens and Edwards (1998) used the term 'privately'

and I found it applicable for the argument on how the students' personal experiences on their own religious stance on this module became 'public knowledge' in their narratives. The two students narrate the events and their experiences as well as the detailed contextual descriptions of their first encounter with the module in their 3rd year. They explore their journeys towards 'making sense' of the new paradigm. In this regard they use different theoretical notions to depict their feelings, but in the process of reflexivity described their own interpretations. Their self-reflection reflects self-critical sympathetic introspection and autoethnography (Roux 2007c; Gatenby & Humphries 2000). They not only describe their feelings and discomfort with the religious content and new knowledge but also engage in their own interpretations of this new paradigm as they move towards a position where they reflect on both issues; the emotions and ontology. I want to argue that these narratives contribute to the two young researchers' understanding of their own development and identifying their multiple identities, and how these developed through their journey. It was clear that the students' approach was a response to what they thought, felt and concluded at the specific time and immediately after. *Narrative One* describes the student's feelings and journey, but also emphasises her concern with her own approach towards her learners in religion education during teaching practice. *Narrative Two* provides an insight into her own teaching and learning approaches during school practice as well as the observation of teachers' facilitation strategies. These observations, combined with her own school practice experiences, offer new insights and research opportunities for her in RiE. The fact that both students also initiated a small-scale research questionnaire indicates that they were able to combine theory with practice. I would argue that to grow and develop from student teachers to young researchers requires a specific comprehension, enquiring mind and ability to engage in different notions as delineated in the science of RiE. I noticed in both narratives a development of an enquiring mind and I experienced their determination to explore more than the third-year module had offered them.

Collaboration in an international research project (SANPAD: 2004-2009) explored also the identification of a 'feminist research paradigm with narration and reflexivity that engages a self-critical sympathetic introspection and autoethnography' (Roux 2007c). Experiences with women academics in this multireligious and multicultural project lasting five years led to a new

dimension of understanding reflexivity. Students should ensure continual self-critique through reflections, journals and narratives. Learning about oneself and identifying stereotypes and notions about another's religious and cultural experience can connect one to and offer insights into another religious or cultural way of life (Patton 2002; Roux 2007c).

I am arguing that these narratives also correspond with the *feminist element of narration* (Elliot 2006; Ribbens & Edwards 1998). Feminist scholars point out that the production of theory is also a social activity which is culturally, socially and historically embedded resulting in situated-knowledge (Haraway 1988:121). Reflexivity in writing is based on the realist tale (*narrative* = CDR) as described by Van Maanen thus: 'A realist tale offers one reading and culls its facts carefully to support that reading' (1988:52). Reflexivity reflects and couples an awareness of one's own identity. According to Elliot (2006:155), developing a reflexive awareness is to become open to new ways of writing and reading text. A researcher's creative reflexivity diverts attention away from the subjects and subject matter of research to the researcher's self. I argue that these students' reflexivity and understandings of their own personal, social and academic situated-knowledge and their autobiographies explicitly located them in relation to the academic content of the module and the facilitation strategies of the lecturer (Mauther & Doucet 1998:121; Ferguson & Roux 2003).

Conclusion

Becoming a young researcher is a process that starts with one's first encounter with the subject and research terrain. In Religion Studies in Education and RiE, this process is complicated by the fact that the knowledge construction and ontology of RiE are disputed in academic circles, Faculties of Education and the public domain. Student teachers' experiences of religious diversity in Religious Studies in Education and RiE impacted directly on the education of society. The challenge is to be sensitive to diversity, given the dominance of one religion in education (schools) and in social orders (religious societies). Experience of Religion Studies in Education can transform students' lived experiences into public academic outputs. It is vital to respect the demands of creating an ethical teaching and learning environment. However, before being able to participate in the liberal

academic discourses, boundaries set by religious, cultural and social contexts have to be traversed. Research in the distinctive field of RiE requires a paradigmatic transformation to become acquainted with the epistemology of teaching and learning religion. This interplay between the epistemology and research practice needs further exploration and closer definition in order to facilitate the process of becoming a young researcher.

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School for Curriculum-based Studies

Faculty of Education Sciences

North-West University (Potchefstroom-Campus)

South Africa

cornelia.roux@nwu.ac.za

The Voice of the Religion Education Teacher in the Context of Religious Diversity

Janet Jarvis

Abstract

In the domain of Religion Education the voice of the Religion Education (RE) teacher is crucial. This voice can either entrench religious discrimination or promote religious tolerance and dialogue. The findings of a recent empirical research project in selected KwaZulu-Natal primary schools provided evidence that the RE teacher's understanding of religious freedom is influenced by his/her biography and school context. This understanding finds expression in the RE teacher's voice which can choose to act in a way which is emancipatory and transformatory or not. It is important that a dialogical space is created for RE teacher's concerns to be voiced and heard.

Keywords: Religion Education, voice, religious freedom, agency and structure, transformation.

Introduction

South African teachers find themselves in religiously diverse classroom contexts. Inclusivity in a school context of religious diversity underpins the country's Religion and Education Policy (2003) which is informed by, and supportive of, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (CRSA) (1996). Legislators have made the assumption that teachers will unproblematically adopt a multi religious approach to Religion Education (RE). The findings of a recent empirical study (Jarvis 2008) demonstrated that this is not the case as teaching RE in religiously diverse contexts can be complex. The teacher's understanding of religious freedom needs to be taken

into account as well as tensions that can arise between the RE teacher's personal religious identity and their professional identity. The school context is another factor which needs to be considered.

In this article I argue for the importance of the RE teacher's voice. Their voice can be empowering and have a practical dimension whereby it can either promote or discourage an inclusive, multi religious approach to teaching RE. I argue further that RE teachers need to publicly express their opinions while also considering the ideas of others. In the next section I describe the study (Jarvis 2008) which explored the way in which in-service teachers of RE¹ constructed their understanding of the human right to religious freedom. The study contributed to a wider research project (Roux *et al.* 2006) focusing on understanding human rights.

Research Design and Methodology

The study was carried out in three purposively selected KwaZulu-Natal primary schools situated in the greater Durban area. The schools were selected in order to investigate three different school contexts in terms of demographics and resources. For the purposes of this article they will be referred to as schools A, B and C. School A was a well-resourced, sub-urban, former model C school with predominantly White and Indian learners, and which promoted a strong evangelical Christian ethos. School B was an under-resourced, peri-urban, former mission school comprising only Black² learners and which unapologetically promoted Catholicism. School C was a

¹ Although for the purposes of this article I, from hereon, refer to these teachers as 'RE teachers', they are in fact teachers of Life Orientation (LO), none of whom have been trained as LO specialist teachers. They teach RE because it falls within Outcome 2 of the LO curriculum, but like most teachers of LO in South Africa, they lack specific training and skills in teaching RE.

² It must be acknowledged that for some South African scholars the term 'Black' refers collectively to 'Africans', 'Indians' and 'Coloureds'. In this article, however 'Black' is used to refer to 'Africans'. 'Indians' and 'Whites' are called by those names. It must be noted that the researcher does not endorse these politically racial classifications, but uses them for expediency in describing the school contexts in which the research took place.

fairly well-resourced, sub-urban, former HoD³ school comprising both Indian and Black learners and which claimed to adopt a multi religious approach to RE.

I employed an exploratory case study approach to determine how the understanding of the human right to religious freedom was constructed and interpreted by teachers of Life Orientation (LO) in these schools. Male and female teachers of all race groups represented in the schools participated in the research, also young and fairly inexperienced teachers as well as older more experienced teachers. Teachers of Grade 4 - Grade 6 LO classes were requested to complete self administered questionnaires in which they expressed their understanding of religious freedom and the way in which they thought their biography and school context influenced their approach to teaching RE. The Grade 6 LO teachers were then invited to participate in semi structured focus group interviews during which I was able to probe further their responses to the questionnaires. In order to gain a better understanding of the school context and the school policy and management position with regard to religious freedom I conducted a semi structured individual interview with the principals in each of the three schools. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed, and augmented by extensive field notes. I analysed and synthesized the data I collected from the questionnaires and from the individual and focus group interviews and recorded my findings and interpretations.

Conceptual Framework

In this section I discuss the conceptual framework which served as the lens through which I viewed the responses of the RE teachers who participated in the study: The concepts on which I focus are the following: RE and religious freedom; agency and structure; and voice.

³ 'Former Model C schools' refers to schools that were formerly 'White' schools under the apartheid regime. 'Former HoD schools' refers to the House of Delegates schools which were formerly 'Indian' schools. The 'peri-urban black school' refers to a school that is 'Black' in staff and learner composition and situated on the rural urban fringe.

RE and Religious Freedom

The right to religious freedom is embedded in Section 7 of the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 and is consistent with section 15(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (CRSA) (1996) which places a responsibility on the state to create conditions for the exercise of religious freedom without favouring a particular religion. School policy issued by School Governing Bodies must also be consistent with Section 9 of the CRSA (1996). According to a former Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, RE will enable children to engage with the multiplicity of religions which form part of the rich heritage of South Africa. Although the Religion and Education Policy (2003) encourages adopting a multi religious approach to RE, research by Roux (2007: 6) has shown that,

there are personal, religious and spiritual dimensions that considerably complicate the process of transformation [from a mono religious focus to a multi religious approach to RE] and the inclusion of different religions in the curriculum and praxis⁴.

The CRSA (1996) gives every individual the right to freedom of religion and states that individuals must also respect the right of others to freedom of religion. The right to freedom of religion can be classified as the freedom to adhere to a religion (freedom *to*) or the resistance to influences to either adopt or change a religion (freedom *from*) (Hammer 2001)⁵. According to Horn (2006) the attempt by the State, in response to the alienation experienced by adherents of religions other than Christianity during the years of colonial and apartheid rule, to give status to traditional African beliefs and other non-Christian religions has become a point of contention for those teachers in South African education who would prefer to endorse Christianity as the hegemonic religion, teaching RE using a

⁴ This constitutes practical action. It is about taking action and reflecting upon the action in order to inform new action (Roux & du Preez 2006).

⁵ It should be noted that freedom of religion excludes people who are free from religion e.g. an atheist. None of the RE teachers who participated in the study (Jarvis 2008) fell into this category.

confessional approach⁶. This complicates the process of transformation and the inclusion of different religions in the curriculum and classroom praxis.

In this article I position myself with Jackson (1997) contending that the function of the school is to assist learners to understand the nature of religion and to know something of the diversity of belief systems (and non-religious worldviews) and their significance to those who hold to them. RE provides the opportunity to teach learners to respect the right of others to hold a different religion or worldview. I concur with Roux (2007: 11) who suggests employing a 'reflective-dialogical approach with phenomenological notions' as the approach which would facilitate this process. A phenomenological approach allows the teacher to put her/his own beliefs into parenthesis without having to become unfaithful to them. Intrareligious⁷ and interreligious⁸ dialogue allows for critical inquiry and interaction. An element of reflectivity is required as individuals investigate their own religions while also developing a religious literacy about religions other than their own.

Agency and Structure

Here I refer to agency and structure⁹ in the context of drawing attention to the construction of and resistance to religious freedom in the school context. Research carried out by Roux (2005) suggests that the school's attitude towards a multi religious approach to RE seems to directly influence the teaching perceptions and strategies of RE teachers. Schools can be sites of possible religious discrimination and the resulting conflicts and tensions that

⁶ Transmission of religious culture from one generation to the next within a certain religious tradition.

⁷ Allows for critical inquiry and interaction between groups/denominations of the same religion.

⁸ Helps to broaden knowledge about different religions when individuals of different religious traditions are in contact with one another within the same context,

⁹ Agency can be defined as the RE teacher's free will/self-determination/autonomy and structure can be defined as the institutional or school constraint.

are created by the repetition of power or the resistance to it. An institutionalised or hegemonic religion could entrench a particular religious discourse. However any power that the school context exercises, has to be reinforced by individuals in order for that power to be reconsolidated (Baez 2000). A school (structure) could portray a particular norm (either negative or positive) with regard to an approach to religious freedom but it is enforced by individual RE teachers (agency). These individual RE teachers are agents of their existence and as such could possibly resist an intrinsic negativity towards other religions, or promote the same. It is individual agency that emerges from the margins of power that makes possible the disruption of and redefinition of (religiously) intolerant structures (Baez 2000; Giddens 2002). The notion of agency is not unproblematic however, as it fails to sufficiently take into account the difficulties associated with the individual's ability to make choices in the face of oppressive institutional structures. Recent research (Jarvis 2008; Roux 2007; Roux Du Preez & Ferguson 2007) has also shown that many RE teachers who come from mono religious backgrounds display signs of fear or discomfort when placed in a multi religious environment and are impotent in exercising individual agency. They still rely on a confessional presentation and view of religion.

In order for true transformation to take place in the RE classroom it is vital for RE teachers to be able to exercise agency by moving from a mono to a multi religious approach to teaching RE and by challenging entrenched institutional structures. RE teachers have the 'agentic' power to create new forms of behaviour and new ways of self understanding and new codes of meaning with regard to religion. By so doing they could play a pivotal role in the classroom in promoting respect for those who believe differently. Their voice is important as it can be considered to be an expression of agency (Deetz 1998).

Voice

In the apartheid era voices suggesting any form of multi religion education were silenced since they challenged the Christian-National ideology (Christie 1989). After 1996 previously silent voices have been articulated. According to Deetz (1998: 159) these voices have attempted to 'reclaim that which was marginalised' demonstrating that voice 'is the presence of active resistance

to constant processes'. An opportunity emerged for voices representing the diversity of religion in South Africa to be heard. Voice can be empowering and can have a very practical, emancipatory dimension. It can either express individual agency or can be constrained or silenced by structure (such as the school context).

Voice in this study (Jarvis 2008) described the way in which teachers articulated their understanding of religious freedom. The voices that emerged showed that in the discourse of religion there are dominant voices speaking in favour of the formerly hegemonic religion, thereby marginalizing the voices of those representing minority religious groups. In some cases even within the same religion, voices representing the dominant denomination held sway. Voices resistant to religious hegemony struggled to be heard or chose to remain silent, thereby supporting the status quo. According to Francis, Muthukrishna and Ramsuran (2006: 141) 'silences can be a potentially disempowering act. [They] can be manipulated and contrived in social contexts by other players and stakeholders'.

There needs to be clarity regarding hearing and listening to RE teachers' voices. Allen (2004) refers to 'dialogical voice' which is about searching for meaning and understanding, positing that teachers need an 'audience' which would respectfully 'listen' to what they are saying. This takes place when RE teachers are able to publicly express their opinions and consider the ideas of others. Dialogue provides the opportunity to get to know better, not only others who believe differently, but also oneself. Ipgrave's (2001) threefold approach to dialogue is useful. She suggests that primary dialogue includes the acceptance of diversity, difference and change. Secondary dialogue involves being open to difference, willing to engage with difference and ready to learn from others. The tertiary aspect includes the actual verbal interchange. This type of participation can have transformational powers (Allen 2004). Human voices that exercise the choice to act or not to act do indeed make a difference to the contexts in which they exist. Adopting a dialogical approach would afford RE teachers the opportunity to understand their own biography with regard to religion; an ability to identify practices which influence their beliefs; and the chance to achieve an individual voice, despite the strengths and endurance of other dominant discourses (Nothling 2001).

MacIntyre and Dunne (2002) suggest the use of 'narrative unity' for getting to know what educational transformation means. 'Narrative unity' takes place when RE teachers listen to one another's stories. They could use their voice to shape a discourse about the issues surrounding RE as praxis in a multi religious school context. Narrative also encompasses the notion of 'tradition and practice' (MacIntyre & Dunne 2002). For any transformation to take place, RE teachers need to understand their own religious tradition, and equally, the religious tradition of others should also be empathetically investigated in an attempt to overcome prejudice. The CRSA Bill of Rights (1996) encourages the paradigm shift from a hegemonic religious tradition to one of getting to know what other religious communities advocate. 'Narrative' and 'tradition' could facilitate this process, and also inform 'practice' (MacIntyre & Dunne 2002). Informed 'practice' would entail a shift from a mono religious to a multi religious approach to RE.

In the next section I will be discussing RE teacher's responses in order to contextualize and validate the arguments offered in this article. Their responses are categorised according to the following claims made in this article about the voice of the RE teacher:

- The RE teacher's voice, influenced by his/her understanding of religious freedom, can either promote or discourage an inclusive, multi religious approach to RE.
- The RE teacher's voice can be empowering and have a practical dimension.
- RE teachers need to publicly express their opinions and consider the ideas of others.

RE Teacher's Responses

- *The RE teacher's voice, influenced by his/her understanding of religious freedom, can either promote or discourage an inclusive, multi religious approach to RE.*

The findings in this research project showed that having a cognitive understanding of religious freedom is insufficient. The majority of the RE

teachers were able to define the human right to religious freedom as the right to practice the religion of one's choice without discrimination or intimidation and to afford others the opportunity to do the same. However, in schools A and B, teachers belonging to religious groups other than the brand of Christianity endorsed by the School Management Team (SMT) were subjected to continuous constitutional infringement as their religions were excluded from the school ethos and they were daily subjected to the practices of the hegemonic religion. They felt that their constitutional right to religious freedom was being infringed upon.

Other RE teachers considered the multi religious approach to RE as advocated by the Religion and Education Policy (2003) to be an infringement of their constitutional right to freedom *from* having to consider religions other than their own (cf. Hammer 2001). They voiced their understanding of religious freedom as the right to consider and practice their religion only.

Jane¹⁰: The freedom to practice the religion of one's choice. It is the freedom to express your religious beliefs that you were born and brought up with.

Sipho: It means you are free to talk about God and to preach his Word.

Bona: I think that Christianity is the right way and only that should be practised. Once you involve in practising other religion, automatically it affects your own religious beliefs.

It became evident that for these specific RE teachers, their biography in most cases played a role. These teachers had grown up in a mono religious environment, influenced by their parent's religion which became the religion that they embraced, informing their religious identity. When asked whether they thought their biography and religious identity affected the way in which they voiced their understanding of religious freedom, they all agreed that this was the case. Their religious biography formed the core of their social identity (Giddens 2002). They identified themselves in terms of religious categories, and compared and contrasted themselves with other religious groupings providing them with a sense of confidence and 'belonging'

¹⁰ The names used in this article are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the teachers who participated in the study.

(Jenkins 1996). Categorising themselves as members of a particular religion led to these RE teachers considering members of other religions to be having, or lacking, certain virtues, and this 'extrinsic discrimination' (Helms 1990) was considered to be morally sufficient for justifying differential treatment. Having to facilitate multi religious RE lessons as directed by the Religion and Education Policy (2003) and to explore religions other than their own, made them feel that their religious freedom to belong to and promote an exclusive religious group, had been stifled. These RE teachers were not able to engage, even at a primary level (Ipgrave 2001), in dialogue with a religion other than their own. They used their voice to entrench a confessional approach, discouraging an inclusive approach to RE.

By contrast RE teachers who were brought up in homes where religious diversity in society was accepted experienced no discomfort in adopting a multi religious approach to RE. This is evidenced by the responses from the following RE teachers, two of whom are Hindus and one a Christian.

Len: My parent's religion had a great influence on me. Because my parents were Hindi speaking I grew up in a home being rooted in Hinduism, this allowed me to find myself and where I come from...it has shaped me to have the ability to know where I come from and be open to understand and respect other religions.

Barbara: I do believe that my religion teaches me not to condemn other religions. I believe every individual has a choice to make on their own. I respect this.

Priya: My religious affiliation does not condemn other religions.

These RE teachers demonstrated a willingness to engage in religious dialogue at a primary, secondary and tertiary level (Ipgrave 2001). The school context in which they were teaching was also conducive to a multi religious approach to RE and supportive of these RE teachers. There is great potential for transformation in the domain of RE when both the individual teacher and the school context and policy support an inclusive, multi religious approach to teaching RE.

- *The RE teacher's voice can be empowering and have a practical dimension.*

It became evident that the SMT in all three schools played a significant role in the way in which RE teachers were able to (or not able to) exercise agency in terms of their approach to teaching RE. On an institutional level, in two of the schools, religions other than those supported by the SMT were marginalised, thereby establishing an 'institutional [religious] identity' (Jenkins 1996). In school A a Christian ethos was embedded in the school mission statement and prospectus/code of conduct. In school B, the hegemonic religion, namely, Catholicism, was clearly favoured. In both these contexts, the 'institutional identity' appeared to be more prominent than personal identity, as evidenced by the response of an RE teacher in school B who felt that her voice was not being heard '... because everyone follows the Catholic ethos'. Her voice was silenced by the SMT disempowering her from engaging in any meaningful dialogue that could lead to transformation in the approach to teaching RE.

The following categories demonstrate the status of the RE teacher's voice (agency) in response to the school context (structure). The RE teacher's voice ... :

- entrenching the status quo;
- that is silenced;
- promoting a multi-religious approach to teaching RE; and
- expressing discomfort and the need for transformation.

○ **The RE teacher's voice entrenching the status quo**

Some of the RE teachers continued to support and maintain the religious hegemonic status quo in the school, adopting a mono religious approach to RE. This was unequivocally expressed by the following RE teachers in schools A and B:

School A Principal: We're a Christian school and we do not give space/time to other religions to practice their religion at school.

Sipho: ... our ethos is Christian and so are our assemblies. I love it because I am a Christian I think Christianity is the right way and only that should be practiced.

Zandi: I'm happy with the religion environment I am around because they are all Christian. Only Christian religion is practiced.

Emily: You are determined in what you believe and don't alter on those beliefs. I think I can explain to the learners who are not familiar with going to church because there are those who can't even pray. So right now we have got to promote that.

Teaching in a school with a confessional ethos (where the school decided on the set of beliefs to be presented as the one true religion) meant that Christian RE teachers adhering to the brand of Christianity promoted by the SMT did not have to compromise their own personal religion. This view is emphasised by Sipho (school B) who clearly interpreted having a voice as being free to say what he felt like in the morning assembly (within the boundaries of Catholic doctrine). He suggested that teachers' voice can have an impact if 'we all believe in Christianity as we all have a say in the promotion of God's work'.

The voice of RE teachers like Sipho, Zandi, Emily and that of the principal in school A, entrench an understanding that religious freedom is simply freedom to practice one's own religion without regard for those who believe differently. Their voices reinforced the status quo, and the power and efficacy of the school structure (cf. Baez 2000).

○ **The RE teacher's voice that is silenced**

In schools A and B where the school structure supported Christianity, and more specifically in school B, Catholicism, as the hegemonic religious discourse, it was evidenced in the responses of the following RE teachers that dissenting voices would not be heard.

Purity: I do believe the learners at this school have to compromise their beliefs. There is no religious freedom ... we don't ever really pay specific attention

to any other religions other than Christianity... We are not allowed to discuss things openly at meetings.

Jabu: Keeping quiet is safer.

RE teachers like Purity (school B) and Jabu (school A) expressed disempowerment, sharing the view that it would be 'safer' to keep quiet because the only voices that would be heard were those supporting the hegemonic religion enforced by the SMT. These silenced voices could be manipulated and contrived by the SMT to be seen as accenting to the status quo thereby further entrenching a mono religious approach to RE.

○ **The RE teacher's voice promoting a multi-religious approach to teaching RE**

The RE teachers in school C expressed the religious freedom which the school (structure) promoted:

School C Principal: There are different religions and they are all treated the same or given fair share i.e. the school considers all religious holidays in the calendar.

Len: ... in our school we have total religious freedom and respect all religions. We should respect all religions as equal ... make a Hindu a stronger Hindu, Christian a stronger Christian etc.

Priya: Learning about other religions helps to broaden my own views. We are free to express our views and children are enthusiastic about learning about different religions.

These RE teachers were prepared to engage in dialogue about religion at all three levels (Ipgrave 2001). Their approach to teaching RE in a context of religious diversity was transformational and empowering, with a practical dimension. This is expressed by Rakeel who said that the RE teachers' voice could be used to deepen the learners' faith and belief in their own religions and at the same time teach them to respect other religions. This respect is not just about the right of others to believe and to do things differently, but it

also means recognising that those who believe differently have something of value to offer (Ipgrave 2001).

○ **The RE teacher's voice expressing discomfort and the need for transformation**

In school A which adopted a particular Christian ethos there were Christian RE teachers who expressed something of the individual struggle they were experiencing in trying to reconcile their personal religion with their cognitive understanding of religious freedom, the expectations of the Religion and Education Policy (2003) and the religious diversity in the school. While not wanting not to compromise their personal religion they experienced discomfort at continuing to adopt a mono religious approach to RE, thereby marginalizing other religions. Something of this confusion and discomfort can be heard in the following responses:

Lyn: I personally would be very offended if I allowed a Hindu prayer to be said in my classroom yet I would go full out and say the Lord's Prayer in my classroom. So to an extent I feel I am not respecting them but at the same time I am respecting them. I do feel that I am compromising my beliefs but not totally my religion. If you were to say the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of the day that is me teaching them to be tolerant of me.

Nadia: ... at times I feel like I should be sharing Christ with everyone so there is a small degree of feeling like I am compromising.

Lindy: The policy set by management is strongly based on a very Christian ethos of which I do agree with but we are not a private school, we are a government school and should be accommodating at least to an extent and respect other religions.

There were Christian RE teachers in School A and B who recognised more clearly, the need for transformation in the religious discourse in the school. They struggled with adopting a multi religious approach however, as it would run counter to that adopted by the SMT which was perceived to be unbending and unaccommodating. While expressing the view that their voice

would not be heard by the SMT, they nevertheless expressed themselves as follows:

Angela: ...we are certainly not being fair to non Christian learners. The other religions are not fully considered. My belief is firm and I feel very secure therefore there is no problem to teach religious freedom in school. You can help learners to respect other religious beliefs and practices.

Sibu: ... there are people who are African Christians but their religious freedom is not taken into consideration.

Jabu: One religion¹¹ is promoted just because more learners are from that religion so others are neglected because they are few members from different religions.

Charlene: I can deepen the learners' faith and belief in their own religions, at the same time teaching them to respect other religions.

After the 'official' interviews at school A, the National Strike¹² meant that teachers did not have classes to teach and so there was time to continue informally engaging with these RE teachers about their discomfort, fear of compromising their own religion and perception of disempowerment. These RE teachers had been obliged to construct their particular understanding of the human right to religious freedom influenced as they are by their biographical and school context. They appreciated having the opportunity to have their voices heard and found the dialogue helpful. The emancipatory process of dialogue helped these RE teachers come to the realisation that they did not have to compromise their own Christian faith by adopting a multi religious approach to RE. They acknowledged that they did have a transformatory voice that needed to be heard in the school. Despite a recent SMT decision to exclude RE from the LO curriculum these RE teachers

¹¹ Teachers at school B often used the term 'religion' as synonymous with 'denomination'. Catholicism is the hegemonic religion and other Christian denominations and other religions are overlooked.

¹² This strike which took place in June 2007, was supported by teacher unions. Whilst teachers were expected to report for work, the schools were closed to learners.

decided that they would in fact exercise agency and include RE and teach it using a multi religious approach. Their intention was also to form dialogical working groups in which they would continue the dialogue in the domain of RE. This would include discussion about curriculum development and the use of appropriate teaching strategies.

Of all the RE teachers I interacted with, I felt this group, having begun to navigate their fears and prejudices, best understood the need for transformation and that their voice had the potential to usher in transformation in the approach to curriculum development and praxis in RE.

- *RE teachers need to publicly express their opinions and consider the ideas of others.*

RE teachers need to be empowered by affording them opportunities to engage in emancipatory discourse (Ipgrave 2001). Dialogical activity brings together understandings and questions from a diversity of religious traditions and perspectives. It recognises the individuality of religious thinking and that even those who share a common religious identity may have differences in religious outlook. Simply knowing about different religions does not influence teaching skills and attitudes towards learners from different religious and cultural backgrounds (Roux *et al.* 2006). Dialogical engagement at a primary, secondary and tertiary level (Ipgrave 2001) can lead to transformed praxis in the RE classroom.

A reflective-dialogical voice (Roux 2007) that provides for the expression of own opinions and consideration of the ideas of others begins when RE teachers meet each other simply as people and not as representatives of one religion or another. The dialogue should enable RE teachers to engage substantially with each other, sharing their narrative (which includes tradition and practice). This dialogue has the potential to be emancipatory for those involved. RE teachers emerging from it are likely to be less fearful of compromising their own religious positions and more able to engage with confidence in situations of religious diversity. Their classroom praxis could be transformed as they seek to be inclusive, promoting a multi religious approach to teaching RE.

As a lecturer at a tertiary institution, it is my intention to give the

pre-service LO teachers the opportunity to engage in emancipatory discourse about RE. This will include the dialogical space to reflect on how they construct their understanding of religious freedom and to explore the influence of their biography on this understanding. Becoming literate about religions other than, and including their own, and having the opportunity to discuss suspicions, fears and possible prejudices in the domain of religion will hopefully help to shape their voice in a way that will be transformative in the discourse of religion by the time they become in-service LO teachers.

Conclusion

In this article I have argued for the importance of the RE teacher's voice. It is apparent that this voice is defined by the individual RE teacher's biography and understanding of religious freedom, and influenced by the school context. The paradigm shift from a mono to a multi religious approach to RE, as evidenced by the voices in this study, has to a large extent not taken place. This raises important questions and challenges for teaching and learning in a context of religious diversity. The relationship between individual voice and school context has implications for classroom praxis. RE teachers' voice can be empowering bringing with it the practical dimension of transformation with implications for curriculum change. Their voice can play a pivotal emancipatory role in the classroom by promoting religious tolerance and respect for those who believe differently so as to dispel the belief in the superiority of one particular religion leading to prejudice and antagonism (Baez 2000).

Concerns voiced by RE teachers include an anxiety about compromising their personal faith; of opposing the hegemonic religious status quo promoted by the school structure; and certain RE teachers experience discomfort at the lack of inclusivity in the approach to teaching RE. Dialogical space is key in providing the framework for RE teachers to explore these concerns. Dialogue could be emancipatory enabling RE teachers to become empowered to view the content they teach more insightfully, to select and employ their teaching methods more creatively and to become agents of curriculum development and design. Individual RE teachers can become 'agents of change' as they choose to regulate behaviour by exerting conscious choices, thereby increasing autonomy and control. The

power that individual voices have, can either entrench religious discrimination or promote an inclusive, multi-religious approach to teaching RE.

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School of Social Science Education
Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
jarvisj@ukzn.ac.za

Teacher Identity in a Context of Religious Diversity

Janet Jarvis

Abstract

The requirements of the state as laid out in the Religion and Education Policy (2003), expect teachers to adopt a multi religious approach to Religion Education. The paradigm shift from a mono religious approach to a multi religious approach has been problematic for many teachers. A recent empirical research project in selected KwaZulu-Natal primary schools provided evidence that to varying degrees teachers have experienced a religious identity conflict. I argue that teachers have to negotiate their religious identity from a position of 'identity paralysis' or 'identity paradox' or even 'identity flexibility' to one of 'identity transformation'. This is a necessary process for teachers if they are to promote the human right to religious freedom, encouraging learners to grow in their own religious beliefs but also to empathetically respect the religious beliefs of others in society.

Keywords: Religion Education, religious identity negotiation, religious identity transformation.

Introduction

In this article I contend that teachers' religious identity and understanding of religious freedom can either entrench religious discrimination or promote religious dialogue in the classroom. The abolition of apartheid presents the opportunity to reshape religious identities and to fashion new understandings about religious diversity. The Religion and Education Policy (2003) requires teachers to shift from a mono religious to a multi religious approach to

Religion Education (RE). However, research (Jarvis 2008; Roux 2005) has shown that this shift has been problematic for many teachers.

There is often a disparity between teacher image (what is expected—by the curriculum or in a specific school context) and teacher identity. This disparity has been demonstrated by research projects including those of Carrim (2001), Soudien (2001), Matheson and Harley (2001) and Jarvis (2008). In the context of religious diversity, this disparity could translate into the difference between what teachers claim they are doing in a religiously diverse classroom and what is actually taking place. More specifically, this could point to a difference between talking about ‘religious freedom’ as a human right and the actual classroom praxis which should reflect the multireligious approach promoted in the Religion and Education Policy (2003).

What is needed is not simply the provision of more training in the skills required for effective teaching, but also an opportunity for teachers to explore their own religious identities and the ‘understandings that [they] hold of themselves in relation to official policy images’ (Jansen 2001: 242). The ‘policy image’ that is depicted by the Religion and Education Policy (2003) requires teachers to employ a multi religious approach to teaching RE. Such a requirement, in many cases, conflicts with teacher’s personal religious identities (Jarvis 2008). This ‘identity conflict’ needs to be explored and negotiated in order for the Religion and Education Policy (2003) to be successfully implemented.

While there has been substantial research focusing on the teacher as practitioner, how teacher identity (the teacher as person) informs the way in which he/she approaches RE, has been under-researched and needs to be explored. I am guided by Goodson who advocates that it is critical to know about ‘the person the teacher is’ (1992: 10). The teacher is not simply a practitioner but a person with a unique history which impacts on his/her work. Mattson and Harley’s (2003) research shows that teachers’ personal values often differ from policy and according to Ratsatsi (2005), if a teacher feels that a curriculum’s content contradicts his/her beliefs then that part of the curriculum is invariably disregarded or considerably altered. The religious identity of the teacher has direct bearing on the teaching of RE as

demonstrated by a recent empirical study (Jarvis 2008) described in the next section¹.

Research Design and Methodology

The study contributed to a wider research project (Roux *et al.* 2006) focusing on understanding human rights. It was carried out in three purposively selected KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) primary schools. The schools were selected in order to investigate three different school contexts in terms of demographics and resources. For the purposes of this article they will be referred to as Schools A, B and C. School A was a well-resourced, sub-urban, former model C school with predominantly White² and Indian learners, and which promoted a strong Christian ethos. School B was an under-resourced, peri-urban, former mission school comprising only Black learners and which unwaveringly promoted Catholicism. School C was a fairly well-resourced, sub-urban, former HoD³ (House of Delegates) school comprising both Indian and Black learners and which claimed to adopt a multi religious approach to RE.

I employed an exploratory case study approach to determine how the understanding of the human right to religious freedom was constructed and

¹ Religion Education fits into the Life Orientation curriculum, under outcome 2 which focuses on the social development of learners.

² It must be acknowledged that for some South African scholars the term 'Black' refers collectively to 'Africans', 'Indians' and 'Coloureds'. In this article, however 'Black' is used to refer to 'Africans'. 'Indians' and 'Whites' are called by those names. This is shifting nomenclature however, for it seems now that it is politically correct to refer to 'Black Africans' simply as 'Africans'. It must be noted that the researcher does not endorse these politically racial classifications, but uses them for expediency in describing the school contexts in which the research took place.

³ 'Former Model C schools' refers to schools that were formerly 'White' schools under the apartheid regime. 'Former HoD schools' refers to the House of Delegates schools which were formerly 'Indian' schools. The 'peri-urban black school' refers to a school that is 'Black' in staff and learner composition and situated on the rural urban fringe

interpreted by Life Orientation (LO) teachers⁴ in these schools. Male and female teachers of all race groups participated in the research, also young and fairly inexperienced teachers as well as older more experienced teachers. Teachers of Grade 4—Grade 6 LO classes were requested to complete self administered questionnaires in which they expressed their understanding of religious freedom and the way in which they thought their biography and school context influenced their approach to Religion Education. The Grade 6 LO teachers were then invited to participate in semi structured focus group interviews during which I was able to probe further their responses to the questionnaires. In order to gain a better understanding of the school context and the school policy and management position with regard to religious freedom I conducted a semi structured individual interview with the principals in each of the three schools. I used discourse analysis as the theoretical approach to analysing the data collected.

The study showed that practicing teachers' biographies strongly influenced the way in which they either promoted or discouraged an inclusive approach to RE in a context of religious diversity. It became evident that as they engaged with the LO curriculum, and more specifically, RE, they did not leave their identities at the classroom door (Bell Washington, Weinstein & Love 1997). However, the way in which they managed their identities differed from teacher to teacher. In the next section I discuss the theoretical framework which served as the lens through which I viewed the responses of the participants in my study.

Theoretical Framework—Religious Identity Formation

The relationship between the individual and society is crucial to understanding how identity is constructed and experienced (Francis 2005). In order to conceptualise how teachers construct their religious identity, and how this impacts on their approach to RE in religiously diverse school contexts, I worked within an interpretive paradigm using social identity theory as the theoretical framework. In this article I will be focusing in

⁴ It should be noted that without exception the teachers who participated in this study were teachers of LO who were not formally trained LO specialist teachers.

certain key ideas from social identity theory, namely the notion of 'multiple identities' (Giddens 2002) and 'identity negotiation' (Nias 1985; 1989) to explore how teachers formed their religious identity. Underpinning these principles is the view that identities are not fixed over time and space but rather, that they are multi-faceted and dynamic (Baumeister 1997; Randall 1995) consisting of membership of social groups (Newman 1997) or 'organizing principles' (Wetherell 1996). These include nationality, ethnicity, class, occupation, gender, race, sexuality, age and religion. Each of these intersects and interacts with the other.

Individuals identify with specific groups (Hood 1998) that they perceive themselves to belong to, thereby bolstering their self-esteem and sense of identity. Postmodernists like Harro (2000) describe how socialisation begins from birth when individuals are shaped into particular identities by already existing structures such as history, traditions, beliefs, prejudices and stereotypes, and influenced by powerful social, religious and cultural agents like schools and religious institutions.

Teachers, specifically, find themselves in schools which usually have an 'institutional identity' (Jenkins 1996) with established norms of practice which in many cases entrench a particular religious identity and this can either enable or hinder any individual agency in constructing a personal religious identity. Teachers have to negotiate their multiple identities/roles as they teach Religion Education in a context of religious diversity. I will later be using the notion of 'identity paralysis', 'identity paradox' and 'identity flexibility' to discuss the degree to which the teachers in the study (Jarvis 2008) were able to negotiate their religious identity.

Multiple Identities

Teachers move between the private and public domains of their life. Distinguishing between the personal and professional self draws attention to what Bendle (2002) describes as 'multiple identities'. Which of these identities is appropriate for an individual at any one time would vary according to the social context. I contend that some teachers, in adopting a multi religious approach to RE, may experience an 'identity conflict' (Jansen 2001). They are South Africans bound by the constitutional emphasis on 'freedom of religion' with the expectation to adopt an inclusive, multi

religious approach to RE. However, they may also be members of a religion which is exclusive in nature, exhorting them to disregard any religion other than their own. Teachers have to manage 'multiple identities' as they move in and out of a variety of social contexts, not least their religious community and school classroom. Individuals choose the identity they wish to embrace and often make choices among various identities as they move from one circumstance or context to another. The possible identity conflict between their professional and personal identities could impact on their classroom praxis. Teachers may struggle to teach adopting a multi religious approach, because they feel they are compromising their own religious identity. Others may struggle because the school context enforces a mono religious approach which is at odds with their religious identity and they therefore feel marginalised and uncomfortable.

The notion of a multiplicity of identities also includes the different roles played by individual teachers in each social context. For example, in a mono religious community an individual teacher may on the one hand play a leadership role in promoting a particular religion and then again in the classroom context the same individual teacher may well be expected to put this particular 'religious identity' aside in the interests of promoting a multi religious teaching approach. The teacher is expected to put into parenthesis his/her own values and beliefs, while not necessarily undermining them (Jackson 1997; Jarvis 2008). In order to do so a process of 'identity negotiation' would have to take place.

Identity Negotiation

The management of multiple identities necessitates identity negotiation (Nias 1985: 1989) so as to develop a consistent set of behaviours. While teachers may have inherited 'sets of paradoxes and ambivalences' (Kearney 2003: 2) their identities are not 'fixed or predetermined' (Kearney 2003: 4), but rather a self reflective project, always in the process of formation (Giddens 2002), making identity negotiation possible. Power relations play a definite role in this process of identity negotiation and formation (Hall 1991; 1996; Wetherell 1996). While an individual is born into a specific religious context, each individual has the power to design his/her own religious identity in response to the organising principle called religion. There is a

distinction between the collective identity or social message and the individual identity. What is crucial is how people in their individual capacities react to the organising principles of society like that of religion. The individual can choose how to respond and make choices and decisions that mould their identities. My contention is that when organizing principles such as religion, are addressed in RE as part of the broader LO curriculum, it is reasonable to assume that if teachers have not engaged in self reflection and negotiated their own religious identity, there is the potential to create less than the intended effect in the curriculum.

Teachers often find themselves in the position where they have to negotiate the school context, or 'institutional [religious] identity' (Jenkins 2006) by deconstructing it in relation to their individual religious identity. It became evident in the study (Jarvis 2008) that several teachers experienced a tension between their individual religious identity and that of the institution in which they were teaching.

The position taken by the school with regard to a multi religious approach to RE has a direct influence on the 'teaching perceptions and strategies of ... teachers in a multi Religion Education programme' as demonstrated by Roux's research (2005: 305). I will be using school A as an example to demonstrate this. The School Management Team (SMT) strongly promoted a Christian only ethos in this school in which the majority of the teachers were Christians. The SMT unilaterally made the decision to remove RE from the LO curriculum.

Of the LO teachers who participated in the research project (Jarvis 2008) several teachers, primarily younger more inexperienced teachers, were overwhelmed by the hegemonic position held by the SMT and responded by endorsing the SMT decision. There were other teachers who, while not fully agreeing with the SMT position, nevertheless went along with the decision and did not openly challenge it. They felt uncomfortable because other religions were being marginalised, but at the same time they felt that they had to adhere to the 'institutional discrimination' promoted by their school. It became apparent, however, that while they did experience a measure of discomfort, they also enjoyed the comfort of being in an environment where their own religion was promoted.

There were however, teachers, mindful of the religious diversity in the school, who did not agree with the SMT decision, and their response was

to continue to teach RE. These teachers were able to maintain their own religious identity as Christians while adopting a multi religious approach to RE despite the ruling of the SMT. By doing so they became marginalised as they were not supporting the status quo. The way in which teachers chose to negotiate their religious identity impacted on the way in which they responded to the SMT decision.

In the next section I categorise teachers' responses to teaching RE. Having used social identity theory and more specifically the concept of teachers having to negotiate multiple identities I now refer to, modify, apply and extend Roux's research (1998). She posits the notion of 'paradigm paralysis', 'paradigm paradox' and 'paradigm flexibility' as lenses through which to approach the teaching of RE. Her conclusion is that it is unhelpful to look to the future through the lenses of old paradigms such as a mono religious approach to teaching RE. She concedes however, that replacing a well worn, comfortable paradigm is not an easy matter. However in order to embrace a new paradigm namely, a multi religious approach to teaching RE, teachers need to exercise 'paradigm flexibility'.

Teaching in Contexts of Religious Diversity—Teacher Responses

I have applied Roux's (1998) notion to religious identity. The following categories demonstrate the degree to which teachers have managed to negotiate their multiple identities. The ways in which they manage their personal religious identity, the school context in which they teach and the demands of the Constitution of South Africa and more specifically the Religion and Education Policy (2003) can be categorized as 'identity paralysis', 'identity paradox' or 'identity flexibility'. While these categories serve the purpose of identification for analysis, in this article I would like to introduce a fourth category, namely that of 'identity transformation'.

Identity Paralysis

Teachers who fall into this category are those who come from mono religious environments and who display signs of fear or discomfort when placed in a

multi religious environment where they have to facilitate lessons about belief systems and values which are not part of their cultural and/or religious and spiritual traditions (Roux, Du Preez & Ferguson 2007). These teachers experience identity paralysis, or what Featherstone (2003) calls 'bounded identity'. They are teachers who are bound by their biography and membership of certain social categories and who, when approaching RE in a context of religious diversity refuse to negotiate their identities. For fear of compromising their own religious identity, they choose not to accept any religion other than their own and teach only from a mono religious position, usually maintaining the status quo in the school because it is aligned with their personal position. This was evidenced in the study (Jarvis 2008) by Christian teachers like Bona⁵ and Siya, both in school A, who experienced difficulty as they struggled to reconcile their own religious identity within the religiously diverse context in which they were teaching. Their responses reflect the desire to engage with their religion only and an unwillingness to accept religious diversity and a need for change.

Bona: I think Christianity is the right way and only that should be practiced.

Siya: You are determined in what you believe and don't alter on those beliefs. I think I can explain to the learners who are not familiar with going to church because there are those who can't even pray. So right now we have got to promote that.

Teaching in a school such as school A where the SMT had decided on the set of beliefs to be presented as the one true religion meant that Christian teachers did not have to compromise their own religious identity and they were not challenged to be inclusive, taking into consideration the other religions represented in the school, especially amongst the learners. This is reflected by the school principal and two of the LO teachers.

School Principal: We're a Christian school and we do not give space/ time to other religions to practice their religion at school.

⁵ The names used in this article are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the teachers who participated in the study.

Angela: Yes, our ethos is Christian and so are our assemblies. I love it because I am a Christian.

Sonja: I'm happy with the religion environment I am around because they are all Christian. Only the Christian religion is practiced.

Not only did several teachers experience the kind of identity paralysis described above, but some also experienced an identity conflict (Jansen 2008). These were by and large the older Christian teachers in schools A and B, schools which formerly (pre-1994) were encouraged to have a Christian only influence and ethos, who now found themselves in the position where Christianity is no longer the institutionalised religion of the State. These teachers were aware that adopting a mono religious approach to RE was no longer constitutional but this realisation did little to resolve their conflict as they were paralysed and unable to move forward from the pre-1994 position with which they had become accustomed.

There were some teachers who demonstrated an identity paralysis for a different reason. These were teachers who felt overwhelmed by the hegemonic position held by the SMT and who responded in a totally subordinated manner, endorsing the SMT decisions. They felt that they had no agency to employ any approach to RE other than that promoted by the SMT.

Identity Paradox

Teachers who experienced discomfort at the fact that religions other than their own were being marginalised, experienced something of an 'identity paradox'. They felt 'bounded' by their own religious identity but they also desired to negotiate their identities in order to embrace a multi religious approach to RE so as to be more inclusive. However this was not without difficulty and they felt unable to do so. They were acutely aware of the religious diversity represented by especially the learners in the school and the Religion and Education Policy (2003) directive to teach RE using a multi religious approach. This is clearly expressed by two of the participants from school A and B respectively.

Lyn: ... we are certainly not being fair to non Christian learners. The other religions are not fully considered.

Jabu: ... there are people who are African Christians⁶ but their religious freedom is not taken into consideration.

These were Christian teachers who recognised the need to accommodate the religious diversity in the school using a multi religious approach to RE as opposed to presenting a mono religious, particular Christian perspective only. Their struggle lay with adopting a multi religious approach to RE which would run counter to the 'institutional [religious] identity' (Jenkins 1996) and mono religious approach adopted by the seemingly unbending and unaccommodating SMT. It became clear during the interviews that these teachers experienced discomfort with this approach especially because of the religious diversity represented amongst the learners. This discomfort is expressed by the following teachers, the first two from school A and the third from school B.

Purity: I do believe the learners at this school have to compromise their beliefs. There is no religious freedom ... we don't ever really pay specific attention to any other religions other than Christianity.

Lindy: The policy set by management is strongly based on a very Christian ethos of which I do agree with but we are not a private school, we are a government school and should be accommodating at least to an extent and respect other religions.

