

# Speaking Truth to Power: A Challenge to South African Intellectuals<sup>1</sup>

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The subject of Power/Knowledge and the regime of Truth is always a thorny one. It is the aim of my article to explore this subject in the context of South Africa with particular emphasis on intellectuals and institutions of higher learning.

It was Nietzsche (1968) who showed that 'Knowledge functions as an instrument of power'. Nietzsche's 'Will to Power' was a tour de force that sought to draw philosophy away from theorising about substances and to look at power as a relation; relations of forces that attract and repel, entice and dominate, restrain and subordinate. About seventy years later, the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1994) took up this theme and offered a definitive conceptualisation of power:

Power in the substantive sense, 'le' pouvoir, doesn't exist .... The idea that there is either located at- or emanating from- a given point something which is a 'power' seems to me to be based on a misguided analysis, one which at all events fails to account for a considerable number of phenomena. In reality, power means relations, a more or less organised, hierarchical, coordinated cluster of relations.

He also related this understanding of power to Truth. Truth, for him,

isn't outside power, or lacking in power: Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power (Foucault 1980).

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<sup>1</sup> Sections 1-7 of this article is a reworked version of an address by Ptika Ntuli at the UDW Student Policy Conference, May 28 1999 and a lecture at the University of Durban-Westville Lecture Series in March 1999, titled: 'Lethargic African Intellectuals or Rebels for the African Renaissance?' Section 8 onwards, was written by Jannie Smit.

Foucault identifies five traits of this regime of truth—two of which are

produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media); lastly, it is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation (ideological struggles). Truth is always contested.

## II

To be able to formulate practical policies in the context of student affairs in an academic institution and indeed in any site, it is important to raise correct questions within the context of Truth, Power and Knowledge.

Schrift (1994) formulates some of these (with very minor modifications from the author)

- \* How does one analyse academic relations of power?
- \* Who makes decisions in a college or university?
- \* Why are the decisions so often wrong, when so often basically good people are in the positions of decision makers?
- \* How do we change power relations in our institutions?
- \* How do we get more women and Africans in decision making positions, and how do we get more multi-cultural and multi-gendered issues included into the curriculum?
- \* Who are the enemies?
- \* Who do we fight?

When one attempts to answer these and related questions, Schrift warns that these relations must not be seen in exclusively personal ways. The reason is that such a focus on individuals tend to obscure any understanding of mechanisms of power.

## III

According to Foucault, wherever and whenever power exists, knowledge will be nearby. This is so 'because power and knowledge directly implicate one another'. Power-knowledge relations are to be analysed, therefore, 'not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system', but, on the contrary, in terms of the subject who knows, the objects that subject identifies as worthy of study or dealing with and the modalities of knowledge, i.e. the many effects historical power-knowledge formations imply.

In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the

processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determine the forms and possible domains of knowledge.

The shift from persons and power to relations of power get an even clearer analysis from Schrift (citing Bourdieu 1988) when he makes a conceptual distinction between 'empirical individuals' and 'epistemic individuals'. Schrift describes empirical

individuals as real, flesh and blood historical people, and epistemic individuals as human functionaries within an institutional setting that they occupy but do not and cannot control. Empirical individuals are historical agents who act within both the public and private spheres; they fall in love, have children and parents, work, vote feel pain, anger, sympathy, and so on. Epistemic individuals, on the other hand, act in terms of their place in an institutional matrix, making the 'tough decisions' that 'have to be made' whether or not they 'like it'.

A major problem in understanding contemporary power relations is the conflation of these two concepts and the failure to strategically anticipate how an epistemic individual's actions may differ from those expected of the empirical individual with whom we thought we were dealing.

Schrift continues to argue that decision making cannot be seen as a mere question of personalities but of 'institutional connections among various nodes through which pass pedagogical, curricular, financial, libidinal and ideological relations of power'. Power will depend on certain specific local relations and within these relations forces of progress and re-action can be located.

How are these power relations used in academic institutions in which different clubs and societies co-exist? How do university managers on the one hand and student leaders on the other, use these relations, and to whose benefit? Of what value would brilliant policy decisions be if students are divided? The analysis of the power/knowledge connection should assist intellectuals to re-think tactics and strategies.

#### IV

But who are the intellectuals and what are their roles, or rather, what should their roles be in this particular context and at this specific historical juncture? Camus said that: 'An intellectual is someone whose mind watches itself'. Certainly one of the canonical definitions of the modern intellectual is provided by sociologist Edward Shils and cited by Edward Said in his 1993 Reith Lectures:

In every society ... there are some person with an unusual sensitivity to the Sacred, an uncommon reflectiveness about the nature of the universe, and the rules which govern their society. There is in society a minority of persons who more than the ordinary run of their fellow-men, are inquiring, and desirous of being in frequent communion with symbols which are more general than the immediate concrete situations of everyday life, and remote in their reference in both time and space. In this minority, there is a need to externalize the quest in oral and written discourse, in poetic or plastic expression, in historical reminiscence or writing, in ritual performance and acts of worship. This interior need to penetrate beyond the screen of immediate concrete experience marks the existence of the intellectuals in every society.

Shil's view is re-enforced by Archie Mafeje (1994) when he writes:

In every society there is a general recognition of certain individuals who have a better understanding of things which concern their society. These 'intellectuals' in modern societies are associated with more than an average level of formal education .... There is some recognition that intellectual status can be achieved through self education, especially in the arts.

Mahmood Mamdani (1994) added his version:

The intelligentsia is a broad and heterogeneous grouping whose origin lies in the split between manual and mental labour in class divided societies. The work of the intelligentsia combines both conception and organisation of social processes and its explanation.

Mafeje's definition centres on education as the main criterion and Mamdani's on class. Both do not seem to include those from 'traditional' societies—the healers—*izinyanga*, *izanus*, *abaloz*i and others. Are their definitions centred in African thought? It appears as if this issue has not by-passed Shils and Said.

In the context of contemporary South Africa who are these 'intellectuals'? What is their role in society? Where are they located? Are they found in the universities and technikons? Are they found among the writers, poets, or artists or in government as policy makers? Are they the advertising or public relations experts? Are they found in the print and electronic media as journalists? I will argue that they are found in all of the above fields, moulding public opinion, 'manufacturing concern' (Noam Chomsky), 'formulating doubt, towing the party line, manoeuvring for positions; toadying to keep their jobs, making money. Are students included in this category. The answer is 'Yes.'

This could be seen as rather cynical. My aim in this article, however, is not to confirm the intellectual's position in their sinecures, but to raise questions, to disrupt our habits of thought and patterns of behaviour. In a word, I wish to be awkward and provocative. As such, I will confine myself mainly to those intellectuals (staff and students) at the universities, technikons, colleges of education and in the Ministry of Education whose task is to mould and