Jabu: One religion⁷ is promoted just because more learners are from that religion so others are neglected because they are few members from different religions.

⁶ Jabu is referring to those learners and teachers who belong to the African Independent Churches and who are not Catholics.

⁷ Teachers at school B often used the term 'religion' as synonymous with 'denomination'. This tended to be confusing at first but with probing I discovered that they are stressing the fact that Catholicism is promoted and other Christian denominations as well as Traditional African Religion are overlooked.

It was difficult for these teachers to exercise individual agency in their school contexts. They expressed disempowerment, sharing the view that it would be 'safer' to keep quiet.

Purity: We are not allowed to discuss things openly at meetings.

Jabu: Keeping quiet is safer.

Teachers suffering with both 'identity paralysis' and 'identity paradox' find themselves in a position of ineffectiveness. They are unable to successfully negotiate their religious identity and while in some cases a measure of discomfort is experienced, there is an inability to promote the human right to religious freedom.

Identity Flexibility

However, there were certain teachers in school A, who, despite a SMT decision to remove RE from the LO curriculum, did in fact include RE and teach it using a multi religious approach. One of these teachers said the following:

Nomsa: I do in LO, teach learners about other religions.

These particular teachers in school A, expressed a measure of individual agency and identity flexibility. They said that in their teaching of other religions they still remained committed Christians in terms of their personal religious identity, but were able to adopt a multi religious approach to RE. This was expressed by another participant in school A who had this to say:

Charlene: My belief is firm and I feel very secure therefore there is no problem to teach religious freedom in schools. I can deepen the learners' faith and belief in their own religions, at the same time teaching them to respect other religions.

In contrast to schools A and B, the teachers, without exception, in school C were quite accepting of a context of religious diversity and a multi religious approach to RE. Two teachers and the school principal made the following comments:

Len: ... in our school we have total religious freedom and respect all religions. We should respect all religions as equal ... make a Hindu a stronger Hindu, Christian a stronger Christian etc.

Priya: Learning about other religions helps to broaden my own views. We are free to express our views and children are enthusiastic about learning about different religions.

School Principal: There are different religions and they are all treated the same or given fair share i.e. the school considers all religious holidays in the calendar.

By and large these were teachers who had been raised in homes that were tolerant of religious diversity and whose personal religious identity included an embracing attitude towards religions other than their own. They experienced no discomfort when adopting a multi religious approach to RE and made the following comments about their position:

Len: My parent's religion had a great influence on me. Because my parents were Hindi speaking I grew up in a home being rooted in Hinduism, this allowed me to find myself and where I come from...it has shaped me to have the ability to know where I come from and be open to understand and respect other religions.

Barbara: I do believe that my religion teaches me not to condemn other religions. I believe every individual has a choice to make on their own. I respect this.

Priya: My religious affiliation does not condemn other religions.

For these teachers in school C adopting a position of 'identity flexibility' was not problematic. This was so different to the scenario in schools A and B where adopting a position of 'identity flexibility' was far more difficult. However, while 'identity flexibility' is a move in the right direction, my contention is that unless teachers move to a place of 'identity transformation' a multi religious approach to RE will be adopted only for the purposes of being constitutionally correct. It could be very superficial, focusing on religious literacy and, as was the case in school C, ensuring inclusivity simply by marking every religious holy day and special event.

What I found lacking in all three school contexts was any meaningful, empathetic engagement with RE. For this to take place, I argue that teachers need to negotiate their religious identity to a position of 'identity transformation'.

Identity Transformation

Simply knowing about other's religions and adopting an inclusive, multi religious approach to RE does not necessarily deal with prejudice, suspicion, fear and stereotyping in the RE classroom. I contend that teachers need to adopt a position of 'identity transformation'. In order to do so they need to be comfortable with their own religious identity and their own religious discourse and sufficiently secure therein so as to be able to empathically⁸ investigate the practice and traditions of other religions represented in their classrooms and in society as a whole.

Teachers need to interrogate their own biography with regard to religion and identify the practices and traditions which influence those beliefs and then reflect on their attitudes towards those (the 'other') who hold different beliefs. Moving to a position of 'identity transformation' does not mean compromising individual religious identity but rather it means taking into account the right of others to hold different religious identities which, while different, are equally of value to those who hold them. It means being able to dispel a 'belief in the superiority of a particular [religion] leading to prejudice and antagonism toward people of other [religions]' (Baez 2000: 330). Teachers in this category of 'identity transformation' should be able to employ a 'reflective-dialogical' approach (Roux 2007) that provides for the expression of their own opinions as well as the consideration of the ideas of others.

The dialogical approach should be about searching for meaning and understanding (Allen 2004). It is about recognizing that each person has 'something of value to contribute; it is opening [up] to the possibility of

⁸ Empathy is described by Abdool and Drinkwater (2005) as more than just knowledge about another person's religion. It is the capacity to understand and respond to the religious experiences of another person with an increased awareness of that person's thoughts and feelings.

learning from the other' (Ipgrave 2001: 7). Even amongst those who share a common religious identity there could well be differences in religious outlooks, as was evidenced in schools A and B in particular. Dialogical activity recognises the individuality of religious thinking (Ipgrave 2001) and provides an opportunity to explore this.

A recommendation of the study (Jarvis 2008) is that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture needs to create opportunities for teachers to share their religious narrative (which includes tradition and practice) with one another. 'Narrative unity' (MacIntyre & Dunne 2002) takes place when teachers meet each other simply as individuals and not as representatives of one religion or another, and listen to one another's stories and grow in understanding of their own of one another's traditions. This interaction provides the opportunity for teachers to put their own beliefs into parenthesis (Jackson 1997) so as to adopt an impartial yet empathetic approach to the beliefs of others.

This dialogue has the potential to be emancipatory and transformational for those involved (Allen 2004). Teachers emerging from it are likely to be less fearful of compromising their own religious identity (often the root of 'identity paralysis' or 'identity paradox') and more able to engage with confidence in situations of religious diversity. This process begins with the acceptance of diversity, difference and change ('identity flexibility') but then needs to move to a place of being open to difference and willing to engage with difference and learn from others ('identity transformation').

'Identity transformation' needs to take place not only on an individual level, but also at the level of 'institutional identity' (Jenkins 1996) which in certain institutions, continues to be a 'bounded identity', as was the case in schools A and B. Teachers who have undergone an 'identity transformation' should be able to exercise individual agency to make possible the disruption of and redefinition of (religiously) intolerant structures (Baez 2000).

It is my contention that when teachers have moved to a position of 'identity transformation' they will be able to employ a 'reflective-dialogical' approach (Roux 2007) in the classroom that will provide learners with the space in which to express their own beliefs as well as empathetically take

into consideration the beliefs of others. It is at this point that meaning will be added to any multi religious approach to RE.

The table below summarises the four categories of ‘negotiated’ religious identity discussed above

Identity paralysis	Identity paradox	Identity flexibility	Identity transformation
The teachers who experienced an identity paralysis were unable to negotiate their religious identity and were unable to adopt a multi religious approach to Religion Education.	These teachers who experienced something of an identity paradox did so because they experienced discomfort at the fact that religions other than their own were being marginalised but they were still unable to sufficiently negotiate their religious identity so as to adopt a multi religious approach to Religion Education.	These teachers were able to negotiate their religious identity and adopt a multi religious approach to Religion Education albeit limited to religious literacy.	Teachers in this category are secure in their own religious identity and are able to dialogue reflectively and empathetically with those who believe differently so as to transform attitudes and truly promote religious freedom.

Conclusion

The transformation in South African society, and its education system, not least with regard to RE, has challenged the religious identity of individual teachers. However, it has also created the opportunity for teachers to fashion a new set of understandings about who they are. Both the Norms and

Standards policy (1998) and the National Curriculum Statement (2003) assume that teachers are able to engage positively and meaningfully within a context of religious diversity. The findings of this study (Jarvis 2008) have shown that this assumption is simplistic at best.

In the domain of religion, post-Apartheid religious identity construction has been problematic. Not only individual teachers, but also institutions, have not been emancipated from holding on to a 'bounded [religious] identity' (Featherstone 2003). There are still post-Apartheid schools that are resistant to transformation and who experience 'identity paralysis'. Within those schools individual teachers find themselves in a position of 'identity paralysis' or 'identity paradox'. There are schools that show semblances of change but do not actually address meaningful transformation, and in some cases could even be seen to be anti-transformatory. While 'identity flexibility' is a move in the right direction it is not enough.

Intrareligious⁹ and interreligious¹⁰ dialogue needs to be encouraged. This requires an element of reflectivity as individuals investigate their own religious identity whilst also developing a religious literacy and religious empathy that will enable them to adapt to a context of religious diversity so that various aspects and issues of religions are brought into a mode of critical dialogue. In order for this to be successful teachers need to know who they are, and they need to acquire the necessary skills to be reflective as they negotiate their religious identity. The questions which need to be further explored include when and in what contexts religious identity negotiation should take place, and the sustainability of such a process.

The religious identity of teachers could play a pivotal role in their classroom praxis as they either entrench discrimination on the basis of religion or promote religious dialogue and transformation. Teachers need to adopt a position of 'identity transformation' in order to encourage their

⁹ To allow for critical inquiry and interaction between groups/ denominations of the same religion.

¹⁰ To broaden knowledge about different religions when individuals of different religious traditions are in contact with one another within the same context.

learners to grow in their own religious beliefs but also to empathetically respect the religious beliefs of others in society.

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School of Social Science Education
Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
jarvisj@ukzn.ac.za

Experience: Its Significance in Contemporary Christian Spirituality

Celia Kourie and
Trevor Ruthenberg

Abstract

Contemporary Christian spirituality, in its lived-life and academic expressions, is inherently experiential. Spirituality thus understood involves various understandings of experience and can be elucidated in the light of some of these meanings. Christian spirituality now has less to do with interventionist, supernatural experiences than with experience understood as contemplative or mystical ways of seeing. Such experience is more linear and every-day than punctiliar or conversionist in nature. Experience in Christian spirituality is pronouncedly immanent, rooted in a new perception of life in general. It also preserves God's transcendence in an appreciation of God's mystery and essential otherness. Academic spirituality finds contemporary resources in the growing experiential interest in spirituality, and also from its own reclaimed legacy. Spirituality shows signs of finding a self-sustained place in the academy through developing its own unique theory of experience.

Keywords: Academic, Christian, Experience, Immanence, Lived-life, Spirituality, Transcendence.

1 Introduction

Contemporary Christian spirituality, understood as that developing phenomenon, at least since Vatican II (1962-1965), raises inherently the significance of experience. Experience, variously understood, is engaged by

contemporary spirituality in enlightening ways. In some cases a certain understanding of experience is affirmed, in others the particular understanding of experience must be qualified, or even dispensed with, if nascent Christian spirituality is to be appreciated and understood. By allowing 'experience' a range of understandings, then, one is able to understand the nature of Christian spirituality, and in what sense experience is being affirmed or denied. It is also assumed in this essay that the emerging spirituality described herein expresses itself in two modes. One mode is that of the everyday lived-life experience of Christian spirituality. The other mode is that of the academic discipline of spirituality. Both these expressions of spirituality speak to experience and clarify themselves by virtue of their relation thereto. In the main, the first part of the essay is given to spirituality in its lived-life form, while the final section, pertains to the academic expression.

2 'Experience' as Problematic

Speaking of experience is problematic on a number of counts. First, experience (in the popular sense of a specific religious or Christian experience) often assumes a contested or uneasy place in Christian theology or spirituality. Second, experience proves a slippery word of variable meaning, never yielding without problem to the constraints of definition. In academic philosophy, for instance, experience hardly occupies a self-explanatory status and definition¹. Third, the word presents with a virtual ambiguity. Does it refer to a definite, punctiliar (even intrusive) phenomenon or to life-experience as a whole in its more mundane, almost every-day sense? Last, in the academic domain, experience is often characterised as the inferior hypothetical counterpart to a more deductive, theoretically based procedure. In some ways Christian spirituality seems obligated to address this characterisation. What understanding can experience deliver against this backdrop, or what is the validity of such a representation?

In the light of such diversity and presumption, experience definitely qualifies as a polysemy—a single word with many meanings. Given such diversity, which understanding of experience is being referred to here? In

¹ Indeed, it seems that '[t]he word 'experience' is often used by philosophers, but seldom defined' (Russell [1946] 1961:768).

answer to that question, and at the risk of over-accommodation, it is helpful and instructive to consider quite a few of these meanings. Different perspectives on 'experience' throw valuable light on contemporary Christian spirituality, at once on spirituality's academic and lived-life expressions. Each meaning has at some time been too easily assumed as *the* particular 'experience' under consideration when used in relation to God or the Christian life, and probably with good reason. What follows, then, is a treatment of contemporary Christian spirituality in its lived-life and academic forms so far as it relates to these *variegated* understandings of experience. Phrased differently: What significance or place does 'experience' have in contemporary Christian spirituality? First dealt with is what is commonly referred to as 'a Christian experience.'

3 'A Christian Experience'

By Christian experience here is meant an experience *of* God, *of* Christ, *of* the Spirit, or of the redemption brought about by God. This experience might be in contrast, for instance, to the secondary experience of Christian fellowship as such, or of the church, or of conversion, or generalised experience of my neighbour *as* experience of God (Marsh 2004:120).

3.1 *An Apologia*

Some justification for writing of this kind of 'experience' at all in the sense of a characteristic Christian or religious experience in contemporary Christian spirituality appears necessary. To be sure there are no words for 'religious experience' in the New Testament. For example, '[i]t is impossible to translate "religious experience" into New Testament Greek' (Richardson 1969:127). Unsurprisingly then, experience has not found an obvious, self-apparent home in Christian doctrine. From a Protestant perspective one might add that 'experience' is not one of the tenets of the Reformation. In Luther's (1483-1546) understanding, faith is more likely 'a stubborn protest *against* experience, a protest that is based on the promises of God' (Nürnberg 2007:126; e.a.). More strongly put, experience seems to have been a late-developer in Christian history. Personal experience in Christian life arguably found a promotive atmosphere in the much later era of Romanticism's spiritual aspirations and emotional depths. However, as late

as the eighteenth century Evangelical Revival in England, the condemnatory word 'enthusiasm,' or 'enthusiast', articulated a general disapproval of religious experience. This censoring word, and its tone, was also part of the (often deistic) Church's disapproving vocabulary.

It may be suggested that there are preferable synonyms for 'experience.' Are not 'consciousness', 'awareness', 'mystical' or 'religious sensibility' less freighted and ambiguous words? Why speak of experience at all? To that it needs to be said, first, that the aforesaid recommended words do not sufficiently include the specific punctiliar kind of experience considered here at the moment—that is to say, *a* Christian experience. Neither do they convey seriously enough the patent claims to certain kinds of experience made by Pentecostalism at the turn of the 19th century. Its subsequent ecumenical diversification in the form of the Charismatic Movement in the 20th century and Pentecostalism's enormous experiential impact on the contemporary world, perhaps particularly in Africa, makes such 'experience' deserving of attention. From the Methodist tradition, it is well known that John Wesley (1703-1791) found the assurance of salvation he was looking for through his *experience* at Aldersgate Street—24th May, 1738. His diary relates that 'about a quarter before nine...I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ...and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins ...' (Curnock 1938:51). While that experience might (arguably) have sustained Wesley throughout his life, it was also of a pointed, interventionist kind, at a specific moment in time². Such experiences of the Spirit, in addition, seem more than sporadically referred to in the Bible, whether with regard to Jesus, the Apostle Paul and Peter, or the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Mark 1:9-11; Romans 8:16; Acts 2:1-13; Acts 11:5-17). What's more, 'spirit' or 'spirituality' does elicit an experiential sense by force of the words' own etymology and

² John Wesley does not refer specifically to this experience later in his life, in stark contrast to Wesleyan (or Methodist) fascination with it. Of course it was a landmark experience for him and tallies with much that follows in his thought and life. Still, have Methodists afforded this event a higher profile than warranted, especially where other crucial Wesleyan emphases are conveniently ignored or under-played? (co-author Trevor Ruthenberg is a Methodist minister).

signification. The Biblical words for 'spirit', whether *ruach* from the older Testament, or πνεῦμα from the New Testament refer to 'breath' and 'wind' in their literal meanings. Both wind and breath are experiential in their inducement, if not always consciously so. Certainly one's 'breath' is decidedly personal, animated and inimitably one's own, even visceral in connotation—and thus suggestively experiential. Few things are as experiential and self-expressed as one's own breath, especially as an infusive conveyance in the vocalisation of one's inner mind and person.

3.2 A Different Kind of Experience

While one would not necessarily want to question the validity of the kind of 'Christian experience' latterly referred to, one still needs to ask, for the present purpose: What is characteristically distinctive about spirituality's *contemporary* expression, even if this distinctiveness is still largely outside the mainstream of church life? What new thing does emerging or renascent spirituality teach, or have the capacity to teach, as opposed to present day notions? If these questions are under purview, which they *are* here, then one notices a different rendering or presentation of experience (or even discontinuance thereof) to that which has been heretofore described—indeed, *a different kind of 'experience.'* That is, the contemporary interest in mysticism, contemplation and apophaticism for example, particularly in academic spirituality but also in its lived-life phenomenon, reflects a turn away from sensate experience and from stereotypical experiences. These words (mysticism, apophaticism and contemplation) all bear a common-denominator of 'letting be,' or 'releasement.' The relinquishment is not only of imagery and analogical meditative activity, but also *ipso facto* of the dependence on, and expectation of, experience or experiences. Such openness and the surrender of human interference and prescription are seen more as relating to experience of God, thus essentially negating 'a Christian experience' commonly understood. This sense of negation is illustrated in Andrews' (2005:143) words that '[t]heological discourse does not define the experience of God. It merely points to the ambiguity that underlies every human experience and, at the same time, attempts to expose its limits.' Indeed, mysticism in its apophatic expression infers a releasement that pre-empt a will-to-power (Fiand 1987:88). Such releasement in principle does

not exclude the relinquishment of an experience, or desire therefor. In this regard the possibility of a much sought after *experience* of God being an instance of will-to-power, or perhaps even of incipient elitism, albeit of a religious nature, should not be dismissed out of hand.

Matthews (2000:87) makes the salutary point that (for instance) 'mysticism is not an experience which can be 'described'. Further, '[i]t is by no means certain that the mystical experiences of which people speak are really 'experiences' at all,' assuming, that is, that they are of the original classical kind (Matthews 2000:87). Indeed Turner's (1995:1) admirable work on mysticism, of which Matthews is most appreciative, virtually begins with the words:

... I began by wondering whether or not there was any such thing as 'mystical experience' ... because on the one hand there seemed to be a common, informal view around that the 'mystical' had something to do with the having of very uncommon, privileged 'experiences'; and, on the other, because when I read any of the Christian writers who were said to be mystics I found that many of them ... made no mention at all of any such experiences

An experientially charged contemporary 'mysticism' is, in Matthews' and Turner's view, less an accurate rendering of original mysticism than it is a reading *in* of present perspectives and aspirations. In other words, the 'experience' of classical mysticism turns out to be quite *devoid* of the word's preferred secular understanding, that is, its evocation of sensation, novelty and adrenalin rushes, religious or otherwise³. Another writer says, again with respect to mysticism, that while it is experienced as more of a

³ This might be one good reason for retaining the word 'experience' here. Using experience (admittedly rather open-endedly) enables us to engage our twenty-first century perceptions, inviting pertinent discourse. It can show what *kind* of experience, if it be experience at all, that contemporary resources in spirituality have to offer. For example, it could raise questions about the oft-heard, usually unreflective phrase, 'Christian *experience*', and whether these two words are self-evident, inseparable partners or just an unconscious way of speaking.

feeling than a state of intellect it is also a state of knowledge, 'but the experience is *not* similar to normal everyday seeing, hearing, smelling, and touching' (Hvolbek 1998:35-36; e.a.).

Suffice it to say, then, that *if* the particular or unique contribution of resurgent and cutting-edge spirituality is to bring to the Christian life a notable experience then that experience calls for careful qualification. It would further need to be noticed that the experience is less sharply punctiliar, or a kind of pointed 'visitation,' than is commonly spoken of in pietist or evangelical tradition. More important is the recognition that this kind of spirituality largely *undermines* the widespread cultural fixation with experience. It thus has something different to offer than might all too easily be anticipated by Christians in general or religious consumerism in particular. In short, a Christian spirituality that is now resourced by its own mystical and contemplative dimensions is in some real respects incongruous with the premise of 'a Christian experience' described earlier in this section. More pointedly, this newly resourced spirituality does not refer to the kind of experience that is popularly fed by an evangelical tradition and ethos—a tradition that in some real way lends to such experiences' substance and perpetuity.

3.3 Independent Discovery and Validation

At least one feature of 'a Christian experience' that bears likeness to renascent and retrieved spirituality is the sense of independent discovery, validation and personal interiorisation—or further elaborated, the inward realisation of *contact*; of mutual recognition and personal-divine reciprocity. Wesley's (Curnock 1938:51) experience at Aldersgate Street, for example, yielded an 'assurance' and personal appropriation, together with new-found faith⁴. Such personal validation and 'owning', with a degree of qualification, might also be found in what is new about latter-day Christian spirituality,

⁴ Wesley's word, assurance, would be less apt for contemporary spirituality, being era-bound and expressing a different theological climate. (Indeed Wesley vacillated on the profile that should be given to 'assurance' after initially according it firm doctrinal status.) But the commonality lies in the sense of 'owning' one's faith as opposed to living off exterior dogma in a condition of relative non-participation and religiosity.

inchoately as early as the years after the landmark Vatican II (1962-1965). In fact, even before Vatican II the anticipatory and intuitive writing of Merton (1960) reflected the turn to reclamation of personal validation and the individual reclamation of Christian experience. The earliest desert monastic, according to Merton (1960:6), evidenced:

... a refusal to be content with arguments, concepts, and technical verbiage. They sought a way to God that was uncharted and freely chosen, *not inherited from others* who had mapped it out beforehand. They sought God whom they alone could find, not one who was given in a set stereotyped form by somebody else [italics mine].

Merton's words characterise at least one understanding or indispensable part of an experience, namely something that relates to risk, trial and venture—that takes us outside of ourselves and our safe places. Where one speaks, in other words, of what is new and emergent in spiritual experience then it is, amongst other things, a reflection of the dissatisfaction with packaged dogma and a prescriptive spiritual theology. Put more positively, it has to do with a personal procuring and retrieval of one's spiritual life. A spirituality invested with this distinctive impulse for personal validation will not take back seat to hierarchical and elitist 'hand-me-downs,' whether those evaluative adjectives are harsh or not. Spiritual authority is no longer invested in priests, bishops, clergy, and people who were previously given such authority. Tacey (2004:37) says that this is so for two reasons: '[T]he inner authority of conscience and spirit is compelling, and people no longer trust old authority figures.' With regard to the second reason given by Tacey it will be clear that spirituality is ever a child of its times, thus the decidedly postmodern flavour of decentralisation, diversification and, in a phrase, 'suspicion of authority'. To be sure, the reclaiming of inner authority is reflective of the postmodern spirit.

In summation, while one cannot simply equate an experience in contemporary spirituality with similar breakthrough-experiences in previous Christian generations the commonality lies in making one's faith or spirituality *one's own*. Whatever an experience is taken to mean it has something to do with personal validation and discovery as opposed to largely

routine observance, or nominal adherence to religious legacy. Within the ambit of this commonality of old and new, however, is the arguably singular difference that the contemporary Church has lost the capacity to regenerate or 'reinvent' itself as it has been able to do before. One wonders whether the laudable developments in contemporary spirituality are more indebted to the spirit of postmodernism than the initiatives and theologising of the Church?

3.4 Evangelical, Mystical, Postmodern?

Following the present heading ('a Christian experience') somewhat pedantically and with overtones of piece-meal literalism one may ask in what sense the *new* meaning given to experience (as opposed to 'a Christian experience') fits the designation of a distinctively *Christian* experience. Notwithstanding the possible *angst* of conservative evangelical schools, it must be said that Christian spirituality is undoubtedly fed by mystical and postmodern streams. It is the mystery and sense of unprescriptive permission in postmodernism and the mystical tradition that has given new life to Christian spirituality, even if this sounds like an anomaly in certain quarters. Some theologians are more accommodative of mysticism's contemporary influence, but not without real un-ease. Bloesch (2007:137-138), for example, expresses concern about 'an unresolved tension' between two strands of Christian spirituality—that is to say, two ways of experiencing God. These strands, for him, are represented by the evangelical and mystical traditions. He speaks of the (at least potential) erosion of biblical personalism through the influence of a de-personalised mysticism. Of course, biblical personalism is here represented by the evangelical strain. Thus, the subject of mysticism needs to be treated with care if it is not to devolve into a scripturally orphaned divine impersonalism. Bloesch (2007:86) thus advocates a theology of Word and Spirit, as opposed to the inherent leanings of mysticism to impersonalism. Indeed for Bloesch it seems that the word 'mysticism' is better left alone altogether, where 'Spirit' is substituted for it. Regardless of such apologetic theological concerns, however, it is clear that the new dynamic within Christian spirituality is in no small part energised by a reclamation of Christian mysticism. Of course, with the attribution of *Christian* superseding the word 'mysticism' Bloesch (2007:137) has less

problems. One senses, though, that for him it is a reluctant concession⁵. In many ways Bloesch belongs to the cautionary school of 'spiritual theology,' which fears a renegade and subjective impersonalism, loosened from the moorings of sound Christian revelation. While this particular concern naturally pertains to 'lived life' spirituality it is a debate that comprises the nucleus of contention in academic spirituality as well. Can the new interest in spirituality, for example, serve as an impetus for a self-sustained department of spirituality in the university academy, including Christian spirituality within its department? On the other hand, is Christian spirituality merely a sub-division of the theology department? It seems to Schneiders (1986:264), for instance, that Christian spirituality has essentially earned its stripes for admission into a new department, of spirituality. Such spirituality, whether Christian or otherwise, then creates its own informed, inter-disciplinary theory, rather than being a subordinate of systematic-theological imperialism.

With more immediate respect to our sub-heading, however, it is important to note the different tributaries running into what is renascent about the flow of Christian spirituality, or experience of God, especially in the last two and a half decades. More troubling for some will be the way that the contemplative, decentralised and less 'dogmatised' renewal in spirituality does not lend itself easily to comfortable categories of the past. This does not mean, though, that contemporary Christian experience of this kind is necessarily adrift. Rather it might mean that people are coming to personal, owned experience of God in the only way they can in the present era. In addition, the kind of experience evident in emerging Christian spirituality, while risky in some real respects, is able to offer a critique of comfortable Christian enclaves or ideologies, particularly some of the 'isms,' not least

⁵ For Methodists of a strong Wesleyan persuasion the reminder that John Wesley, although showing some interest in the mystics and drawing from them, also evidenced ambivalence thereto, will introduce some wariness amongst the purists. More seriously, Bloesch (2007:138) reminds us that the esteemed Methodist forefather attested to nearly making shipwreck of his faith on account of the writings of the mystics.

those of evangelical-ism and mystic-ism⁶. This will open up some Christian breathing space. Hopefully postmodern-ism will also fall under such unilateral critique.

4 Experience and Immanence

It was said earlier in relation to 'a Christian experience' that a postmodern Christian spirituality in the main offered an experience of a different kind, given the malleability or even expendability of the word experience. Such experience relates to a new perception, an illumination, and an enchantment of all that is. If the cutting edge of contemporary Christian spirituality shows us anything it is the possibility of experience of God through creation and material rootedness. This experience has less to do with supernaturalist divine intervention than with a decidedly new way of *looking* at the world and ourselves. From the contribution of Christian mysticism, furthermore, comes the sense of *participating* in God and in life within that perspective and awareness. Contrary to hackneyed terminology of 'letting God into one's life' spirituality now relates more to 'participating in God's life.'

Tacey (2004:78), speaking of the spirituality phenomenon, says: 'I am not imagining anything 'added on' to our lives from above, but rather a new dimension revealed to our understanding from below. This dimension is revealed to our sight when we 'see through' the mundane encasement of our lives to the mystery beneath, within and around us.' The experience so described, then, is more of an illuminated, contemplative perspective that is sustained on a continuum of awareness than a sudden opening of the sky and the descent of a dove. Tacey (2004:78) explains:

We are not talking about direct or unmitigated experiences of a supernatural realm, personal communications with God, or first-hand sightings of angelic beings. Actually, I am not thinking about

⁶ 'I confess to a growing disquiet about the time-honored term *evangelism*. When we refer to the good news of Jesus Christ as an *ism*, we are in danger of reducing it to an ideology...Instead of *evangelism*, we should retain the verbal form, which is the way the term is used in the New Testament' (Gibbs 2005:39). Should we say the same of some other hallowed *isms* as well?

anything metaphysical or magical at all, but something quite ordinary and existential. By spiritual experience I mean a deeper and more profound apprehension of our ordinary lives.

We would not be amiss in pointing out that Tacey speaks more of spirituality in general terms as a current world phenomenon than he does specifically of *Christian* spirituality. His thinking, however, accords well with the qualified description of 'experience' that seems to emerge from the true Christian mystical tradition. Neither should it surprise us that Tacey has *intra*-experience of the Christian Church in his own life, though certainly not without a critical stance. Furthermore it is precisely in this Christian mystical tradition that there is now a burgeoning interest within the domain of Christian academic thinking and lived life Christian experience.

Here again it must be observed that theology and spirituality use the language and concepts of their own context and era. That is to say, we should probably expect that a similar appreciation of divine immanence is also generally affirmed by the present postmodern spirit. 'Although different constructive postmodernists describe it with different nuances, most of them affirm a vision that can be called *naturalistic pantheism*, according to which the world is present in deity and deity is present in the world' (Griffin 1988:17). Whether Christian spirituality can subscribe to pantheism or not is at least controversial. But it need not so subscribe to draw benefit from such a turn to immanence. As one learns more about the crisis of our planet and the delicate inter-relation of everything, so spirituality has come to see that 'organised religion' has not had enough to say about the experience of the sacred in creation (Tacey 2004:36). The pre-modern archaic cosmology of intervention *from the outside*, inspired and informed by metaphysical presuppositions, seems far less credible in a postmodern society, of which Christians are, of course, in some real sense a part.

Neither should we too easily equate this newer sense of divine immanence with a former modernistic appreciation of creation where God is reflected on as the unmoved mover or cause of it all. It does seem that Christian spirituality (or *that* particular Christian spirituality uniquely manifested in the postmodern clime) attributes to materiality, nature and the human body an enchantment and sacramental sacredness that was not possible in modernism's more dualistic, mechanised and detached scientific

understandings. The earth, the body and materiality breathes with an organic life and mystery. This enchantment was apparently extinct in Descartes' (1596-1650) philosophy, as in the work of Newton (1642-1727), or the (pre-Darwinian) mathematician and theologian, William Paley (1743-1805)⁷.

The trend to immanence in rediscovered (or reclaimed) Christian perception is convincingly attested to in various expressions of its contemporary spirituality. Feminist spirituality, for example, reclaims the sacredness of the human body, most especially in its affirmation of women and the mystery and sacredness of child-bearing and birth. Feminist spirituality, however, extends this wonder to all of life and even, in some works, understands the earth as an organic living thing, with all the inherent mystery and enchantment of the divine (McFague 1987). In this regard it has helpfully and insightfully challenged male-centred, over-cerebral approaches to theology. At the same time, in feminist usage of metaphor and analogy, it has shown imagination—and utilisation of a greater relational (divine-human) dynamic (McFague 1987). Creation spirituality, notably pioneered by Fox (1983), introduces a profound ecological earthiness to spirituality, with an imperative to take the cosmos seriously. He shows how a privileging of an exclusive salvation-history dispensationalism has in many ways undermined a broader spirituality that must encompass the entire universe—in short, a creation spirituality⁸.

Each of these spiritualities, it must be said, work from a distinctively Christian perspective and therefore qualify for inclusion in the dynamism and ferment taking place in this new discourse and discipline. In the case of feminist thinking in particular the latter sentence is probably an

⁷ 'With the rise of modern science, it became the generally accepted view that the universe was a giant machine, perhaps set up by God, but in any case a well-coordinated and predictable mechanism' (Solomon 1981:72). William Paley is best remembered for his image of the universe as a watch, left in automatic motion by a divine watchmaker.

⁸ Interestingly, the philosopher Albert Camus (1913-1960), bemoaned the fact that the Church had come to place its 'emphasis on history to the detriment of nature....When Nature ceases to be an object of contemplation and admiration it can then be nothing more than material for an action which aims at transferring it' (Camus [1951] /1986:263).

understatement. Feminist spirituality, and the new perspective on life-experience that it brings, has in many respects led the charge in what is most exciting about new developments in both 'lived-life' and academic Christian spirituality.

5. Experience and Transcendence

Does the new leaning to immanence bring with it an erosion of the all-important dimension of divine transcendence as it relates to Christian experience? A submerging of transcendence into immanence cannot be laid at the door of postmodern Christian spirituality. What is in evidence, rather, is a reinstatement of the mystery, otherness and essentially ineffable being of God, which in turn invites personal discovery and the internalising of one's own spirituality. We should perhaps not rue the fact that this initiative is in contrast to the unthinking pre-digestion of ecclesiastic dogma, which runs the risk of bringing premature closure to authentic experience of the divine.

Again, personal discovery and the need to experience the divine for *oneself* concur with the general spirit of postmodernism. Such postmodernism invariably celebrates diversity of approach and experience, and a sharp partiality to one-way authority directives—that is, to a hand-me-down *modus operandi* all too often identified with the Church.

If a more contemplative, mystical spirituality, however, does not undermine transcendence it does probably invite a reworking of it in some respects. In other words, a decidedly cosmological or metaphysical transcendence that may lead to an objectifying of the divine would find itself ill-matched with the post-modern growing edge of Christian spirituality. Indeed, a value or quality-driven *ontological* transcendence may better fit the part, or even a qualified *epistemological* transcendence, especially as the growing edge of spirituality now places more stock in the 'knowing' dimension. The point is that transcendence can be 'secured' in different ways without surrendering the essential mystery and, paradoxically, the unknowability of God. The reclaimed 'checks' of the *via positiva* and the *via negativa* are theologically iconoclastic and serve the purpose of dismembering a kind of primordial objectivity. While this mystical contribution may frighten some purists it debatably has more going for it than older two-dimensional, dualistic paradigms. *Contemporary spirituality, thus understood, evidences a new readiness to appreciate the mystery and*

unknowability of God. Indeed, 'for those who do not share this (Christian) faith or who have been alienated from it because its proclaimers have seemed to 'know' too much, the starker journey into the divine darkness ... may well offer a more compelling invitation to take a closer look at the Christian way' (Wiseman 1998:184).

Where is experience, then, in all of this? Given the indeterminacy of the word, not to mention theological suspicions already alluded to, one would say that experience here relates to a sense of personal journey, discovery and wonder. More than that it further relates to risk, testing and moving into the unknown—all concepts that are virtually synonymous with experience (Caputo 2005:23)⁹. Experience, in this view, has to do with stepping out as realisation of self-claimed faith, discovering the God who impossibly confounds all formal parameters and possibilities. It relates also to a sense of being incorporated into a ubiquitous God. The experience, furthermore, is ironically one of having no more to do with conjured or stereotypical religious experiences as if they particularly matter. Indeed, the view of pristine, unadulterated Christian mysticism seems to say that they invariably do not.

6 Experience and Academic Christian Spirituality

6.1 Spirituality as a Universal Experience

The exciting appearance in some academies of the discipline, Christian spirituality, is partly explained by a growing universal interest in spirituality.

⁹ 'To have an experience is to have a taste for adventure, for venturing and risk, which is the meaning of the root *peira*. Thus to be a real 'empiricist' means not to sniff along the ground of experience like a hound dog but to search for opportunities, even perilous ones, like piracy (all of which have the same etymology)' (Caputo 2005:23). Caputo defends the use of 'experience' in relation to God, defying Kant's (1724-1804) formal conditions when it is *God* who is at work. "Experience' is the sort of thing that calls for God and the name of 'God' is the sort of thing that raises experience to its highest pitch. Anything that falls short of God will not have the bite of experience' (Caputo 2005:25).

The interest has sprung from the everyday *experiences* of diverse groups of people, whether of religious background or not. The word spirituality, though often used unthinkingly, is part of contemporary language. Spirituality races more pulses, it seems, than 'organised religion', which is fast acquiring pejorative status in connotation. The universal interest in spirituality (again, primarily the fruit of personal insightful experience) is significant for reflective Christian spirituality as inspiration and impetus in the latter's academic emergence and development. It does not stop there, though. Schneiders (1986), a Christian New Testament scholar, has spearheaded an argument for Christian spirituality falling under an even wider academic umbrella of a general spirituality academy. She formulates an all-purpose, user-friendly definition of spirituality *in general*. This spirituality-in-general refers to 'the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives' (1986:266)¹⁰. Her definition for *Christian* spirituality, itself a universal phenomenon, also has the ring of personal experience:

We might define Christian spirituality as that particular actualization of the capacity for self-transcendence that is constituted by the substantial gift of the Holy Spirit establishing a life-giving relationship with God in Christ within the believing community. Thus Christian spirituality is trinitarian, christological, and ecclesial religious experience (Schneiders 1986:266).

Perhaps the sense of experience is more pronounced in the second definition. But significantly, it is the experience of people. authenticated or made more

¹⁰ What is debatably missing from this definition is the sense of otherness and external, numinous 'pull' that many people are experiencing. After all, there is surely some external energiser, imagined or otherwise, that moves and sustains the secondary experience of 'consciously striving', whatever name it/she/he be given. Does she go far enough in actually accounting for this almost postmodern religious *faith*, or sense of the numinous enchantment of reality? In defence of Schneiders, on the other hand, it *is* an all-purpose description that must speak for the widest audience.

plausible by their own sense of excited discovery, that conceives and further generates academic spirituality, in both its general and Christian understandings. Popular experience is taking a primary (if somewhat unprecedented) place in academic consideration. By the same token that is not to suggest that it is uncritically embraced in each instance.

6.2 Experience in Christian Scripture and Tradition

Commensurate with a postmodern shift to personal experience and validation is the revalorization, by academic Christian spirituality, of experience in its own Christian heritage and tradition. A ground-breaking exponent of academic spirituality writes that 'it is difficult to avoid the evidence of history that concrete spiritual traditions arise from Christian experiences or from the concrete realities of human existence rather than being derived from ideas and doctrines' (Sheldrake 1998:86). Christian experience pre-dates the scriptures and the subsequent reflection and coherence that scripture, tradition and theologising give to it. With that new-found appreciation comes the astute insight that the historical givenness of revelation is not presented in a dogmatised, reified way, but rather takes seriously, and incorporates, the human dimension of engagement on the experiential level. Earliest patristic theologising, moreover, had a greater dimension of holism and experiential involvement than later categorisation of theology into discrete sections. This last-mentioned categorisation had the notorious effect of fragmenting theology, or delegating different disciplines with pronounced entitative functions: speculative-philosophic theology, morals, ascetic and mystical portfolios. Such dismemberment, in other words, did not correspond with the earliest tradition of doing theology. The price paid for such formalisation was the rupture of what is essentially all-of-a-piece, or more precisely here, an inevitable marginalisation (and even denigration) of experience. Conversely, the speculative and philosophic domains of theology went into the ascendancy. A false distinction between 'mystical theology' and other forms of academic theology clouded theology's experiential core (George 1994:11). Johnson (1996:168) contends that 'Christianity has never been able to 'prove' its claims except by appeal to the *experience* and *convictions* of those already convinced' [*italics mine*]. He goes on to say that '[t]he claims of the gospel cannot be demonstrated logically. They cannot be

proved historically. They can be validated only existentially by the witness of authentic Christian discipleship' (Johnson 1996:168). One feels that Johnson makes an important contribution (as do many other scholars in various theological disciplines) to revisioned Christian spirituality. More than that, he shows how the Gospel and its experiential foundation can meet the postmodern mind with an intelligible message—and even a *καιρός* moment.

In addition to scriptural tradition, the long history of asceticism and mysticism provides important experiential material for academic spirituality's reflection, scrutiny and theory-formation. Of critical importance for the advent of spirituality is the way that Vatican Council II became the major efficient cause for reconciliation of asceticism and mysticism. This merger made mysticism universally accessible, de-regulating mysticism's previously unfortunate aura of privilege and eliticism. With this merger there came into being the possibility of spirituality as such, as opposed to the dogmatically controlled spiritual theology. Thus spirituality opened up the world of experiential legitimacy in a way that spiritual theology could not do.

6.3 *The Academy: Nemesis for Experience?*

It is important to acknowledge a final nuance integral to 'experience'—or, by association, to spirituality. Experience is sometimes a red flag to universities, who after all want to be scientific. Theological scholars typically fear the surrender of revelation to subjective experiences. Other faculties, along similar lines, have grave doubts about securing critical distance for such an experientially loaded field. After all, universities are not theological seminaries, which presumably have more parochial sympathies with experiences of such kind, if indeed they do not expect them in some cases. This will clearly not do in the courts of scientific learning. In this sense, then, experience occupies a highly significant and problematic place in spirituality's aspirations for academic status. An instance of *theological* disagreement on the issue of university status for spirituality is clearly apparent in the affirmative advocacy of Schneiders (1986) on the one hand and the less convinced Hanson (1990:50) on the other. Hanson is of the opinion that experience of necessity involves 'a strong existential concern to grow

in faith', which must disqualify spirituality as an over-invested interest group.

The contestation is real, and the subject highly freighted, bearing *inter alia* the stances of a resilient rationalism on the one hand and the perspectival, epistemological challenges thereto of Hume (1711-1776), Kant (1724-1804) and Hegel (1770-1831) on the other. Together with the last-mentioned challenge might be the further enhancement for spirituality of the postmodern climate. Here the underlying ethos is far less hierarchical and rationalistic. Postmodernism typically disassembles established structures and exercises a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' once more (Tarnas 1991:401). But whether spirituality justifies inclusion in the academy (or should be happy to do so) solely on the grounds of favourable postmodern climate is a moot point. Rather one would think that the matter is more complex than that. Spirituality has also built up a considerable, consistent literature and resource through the centuries. It is even possible that the uneasiness with experience is the death rattle of old university annexations and hierarchies that cannot survive the increasing diversification of a more specialised world. In any case, one must not speak too self-assuredly about experience but rather try to understand its own dynamic and dialectic. Can spirituality not be productive of its own unique, inter-disciplinary theory of experience?

7 Conclusion

Contemporary Christian spirituality has less to do with a pointed supernaturalist experience of God or Christ as with the experience of seeing all of reality with a new, contemplative and illuminated sight or perspective. Spirituality thus gives expression to experience less as a punctiliar inbreaking of God and more as a continuum of experience in a new kind of reality and contemplative epistemology. The sense of linear participation is far greater than experiences of punctiliar or staccato inbreakings 'from the outside'. Still, while God is experienced in terms of immanence, the transcendence of God is secured. Christian spirituality is happy with transcendent mystery; with awe, wonder and discovery as opposed to dogmatic closure. These experiences make sense given the postmodern climate and world view, but should not be dismissed on those contextual grounds.

Academic Christian spirituality is challenged and resourced by experience in three ways: First, there is the super-abundance of experiential spirituality to feed on and assess in society as a whole, often outside of the Church. Second, there is the perhaps not coincidental rediscovery of its own experiential heritage, both in early scriptural tradition and through the ages, but more recently in the post-Vatican II era. Finally, academic spirituality does battle with understandings of experience that would disqualify it from academic status. The battle for academic status goes on. However, there are signs that spirituality is a discipline whose time has come and that it has greater sophistication than its detractors appreciate.

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Celia Kourie

Professor: Christian Spirituality

Department of Christian Spirituality Church History and Missiology

School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Theology, Unisa

Kouricet@unisa.ac.za

Dr Trevor Ruthenberg

Methodist Minister, Thornton Society, Cape

DTh: Christian Spirituality

Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology

School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Theology, Unisa

trean@mweb.co.za

The Spiritual Dimension of Individuals in the Context of the Workplace

Yogi Penceliah

In a holistic view of life we are creatures with a mind, body and a spirit—all interconnected and arranged in a pattern that means that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts (Albert Einstein)¹.

Abstract

The paper reviews literature on spirituality and identifies numerous ways in which spirituality has been conceptualized, suggesting that when approached in the workplace, certain constraints are inherent. The paper makes a distinction between religion and spirituality and asserts that the spiritual dimension of individuals can be described as, *inter alia*, a search for purpose, meaning, value, integrity, humanity, and service to others. In the context of the workplace, the paper argues that where the spiritual dimension plays an important role there is a shift from earning a living towards living a meaningful life—where meaning has to do with turning one's job into a vocation, thereby achieving a sense of personal wholeness, purpose and direction.

¹ Albert Einstein (1879-1955). Available at: <http://careerfocus.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/326/385/S51>.

Keywords: Religion, spirituality, workplace, management, productivity, self-actualization, ethics.

Introduction

In the context of the workplace ‘spirituality’ is a fairly new concept. Conversely, in life and in individual human experience, spirituality is as old as civilization itself. As we live in the transition period amid the old meaning of work as survival, and the new meaning of work as livelihood, an enabling environment needs to be created where employees are happy and are able to actualize their full potential, whilst at the same time the organization achieves its own goals.

Over the course of the twentieth century a central development in the workplace was the rejection of the rational and mechanistic view of labour characterized by FW Taylor’s ‘principles of scientific management’ or Taylorism (Hicks:2003:39). This was due to the increasing recognition that workers are motivated by more than rationality or narrowly considered self-interest.

Over the last few decades, the emerging trend in managing people or human resources is evidently towards the adoption of the human resource approach. The thrust of this approach is that it is beneficial both to the organization and to the employee. In this regard, Grobler, Warnich, Carrell et al (2006:5) suggest that rather than addressing organizational goals and employee needs as separate and exclusive, the human resource approach holds that organizational goals and human needs are mutual and compatible: one set need not be gained at the expense of the other.

In referring to employees as a ‘human’ resource it is important to consider the dimensions that constitute human beings. ‘Human’ is a holistic concept and includes the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimension. Biberman and Whitty (1997:17) emphasize that the spiritual dimension is simply another facet of the human character which warrants consideration when viewing the human—whether employee² or employer—as a whole

² The term ‘employee’ for the purpose of this paper shall also include those in managerial positions.

person. Similarly, Kourie (2009:151) suggests that spirituality impacts on the totality of what it means to be human.

This paper shall provide a general overview of spirituality and covers the following aspects, namely, spirituality and religion, status of spirituality in South Africa; spirituality in the workplace; benefits of spirituality in the workplace; and spirituality *versus* ethics in the workplace.

Spirituality and Religion

Initial research in the field of spirituality advocated different religious perspectives on the concept, which with the passage of time subsequently changed (Kale & Shrivastava 2003). Even though the vocabulary of spirituality contains many religious terms, spirituality is viewed by some authors as a much broader and inclusive term than the creed of any single organized religion (De Klerk-Luttig 2008:510). In this regard, she cites Alexander and McLaughlin (2003) where they differentiate between religiously 'tethered' and 'untethered' conceptions of spirituality and concur that 'spirituality' cannot be confined to the religious domain (De Klerk-Luttig 2008:51).

According to Kourie (2009:148),

spirituality is no longer a phenomenon discussed quietly and reservedly in church circles, but has increasingly entered the public arena; it is no longer limited to clergy, religious workers, theologians and theoreticians of religion, but on the contrary is a topic of discussion, *inter alia*, in the health profession, psychology, business and education.

She adds that spirituality has come into its own, and that publications, both popular and scholarly, abound; courses on spirituality and retreats are in high demand; and that centres for the study of spirituality have been instituted to cater for this growing interest (Kourie 2009:149). Moreover, the academic study of spirituality has been introduced in theology faculties and departments of philosophy and religion (Kourie 2009: 149).

The concept *religion* is clarified by Koenig *et al.* (2000 in King and Crowther 2004) as follows:

Religion is an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals and symbols designed to (a) to facilitate closeness to the sacred or transcendent (God, higher power, or ultimate truth/reality) and (b) to foster an understanding of one's relation and responsibility to others in living together in a community. Spirituality is the personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, about meaning, and about relationship to the sacred or transcendent, which may (or may not) lead to or arise from the development of religious rituals and the formation of community.

Roof (1993) adds that religion may be viewed as 'institutional' and 'manifested in the practice of rituals, adhering to dogmas and attending services'.

The spiritual dimension, according to Smith and Louw (2007 in Albertini and Smith 2009:13) can be defined as a search for purpose, meaning, value, inner wholeness, connectedness, harmony, love, morality, beauty, wisdom, hope, vitality and gratitude. Our spiritual dimension is considered to be our ultimate or core dimension. Verrier (2002:35) adds that spirituality at work involves 'bringing one's whole self to work', including one's spirit. If one views spirituality as a basic human life dimension, then one would have to agree that it is impossible not to takes one's spirit to work. In a similar manner Schneiders (1986:266) asserts that spirituality refers to the deepest dimension of the human person, whether religious or non-religious, and presupposes a life that is not isolationist and self-absorbed, bur rather characterized by 'self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives'. In a parallel view, Kourie (2009:159) affirms that spirituality can denote the actual experience of self-transcendence, whereby life is lived according to the ultimate values and commitments upon which we base our lives. However, Waaiman (2002) in Kourie (2009:151) goes a step further and describes spirituality 'as that which touches the core of human existence, namely our relation to the Absolute'.

Spirituality, according to Cacioppe (2000:49) is not formal, structured or organized whereas organized religion has more of an external

focus. Spirituality involves a person looking inward, and therefore, is accessible to everyone whether religious or not. Also, spirituality is above and beyond any specific religious denomination and seeks to find and experience the common principles and truths that each religion offers (Cacioppe: 2000:49). Similarly, Graber (2001:39) also delineates spirituality and religion and contends that 'spirituality avoids the formal and ceremonial undertones of religion; it is non-denominational; non-hierarchical, and non-ecclesiastical'.

For purpose of this paper it was necessary to delineate 'spirituality' and 'religion' as spirituality in lay circles is oftentimes seen in the same context as institutionalized or organized religion, which embraces particular beliefs, moral values and traditions—often resulting in ambivalent or narrow connotations.

The fundamental nature of spirituality is that it emphasizes the core of human existence—that which connects individuals to one another.

Status of Spirituality in South Africa

Democratic societies are founded on the principle of the dignity and worth of all people and derive from the most basic human values. With the advent of democracy in South Africa, many pieces of legislation and policies were revised and new ones promulgated. Among others are the Constitution, Act 108 of 1996, and the White Paper for Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997.

Although the Constitution, Chapter 2: Bill of Rights does not specifically refer to the dimension of spirituality, it may be argued that under sub-sections 'Equality' and 'Freedom of belief, religion and opinion', it is broadly captured as follows:

Equality

9 (3) the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including *race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture and birth*.

Freedom of religion, belief, and opinion

15 (1) everyone has the right to freedom of *conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion*.

As spirituality may be the result of one's *conscience and beliefs*—aspects that are covered in the above Sections in the Bill of Rights, it may be argued that 'spirituality' in any context, including the workplace, is a human right. In this regard the intrinsic-origin view of spirituality argues that spirituality is a concept or a principle that originates from inside of an individual (Krishnakumar & Neck 2002:154). In a parallel view, Guillory (2000:154) also affirms that spirituality may be defined as 'our inner consciousness'. A question that may be posed is 'where do we derive our inner consciousness from', if not from within, namely, our conscience and beliefs?

In essence, spirituality in any given context implies a search for meaning, purpose or fulfilment that may be undertaken by anyone (organizations included) regardless of religious belief or denomination, or someone even with no belief system.

Spirituality in the Workplace

The spiritual dimension of individuals may be defined as a search for purpose, meaning, value, inner wholeness, connectedness, harmony, love, morality, beauty wisdom, hope vitality, and gratitude. Our spiritual dimension is considered to be our ultimate or core dimension (Smith & Louw 2007:19)

As indicated earlier we live in the transition period between the old meaning or definition of work as survival, and the new meaning of work as livelihood. Consequently, management in the survival mode has been based on command and control. In the bureaucratic and scientific management models in the workplace, rationality and legality provided the parameters for workplace behaviour. According to Ashmos and Duchon (2004:3) the spiritual dimension of human beings, namely that dimension concerned with finding and expressing meaning and purpose, and living in relation to others—something bigger than one oneself—was not yet welcome in the workplace. The notion, however that personal issues, *inter alia*, spirituality

should not be brought to work is not pragmatic as employees are holistic beings, and many link their personal self-image with who they are in the world of work.

Visser (2008:56) states that little has been written about the search for meaning in a workplace or business context, although meaning has been a serious topic of research and application for least fifty years, following the seminal work of Viktor Frankl. He adds that 'work is where we spend about a third of our lives—if meaning cannot be found in the workplace—our ability to lead a fulfilling life is seriously impaired' (Visser 2008:56).

In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning* Viktor Frankl (1946:105) narrates his experiences in a concentration camp during the holocaust. He asserts that 'man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a "secondary rationalization" of instinctual drive'. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning (Frankl 1946:105). He adds that 'Man, however, is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values' (Frankl 1946:105). It is indeed profound that under such trying conditions, a prisoner would search for meaning in his life. A few decades later, during his treason trial, former President Nelson Mandela also echoed similar sentiments—that he was prepared to die for his ideals and values. Clearly, a purpose and meaning in life is what should motivate human beings—without which life could be sterile.

In the context of the workplace, Visser (2008:56) further suggests that,

where the spiritual plays an important role there is a shift from earning a living towards living a meaningful life, because spirituality is not primarily about success, but about significance and meaning. Meaning has to do with turning one's job into a vocation, thereby achieving a sense of personal wholeness, purpose and direction.

Whilst management literature emphasizes the need to ensure productivity and performance, employee satisfaction is also important and often coupled with work as meaningful. In this regard, Herman, Gioia and Chalkley (1998:24) argue that today's worker is no longer willing to work in

an authoritarian and dehumanizing environment, and that workers want meaning in their work and balance in their lives.

In a similar perspective, Barrett (2006) contends that research shows that employees are finding it difficult to continue to separate their spiritual lives from their work lives as it is believed that integrating spirituality in the workplace will allow them meaning and purpose in life. It may be assumed that employees not only become personally fulfilled, but the organization reaps the benefits of profits, high morale, and a decrease in absenteeism. Accordingly, Rutte (2005:5) suggests that in the *spiritual workplace*, productivity can be achieved through 'nurturing the expression of the self and the spirit'. He adds that 'leaders should facilitate the discovery of spirit, to esteem it, to celebrate it, and to hold others accountable for their expression of it' (Rutte 2005:5).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory provides a useful framework for the understanding of needs and expectations in an individual and organizational context. The theory identifies human needs as either low-order or high-order needs, and is often cited in leadership literature as important for understanding the motivation of employees and employers alike. Swanepoel *et al.* (2009:325) suggests that the self-actualization model (of which Maslow's hierarchy is the best known example) is based on the work of existential philosophers who postulate that man has the innate drive to achieve his full potential, but that conditions of everyday life that place constraints on this 'instinct of self-actualization' and cause him to perform sub-optimally'. Self-actualization, a high-order need relates to growth and development—and to achieving one's optimal potential.

Hughes *et al.* (1999:395-6) also contend that the literature on spirituality and leadership generally classifies spirituality as a high-order need, most often in relation to *self-actualization*, the top tier of Maslow's pyramid. Visser (2008) adds that,

writing about high-order needs of his famous motivational hierarchy, Maslow used words like *vocation, calling, mission, duty, beloved job*, even *oblation*, to describe the sense of dedication and devotion to their work experienced by self-actualizing people.

Similarly, Tischler (1999:273) suggests that,

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as the majority of citizens in any society can be freed from Maslow's lower level needs (*food, shelter and security*) they can, as a society, shift their concern to higher order needs (*knowledge and self-fulfilment*).

Clearly, there is a perceived connection between meaningful work and self-actualization. It may, however, be argued that self-actualization may not be possible in all societies as it would depend on individual's priorities, and vary depending also on the level of development of the country.

Stephen Covey's popular book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* which embodies many of the fundamental principles of human effectiveness encourages an inward and intrapersonal journey. The 'Habits' represent the internalization of correct principles upon which enduring happiness and successes are based (Covey 1992:23). The Seven Habits identified by Covey are: *Be Proactive; Begin with the End in Mind; Put First Things First; Think Win/Win; Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood; Synergize; and Sharpen the Saw*. 'Habit 7' is taking time to sharpen the saw. It surrounds the other habits on the Seven Habits paradigm because it is the habit that makes all others possible (Covey 1992:287). Renewing the spiritual dimension, claims Covey (1992:292) provides leadership to one's life as it is 'your core, your center, your commitment to your value system'. Notably, the 'Habits' are about self-renewal—renewing the four dimensions of one's nature—physical, spiritual, mental, and social/emotional.

All of the great religious traditions at some level encourage the contemplative life, asserts Ashmos and Duchan (2004: 2) where the search for meaning and purpose is primary and the goal of living in harmony with others is fundamental. Thus, the language of the spirituality movement that is appearing in the workplace, claim Ashmos and Duchan (2004:2) is grounded in the tradition of religious metaphors: *personal transformation; rediscovering self; beginning a personal journey; having utopian visions; and experiencing renewal*. These are familiar descriptions in religious circles, but uncommon in classical organization and management theory such as that articulated by Weber (1947) and Taylor (1947) where managers were viewed as impersonal instruments to material ends, and were expected to control workers (Ashmos & Duchan 2004:3).

The rationale for the above assertion may be attributed to the angle offered by Zohar and Marshall (2001:54),

from the moment we begin school we are trained to look outward rather than inward to focus on facts and practical problems in the external world; virtually nothing in western education encourages us to reflect on ourselves, on our inner lives and motives.

In their earlier book, the authors rightly emphasized that human beings are essentially 'spiritual creatures' because they are driven by a need to ask 'fundamental' or 'ultimate' questions as to the meaning and purpose of life (Zohar & Marshall 2000). Also, humans have a drive and need to find meaning in everyday life experiences and to be involved in something that is greater than themselves which can help them to experience feelings of worth (Zohar & Marshall 2000). In the context of the workplace, such questions could include: What is the purpose of what I do? Is there meaning in what I do? Do I add value in the workplace? These questions would be motivated by wanting to construct logic of one's purpose in life.

While it may be true that the workplace must essentially be secular, detached and rooted in the real world, it cannot also be totally oblivious to or unconcerned with the spiritual orientation of the individuals who populate it, suggests Titus (2007). He adds that creating environments that respect the spiritual orientation of individuals and encourage their practice requires strong organizational commitment and effort (Titus 2007). Moreover, this is a productive effort for spiritual values such as integrity or honesty, co-existence or respect for diversity, anger management or behavioural decorum, compassion or caring and self improvement or learning are all closely linked to key management principles that organizations themselves are often seeking to espouse (Titus 2007).

In South Africa, even today, the dichotomy of work and *religion* is not a subject that has been vigorously debated, especially during the apartheid regime that claimed to uphold Christian values. Generally, this dichotomy pervaded the work environment—the belief perhaps that if *religion per se* was allowed, it may promote a multitude of religious perspectives—thus threatening the neutrality of the workplace. That being said, even today, a robust discussion on spirituality or the promotion and

benefits thereof in the workplace is a subject that not many people are comfortable with.

Benefits of Spirituality in the Workplace

For many the workplace is the only environment that offers an opportunity to interact and connect with people at a social level. Accordingly, Conger (1994:89) suggests that the workplace is being seen more often as a primary source of community for many people because of the decline of neighbourhoods, churches, civic groups, and extended families as principal places for feeling connected.

For individuals, where the spiritual plays an important role there is a shift from earning a living towards living a meaningful life, because spirituality is not primarily about success, but about significance and meaning. Meaning has to do with turning one's job into a vocation, thereby achieving a sense of personal wholeness, purpose and direction (De Klerk-Luttig 2008:507).

Although many people would find religious expression in the workplace highly inappropriate, spirituality is generally seen as more inclusive. It is viewed as embracing diversity of expression while underlining the interconnectedness of all life. Within that frame of reference are elements such as ethics, vision, values, meaning and mission (Barrett 2006).

Literature and studies show that globally, some workplaces are encouraging the development of spirituality because it is believed that a humanistic work environment creates a harmonious situation for both employees and the organization. According to that view, if members of an organization are happy, it may be assumed that they may be productive, more creative, and more fulfilled³. Barrett (2006) adds that that in light of factors

³ Personal fulfilment and high morale are closely linked to outstanding performance and, therefore, have a direct impact on an organization's success (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_philosophy). A dispirited workplace, however, can manifest itself in low morale, high turnover, burnout, frequent stress-related illness, and rising absenteeism <http://www.oppapers.com/essays/Spirituality-Workplace/138562>.

such as costs of employee burnout, turnover and absenteeism; the value of focusing attention on our inner lives should not be dismissed.

Through a rigorous study of the work of eminent researchers in the field of spirituality, Albertini and Smith (2009:11) extrapolated the recurrent benefits of spirituality in the workplace, namely

- a purpose-driven and meaning-based workplace;
- an appreciation based culture;
- management practices and decisions that are consistent with spiritual values such as integrity, honesty, love, hope, kindness, respect, and nurturing;
- management values employees based on who they are not only on what they do;
- management truly listens and builds a safe place where employees can speak the truth without fear of repercussion;
- a move from command-and-control leadership to horizontal servant (*sic*) leadership; more creative and innovative employees;
- increased authenticity and genuineness in communication;
- a greater sense of teamwork based on trust; increased ethical and moral behaviour; increased sense of fulfillment, contentment and belonging; and
- improvement of morale, job satisfaction, loyalty and ultimately productivity.

To understand spirituality in the workplace it is important to recognize that workers are spiritual beings whose souls are either nurtured or disregarded in the work environment. In this regard, Moore and Casper (2006:3) assert that

when an organization develops an environment where employees perceive they are valued and cared for as individuals, the organization is communicating that the job is only part of the whole employee. Employees feel as though the organization values them as a whole being, not just the employment or job aspect of the individual. As a result, employees feel encouraged to bring their 'whole selves to work and not just their work only characteristics' (Moore and Casper: 2006:3).

McGhee and Grant (2008:67) assert that although research on the subject of spirituality does not explicitly connect to the exercise of spiritual virtues, that it does not take much imagination to see the potential linkages. They further assert that spiritual individuals have greater organizational commitment, increased job motivation, increased productivity and greater job satisfaction (McGhee and Grant: 2008:67). Moreover, they suggest that this may be attributed at least partially to them seeing their work as a calling not just a job in which they want to do the best they can with humility while respecting others (McGhee & Grant 2008:67). The idea of 'all work is a vocation' may be an idealism for many sectors and societies. In South Africa some occupations that were traditionally viewed as noble professions or vocations, namely, teaching, nursing and law enforcement have lost its glory. There are perhaps a myriad reasons for this—*inter alia*, poor salaries and working conditions. Moreover, given the high rates of unemployment—individuals who do not necessarily have a passion for a job—accept it as a means for survival.

A question that one is bound to grapple with—are there any specific characteristics or qualities to 'spirituality'? To this end, McGhee & Grant (2008:65) extrapolated a multitude of core values of spirituality identified by different authors on the subject, namely, *equality, honesty, compassion, service, duty, trustworthiness, being a good citizen, empathy, integrity, humanism, responsibility, humility, empathy, service to others, respect, openness, caring and concern, and reflective practice*. Understandably, the above-mentioned values and characteristics are not only confined to personal and individual issues, or for that instance to organizational issues only but pervade matters that concern all of society. In addition, McGhee and Grant (2008:62) suggest that the behavioural characteristics of spiritual individuals include:

- i) seeking to transcend their ego (i.e. their own self-interests);
- ii) awareness and acceptance of their interconnectedness with others, creation, and their Ultimate Concern;
- iii) understanding the higher significance of their actions while seeking to integrate their lives holistically; and
- iv) believing in something beyond the material universe which ultimately gives value to all else.

Arguably, the behavioural characteristics of individuals in the workplace are indeed noteworthy, principally in light of the implications and ramifications of their conduct; both positive and negative. For example, the financial crunch that is currently sweeping across the globe, including even super powers is attributed to greed, corruption and unethical behaviour by so-called custodians of financial power and authority. In addition, and closer home, almost daily the media reports cases of fraud, corruption and unethical behaviour of, *inter alia*, political office-bearers and public officials—at all levels and in many forms and shapes. By at least taking cognizance of the consequences of their actions and inactions on the ‘ordinary’ public—that is, by having a social conscience—would hopefully serve these so-called ‘fat cats’ well.

Spirituality is not about bringing religion into the workplace or necessitating that employees *meditate*, *chant hymns* or *mantras* at their workstations. Spirituality in the workplace is an endeavour to create a sense of meaning and purpose at work, and a connection between individual and organizational values and goals. A major challenge of taking spiritual awareness into the workplace, however, is that in the main people are reticent to discuss their spiritual beliefs, let alone practice them within the parameters of a work environment.

Spirituality versus Ethics

Spirituality and ethics are dissimilar concepts, although it is easier for a spiritual person to be ethical. Garcia-Zamor (2003:358-359) asserts that

spirituality encompasses the same topic, which is so important in ethics: character, and the giving of oneself for the benefit of others. Ethics or moral philosophy aims to explain the nature of good and evil. It is important because the human world is dominated by ideas about right and wrong and good and bad, and most ordinary conversation consists of value judgments (Garcia-Zamor: 2003:359).

A variety of studies demonstrates a clear link between values and workplace behaviour where employees bring their ethics and value system to the workplace—which motivate their behaviour. In this regard, Hitlin and Piliavin, 2004, suggest that values affect one's perception of a situation, how one relates to others, and act as guides for choices and actions.

It is implicit that each individual should have a basic understanding of what kind of behaviour is morally acceptable (and sometimes obligatory) in the work environment, and what is considered morally unacceptable. However, within this broad framework are a multitude of variables that often are rooted in the individual's own spirituality, adds Garcia-Zamor (2003:359). It is almost with certainty that an individual's spirituality will determine his or her understanding and interpretation of ethical behaviour. However, relying on an individual's interpretation of 'ethics' in the workplace is not adequate. For this reason, a code of ethics is essential as it is a formal way of governing the conduct and performance of employees in the workplace—as part of the conditions of service.

The relationship between work and spiritual life is more complex than just exhibiting excellent ethical behaviour. Organizations need to understand that employees bring to the job, personal and moral core values that may be linked to their cultural backgrounds and spirituality, which they try to relate to their jobs. In this regard, the perception that work is a vocation can bring a sense of individuality to all employees, across the board.

Conclusion

Human beings are holistic beings with multi-dimensional aspects—spirituality being an important dimension. The spiritual dimension can be described as a search for purpose, meaning, morality and connectedness—which many authors consider to be our ultimate or core dimension. A growing

awareness and interest in spirituality shows that people have aspirations for greater things that could give meaning and purpose to their lives.

In the work context, numerous social and economic changes and shifts in demographics have also contributed to the growing interest of spirituality in the workplace. Spirituality plays a central role in upholding human values, morality, sense of duty and virtue—in both the individual and the work context. In this regard, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory provides a useful framework for the understanding of needs and expectations in an organizational context—where human needs are classified as either low-order or high-order needs. Self-actualization which includes knowledge and self-fulfilment is, for e.g. high-order need. Consequently, there is a perceived connection between meaningful work and self-actualization. As a corollary, this paper suggests that work environments that respect the spiritual orientation of individuals should be encouraged. Accordingly, if members of an organization are happy, it may be assumed that they shall be productive, more creative, and more fulfilled. When this happens one's job can be experienced as a vocation or calling, and their work as meaningful!

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Public Administration & Development Management
Westville Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Penceliahy@ukzn.ac.za

Ethno-spirituality: A Postcolonial Problematic?

Stephen Bigger

Abstract

This article explores the nature of spirituality in African traditions, for which we use the term ethno-spirituality. We examine the assumptions and effects of western missionaries, and how African spirituality negotiated with these new ideas and merged the new with the traditional. It problematises the relationship between Christianity in Africa and indigenous beliefs from disrespect for local religions, using terms such as animism, fetishism and paganism, to a more recent and respectful emphasis on whether we all have things to learn from each other. A particular case study is offered of San spirituality, exploring San story, the healing dance, ideas of spirits and deities, and transcendence. It concludes with a discussion of dialogue and hermeneutics around descriptions of God drawn out of philosophical work by Paul Ricoeur. It advocates a re-evaluation of San story, belief and practice as expressive of spiritual experience.

Keywords: San spirituality, existential myth, religious language, syncretism, religious hermeneutics.

Ethno-spirituality

Terms such as ethno-botany, ethno-musicology and even ethno-mathematics have academic pedigrees. Although ethno-spirituality is not newly coined here (there are popular usages), it has no academic tradition. It describes the discourse about spiritual matters found in traditional, pre-scientific communities. The term spirituality is contested. I argue elsewhere that it is

different from religious belief (Bigger 2007: 60-64); indeed religion can be anti-spiritual, and controlling rather than empowering. Spirituality often focuses upon non-material forces, such as spirits and unseen powers. This, whether taken literally or metaphorically, is a way of contemplating and responding to life, the world, ourselves and our relationships, dealing with meaning, mystery, and causation. Spirituality is explanatory in ways different from objective description and can be studied phenomenologically as reflections on everyday life. This article draws on studies of the San of southern Africa because their experience of modernisation has been different from that of settled groups who engaged with long-term Christian missions (although the interactions between San and missionaries are no less significant). The discussion explores how the San have expressed meaning, mystery and reflection on life and being; what this means for the study of spirituality; and what this might mean socially and politically for San identity today.

If the colonialist enterprise represented colonized peoples as subjects, the missionary enterprise represented them as spiritually ignorant and superstitious, needing education and civilisation (Etherington 2005: 6-8). Settled groups were influenced by mission schools and stations from the early nineteenth century onwards. Lord Hailey's *African Survey* of 1938 estimated that nine-tenths of all African education was in missions (Etherington 2005: 11-12) and anthropologists bemoaned the fact that indigenous peoples were becoming westernised and 'their' raw material was disappearing (Moore 1994: 1-7; Olivier de Sardan 2005:42-57). It was clear however that the change process itself is worthy of study. Franz Fanon linked resistance to the reversion to fossilised traditions (Cherki 2006 p.144), opposing the colonisers' assumptions of uncivilised barbarism stressing continuity between Africa's past and future (Fanon 1967/1961: 187).

Syncretism is a loaded word describing the mixing of one faith with another, hinting disapproval. The biblical prophets attacked apostasy, so missionaries assumed syncretism to be wrong. For converts to 'backslide', 'to relapse into heathenism' (SPGFP 1900: 47) was declared to be normal. In other words, Africans opposed the dominant voice, the hegemony of the west, and found their own voice by incorporating traditional beliefs and concepts. Stewart and Shaw (1994: 19-23, 46-65) comment that condemning indigenous belief as being of the devil had the effect of validating local belief in the reality of devils, spirits and deities. For from the colonial power to

believe that indigenous deities are powerful (and powerful spiritual enemies) strengthened dualistic belief. The missionary argument thus had an unexpected long-lasting consequence.

Georges Balandier (1955: 432) moved away from the convert/backslider dichotomy by talking about 'a third term'—neither the coloniser's religion, nor traditional religion, but a new construct with roots in both (Moore 1994: 99-103). In this he presages Homi Bhabha's (1994) *third space* in which dialogue between colonised and coloniser moves into an in-between hybrid discourse. John Mbiti (1969:1-21) promoted a 'transfused' civil religion drawing from both traditional beliefs and Christianity to emphasise moral responsibility. This might be termed *syncrenism*, the fusing of Christianity and indigenous spirituality. Peggy Brock, (in Etherington 2005: 133) quoting Susan Neylan's *The Heavens are Changing* (p. 130) on Tsimshian protestant missions in Canada comments:

the complex realities of people experiencing revolutionary change in their spiritual and material worlds... 'demonstrate not just 'inbetweenness' but the multiple identities of Native missionaries'.

Neylan (2003:6) comments that missions were 'sites of contested meaning'. It was dialogue with attitude on both sides, but not one in which the holder of power, the coloniser, could easily win.

Ethno-spirituality starts with the assumption that indigenous peoples were not ignorant savages but potentially wise within their level of knowledge. Missionary accounts obfuscate the picture as they were out of their intellectual and cultural depth and were indoctrinated into a hegemonic view of the value of western Christianity. Over two centuries they subtly interfered with indigenous beliefs so we cannot posit a historic pure African pre-Christian faith. Lack of scientific education and knowledge encouraged elemental speculation about ourselves, the environment, weather, and heavens which over time would have adapted to new knowledge. Our task is to re-evaluate this traditional wisdom without Christian or colonial assumptions.

Missionary Colonial Agendas

The spiritual heritage of Africa is rich and complex, but was obscured

by various colonialist agendas of missionaries, educators and politicians. In Africa, religion was one aspect of otherness, seen within a racialised world-view. Missionaries went to Africa and other colonies both to convert and to civilise; European powers went to exploit. Europeans brought with them healthcare and schools, the first to fix the body, the second to fix the soul as reading enabled the indigenous people to read the Bible. So Christianity came to the colonies as a complex package. Europeans also came with attitude. The indigenous people were, they believed, primitive, ignorant and savage. Such descriptions can be found in the titles of social scientists such as Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown (see the discussion in Moore 1994: 29-47).

The effects of missionary activity are complex, examined for example in a range of papers brought together by Norman Etherington (2005), cited above. Etherington (pp. 1-18) sees tension between missionaries and political colonisers, with missionaries not considered important in the broader colonising process, and sometimes regarded as a problem, accused for example of educating 'natives' beyond their menial status (p. 9). Missionaries sought to replace local beliefs and culture with their own set of teachings, mythology, rules and values. They saw 'other' as evil that had to be tackled by confrontation, replacing indigenous spirituality rather than exploring it. Chapter 8 'Trained to Tell the Truth' (Gareth Griffiths), describes how 'native' life stories (testimonies) were constructed for missionary journals. Its title quotes a missionary who tells how difficult it was to train converts, and one in particular, not to lie but to tell the story 'properly'. This reveals an oppressive imposition of western voice over indigenous voice: the girl in question was bitter about being bullied not to say what she really thought. John Barker comments elsewhere (in Etherington 2005: 101) about 'the missionaries' inability to convince even themselves that Pacific Islanders and Africans could be their equals'.

Paul Landau (chapter 10, on 'Language'), offers a significant discussion of how missionaries translated their message into local languages. They leave a legacy of literacy which was a mixed blessing. To make Christian teaching understandable, indigenous terms were needed which had pre-existing meanings. In 1813, John Campbell of the London Missionary Society working among the Tswana chose the name Modimo to translate God (p. 207), which was the source of huge misunderstandings, as it primarily referred to The Ancestor. This choice of term imported the fine detail of

ancestor reverence into what the local people thought Campbell and his colleagues were teaching them. Landau concludes:

Missionaries' lasting textual imprint has also been to primitivise and tribalise peoples in their own histories, construing their pasts as enchanted or superstitious. Not only popular insurgencies, but the forces of diffusion and oppression, have (re)occupied Christianity's vocabulary (p. 213)

Redefining language and its signifiers had the unintended consequence of confirming supernatural and superstitious conclusions and remythologising ancestry and tribal identity. The tribal aetiologies of *Genesis*, highlighting Abraham, Adam and God as ancestors were re-enacted in Africa through Bible study, reaffirming old beliefs in ancestors, and validating political structures through religion. Adrian Hastings (1994:458) agrees: the Bible was accepted because it was 'so comprehensively supernaturalist, so supportive of beliefs in spirits of various sorts'.

Issues for the Study of Religion

Religion and spirituality are both problematic activities, the former to do with practice and organisation, the latter with transcendent and transformative experiences. Much is currently being written on their relationship and the gap between concept and reality (De Vries 2008; Roehlkepartain *et al.* 2006, Bigger 2007; Bigger 2008). The relationship between religion and knowledge is problematic. Religious experience is categorically different from religious practice, but visions and emotionalism are problematic in themselves, some rooted in medical conditions (see Fontana, 2003 for a recent study of psychology of religion). That people believe conceptually in the divine is no guarantee of its objective reality, but the concept might relate to deeper realities (or 'phenomena' that are at the heart of phenomenology). It is in the ontology of *self and other* that psychology and spirituality collide. 'Other' is important if religion is to be ethical and not narcissistic. Relationships with those defined as 'other' can be special, respectful and significant; or they can be bigoted, oppressive, exploitative, dismissive and lacking in human dignity. The self-other link is therefore where ethics and morality begin, and where issues of diversity are encountered.

To treat African religion as a single entity (Mbiti 1975: 1-21) obscures the fact that 'African' religion is plural and diverse. Since this attempt at systematic theology comes at the end of two centuries of Christian provision of education, the search for the hidden Christ in African religion may be a post-colonial reaction. The search for synthesis could create a new hegemony. African academics are similarly exploring 'African Philosophy' (Rettová 2007:27-46). Ethno-spirituality is in contrast diverse, searching beneath beliefs in supernatural powers to rediscover symbolic rationality. Thus for example the idea of the spirit of the earth (Awolalu 1979: 45-51) is capable of rich utility in today's world concerned about the environment.

Definitions of spirituality embed beliefs in the spirit world and the supernatural. Sir Edward Tylor labelled as *animism* the belief in souls or spirits in living things and the environment, regarding this as the most primitive, early evolutionary stage of religion. Tylor's evidence came from missionary ethnology (Harries in Everington 2005:238-260), a tainted evidence stream viewing traditional cultures through dogmatic eyes. Some indigenous people may have lived up to the low expectations set on them, so seeming to strengthen the initial misreading. Respect for ancestors was a common feature of tribal belief; indeed what happened after death encouraged speculation on which religion was based (Bigger 2003: 14-15), but Tylor derided this as ancestor *worship*. The concept of holiness had an approved side, as spiritual experience of the numinous, after Rudolph Otto's *Das Heilige*, (1917), the full German title meaning *The Holy—On the Irrational in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*¹. However, primitive superstition was described through the Fijian term *tabu* (taboo) for anything forbidden, including spaces which were held inviolable and special. Today, some sacred sites are being returned to their indigenous owners. The task today is to rethink and reinterpret these experiential terms as expressive rather than superstitious.

Finally, pre-scientific people misunderstood causation. It was easy to think that every disaster has a cause, and that pacifying assumed causal agents (such as ancestors) might solve the problem. Aspects of magic and witchcraft came from here, with rituals to appease the elemental causes and angry spirits (Evans-Pritchard 1937). We do not know how much of this was

¹ Translated with the inaccurate title *The Idea of the Holy* (Otto 1917)—holiness is described as real, not an idea.

traditional, and how much influenced by missionary reifications, but it should be sufficient to say that mistaking causation is part of the human condition. Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1935/1987) solidified the idea that magic preceded religion as an evolutionary stage. However, belief in angels, demons, an afterlife and rituals are found worldwide, regardless of the availability of education. Uncertainty about the former certainties of science are a feature of postmodernity, but returning to pre-modern (pre-scientific) beliefs is not the only response. Alice Lenshina's Lumpa Church in Northern Rhodesia in 1953, which promised strong medicine against witchcraft (Robert Edgar in Etherington 2005: 235), seems little different from western popular 'spiritual' panaceas which promise spiritual health through guardian angels, crystals and sound bowls. Both are under-educated and misconceptualised, but are found persuasive by their adherents.

Myths are a form of fantasy. Fantasy literature today allows readers to suspend belief and read on as if the fantasy is true. With this willing suspension of disbelief (as Coleridge termed it), life issues, values and concepts can be explored creatively to see if it helps us to view our world differently. So too with myth, folktale, performance and elemental reifications. We can 'read' the symbolism of myths without the need to interpret them literally. We can understand the world as meaningful without taking absolutely literally that it was created in six days (Genesis 1.1-2.4), or that it came from a cosmic egg (the Hindu Vayu Purana 4.74-75). The existential meaning is that we reverence life as created, meaningful, beautiful and worthwhile. Beliefs are adaptable. Sharon Hutchinson's anthropological study of the Nuer of Sudan, a longitudinal re-examination of a people studied by Evans-Pritchard (1956; full bibliography in Hutchinson, 1996: 368-9), showed how animal sacrifice was once *respectful killing* for food; but was reinterpreted by Christians as wasting a food resource (1996: 299-350).

The San

The San's spiritual tradition lies outside of the 'African religion' generalisation. A body of primary texts and interpretive studies are available. San spirituality provides therefore a case study that can shed new light onto the study of spirituality in Africa. Given the richness of the academic literature on the San, this survey cannot be exhaustive. San means 'outsider', an ancient name which separated nomadic hunter-gathers from settled tribes.

The term 'Bushmen' has been used in both derogatory and honorific ways. Once widely spread geographically and linguistically, with group names such as !Kung and Jul'hoansi, their history is characterised by repression and oppression (e.g. Gall 2001:163-182, the best of journalistic accounts). Their experience of missionaries was less than settled villagers, but they took advantage of mission resources where offered (McDonald 2009). They are still often represented as modern-day stone age exhibits, to their disadvantage. The San lived² close to nature, with hand-made technology, feeding off the land as hunter-gatherers. They have been of immense interest to westerners (Barnard 2007: 23-37), starting with the frenzy of evolutionism³ which represented them as a vestige of an earlier evolutionary stage. Jane Taylor and Laurens van der Post celebrated 'Bushman' culture, working towards a better future (Van Der Post & Taylor 1984: 120, 123-170⁴). San stories and folklore collected by the Bleek family (Bleek & Lloyd 1911) remains an invaluable archive of a now lost culture. Andrew Bank (2006) tells the story of this family; Pippa Skotnes has artistically reproduced many parts of it with wide-ranging analysis, stemming from 'a love affair with an archive' (2007: 41). Megan Biesele, magisterial in Bushman studies, recorded !Kung examples (in Lee & DeVore 1998:302-324). The distinction between humans and animals is blurred. The deities behave as humans, arguing with their wives and having tricks played on them in power reversals. San life can be unpredictable so regarding some deities as wilful tricksters is

² The past tense is deliberate.

³ By evolutionism I refer to a range of extensions of Darwin's biological theory to society, such as by E.B. Tylor.

⁴ Stories 'collected' by Laurens van der Post were mostly quoted or misquoted from the Bleek's published books. Van der Post treated the San as *his Bushmen* and as children with childish ideas. After Jung, the Bushmen helped his search for the child within himself and for the child within society; their unsophisticated closeness to nature is something he argued all humanity should strive for. He disapproved of scholars studying Bushmen society. His biographer J.D.F. Jones commented: 'he made their sad story his own...In a word, he colonised them' (2001:215). He idealised their way of life so that their best interest was obscured—that is, sympathetic education which valued their culture but broadened their horizons, taught them skills and encouraged them to understand their own lives and stories as valuable and insightful.

fully comprehensible. Is this myth, fantasy, imagination or fallacious science?

The eland was held in special regard, and appears on rock paintings of animals, the hunts, and trance healing dances. David Lewis-Williams and David Pearce (2004) demonstrate the antiquity both of the San rock art, and of San spirituality depicted in it. They emphasise the prestige conferred through the claim to shamanic powers (p. 193) and the ways this shaped the community (pp. 185-204). The emphasis on body transformations, into animals for example explain the human/animal figures in rock paintings and point to a fluidity of everyday thought whereby one thing could actual be or become another (pp. 159-184).

Bushman stories are told mainly by the elderly who are valued for their experience of life. These stories are playful, earthy comedy entertainment: telling and hearing stories is perhaps the most significant leisure activity. The folktales varied from place to place—Bieseke noted: 'the student of [San] folklore [cannot] make many generalizations about their oral traditions' (in Lee & DeVore 1998: 304-5). She notes that the !Kung concept of God is different from Christianity, so avoids using the term 'God' in translations. In the stories, animal ancestors are anthropomorphised to the extent that their kinship with humans is presumed. This applies not only to valued mammals such as the eland but also to insects such as the mantis. Life is viewed as a respectful interplay between creatures, reflecting the positive relationships in human community.

Hans-Joachim Heinz (Heinz & Lee 1978:117-9), a German scientist with a Bushman wife, described two deities, a distant but benevolent creator Guthe, and the less predictable Thoa. Disagreements between them explain why life is uncertain—why some people survive illness, and why lions kill some people and not others. Guthe does not always get his own way. The spirits of the dead go to work for Guthe and Thoa, before returning to physical life. Thoa causes jealousy and tensions, and especially had to be kept away from women: the trance dance (pp. 212-4) drove evil away and rooted out any underlying tensions. The San lived, ate, slept and played in close communities, with very little privacy. Harmony—disharmony dualism was therefore a crucial dynamic, depicted by Guthe—Thoa duality. Guthe is tradition, the initiator, and so conservative. Thoa is radical, the pressure for change, the source therefore of arguments. The tension between these

tendencies, dramatised by the stories, is helpful if kept in proportion and balance. Kramer (1995:304-7; 320-1) emphasised the ambiguity and liminality of Bushman thinking, fluid, in between, and 'along edges' through existential thresholds⁵ (1995:17).

Elizabeth Marshall Thomas was brought up with the !Kung San alongside her anthropologist mother, Lorna Marshall (see especially Marshall 1999). She described camp life (1959) and later, in more detail, she noted (2006:255ff) how her mother used to discuss the stars and constellations with an old who described a huge constellation, wholly visible only once a year, called Tshxum, resembling a horned beast protecting the earth. Lorna Marshall (1999: 264-268) later gave more detail of the same story, linking the constellation with The Pleiades (= Tshxum), with Canopus and Capella being the horns. Interpreting the night sky through story is a key part of San spirituality. The stars in the sky give rise to imagination, stories that make the constellations predictable. They knew when to tell Lorna Marshall that the horns were visible. The sun was not revered but considered a danger to protect oneself from. The two main deities were horizon deities, one in the east, the other in the west. These gods do not punish (Thomas 2006:261) though to displease them can have unpleasant consequences, just like stepping on an adder. The San do not interfere with nature, to avoid accidental dangerous consequences. The San were generally aware of what the deities liked and disliked. Good or bad consequences could come from accidentally getting in the deity's way, and the San were concerned to plot a favourable course for their lives. Stories told of deities being bullied, harried and tricked, showing that coming out on top is not a matter of compliant worship. The gods are an intrusive layer of existence: their actions explain why things go wrong, and if you are lucky, you might see it happening in time to dodge. #Gao N!a (the greater god) was tricked by his wives; //Gauwa was feared as god of death. After reaching //Gauwa, spirits are said to continue to age, but develop long straight hair (unlike the Bushmen's tight curls). People, and some animals, were said to have an inner energy or *n!ow* (Thomas 2006:268). One person's energy interacts with others and with things around like the fire and creates a complex web of consequences. This

⁵ This owes much to the work of Victor Turner (1969) on liminality (the in-between state), and ritual thresholds such as rites of passage. I have reviewed this elsewhere (Bigger, 2009).

is explanatory rather than useful, for people did not attempt to change their fortune by experimenting with *now*.

We need to exorcise the missionary influence, and especially their models of animism and totemism, before we can glimpse indigenous thought processes. They saw their world and the skies not scientifically but mythologically. The San knew the material world very well—they knew animal behaviour, tracks, the signs of nature, the seasons and sources of food. In a sense, their physical world was predictable: tracks led to the animals they expected; the roots they knew grew where they should. There are however other powers at work and dangers that knew they had to avoid, and they described these through elemental myths. Aspects of the world—the wind, the weather, the heavens—were personified. These could be tricksters that people needed to second-guess. Life is unpredictable and only the wise and cunning survive. The sun, lack of prey or plant food, and disease could kill. These dangers were storied. A hunt could end in success or failure: what made the difference? What caused some things to happen, and other things not to? If everything that happens is meant to happen, then someone *causes it*. So there are forces beyond our understanding. There is a spirit within us—the dead don't disappear, but the ghost/spirit has its own existence. In seeking to answer these concerns, the San were not being more primitive or any more pre-scientific than the average under-educated westerner, but they were in their own terms clearly observing and analysing what they experienced.

Living communally without privacy means that psychological pressures are also real—jealousy, selfishness, abuse of power—so are visualised and reified as evil spirits to be controlled and exorcised through the trance-dance, which then has therapeutic value and happens every few days. Lorna Marshall (1999: 63-90) provides a detailed study. Elizabeth Thomas (2006:272) notes that they called the illness that is healed through trance 'star sickness':

the force that pervades a group of people and causes dissent and jealousy, anger and quarrels and failures of gift giving—the evils that drive people apart and damage the unity that is life itself on the savannah. Physical illnesses are bad, but star sickness is worse, and it was this that the trancing men flung back to the surrounding spirits, they who were waiting just beyond the firelight.

Generally it is men who trance and dance, the women participating by singing and clapping. These demons are visualised in the trance, and the entranced men cast them out from the women, so the performance is gendered, like a reconciliation after a row, only timed to prevent the row in the first place. The dance as a source of healing was explored by Richard Katz, et al. (1997) who describe the dance as celebratory, joyful and deeply healing in general (p. xiii). They commented,

Healing is based on *n/om*, a spiritual substance or energy residing in the bellies of the men and women who have been taught to activate it. *N/om* is said to 'boil' when the people dance strenuously or sing the healing songs strongly; it leaves their stomachs and travels up their spines and out of their fingers, where it may be used to heal by the laying on of hands. The Ju!'hoan people highly respect those who dare to feel the pain experienced when healing and the synchronized presence of the whole community celebrates the healing power's existence.

Katz elsewhere (in Lee & DeVore 1998: 281-301) calls this !Kia-Healing, an ability available to all, male and female, but mastered only by half of the population after a process of education. To have a good imagination and a head for fantasy is said to be important. He calls this 'transcendence', even though his whole description is of an experience from within, moving up the spine until the !Kia state is reached. In this state, people can walk on hot coals, talk with spirits, and claim to see great distances and even have X-ray vision. It is viewed less as going beyond oneself, as discovering one's real self deep down. It may relate to what Ioan Lewis (1971) called 'ecstatic religion', emerging from stress and poverty; Thomas DuBois (2009: 109-132) to be sure finds trance used by shamans worldwide.

Their stories show that they had a penchant for fantasy. People became animals, and animals people. A boy, looked at by a menstrual girl, became a tree. He was still a boy, yet seen as a tree *and believed in some way to be so*. In trance, the 'seers' became animals and birds, and travelled to other regions. To trance is to see mystically, whether spirits, or sickness arrows, or far-off regions. Others were interested to talk about what had been seen when the trance was over. The artist sees non-material insights which

come across as true; writers similarly see their characters and try to depict them faithfully. The reader engages with fiction and fantasy deep in the brain having suspended disbelief. San experiences are no less true than these. They deconstruct human anxieties and tensions, visualise them and defeat them. It is part of our human heritage, a shaman experience found everywhere (Eliade, 1972; Neylan, 2003:29; DuBois, 2009: 109-132). Spirits may not be 'real', but it is true that jealousy and depression can kill, whether we differently describe this as a police officer, psychologist or storyteller.

A Site of Spiritual Struggle: An Application of Paul Ricoeur

The early colonists had a low regard for aboriginal practices and beliefs, viewing these as heathenism, paganism and animism. However, the supernaturalist assumptions of the religion they imported, Christianity, validated the ideas of the indigenous peoples about the supernatural power of witches, demons, spirits and ancestors. Translating the Bible into local languages brought about a fusion, a syncretism, between African and biblical teachings. The apparent reality of demons, spirits and witches left a legacy of war between light and darkness, a dualism of good and evil which could mislabel indigenous spiritualities like the San. Once African people could take ownership of their version of Christianity, membership greatly expanded. The San were, however, a hard to reach minority for missionaries, but met instead an academic elite interested in San traditions.

The philosopher Paul Ricoeur applied hermeneutic ideas to spirituality in *Figuring the Sacred* (1995). For him, there is an intellectual conflict between being a rational philosopher and believing in God, which he resolves in the notion of *ultimate concern* (1995: 46f). The spiritual core lies on this view deep within human experience. In a paper on Naming God (1995:217-235), he expounds Christianity, but his philosophical case can apply also to San spirituality.

- He starts with *presupposition* that theology (or spirituality) is *meaningful* so it is right to look philosophically for meaning.
- Secondly, *text*. The naming of God (that is, defining spiritual meaning) has already taken place in texts from the past. A text

(written or oral) has scribed inner experience into words, and by doing so it has become *discourse*. Writing fossilises spoken words; written words are brought back into the domain of speech through performance (reading, preaching). Discourse is *about something*, the *referent*. Discourse about God refers to something, the words being closely linked to experience. Language about God is really putting experiences into words. Each passage (within and across religions) tells a different story ('polyphony'), preachers have different motives and experiences, and each reader brings different experiences to the reading. The text is not 'revealed'; some discussion of themes might be considered 'inspired'. San story comments on life experiences, commenting on mysteries such as why people die, why weather happens, why food is scarce, and why people are as they are. These mysteries control San life, and are not to be taken lightly.

- Thirdly, *poetics*, or language celebrating itself. 'Poetic discourse ... refers to our many ways of belonging to the world', the modalities of *rootedness* and *belonging to* (222). We will miss this if we limit ourselves to a positivist view of reality based on verification and falsification. Poetry expresses what cannot be expressed by scientific description. In poetry, including story, understanding is revealed, and light dawns.
- Fourthly, *polyphony*. There are many voices, none privileged. Each should be heard for its own sake, with respect. None should be censored because they disagree with a pre-determined script. The versions of deity and ultimate meaning implied in San stories are part of the universal poetic expression of ultimate human meaning.
- Fifthly, *limit-expressions*. Language about God cannot become knowledge, since it is about infinitude and mystery. Spirituality is the language of metaphor and simile, not knowledge. To understand these stories *as fact* (that is, knowledge), is an error. Christianity and San share a view of divine weakness: the Christian God died on a cross, the opposite of a view of God in total control. San stories are of tricking the Powers that be, secular and sacred, into making human

life comfortable. Both recognise that belief in a Deity does not simplify life. Life is a mess in an out-of-control world.

- Sixthly, it is a *poem of God or of Christ*—indeed, or of Vishnu, or ʒGao N'a. There is surely a poem of San deity to be uncovered that is pertinent to life experience.
- Seventhly, *poetics and politics*. Poetry opens up a new non-ordinary world which helps readers to understand themselves more clearly. Poetry about God *remakes the world*. Self understanding is defined by this constructed poetic world. Hermeneutic dialogue presupposes that neither the writer's nor the reader's voice is privileged. In an African context, the poetry of deity remakes, or redefines the worldview, and enables people to consider their self understanding on that basis. To cast out such poetics as infantile and foolish, and to attempt to replace with another account (equally foolish) from a different set of experiences, is both futile and oppressive. It can only lead to loss of self esteem and agency, followed by meaningless and inauthentic attempts to be obedient to a powerful other. Attempts to subvert this process back to the authentic (whether syncretism or syncretism) can only be applauded.

I have refocused Ricoeur's analysis to San spirituality to underline the value of rational commentary and hermeneutics that we need to attempt if we assume there is meaning to be found. Spirituality exists where ultimate concerns are considered and expressed. Dealing with greed, jealousy, ambition, aggression, anger, and promoting love, care, altruism, and harmony are deeply rooted—and these are central components in the trance dance. Negative impulses may be visualised as spirits and demons, and chased away—this need not be reduced to supernaturalism but be linked with poetic imagery. To drive away jealousy, it may help to visualise it.

Conclusion

The human race are storytellers and use stories to express deep concerns from their inner experience. Fiction is hugely popular for this reason. We

commenced our discussion by proposing that ethno-spirituality, the expression of ultimate concerns regarding the human condition, be taken seriously and become the object of unbiased study. This article demonstrates that the missionary agenda had had a number of effects—to declare ethno-spirituality unworthy; to declare imagery as idolatry, and visualisation as superstition. Also, by identifying indigenous deities with the devil, missionaries validated belief in a devil with all the power and attractiveness of the indigenous deity.

The hard to evangelise San escaped the worst of this superstition-promoting syncretism. San spirituality has been examined through myths and the practice of trance dance. There are regional and linguistic variations, and some principles of interpretation are developed, emphasising existential concerns rather than supernatural beliefs. It is argued that existential concerns help us also to understand the healing nature of the trance dance. Through Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics regarding the sacred, rational and existential interpretations of myth and ritual are encouraged. This extends Ricoeur's approach beyond Christianity, and exposes the folly of confusing poetic imagery either with fact or with superstition. There is a need for future study to focus on poetic imagery expressing ultimate concerns.

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Stephen Bigger
Institute of Education
University of Worcester, UK.
s.bigger@worc.ac.uk

Is the Secular State the Root of our Moral Problems in South Africa?

Martin Prozesky

Abstract

There is widespread concern about the moral health of South Africa, a concern that extends in the eyes of some to its ruling party and some of the party's leading members. In an interview with a leading Sunday newspaper in 2006, the well-known founder of the Rhema Bible Church, Pastor Ray McCauley, blamed the secular state for our moral degeneration. Given the much publicized visit of President Jacob Zuma to Pastor McCauley's church in the pre-election period early in 2009, one wonders whether similar misgivings about the secular state might now be stirring in parts of the ruling party. I argue in this paper that blaming the secular state is spurious on ethical grounds; in an exercise of empathy required by the phenomenological method of studying religious issues I then venture some contentions that they are also spurious on biblical and theological grounds, which Christians presumably regard as decisive, and also on more generally on grounds of religious diversity, and I end by inverting the Pastor's view by arguing that it is largely the churches and politics, and not constitutional secularity, that are failing the nation ethically.

Keywords: secular state, secularism, moral decline, conservative Christianity, unethical politicians.

Introduction

Few South Africans of conscience will dispute the contention that the country has a serious problem of unethical activity, some of it criminal. Violence, murder, corruption in its various forms, nepotism, sexual abuse, price-fixing by large companies, poor service delivery by lazy officials, aspects of the arms deal, thuggery on the sports field, school teachers and nurses with insufficient concern for those in their care—the list is a long one, and may be getting even longer. Any country with a murder rate seven times greater than that of the USA, where powerful firearms can be bought easily over the counter, and where a shocking 25% of men have reportedly admitted to having raped at least once, is a country in deep trouble ethically.

These grim realities lead people of conscience to seek causes in order to eradicate or at least alleviate the problems and enable the country to raise the level of its ethical performance. This is a crucially important task, calling for the utmost care and thoroughness, for we cannot afford to misdiagnose the situation and thereby seek correction in mistaken ways. That could well make matters even worse. In this context, a special responsibility rests on those who occupy positions of influence and power in politics, education, law and, perhaps most of all, in religion. This holds especially for South Africa's Christian churches because they have the allegiance of at least 75% of the population.

In this context, the published views of one of the country's best known and most influential Christian leaders, Pastor Ray McCauley, founder of the Rhema Bible Church, come under discussion in the present paper, because he has offered a clear and emphatic diagnosis of the root cause of our moral troubles. In an interview with a leading Sunday newspaper in 2006 he attributed them to the secular state that South Africa became with its 1996 democratic constitution. But before setting forth and then evaluating this contention, three extremely important clarifications are needed.

Firstly, it is not Pastor McCauley himself or even his published view that is centrally at issue here, but the contention that the secular state is the source of our moral decay. The pastor may well have changed his mind, while the view remains an important one which I have heard voiced by others, one of whom—albeit in unpublished form and thus anecdotal—was at the time a very senior academic in a top executive position at a major South African university. Nor is it limited to South Africa or even to Africa, as

important studies of developments over the past decade or two reveal, showing it to be present in many parts of the world, though these developments are not the concern of the present paper (Westerlund 1996; Juergensmeyer 1993).

The second clarification concerns the central term in this paper, namely 'secular' in the phrase 'secular state'. While the term is explained more fully later in the paper, an introductory clarification at this point is helpful. It refers to the stipulation in South Africa's democratic constitution of 1996 that there is freedom of belief and associated practice for all belief-systems, such as all the country's religions, and that none of them has preferential status in law (*Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1997, 15(1)). This definition accords very well with the standard dictionary definition of secular as 'not subject to or bound by religious rule' (*South African Concise Oxford Dictionary* 2002: 1058).

The third clarification concerns the stance that faith communities should take to the secular state, as determined by ethical principles. Should they consider it to be a moral error or should they support it as morally sound? The contention of the present paper is that they should support it, for two main reasons. Firstly, by enshrining freedom of belief and practice equally for all belief-systems, the South African secular state meets the ethical principle of justice (which is every bit as such a part of religious ethics as of non-religious ethics); and secondly, because support for the secular state is required by the so-called Golden Rule, which is taught (in either positive or negative form) by all the faiths and certainly by Christianity, where it occurs in the Gospel of Luke (chapter 6, verse 31; cf. Hick 1989:299ff). It requires that people should do to others what they wish done to themselves. Members of faith communities wish to be free to practice their religion and they want to be treated justly, so they must want the same for members of other faith communities. That is precisely what South Africa's secular state does, unlike an arrangement which gives greater, or even sole, legal status to just one religion.

What follows is divided into four sections, starting with the view that blames the secular state for South Africa's moral problems. This is followed by a section in which I argue that the view in question is mistaken. Then I outline and substantiate what I hold to be the real causes of the problem, and end the paper with my conclusions.

1. Blaming the Secular State for Moral Decay

Pastor McCauley's view appeared in published form in an interview with the *Sunday Times*, the country's largest circulation newspaper, on 14 May 2006, in the editorial pages of that newspaper (*Sunday Times*). Here are the relevant parts extracted from the interview, with the opening question repeated in italics:

Why are we Living in Such a Godless Society?

It's all relative, you know. It seems like there's a lot of chaos going on in the world. Places like France, Holland, they've been shocked by the moral fibre of their nation themselves.

... A godless society ... that's why Holland and France, being secular states, have declined dramatically in their morality. Once you become a secular state, once you get into a place that is godless, the country becomes bankrupt

Let me repeat that I am not concerned so much with Pastor McCauley's views at the time of the interview or at the present time, as with the validity of the view that posits the secular state as the root cause of the moral decay we all know to be widespread in South African society. The view set forth in that interview is however a handy, clear and concise expression of this notion, and as such provides a convenient basis for analysis and evaluation.

Before proceeding to that evaluation, it is important to note three further points. The first one is the way Pastor McCauley's view, as given in the interview, equates secular with godless, godless with being morally bankrupt and secular with moral bankruptcy. The second is to recall the visit by President Jacob Zuma's visit to the Rhema Bible Church in Randburg, Johannesburg, on 15 March 2009 and thus in the period before the April 2009 general election, and similar reported visits to other Christian churches, most or even all them apparently in the more conservative part of Christianity, by him and other senior members of the ANC (see www.mg.co.za, accessed 30 July 2009).

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A word of clarification is needed at this point about the phrase 'the more conservative part of Christianity' as used in the previous sentence and elsewhere in this article. I have in mind members of that faith who share most or all of the following characteristics: a belief that their religion is the only means of salvation; that Christ is the only saviour; that he was born of a virgin mother; that the Christian Bible is the sole source of saving truth and moral guidance, and even—for the very conservative—of factual matters like the creation of the universe, being inspired (even dictated, according to some of the most conservative) by God himself, so that where biblical teaching and science are in conflict, as many of these Christians maintain is the case in connection with evolution and the story of creation in the book of Genesis, the former is to be preferred. In connection with morals, conservative Christians would typically hold that abortion, sex outside marriage and homosexuality are wrong, as are same-sex marriages, that the death penalty is mandated by the Bible and thus by God, and that husbands are divinely authorized to be in control of their families.

Were the visits by important members of South Africa's ruling party to churches whose leaders and members hold the beliefs noted above merely ways of winning votes for the ANC or might they betoken the beginnings of a new alliance between government and amenable parts of the faith community, or at least the conservative Christian part of that community, bearing in mind that the growth in church membership and attendance is there and not in the so-called mainline churches like the Anglicans and Methodists? If such an alliance is being sought by either or both sides, it has serious implications for the continuation of the secular state in South Africa. While nothing along these lines has to my knowledge been reported, it would be well to keep the mere possibility of it in mind. After all, conservative sectors of the country's Christian churches have made no secret of their unhappiness in recent years about some of the liberal social legislation that the previous ANC governments under Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki have given the country on matters like same-sex marriage, abortion, homosexuality and the abolition of the death penalty, as is well known in South Africa.

The third point to note is that Pastor McCauley is not the only person in South Africa to have expressed grave reservations about the moral desirability of the secular state. In the period before the adoption of the 1996

constitution which gave us our secular state, those of us who were involved in the process of defining the place of religion in post-apartheid, democratic South Africa, will recall, as I do, that there was no shortage of support for the view that the new South Africa should be governed by Christian values. It would be very surprising if the people and organizations that held that view had vanished, leaving Pastor McCauley as the sole champion of that point of view.

The real issue, however, is not whether that view is widespread or not in South Africa; the real issue is that it exists and that it concerns a critically important problem, the problem of moral decay. If the decay really does go back to the adoption of a secular state then we must think again, but if the real cause of the problem is elsewhere, this must be made clear and attacks on the secular state firmly rebutted in the interests of valid diagnosis and treatment.

2. Why the Secular State is not to Blame

My contention is that it is mistaken to blame the secular state for our ethical problems. To explain why, I need to do two things: firstly explain 'secular' more thoroughly than was done above, and contrast it with a superficially similar but in fact very different term, 'secularism', and secondly refer back to some early aspects of the process that led, ultimately, to South Africa becoming a secular state, aspects in which I had a small hand.

I want to propose that it is absolutely essential to distinguish between a secular state and secularism or a secularistic state, and that the 1996 constitution provides the former but wisely and ethically prevents the latter from becoming the governing ideology of the country. Let me therefore define these two terms as follows. 'Secular' means independent of religious control of any kind; it means fairness and neutrality of stance towards them, but the neutrality is an enabling or facilitative neutrality because it provides freedom of belief and operation for all. By contrast, 'secularism' is a philosophy or ideology which opposes religion, deeming it to be a bad thing, at best confused and at worst deeply damaging to humanity. Classical Marxism is the best example, with its condemnation of religion as the opium of the masses—the drug that allegedly induces false consciousness about the real causes of human misery and thus an inability to deal with them. This is

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not, of course, what the 1996 constitution stipulates and is certainly not what I advocated back in 1990 and in the years that followed, and which I am here defending, again on ethical grounds. In short, people like me advocated, and the 1996 constitution provides, a secular state, not a secularistic, anti-religious state.

Returning now to the term 'godless', one of the expressions in the McCauley interview, secularism, as defined above, can certainly be deemed to be quite literally 'godless' for the simple reason that it is by definition atheistic. The same does not follow for 'secular'. It is perfectly possible to be a theist and support a secular state, because such a state provides freedom for believers in a God to practice and propagate their faith while affording secularists the same rights. This is a far cry from the former USSR, whose Marxist-Leninist constitution made atheism the official stance of the state and in practice treated theism repressively.

This alone, I contend, refutes the view that secular means godless. But there is more to be said. According to virtually all theists, God is an infinite being and therefore present everywhere as an invisible but very real spirit. In technical, theological terms, God is omnipresent, and of course also infinitely powerful. That means that the divine presence pervades everything and that there is nothing humanity or any other agency can do to exclude or diminish it, though our freedom means that people can choose to turn their backs on it, or can be blinded to it by cultural and other forces like being force-fed religion in early childhood. It follows logically that the divine presence cannot, as such, be diminished or banished by the adoption of a secular national constitutional, or even an aggressively atheistic one like that of the former USSR. God would therefore not be absent in a secular state, making it highly problematic to speak of the secular state as 'godless' in the literal sense of the term.

The word 'godless' does however have another meaning. It can refer to a lack of moral quality. For the purposes of this paper, this is the more relevant meaning because it raises the central question of whether secular states cause moral decay. I contend, as will be clear, that this is a mistaken view and I explain why in the following paragraphs.

My next step in refuting the view that attributes our moral problems to our secular state is to refer back to some actions I took to advocate such a state in the last years of apartheid and especially to the concern for morality

that drove those actions. This is necessary because I (and others) who were researching the relationship of religion and the state as part of early groundwork for a post-apartheid society, as part of work done for a South African Law Commission report, came to see that a secular state was the only ethical option facing the country, and therefore began to canvass support for it. The ethical grounds then identified constitute the basis of my argument against those who are now blaming the secular state.

The canvassing I personally undertook was thus based upon very careful research and reflection but its expression mostly took the form of popular press articles and broadcast media discussions in order to reach far beyond the small world of the academy. Here now is my text of an article published in a Sunday newspaper on May 20, 1990. I have added emphasis in a number of places to highlight the ethical considerations underlying my position.

The Nationalist Government for a long time looked like the Dutch Reformed Church in Parliament.

Will things be any better in a future South Africa if the ruling party is the Methodist Church or the South African Council of Churches in Parliament?

For our own good we need to debate the place of religion in the post-apartheid era. I will argue that both politics and religion will benefit if we transform South Africa into a constitutionally secular society.

This means that the apparatus of the State would be completely separate from all religious activities. Most South Africans would doubtless continue to regard themselves as Christians but State support for Christianity, or for any other faith, would cease. The constitution, the statute book, education and state-controlled broadcasting would—unlike the present—operate neutrally concerning religion.

At present the 1983 constitution provides for freedom of religion and our various non-Christian religions certainly operate without official harassment. But that same constitution nonetheless favours Christianity by declaring that South Africa will uphold its values.

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This might even seem democratic because about three-quarters of our people regard themselves as Christians. In practice, however, only one church group has had any real state influence and unofficial support—white, Afrikaans-speaking Calvinists belonging to the three Dutch Reformed churches.

Members of this elite have used the apparatus of the state—paid for at least partly by the taxes of a dissenting and mostly disenfranchised majority—to impose their beliefs and values on the country. Education and broadcasting are two most significant fields to have been affected over the past 40 years.

Roughly speaking there are three ways of handling the relationship between religion and the State.

At one extreme is theocracy. Here religion absorbs and wholly controls the state. Calvin's Geneva, modern Iran and the Papal States before Italian unification are well-known examples. This arrangement is compatible with *social justice* only in countries where the vast majority of the population actively supports the same religion, and there are now very few of these left apart from the Vatican and some of the Muslim states.

Given our religious diversity in South Africa a theocratic state would be a disaster and is not seriously in contention.

The opposite of a theocracy is the modern, secular state where religion is entirely independent of the State and operates through the unaided efforts of its own members, enjoying full freedom of belief. The United States, France and India are examples.

In between are the countries where a particular religious group enjoys official status of some kind, but without officially blurring the distinction between religion and government. We could call this a semi-secular system. Britain and South Africa, despite certain differences, are in this middle category, but at opposite ends both legally and in practice.

Despite all the talk about South Africa being a Christian country, which suggests that we have a large degree of religious agreement, ours is in fact a very divided society at the religious level. And its Christians are perhaps the most divided of all.

Therefore a united religious influence acceptable to most South Africans is extremely unlikely. That alone makes it religiously and politically undesirable to continue to retain our present semi-secular system. It would merely amount to *a new form of religious domination*, for example a consortium of more liberal Protestant Christians replacing the former hegemony of white Calvinists.

A secular state is also religiously preferable to its alternatives. It alone would free the churches and religions from that great underminer of true faith, pressure to conform. Nothing is more at odds with real religion than this. Anybody who has experienced compulsory church-going and the hypocrisies and resentments it breeds know that.

It is bad for religion. It fosters power rather than persuasion, spiritual flabbiness rather than true dedication, inquisitors rather than saints.

The best way to achieve *first-class status for all* at the religious level is a constitutionally secular state. Believers should be the first to welcome that arrangement and none more so than Christians: far from enjoying state support the founder of their faith was tortured and crucified by it (Prozesky 1990).

Others were working along similar lines. The ANC, I have been told, took up the issue and supported the call for a secular state in the new South Africa. The faith communities were, however, divided. My own activities revealed strong support from liberal Christians and from leading Jewish, Muslim and Hindu figures. It also revealed opposition from others, mostly from conservative parts of Christianity who relied heavily on the fact that Christians were and remain a large majority in the country. This reality was held by people of that persuasion with whom I engaged to justify making the new South Africa a constitutionally Christian state. (I cannot recall any of those who wanted a Christian state admitting that there are in fact many Christianities, ranging from extremely conservative fundamentalists to extremely radical people, with many intermediate positions. How fair and honest was it for anybody to claim to speak for all our Christians, given such divisions, I often wondered.)

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In any event, the upshot was the 1996 constitution which ushered in our present secular state, which is now under fire from some as the alleged source of our moral problems.

It will be apparent from the emphasized phrases in the press article quoted above that I appealed mostly to ethical values to justify my advocacy of a secular state. The first one is to *problematize imposition and domination*. While I did not analyze these two evils further in that press article, I will do so now. They are evils because they violate the right of people to equality of treatment and therefore to respect. When somebody or some organization presumes to impose a view on others, that is an offence against the dignity of the recipients of the imposition, and therefore unethical.

The second ethical value is *social justice*. I was saying that we needed an arrangement that was *fair and just* to everybody, that this could not be achieved by giving any religion (or non-religious philosophy) legal status above that of all others, but that a secular state could provide that justice because it treated all faiths and philosophies even-handedly. Indeed it would treat everybody alike as first-class citizens. That made it just.

In the third place, I appealed to the principle of *inclusivity*, by calling for first-class status for everybody, which can only be provided by a secular state. I will return to inclusivity as a Christian ethical principle later in this paper.

These were and remain the main ethical grounds in favour of a secular state, except for a further one to which I now turn by drawing attention to the nature of such a state as explained in my press article and as enacted in the Bill of Rights, chapter 2 of our 1996 constitution, in clauses 9 and 15 which deal with equality and freedom of belief.

The operative phrases in my press article are that a secular state is *neutral* with regard to religion (or any non-religious belief-system), that it is *even-handed* towards them all, that it *favours none*, and that it provides *freedom of operation* to them all. It is important to emphasize these features of the secular state because a widespread confusion appears to have arisen, namely that a secular state is somehow opposed to religion and morality and is even godless, as we see from Pastor McCauley's expressions.

The terms 'neutral' and 'even-handed' express two features of how a secular state relates to religion, and both of them reveal that it does so justly

and thus ethically. The third term, 'freedom of operation', takes us from the state to religion itself, and is ethically crucial. It means that in a secular state all religions have full scope to operate, which includes teaching their ethical values, obtaining radio and television time, building great new places of worship, and so forth. That cannot happen in a secularistic state, or is made extremely difficult. How many new cathedrals were built in the USSR under Stalin, for example?

By giving all religions the same right to freedom of operation, a secular state acts justly and ethically, unlike a religiously-defined state (or a secularistic state) in a country with a diversity of faiths, which cannot do justice even-handedly towards them all because it privileges one of them for no objectively good and just reason.

Returning now to the viewpoint expressed in Pastor McCauley's 2006 press interview, I want to argue strongly against the view expressed there that godless means unethical. It is simply incorrect to think that those who do not believe there is a God are therefore lacking in morality. Even a cursory personal familiarity with atheists shows that they are capable of the highest ethical standards. The best example is the Dalai Lama, for Buddhism is a non-theistic faith. The same holds for secular humanism, which is forthright in advocating strong ethical values, as I have shown elsewhere. (Prozesky 2006: 43ff.). What this reveals is not only that it is incorrect and unfair to depict the secular state as necessarily unethical; it is also incorrect and unfair so to depict a secularistic state like Castro's Cuba.

Christian Grounds for Supporting a Secular State

Given my personal background of an earlier and very deep immersion in Christian theology, my campaigning for South Africa to become a constitutionally secular state was also motivated by what I saw as theological and religious grounds for such a state. In turning now to such grounds, from a present position outside the world of theology, I do so by means of the phenomenological method used in religious studies and in my present field of comparative applied ethics. This means empathetically and imaginatively seeking to enter the world of the insider, attempting to see issues as such an insider might see them.

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Four arguments arise from this exercise, strongly suggesting that Christians (and members of any other faith) should be the first to embrace the secular state, not oppose it.

The *first* religious argument concerns the very nature of belief itself. All believers know that faith cannot be compelled. They know that compulsion or even the milder problem of pressure to conform is deeply alien to genuine belief, as distinct from pretended belief. As I said in my *Sunday Tribune* article, pressure to conform 'fosters power rather than persuasion, spiritual flabbiness rather than true dedication, inquisitors rather than saints'. When a single faith enjoys exclusive constitutional and legal superiority in a country with many faith traditions, the door opens to pressure to conform in order to get ahead, to avoid marginalization, or even to avoid victimization and persecution on religious grounds. And it is restrictive and unfair towards other traditions.

The alliance between a dominant faith and the power of the state is a formidable one. How can such pressure be ethical? By contrast, a secular state removes such pressure from the workings of the state, and creates a free space where faith can flourish on its own terms and through its own virtues.

Related to the argument just given is the way state power in religion decreases the space for a vital part of a strong ethic—the role of the prophet who speaks truth fearlessly to power. This is my *second* faith-based reason for supporting the secular state. There is of course no denying that in situations of great state control and even state-caused evil, we find such prophets, bravely speaking out against such evils, like Moses and the Pharaoh, Nathan and King David, Albert Luthuli and Beyers Naude against the apartheid state, usually suffering the consequences, which can be very grave. Luthuli's freedom of movement was restricted and his achievements mocked, as I myself heard, to mention just that, and Naude suffered exclusion from and rejection by his mother culture and faith world.

Society needs more than these rare, magnificent moral and spiritual heroes; it needs plenty of prophets. When a religion allies itself too closely with the state and enjoys constitutional superiority, the prophetic voice weakens because pressure rises. Similarly, shrewd politicians are at times adept at manipulating believers who drop their critical guard towards them, as Gifford has shown in his work on Christianity in Africa (Gifford 1996:

204ff). Ethics then suffers. Is this not exactly what happened under apartheid? Do we not see signs of it in post-apartheid South Africa? A group of religious leaders, led, incidentally, by Pastor McCauley, met President Jacob Zuma shortly before these words were written, a meeting reported in the press under the interesting but possibly misleading heading of 'McCauley gets even closer to Zuma' (*Cape Times* July 29, 2009).

My *third* faith-based argument focuses on the nature of a perfectly loving God, a notion obviously shared by our Christians. What would such a God want from South Africa or any other country but the highest standards of justice, generosity of spirit and action, respect, freedom and concern for others? And would such a God not want these things for everybody, for a love that excludes even one of us is not a perfect love? Lest this seem more philosophical than theological or biblical, let me make clear that it was in fact the New Testament in Luke 15: 4ff that first showed me that total inclusivity is integral to the ethic taught by Christ, for it tells of the person who does not rest till all 100 of his sheep are in the fold, and extends the point to God in heaven. Ninety-nine percent is not good enough, let alone 75%. It will already be clear from these arguments that a secular state accords far better with the nature and will of such a God than any other kind of state.

The *fourth* faith-based reason for supporting the secular state arises from a centerpiece of Christian ethics, to which I have already made reference, the so-called Golden Rule of Luke 6: 31: 'Do to others as you would have them do to you'. Believers want to be treated as first-class citizens, like everybody else. They want to be treated fairly and without unjust discrimination against them. They want fairness and non-discrimination for their fellow believers. The Gospel tells them to want the same for others, which in this context means that Christians must want these things for Jews, Muslims, Hindus, African traditionalists and all others, including secularists. That is precisely what the secular state ensures. That is precisely what is denied when a single faith, no matter how numerically dominant, has exclusive, or even just superior, legal and constitutional rights not enjoyed by other faith traditions and philosophies.

The Real Root of the Problem of Moral Decay

If our constitutionally secular state cannot be blamed for the serious moral problems around us, what is the real cause? Here we need to guard against superficial, short-term thinking and heed the wisdom of the old saying that while the mills of God grind slowly, they grind surely. The mills of goodness, the moral mills, also grind slowly but surely. Therefore we need to look much further back in time than the 1996 constitution. Here Pastor McCauley was correct when he said earlier in the 2006 press interview that South Africa has inherited some of its evils from the past, like violence and conflict.

How far back should we go? I shall argue that we must go back to the beginning of European settlement and conquest, which ushered in over 300 years of conservative Christian religious and political hegemony in an arrangement which is the very opposite of the secular state.

What did that hegemony do to morality and to Christianity for that matter? I contend that it gravely compromised and weakened both. Instead of the moral values of equality and respect for all, it gave us domination, discrimination and an ugly sense of superiority by most whites that has yet to vanish. Instead of an abundance of ethical prophets it gave us an abundance of obliging bed-fellows. Instead of a Christ-like love, the hegemony gave us pass laws, broken families, mass removals and murders in detention. None of that began in 1948 when Dr Daniel Malan's National party came to power or in 1910 when the former Union of South African came into being as a sovereign nation; it was happening during the preceding centuries of colonial control imposed by people from Christian Europe.

That centuries-long dispensation of white Christian domination means that by 1994 we inherited a profoundly damaged culture, not just politically and economically damaged, but—perhaps above all—ethically and spiritually damaged.

In all fairness we must allow for this dreadful reality when asking what has happened to morality since 1994 and especially since the adoption of the 1996 secular state. The first post-apartheid, democratic government faced a veritable moral mountain. The many measures taken since then to remove unjust discrimination, redress past evils, recognize human rights and freedoms, build houses, lay on piped, clean water, provide social grants for 12 million poverty-stricken people and promote gender justice must all be

applauded. So must the efforts of our under-resourced but dedicated Moral Regeneration Movement staff be applauded, and all others who work for moral upliftment such as our feminists. But an ethic of honesty also obliges us to speak out about corruption, murder, rape, robbery, cronyism, AIDS denialism, the arms deal and other serious evils, some of them involving our politicians and people in public service, at times very highly placed. Is it not clear that a contributing cause of our moral evils is from this world of politics, government and public service, including the moral failure of uncaring school teachers and the bigoted principals who continue to treat their brand of Christianity as it was treated under apartheid, as if it were the state religion? Is it not perfectly clear that the fault is not the secular state?

In addition, we will find another contributory cause of our moral problems in the faith community itself, and here I restrict myself to Christianity as the tradition I know from within and best, and as by far our numerically dominant faith tradition. In the words of a friend who is an ordained Christian minister with admirable struggle credentials and a huge passion for ethics, I ask. 'Where have all the prophets gone?' Why, apart from a handful of heroic Christian figures, men and women, do we hear so little about the really serious ethical problems of our time, if not because the ethical input from this quarter is simply not good enough?

Conclusion

The secular state gives ample scope for religious ethics to flourish as a national force for good. It is not flourishing. That is not the fault of the secular state. It is the fault of political players, Christian religious players and others who influence us, who seem to think that massive, macro-ethical problems like ours, with their long and ethically undermining history, can be met with merely micro-ethical thinking and action.

What the rest of us must therefore take to heart and act upon is that morality is far too important to be left to politicians, priests and pastors—or far that matter, professors. It is the privilege and responsibility of us all.

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Emeritus Professor
University of KwaZulu-Natal
marproz@mweb.co.za

Nationalizing Religion: The Violent Path of Religious Nationalism

Johan Strijdom

Abstract

The article not only accepts the distinction between indigeneity and hybridity as two extreme positions in postcolonial studies, but argues that the former paradigm's rigid and essentialist definition of identity may contribute to intolerance and violence. Examples of religious nationalism within Buddhist, Hindu and Christian traditions are juxtaposed to illustrate the point, and their relevance for a critique of monolithic Afrocentric views is postulated. In conclusion, the struggle to defend constitutional promises that respect cultural diversity and the promotion of a cosmopolitan education are presented as necessary antidotes to the problem of homogenizing tendencies.

Keywords: Religious nationalism, violence, post-colonialism, homogeneity, heterogeneity, Buddhist nationalism, Hindu nationalism, Christian nationalism, Afrocentrism.

In his essay 'Colonialism' David Chidester (2000:432-436) not only elaborates on the postcolonial location from which one may critically analyze religion and the study of religion as modern European constructs that have been useful instruments for economic, political and military imperialism during the 19th and 20th century, but also towards the end of that article identifies 'two extreme positions in postcolonial studies—*indigeneity* and *hybridity*—that are relevant to the future of the academic study of religion'. The emphasis in postcolonial theory, he says, 'has shifted away from the

critique of European representations of 'others' to a recovery of the subjectivity and agency of the colonized'.

Thus those who work within an *indigenous* paradigm privilege 'the self-representation of indigenous people who have passed through the experience of colonization', draw their inspiration from liberation movements against colonial oppression and aim at the recovery of a supposedly pure or authentic pre-colonial tradition, unstained from the distortions that the imperial encounter imposed on it—a strategy that Chidester aptly calls 'a romantic politics of nostalgia'. Amongst such traditionalists he then includes not only Hindutva which 'has actively engaged in electoral politics', but also those who promote visions of an African renaissance¹. He rightly points out that such an essentialist approach, which assumes the existence of 'timeless traditions', has to contend with historical research that questions the assumed continuity and uniformity of tradition and instead emphasizes the contingent invention of it.

The second analytical strategy has therefore been to focus not on the nostalgic wish for the recovery of some pre-colonial pure root, but instead on the *hybridity*² that has resulted from the cultural negotiation between

¹ Chidester (2000:433f) considers Fanon's position as 'a type of 'nativism'', qualifying it as 'an indigeneity that sought to forge a new humanity in the modern world by means of a militant anti-colonialism'. He also points out that Spivak, who is known for being a critic of essentialism, can support 'in some occasions a 'strategic essentialism''[that] might be necessary to intervene on behalf of the marginal, oppressed or 'subaltern' in struggles over representation in colonial relations'.

² The main theorists that Chidester (2000:434–435) refers to here are Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall. The former does not wish to foreground in his analysis the *diversity* of cultures in colonial situations, but rather the aspect of negotiated *hybridity*. The latter, however, seems to focus on both heterogeneity and hybridity in his analysis of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. Doniger (2009:46–49) is helpful in clarifying by means of concrete examples the distinction between 'hybridity' and 'multiplicity'; she simultaneously emphasizes quite correctly that 'it doesn't really matter whether you call it multiple or hybrid (or even syncretic)', but that 'what does matter is how you evaluate the fused mix'.

colonizer and colonized, now emphatically including diaspora communities as well. Instead of seeking the return to a supposedly pure, indigenous essence that would be nothing but a repetition of 'the old, the imperializing, the hegemonizing form of "ethnicity"', an approach that focuses on hybridity recognizes and analyzes heterogeneity and diversity in intercultural exchanges, particularly amongst diaspora communities. We will, however, do well to underline Chidester's concluding point that 'not all negotiating positions are equal'.

Now in his article 'Diversität und Homogenisierung: Postkoloniale Anmerkungen aus Indien' (2005) Anil Bhatti, from Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi), identifies the very same two contradictory tendencies in postcolonial theory, but shows with reference to India's history in no uncertain terms the destructive consequences of a closed, nativist paradigm that searches for some original, pure roots. In contrast to this attitude which is actively propagated by Hindutva and its political arm the Indian People's Party (BJP) and the supportive international World Hindu Council (VHP), he presents us with the alternative vision of a postcolonial India as an open, multi-layered palimpsest that has been formed by diverse religions, languages and ethnicities which must be respected in order to avoid intolerance and violent conflict—a vision embodied in India's anti-colonial struggle, by Gandhi's respect for Islam and Christianity, and by Nehru's vision of a secular state that would deal equally with all religions.

What interests me is the juxtaposition of Hindutva and African indigenism by Chidester, and the lesson we may learn from Bhatti's analysis of postcolonial India for our own postcolonial and post-apartheid context. But before I raise that point for further discussion, I would like to sketch the broader global context of the problem. The role of religion in violent conflicts has gained renewed global urgency in our day, with most of the world's attention focusing on Islamism. It may, therefore, be a good strategy to decenter this one-sided emphasis by first looking at Hindu and Buddhist nationalism, since these two religions have traditionally been regarded as exemplary of tolerance. We may then return to Islamic and Christian nationalism, and eventually ask about its relation to African indigenism.

'Hinduism' and 'religion' are categories invented by the modern West. European explorers and colonialists first employed the concept of 'religion' to mark the difference between themselves having 'religion'

(meaning Christianity) and the indigenous people they encountered being without religion (meaning without anything comparable to Christianity), a view which was adapted in the 19th century by emerging scholars of comparative religion who came to recognize the existence of myths and rituals amongst the colonized, but accorded the so-called 'primitives' places within a hierarchy of religious evolution with Christianity being given a place right at the top-end of the scale. Religious Studies thus became quite useful and complicit in managing the 'natives' and keeping them in their inferior place (cf. Braun 2000:7-8; Chidester 2000; Mack 2008:16-25; Smith 2004).

The term 'Hinduism' was first coined in the 19th century by British colonial scholars in an attempt to create a common identity out of what they perceived to be a despairing chaos. Although some Indian intellectuals at first questioned the move, they eventually came to find it quite appealing in the context of nationalism—another idea that was entering from the West (cf. Madan 2006:16). The concept of 'nationalism' was a product of the European romantics, who insisted, against the cosmopolitan thinkers of the Enlightenment, on the naturalness of a *Volksgeist* based on a common ethnicity and history, language and literature, art and religion, within a specific territory—an idea that came to be realized in the formation of 19th century European nation-states and that spread to the colonies, where it came to be appropriated by national liberation movements in the 20th century (cf. Bhatti 2005:1; Anderson 2006).

The rise of 'religious nationalism', by which we understand the use of 'religion' as a category to rigidly define the boundaries of the nation-state, can therefore not be understood apart from this history of Western colonial expansion and the struggle for liberation from it. But, as Peter van der Veer (1996:250) aptly remarks, behind the official story of Indian national liberation from British oppression, lurks 'a subtext that tells the story of partition, of hatred and violence between Hindus and Muslims'. How do we explain this violence in postcolonial India? Bhatti (2005:10) ascribes it to a clash between homogenizing and secular mentalities, between Hindu nationalists and Muslim nationalists³, which reveals the fragility of a secular

³ For Savarkar as founding ideologue of the former and Muhammad Iqbal as illustrative of the latter, see Bhatti (2005:7-10).

nation-state with a constitution in which cultural plurality is enshrined (the kind of alternative that Nehru, with his socialist leanings, had in mind for postcolonial India)⁴. Thus not only was the partition in 1947 of a Muslim nation-state in Pakistan and a secular nation-state in India based on an assumed essential difference between Muslims and Hindus, but in the case of secular India there was also a clear split between exclusivist Hindu nationalists and inclusivist secularists, as became all too clear in the assassination of Gandhi by a Hindu nationalist.

The picture may be further refined by adding economic and educational reasons for the communal violence to political and religious causes. The question then ‘seems to be how ... Hindu-Muslim riots are related to structured economic inequality of class’, how religion is related to ‘economic causes, such as large-scale unemployment due to the crisis in the textile mills’, to quote Peter van der Veer (1996:252)—an aspect that is well recognized by the media.

Equally critical are the selective uses of history, as Bhatti (2006b:3) indeed observes, and the literal interpretation of myth by the Hindu Right. ‘When college and university teachers educate their students in a history of oppression by Muslims of Hindus’, Van der Veer (1996:251) says, ‘the discursive premises of violent acts have been laid’—a concern shared by Martha Nussbaum (2007a) and Amartya Sen (2005), who have spent considerable energy to contest the Hindu Right’s attempt to have their monolithic version of history prescribed for schools. Commenting on her new book *The Hindus: An Alternative History* Wendy Doniger (2009b), the well-known Indologist at the University of Chicago and object of the ire of the Hindu Right in the USA (cf. Nussbaum 2007a:246-250), foregrounds the danger of misreading myths for history. ‘Myth’, she says, ‘has been called “the smoke of history”, and therefore, she insists, “[the] desperate need for a history of the Hindus that distinguishes between the fire, the documented evidence, and the smoke; for mythic narratives become fires when they drive historical events rather than respond to them’. What she then attempts to do, in contrast to standard colonialist and Hindu nationalist histories, is ‘to set the narrative of religion within the narrative of history, ... to show how Hindu

⁴ Bhatti (2005:5-7) traces this inclusive vision back to the thinking of Ranindranath Tagore. Cf. also Sen (2005).

images, stories, and philosophies were inspired or configured by the events of the times, and how they changed as the times changed. There is no one Hindu view of karma, or of women, or of Muslims; there are so many different opinions'. The challenge is to include these alternative and diverse views of untouchables, women and non-Hindus.

The same would apply to the political use of sacred space. On the one hand we witnessed in 1991 the Hindu nationalists' demolition of Babur's 16th century mosque at Ayodhya in order to reclaim the space for the cult of Rama, which left a bloody trail that eventually culminated in the Gujarat pogrom of 2002 with approximately 2000 Muslims being killed (cf. Nussbaum 2007a:17-22). On the other hand Bhatti (1996a:6; 1996b:5-6) upholds the secular alternative, which would instead turn the site into a memorial place where both Muslims and Hindus may worship.

The tension between heterogeneity and homogeneity, between religious nationalism and secular / syncretic alternatives, is clearly not limited to the Indian sub-continent, as Bhatti (2005:1) would surely agree. Any religion may be essentialized and used to rigidly define political identities. Since Islam presents an enormously complex case, demanding nuanced distinctions between a spectrum of positions (from Islamic States like Saudi Arabia and Somalia to more secular variants like Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey)⁵, I will limit myself here to a few observations on Buddhist and Christian nationalism, before I bring the question home to African nativist paradigms in our midst.

Buddhism has stereotypically been portrayed as a tolerant, peaceful and inclusivist religion (McCargo 2009:11), a picture to which Western scholars of religion have decisively contributed by classifying it first within the category of 'idolatry' and then upgrading it, in the second half of the 19th century, to a universal, ethical and spiritual religion, almost on a par with Christianity (Smith 2004:187-191). The continuing violence in Sri Lanka and Thailand forces us, however, to take a much more critical view of the role of

⁵ I intend to map and assess in a further article forms of Islamic nationalism and European secular nationalism which are unable to deal with cultural diversity. The latter is most pertinently illustrated by France's legal ban of the Islamic veil in public schools and by Switzerland's ban of minarets (cf. Scott [2005] for an excellent analysis of the French situation).

religion in these nation-states. In Sri Lanka we witness the ethno-religious clash between Sinhalese Buddhist nationalists and the Tamil minority (cf. Tambiah 1992), and in Thailand between conservative Buddhist nationalists and Muslims in its southern provinces.

The latter presents a particularly interesting case, since it has never been formally colonized by a European power. This does, however, not mean that it has not been profoundly affected by Western modernity, the influence of which is evident in the formation of a territorially demarcated Thai nation-state which came to be predicated on the institutions of the monarchy and the Buddhist monastic order, which were in their turn legitimized by the creation of a master historical narrative to be taught in schools as well as the concomitant restoration of memorial sites and establishment of festivals in the national calendar (cf. Peleggi 2007:7-9, 171-192).

In its history as a modern nation-state the persistent tension between a syncretic attitude and a nativist emphasis on Thainess is quite evident. On the one hand kings were educated since the latter half of the 19th century in the West, taking it as a model for the active modernization of the Thai nation. On the other hand there was the opposite tendency too, particularly associated with King Rama VI who, deeply influenced by European ideas on nationalism at the beginning of the 20th century, propagated a solipsistic view of Thai identity based on a singular language and assumed pure ethnicity and cultivated a hostile attitude towards foreigners, particularly the Burmese as external and the Chinese as internal enemies (Peleggi 2007:193-214).

These contradictory positions are not only still clear amongst contemporary politicians and scholars (viz. those who perpetuate the official historical narrative versus those who deconstruct it by focusing on its multi-layered hybridity), but also amongst leading monks. Whereas the renowned philosopher-monk Buddhadasa saw Buddhism as an inclusive, universal religion, his successor has taken an increasingly conservative stance arguing that Thai nationality should be based on orthodox Buddhism alone, thus creating a climate of increasing intolerance and hostility towards the Muslim minority in the country, which was corroborated by a call from the Queen that 'all three hundred thousand Thais' in the [southern] region [should] learn how to shoot' (McCargo 2009:4, 8). 'Buddhist temples in the southern border provinces', says Duncan McCargo (2009:21) in the most recent 2009 edition of the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*,

represent enclaves of Thailand's majority religion, outposts of 'nation, religion and king' that need to be defended from physical, religious, ethnic, cultural and political incursions by the Malay Muslims who comprise most of the area's population. Each functioning temple is a visible assertion of the Thai Buddhist state's continuing suzerainty over this rebellious region. For this reason, the Thai state has invested considerable moral and military capital in securing Buddhist temples for symbolic reasons.

When the Taksin government took a more pragmatic approach and established a National Reconciliation Commission in 2005, tasked to propose policy solutions to address the southern violence, the initiative was highly unpopular among Buddhist monks, with only two joining the commission—the one being a prominent peace activist and the other an advocate of interfaith dialogue in the south (McCargo 2009:17, 28-29). McCargo (2009:32) concludes:

While Buddhist individuals and communities in the south began arming and militarising themselves under royal patronage, elements of the *sangha* [ie, the community of monks—JS] joined a nationwide campaign to enshrine the place of Buddhism in Thailand's next constitution. Thai Buddhism was becoming increasingly particularistic, more and more national and very markedly less civil.

I take the nationalist use of Christianity in the USA as another illustration of our problem. In his recent *Myth and the Christian nation* Burton Mack (2008), a well-known critical scholar of early Christianity and its reception, analyzes the formation of Christian nationalism in the USA from a social-critical perspective on the history of religions.

Whereas the founding fathers were in the first place inspired by 18th century Enlightenment ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity, which resulted amongst other things in the constitutional separation of church and state, the notion of a 'Christian nation' amongst fundamentalist Christians has become particularly prominent during the second half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century. Here are a few moments in the growing influence of Christianity in the public sphere:

- Under Eisenhower (1953-61) Congress added 'under God' to the pledge of allegiance (1954) and 'In God we trust' to the dollar bills (1956). Eisenhower himself presided over the first National Prayer Breakfast and started to invite Protestant preachers like Billy Graham to lead those prayers.
- John F Kennedy (1961-63) was more cautious and tried to maintain the distinction between church and state, and to limit religion to the private experience of the individual. He nevertheless understood that the Christian religion indeed formed a crucial part of the way Americans conceived of their nation.
- After Kennedy Christian fundamentalists increasingly entered the public domain, involving themselves in school boards, city and state bureaucracies, and in national party politics, as a reaction against what they considered threatening changes in liberal civil rights of African Americans and women, and against unpatriotic, 'decadent' students who protested the Vietnam war.
- In the 1980s Reagan had the vigorous support of the conservative Protestant preacher Jerry Falwell who coined the term 'Moral Majority' and contributed greatly to Reagan's election as president.
- In the 1990s the televangelist Pat Robertson founded the 'Christian Coalition', and networks of Christian churches started to form Political Action Committees that could ensure Christian representation on school boards, in city councils, and in state and governments in order to censure immoral practices that in their view violated Biblical law.
- But it was after the September 11th attacks in 2001 that Christian language became most apparent in public discourse. In the subsequent 'war on terror' Christianity became a reason for going to war under the bravado that 'God was on our side'. Mack (2008:3-4) gives a few examples:

As President Bush said, we were 'the greatest force for good in history'. A lieutenant general gave speeches on the Christian nation going to war against infidels and winning because our 'God was bigger than their gods'. Attorney General Ashcroft said, in effect, not to worry because Jesus is our king and we have no king but Jesus'. And our radio preachers and television evangelists said that God had allowed the terrorists to attack us because, as a nation, we had sinned and deserved the punishment.

How do we explain this nationalistic mentality of the Christian Right in the USA that has been actively involved not only at all levels of society pleading for the upholding of moral values, but also in politics using most recently 'Christian language to justify a military mission' (2008:ix)⁶? Mack argues that, although the formation of the American nation is different from the birth of European nation-states (the latter developed out of kingdoms that had their own state churches, whereas the USA has never had an official church but only diverse denominations that had to establish spaces for themselves), the USA nevertheless inherited a grammar from medieval Christendom according to which only the Christian religion is true and all other religions are regarded as false and inferior. It is the persistence of this logic in the mentality of the Christian Right that explains the violent consequences which we have witnessed. It is a monolithic grammar that supports a binary hierarchy between a superior 'us' versus inferior 'them' that is at the basis of the Christian myth-ritual system—a social logic that is, in Mack's view, simply not tenable in today's multicultural world. Instead of thinking of Western culture as superior to other cultures, and of Christianity as superior to other religions, Mack (2008:7) insists, we need 'to learn how to engage [each other] constructively' by educating citizens in religion from a humanistic perspective 'from grammar school through college', which would prepare them to 'think critically about religion in public forum', as would befit a multicultural democracy.

⁶ Mack (2008:3) notes the similarity in rhetoric between Islamists and the US administration, who were using the same labels for each other after 9/11 but without noticing it.

This is not the place to give a detailed outline of or to debate Mack's intricate social-historical analysis of the Christian myth and ritual system:

- on how apocalyptic fantasies imagine a divine holocaust in which the in-group would be saved ('God is on our side') and the outsiders be slaughtered by God's vengeance (Mack 2008:3); or
- on the formation of one Bible and one creed under Constantine in the 4th century to serve one empire by which: alternative, called 'heretical', voices were silenced; or
- on ritual appropriation of space in pilgrimages and cathedrals.

I would only like to highlight Mack's basic point: of a tension between those Christian nationalists who have internalized a mentality that considers itself the only pure truth superior to any other on the one hand (also shamefully present in the history of the Western academic study of religion), and on the other the multicultural society that America in fact has become.

This brings me to our own situation. Given these examples, taken from Hindu, Buddhist and Christian nationalisms, would it be surprising to find the same contradictory positions in a post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa? We should, I maintain, not be surprised, and we should, I insist, be cautious of its destructive potential. We know the theory and practice of Afrikaner Christian nationalism firsthand, whose legacy is still with us. But we have in the meantime also been confronted with a comparable view of Africanization that essentializes African culture, and wishes to uncover a pure pre-colonial root unstained by European influences. Ulrike Kistner (2009) articulates the point aptly in a recent article in the *Mail & Guardian*, entitled 'Recolonising the mind: The rise of African National Education'. Says Kistner (2009:6):

That 'Africanisation' of higher education has been or should be the hallmark of post-apartheid higher education reform has a thin common sense basics

'Africanisation in Tuition' at Unisa, for instance, comes with a list of mandatory 'reorientations' closely in line with Thabo Mbeki's

version of the African Renaissance⁷ ... Afrocentrism, the valorisation of things African, Afro-dynamism and Afro-optimism are central to this mission. A new division is being created between 'the Africanised' and the 'un'- or 'anti-Africanised', implying a call for a policing of this division

Without reflecting on particular orders and histories of disciplines 'Western knowledge' is pitched against 'African indigenous knowledge'⁸.

Speaking about the function of tradition in black political discourse in the diaspora, Paul Gilroy (1993:187-188) observes a similar tension between Afrocentric traditionalists who obsessively search for an idealized pure, authentic origin before modern colonialism and slavery on the one hand versus African modernists who emphasize 'the irrepressible diversity of black experience' and 'intercultural cross-fertilizations' on the other. 'The invocation of tradition', says Gilroy (1993:194,199), 'becomes both more desperate and more politically charged as the sheer irrepressible heterology of black cultures become harder to avoid. ... [the] story of hybridisation and intermixture ... inevitably disappoints the desire for cultural and therefore racial purity'—a process that applies in his view equally to the African diaspora and Africa itself.

⁷ Chidester (2008:278-282) seems to consider Mbeki's explanation of the Coat of Arms as expressive of the Khoisan motto of 'unity in diversity' to be consonant with Mandela's and Tutu's rainbow vision, but others (e.g. Kistner) would contest this and instead observe a shift from the inclusionary rainbow metaphor to a more exclusionary African Renaissance rhetoric and practice. It is against such observable reductions that this article wishes to issue a warning. Butler (2009:36) aptly remarks that 'South Africa remains a long way from Archbishop Tutu's vision of a rainbow nation comfortable with and strengthened by its own diversity' and then proceeds to illustrate South Africa's 'uncomfortable' heterogeneity with reference to ethnicity, language and religion.

⁸ Cf. also Kistner's (2008:1) critique of pleas at the 2007 CODESRIA conference for exclusionary Africanisation-as-indigenisation curricula in the social sciences.

What are we then to do, if rigid identities—amongst them those based on religion—seem to leave a trail of intolerance and violence? Politically, I think, we should continue the struggle against all forms of discrimination based on religion and work towards the equal respect for all religions by the state and their equal treatment before the law (cf. Nussbaum 2007b). In this way the democratic state would be held responsible by its citizens to create the systemic conditions which would make it possible for all its citizens to enjoy a fulfilled life, which would include the human right to practice the religion of one's choice⁹.

But this struggle, we know, can only be fought by citizens who are properly educated in respect for diversity. Our energy, I would therefore urge, should most crucially be invested in the promotion of a cosmopolitan education of the type that Rabindranath Tagore taught in his Santiniketan School in Bengal, which Amartya Sen (2005:45, 115) had the privilege to attend—one that realizes that creativity and renewal come from being exposed to a diversity of cultures rather than a xenophobic focusing on one's own that will leave a society so much poorer and worse. As the Italian writer Antonio Tabucchi answered when asked about his roots: 'Only trees have roots', he quipped, 'human beings have legs, they can cross boundaries'. But, he added more seriously, 'if we do indeed have roots, they should be in our hearts'.

What would this mean in the South African context? Chidester (2008) seems to register the problem only reluctantly. On the one hand he fully supports South Africa's current National Policy on Religion and Education, according to which learners in public schools must be educated about different religions in such a way that it would cultivate respect in them for cultural diversity. This would be in line with the values enshrined in the South African Constitution and in line with universal human rights. On the other hand he argues for the greatest part of his essay that post-apartheid heritage initiatives are to be seen as an extension of the classroom to re-educate citizens (particularly emphasizing that many of these attempt to transform sites of pain into sites of reconciliation), but eventually admits that

⁹ Nussbaum (1999) does, however, argue elsewhere that freedom of religion may not be used to condone cases where religious traditions violate basic human rights.

there are critics who legitimately object that post-apartheid national monuments may 'reinforce an imaginary uniformity' (Chidester 2008:291). In my view this is the crucial point that needs critical elaboration, towards which the analytical juxtaposition of religious nationalisms above may contribute.

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Religious Studies
Unisa
striijm@unisa.ac.za

Said Nursi's Approach to Interfaith Dialogue

Suleman Essop Dangor

Abstract

This article investigates Said Nursi's approach to interfaith dialogue. It commences with an outline of the established trends in dialogue between faiths (exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism), and then identifies major factors that contributed to Nursi's thinking (e.g. his 'shift' from political activism to contemplation). It then explores Nursi's approach—his rationale for promoting interfaith dialogue; what he considered as necessary conditions for dialogue; why he proposed Islamic civilisation as the foundation for such dialogue and, finally, what he perceives to be the objectives of dialogue.

Keywords: Said Nursi, interfaith dialogue, common values, global peace.

Introduction

While the world has witnessed a growth in the number of conflicts ostensibly fuelled by religious motives, there is a growing international trend to encourage interfaith dialogue. Several conflicts in Asia and Africa have been attributed to a clash between the Islamic and 'Western' civilisations¹ or as a religious war between Islam and Christianity. The invasion of Iraq and

¹ In this regard, Samuel Huntington's theory in a *Clash of Civilisations* (1996) which posited a clash between Western civilisation and an Islamic/Chinese axis has been challenged, both by those who are convinced that such a clash was not imminent as well as by those who believe that future conflicts will be driven by considerations that have little to do with religion or culture (see Fox & Sandler 2004: 119-124).

Afghanistan by US-led forces is viewed by many Muslims as an attack on Islam by Christians. At the beginning of the campaign against Afghanistan Dolan (2001) warned:

Now that the bombing campaign in Afghanistan is underway, moderate Muslim leaders are expressing renewed concern that many of their people see it as another 'Christian Crusade' against Islam. This perception was already floating around after George W. unfortunately used the dreaded 'C' word twice in announcing that he was going after Osama bin Laden and his terrorist cronies.

The 9/11 attacks have been interpreted by several American religious leaders, including Don Franklin, as an assault by Muslims on Christianity. His response to 9/11, 'This is indeed a clash between two forces on this earth: Islam and Christianity' (Franklin 2001) is self-explanatory.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is perceived as fundamentally a conflict over land, though there is a religious dimension, viz. the Israeli claim to a Biblical right to occupy the land previously inhabited by the Palestinians², to exercise exclusive control over Jerusalem³ and to rebuild the temple of Solomon on the current site of *al-Masjid al-Aqsā* which is considered to be the third most important sacred site in Islam (see Temple Mount).

The Parliament of the World's Religions (first convened 1893) provides people of all faiths a forum for sharing their views about challenges confronting humanity in general and generating strategies and programmes to promote peace. As the PWR claims on its website, it

² 'The Jewish people base their claim to the Land of Israel on at least four premises: 1) the Jewish people settled and developed the land; 2) the international community granted political sovereignty in Palestine to the Jewish people; 3) the territory was captured in defensive wars and 4) God promised the land to the patriarch Abraham' (see *Myths & Facts*).

³ 'For the Jews, Jerusalem and Zion are synonymous, and have come to symbolize the Jewish nation as a whole. Judaism, in fact, recognizes both the Earthly Jerusalem—a symbol of the ingathering of the exiles to their promised land—and its Heavenly counterpart ...' (see *History of Jerusalem*).

brings together the world's religious and spiritual communities, their leaders and their followers to a gathering where peace, diversity and sustainability are discussed and explored in the context of interreligious understanding and cooperation (Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions).

While it has attracted several prominent scholars of Islam, the PWR has to date not succeeded in making a significant impact on Muslim religious or political leaders.

Turning to the church, Pope Paul VI made the following declaration at the Second Vatican Council (1965):

The Church encourages its children, together with believing and living as Christians, to get to know and support, with precaution, compassion, dialogue and co-operation those who follow other religions and to encourage them to develop their spiritual, moral and socio-cultural values (Gülen 2002: 35f).

This declaration is viewed as a landmark in interfaith dialogue. Since the 1970s, the World Council of Churches has given greater attention to dialogue with other religions (Coward 1985: 23).

At round about the same time, a number of interfaith groups have emerged across the globe. While many focus essentially on Christian-Muslim dialogue, and some on Jewish-Muslim dialogue (as in Palestine, Israel, Europe and the United States), others are more inclusive and cover the entire spectrum of faith groups. One such group is the World Conference of Religions for Peace (founded in 1970) which has dedicated itself to promote mutual respect and cooperation among the world's religions for the attainment of peace, justice and harmony while maintaining respect for the diversity of religious and cultural traditions (WCRP Newsletter 1 1998). The WCRP, like the PWR, is yet to make a significant impact on the majority of Muslim leaders, locally and globally.

Notwithstanding, the past decade has witnessed several initiatives at dialogue by Muslim governments and non-governmental organisations.

British and American Muslims have become increasingly involved in interfaith dialogue. This is without doubt, a response to numerous incidents

of harassment and hate crimes Muslims were subjected to following the 11 September 2001 (9/11) attacks by 19 Muslim hijackers on Washington and New York to signal their objection to American foreign policy and the 7 July 2005 (7/7) bombings in London carried out by British Muslims as a protest against British involvement in the Iraq war.

According to the Hate Crimes Survey on 'Violence against Muslims' carried out in 2008,

a mixture of Islamophobia and racism is also directed against immigrant Muslims or their children. This tendency has increased considerably after 9/11 and government responses to such terrorist crimes. Muslims have been physically attacked and mosques vandalised or burnt in a number of countries (Hammarberg 2008: 14).

Muslim leaders in Britain and the United States began to promote and participate in interfaith dialogue as a means of developing greater understanding between communities and leading (hopefully) to the elimination of hate crimes against Muslims.

In February 2004, an International Symposium on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations was held in Yemen, organized by the Centre for Yemeni Studies and Research in cooperation with The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Among the resolutions adopted by the Symposium were the following:

- a dialogue among cultures and civilisations between the Arab region and other regions that challenges old and new forms of ignorance, prejudice and assumptions about 'Otherness';
- a dialogue that promotes mutual understanding and exchange, tolerance and a culture of peace at the level of political decision-makers, intellectuals, actors of civil society, and individuals;
- a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts (Russell & Bovermann 2005: 14).

These resolutions indicate that Muslim leaders (at least 50 personalities from Arab-speaking countries participated) are concerned about the rise in conflict and are committed to inter-cultural and inter-civilisation dialogue. The irony, of course, is that non-Arab Muslims were excluded from a symposium which aimed at promoting cultural dialogue!

Following these developments, coupled with recent appeals by the current pope for dialogue, the International Islamic Conference for Dialogue held in Makkah in June 2008 issued a public statement called 'the Makkah Appeal for Interfaith Dialogue' (see Initiative for Interfaith Dialogue). Subsequently, the World Conference on Dialogue held in Madrid, Spain, in July 2008 under the auspices of the Muslim World League issued the *Madrid Declaration*.

In order to fulfil the objectives of dialogue, participants agreed on adopting, *inter alia*, the following :

- cooperation among religious, cultural, educational, and media establishments to deepen and consolidate ethical values, to encourage noble social practices and confront sexual promiscuity, family disintegration and other vices.
- organizing inter-religious and inter-cultural meetings, conducting research, executing media programs and using the Internet and other media for the dissemination of the culture of peace, understanding and coexistence.
- Promoting the issue of dialogue among the followers of religions, civilizations and cultures in youth, cultural, educational, and media activities)*Madrid Declaration*).

Hosting such a conference in Makkah is a significant development, given the fact that Makkah is the birth-place of the Prophet of Islam and is the location of the most sacred site in Islam—the *ka`bah*—which millions of pilgrims visit each year. The symbolic choice of Makkah as the centre calling for interfaith dialogue is significant. .

One of the most prominent Muslim scholars to promote inter-faith dialogue is the Turkish scholar, Fethullah Gülen, currently resident in the United States. Gülen has dedicated his life to 'establishing a dialogue among factions representing different ideologies, cultures, religions, and nations' in

preparation for what he anticipates to be the 'birth of the century of tolerance and understanding that will lead to cooperation among civilisations and strengthen bonds among all people' (Gülen 2002: 6f). One of the contributors to Gülen's intellectual and spiritual formation was Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1877-1960) of Turkey, a scholar who has had a tremendous impact on the new generation of Turkish Muslims (Ünal & Williams 2000: 15).

Turkish Muslims who arrived in South Africa after 1994 initiated interfaith projects and activities, hosting interfaith conferences and establishing dialogue centres and schools. My investigation revealed that they had drawn their inspiration from either Said Nursi or Fethullah Gülen. This attracted my interest in the Turkish interfaith initiatives in general, and Said Nursi in particular.

I will begin with a description of the current approaches to interfaith dialogue, then identify the major factors that contributed to shaping Nursi's thinking, and finally explore his concept of interreligious dialogue as set out in his magnum opus, the *Risale-i Nur* (meaning, 'Manifestation of Light').

Approaches to Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue is defined as 'dialogue between members of different religions for the goal of reducing conflicts between their religions and to achieve agreed upon mutually desirable goals' (see Religious Pluralism). Let us briefly examine the divergent attitudes of faith communities in respect of the 'other'.

Exclusivism

According to Vlach (2009a: 5), 'Exclusivism is a logical claim based on the law of noncontradiction: where two religions make logically incompatible claims, they cannot both be true'. 'Exclusivism' (or 'Particularism') also means that there is only one way to God and human salvation. Earlier attitudes of religious communities towards the 'other' were characterised mostly by exclusivism. The vast majority of exclusivists consider their own religion as uniquely and supremely true and all other religions as false. While they do affirm that other religions possess elements of truth, they believe that

these do not teach 'the truth' that is able to save their followers. In fact, they regard much of what is taught in other religions as false (Sadri 2006).

Some exclusivists (we could include evangelists and missionaries of all faiths here) are committed to the proselytization of the 'other'. But others isolate themselves in the certainty that they belong to a pure and perfect faith. When exclusivists of one faith engage in debate with representatives of other faiths, their sole purpose is to convince the audience about the superiority or correctness of their own faith tradition.

Several disillusioned exclusivists, however, challenged the dominant discourse and paved the way to interfaith dialogue. The two approaches to interfaith dialogue are discussed below.

Inclusivism

Friedrich Schleiermacher's statement that God is available, to some degree, in all religions, but that Christianity is nevertheless superior to all has led to what is today known as 'Inclusivism' (Sadri 2006: 36).

'Inclusivism' is the position that one religion is uniquely true but salvation is accessible to those outside of that faith. Though inclusivists believe that truth and salvation can be found in other religions, they do not claim that all religions are equal. We know that the Roman Catholic 'Vatican II Council' of the 1960s explicitly declared that people of other faiths—including Islam—could be saved (Michel 2005b : 36).

This non-intrusive approach—also designated the post-liberal approach—to the internally held belief systems of participant groups does not make any attempt to change or syncretise the participants' beliefs. Post-liberals, in fact, view these attempts as intrusive. Some see interfaith engagement as a fruitful step in conflict resolution resulting in new interpretations, mutual influences, etc. Others do not see ideological interaction as necessary and consider it as adverse to the best interests of participants because it undermines their self preservation (Rider 2008: 150).

There is, in this approach, a convergence on common social issues e.g. fighting poverty or drug addiction, but not necessarily on doctrinal issues. If and when adherents do engage in discourse on key components of their respective religions, it is for the purpose of learning about and

understanding each other's beliefs; conflicting claims to truth are, therefore, not debated (see *Interfaith Activities and Interfaith Dialogue*).

This approach is favoured by many interfaith organisations, including the Parliament of the World's Religions and the World Conference on Religion and Peace mentioned above. The following guiding principles of the WCRP bear this out:

- We are committed to our respective faiths and at the same time strive for inter-religious understanding and cooperation.
- We recognise our religious differences and respect one another's convictions and hopes.
- We do not intend to start a new universal religion which replaces all our faiths.
- We want to promote mutual understanding between religious communities.
- We want to foster closer inter-religious cooperation in addressing the ills of society (see World Conference on Religion and Peace).

The approach of the Second Vatican Council is also inclusivist as is evident from the following text:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. However, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim *Christ* 'the way, the truth and the life' (Jn. 14: 6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself (*Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*).

Pluralism

Ernst Troeltsch's view that every culture's claim can only be viewed as its peculiar apprehension of the divine and William James' emphasis on the

centrality of individual experience in diverse religious milieus has ushered in the current school of thought that advocates 'Religious Pluralism'. For Troeltsch,

absolute validity cannot be claimed for Christianity or any other religion each religion is a different cultural manifestation of the struggle of the human spirit from the divine source to the divine goal (Coward 1985: 24).

Religious Pluralism is the view that all major religions are equally valid. Thus, no one religion can be considered better or superior to any other religion. While pluralists concede that there may be differences in rituals and beliefs among diverse faiths, they argue that on the most important issues, there is great similarity. They also point out that there are virtuous people in all the major religions. Religious Pluralism became increasingly popular in the latter half of the twentieth century and its leading proponent in the last few decades has been John Hick (Vlach 2009b).

The following are among the most common features of Pluralism:

- Religions teach multiple truths which are all valid;
- All religions are legitimate and valid;
- All religions are equally valid;
- All religions constitute varying conceptions of the Ultimate Reality; and
- Religious truths are different responses to the divine (see *The Diversity of Meanings of the Term Religious Pluralism*).

Religious pluralists view the breaking down of fences between religions as inevitable. They maintain that no one religion is the sole source of truth, and that all belief systems may contain truths. Pluralists seek to reduce religious conflict through a societal and theological change. They, therefore, apply a cooperative rather than a competitive or hands-off methodology to this change (Rider 2008: 151).

Another branch of pluralists maintain the need to consciously manage the interfaith interaction and see merit in the internal and external

changes this may bring to belief systems. They do not, however, seek an end to this process, understanding that the interaction is itself generative. In this way this methodology combines the syncretic approach to collaborative growth with the premise of the post-liberal approach that seeks to maintain differences between groups (Rider 2008: 152f).

John Hick is one of the foremost proponents of religious pluralism. He rejects both exclusivist and inclusivist responses to religious diversity—the first because he considers it unjust and incoherent, and the second because he believes it is insulting and patronising. He argues that all the major religions in the world are equal and valid responses to the 'Real' (Markham 2004: 8f). In his view, the diverse world faiths embody different perceptions of Ultimate Reality and provide divergent ways of salvation/enlightenment/fulfilment. Hick believes that each individual experiences Reality as it appears to him/her in his/her unique cultural situation (Peterson *et al.* 1996: 513; Hick 1973: 146).

Unlike the case of Inclusivism where the autonomy of religions to adhere to their specific religious doctrine is respected, pluralists believe that convergence on social issues by adherents of various religions should eventually lead to the affirmation of the legitimacy of each other's doctrines—regardless of conflicting claims to truth (see *Interfaith Activities and Interreligious Dialogue*).

Major Influences on Said Nursi

In order to obtain a proper appreciation of Nursi's approach to interfaith dialogue, it is important to examine the major influences on his life.

Exposure to Sufism

Nursi had great affinity with Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī whose *Futūh al-Ghayb* had a profound influence on him, and he studied *tasawwuf* under several *shuyūkh* of the Naqshbandī/Khālīdī order. Vahide (2005a: 5,27,165) claims that he never joined a *tarīqah* and rejected the denigration of his movement as a *sūfī* order (Vahide 2005a: 294). Despite this, there can be little doubt that his contact with and studies under these *sūfī* masters left an

indelible impression on him. His austere lifestyle is reflective of *zuhd* (abstinence), a principle feature of *sufism*. Hamid Algar (1979: 315) states: '... the influence of Sufism upon him was profound, and can be seen to have permeated the entirety of his writings'.

Experience of War

Nursi lived through the two world wars. In addition, in the First World War, he led the militia forces on the Caucasian Front against the invading Russians for which he was later awarded a War Medal (Vahide 2005a: 111). He was captured and detained as a prisoner of war in Russian camps from 1916 until his escape in 1918 (Vahide 2005a: 122-128).

Mücahit Bilici (2004: 297) describes the 'Old Said' as 'anti-colonial'—identifying with anti-colonial intellectuals from other parts of the Muslim world, resisting the European encroachment on Ottoman land and culture and condemning those of his fellow citizens who embraced colonialism. Şükran Vahide describes the mental and spiritual transformation that Nursi experienced after his return from the prisoner-of-war camp: '... Nursi underwent a radical interior change, 'a strange revolution of the spirit'.' He calls this 'the birth of the New Said' (2005a : 163f). However, this birth was preceded by severe emotional and mental turmoil as a consequence of the war, the harsh conditions of his captivity, the atrocities suffered by his own students, the Ottoman defeat and foreign occupation, i.e.,

Because of the extreme tyranny and despotism of this last World war and its Merciless destruction, and hundreds of innocents being scattered and ruined And the awesome despair of the defeated ... (Nursi 2001: 167).

Nursi saw with his own eyes the suffering, anguish, and destruction brought about by the two World Wars. He describes World War II as 'having plunged the world into chaos', and bringing about 'widespread hunger, destruction, and waste' (Michel 2005a: 121). What also disturbed Nursi profoundly was the fact that many innocent people get killed in war. To him the loss of a single innocent man or woman was unacceptable and

unjustifiable (Vahide 2006). Nursi's sense of fairness and his compassion toward people of all creeds is evident from his intervention on behalf of Armenian civilians who were to be exterminated by the Ottoman forces in retaliation for the massacre of Muslim civilians by Armenian bands (Bilici 2004: 299; Vahide 2005a: 116f).

Another factor that no doubt weighed heavily on Nursi's mind was that Muslims were no match for the technologically superior Western armies and so were in a sense committing suicide by confronting them. He believed it would be far more prudent for Muslims to divert their attention from physical confrontation to peaceful pursuits like eradication of poverty and ignorance and putting an end to internal conflicts (Vahide 2005a: 61). These Nursi (1909:78) contends are the real enemies of humankind:

We shall therefore wage *jihād* with the weapons of science and industry on ignorance, poverty and conflicting ideas.

It is against this background that Nursi's notion of *jihād* must be understood. Nursi advocated 'positive action' (*Musbet Hareket*), meaning patient and silent struggle (*jihād*) to strengthen faith by peaceful means. Not only did Nursi advise his students as well as others to refrain from violence, he never sought revenge, even against those who persecuted him (Saritoprak 2005: 413-427). This method of *jihād* Nursi termed *cihād-i mānevī* (moral *jihād* or *jihād* of the word) in the struggle against atheism and irreligion (Vahide 2005a: 323).

Observation of the Progress of Europe

Nursi admired the advances made by European nations, recognising the 'numerous virtues in modern civilisation' (Michel 2005b: 29). However, he decried the materialist philosophy that underpinned Western civilisation which he attributed to the abandonment of the 'fundamental laws of revealed religions' (Nursi 1959,ii: 97f). Nursi therefore cautioned Muslims not to blindly adopt Western civilisation, with all its pitfalls, but only to retain its positive features. He advised them to work towards a new civilisation rooted in Islamic norms and values (Michel 2005a: 91).

Encounter with the System of Education

Said Nursi began his education in the local village *madrasah*. He began teaching at the early age of 19 at the mosque in Mardin. Fearing his growing influence, the Governor expelled him from the town to Bitlis where he had an opportunity to further his studies under several scholars. He went to Van in Eastern Anatolia following an invitation by its governor. Here he studied history, physics, mathematics, geography, geology, chemistry, astronomy and other sciences (Vahide 2005a: 20-28).

Nursi was highly critical of the teaching methods as well as curricula of seminaries and *madrasahs* which he described as being incapable of graduating youth capable of meeting the challenges of the modern era (Vahide 2005a: 142). He proposed an integration of the natural sciences with the religious sciences which he believed would 'strengthen the truths of religion' (Vahide 2005a: 29). One way to do this would be for religious sciences to be taught in secular schools and moderns science in religious schools (Vahide 2005a: 48).

Interaction with Politicians

Initially, Said Nursi was involved intimately with political affairs in Turkey. He even offered advice and guidance to politicians and government officials, including Sultan Abd al-Hamid who considered him to be disrespectful and handed him over to the military court. The court, unable to silence him, sent him to a lunatic asylum where he spent some time. The Young Turks, mostly composed of Western-educated intelligentsia, began to be effective within the Ottoman government by the end of the 19th century. They imposed Western thoughts and theories on the classical model of Ottoman government, and changed the forms of administration. Initially, Nursi was in contact with these new governing elites, and even participated in some of their meetings (Vahide 2005a: 36f).

Nursi paid a visit to Salonica where he met with the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), but on discovering that they were opposed to Islam, he returned to Istanbul. After the proclamation of the Constitution in 1908, he began to educate people on the Islamic concept of freedom and constitutionalism. Nursi adopted a modern approach—he

wanted to see the involvement of ordinary people in the constitutional order. In his view the principle of mutual consultation (*shūra* or *meşveret*) can only be properly applied in the modern age through a constituent assembly (as was being proposed for Turkey) (Vahide 2005a: 55-58).

The following year, the CUP sent a regiment of soldiers to protect the constitutional regime against a revolt demanding the reinstatement of the Shari'a. The revolt was suppressed, Sultan Abd al-Hamid dethroned and a military administration proclaimed. Among those who were court-martialed for instigating the revolt was Said Nursi (Vahide 2005a: 73-78). Said Nursi opposed the entry of the Ottomans into the First World War.

After the British forces occupied Istanbul in 1920, Said Nursi joined several religious scholars who issued a *fatwa* urging the Muslims to actively resist the occupation. But he devoted his time primarily to his writings which were dedicated to combatting disbelief, atheism and apostasy in Muslim lands (Vahide 2005a: 141).

During this time, said Nursi continued writing the *Risale-i Nur*. The treatises he wrote were copied out by his students who conveyed them to the farthest corners of Turkey. When the government realized that the *Risale-i Nur* was spreading to all the towns and villages, they started to treat Nursi and his students as criminals. They raided their houses and carried out searches, but were unable to intimidate them (Vahide 2005a: 204-215).

In the later years of his life, Nursi was in contact with Mustafa Kemal, and he personally participated in the Parliament in Ankara until he fell into disfavor because of his severe criticisms of the policies of Mustafa Kemal and the Parliament. Mustafa Kemal sentenced Nursi to internal exile, and had him closely watched (Vahide 2005a: 169, 171, 182, 186).

When the Arabic *adhan* (call to prayer) was banned in 1932 by the government, Said Nursi persisted in reciting it in the small mosque in Barla which he frequented. The authorities imprisoned some of the villagers, and in 1934 he and 120 of his students were arrested and imprisoned on the charge of 'setting up a secret society' opposed to the state system. Nursi was held in solitary confinement and despite their efforts to break his morale he continued with his writings in prison (Vahide 2005a: 189, 208, 215-217).

Upon his release from prison in 1936, Said Nursi was exiled to Kastamonu, where he was compelled to reside for the next seven years. Not only did he continue writing the *Risale-i Nur*, he also corresponded secretly

with his students. It is through their efforts that the treatises spread everywhere, even to all the villages (Vahide 2005a: 227).

In the summer of 1943 the authorities poisoned Said Nursi, but he recovered. They raided and searched his house on numerous occasions, took him and 126 of his students from all over Turkey to Ankara to face a charge of 'setting up a secret society', then sent him to Denizli where he was imprisoned for nine months. Instead of being released from prison, he was sent to Emirdag in 1944 where he was kept under strict surveillance. In 1948, his house was raided and he was sent to Afyon Prison on a number of false, trumped-up charges (Fedotoff 2004: 255).

When the Democrat Party came to power and restored the freedoms which had been restricted under the Republican Party, Said Nursi—in the phase where he is referred to as the 'Third Said'—again began to offer advice and guidance to politicians and members of government. After the publication of his *Gençlik Rehberi* (A Guide For Youth) some authorities instigated a court case against Said Nursi on a charge of intending to found a state based on religious principles. He was acquitted of this charge. When all Islamic papers and magazines were barred and those involved with them were arrested, it included Said Nursi (Vahide 2005a: 306-315).

Nursi's personal experience of the hypocrisy, corruption, injustice, partisanship and manipulation of religion by politicians as detailed above (Buti 1997), as well as their repression of citizens and denying them their fundamental rights, convinced him that active participation in politics was counter-productive.

It is precisely for this reason that Nursi discouraged his students from active political participation. The following words are illustrative:

Beware, my brothers! Do not fancy or imagine that I am urging you with these words to busy yourselves with politics. God forbid! The truth of Islam is above all politics. All politics may serve it, but no politics can make Islam a tool for itself (see Vahide 2000: 96-105).

Spread of Atheism and Materialism in Muslim Societies

Nursi was alarmed at the rate at which atheism and materialism had infected Muslim societies. He described the situation he found in Ankara as follows:

... I saw that an abominable current of atheism was treacherously trying to subvert, poison, and destroy their minds (see Vahide 2005a: 169).

Nursi identifies Dajjal, who correlates to Christian legends about the Antichrist and is described in some detail in Islamic literature, with atheism (Michel 1995b: 40).

The Dajjal ... has forgotten God His huge current of atheism ... is truly vast (see Michel 2005a: 94).

He was extremely concerned that the Turkish nation would be unable to 'withstand and counter' the forces of unbelief (Vahide 2005a: 278) unless they were checked. It was this over-riding concern with protecting the right to belief that inspired him to seek the co-operation of Muslims and Christians (Vahide 2005a: 317). He is convinced that this collective struggle against atheism will eventually triumph:

... Although defeated before the atheistic current while separate, Christianity and Islam will have the capacity to defeat and rout it as a result of their union (Michel 2005a: 95).

In Nursi's view, materialism is a direct consequence of the abandonment of the spiritual aspect of life—people become obsessed with acquiring material goods in order to give meaning to their lives.

Impact of Scholars

Nursi's quest for an escape from the 'spiritual darkness' he found himself in after the First World War led him to the *Futūh al-Ghayb* of `Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylāni (d. 1166) and the *Maktūbat* of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624). He attributes his spiritual and intellectual transformation from the 'Old Said' to the 'New Said' to the influence of these two works; the first helping him to eliminate any pride he might have harboured and to identify his faults, and the second bringing him to the realisation that he should rely entirely on the Qur'an to be his guide (Vahide 2005a: 163-166).

Furthermore, `Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī is known to have encouraged tolerance and respect for all faith communities (Reed n.d.: 83f). We can safely assume that this influenced Said Nursi's own attitude toward diverse faith communities.

Nursi's disillusionment with politics, concern about the negative impact of materialism, disenchantment with the system of education and realisation of the futility of war inspired him to turn to writing to expound his views. His proposals for a reconstitution of modern civilisation founded on religious values, which are contained in his numerous writings, include interfaith dialogue.

Nursi's Approach to Dialogue

To begin with, it is clear that Said Nursi was not an exclusivist in the sense described above. It is known that during his lifetime, he reached out to Christian leaders. Two prominent examples that are cited are (a) Nursi sent a collection of his works to Pope Pius XII in 1950; and (b) he visited the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in Istanbul in 1953 to request cooperation between Muslims and Christians against atheism (Michel 2005b: 36f).

This raises a question: knowing that Said Nursi was highly critical of Western Civilisation (as discussed above), how do we explain his willingness to have a dialogue with Christians?

In this section, we will examine (a) Said Nursi's rationale for dialogue; (b) what he considered to be the necessary conditions for dialogue; (c) what he proposed as a foundation for dialogue; and (d) what he perceived to be the objectives of dialogue.

Rationale for Dialogue

There are several factors that contributed to Nursi's promotion of dialogue in the contemporary world. I will list what I consider to be the most crucial.

a The Qur'an's Call for Dialogue

In his writings, Said Nursi cites Qur'anic verses which encourage or endorse dialogue between faiths.

In his commentary on the Qur'anic verse, 'O People of the Book! Come to a common term between us and you, that we worship none but

Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allah' (3: 64) he stated:

Modern civilization, which is the product of the thought of all mankind and perhaps the jinn as well, has taken up a position opposed to the Qur'an, which individuals and communities have failed to dispute.

In this situation, the Qur'anic injunction to come to a 'common term' with the People of the Book implies that Muslims and Christians must come to a mutual awareness that as communities founded on faith in God, they have a common mission to bear witness to Divine values in the midst of modern civilization. Far from being divided by a supposed 'clash of civilizations', they are called to work together to carry on a critical civilizational dialogue with the proponents of modernity (Michel 2005b: 31).

Nursi refutes the contention that Muslims may not befriend or collaborate with Jews and Christians based on the following verse:

O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for your friends and your protectors (Qur'an 5: 15).

He asserts that the proscription on befriending Jews and Christians applies only in a situation where they reflect the qualities of disbelief. He further argues that the fact that Islam permits Muslim men to marry Jewish and Christian women implies that Muslims are permitted to have love and compassion for them (Michel 2005b: 37). The above verse should, therefore, be understood in its proper context.

It is this approach of Nursi's, which stands in sharp contrast to that of many traditionalist scholars who reject any co-operation even with those whom the Qur'an describes as 'People of the Book' that I believe is very relevant in our present context.

b Threat of Atheism, Materialism, Secularism to Religion in General

Said Nursi argued that there is a need for a common struggle against irreligion, atheism, tyranny and evil (Berghout 2004: 29f). In his view the

dominant challenge to faith in the modern age lay in the secular approach to life. He was equally critical of communism and capitalism, the former for denying God's existence and consciously denying religion any role in society and the latter for ignoring the question of God and promoting a consumerist, materialist way of life (Michel 2002).

Nursi wrote a refutation of atheism in Arabic entitled *Zayl al-Zayl* (Vahide 2005a: 169). Apart from atheistic committees that were established to sever Turkey's relationship with the Islamic World, communism had spread rapidly in the country in the 1940s and this development was a matter of great concern to him.

For Said Nursi, the enemy of human happiness and ethical uprightness is unbelief and irreligion. By this he means the tendency by people to ignore Divine Guidance, their unwillingness to give up their own desires and ideas and submit to divine teachings about human nature. In their quest for a Divinely-guided way of life in the modern age, Muslims will find common cause with Christians who are committed to the teachings of Jesus.

The reasons why Nursi was preoccupied with atheism can be found in *Mesnevî-i Nuriye*. They include the following:

- Unbelief renders the universe meaningless;
- Unbelief severs the bonds that connect man [human beings] both to himself and to all other creation; and
- Unbelief extinguishes the soul and heart and leaves them in darkness (Ulosoy 2004: 183f).

As stated earlier, the Second World War marked a turning point in Nursi's life. This is when he began to call on Muslims to unite not only among themselves but also with religious and pious Christians, disregarding questions of dispute and not arguing over them, for absolute disbelief is on the attack (Nursi 1959, i: 202).

Despite his critique of Western Civilisation, the 'other' in Nursi's thought was not Western civilization, as it has been for many recent Islamic movements. On the contrary, a more populist appeal was at work, rather than a fundamentalist construction of otherness. Nursi inspired a reaction against the official local governors as they became the representatives of the alien, of non-Muslim practices, as they were seen to be by provincial people. But

there was no exclusion of Western civilization as a whole; the uniqueness of the Nur movement lay in its quest to appropriate some aspects of this civilization in its own distinctive ways.

How do we see Said Nursi's criticism of Western civilisation? Nursi is highly critical of the modernization methods of the secularist, Western-oriented elites who paved the way for Kemal Ataturk's revolution in 1923. Their critics focused on these secularist elites because according to the Nurcus (followers of the Nur movement), the social theories and projections of the secularists bore no relation to the actual experience of the people of Anatolia; these theories, the Nurcus said, had drifted away from the realm of existing social life (Arisan 1996).

It is evident from the above that Nursi did not harbour an inherent hatred for the West. In fact, he admired the advances made by Europe though he claimed that they could not be attributed to Christianity (Vahide 2005a: 158). However, he was critical of the atheism and agnosticism that had come to characterize Western societies and had begun to influence Muslim youth (Vahide 2005a: 169, 323). But when he found that they had softened their attitude towards Muslims whom they began to view as their allies in their struggle against the communists, he relented (Vahide 2005a: 307).

Nursi is convinced that the Muslim World would be rejuvenated if the youth acquired modern sciences and technology, primarily because Islam contained within itself the requisites of progress (Vahide 2005a: 53). One way to do this was for religious sciences to be taught in secular schools and modern science in religious schools, while religious scholars should attach themselves to a *sūfī* order (Vahide 2005a: 48).

c Common Values

Said Nursi was deeply cognisant of the fact that the theological differences between Islam and Christianity could not be washed away. However, he acknowledges the commonalities between them.

Nursi argues that there can be no clash of civilizations between real Christians and real Muslims. There is nothing surprising in this, because both communities believe in the one and only God and both seek to construct society on divine principles and values. If there is a clash, it is between, on the one hand, the civilization envisioned by 'people of faith', or in the words of Said Nursi, 'the God-conscious' and, on the other, a civilization that tries

to banish God from everyday life, from politics, economics, and social interaction, and to reduce religion to privately-held beliefs, to ineffective ritual, to colourful folklore (Michel 2005d: 126).

Said Nursi found justification for his rapprochement with Christians in the *hadith* or Prophetic traditions which predict that at the end of time, pious Christians will unite with Muslims to fight their common enemy, atheism (Michel 2005e: 20).

In short, Said Nursi sees the need for dialogue as arising from the challenges posed by secular society to Muslims and Christians.

Conditions for Dialogue

Said Nursi established several ground rules for successful dialogue. These include:

- Taking into account the core principles of all religions and there should be no attempt by any one faith to compel other faiths to accept its teachings or impose its beliefs on all others;
- Placing dialogue above self-interest and/or thoughts of worldly gain;
- Basing dialogue on the responsibility and mission of vicegerents;
- Understanding the complexities of our reality in the global age and finding ways of revitalizing the role of religion in addressing human problems (Berghout 2004: 35).
- Avoiding disputes on questions of belief (Michel 2005e: 18).

Foundation for Dialogue

For Nursi, the foundation for dialogue has to be Islamic civilisation. The reason why Western civilisation could not be considered as the basis is that (a) it relies on force; (b) its goal is self-interest; (c) its principle in life is conflict; (d) it uses racism and negative nationalism to hold the masses together; and (e) its enticement is inciting love and passion and gratifying desires (Michel 2005a : 83).

Western civilization, according to Nursi, became distant and estranged from true Christianity and based its personal and societal views on

the principles of an anthropocentric Greco-Roman philosophy which exalted the human person to the centre of the universe and pushed God to its margins (Michel 2005b: 29f).

Said Nursi held that European societies replaced divinely guided Christian ideals with the philosophical principles of the Enlightenment, focusing on the freedom of the individual, dismissing the formative role and rights of society, and reducing religious faith to a private, personal commitment with no voice in the autonomous spheres of politics, economics, and social relations.

This, however, does not suggest that Nursi saw no value in Western civilisation. To the contrary, he admired the advances made by Western civilisation in the fields of science and technology and urged Muslims to emulate European nations. We know that among the disciplines Nursi taught were chemistry and physics. And he encouraged the integration of Islamic and modern disciplines (Vahide 2005a: 29).

For Nursi, Islamic civilisation is better suited to provide a basis for establishing a just and peaceful world because it has the following characteristics:

- it is truth (not might) which makes right;
- virtue is the motivation for human acts;
- unity is the basis of social relations;
- it encourages mutual assistance; and
- it upholds divine guidance as the norm of ethical behaviour (Michel 2005a: 84).

If any effort at dialogue were to succeed, he holds, Christians and Muslims will have to refrain (at least for some time) from disputes between themselves. In saying this, Said Nursi did not imply that there are no differences between Muslims and Christians or that those differences are not important. His point is that concentrating obsessively on these differences can blind both Muslims and Christians to the even more important common task which they share, that of offering the modern world a vision of human life and society in which God is central and God's will is the norm of moral values (Berghout 2004: 28).

Purpose of Dialogue

What exactly did Said Nursi hope to achieve through interfaith dialogue? In my view, Nursi was desirous of achieving three major objectives.

a Establishment of Divine Values

To Nursi, the threat of atheism far outweighed any other threat. He was hoping that through interfaith dialogue the world would be more accepting of 'divine' values which have been ignored or discarded as a result of the secularisation of societies. In one of his letters which appears in a collection called *Emirdağ Lahikası* he states:

Since modern Western civilization acts contrary to the fundamental laws of the revealed religions, its evil has come to outweigh its good aspects, its errors and harmful aspects its benefits (Michel 2005a: 96).

There are two essential points to note here. Nursi does not refer to Islam exclusively, but to all revealed religions. So he could be called a 'universalist' in the sense that he is concerned about the fate of all nations. And he deems the reestablishment of divine laws as crucial to the quest for a just and peaceful world.

b Attainment of Human Dignity, Justice, and Fellowship

Nursi's central thesis is that Muslims and Christians together can build a civilisation in which human dignity, justice, and fellowship will be the norm. This is possible if they seek to ground their mutual relationships on love (Michel 2005b: 41).

Love is an important theme in Sufism. This indicates that Nursi's study of Sufism and his contact with *sūfī* shaykhs had a profound effect on him. In the *Damascus Sermon*, he advocates love as a solution to the disease of enmity (Michel 2005b: 52).

c Commitment to Global Peace and Tranquillity

It was during the later phase of his life, subsequent to the two world wars, that Said Nursi began to focus on world peace (Shuriye 2004: 243). His

disillusionment with war is evident from his contention in his now famous *The Damascus Sermon*:

The time for enmity and hostility has finished. Two world wars have shown how evil, destructive, and what an awesome wrong (sic.) is enmity (Çengel 2004: 207).

Conclusion

In the final or third phase of his life, Badiuzzaman Said Nursi encouraged interfaith dialogue. It is evident, from his writings, that he is committed to the truth of Islam. The following declarations bear this out:

Is it at all possible for there to be any doubt concerning the statements of the Qur'an And can there be doubt concerning the testimony and witnessings of the Muhammadan Being ... (Nursi 2001: 543).

However, due to the fact that Nursi (like Friedrich Schleiermacher) acknowledged that other faiths possess a partial understanding of the truth, he cannot be considered an exclusivist. But he was by no means a pluralist like John Hick who endorsed the validity of all truth claims. He could rightfully be called an inclusivist, a view supported by Ian Markham (2004: 18) who observes:

.... Said Nursi is properly labelled an 'inclusivist'. He is committed to the truth of Islam Yet he acknowledges that other traditions have a partial insight into the truth.

Said Nursi was profoundly influenced by mystics, in particular by the writings of Ibn al-Arabī and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī and by the Naqshbandiyyah order. It is this influence that can be assumed to have shaped his inner personality and explains his reluctance to resort to violence to challenge the authorities who continued to harass him throughout his life through detention, exile, imprisonment, court marshalling and raids on his residence. He was ever willing to forgive his prison wardens, judges,

government officials, law officers, and civil authorities who had constantly persecuted and harassed him (Michel 2005c: 76).

But more importantly, it made him more open to dialogue, not only with Muslims of all persuasions but also with people of other faiths. Berghout (23) asserts that Nursi's

call for dialogue and understanding stems not only from the critical situation of the world's alarming problems but initially and basically from the inner call of his human nature as well as from the deep wisdom enshrined in the Qur'anic text

Most of Nursi's comments refer to Christianity and Christians. There are few references to Judaism and none to Hinduism, Buddhism or other faiths. This must be attributed to the context in which he found himself. His encounter was with European civilisation which he both admired and criticised.

The impact of Said Nursi on (mainly) Turkish Muslims has been quite phenomenal. According to M. Hakan Yavuz (2003b: 11), the number of Nursi's adherents who constitute the Nursi movement in 2003 varied between five and six million. Nursi's interfaith initiative has been instrumental, in my view, in encouraging Muslim scholars and religious leaders to pursue interfaith dialogue within Turkey, in Muslim majority countries such as Egypt and Malaysia, as well as in Muslim minority communities globally.

The primary means employed by the Nursi movement are establishing dialogue centres, hosting conferences and founding schools. In the past few decades, hundreds of dialogue centres and institutes have been established throughout the world by followers of Nursi or his disciple, Gülen. In South Africa, four such centres have been located in the major cities. Seminars and conferences on Nursi are held regularly in Turkey, in Muslim majority countries and in countries with Muslim minorities. These conferences which focus on various themes emerging from Nursi's writings attract a fair number of non-Muslim (primarily Christian) participants who find resonance in Nursi's views. One of the foremost exponents of Nursi's thoughts is the Jesuit, Thomas Michel SJ.

According to Hakan Yavuz (2003a), Fethullah Gülen, who is recognised widely as the chief Muslim proponent of dialogue among

civilisations today, can be said to have 'reimagined' Nursi. He is well known for the schools which he has been instrumental in founding. There are currently between 250—300 Gülen-inspired schools worldwide, four of which are located in South Africa. These Gülen schools which admit learners of all faiths and follow the standard public school curriculum of the host country, emphasise what is termed 'universal moral values', viz. love, compassion, tolerance, and forgiving (Gülen 2000: 4-9)—values which were propounded by Said Nursi.

Said Nursi did not propose a specific model of interfaith dialogue. His approach falls within the parameters of Inclusivism discussed above. He avoids engaging faith communities on matters of doctrine, preferring to focus on issues that are common, such as belief in God and core moral values. For him, the pursuit of peace and justice, which he was convinced could come about only through the restoration of divine values, was a greater priority than attempting to compel other faiths to accept Islam or imposing its doctrines on all others.

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School of Religion and Theology
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Dangors@ukzn.ac.za

An *Harambee*¹ Theory of Rhetoric in Social Action: Persuasion, Religious Identity & Recognition in Sudan

Denzil Chetty



Abstract

There are various theories of social interaction that can be used to analyse the current state of Africa, albeit, there is also an inherent need for a theory which can capture the salient factors that perpetuate the state of social conflict that is unique to the African context. Hence, the aim of this research paper is to advance an African discourse that postulates an African born theory of rhetoric in the realm of critical social action. This research paper brings to the fore three important conceptual facets, namely persuasion, religious identity and recognition that have the potential to significantly influence the African social system of interaction. Thus, this paper calls for

¹ *Harambee* (Swahili) = 'pulling together'.

an analysis of the revitalization of primordial consciousness in the context of group processes and intergroup relations which can serve as a mechanism for strategic mobilization. Using Sudan as a case study, the objective of this paper is to analyse the range of effects sought by the deployment of rhetoric in the realm of critical social action. Social action in the context of this paper involves roles and organizations as units of analysis. Hence, it involves not only interaction at the societal level, but even informal interpersonal relations involving two persons. Against this background, the paper posits a theory of rhetoric – i.e. ‘An Harambee Theory’ - which can serve as a model for analysing critical social action and interaction in Africa.

Key Concepts: An African discourse, rhetoric, social systems, social action, religious identity, social identity complexity, collective context, collective orientation, collective action, in-group and out-group, solidarity and belonging.

Introduction: Initiating an African Discourse in Social Action

In recent years, Africa has been portrayed as a continent plagued by the recurrent phenomena of social, religious and ethnic conflicts. Indeed, most reports on Africa generally create an impression of a continent torn apart by persistent conflicts, weak states, and displaced populations that require international aid and foreign intervention. The continent has undeniably been the site of some of the most violent and destructive conflicts over the past fifty years – i.e. the appalling conflicts in Algeria, Somalia, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan exhibit some of the most recent and dramatic examples (cf. Meredith 2005: 1-16).

In addressing the contested terrain of Africa within the larger political and socio-economic crises, I recall the words of Tadesse (2008: 41):

Any serious conflict resolution initiative needs to confront the nature of the African state, which is the major locus of political and socio-economic crisis.... Most states [in Africa] don't represent the interest and character of all components of their population. The state, its

institutions and rules and regulations are highly contested. A state which is a contested terrain in this sense suffers from political instability and institutional disarray and poses real challenges for reform and democratic transition.

Thus, the challenge confronting the African continent is to transform governments run by small elite groups with partisan agendas and militarised conceptions of security, to states that have inclusive, representative and legitimate processes and systems. According to the thesis of Reynal-Querol (2002:29), an understanding of the temporal link between the contested terrains, the effect of ethnic divisions on civil wars and the roles of political and economic systems, coincides with religious polarization and animist diversity. Reynal-Querol (2002:29-54) argues that religiously divided societies are more prone to intense conflict than countries where people have conflicting claims to resources based on interest groups or language divisions².

Building upon the foundation set by Reynal-Querol (2002), I began my personal journey advocating for an African discourse, which draws upon the pragmatic characteristics of conflict in Africa. Although, each contested terrain (i.e. Sudan, Nigeria, Eritrea, etc.) needs to be analyzed as individual flash points in Africa and understood within the parameters of its own discourse, there are also common loci that are shared within the larger African context. Hence, in contextualizing Parsons (1991: 25) definition of a social system, an 'African social system' can be defined in terms of a system of processes of interaction between individual actors and the structure of the relations between the interactions of these actors. This refers to the interaction of individual actors, which takes place under such conditions that it is plausible to treat this process of interaction as a system in the scientific sense. Hence, in substantiating an African discourse, three salient principles

² Religious identity is fixed and nonnegotiable, hence, disputes amongst identity groups based on their religious nature are particularly difficult to negotiate, thus, raising the odds of violence (cf. Reynal-Querol 2002: 29-35). However, arguably not all ethnically and religiously divided societies evolve into civil wars. There are also experiences of good relationships among individuals of different cultures within a country.

of interaction can be identified in Africa – i.e. persuasion, identity and recognition.

In the context of this research paper, persuasion is understood as the engineering of consent which encompasses the related qualities of trust, trustworthiness, credence and credibility and extends to objects and means used to secure such trust or belief (Carey 1994: 26). According to Blumenberg (1987: 423), persuasion is rooted in basic human capacities, with the primary intention for practical deliberation, for producing agreement through persuasive speech and for achieving mutual understanding. Both Brooks and Warren (1970: 36) classify this paradigm of interaction by three important perceptual facets – i.e. logic, time and space³.

Thus, essential to persuasion is identity which serves as a mechanism for mobilization of the individual actor, acting upon a specific ideology which enhances a state of shared recognition. According to Deng (1995: 14):

Identity is seen as a function of how people identify themselves and are identified in race, ethnicity, culture, language and religion, and how such identification determines or influences their participation in the political, economic, social and cultural life of their country.

According to the above definition, one can argue that identity is of little consequence in modern, democratic, and pluralistic countries or societies where discrimination on the basis of race, skin colour, national origin, religion, or gender is forbidden by law. However, stated in positive terms both Johnson (2003) and Jok (2007) argue that in Africa (with particular focus to Sudan), democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms also imply that an individual's identity is accommodated through tolerance for diversity. Hence, Deng (1995: 14-15) continues to argue that,

³ 'Logic' refers to the reasoning process in which relations are established between one thing and another – i.e. cause and effect, evidence and conclusion; 'time' refers to the natural perception of sequence in our experience; and 'space' is based on the way we perceive the world in which we live, cf. Brooks and Warren (1970: 36-44) for further discussion.

In some countries or societies these elements of identity are important factors in the sense of belonging to the nation and participation in the political, economic, and social process. In tribal societies, for example, the family or clan is important to membership; in theocracies, religion is a critical factor; in a racially defined state, as in the apartheid South Africa, race determines participation; in a context of ethnic nationalism, as in the states of the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union, ethnicity is a social detriment.

Elaborating further on the definition of identity, Giannakos (2002: 1) states that scholars tend to focus on identity as an end in itself or as a means to an end⁴. In general terms, they tend to view identity as the instrument by which institutions (i.e. state or a national state), become legitimate in the eyes of its citizens and the world, or a group of citizens become sovereign over a specific territory (i.e. the right to national self-determination).

In this context, identity becomes the means by which certain institutions become or attempt to become legitimate. Identity is hence attributed to a process where the role of the individual is passive, with identity being imposed on the individual by realities beyond his/her realm, such as systemic economic and political ones. Eriksen (1991: 263) relates ethnic and religious identity to the social reproduction of basic classificatory differences between categories of people and to aspects of 'gain and loss' on social interaction. Arguably, identity can therefore become an expression through which individuals are provided their social statuses. According to Singh (1995: 174) identity is essentially, a boundary between in-group and out-group, which has the potential to give rise to group mobilization and politicization qua separate community or society. Therefore, to understand the contributing significance of identity to the contested terrain, one needs to

⁴ Those who focus on identity as an end tend to explain identity in terms of assumed racial or genetic characteristics or presumed cultural or linguistic uniqueness. Among the most prominent representatives of this school of thought are Gellner (1983), Smith (1991), Coleman (1968) and Connor (1978).

analyse the interaction of persuasion with identity in the realm of critical social action⁵.

The conflicts in Africa are indeed many and varied and can arise as a result of pervasive structural or systemic factors that may create pre-conditions for violent outbreak. These include state repression, lack of political legitimacy, poor governance, unequal distribution of wealth, poverty, etc. Hence, together with persuasion and identity, another crucial facet that has the potential to delude the contested terrain is recognition. Thus, identity brings to the fore the interrelated problems of self-recognition and recognition by others⁶.

This research paper aims to provide a theory of the pragmatics of rhetoric with the postulation of persuasion, religious identity and recognition in the paradigm of critical social action within the broader ambits of an African discourse using Sudan as a case study. It remains my objective and the thesis of this research paper to facilitate a wider discussion on the uniqueness of the African context, which takes into account the current state of Africa and beckons a call for an African theory unpacking 'African solutions to African problems'⁷.

⁵ In recent years discussions on social action have featured as prominent discourses among many scholars in various disciplines. The earlier works of scholars such as von Gierke (1913), Parsons (1934), Troeltsch (1911), Znaniecki (1925) and others seem to come to the fore in the writings of many contemporary scholars.

⁶ Recognition is vital to any reflexivity – e.g. any capacity to look at oneself, to choose one's actions and see their consequences. Hence, according to Smelser (1962: 59) recognition is essential in the spreading of generalised belief, precipitating factors, and mobilization of participants for action.

⁷ The importance of African solutions for African problems is highlighted by Kagwina (2009: 6) as a salient ideological force driving Africa's agenda for peace and security, especially within the African Union (AU).

Contemporary Discourses on the Correlates and Antecedents of Group Processes and Intergroup Relations

The postulation of an Harambee theory, originates from the current trends of 'belonging' and 'solidarity' discourses in the African context. As one surveys the present state of social interaction in Africa, the key factors that come to the fore as stimuli for action are the relations and interactions between individuals belonging to specific groups and their interactions with other groups. For example, Nigeria's two major religions, Islam and Christianity are often depicted as monolithic entities that confront each other in violent outbreaks (cf. Osaghae & Suberu 2005: 19-20). These outbreaks and riots are reported to be based on religious affiliation and collective responses towards the implementation of religious policies – i.e. such as the conflict in Kaduna between February and May 2000. Thus, the key issues of belonging to a group and solidarity, begins to shape the social agenda for reaction to policies and interaction between other groups and individuals. Based on the above premise, this research paper identifies the following current trends as crucial to understanding the African discourse between belonging and solidarity in the interactions of in-group and out-group relations and processes.

(a) The Solidarity of the Collective Group to a given Social Action

This paper adopts the minimal premise of 'social action' as individual actors interacting with each other in a situation, motivated towards the optimization of gratification, and whose relation to their situations, including each other, is defined and mediated in terms of a system of culturally structured and shared symbols (cf. Parson 1991: 4, for a further elaboration on this definition). In this action system of solidarity, members of a social group define certain actions as required in the interest of the integrity of the social system itself, and others as incompatible with that integrity, with the result that sanctions are necessitated. Such a system is termed a 'collective group'. Collective-orientation thus involves posing the 'question of confidence' (cf. Parsons 1991: 97) – i.e. 'Are you one of us or not?' Koenigsberg (2009: 83) contends that collective-orientation proposes an institutionalized obligation

of the role-expectations, i.e. as part of the collective group the actor is obligated to act in the prescribed manner of the collective⁸. Thus, according to Parsons (1991: 99) conformity with expectations of collective-orientation may be termed taking 'responsibility' as a member of the collective group⁹.

Porterfield (1998: 165) argues that religious groups resemble such collective-orientations, whereby they exert significant power in the larger social world as collective actors of social order or social change. The power exerted by the collective group can be attributed to their group actions to implement social agendas and shape the attitudes and behaviours of their individual members. As centres for the implementation of group agendas, religious groups work through various forms of social action to restore a social order believed to have existed in the past, help create a new order for the future, or contribute to forces supporting social conditions as they exist in the present (cf. Lifton 1993: 87). However, as centres for the socialization of individuals, religious groups teach their collective members to cultivate certain attitudes towards themselves and others, and encourage particular kinds of social behaviours that members bring to their interactions in the larger world. Hence, according to Porterfield (1998: 165-166), these individual actors can

⁸ An important frame of reference within the social system pertains to 'orientation' – i.e. the relation between the actor and other actors or group and other groups within a given situation.

⁹ According to Prendergast (2007: 37) this is an important factor in mobilizing communities for conflict management. For example in the Greater Horn of Africa region, indigenous conflict management initiatives such as the Grassroots Peace Conference in Eastern and Western Torit district which involved the Catholic church and community leaders, the Intra-Neur Peace Conference (Akobo Peace Conference), and the Dinka-Misseriya Peace Agreements in the transitional zone between north and south, all owe their success and failures to the notion of collective solidarity which served as a mobilization mechanism (also cf. Ferris 2004; Kubai 2005; Villumstad, 2004; Nordstrom 1998; and Adebo 2005). Consequently, as one of the most important processes of social change, there is a continual process of dissolution of old collective groups and formation of new ones, albeit there are also processes of change which do not destroy the identity of the collective group (cf. Parsons & Shils 1962: 108).

play a constructive or destructive role depending on the context and the motivation for action initiated by the collective group.

(b) Social Identity Complexity: In-Group and Out-Group Tolerance

According to Miller, et al. (2009: 79), members in large and complex societies are differentiated or subdivided along many meaningful social dimensions, e.g. gender and sexual orientation, economic sector, religion and political ideology, etc. Each of these divisions provides a basis for shared identity and group membership that can become an important part of social identification. According to Lott (2005: 33), shared identity serves as a way of aligning ourselves with a distinctive way of life and with the people that share the values of that way of life, albeit affirming a shared identity also entails some degree of contrast with the 'other'. The paradox is that although shared identity intends some form of collective integration, it also entails some form of collective differentiation. Thus, according to Lott (2005: 33-34), in making clear who we are, and where we belong, we implicitly set ourselves in some measure over and against others who are different, i.e. alignment inevitably creates some kind of individual or collective alienation. Hence, the continuous dialogical process of identification and dis-identification, points out two distinct features of identity formation: (a) that our identities do not pre-exist us and (b) that our identities must be produced or established (cf. Kiguwa 2006: 119).

Elaborating further on the discourse of individual and collective identities, Brewer and Pierce (2005: 428), argue that these differentiations are also cross-cutting. The individual may share a common in-group membership on one dimension, but belong to different categories on another dimension. Thus, in a complex society such as Africa, the different groups that a particular individual belongs to across different domains of social life (e.g. religion and ethnicity) are likely to overlap. This is crucial to understanding the uniqueness of the African context and is substantiated by Jhazbhay (2009: 137-140) with reference to the intricate cross-cutting dimensions of religion; ethnicity and the traditional clan system in Somaliland, which emanates the challenges of a fragile development.

Undeniably, these cross-cutting dimensions bring to the fore the challenge of 'social identity complexity', vis-à-vis the way in which the individual subjectively represents the relationships among their multiple in-group memberships. According to Brewer and Pierce (2005: 429), social identity complexity is the product of a process of recognizing and interpreting information about one's own in-groups. Hence, social identity complexity is dependent upon two conditions, first awareness of more than one in-group categorization, and secondly, recognizing that the multiple in-group categories do not converge. Thus, members with fewer multiple social identities are less tolerant and accepting of out-groups, as compared to members who have greater multiple social identities. Members with fewer multiple social identities tend to be bias and maintain a more distinct boundary which defines their group memberships. Hence, for Brewer and Pierce (2005: 430), the general perception is that any individual who is an out-group member on more than one dimension is also perceived as an out-group member on other dimensions.

(c) Beyond 'Class': New Directions in Social Stratification

According to Anthias (2001: 836) while stratification theories cling to the traditional focus on 'class', much of the motivations for engaging with the classical understanding of class divisions has disappeared. Thus, placing stratification approaches on the periphery of the modern sociological debates. Accordingly, Touraine (1981: 45) argues that new emerging social movement theories bring to the fore new types of allegiances influenced by social forces organised in terms of local identities and concerns. Hence, new directions in defining social stratifications, prompts a new understanding of the concept 'social exclusion', with a redirection towards the broader recognition of the objects and mechanisms of inequality. Thus, for Anthias (2001: 838), social identities involve the construction of where, how and why particular boundaries are formed in exclusion and inclusion.

Two crucial debates come to the fore in understanding the emerging dichotomy of social stratification (cf. Crompton 1998). Firstly, in categorically identifying persons as 'the excluded', it reduces the subject to either passive victims or willing agents in their own denigration. Secondly,

there is a tendency to pathologise and homogenise, thereby producing a 'disqualified' identity, i.e. focusing on 'the excluded' as forming part of the bottom of the social scale does not allow for looking at forms of inequality within the higher hierarchy. In the context of social identity complexities (multiple in-group membership), this becomes problematic. In this regard, the process of exclusion is relational and multidimensional, hence, located in different social spheres and affects categories of the subject differently, i.e. depending on whether they are excluded in terms of religion, ethnicity, clan etc.

Hence, Anthias (2001: 839) shifts the discourse by proposing a reformulation which might be 'differential exclusion and inclusion', which brings it closer to a contextual understanding of African social stratification. Such an approach would see exclusion as not absolute but dynamic and contextual, i.e. it would not only focus on the bottom but the entire stratification structure.

(d) The Convergence of Rhetoric and Justified Anger

Within the current discourses of group processes and inter-group relations, the question of rhetoric and anger (in the context of social interaction) is an inevitable question. According to Zagacki and Boleyn-Fitzgerald (2006: 290), the rhetor faces a rhetorical challenge in deciding when and how to express anger and determine the role that it might play in public discourse, i.e. within specific audiences and in particular rhetorical situations. In recent years, rhetorical scholars have debated the various genres of rhetoric, from apocalyptic genres to the rhetoric of religious and political leaders, where the rhetorical application of anger is explained in terms of situational conventions and cultural norms. However, these discourses have not addressed the moral problems associated with the rhetoric of anger, i.e. discerning the moral limits of anger. Some contemporary scholars have gone further in suggesting that a failure to feel and express anger in public portrays an insufficient concern for justice and self respect (cf. Allen 1999, Carpenter 1981 and Duxtader 2001).

In the context of social interaction, much of the present debate for justified anger is based on Aristotle's (1962) understanding of the following

five factors: object (the person is angry with the right people), intensity or expression (the person is angry in the right way), duration (the person is angry for the right amount of time), time (the person is angry at the right time), and rationale (the person is angry for the right reason). Hence, according to Zagacki and Boleyn-Fitzgerald (2006: 307), the current discourses on rhetoric and justified anger leans toward the view that in many cases the transformation of anger is the strategic and practical choice for the development of democratic communities. This implies that the moral constitution of the selective groups and their social interactions must be viewed in terms of the ways in which anger becomes apart of the subject of the public discourse and promotes or diminishes public deliberations. Hence, Garver (1994: 106) cautions that 'emotions' have the potential to make practical judgements wise and determinate by considering the particularity of a case and sometimes they corrupt judgement by making it partial, using those same particularities to override justice.

Towards an *Harambee* Theory of Rhetoric in Social Action

The aim of postulating an African theory of rhetoric in social action, is to bring to the fore the uniqueness of the African context, by advocating a discourse on the intricate social relationships between individual social actors as agents for change and the interactions between various social in-groups and out-groups. 'Harambee' finds its origins in Swahili and literally means 'pulling together'. In East Africa, the concept implied ways to build and maintain communities, i.e. community events ranging from informal affairs to invitations spread by word of mouth. In 1963, preceding Kenya's independence, Jomo Kenyata (the first Prime Minister and later first President of Kenya) adopted Harambee as a socio-economic ideology of pulling the country together in building a new nation state. This research paper acknowledges the strategic importance of Harambee in Africa and its potential as a theory of social rhetoric.

In constructing a conceptual framework for an Harambee theory, this research paper proposes an analysis of three important social-stages i.e. collective context, collective orientation and collective action.

(a) Collective Context (Systemic Disequilibrium)

In analysing social-structural theories that perpetuate social change, both Conteh-Morgan (2004) and Parsons (1971) affirm that 'structure' and 'function' accentuate the idea of society as an organism whose entire system has to be in good working order for systemic equilibrium to be maintained. Both an organism and society are similar in that each represents an integrated whole, maintains a certain degree of structural continuity, and involves internal processes that perform specific functions. The analogy of society to an organismic model emphasises the attributes of interdependence, equilibrium and differentiation in every society. According to Strasser and Randall (1981: 98), interdependence refers to the interactions among social actors and social relations that comprise a social structure; equilibrium is the regulatory mechanisms of socialization, adaptation, goal attainments and social control that continuously attempts to preserve social-structural equilibrium; and differentiation is the institutionalisation of social roles and organisations and their related processes, outcomes and functions.

Therefore, the social system persists by maintaining its structural balance and managing change by adjusting its essential variables and overall structure. Collins (1975: 167) explains this process in the following manner:

In other words, the social system maintains its equilibrium by retaining the necessary forms of social organisation and patterns of action, while abandoning dysfunctional patterns. In order to underscore the idea of system maintenance or survival, the system attempts to identify 'functional prerequisites' or 'needs' or 'essential variables' of society.

According to Johnson (1966: 208) there are four functional prerequisites to ensure that the social system stays in equilibrium. The first is socialization or pattern maintenance, which corresponds to the religious sector of social life, i.e. the inculcation of societal values and norms. The second prerequisite is adaptation, which relates to the political sectors of society, i.e. the differentiation and allocation of roles, as well as the distribution of scarce resources. The third prerequisite is goal attainment, which focuses on the economic sector of social life, and is concerned with the formation and

development of policies for achieving systemic goals. The final prerequisite is integration and social control, i.e. ways in which problems of deviancy are prevented or solved.

Accordingly, Conteh-Morgan (2004: 50) argues that these functional prerequisites must therefore be maintained within certain predetermined critical limits to ensure equilibrium. Hence, when the environment undergoes change, the critical limits of the systemic variables need to also change to compensate for the environmental changes. However, it is possible that with sudden and radical environmental changes, the system can break down. Hence when the system is incapable of adequately responding to these precipitated environmental changes, it becomes disequibrated followed by a loss of authority, and then given a catalyst or precipitating factor, some form of collective reaction occurs (cf. Kornhauser 1959: 67).

(b) Collective Orientation (Group Relational Dynamics)

According to Smelser (1962: 46), collective orientation is an action produced by a generalized belief in the existence of extraordinary forces (i.e. threats, conspiracies, etc.) that are at work in the wider environment. These generalized beliefs according to Smelser and Smelser (1970: 306), which produce collective orientation, also involve assessing the consequences that will result if such collective attempt to reconstitute social action is either successful or unsuccessful. In other words, Smelser's definition of collective orientation comprises an uninstitutionalised mobilization whose aim is to reconstitute a component of social action on the basis of a generalized belief (cf. Smelser 1962: 247-265; Conteh-Morgan 2004: 53).

Collective orientation can be produced by general determinants or a combination of unique determinants. Smelser (1962: 59) identifies structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of generalized belief, precipitating factors, mobilization of participants for action, and operation of social controls as the determinants of collective orientation. These determinants follow a specific pattern and sequence. According to Smelser (1962: 58), collective orientation can only occur if the above are activated in a specific pattern. The most general determinant is structural conduciveness and is a necessary condition for the activation of the other five. However, it

is important to distinguish between structural conduciveness and structural strain. Structural conduciveness refers to the social conditions that increase the tendency for groups to engage in collective orientation.¹⁰ Structural strain refers to a conflict between opposing societal practices, i.e. equal opportunity and discriminatory practices, etc., which produces socio-economic and political deprivations, conflicts and discrepancies.

(c) Collective Action (Coercive Persuasion)

Smelser (1962: 61) argues that before the group can engage in collective action, it must accept the combined situation of structural conduciveness and structural strain as consequential. Thus, this takes the form of accepting a general belief that communicates the meaning to potential collective behaviour participants by identifying the origin and source of the strain, attributing certain characteristics to this source, recommending that certain action be taken to deal with the strain, and the medium used to get attention and regain equality vis-à-vis other groups that are more accepted (cf. Lipset and Smelser 1961: 203). Hence, these precipitating factors provide the context towards which collective behavior can be channelled and provides an immediate catalyst effect of mobilizing participants for action.

According to Conteh-Morgan (2004: 52) in a disequibrated system, the elite could either allow the system to undergo structural change or maintain the system. As a counter determinant of collective behaviour, the elite can choose to induce social coercion which minimizes structural conduciveness and structural strain, thereby reducing collective behaviour. However, Liska (1992: 12) disputes this hypothesis and argues that if the elite opt to maintain the system through coercive measures, then the coerced will respond to these threats with acts that reaffirm their collective values and identity. Accordingly Sites (1973:165) argues that coercive strategies are induced after other attempts of control have failed and the individual or group has not yet reached their objective, however this is disputable and beyond the scope of this paper. The use of different instruments of coercion

¹⁰ For example: a populated neglected ethnic minority section of a city is more conducive to ethnic riots than areas with middle-class residential patterns.

depends on the resources and the resourcefulness of the parties involved (cf. Scott and Scott 1971: 14).

An Harambee theory postulates the complex yet significant influence of the 'ritualization of belief' which has the potential to mobilize coercive persuasive tactics and perpetuate violent coercion through riots and mob tactics, genocide, and terror tactics. Indeed, beliefs, attitudes, and values are integrated into the total personality and perform specific functions for the social actor. In recent years, there has been immense speculation concerning the relationship between publicly expressed and privately held beliefs, attitudes and values in the citizen of such society. According to Schein et al. (1961: 259), the simple dichotomy of overt public behaviour versus covert private behaviour is insufficient for an understanding of what can happen to cognitive-affective responses under the impact of coercive persuasion. Smith et al (1956) distinguishes three functions in which beliefs, attitudes and values can influence the social actor. They can serve to appraise reality – i.e. through their beliefs the individual can test reality, categorise incoming information, and reach rational conclusions about his/her environment. Secondly, they can facilitate and reinforce social adjustment – i.e. through his/her opinions, the social actor can relate him/herself to others, express his/her membership in certain groups, and his/her sense of identity. And thirdly, they can serve to externalise inner problems – i.e. through his/her opinions, the social actor can express his/her personal conflicts, his/her conscious and unconscious feelings and motives.

Thus, the ritualisation of belief is the psychological process which results when a group's formal doctrine and its manner of expression is controlled – i.e. through leaders of a religious group, ethnic leaders, clan elders etc. From the point of view of the individual social actor, the psychological manifestation of the ritualisation of belief is the ability to gain control over both the overt expression of belief and the private expression (i.e. even the expression of their own individual thoughts). Hence for Schein et al (1961: 261), learning to control overt expression is not difficult, but learning not to have thoughts other than the ideologically correct ones is very difficult and probably the result of being highly coerced to do so. In the context of collective action, Hoffer (1951: 156) highlights the ritualizing aspects as when unity and self sacrifice are indispensable for the normal

functioning of a society, and where everyday life is likely to be either religiofied (common tasks turned into holy causes) or militarized.

Thus, the Harambee theory postulates that the intended result of coercive persuasion is where the sphere of private activity becomes restricted or eliminated, that the belief systems become ritualized and come to serve solely as a motivation for collective action, and that such ritualisation has the potential to leave the individual social actor without the cognitive tools to lead a creative private life. Thus, in the end both his/her public life is dominated by ritual.

A Case Study of Sudan: The African ‘Cauldron of Dissent’

In order to apply the conceptual framework of the Harambee theory and substantiate an African discourse in social action, this research paper proposes an analysis of the conflict in Sudan as a case study. The call for peace and conflict resolution in Sudan presents the Sudanese, African and the international community with a vital challenge to develop doctrines and modalities that will provide an inclusive yet flexible formula to which all Sudanese can collectively and confidently identify. Hence, Nantulya (2003: 104) contends that such a formula should not only accommodate their ethnic, cultural, racial and religious diversities, but also assist in deconstructing myths and stereotypes associated with the negative aspects of identity mobilisation.

Sudan shares its borders with Egypt, Libya, Chad, the Central African Republic, Zaire, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Eritrea. In effect, all these states have their own socio-economic and political problems, continuing tensions and diverse interests. Given the size of Sudan (i.e. the largest country in Africa), and the absence of security measures, the region has become a base or transit point for assorted collective coercive tactics, i.e. guerrilla tactics, terrorism and Islamist fundamentalists. In applying the Harambee theory to Sudan, it should be noted that it is not the intention of this paper to provide a discussion on the historical development of the conflict or epitomize the political contentions. Thus, selective discourses will be highlighted to engage with the salient principles of collective context, collective orientation and collective action perpetuating social action in Sudan.

(a) The Encroachment of Collective Identities in the Struggle for a National Sudanese Identity

This research paper argues that amidst the socio-economic and the varying political contentions, the primary cause for the conflict in Sudan is the contending perspectives on national identity. Due to identity conflicts being highly complex, Sudan exhibits an extremely sensitive case study, embodied with problematic concerns for preventive initiatives and effective diplomatic interventions. The crisis in Sudan is often characterised as two powerful social collective forces contesting against each other, i.e. a Northern Arab-Islamic identity and an African identity that is asserted by the South. Despite the Northern elite being products of centuries of African and Arab intermarriages, they see themselves as exclusively Arab, and have framed the national identity along Arab-Islamic lines. This brings to the fore crucial policy implications, as it excludes a large portion of the population from full participation in national life. Thus, according to Nantulya (2003: 104-105), the South in particular has been badly affected, albeit, it has been largely impacted by a colonial legacy of separate development and remains resistant to racial, cultural and religious assimilation into the Arab-Islamic model of the North.

Accordingly Reeves (2007), Totten and Markusen (2006) and De Waal (2007), all contend that the main protagonists in the continuing debate for defining the national identity framework are the Northern ruling elites and the Southern resistance forces that have historically been led and mobilised by various liberation movements, i.e. the most notable being the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement and Army (SPLM/A). While the successive Northern ruling elites have, since independence in 1956, defined the national identity framework along the parameters of 'Islamism' and 'Arabism', the Southern resistance forces have asserted 'Africanism' and 'secularism' as counter identities. For Wakoson (1998), there is a strong ideological dichotomy between these two collectives. He contends that the Northern ruling elite almost exclusively embraces the negative and totalitarian ideological notions in 'Islamism', while the SPLM/A in embracing 'Africanism', focuses more on liberalism and democracy, secular democratic federalism, freedom of religion, and consensual unity in diversity. However, while such notions are desirable and favour a more

peaceful alternative in Sudan, there is no guarantee that if the SPLM/A comes into power, that it would institute such ideas. Hence, a more cautious approach should perhaps be followed in analysing the opposing ideologies of these collectives.

The present contention of the Southern resistance forces is that while an Arab-Islamic identity is part of the reality of the diversity in Sudan, it is only one reality amongst many others. As a result when an Arab-Islamic identity is adopted as the official philosophy of the state, it inevitably excludes the other identities that have shaped the country through the many years. However, arguably the problem is not so much what the dominating collective (i.e. Northern ruling elite) perceive themselves to be, but rather the manner in which this self-perception has come to shape the definition, configuration, and the exercise of political power and control. Thus, these successive elites have defined the country within a self-perceived and minimalist Arab-Islamic mould, which does not accommodate the broader multiplicities and diversities which does not fall within these parameters (cf. Schwartz 2009).

(b) Collective Context: Sudan in Social Disequilibrium

The present diverse identity of Sudan can be viewed as an outcome of a long process of socialization and acculturation developed through a process of historical, political and socio-economic adaptation, with mutual co-existence and religious tolerance between Muslim Arabs and Sudanese indigenous groups. According to Hurreiz and Al-Salam (1989: 77), this process had always been the backbone and social fabric of the Sudanese culture and identity, as it allowed different groups the flexibility to merge and form wider groupings. However, in modern day Sudan, the main causes of mutiny, instability and civil war are 'marginalization' and 'ethnicization' that have been exercised by the Northern ruling elites (cf. Musa 2009a). The underlying misperceptions, ambiguities, and conflicting perspectives of what should constitute the national identity framework continue to play a key role in undermining trust and confidence between these collective groups. As a result, distribution of resources, access to political and economic power, development, welfare, and other rights, duties and responsibilities have advocated exclusion and forced assimilation.

To create a further understanding of the social system in Sudan, I will briefly contextualize Johnson's (1966) functional prerequisites to Sudan.

(1) Sharia, Secularism and Tribalism as Methods of Socialisation

As discussed earlier, the first prerequisite to social equilibrium refers to socialization or pattern maintenance. Clearly, in Sudan there is a distinct fragmentation of socialisation which can be seen in three patterns. Firstly, the implementation and institutionalization of *Sharia* (i.e. Islamic Law) in Sudan is a dominating pattern, taking into consideration that the Islamicised and Arabicised northern Sudanese considered their culture and way of life to be the 'norm' for a combined Sudanese identity which they ambioned to spread throughout Sudan. The Northern ruling elite argued that the Muslim majority had the right to establish a constitutional system that it preferred, i.e. *Sharia*. However, they contended that religious diversity would be honoured by exempting the south from the severest of body punishments under the *Sharia*, the *Hudud*. Funke and Solomon (2006: 255) argues that the intention of the Northern ruling elite was to retain the central government's authority over policy-making related to religion and education. However, with the crisis in Darfur (whose population is 100% Muslim) rebelling against an Islamic ruling government on ethnic basis, a second pattern of socialisation emerged where the tribe proved to be a prominent social pattern (cf. Flint and De Waal 2008). The third social pattern comes to the fore with the SPLM/A which advocated secular democracy and equality, and opposed the proposed religious and racial assimilation and implied marginalisation of non-Muslims (cf. Schwartz 2009).

(2) An Arabist Discourse: Politics and Power of the Elite

According to Musa (2009a), the actual problem in Sudan is 'politicized ethnicity' – i.e. the discourse of the Northern ruling elite and their ethnic-oriented political behaviour. This hypothesis perpetuates a national debate on whether Sudan is an Arab country, an African country or and Afro/Arab country. The present state of social disequilibrium owes much to its colonial predecessors who developed centralised authoritative systems. The national elite, who took over after independence (1956), inherited this system

fostering an elitist bourgeoisie with a gulf between the state institution and the social structure. Thus, according to Musa (2009b: 39), the elitist centralised authoritarian system gave birth to a hierarchy through which the interests of the minority are maintained, whereas disadvantaging the majority.

Hence, the dominant power-related discourse as been formulated in such a way as to confirm the superiority of the ruling elites and the relevant affiliations whose interests they safeguard. In addition, this prejudiced discourse has been intended to stereotype all non-Arabs and the Sudanese Arabs other than those coming from central and Northern Sudan as inferior and primitive and thereby denying access to power even in regions they dominate (cf. Ezza and Libis 2009: 3). Thus, this paper hypothesises that the prejudiced, power-related discourses derive from racial, regional and religious preconceptions about the 'other', which has been institutionalised and exploited by the ruling elites to achieve their political interests, i.e. eternal access to power.

(3) An Africanist Discourse: The Dialogue of the Resistance

An African discourse in social action takes the form of a resistance discourse that goes hand-in-hand with the armed struggle against the Northern ruling elites. In applying Van Dijk (1993: 249-283), principles of a critical discourse, Ezza and Libis (2009), defines this social action as a protesting dialogue by some enlightened elites from the remote corners of Sudan, advocating against the monopolization of wealth by the ruling class. A few years ago, it was taboo to express concerns of villages and dwellers of remote areas over developing their homelands and seeking equitable share with how the country should be ruled. However, with the increasing exposure in the international arena, there is an increase in the solidarity of the Sudanese over the significance of negotiating these issues. The Sudanese liberation/resistant movements have also succeeded in bringing these marginalised discourses into the national and international levels. Although, the methods used by these movements in attacking the Northern ruling elites are morally questionable, in the context of justified anger, they have instated a new discourse with a protesting tone backed by military operations, i.e. mostly guerrilla attacks.

(c) Collective Orientation: 'Uninstitutionalised Mobilization'

In addressing the issue of collective orientation in Sudan, I recalled the words of Mamdani (2009: 244-245) pertaining to collective interactions between Arab (comprising Mahariya, Mahameed, Eraigat, Etaifata, and Awlad-Rashid) and non-Arab (the Zaghawa) collectives in Darfur:

Each side developed its own defence of the right of access to productive natural resources, and each did this in the language of rights. Settled groups with *hakura* [land rights] defended their rights as 'customary' and 'tribal', whereas those with diminished or no homeland (*dar*) rights claimed access to productive natural resources as the right of a 'citizen'. The clash between rights took the form of ethnic wars. As each side undertook to defend an exclusive right, its defence began to take on an increasingly racist tone.

The above quotation of Mamdani epitomises the challenges of collective orientation in Sudan. According to Mamdani (2009: 245), the more these collective groups saw themselves as victims with little control over their situations, the more both sides tended to slide into an 'exclusionist rhetoric' that inevitably opened them to outside influences that further racialised and inflamed the discourse. The crisis of collective orientation is a prominent factor in the Sudan conflict and has certainly contributed to its tragedy since post-independence. Although, it is evident that the emerging post-colonial Sudanese state is a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-religious modern state, its formation was wrongly constructed on the basis of Islamism and Arabism rather than on all-encompassing Sudanese ingredients.¹¹ Thus for Makris (2001: 55), 'Sudanization' or becoming a citizen, essentially meant Arabization or concomitantly Islamization.

Accordingly, Battahani (1998) argues that a major consequence of the exclusionary state was that some excluded sub-national identities,

¹¹ Idris (2001: 34-52) argues that the perspective of Northern Arab superiority over Southerners has been a constant theme in Sudanese politics, however, the 'Arabness' of the Northern elite is not grounded on objective fact, but on a denial of their African heritage, which is so obvious in their physical features.

occupying specific regions, began to make their political and economic demands to the state on the basis of their ethnic identity. They inevitably associated the region they occupied as being concretized as a political entity with a specific character, image, and an icon of socio-cultural belongings and identifications. In the persistent failure of the state to effectively redress the fundamental political questions and the growing political demands of the marginalised groups, there emerged political movements along ethno-political identities that later shifted from peaceful to armed struggle. This gradual shift started with the first civil war led by the Anya Anya Movement (1955-1972) in Southern Sudan. The second war led by the SPLM/A (1983-2005), was wider in scale, time, space and consequences. According to Khalid (2003), indoctrinated by the notion of 'New Sudan', the SPLM/A redefined what was historically called the 'problem of Southern Sudan' to 'the problem of Sudan'. This new ideological shift attracted the marginalised collectives on the peripheral regions beyond Southern Sudan, extending the armed struggle of the SPLM/A to the Nuba Mountains and the Southern Blue Nile in the 1980s, to the Beja in Eastern Sudan in the 1990s and with the Justice and Equity Movement (JEM) and Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) extended to Darfur in the early 2000s. Dr. John Grang d Mabior, chairman of the SPLM/A, and one of the founders of the insurgency summarized the political aims of the New Sudan as follows:

We believe the New Sudan represents the future and the hopes and aspirations of the Sudanese people, in that the new Sudan is based on a Sudanese commonality – a social and political commonality that belongs to all of us, irrespective of race – whether we are Arab or African origins. Nations are formed as a result of the historic *movement* of peoples.... So we aspire to a new Sudanese dispensation in which all are equal, irrespective of these localisms which we inherit out of no choice of our own (as quoted in Meyer 2005: 90).

(d) Collective Action: Ideology of the National Islamic Front

As discussed earlier, the ritualization of belief has the potential to mobilise coercive persuasion, which in turn can reduce collective behaviour. It can

also potentially serve as a unifying factor, i.e. as with the Northern ruling elite around a particular ideological stance, which favoured their position as ruling elite. Hence, according to Funke and Solomon (2006: 274), it is important to analyse some of the ideas of Hassan al-Turabi, which have shaped the ideology of National Islamic Front (NIF), in spite of his split with the party in 1999.

The basic underpinning of Turabi's political ideology of an Islamic state is the metaphysical principle of *tawhid* (unity of God) and human life. Contemporary Islamic scholars have interpreted *tawhid* as being the unifying force among various aspects of human life, such as socio, religious and the political. Hence, substantiating the earlier discourse on overt versus covert religious behaviour, a unification of the political and religious implies that public (or political) and religious life cannot be separated. Hence, in this context secularism is regarded as the denial of the rightful role of religious faith and God in the governing of human affairs. Accordingly, Turabi contends that *tawhid* in the political realm means the ascendancy of Islamic law over the rulers and thus, God is considered supreme or sovereign, while the *Sharia* provides connections between God's followers and the will of God (as quoted in Morrison 2001: 153-154). However, *tawhid* inevitably influenced which kinds of political forms Turabi considered acceptable. Turabi rejected the concept of nationalism on the basis that allegiance is to be owed to God and not the state; nonetheless he accepted the notion of the state as a territorial national entity (cf. Morrison 2001: 154). According to Ibrahim ((1999: 205), Turabi affirms that the modern state has become so enmeshed in society that it has taken over certain responsibilities that once belonged to the family, i.e. transmitting of culture and education to the younger generation. The counter argument is that these facets of society are too important to be left to secularists, and hence the reclaiming of the state by Islamic fundamentalists is an imperative social action.

Turabi's basic ideological stance also advocates for the return to Islam's fundamental texts. However, Turabi does not believe that it is useful to adhere to a literal interpretation of the text as they may be ambiguous. Instead he calls for a new interpretive method which encompasses *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and *tajdid* (renewal or revival), which implies new thinking and fresh expression of religious rules and principles, appropriate to the new situation (cf. Morrison 2001: 155). In his political ideological stance,

Turabi makes use of two important concepts, i.e. *shura* (which he defines as the selection of a consultation with the government) and *ijima* (consensus). Funke and Solomon (2006: 279) argue that for Turabi, the basic difference between democracy and *shura* is the locus of sovereignty. In democracy, sovereignty lies with the population of a country, whereas if one adheres to *tawhid*, the sovereignty lies with God. Hence, there is no conflict between *shura* and *sharia*, as the latter represents the convictions of the people and, therefore, their direct will. *Shura* is then considered an indication of the equality of people before God and provides the basis for or rather the requirement of respect for their political freedom; hence, Turabi sees the minority/majority character of western democracy as undesirable.

Conclusion

The aim and objective of this research paper was to develop an African born theory of rhetoric in social action. In response, I have postulated an Harambee theory (pulling together) of rhetoric, which is based on three social stages, i.e. collective context, collective orientation and collective action. To substantiate an African discourse in social action, I selectively analysed various discourses in the case study of Sudan. The crucial question in Sudan is why peace initiatives haven't been able to prevent the continuation to the civil war. This research paper concludes that in the context of Sudan, a sound conflict prevention process is one which (1) establishes trust and confidence between the collective groups and creates a genuine commitment to peace, (2) creates joint ownership between the collective groups, (3) establishes mechanisms to create parity and confidence between the collectives, and (4) facilitates discussion with a view to reaching a compromise solution on national identity framework. Against this background, I offer the following African theory of rhetoric in social action, which has the potential to also critique group mobilization for social transformation in social action.

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Department of Religious Studies and Arabic
University of South Africa
Chettd@unisa.ac.za

Advancing Religion Studies in Southern Africa

Johannes A. Smit
Denzil Chetty

Abstract

Since the promulgation of the *National Policy on Religion and Education* (2003), Faculties of Education have worked hard to develop the Religious Component of the Life Orientation curriculum—Religion Education. Schools also started to offer Religion Studies as a full Grade 12 subject. This paper investigates the background to and current state of these developments, some of the thematic focuses on which Religious Studies can impact, and the contours and issues in terms of offering Religion Studies as Grade 12 subject. The article provides a few pointers to important focuses that need further development, such as the articulation of the BA major in Religion with the Religion Education and Religion Studies curricula.

Keywords: Relations between religious organisations and the state, historical background, Manifesto, Religion Studies, curriculum.

Introduction

In his important contribution to the South African Constitution (1996), *Protecting Human Rights in the New South Africa* (1990), former Constitutional Court Judge Albie Sachs included a chapter 'To believe or not to believe'. After referring to *Nkosi Sikelel'i Afrika*'s status as anthem for national liberation, that it is sung by both believers and non-believers despite its religious content—'[t]he words are religious, the occasions secular'—Sachs (1990:43) states: 'We want a secular state in South Africa, but a

secular state with religion. indeed with many religions ...'. In addition to a number of issues he then touches on, Sachs (1990:45) also pointed to five 'constitutional options' for 'governing the relations between religious organisations and the state'. These are:

- Theocracy, that is, the acknowledgement of religious organizations as the holders of public power and of religious law as the law of the state.
- A partly secular, partly religious state, with legal power-sharing between the state and religious institutions — each exercising constitutionally recognized power in its own sphere, usually with religious bodies controlling family law and, possibly, criminal law, and the state controlling all other aspects.
- A secular state with active interaction between the state and religious organizations, which not only have a constitutionally recognized sphere of autonomy, but collaborate with the state in tasks of mutual concern.
- A secular state in which religious organizations have a tolerated, private sphere of action, but there is no overlapping or joint activity with the state.
- A secular state in which religious organizations are repressed.

In his analysis of these options, their related questions, and assessment as to the most desirable—that would attract most support—Sachs' view was that:

[T]here is no scope at all for the suppression of religion, nor is there any possibility of having a state religion in South Africa, nor of giving religious organizations judicial or other authority beyond the voluntary authority accepted by members. It would seem that in the light of South Africa's history and culture, something along the lines of the third option mentioned above would achieve the greatest support, namely, *a secular state with active interaction between the state and religious organizations*¹.

¹ See Sachs (1990:46) for these two quotations.

Given the wide diversity of religions, religious orders and denominations as well as divergences within these, this system is indeed the best for South Africa in our view. It is this system at base, that best captures and accounts for the plural realities and their attendant challenges South Africa faces in terms of its specific postcolonial and postapartheid condition, i.e. as the religions function at the most basic levels of human society.

One model Sachs did not point to, was the Christian National Education model followed by the apartheid regime where one Christian religious denominational system was used as a central ideological unit of the apartheid order, and which was to be incorporated and inculcated not only in and by educational state apparatuses, but across the board in institutions and systems aligned with and buttressing the apartheid state. Non-Christian religious organisations as well as Christian institutions and organisations that resisted and opposed the state ideology were to various degrees either tolerated—under certain conditions (such as not being forced to attend ‘Christian-based’ public and other institutional religious gatherings; or not being allowed to use the public broadcaster for their religious propaganda)—or actively repressed through a variety of state-sanctioned measures². This model can rightly be termed ‘a state-sanctioned, religiously-founded ideology in the interests of a secular minority regime’.

Even so, more than a decade of deliberations after the fall of the apartheid order, it was perspectives such as Sach’s that impacted on and was the main organising principle for the adoption of the *National Policy on Religion and Education* (2003).

The Way towards the *National Policy on Religion and Education* (2003)

Through a wide variety of consultations with stakeholders, tasking of investigative, consultative and policy formulating committees, the *National Policy on Religion and Education* (2003) was eventually adopted on August 04, 2003. In his outline, of the process, Chidester (2008: 273) points to the work conducted and submissions of committees and working groups in terms of the following landmark events (see also Amin 2005: 363ff):

² See the experiences of the numerous religious struggle veterans such as Dr. Fatima Meer, Dr. Alan Boesak, Dr. Frank Chikane, and numerous others.

- National Education Policy Investigation (early 1990s)
- National Education Coordinating Committee (1992)
- National Education and Training Forum (1993 - 1994)
- South African Schools Act (1996)
- Report of the Ministerial Committee on Religious Education (1999)
- Ministerial Standing Committee on Religion and Education (since 1999)
- Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001)³
- National Policy on Religion and Education (2003)

Given its divisionary past, the new policies developed for the new South Africa sought to envision a fully functioning South African nation,

... brought into the unifying streams of democracy and nation building. Here was born an idea, a South African idea, of moulding a people from diverse origins, cultural practices, languages, into one, within a framework democratic in character, that can absorb, accommodate and mediate conflicts and adversarial interests without oppression and injustice (see Asmal 2001).

Recognising that these values are not yet fully operational in South Africa, the *Manifesto* advances ten values because they 'compel[] transformation', and because they 'express[] South Africans' shared aspirations, and the moral and ethical direction they have set for the future'. They are: 1) democracy; 2) social justice and equity; 3) equality; 4) equality

³ For general educational purposes, but also for understanding the broader value-environment in which Religion Studies function, amongst others, we need to at least add this landmark document with its subsection number 7 on 'Introducing Religion Education into Schools' to this list (see Amin 2005: 379ff). It was launched after widespread public discussion, and engagement in the media, academia and a variety of submissions to the Ministry, followed by a national conference. As product of this specific process, it functioned as a 'call to all to embrace the spirit of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa' (see Asmal 2001).

—especially in terms of non- and anti-racism and -sexism; 5) ubuntu (human dignity); 6) an open society; 7) accountability (responsibility); 8) rule of law; 9) respect; and 10) reconciliation.

Furthermore, the *Manifesto* outlines sixteen educational strategies, for ‘instilling democratic values in young South Africans in the learning environment’, e.g.: Making *schools work better*: 1) nurturing a culture of communication and participation; and 2) promoting commitment as well as competence among educators. Using the *curriculum*, the primary means of *instilling knowledge, skills and values* in young people: 3) infusing the classroom with the culture of human rights; 4) making arts and culture part of the curriculum; 5) putting history back in the curriculum; 6) teaching religion education; and 7) making multilingualism happen. Using *sport*: to 8) shape social bonds; and 9) nation building. *Equity, social justice and equality*: 10) ensuring equal access to education; 11) promoting anti-racism; and 12) freeing the potential of girls as well as boys. *Rights and responsibility*: 13) dealing with HIV/AIDS; and 14) nurturing a culture of sexual and social responsibility; 15) making schools safe to learn and teach in and bringing back the rule of law to schools; and 16) nurturing the new patriotism⁴.

Building then on a variety of events that preceded it, and using the South African Constitution as cornerstone for its identification of these relevant values and these relevant educational strategies to collectively inculcate these values in the citizenry, the *National Policy on Religion and Education* (2003) was not only the culmination of widespread democratic and consultative processes, but also a policy outcome aimed at providing one of the major building blocs for the new nation in the making. Capturing our Constitution’s ‘invocation’ of religion and giving expression of the ‘principles governing religious freedom’, it aimed at nation building. Asmal (2003) formulated it as follows:

As a democratic society with a diverse population of different cultures, languages and religions we are duty bound to ensure that

⁴ Mkandawire (2006: 10 - 55) provides a helpful assessment and prospects of the broader issues relating to democracy, development and nation-building on the continent.

through our diversity we develop a unity of purpose and spirit that recognises and celebrates our diversity. This should be particularly evident in our public schools where no particular religious ethos should be dominant over and suppress others. Just as we must ensure and protect the equal rights of all students to be at school, we must also appreciate their right to have their religious views recognised and respected.

Significantly, and in line with Sachs' sentiments of more than a decade earlier, and the nation-building vision of the Constitution, Asmal (2003) said:

We do not have a state religion. But our country is not a secular state where there is a very strict separation between religion and the state. The Policy recognises the rich and diverse religious heritage of our country and adopts a cooperative model that accepts our rich heritage and the possibility of creative inter-action between schools and faith whilst, protecting our young people from religious discrimination or coercion.

.... In the Policy, we do not impose any narrow prescriptions or ideological views regarding the relationship between religion and education. Following the lead of the Constitution and the South African Schools Act, we provide a broad framework within which people of goodwill will work out their own approaches.

Reflecting on the diversity of actual religious practice, Asmal (2003) continues, saying that,

[t]he Policy is neither negative nor hostile towards any religion or faith and does not discriminate against anyone. Rather it displays a profound respect towards religious faith and affirms the importance of the study of religion and religious observances.

Against this background, Religion Education was initiated in the school curriculum, with the Grade 12 subject Religion Studies, following suit since 2005, after the developing of the Curricula for Grades 10 through 12.

Curriculum and Themes: Religion Studies in the South African National Curriculum Statement (Grades 10-12)

In analysing the three-tier curriculum, it is important to look at the issues of progression—the building of curriculum in terms of sound pedagogical principles—the specific themes identified as areas of focus, and the possibilities for the developing of relevant scholarly materials for the training of educators that would themselves become teachers, or at least engage in similar themes in the government and public sectors, as well as the corporate world. Since these and related pedagogical approaches and themes are dealt with elsewhere in this issue of *Alternation*, we do not engage them here⁵. Important, however, is to highlight the themes engaged in the curriculum.

Below we provide an abridged version of the themes in the Grade 10 - 12 Curriculum. Please note that these themes should not be compared laterally from grade to grade in this graph. The aim is just to show the themes in parallel columns.

As Asmal noted and as is generally acknowledged, curricula only provide the general framework for what actually happens in the teaching of a subject in each of the classes that need to measure up to the curriculum. For this purpose we have curriculum advisers, submissions to the various bodies who decide on actual prescribed curriculum materials as well as the individual choices of teachers. In the final analysis, choice rests with the specific mix of religions in the area in which the school is located and the choice of the pupil in terms of the choice provided at this level.

Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Clusters of religions	History of religions	Conceptual distinctions between <i>identity</i> , uniqueness, unity, similarity, difference and comparability
Origins of religions (History)	Interdependence of religion and social issues	Internal differentiations in some religions

⁵ See especially Roux (2009a; 2009b), Du Preez (2009) and Jarvis (2009) elsewhere in this issue.

World Statistics on religions	Mutual influence and adaptation of religions	Uniqueness of some religions in wider religious context
Concepts on religious interaction	Approaches to inter-religious dialogue	History and present dynamics of inter-religious relationships in SA, Africa and internationally
Various definitions of religion	Significance of religious symbolism	The roles of teaching in a variety of religions
Religion and related concepts	Theories about religion	The central teachings of one religion
Adherents' and learner's Perspectives on religion	Significance of Narrative/ myth in religions	Oral, written and contemporary sources in several religions
Major dimensions common to all religions, e.g. narrative, ritual , etc.	Religious rituals and their role in religions	Ways of interpreting normative sources or traditions in one religion
Variety of how religions originated	Concepts: worship, mysticism, prayer, faith, spirituality, aesthetics , etc.	The understanding of selected part(s) from normative source(s) in one religion
Variety of social organisation, institutions and roles in religions	Relationship between <i>state</i> and religion	Analysis of any one <i>secular worldview</i>
Some <i>topical issues</i> relating to Religion in South Africa, Africa and the world	Relationship between religion and <i>politics</i>	The notions of religious freedom, <i>human rights</i> and responsibilities in different religions
<i>Public life</i> and religiously founded ethical principles	The interdependence of religions and the <i>natural environment</i>	The development of a strategy for seeking a solution to a <i>major social problem</i>

The relationship between religions and <i>economics</i>	Co-responsibility and co-operation of religions in the improvement of quality of life	The role of the <i>media</i> in presenting and influencing public opinion and attitudes with reference to religion
The principles of research into and across religions	Research: <i>gender</i> issues as experienced	Research into the involvement of religion in areas of <i>conflict</i> in South Africa, Africa and the world
Research through observation: Ritual	Research: ethics of <i>leisure</i> related to relaxation, recreation, advertising, sponsorships, etc	Research into the relationship between religion and the <i>natural sciences</i>
Research through interview: Inter-religious relationships		

Figure 1: Thematic Representation: Religion Studies in the South African National Curriculum Statement

In bold, we find concepts traditionally important for the phenomenological study of religion⁶. In italics, we highlighted themes related to secular life, where these are projected as significant articulations for reflection from within phenomenological studies of religion⁷. The comparative aspects come to the fore in those sections of the curriculum looking at the origins, historical, internal religious and denominational/ order diversity, as well as those who are explicitly comparative⁸. Important to note is that this approach

⁶ Cf. Van der Leeuw ([1933] 1938); and especially Smart (1973:47f) and Mugambi's (1987) further development in African context.

⁷ See especially Beckford's (1990) article opening some relevant issues on engaging 'social problems' from Sociology of Religion perspective.

⁸ For a History of Religions perspective in the context of theoretical and methodological pluralism, see especially Geertz and McCutcheon's (2000) edited volume of the *Adjunct Proceedings of the 1995 Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions*.

sees the religions as an important resource for addressing the social and economic challenges in secular, public context and importantly link up with:

- The Lifelong Learning Paradigm and the religions in Africa;
- Comparative Religious Ethics—similar structures of attitude, etc.;
- Research for, with, in and by (geographical urban and rural) community involving all religions.

Contours and Issues: Religion Studies in the South African National Curriculum Statement (Grades 10 - 12)

South Africa offers the ideal case study for analysing the shifting paradigm from a religion specific curriculum—i.e. the apartheid form of the 'Christian National Education Policy'—to a more inclusive representation of the religious diversity present in the country. The thrust of a more inclusive approach prompts recognition, understanding and appreciation of the variety of religions, in the context of a civic understanding of religion with a view of creating a platform for enlightened religious literacy.

As a new subject in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Religion Studies is a relatively new option for students in Grades 10 -12. Hence, it prompts a major paradigm shift from the early 1960s context of the Christian National Education paradigm, to the desirability of a new approach provided by the *National Policy on Religion and Education* (2003). Based on the premise that Religion Studies is situated in the civic context and is about how humans live together and the role that religion plays in that context, it is crucial to understand the significance of its implementation to social interaction as well. As part of the NCS Grades 10-12 (General), Religion Studies is based on the following principles: social transformation, human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice, and valuing indigenous knowledge systems (cf. *Sub Statement - National Curriculum Statement, Grades 10-12: Religion Studies*).

As a relatively new subject, the emerging concerns and challenges with implementation and a comparative analysis of the pass rates over the past two years need to be analyzed to plot the way forward for a more strategic implementation. Hence, the aim of this section is to provide a comparative analysis of the 2008 - 2009 National Senior Certificate (NSC)

results and foster a discourse on the evaluation of the statistics, and a selective problematization of important concerns.

2008 - 2009 National Senior Certificate Results

(a) Number of Schools offering Religion Studies per Province

In comparing the national total of schools offering Religion Studies (RS) as a NSC subject, there is an increase from 52 schools in 2008 to 54 schools in 2009. However, at closer analysis, one can deduct that amidst the gradual

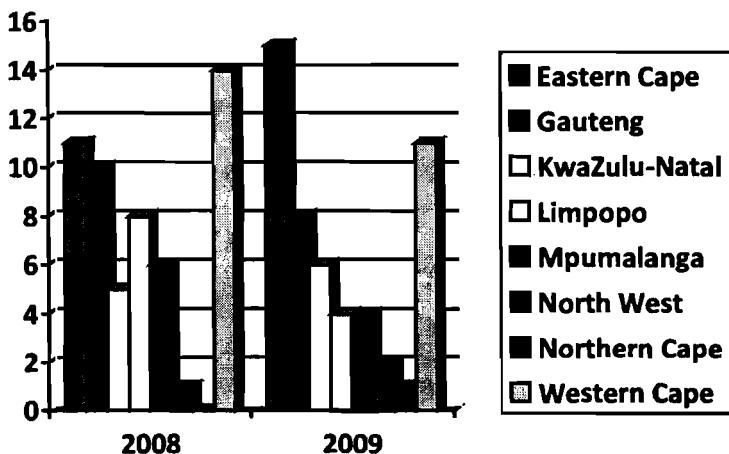


Figure 1: Graph of Number of Schools Offering Religion Studies⁹

gradual increase with the offering of RS in some provinces, there is also a substantial decrease of almost 50% of the schools offering the subject in other provinces (cf. Figure 1). In Eastern Cape, there was an increase of 4 schools with 11 schools offering RS in 2008 to 15 schools offering RS in

⁹ These statistics have been obtained from the Department of Basic Education, February 2010 and made available for this publication by Ms. K. Moleté (Deputy Director for FET School Curriculum), for the purpose of Higher Education Research.

2009. In Gauteng there was a decrease of 2 schools with 10 schools offering RS in 2008 and 8 schools offering RS in 2009. KwaZulu-Natal increased with one school—i.e. 5 schools offering RS in 2008 and 6 schools offering RS in 2009. The Province of Limpopo decreased by 50% with 8 schools offering RS in 2008 to 4 schools offering RS in 2009. Mpumalanga also decreased by 2 schools with 6 schools offering RS in 2008 and 4 schools offering RS in 2009. school (1 school offering RS in 2008 to 2 schools offering RS in 2009) and Western Cape (11 schools offering RS in 2008 to 14 schools offering RS in 2009). In 2009, Northern Cape introduced RS with 1 school offering the subject.

The following list of schools per province provides a further analysis. Both North West and Western Cape have shown an increase in the number of schools offering RS. North West increased with 1 of the regions/ districts in which RS is offered. This indirectly serves as an important foundation to profile the type of schools and students recruited for RS.

Eastern Cape (15 schools)

Dimanda Senior Secondary (Eastern Region), Joubert Ludidi Senior Secondary (Eastern Region), Smuts Ndamase Senior Secondary (Eastern Region), Toli Senior Secondary (Eastern Region), Tshongweni Senior Secondary (Eastern Region), Ekuphumleni High School (Northern Region), St. James Senior Secondary (Northern Region), Asherville Senior Secondary (Western Region), Gamble Street Secondary (Western Region), Humansdorp Senior Secondary (Western), Khanyisa School (Western Region), Mary Mount RC Secondary (Western Region), Sakhisizwe Senior Secondary (Western Region), Solomon Mahlangu High School (Western Region) and Willowmore Senior Secondary (Western Region).

Gauteng (8 schools)

Blue Hills College (District 9), Illinge Secondary School (District 16), Ithuba-Lethu Secondary School (District 11), Lethukuthula Secondary (District 16), Providence Academy (District 11), Sedaven High School (District 7), Sheikh Anta Diop College (District 11) and Sijabulile Secondary (District 16).

KwaZulu-Natal (6 schools)

Mountview Secondary (eThekweni), Theo Hlalanathi Secondary (eThek-

wini), Umqhele Public School (eThekweni), Arthur Blaxall (Pietermaritzburg), Heritage Academy (Pietermaritzburg) and Bizimali High School (Zululand).

Limpopo (4 schools)

Makgoka High (Capricorn), Mashianyane High (Capricorn), St. Josef's Secondary (Greater Sekhukhune) and Vhulaudzi Secondary (Vhembe).

Mpumalanga (4 schools)

Dlumana High School (Bushbuckridge Region), Magigwana Secondary (Bushbuckridge Region), Mawewe High School (Bushbuckridge Region), Mzimba Secondary School (Bushbuckridge Region).

North West (2 schools)

Mayflower Educational School (Dr. K. Kaunda District) and St. Paul's High School (Dr. RS Mompoti District).

Northern Cape (1 school)

Volksskool Orania (Pixley Ka Seme Region)

Western Cape (14 schools)

Breë-Rivier High School (Cape Winelands), Bridges Academy (Cape Winelands), Bastiaanse Secondary (Eden and Central Karoo), De Rust Secondary (Eden and Central Karoo), George Secondary (Eden and Central Karoo), Morester Secondary (Eden and Central Karoo), Parkdene Secondary (Eden and Central Karoo), Dominican Grimley School (Metropole Central), Holy Cross Convent (Metropole Central), Athlone Skool (Metropole North), Bishop Lavis Secondary (Metropole North), Elswood Secondary (Metropole North), Uitzig Secondary (Metropole North) and Woodlands Secondary (Metropole South).

(b) Comparative Analysis 2008-2009 Religion Studies Pass Rates

In 2008, 1 471 students wrote the NSC Religion Studies examinations and in 2009, the number increased to 1 870 students. There was an increase of 399 students in total. In 2008, the national pass rate was 87.3% with the national average performance being between 50-59%. In 2009, the national pass rate was 86.3% with the national average performance being between 40-49%. Although, there is a 1% decrease in the national pass rate in 2009, the overall

Average Performance Levels	Total Students	L1 (0%-29%)	L2 (30%-39%)	L3 (40%-49%)	L4 (50%-59%)	L5 (60%-69%)	L6 (70%-79%)	L7 (80%-100%)	Total Pass	Percentage Pass
<i>Eastern Cape</i>										
2009	441	37	45	74	88	82	80	35	404	92
2008	444	80	118	78	55	34	44	35	364	82
<i>Gauteng</i>										
2009	196	0	2	6	24	48	48	68	196	100
2008	205	0	15	48	64	53	23	2	205	100
<i>KwaZulu-Natal</i>										
2009	297	71	70	50	39	23	21	23	226	76
2008	67	10	4	2	12	9	13	17	57	85
<i>Limpopo</i>										
2009	256	63	49	50	46	23	19	6	193	75
2008	368	75	83	61	60	49	27	13	293	80
<i>Mpumalanga</i>										
2009	245	44	52	79	41	19	8	2	201	82
2008	43	19	17	5	1	0	1	0	24	56
<i>North West</i>										
2009	38	0	1	0	14	14	6	3	38	100
2008	29	0	2	8	11	6	2	0	29	100
<i>Northern Cape</i>										
2009	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	100
<i>Western Cape</i>										
2009	396	42	68	81	61	63	55	26	354	89
2008	315	3	19	64	87	85	37	20	312	99

Figure 2: Religion Studies Average Performance Levels per Province: 2008-2009, Department of Basic Education, February 2010.

pass rate needs to be analysed against the background of an increase by 399 students. There is a 2.7% increase in the number of students passing RS with distinctions. In 2008, 6% students passed with distinctions and in 2009 it increased to 8.7%. In considering that RS is a subject in the NSC, and has

implications for university entrance, it is imperative to emphasise that there needs to be a paradigm shift from the focus of obtaining high national pass rates to strategically maintaining a significant level of succinct national performance—i.e. the quality of the pass rate. The table in Figure 2 illustrates the provincial performance of RS in 2008 - 2009 within the various percentile levels.

In 2008, the average performance of most students in Eastern Cape was in L2; however in 2009 the performance increased to L4. Gauteng also showed an impressive increase in its average performance. In 2008 the majority students were situated in L4; however, in 2009 the majority students obtained a L7 pass. Also in Gauteng, there is a significant increase in the number of students obtaining a L7 pass—i.e. a substantial increase of 2 students in 2008, to 68 students in 2009.

KwaZulu-Natal shows a vast increase in the number of students opting for RS, i.e. from 67 students in 2008 to 297 students in 2009. Although, the table exhibits 141 students situated at L1-L2 for 2009, there is also a substantial number of students at the higher levels of L4-L7 for 2009. A decrease is noted in the pass rate for 2009 (76%) as compared to the pass rate for 2008 (85%). However, this can be misleading if not considered against the background of the student increase.

There is a substantial decrease in the number of students taking RS in Limpopo. In 2008 there were 368 students and in 2009 there were 256 students. The pass rate has also decreased by 5% and the performance of most students have moved from L2 (2008) to L1 (2009). North West Province is performing fairly well with an increase in the number of students from 2008 to 2009. The majority of students are situated between L4-L5. Northern Cape has one student; however, the one student is currently situated at L2. Western Cape has an increase in the number of students for 2009. However, majority of the students for 2009 are situated in L3.

The above statistics provide a synopsis of the state of RS nationally and provincially. However, the impressive 2009 national pass rate for RS of 86.3% needs to be critiqued against the declining NSC pass rate of 60.7%.¹⁰ As a new subject in the NSC curriculum, it is evident that RS pass rates are

¹⁰ Cf. *Report on NSC Grade 12 Examination Results for 2009*, Minister of Basic Education, Mrs. A. Motshekga.

detrimental to evaluating the success of its implementation. However, one cannot ignore the importance of the student performance levels against merely obtaining high national pass rates. Against this synopsis, the next section aims at problematizing selective issues in the implementation of RS nationally and provincially.

A Problematization of Selective Issues in the Implementation of Religion Studies Nationally and Provincially

The following concerns are central to understanding the present state of RS in South Africa. These concerns have developed over the past two cycles of Grades 10-12 and the NSC Grade 12 examinations. They also come to the fore from national and provincial workshops conducted with RS Subject Advisors and RS Teachers.

(a) Religion Studies Recruitment: Perception vis-a-vis Conceptualization

The current challenge confronting the successful recruitment of students to RS is the negative perception of what constitutes Religion Studies. To a great degree, the discourse of Religion Studies has been categorically grouped with Christian National Education. Hence, RS is still perceived by many as Biblical Studies, Religious Instruction or a religion specific subject, i.e. Christianity or Islamic Studies. These perceptions have largely impacted on the manner in which students approach and perceive the subject. The subject is often perceived as an 'easy subject' and hence, when students encounter the content of the subject, they are immediately confronted with the challenge of reconceptualising what RS actually entails.

According to Ms. K. Molete (Deputy Director for FET School Curriculum, 25th February 2010), another direct challenge on Religion Studies is the negative perception construed by parents. Due to this mistaken perception, many parents believe that if their children opt for Religion Studies it will inevitable affect their spiritual grounding in their specific religious traditions. This prompts a critical question of religious identity and solidarity in the context of being exposed to the religious diversity that exists within a country. In emphasising the importance of this discourse, Weller (2008: 129) states that:

The education system is also an arena within which family traditions and identities, including religious identities and convictions, come into interaction with the beliefs and values of the wider and more diverse society. Such interaction can result in significant tensions for parents, children and teachers alike. These tensions can either take the form of conflict and/or negotiation.

Thus, the conceptualization of Religion Studies according to the *Sub-Statement: National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (General) Religion Studies* (2008:9) needs to be emphasised with the objective of a paradigm shift in public perception:

Religion Studies is the study of religion as a universal human phenomenon and of religions found in a variety of cultures throughout history. Religion and religions are studied without favouring any religion or discriminating any religion, whether in theory or in practice and without promoting adherence to any particular religion.

Hence, there is a need to emphasise the rationale for the study of religions that is based on the mutual recognition of citizens, for all their religious diversity, in a common interreligious society (cf. Chidester 2002: 6). Thus, the purpose of RS is to enhance knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary to equip the student to function in an open and democratic society. Weller (2008: 129) affirms this thesis by stating that:

The education system is also important because at school level, it can be the means by which attitudes and values are initially formed and, later, for those who enter higher education, critically evaluated. It can thus play a significant role in shaping perceptions and approaches to issues of religious diversity.

(b) The Religion Studies Teacher as an ad hoc Teacher

The success of RS is largely dependent upon its facilitators. Hence, the current state of the South African education system cannot be ignored. It was clearly evident at the Religion Studies National Subject Advisor

Workshop in Mpumalanga (25-27 May 2009), that many teachers, who are currently teaching RS, do not have the necessary skills and the knowledge of the content needed to fulfil the curriculum requirements. Hence, the question that posits a critical reflection relates to who are the subject facilitators. Many of these teachers were recruited on the basis of either having some experience of Biblical studies, religious instruction or experience in facilitating Life Orientation. Indeed, this becomes problematic when considering that RS is a new subject that requires new skills and familiarization with the new content, i.e. the requirement of new skills for effective facilitation and application of new methods for appropriate assessment.

Hence, teachers are required to share their time on developing the new subject amidst teaching other subjects. Indeed, RS is not like other subjects, it requires the application of the appropriate skills to create a conducive environment for reflexive engagement. It also implies that the teacher familiarise himself/herself with his/her students to understand the type of environment that needs to be created to secure respect, trust and freedom for active participation.

In addressing this crucial issue, the Department of Education in Gauteng exemplifies an ideal model for sustainable training and development in RS. In both 2008 and 2009, Gauteng achieved a 100% pass rate. The success of these achievements can be attributed to the intense support structures that are currently in place—i.e. regional workshops to collectively engage with content and assessment methods, and small group district support structures where teachers engage with each other sharing experiences and challenges.

(c) Induced Outcomes versus Strategic Outcomes

In this section, we employ the terminology 'induced outcomes' versus 'strategic outcomes'. The term 'induced outcomes' refers to the pass rates both nationally and provincially which serve as the persuasion factor for evaluating and concluding the state of RS. This is contrasted against the term 'strategic outcomes' which takes into consideration the performance levels of the students and their demonstration of the respective competencies. Indeed, as a new subject forming part of the NCS, one cannot ignore the impressive

national pass rate of 86.3% (2009) and 87.3% (2008). Also the number of students passing with distinctions in 2008 (6%) and in 2009 (8.7%) needs to be commended. These induced outcomes provide a promising future for RS.

However, on substantiating that RS is a relatively new subject, with potential of attracting more students, there needs to be a paradigm shift that brings into balance the induced outcomes and the strategic outcomes. In evaluating the present state of RS (provincially and nationally), there needs to be a shift in focus which now places emphasis on improving student performance—i.e. improving the percentile levels in which passes are achieved, and the demonstration of the required competencies which empowers students for Higher Education and lifelong learning. The critical competencies that come to the fore in RS are competencies in communication, investigation, data handling and problem solving (cf. *Subject Assessment Guidelines—Religion Studies: National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12*, Department of Education).

Hence, this paradigm shift requires a strategic change in assessment and evaluation methods. There needs to be a shift of focus from the regurgitation of textbook knowledge to creating a cohort of students that have acquired the skills of critical engagement through the demonstration of the various competencies. Thus, the correct facilitation, and active engagement with the content and specified learning outcomes have the potential to promote the strategic outcomes with the implementation of the acquired skills in the larger social discourse.

(d) Marketing RS through Strategic Career Paths

In both the National Subject Advisor Workshop and the Gauteng Subject Advisor Workshop, the critical question that surfaced pertained to career paths –i.e. “once the student takes RS, what then?” This proved to be an important facet that crossed two dimensions: (a) student recruitment for RS and (b) career guidance. The common perception of RS, mentioned earlier, brings to the fore only one career path. Many students and parents believe that RS is in preparation of a position in religious vocation—e.g. a church minister. In a changing global context and with the active interaction of people from different religious backgrounds, there is a dire need for the creation of more relevant career paths that require the understanding of

religion as a career and post or position requirement in strategically vital systems for the benefit of the equitable socio-economic development of the country at local as well as national levels.

A career in religion crosses all dimensions and serves as an integral part in the informed understanding of social interaction and social systems. For instance, some career paths are: business (i.e. national and international; customer relations; marketing; company and market management of religious diversity, e.g. Islamic banking); governance (ranging from municipal to international relations and their equitable accommodation of diverse religious organisations and institutions), non-profit and non-governmental organizations; counselling and social work service; journalism; law; tourism; information technology; etc.

Hence, this posits the need for a creative religious studies curriculum at Higher Education (i.e. Degree Programmes in Religious Studies—BA Major in Religion) that can serve as a strategic path enabling students to enter into these various careers—i.e. plotting a career direction.

Conclusion

The South African Education community has taken significant steps towards realising perceptions and expectations on the organising and governing of the various kinds of relationship between the religious organisations and the state. In order to educate and train future leaders and citizens, we need to ensure that learners are educated in terms of appropriate continentally and internationally respected moral value systems¹¹. On the one hand, we need to research, learn about, and foster the significance of each of the major religions in Africa and more broadly speaking. On the other, we need to ensure that their impact on our social systems and their various transformations and interactions work toward the common good of all. Since it is especially religious formations that are represented at all sectors and levels of society, religiously-founded organisations and institutions can play

¹¹ It is especially informative to learn from significant leaders and incentives in this area in secular state systems that do not exclude, oppress or repress religions but rather seek cooperation, as well as the variety of systems which have been developed since the advent of the various forms of modernization on the African continent.

important roles in addressing the socio-economic, institutional and moral-ethical challenges our developing continent faces. That Religion Education and Religion Studies will play a very important role in this endeavour, is indicative of the challenges we face. In this brief article we attempted to point to a few of the issues we need to consider in our pursuit of this route. The next phase is to sharpen the education and learning environment and practices in our classrooms. An important further requirement would be to focus the articulation of the BA major in Religion/ Religious Studies more closely with the Religion Education and Religion Studies curricula. A stronger partnership between the study of religion and education programmes may yet prove crucial for advancing Religion Studies and its particular niche in southern Africa.

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Interview

Interview with Ms. K. Molete, Deputy Director for FET School Curriculum, 25th February 2010.

Workshops/Presentations

- Religion Studies National Subject Advisor Workshop*, Mpumalanga, 25-27 May 2009, conducted by HC Steyn and D Chetty.
- Religion Studies Gauteng Province Subject Advisor Workshop and Teacher Workshop*, 31st July 2009, conducted by HC Steyn and D Chetty.

School of Religion and Theology
University of KwaZulu-Natal
smitj@ukzn.ac.za

Religious Studies and Arabic
Unisa
chettd@unisa.ac.za

The 'Dis-embodied Mind' and Religion¹

Johannes A. Smit

Abstract

The successive and interdependent systems of colonisation, imperialism and apartheid produced a multiplex race- and gender-based country-wide national system of inequality, that currently makes South Africa one of the countries with the largest wealth gap in the world. Focusing on two of the Christian missionary pioneers, Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp and John Philip, this article analyses four discursive threads that constituted the discursive formations they formed part of respectively. It is argued that since inequality is historically produced, similar studies need to be done, in order to delimit the discursive effects of past knowledge formations in the production of inequality in South Africa.

Keywords: Inequality; Christian mission; enlightenment; anti-colonial.

9. Equality²

1. Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.
2. Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative

¹ Paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa at Stellenbosch, 30 June 2009.

² Section 9 of Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution, 1996; <http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996/96cons2.htm#9>.

and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken³.

3. The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.
4. No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3). National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.
5. Discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed in subsection (3) is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair.

Introduction

It is this month (June 2009) two hundred and fifty-five years since Jean-Jacques Rousseau completed his discourse on 'What is the Origin of Inequality among Men, and is it Authorised by Natural Law?' (1754 and

³ According to Labour Protect, discrimination is generally legally allowed – as 'fair discrimination' – on four grounds, e.g.: a) Discrimination based on affirmative action; b) Discrimination based on the inherent requirement of a particular job; c) Compulsory discrimination by law; and d) Discrimination based on productivity (see http://www.labourprotect.co.za/fair_unfair.htm). This is part of what Fanon called 'moral reparation', which positions the 'equality' in section 9 of our Bill of Rights central to all processes and procedures of transformation – which obviously includes the metropolises, 'We are not blinded by the moral reparation of national independence, nor are we fed by it. The wealth of the imperial countries is our wealth too' (Fanon 1965:102).

published in 1755) at Chambéry. Rousseau's basic assumption from which he developed his thinking – which also contains the answer to his question – is present in his opening paragraph in 'Dedication to the Republic of Geneva' as well as his introduction to 'A Dissertation on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality of Mankind'. In his 'Dedication' he makes an evaluative distinction between 'the equality which nature has ordained between men [human beings], and the inequality which they have introduced'. In the 'Dissertation', he elaborates and says,

I conceive that there are two kinds of inequality among the human species; one, which I call *natural or physical*, because it is established by nature, and consists in a difference of age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of the mind or of the soul: and another, which may be called *moral or political inequality*, because it depends on a kind of convention, and is established, or at least authorised by the consent of men. This latter consists of the different privileges, which some men enjoy to the prejudice of others; such as that of being more rich, more honoured, more powerful or even in a position to exact obedience (e.a.).

Different from natural inequality which all human beings participate in, Rousseau problematises the humanly produced inequalities deriving from 'moral or political' systems – which are 'conventions' that come into being by virtue of their being authorised by the consent of people. Revolutionary thoughts for his time – but still thirty-five years ahead of the French Revolution – he then groups 'the different privileges that some ... enjoy', such as 'being more rich, more honoured, more powerful or even in a position to exact obedience' together. They can only function, so he argues, because of the 'prejudice' of those who enjoy these privileges vis-à-vis those who are not rich, honoured, powerful or in a position to exact obedience. Centrally part of the rise of eighteenth century secular humanism, this was still forty-five years prior to the dawn of the century of missions in South Africa – with the arrival of the first missionary and Superintendent of African Missions of the London Missionary Society at the Cape in 1799. This was simultaneously the dawn of the century of colonization and the hegemony of British imperialism, but also the beginnings of the resistance by what would become a century later the twentieth century's struggles for

independence and democracy in the erstwhile colonised world. The paradox of the current juncture in world history is that despite more than two hundred and fifty years of the propagation of equality, including freedom and democracy, this hoped-for utopia has not arrived. For South Africa, for instance, Klein (2007:198) points out that '[p]olitically ... people have the right to vote, civil liberties and majority rule. Yet, economically, [we] are the 'most *unequal* society in the world' (e.a.). In his 2002 graph of South Africa's highly stratified class society, Terreblanche (2005:36) showed that South Africa's bourgeois elite (7,5% of the populace) received 72% of annual income, and the petit bourgeoisie (also 7,5% of the populace), another 17,2% in 2001. In total, 15% of our people received nearly 90% of annual income in monetary terms⁴ in 2001.

In order to engage the problematic of inequality we need to first recognise that it is historically produced, then to look at certain junctures in history to ascertain the extent of the inequality at specific moments in our history, the socio-economic variables at play, the necessary interventions by certain agencies, and then evaluate the effectivity of such interventions. I chose the figures of Johannes van der Kemp and John Philip. As two of the most significant historical figures who engaged inequality in their life and work, their legacies continued to make remarkable impacts in South African history writing for more than two hundred years. My concern is with their intervention and engaging of the inequality of their own historical context. Since they were two well-educated scholar-missionaries who engaged inequality as intellectuals, my main sources will be their scholarly remains – Van der Kemp's journals and letters published by the London Missionary society ([1799] 1801 – 1804) and Philip's two volume, *Researches in South Africa: Illustrating the Civil, Moral, and Religious Condition of the Native Tribes: Including Journals of the Author's Travels in the Interior: Together with Detailed Accounts of the Progress of the Christian Missions, Exhibiting the Influence of Christianity in Promoting Civilization* published by James Duncan.

⁴ Turok (2008a: 13,117f,135,152) traces some of the dynamics that prevented the ANC government to make any inroads in our endemic wealth gap and inequality. On this latter point, cf. also Klein (2007: 194 - 217) and Melber (2010) available at: <http://links.org.au/node/1704>.

1 Enlightenment Mission

It is well-known that, Van der Kemp originally planned to start a mission for the Xhosa beyond the colonial border. Having met Ngqika on a few occasions as well as other Xhosa leaders, he became convinced of the futility of such an exercise and decided to return to the colony. On his arrival at Graaff Reinet he saw the destitute conditions of the Khoekhoe and decided to rather start a mission for them. After another two years and with the consent of the newly arrived Batavian Governor Janssens, Bethelsdorp was established in 1804.

Land

It was already in his letter of 'Recommendations to Francis Dundas' for the founding of the first LMS mission station, that Van der Kemp combined his request with that of the destitute conditions of the Khoekhoe and the establishing of a mission station for their benefit. He says:

It was God, Sir! who brought me by a chain of unexpected events ... to Graaff Reinet, where I met with my associates in the ... Mission, Read and Van der Lingen, ... we were witnesses of the *deplorable and wretched conditions* into which the [Khoekhoe] *nation is sunk for want of food, destruction, liberty, useful employments and spot*, which they under the superintendence of Government might in some measure call *their own home* (e.a.) (Van der Kemp 1801b).

This general condition of the Khoekhoe – to have lost their lands with no independent sources of subsistence due to one hundred and fifty years of colonisation (cf. Elphick 1977) – was to be addressed by Van der Kemp's founding of a mission station. There is ample evidence that colonial governments mostly ignored the conditions of the colonised – as is evident from the history of underdevelopment. Colonisation by definition meant the confiscation of indigenous land with scant concern for the wellbeing of indigenes. It was more important to produce landless people who in turn had to fend for a living as 'free' labour on settler farms. Government often only paid attention to the conditions of indigenous peoples as response to missionary critique as in this case. Here, it was the mutual recognition of Van der Kemp and government of the Khoekhoe's destitute or 'unhappy'

condition that persuaded the government to allow the mission to have a piece of land.

The main cause of this condition that the Khoekhoe found themselves in was that they did not succeed in continuing an existence independent of 'European economic, political, and cultural influences'. This, from Khoekhoe perspective, as Elphick saw it, was a gradual hundred and fifty year process and hardly noticed by the various role players during this period – whether Jan van Riebeeck or the various Western Cape Khoekhoe 'chiefs'. He explains:

... for example, when a [Khoekhoe] sold his heifer to a Dutch bartering expedition, or his labor to a colonist, he was exploiting the colonial situation for his own ends; but, though he did not know it, *his immediate interests were incompatible with the continuing autonomy of his traditional society*. These seemingly minor actions, and the processes to which in aggregate they gave rise, are less often witnessed by our documents than the episodes of conquest. Nonetheless, *they were the fundamental determinants of [Khoekhoe] decline* (Elphick 1977:237; e.a.).

Elphick's statement is in the context of the DEIC using the local Western Cape Khoekhoe to barter for cattle and sheep in the interior of South Africa and then sell them to the Cape station to provide the passing ships with food. The Khoekhoe however soon realised that they could horde the animals and sell them much more expensively to the DEIC, which gave rise to the DEIC starting to use violence in confiscating the needed livestock. This sparked the seven frontier wars dating from the 1660s to 1714, when the Khoekhoe finally lost all their ancestral lands and independence. The violence associated with the colonisers' land seizure and occupation, which closed down any alternatives for Khoekhoe subsistence, was therefore a central feature of the gradual crowding out of indigenous people(s) off their lands.

After about ninety years, Van der Kemp would for the first time again provide a piece of land to the Khoekhoe for settling down, or in his words, to then be able to produce their own food, and in 'liberty' engage in useful employments on their own 'spot'. He did qualify this by saying that they would be able to here 'under the superintendence of Government', be

able to 'in some measure call [this] their own home'. Van der Kemp's request here concurs with typical Enlightenment views on property in England – that landed property provides the most basic condition for wealth creation and possibilities for self advancement.

Owning land was the main form of wealth in the 18th century. Political power and influence was in the hands of rich landowners. At the top were the nobility. Below them were a class of nearly rich landowners called the gentry. In the early 18th century there was another class of landowners called yeomen between the rich and the poor. However during the century this class became less and less numerous (Lambert 2009).

One of the most significant texts of the time – which also shares concepts with those used by Van der Kemp – comes from James Wilson, U.S. Supreme Court justice, a principal contributor to the U.S. Constitution and founding father of the United States (together with George Washington and others). On the relationship between landowners and government, Wilson addressed the question whether human beings ('man') exist for the sake of government or government for the sake of human beings. His own view veered more to the latter. This in turn lead to the question of natural and absolute rights, and whether property should resort under the former or the latter⁵. H supported the former. These views concur with Van der Kemp's arguments by which he urged government to provide a 'spot' for the Khoekhoe and the mission. More generally, these derive from assumptions present in Wilson's (cf. 1774 - 1798) text, 'On the History of Property'.

The right of separate property seems to be founded in the nature of men and things; and when societies become numerous, the establishment of that right is highly important to the existence, to the tranquillity, to the elegancies, to the refinements, and to some of the virtues of civilized life.

...

⁵ For some analyses of the discourse on this matter for the period, see London (1999); Power (1993); and Schmidgen (2002).

By exclusive property, the productions of the earth and the means of subsistence are secured and preserved, as well as multiplied. What belongs to no one is wasted by every one. What belongs to one man in particular is the object of his economy and care.

Exclusive property prevents disorder, and promotes peace. Without its establishment, the tranquillity of society would be perpetually disturbed by fierce and ungovernable competitions for the possession and enjoyment of things, insufficient to satisfy all, and by no rules of adjustment distributed to each.

The conveniencies of life depend much on an exclusive property.

Confronted with the destitute state of the Khoekhoe, which has been the outcome of more than one hundred and fifty years of settler encroachment onto Khoekhoe ancestral lands, and nearly ninety years of absolute landlessness, one can understand why Van der Kemp saw property as a mechanism by which to leverage not only for some semblance of geographical independence from government and farmer displacement of the indigenous population, but also for his combined mission effort.

Conversion

In his proposal for the founding of the mission, Van der Kemp grounds the mission objectives primarily in his evangelising scheme and articulates it with current enlightenment perspectives on addressing the 'unhappy' state of the Khoekhoe. Importantly, he relates evangelisation, with teaching and the cultivation of 'occupations'. For him, temporal 'happiness' only becomes possible in the wake of conversion and practice of Christian piety. In point 2 of his 'Recommendations', he says:

2. The chief object and aim of the Missionaries, under which direction this settlement shall be established, ought to be to promote the *knowledge of Christ*, and the practice of real *piety*, both by *instruction and example* among the [Khoekhoe] and other Heathen, ... shall be admitted, and formed into a regular society; and, in the second place, the *temporal happiness and usefulness* of this Society with respect to the country at large (e.a.) (Van der Kemp 1801b).

With regard to the objectifiable socio-economic aspects, Van der Kemp (1801b) explains in point 6 of his 'Recommendations':

6. As we are of opinion that the rule laid down by Paul 'that if any would not work, neither should he eat', ought to be strictly observed in every Christian Society, our intention is to discourage *idleness* and *laziness* and to have all the individuals of our institution, as much as circumstances shall admit, *employed in different useful occupations*, for the cultivation of their *rational faculties* or *exercise of the body*, as means of subsistence, and of promoting the well-fare of this society and the colony at large. These *occupations* may be referred either to *agriculture and farming, the management of cattle, or mechanical arts, and little manufactories, e.g. soap-boiling, candle-making, spinning of thread, manufacturing of paper, tanning, potting, brickmaking, turnery, &c.* (e.a.)

Of first importance is the labour principle of self-subsistence which was to characterise the ethos of the nineteenth century mission stations. Whereas the products produced at the mission would be sold on behalf of the mission and the establishing of further mission stations, Van der Kemp's (1801b) view in point 7 of the 'Recommendations' was that if there were Khoekhoe who could move out on their own and start an independent existence without missionary support, they were to be encouraged to do so.

By these measures we intend not to preclude any one, who by his industry and diligence shall be enabled to elevate himself above the class of journeymen from becoming a master and proprietor of his own business (Van der Kemp 1801b).

Despite his idealistic objectives, Van der Kemp did not succeed in his project for a variety of reasons – e.g. the arid area at which the mission station was founded, the continuous pressure from the government to supply workers for farm labour, and the general historically-produced destitute state of the Khoekhoe. Even so, it is precisely about this settlement that he was severely criticized by the traveller Lichtenstein, for the inadequacy of his mission. In one of his statements, Lichtenstein (1928:291f; 295) said:

[The Khoekhoe] were certainly daily instructed for some hours in the christian religion, but these instructions made much more impression upon their memory than upon their understanding. They could sing and pray, and be heartily penitent for their sins, and talk of the Lamb of atonement, but none were really the better for all this specious appearance. No attention was paid to giving them *proper occupations*, and, excepting in the hours of prayer, they might be as indolent as they chose (e.a.).

To be engaged in 'occupations' is here compared to 'indolence', which in turn is equated with religious worship, with Lichtenstein deducing that Van der Kemp's ministry is not of much 'value'.

It appears to me that Van der Kemp is of little value as a missionary, partly because he is a *mere enthusiast*, and too much absorbed in the *idea of conversion*, partly because he is *too learned*, that is to say, *too little acquainted with the common concerns of life*, to turn the attention even of a raw [Khoekhoe] to them. Thence comes his total neglect of *husbandry* and all *mechanical employments*, though these are the arts in which his disciples must be instructed if he would make them *really happy*; thence also the perverted view he takes of the conduct which the colonists ought to observe with regard to his institution, since he considers them as bound to assist in its support (e.a.).

It is doubtlessly true that Van der Kemp's main aim was the religious conversion first of the Xhosa, and when he was not successful here, then the Khoekhoe. This primary focus matches Lichtenstein's observations on and exposition of the missionary's teaching of the Khoekhoe in the 'christian religion' first and foremost, as well as Van der Kemp's own pointing to his objectives for the mission in his 'Recommendations'. Yet, irrespective of the doubts about his success and those of subsequent missionaries (see Bird 1822:66), the primary point is that his understanding was closely intertwined with his optimistic enlightenment beliefs about the articulation of Christianity ('*knowledge of Christ*') with 'the practice of real *piety*' – which meant piety by way of '*instruction*' and '*example*' (by and of the missionaries) and the cultivation of '*temporal happiness*' and '*usefulness*'

secondly. This latter, temporal part he spells out more closely in point six, where work is religiously grounded, and as such, impacts on the possibility to be '*employed in different useful occupations*', which in turn aims at the fulfilling of the objective of '*the cultivation of ... rational faculties or exercise of the body*'. In principle, this holistic perspective constitutes the missions' romantic Enlightenment idealism – that conversion, prayer and pious acts integrated with the cultivation of reason and a healthy body, together with different kinds of labour, would of necessity lead to 'happy', modern human citizens on the African continent. Even though there was widespread acceptance of the 'therapeutic' significance spiritual cultivation has for communities (cf. Potkay 2000:15), this was also a bone of contention, as is evident from Lichtenstein's critique of Van der Kemp. As the cultivation of the 'knowledge of Christ' and 'piety' first and foremost would lead to the Khoekhoe's eternal happiness and only because of this, to temporary happiness for Van der Kemp, for Lichtenstein it was to be derived exclusively from temporal and this-worldly secular employments rather than the 'specious appearance' present in their singing, prayers, hearty penitence for their sins, and 'talk of the Lamb of atonement'.

Happiness

The *third* point and closely related to the previous one, is the difference of opinion on what constitutes true happiness. For Lichtenstein, Van der Kemp himself was of 'little value as a missionary' with the missions not producing 'happiness'. From his own idealistic Enlightenment understanding, real happiness is the result of being '*acquainted with the common concerns of life*', '*husbandry*' and '*all mechanical employments*'. 'Husbandry' as the cultivation of crops and the breeding and raising of livestock was one of the most significant sciences that developed during the eighteenth century, and that most foundationally impacted on socio-economic development (cf. Fussell 1937). To be able to master and apply this science, as well as be '*acquainted with the common concerns of life*', and '*all mechanical employments*', required a rising bourgeois mindset and assumptions. Yet, if these were the means, the end – shared by both Van der Kemp and Dundas – was the common eighteenth century concern which gave rise to much literary and philosophical speculation, viz. 'happiness'. In Potkay's (2000:12) comparative study of Johnson and Hume's views, the period concept of,

happiness or human flourishing is the proper aim not only of ethical precept but also of descriptive psychology, and that its attainment depends partly on political and economic conditions, but primarily on an inner economy, the proper management or regulation of the passions that propel us⁶.

The general sense of 'human flourishing' in Potkay's synonym seems to capture this notion best. Yet, the articulation of ethics with the passions as part of an 'inner economy', is a secular explication of the evangelical humanist discourse that produced Van der Kemp's spiritual one where 'piety' encapsulates both. The general understanding of an 'inner economy', is also present in Bird's (1823:177) exposition of 'happiness at the Cape'. For him, the concept is more related to the desire to live an uncomplicated life, meaning, not disturbed by 'ambition and politics'. He says:

Moral writers assert, that the happiest condition of human fortune is in the uniform and uninterrupted current of ordinary life, affording from day to day the same regular pursuits. If this be correct, [colonial] man in the Cape colony is a most happy being. There is nothing here calculated to give an impetus to violent exertion, and the current glides on in an unvarying course. Ambition and politics, two of the grand tormentors of human life, have no field in South Africa large enough for an Englishman, and the Cape-Dutch know them not, for they are content to be quiet, and to obey (Bird 1823:177).

A similar view is also present in Philip's (I.1828:33) quotation of landrost Kupt when he reflected on the happiness of the indigenous people prior to colonisation, and how the impact of colonisation changed the lives of happy settled indigenous people.

⁶ For the personal, ethical and philosophical ambiguities related to the concept of happiness in eighteenth-century short novels, poetry and prose, see Samuel Johnson's 1759 novella, *Rasselas* (1759); Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'Fifth Walk' in his *Reveries* (1782); William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789; 1794); and portions of William Wordsworth's autobiographical poem *The Prelude* ([1798] 1888).

... [F]rom people living in peace and happiness, divided into kraals under chiefs, and subsisting quietly by the breeding of cattle, they are become almost all of them huntsmen, Bushmen, and robbers, and are dispersed everywhere, among the barren and rugged mountains.

Even though this statement was made to encourage appreciation and support of indigenous people's ways of life in distinction to the colonising program, one could even heredetect Philip's fears that it is precisely this content lifestyle that will be permanently displaced by the looming approach of ever larger waves of colonisation and settler invasions onto indigenous land.

Usefulness

Fourthly, to be happy certainly depends on whether the individual was free or not, together with the political and economic conditions of the country which allows for the assertion of such freedom not only in appropriate labour and cultivation of the land, but also contributions towards the common good. Prior to his acquiring of Bethelsdorp, and on the topic of the landlessness of the Khoekhoe, and their resultant loss of freedom, Van der Kemp reports,

I had a free conversation with the Commissioner on the state of the [Khoekhoe] nation, and the present calamities, and gave as my opinion that the [Khoekhoe] should be *perfectly free*, upon *an equal footing in every respect with the Colonists*, and by no sort of compulsion brought under a necessity to enter their service, but have a piece of ground given to them by Government as their own (Van der Kemp 1801d:494; e.a.).

Following on his engagement of government on acquiring a 'spot' for the Khoekhoe and his continued exertions to secure a 'piece of ground' for them, this argument could only be made and be affective, if it was accompanied by the assertion that the Khoekhoe should not only then be equally 'free', but would also function as equal to the colonists, e.g. as British subjects and citizens, and contribute to the welfare of the colony as free citizens and not as labour force available to either government or settler. Freedom goes hand in hand with the free and independent cultivation of the

land⁷.

This comes more to the fore in both Van der Kemp's (and Lichtenstein's) views, that it is imperative that the Khoekhoe contribute to the wellbeing of the country. So, Van der Kemp strings together land-owning, conversion and piety (that includes instruction), happiness and usefulness. Hence, the inner economy of piety must be related not only to instruction but also to freedom and the economic and political contributions to the country. This is present in Van der Kemp's point that the '*temporal happiness and usefulness* of this Society would have significance with regard to the 'country at large'. The Khoekhoe were also to be '*employed in different useful occupations*, for the cultivation of their *rational faculties or exercise of the body*' to take care of themselves – 'as means of subsistence' – but also, by being so employed and cultivated, promote 'the well-fare of this society and the colony at large'. In his 'Recommendations', Van der Kemp mentioned the 'occupations' of 'agriculture and farming, the management of cattle, or mechanical arts, and little manufactories, e.g. soap-boiling, candle-making, spinning of thread, manufacturing of paper, tanning, potting, brickmaking, turnery, &c.' This would not materialise in his lifetime but would be taken further by Philip (cf. below). Even so, in terms of late eighteenth century discourse and relating it to property, Wilson says:

Property is the right or lawful power, which a person has to a thing. Of this right there are three different degrees. The lowest degree of this right is a right merely to possess a thing. The next degree of this right is a right to possess and to use a thing. The next and highest

⁷ The same assumptions underlie his celebrations of the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and his advocacy of the abolition of slavery. In order to get some sense of the prevalence of slavery at the Cape fifteen years after its abolition, Bird's (1823: 69) study of 1820 reports 34 329 slaves in the districts of Cape Town, Simon's Town, Stellenbosch, Tulbagh, Zwelendani, George, Uitenhage and Graaf Reinet. The dire situation in which the colony was around this time – seven to ten years after Van der Kemp's death – can also be gleaned from Philip's (I.1828:201) report that even Bethelsdorp was 'virtually converted into a slave lodge' for both government and farmers when he and Campbell visited it the first time in 1819.

degree of this right is a right to possess, to use, and to dispose of a thing (Wilson 1774 - 1798 'On the History of Property').

In Van der Kemp's reasoning the Khoekhoe would find a piece of land to cultivate at Bethelsdorp but also develop their own trades. They would in terms of Wilson's hierarchy be able to both possess and use their property, even though still unable to possess it in such a way as to dispose of it in terms of their own free will. Yet, in his general observation towards the end of his treatise, he relates property to usefulness.

Man is intended for action. Useful and skilful industry is the soul of an active life. But industry should have her just reward. That reward is property; for of useful and active industry, property is the natural result.

...

Exclusive property multiplies the productions of the earth, and the means of subsistence. Who would cultivate the soil, and sow the grain, if he had no peculiar interest in the harvest? Who would rear and tend flocks and herds, if they were to be taken from him by the first person who should come to demand them?

The conveniencies of life depend much on an exclusive property. The full effects of industry cannot be obtained without *distinct professions and the division of labour*. But labour cannot be divided, nor can distinct professions be pursued, *unless the productions of one profession and of one kind of labour can be exchanged for those of another*. This exchange implies a separate property in those who make it.

...

For these reasons, the establishment of exclusive property may justly be considered as essential to the interests of *civilized society*. With regard to land, in particular, a separate and exclusive property in it is a principal source of attachment to the country, in which one resides. *A person becomes very unwilling to relinquish those well known fields of his own; which it has been the great object of his industry, and, perhaps, of his pride, to cultivate and adorn* (e.a.)

We find here Wilson's exposition of usefulness, how it relates to landed property, as well as the division of labour and the different professions, and how these impacted on a 'civilised society'. In a similar register, these also relate to the discursive strand of not only happiness of the individual flourishing person in terms of the 'inner economy' of the 'proper relationship between reason and passion' but also 'social utility' (cf. Potkay 2000:76,45). In Ciceronian Stoic terms, passion is 'moderated' for the greater and common good (Davidson 2002:114). This would match Van der Kemp's suggestion that the Khoekhoe should serve the common good, but equally, that the colonists contribute to the common good by including the optimal functioning of the mission institution – for them to not merely use it as a reserve from which seasonal labour could be recruited. The push of government as well as the settler farmers, however, was not self-subsistence but to retain the Khoekhoe as 'free' labour. This was one of the main dubious reasons why a very arid and dry place was given to the missions in the first place – to ensure that it was virtually impossible to deliver on the promises of raising an independent self-subsistent establishment.

These assumptions, expectations and judgments by Van der Kemp and Lichtenstein have proven to be short-sighted and deficient. The main hiatus lay in the nearly one hundred and fifty years of Dutch colonisation that the Khoekhoe had been subjected to at that point (cf. above), but also in the limitations of Enlightenment rationality itself.

Firstly, here at the beginnings of mission, both Van der Kemp and Lichtenstein's perspectives were too aloof of empirical environmental reality, the political effects of such concerns and how the African body politic differed from the socio-historical -political and -economic dynamics back in Britain and Scotland, and in Wilson's contributions to this general discourse, the realities in the United States. Whereas there was a history of at least a hundred years or more of the cultivation of industry and education, the Khoekhoe suffered more than a hundred and fifty years of continuous suppression and loss of land. Yet, as a very well read scholar and author of his time, Van der Kemp shared the common evangelical and secular humanist criticisms of colonisation of his time. He saw his founding of the mission station as an intervention not only in the eternal salvation of the Khoekhoe but also the temporal. The mission would not only provide the Khoekhoe with an opportunity to be educated but also a piece of land they could call their own, and so escape government and settler exploitation of

their 'free' labour. They could then become useful in the 'mechanical arts' and be creators of their own destiny in a self-subsistent manner⁸. After a hundred and fifty years of colonial destruction of Khoekhoe culture and confiscation of land, with no political and economic conditions comparable to those that gave rise to enlightenment development in Europe, these hopes by Van der Kemp, however, proved ill-founded and socio-historically fallacious.

Secondly, the decontextualised optimism related to the articulation of religion with the temporal welfare of people showed itself to be equally erroneous. Ross (1986:96f) for instance comments on this issue saying, that 'Enlightenment' and 'evangelicalism' was 'not necessarily opposed', and that 'they blend in the thought of many Scottish evangelicals of the first decades of the nineteenth century'. Whether due to the pietist evangelising tradition within which Van der Kemp functioned⁹, or his romantic

⁸ Van der Kemp's intervention on behalf of the Khoekhoe was a very explicit and conscious intervention in the most abhorrent colonising conditions, as is evident. Yet this formed part of a larger more encompassing eighteenth century framework of the general development of the ordinary people. Meek (1977) reports on the developmental stages of people for instance, e.g. moving from hunting and gathering, through pastoral and agricultural stages to the final stage of commercialisation. Due to Van der Kemp's intervention, the Khoekhoe would be able to not only come by their own land again, but also be able to engage in the natural developmental progress into engaging of the mechanical arts and commercialisation as others were able to do – to become 'journeymen' and in time be 'enabled to elevate [themselves] above the class of journeymen [to that of] a master, and proprietor of [an] own business' (see point 7 in Van der Kemp's 'Recommendations').

⁹ Granted that Van der Kemp only had his conversion experience in June 1791 – about a decade after his studies in Edinburgh (August 1780 – July 11 1782) – this experience connected to the profound influence Edinburgh's scholarly environment exerted on his own enlightenment pursuits, at the height of the Scottish Enlightenment (without however succeeding in stopping his [philosophical] faith in the existence of God). He shared this same optimistic and romantic evangelicalism with the Moravians and the LMS's Scottish missionaries who would follow later in the nineteenth century.

Enlightenment optimism in terms of which he believed that conversion to Christianity would by default also bring people into the age of enlightenment and the age of civilization, science and industry, he did not succeed and the discourse as well as the institution of the time – the mission station – proved insufficient for attaining the desired outcomes.

This state of affairs continued after Van der Kemp's death and was much worse when Philip arrived. In his labour we see another phase in which the missions engaged this complex matter head-on, but again, and despite some success – the British Government's promulgation of Ordinance 50 (1828), and the abolition of slavery in 1838 – they were destined to fail. In the longer term, after Philips' death, the next hurdle in the pathway to the cultivation of equality, would arise with the new economic developments in South Africa after the discovery of diamonds and later in the century, gold.

2 Anti-colonial Mission

One of Van der Kemp's most significant successors, Reverend John Philip tried his utmost to rectify this state of affairs. The main aim of his two volume work was to be an intervention in the 'reciprocity of injuries' that characterised colonisation the world over, but also the development of Bethelsdorp and its inhabitants. Due to their close ties, this formed part of the anti-slave trade and the abolition of slavery movements. These were general discursive threads and part of both secular and evangelical humanism.

Anti-Colonial Critique

Philip's starting point is his criticism of colonisation. His conscious criticism of the practices of colonialism is already evident from his head-quote of Dr. Johnson that launches both volumes of his book¹⁰. It reads:

What mankind has lost and gained by European conquests, it would be long to compare, and very *difficult to estimate*. Much *knowledge*

¹⁰ I could not trace the actual reference, but Dr. Johnson (1709 - 1784) is most certainly the famed Samuel Johnson who made such a significant contribution to formalising the English language and to English literature criticism in the eighteenth century.

has been acquired, and much *cruelty* committed: the *belief of religion has been very little propagated*, and *its laws have been outrageously and enormously violated*. The Europeans have scarcely visited any coast, but to *gratify avarice* and *extend corruption*; to *arrogate dominion without right*, and *practice cruelty without incentive*. Happy had it then been for the oppressed, if the designs of the original invader had slept in his bosom; and, surely, more happy for the oppressors! But there is reason to hope, that *out of much evil, good may be sometimes produced*, and that *the light of the gospel will, at last, illuminate* the sands of Africa and the deserts of America; though its progress cannot but be slow, when *it is so much obstructed by the lives of men calling themselves Christians*. Dr. Johnson (e.a.) (Philip I.[1828] 1969:xxxvi).

In his recognition of the cruelties of colonialism, Johnson concedes that much 'knowledge' has been gathered. However, colonialism's possible advantages to humankind – 'what mankind has lost and gained by European conquests' – is 'difficult to estimate'. Significantly, Johnson pits 'religion' over and against colonialism. Whereas colonialism has restricted the propagation of religion, has outrageously violated the 'laws' of religion, gratified avarice and extended corruption in the process of arrogating 'dominion without right' and the practicing of 'cruelty without incentive', the propagation of religion may yet prove different. Despite the obstruction of 'men calling themselves Christians', the 'light of the gospel' may yet 'illuminate' the peoples of Africa and America.

Aberrational Representation

By the 1820s the critique of colonialism has become much more vociferous than Van der Kemp's two decades earlier. In South Africa, it was especially the early eighteenth century evangelical humanitarian tradition that represented the anti-colonial opposition¹¹. For Philip, the main dynamics of

¹¹ Cf. Elbourne (2002:25-70) for a general and concise overview, Marais (1927:11 – 24 – 'The Opponents of Colonisation') and Keegan (1996:75ff) for specifics, and Isichei (1995:224) and Elbourne (2002:71ff) for indigenous views.

colonisation were to be pried open between traveller representations and the critique of actual colonising dynamics and experiences of the body politic of the indigenous people(s).

On the one hand, his works call attention to the biased nature of the reports of 'travellers' and 'adventurers' in the colonies. He ascribes this to their 'prejudices or their interests'. These generally comprise of '[m]eagre narratives, defective or filled up with conjectures, seemingly adopted merely to surprise or amuse' and as such may be ignored. However, due to the fact that they often include stereotypes of indigenous people, he calls on 'writers' to 'search into the origin and grounds of ... representations with the utmost care and impartiality'. The general realities of colonisation are not as innocent as it appears. For example, in order to 'justify' 'the most oppressive and cruel treatment' of the indigenous populations, colonising 'powerful strangers' represented the inhabitants as 'barbarous tribes'. He continues stating:

We have examples where it has been held a sufficient reason for depriving a people of their lands and grazing grounds, that they had no houses or cultivated lands; and when thus reduced to want, they are speedily denounced and hunted down as robbers, or rather as beasts of prey. The connexion between the new and old inhabitants in such circumstances becomes nothing more than a *reciprocity of injuries*, and the growing colony presents on its borders an unbroken line of *crimes and blood*. Such is the picture of almost every new settlement in an uncivilized country; and the result has almost uniformly been either the extirpation of the original inhabitants, or their degradation to the condition of slaves or bondmen (Philip I.1828:2; e.a.).

The aberrational representation here results from firstly denying that the indigenous people do indeed occupy houses and cultivated land. Once collectively communicated and asserted, it becomes a misleading self-delusional yet dangerous fiction which is then used to actively displace people from their 'lands and grazing grounds'. The third step is to then 'denounce' all such displaced people who are destitute and without food and shelter, and even hunt them down as 'robbers' if not 'beasts of prey'. Many,

however end up as 'slaves or bondmen'¹².

On the other hand, Philip aims at setting the record straight. One of his main bones of contention is with Lichtenstein's representation of Van der Kemp and Bethelsdorp. Philip (I.1828:93ff) goes into much detail to quell Lichtenstein's 'prejudices and false representations' and 'inaccuracies'¹³. Grouping him together with all the other 'travellers and adventurers' he not only sets him aright, but also muses:

* It is impossible to look at the false reports and the inaccuracies of many travelers, and not sympathize with the continental philosopher, who, provoked by the ignorance and false statements which abound in books of travels, brought the following charge against writers of this description in general:- 'One may lay down as a maxim, that out of one hundred there are sixty who are liars, not through interest, but ignorance; thirty through interest, or the pleasure of imposing on the public; and about ten who are honest, and aim at truth'.

From what has been stated, the reader will be able to judge for himself, what importance he ought to attach to the reports and opinions of Dr. Lichtenstein, connected with the subject of missions; and the following passage may be taken as a specimen of his accuracy ... (Philip I.1828:95).

If the colonisers, travel writers and adventurers constitute one group of protagonists he engages critically, then, more particularly, his centre of attention to the contrary, is the original inhabitants of South Africa – a study of their 'civil, moral, and religious condition' as stated in the subtitle of the works. To capture this, the 'heart' of the study, he says:

To the melancholy list of instances by which this view is supported

¹² The significance of this statement is that this practice, as well as slavery were still in force at the time. Slavery would only end a decade later.

¹³ See the section he explicitly labelled, 'Misrepresentations of Vanderkemp's character'. About Lichtenstein he says: 'It is painful to see a man like Dr. Lichtenstein, with some pretensions to science and literature, adopting all the vulgar prejudices and false representations of the colonists' (Philip I.1828:97).

[the general condition of the 'reciprocity of injuries' and 'crimes of blood' in the colonies], I am about to add that of the Aborigines of Southern Africa [the Khoekhoe]; – a people that in the course of less than a century were *violently dispossessed of every portion of their territory*¹⁴, *deprived of every means of improving their condition as individuals*, and, *under various pretexts, fixed by law in a state of hopeless bondage in the land of their forefathers*. To give a faithful sketch of their past sufferings, and of their present condition, is my chief object. I shall, in every instance, lay my authority before the reader (Philip I.1828:2; e.a.).

If aberrational and misleading representations were used to further their own cause, the irregular continues not only in violent dispossessions but that the people lose 'every portion of their territory', and are deprived of 'every means of improving their condition'. (This, the travellers and adventurers do not report on.) Even more devious, is the fact that the colonisers under various pretexts fix in law legislation which are presumable to help indigenous peoples while ultimately serving their own interests. Philip challenged government on these issues but from his own space.

Civil Rights vis-à-vis Politics

Apart from his extensive overview of the history of colonisation, its various impacts on the indigenous population, and numerous stories of ill-treatment of the Khoekhoe and San peoples, Philip's own major objective with his work was an intervention in this state of affairs. His two volume book formed part of a project similar but more developed than Van der Kemp's¹⁵ - to in Ross's (1986:77) words,

persuade the British public that the Imperial government had to reform its administration of the Cape Colony, if that Colony was to

¹⁴ Cf. pp. 358f above.

¹⁵ It is for this reason – as building further on Van der Kemp's legacy, and apart from the negative rumours that colonists circulated about Van der Kemp – that Philip launched such a strong argument for the clearing of the name of the founder of missions in South Africa vis-à-vis Lichtenstein's.

be governed according to British traditions of justice¹⁶.

Harbouring an organic view of society he applied enlightenment assumptions about individual advancement in Britain to South Africa. Most crucially, he worked with a notion of 'civil rights' divorced from 'politics' – similar to other sectional diversification of disciplines (cf. Foucault 1982; Smit 2001) which often meant 'factional fighting over patronage' (Ross 1986:79) but also, as is clear from the quotation below, to set up alternative 'forms' of government, or even systems critical of government.

No question can be more simple and less incumbered (sic.) with difficulties than the one before us. We ask for nothing unreasonable, nothing illegal, nothing new. *We have nothing to say to politics. The question under discussion is a mere question of civil rights.* We have advanced no suggestions about the new charter of justice. We are the advocates of no particular form of civil government for the colony. We have offered no particular directions about the machinery of government desirable in such a country. We have recommended no checks but such as are necessary to prevent one class of British subjects from oppressing and destroying another. *In what we propose we suspend no weight upon the wheels of government.* We ask nothing for the poor natives more than this, *that they should have the protection the law affords to the colonists.* There is nothing surely in these claims, against which the shadow of an objection can be urged (Philip I.1828:xxvf; e.a.).

Crucially, however, Philip's enumeration of the civil rights for the Khoekhoe would mean nothing less than that they would be fully treated as

¹⁶ There is ample evidence to this effect, not least Philip's favourable evaluation of the Romans and Dutch in their extension of empire while not repressing inhabitants and the British's policies and conduct to the contrary. 'It is by acting upon such principles as these, that the Romans extended, and so long preserved, their empire; and it is by acting upon similar principles, that England will preserve her own greatness, and hand down her fame to future ages' (cf. Philip I.1828:356 - 359). Cf. also Philip's criticisms in other parts of his work, e.g. (I.1828:394f).

'British subjects' and citizens¹⁷. He continues,

Independent of printed statutes, there are certain rights which human beings possess, and of which they cannot be deprived but by manifest injustice. The wanderer in the desert has a *right to his life*, to his *liberty*, his *wife*, his *children*, and his *property*. The [Khoekhoe] has a *right to a fair price for his labour*; to an *exemption from cruelty and oppression*; to *choose the place of his abode*, and to *enjoy the society of his children*; and no one can deprive him of those rights without violating the laws of nature and of nations. If the perpetration of such outrages against the laws of nature and of nations is a crime, that crime is greatly aggravated where it is committed against the *lex loci*, against the written law of the land. The [Khoekhoe], in addition to the unalienable rights conferred upon them by their Creator, have prescriptive rights in their favour; they are regarded by the British government as a free people; and the colonial law says, that they are to be treated in their persons, in their properties, and in their possessions, the same as other free people (Philip I.1828:xxvif; e.a.).

(Petit-)Bourgeois Labour

Since our focus is the production of 'inequality' we also need to look at Philip's intervention in terms of the material development of the Khoekhoe, and more broadly speaking, the LMS missions in southern Africa. Crucial is his statement about six to seven years after he arrived in South Africa with John Campbell.

Dr. Vanderkemp remarks, that the neighbor of Bethelsdorp was covered with the aloe of commerce but that he despaired of seeing the day when the [Khoekhoe] be induced, by any temporal advantage, to take the trouble to drain and collect the inspissated

¹⁷ It needs to be remembered that Van der Kemp already called for the Khoekhoe to be recognized as British subjects or citizens, 'perfectly free, upon an equal footing in every respect with the Colonists' (cf. p. 366 above).

juice. I had often remarked the indifference with which the [Khoekhoe] regarded money (Philip I.1928:204).

Closely related to the fact that they did not engage in commerce, was Philip's idea to introduce shops and therefore consumerism to the missions.

We had no retail shops at our institutions, and the [Khoekhoe] had from five to fifteen or sixteen miles to travel, before they could dispose of any trifle they might possess. Reflecting on this subject, it occurred to me that the sight of a shop at each of the institutions might operate as a stimulus to industry. The plan of opening a shop, in connexion with the society, appeared to me accompanied with insuperable difficulties. A business of this nature would have required the whole attention of a man of commercial habits, and we had no individual to spare for such an occupation, to whom it could be entrusted (Philip I.1928:204f).

After soliciting the collaboration of some 'merchants' and their establishing some shops at the few missions at the time, Philip's judgement is: 'The experiment succeeded'. The reason for this evaluation is captured in his portrayal of the progress in terms of 'sight' – enlightenment vision included the role vision played in the generating of consumerism.

The sight of the goods in their windows and in their shop produced the effect anticipated; the desire of possessing the articles for use and comfort by which they were constantly tempted, acquired additional strength on every fresh renewal of stimulus. Money instantly rose in estimation among them; and the women and the children, finding that they could obtain what they desired by collecting the juice of the aloe, were, in a short time, seen early and late, engaged in this occupation, or in carrying the produce of their labour to the merchant's shop, to exchange it for clothing and such other articles as might suit their taste or necessities (Philip I.1928:205f).

Anticipating some critique from those zealous for mission, viz. that the object of mission is not commerce but the conversion of people and that funds donated for mission should not be used for commerce, Philip points to

the fact that the people's 'habits' 'have been eminently improved' by transforming them into consumers – the 'addition of shops' to the mission institutions – and that it has not transferred into 'additional expense or risk to the society'. Furthermore, his argument is that the shop-owners or merchants do in fact benefit the society, since they actively participate in schooling – most probably in arithmetic (cf. Philip I.1928:205f).

This success was followed by apprenticing Khoekhoe to colonists to learn some trades – blacksmiths, masons and carpenters. Further 'improvements' are also evident. Comparing Bethelsdorp in 1825 with what it was in 1723, he observes that they are 'advancing with a steady and accelerated pace', that their 'substantial, clean, and commodious houses' reveal a 'degree of comfort possessed by few of the frontier boors' and in comparison with the 1820 settlers, 'far surpassing the great body of the English settlers'. They are also mostly clothed in 'British manufactures'. Reflecting on past descriptions of Bethelsdorp – that visitors represented it as the 'approbrium of missions' – he observes that the inhabitants are not only 'in possession of fifty wagons', but that Bethelsdorp is now 'a thriving and rapidly-improving village'.

Instead of the indifference to each other's sufferings, and the exclusive selfishness generated by the oppressions they groaned under, and the vices which follow such a state of things, their conduct to each other is now marked with humanity and Christian affection, of which a beautiful line of almshouses, (the only thing of the kind in the colony,) and their contributions to support their poor, furnish striking examples (Philip I.1928:222).

These are all signs of self-subsistence and the acceptance of rights for their own well-being. They have also themselves built a 'spacious school-room, valued at five-thousand rix-dollars' at their own expense, as well as a 'church of larger dimensions'. The 'youth are taught to read, both in the English and Dutch languages, and many of them also instructed in writing and arithmetic' in the school-room.

Furthermore, he points out that Bethelsdorp also now possesses the

... best blacksmith's shop on the frontier, or, indeed, in the colony. Other trades, especially those of the mason, thatcher, sawyer, &c.,

are successfully followed by many inhabitants of Bethelsdorp. The inhabitants have, besides, within the last two or three years, raised seven thousand rix-dollars, by gratuitous contributions from their hard-earned savings, to pay for a valuable farm, purchased in aid of the very inadequate resources of Bethelsdorp (Philip I.1928:222f).

It was due to the self-advancement and the commerce at Bethelsdorp, that Philip could further narrate how government started to use the [Khoekhoe] as contractors for the carting of 'military stores' from Algoa Bay to Graham's Town in 1822. They made use of thirty wagons. Significant is that they 'created a net saving to the government in the first six months of 11,175 rix-dollars, 5 skillings, and 4 stivers'. These savings obviously came about by government using Khoekhoe labour and not the settler transporters, who would have charged more. From this event he concludes that whereas the Bethelsdorp Khoekhoe were 'formerly burdensome' to the colonial government in the time of Van der Kemp, they have now progressed to where they are 'in the habit of paying, in direct taxes, between two and three thousand rix-dollars'. Apart from having become tax payers – which signals the participation of citizens in infrastructural development – Philip (I.1928:221) also announces with some satisfaction, that they have also now become 'consumers of British goods to the amount of twenty thousand rix-dollars per annum'. Significantly, the Khoekhoe did not only start to function as citizens who fulfill their obligations to the common good, but also became consumers, and that of 'British manufactures'.

Here we have a few glimpses of the economics related to the introduction of inhabitants of the missions to commerce, civil society and self advancement. In more ways than one, Philip's report – which may be idealistic to some degree – is not only a crowning achievement of his own labours but also a realisation of Van der Kemp's initial promises.

In addition to the two critical perspectives on missions under Van der Kemp above (cf. pp. 369 and 370), a *third* can now be formulated. If Van der Kemp expected too much of his mission – that experiences of development in England could be transplanted uncritically into South Africa – and was blinded by his own enlightenment assumptions, then Philip's positioning of himself against government in an anti-colonial stance, his position proved equally detrimental to the Khoekhoe. It is true that he adhered to government requirements, and even criticised if for its devious

deployment of the law against the Khoekhoe. It is also true that some government interventions followed on missionary agitation. During Van der Kemp's life, Janssens put restrictions on Van der Kemp, forbidding him to go to the Xhosa after having established Bethelsdorp – they did however sent visitors to him. Despite such limitations, he continued to critique government and the settler farmers. One outcome was the publishing of Caledon's 'Colonial Proclamation' of 1809 – positively appreciated by W. Wilberforce Bird (1823:7). Yet, Philip critically remarks:

A proclamation ... was published by Lord Caledon shortly after the visit of Colonel Collins to Bethelsdorp, with the most benevolent intentions on the part of his lordship; but the provisions of this enactment were so framed by those by whom it was constructed, that what his lordship intended for the relief of the oppressed [Khoekhoe], was practically employed by the local authorities of the country districts to increase their burdens (Philip I.1828:127).

Later, he devotes a whole chapter to this issue (Philip I.1828:142ff) and, advises that contrary to expectations '... great perspicacity' be required to detect '... the lurking mischief which exists in this proclamation, under the ambiguous phrases by which it is concealed' (Philip I.1828:143ff). This 'mischief' is present in that all the regulations applicable to the Khoekhoe, benefit colonists first and foremost and not the Khoekhoe – because their '*inboekelingskap*' was nothing but a 'compulsory serfdom' of '*direct forced labour*' (Terreblanche 2005:11). Philip raises the same matter on Cradock's Proclamation of 1812 (cf. Philip II.1828:378 - 380), arguing,

that it was the design of the colonial government that the [Khoekhoe] should not be placed in situations where they could provide effectually for themselves, or become anything better than servants to the colonists (Philip I.1828:190).

The kind of pressure the government exerted on the Khoekhoe, is also evident from the letters of Read with regard to the exorbitant taxes government expected the Khoekhoe at Bethelsdorp to pay – which if they could, they would only be able to earn in the inhuman conditions of the settler farms in any case (cf. Philip I.1828:191ff). Yet, because Philip was

part of the colonising mission, even his protests and campaigning would in final analysis serve British interest despite his vociferous campaigning for Khoekhoe rights and self-subsistence (cf. further below).

3 Judging Mission

It could be argued that Van der Kemp's legacy certainly includes his existential identification with the plight of the Khoekhoe, his founding of Bethelsdorp, and the establishing of an educational system for the indigenous population. Philip again succeeded in regenerating this early ideal with the added significance of introducing shops at the missions, artisan training, his success in pressing for the British Government's promulgation of Ordinance 50 (1828), and ultimately, his lobbying for the abolition of slavery. Apart from Lichtenstein's published and widely circulated negative evaluation of Van der Kemp and Philip's setting him aright fifteen years later, the last two hundred years of the evaluation of the century of missions – by numerous missionaries themselves as well as a multitude of apologists and critics in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – the two models above also brought with them their own evaluative frameworks.

Firstly, Van der Kemp obviously saw himself as fulfilling the missionary call to evangelise 'heathen'. He linked this call and his founding of a mission station to the securing of land for the Khoekhoe, and his work toward their 'happiness' and 'usefulness'. I have indicated that his project was substantially influenced by some strands of eighteenth century enlightenment discourse. Despite his own missionary concerns, he nevertheless had a holistic intervention on behalf of the Khoekhoe in mind. Yet, it also became clear that this discourse itself brought along its own limitations but also opposition from his contemporaries.

Over and above his achievements Van der Kemp critically engaged both the government of the time and the frontier farmers. Both conspired together to various degrees and posed a major hurdle to his mission. Whereas the Xhosa was at that time still independent and beyond the frontier – and regarded by Van der Kemp as an independent nation with its own identity as his text, 'Religion, Customs, Population, Government, Language and History' ([1800]) shows – the same is not true for the Khoekhoe. He had to challenge both government and frontier farmers on a continuous basis to wrench some semblance of freedom for the Khoekhoe. He then also refer to

them at least once as a 'free nation' – who should be allowed to choose of their own accord to be instructed in 'reading and writing' (Van der Kemp II. 1803:94) – and also attempted to have them recognised as British subjects and citizens. He also continued to challenge government with regard to its employment of the Khoekhoe as soldiers and opposed its encouragement of settlers to employ them as farm labour (cf. Van der Kemp II.1804:241). Van der Kemp is also most vociferous in his condemning of the frontier farmers – an 'ill-natured people' – often referring to their 'tyranny', 'horrid practices', 'horrid deeds of oppression, murder, &c', and manhandling of their hired workforce and other forms of exploitation (cf. Van der Kemp II.1803:94; 1803:161,158f). In a context where white colonists were in general referred to as 'Christians', Van der Kemp judged them to not measure up to Christian behaviour and therefore on a number of occasions, refer to them as 'nominal christians' – later followed by Philip – or '*Christians* (if they may be so called)', 'these inhuman wretches, who call themselves christians', 'the unchristian inhabitants of this country' and even 'barbarous inhabitants' (Van der Kemp II.1804:150, 241). Where racial separation came into play with regard to worship, he profoundly propagated that 'divine worship ... should be open to every one without distinction' and that he would 'never preach in a church, from which our ... congregation should be excluded' (Van der Kemp I.1801b:483). As for the equality of all human beings, and providing the rationale for this view, Van der Kemp found it in his belief in the commonly shared sin of all humanity – their 'equal misery' – due to their being children of Adam and marked by the 'sin' of the 'fall' (Van der Kemp 1799:376; cf. also Smit 2004).

Van der Kemp's mission cannot therefore be judged unless one takes into consideration the discourse he formed part of – together with its limitations – as well as his critical engagements of his contemporaries and the discursive strands they represented in the broader epoch of the time. (This, latter complex of issues is not addressed in this article.)

Secondly, Philip's views of himself and the value systems in terms of which he judged his own actions formed part of the evangelical value system that produced him back in Scotland (cf. Ross 1986). Yet his career in England and South Africa made him important friends in the humanitarian movement and had an important impact not only on mission but also on the development and the advancement of the indigenous people(s). Telling, are his anti-colonial critique, his criticism of the devious representations found

in traveller and adventurer literature, his positioning of himself within his own understanding of civil society of the time – vis-à-vis ‘politics’ – and his furthering of the (petit-)bourgeois lifestyle of the Khoekhoe.

In addition to the discursive strands overviewed above, we also find a brief summary right at the outset of his two volume book, which provides an indication of the contours of his own understanding of the missionary project. Here he puts forward his favourable evaluation of missionaries who ‘beyond the borders of the colony’, are ‘everywhere scattering the seeds of civilization, social order, and happiness’ (Philip I1828:ix) vis-à-vis his critique of the travellers and government officials. In this he doubtlessly formed part of the earlier modernising discourse shared by Van der Kemp, in which ‘civilisation’, and ‘happiness’ went hand in hand with ‘evangelisation’. Absent in Van der Kemp, and obviously part of the further developments of early nineteenth century modernising discourse, the production of ‘social order’ has by the late 1820s become a constituent part of this programme¹⁸. Another important further development if compared to Van der Kemp, is Philip’s active and unashamed propagation of British ascendancy and domination. He for instance boasts that ‘our missionaries ...[are] by the most unexceptionable means, extending British interests, British influence, and the British empire’ (Philip I.1828:ix). This also provided the context for his anti-slavery lobbying and his successful securing of the promulgation of Ordinance 50 by the British Government. Despite Philip’s misgivings, it at least did away with the most restrictive elements of the ‘Caledon Code’ (cf. Lapping 1986:36f; Crais 1992: 128ff; and Giliomee 2003:83)¹⁹. Significantly, Pdraig O’Malley’s website²⁰ dryly avers that the

¹⁸ This is one conceptual instance indicating that the orders of modern ‘man’ – studied by Foucault (1982) in terms of the disciplines of language, natural history and wealth – have started to impact on the missions by this time.

¹⁹ For a list of laws that fostered underdevelopment in South Africa legislation, see 1) ‘Racial Legislation’ prior to apartheid, for the period 1806 – 1947 see <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv01538/04lv01646.htm>; and 2) for Apartheid Legislation 1948 – 1990, <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv01538/04lv01828/05lv01829/06lv01830.htm>.

²⁰ See <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv01538/04lv01646/05lv01649.htm>.)

repeal of this legislation was not for altruistic reasons, but to provide the British settlers access to indigenous labour – ‘the incoming British settlers, who were not allowed to buy slaves, could not find any free-moving wage-labour due to the pass laws’ and the Caledon Proclamation. By abolishing the pass laws, the Khoekhoe could move around more freely and so become available as ‘free’ labour for British settler farmers. It seems that Philip supported this move, because closely related were his beliefs in the positive effects of missions – to not only break down prejudices against British colonisation, but also to increase the indigenous converts’ ‘dependence upon the colony ... [by introducing] artificial wants’. In this process,

confidence [in the colony] is restored; intercourse with the colony is established; industry, trade, and agriculture spring up; and every genuine convert ... becomes the ally and friend of the colonial government’ (Philip I.1828:x).

In the wake of British, especially Scottish experiences of self-advancement, since the 1780s and Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* ([1776] [1904] 2003), such universalising optimism is understandable. Yet, as many critics of colonialism and colonial missions have pointed out, it was ill-founded in so far as it did not (or did not want to) recognise the detrimental effects British capital’s inbuilt racism, superiority (including ‘indirect rule’) and the twin product of its labour exploitation, would generate (cf. Terreblanche 2005:240,248,252,254). Since Philip however, was a staunch supporter of colonisation he must ultimately be evaluated against the background of its excesses. The missions with people like Van der Kemp and Philip at the front nevertheless made very significant breakthroughs in their contributions to the abolition of the slave trade and ultimately slavery as such.

Conclusion

I started this article with a quotation from Section 9, Equality, of Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution, 1996. The very significant aspect of this section is that it not only asserts the value of equality before the law, ‘equal protection and benefit of the law’, and all citizens’ ‘full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms’ but also that

legal and other instruments may be developed and instituted to promote such equality – to ‘protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination’. Since we have a history of unfair discrimination – both ‘direct and indirect’ – on the basis of ‘race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth’, this legacy is discontinued and the advancing of those previously discriminated against, promoted via measures of fair discrimination applicable to each of these areas. Yet, despite this epoch-making event, the fact that South Africa’s inequality has been produced over more than three hundred and fifty years, I believe this need to be researched and its continuing determinations brought to the surface. Focused on Christian missions, this article was an attempt in this direction.

Finally, I titled the article ‘The Dis-embodied Mind’ and Religion’, in order to capture the limits of Enlightenment rationality. In his *History of Bourgeois Perception* – and implicating both Cartesian rationalism and British empiricism – Lowe (1982:87) argues that the enlightenment’s discursive constraints derive primarily from its ‘materialist reduction of the body’,²¹.

In Van der Kemp’s knowledge system, this manifests primarily in his lobbying for ‘land’ for the Khoekhoe without critically factoring out his own missionary interests in this same land; his interest in ‘conversion’, without recognising that Christian conversion is not of necessity required for material wellbeing; that the inner economy of ‘happiness’ does not need Christian piety as substantial ingredient; and that ‘usefulness’ in his discourse bleached the Khoekhoe’s uses by the mission institutions for their own unacknowledged interests. For many students of Christian missions, they provided the only means for advancement towards equality for the indigenous population. Ultimately, though, they nonetheless formed part of the colonising epoch with all its often unacknowledged self-serving

²¹ Lewis Gordon’s critical view of the vested interests in modernist but even postmodern and postcolonial cultural ‘representation’ is a case in point. Even where the moral ideals of non-racism (color ‘blindness’), non-sexism, and social and class equality are emphasised, such reductions of the black or female body papers over a major critical hiatus in our world of scholarly discourse and its ‘legitimate embodiments of reason’ (cf. Alcoff 2003:184).

incentives and practices²².

Similar perspectives come from the discourse Philip formed part of more than a decade after Van der Kemp's death. Part of the evangelical humanism of his time, and an ardent anti-colonisation activist, Philip nevertheless represented a central and formidable component of the British colonising project. Even though he recognised, in Johnson's words, that humanity would find it difficult to ascertain what it has lost and what gained through colonialism, he failed to measure the ways in which his own project violated that which Johnson denounces; how his own representations – of Van der Kemp and Lichtenstein or the successes of his own mission – were subject to his criticism of the representations by travellers and adventurers; how his own civil rights agitation discounted his own discourse's actual political effects – both positive and negative; and how his push for Khoekhoe labour and consumerism, served his unashamedly support and propagation of British colonial export to the colonies and its interests²³.

In summary, Lowe (1982:87) points out that the 'materialist reduction of the body' in discourse – and here we should generalise – means that 'mind', and we may add the whole discursive formation with all its systems, institutions and agencies, gets 'trapped by the logic of identity and difference, never able to obtain on its own the necessary connection with matter'. Such critical awareness will hopefully help us to also engage our precarious specifically produced South Africa system of inequality and move beyond our own 'psycho-physical parallelisms', and even 'scepticism'.

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²² This scenario has been claimed and propagated by numerous missionary protagonists and supporters. Yet, the critical voices have not been absent – cf. Cuthbertson (1987), Comaroff (1989), and Saayman (1991) for instance.

²³ For this problematic in west-European context, see Adorno and Horkheimer's chapter on 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception' in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972).

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²⁴ I date this very significant text 1800 because it was during the latter half of 1799 (September 20 1799) that Van der Kemp met Ngqika for the first time. He then spent time here until he returned to Graaff Reinet in May 1801. I assume that he wrote the text in 1799 – 1800 and then sent it to London where it was published in 1801 as part of the first volume of the London Missionary Society Transactions.

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School of Religion and Theology
University of KwaZulu-Natal
smitj@ukzn.ac.za

Contributors

Stephen Bigger has taught religious studies and education in university in Oxford and Worcester, has been Head of Education Studies and Dean of Education, and currently supervises PhD students. He edited *Creating the Old Testament* (Blackwell, 1989); and *Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education* (Fulton, 1999); and co-wrote *Researching Equal Opportunities in College and University* (Ashcroft, Bigger and Coates, 1995, Kogan Page). His many papers, reviews, articles and blogs are listed on <http://stephenbigger.blogspot.com>

Denzil Chetty is currently employed at the University of South Africa (UNISA) as a lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies and Arabic. He specialises in comparative religion with a research focus on African and Asian conflict, with particular reference to the use of religious rhetoric in the realm of critical social action. Chetty's interest also extends to the use of Multimedia and Internet-based learning in an Open Distance Learning context. He is a recipient of the prestigious Abe Bailey Fellowship and a participant in the Young Academics Programme (YAP) at UNISA. Chetty also holds the position as secretary for the Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa (ASRSA) and is a trustee on the African International Association for the History of Religion (IAHR) Trust Fund. Contact details: chettd@unisa.ac.za and <http://www.chettyd.com>

Suleman Dangor is professor of Islamic Studies in the School of Religion & Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and will retire at the end of 2009. He obtained a PhD degree from the former University of Durban-Westville and a higher diploma in Arabic from the University of Riyadh (Saudi Arabia). He has more than 70 academic publications to his credit, including books, chapters, journal articles, encyclopaedia entries and edited

volumes. The major focus of his research is Islam in South Africa. He has also been a regular columnist with several national newspapers, and has published more than two hundred articles. Contact details: dngors@ukzn.ac.za

Petro du Preez obtained her PhD in Curriculum Studies at the University of Stellenbosch. She is currently a Lecturer in Curriculum Studies and Research Methodology at the North West University (Potchefstroom Campus), South Africa; where she also chairs the Curriculum Studies subject group. Her publications are predominantly in the areas of curriculum studies, human rights in education, and multireligious and multicultural education. She is part of an international research team (www.hreid.co.za) that received funding from SANPAD (South African Netherlands Programme on Alternatives in Development) for a project entitled: *Human Rights Education in Diversity: Empowering Girls in Rural and Metropolitan School Environments*. She serves on the Editorial Boards of the following two journals: *Panorama*. (International Journal of Comparative Religious Education and Values) and *Religious Education Journal of Australia*. Contact details: petro.dupreez@nwu.ac.za

Janet Jarvis currently co-ordinates and lectures in the Life Orientation discipline within the School of Social Science Education in the Faculty of Education, UKZN. She previously taught in high schools in KZN and was a senior lecturer at the former Edgewood College of Education. With the incorporation into the then University of Natal, she was appointed to a lectureship position which she continues to hold within UKZN. Her Master's dissertation focused on teachers' understanding of the human right to religious freedom. Her doctoral research explores how the religious and cultural identity of teachers of LO influences their interpretation and facilitation of the human right to gender equality.

Celia Kourie is Professor of Christian Spirituality at Unisa. In 2000 she instituted the Masters and Doctoral degrees in Christian Spirituality at Unisa, and in 2001, the BTh (Hons) degree. Her research interests include mysticism, spirituality, inter-spirituality, mysticism and psychology, and mysticism and art. Contact details: kouricet@unisa.ac.za

Contributors

Fred Sheldon Mwesigwa obtained his PhD in Religious Studies from the University of Leeds, UK in 2003. Prior to the PhD, he was a secondary school teacher of English Language and Religious Education for twenty years during which he was also appointed as substantive deputy school head-teacher. Fred joined Uganda Christian University in 2005 and is currently a senior lecturer in the field of Religious Education. He is Head of the Education Department cum Dean of the Faculty of Education and Arts. He is a member of ISREV (International Seminar for Religious Education and Values); member of the International Ecumenical Fellowship (IEF), British chapter; member of ASRSA (Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa) and a corresponding editor of the journal *Panorama*. Contact details: fsmwesigwa@educ.ucu.ac.ug

Yogi Penceliah is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Administration and Development Management at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In previous years she has co-ordinated the Masters and Doctoral Programmes. She has authored and co-authored numerous articles and texts nationally and internationally. Over the years she has supervised many Masters and Doctoral students, and has presented numerous conference papers nationally and internationally. Contact details: penceliah@ukzn.ac.za

Paul Prinsloo is an Education Consultant at the University of South Africa. He has a DLitt et Phil (Religious Studies) from Unisa. His research interests include citizenship education and religious studies, curriculum theory, corporate citizenship, sustainability education and critical theory. He received an Open University International Fellowship in 2007, the Unisa Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Research in 2008 and a Unisa International Fellowship in 2009. In 2010 he was seconded to the office of the Vice-Principal: Academic and Research at Unisa. Contact details: prinssp@unisa.ac.za

Martin Prozesky is an independent ethics educator and consultant and an Emeritus Professor of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. From 1997-2007 he directed the Unilever Ethics Centre at this University. A graduate of Rhodes,

Oxford and the University of Rhodesia, he is the author of five books, co-author of four more, with many academic papers and well over 150 press articles. His latest book, *Conscience: Ethical Intelligence for Global Well-Being*, was published by the UKZN Press in 2007. A former Dean of Humanities, he has been a frequent speaker at conferences and seminars in various countries, and has often addressed schools, businesses and other audiences. Contact details: marproz@mweb.co.za

Cornelia Roux is currently Director of the Research Focus Area (Teaching-Learning Organisation), Faculty of Educational Sciences (Potchefstroom Campus), North West University, South Africa. She was previous a Research Professor at the School of Curriculum-based Studies at the same university. She has thirty years of teaching and research experience in teacher training at the Faculty of Education, University of Stellenbosch. Her publications and research projects are: Religion in Education; and Religion Studies and Human Rights Education in Diverse Religious and Cultural Contexts. Contact details: cornelia.roux@nwu.ac.za and www.hreid.co.za

Trevor Ruthenberg is a Minister in the Methodist church of South Africa. He is currently the resident Minister of the Thornton Society in the Cape of Good Hope District. He obtained a Doctorate in Christian Spirituality at Unisa in 2006. The title of his doctorate is: *Contemporary Christian Spirituality: Its Significance for Authentic Ministry*. He has a special interest in the contemplative side of ministry. Email: trean@mweb.co.za

Macloud Frank Salanjira is a lecturer in Curriculum and Teaching Studies in Religious Education in the Faculty of Education, Chancellor College, University of Malawi. He completed his doctoral study at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the field of Religious Education in 2009. Contact details: Sookrajhhre@ukzn.ac.za

Johannes A. (Jannie) Smit is a graduate of the University of Durban-Westville (now UKZN), editor-in-chief of *Alternation* and served as research chair of the Humanities for some years. He has a lifelong commitment to interdisciplinary learning and critical research capacity development and currently serves as Academic Coordinator for Religion at UKZN. He teaches

Contributors

Comparative Religion (main focus Christianity), and supervises MA and PhD students in Religion and Social Transformation. Contact details: smitj@ukzn.ac.za

Reshma Sookrajh is an Associate Professor of Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. During the merger she acted as Deputy Dean for the Initial Teacher Education sector in the Faculty of Education. She has collaborated in projects with national and international universities that cover a wide range of areas within the curriculum and language policy domain. These include Curriculum Quality Concerns, Language Policy, Social Giving, and HIV/AIDS research. She has supervised several Masters and Doctoral students in the discipline of Curriculum and two Doctoral students in the area of migration research. Contact details: Sookrajhre@ukzn.ac.za

Johan Strijdom is an Associate Professor in Religious Studies at the University of South Africa, where he is currently responsible for the teaching of the social and in political roles of religion, of gender in religion and of religion in Africa. He was previously employed in Classics at Unisa, where he taught ancient Greek and classical mythology and philosophy. After obtaining a doctorate on Historical Jesus Studies, he continued to publish articles on early Christian myths within their Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts, as well as Platonic uses of myth and the relationship of these to discourses on human rights and justice. Contact details: strijdm@unisa.ac.za



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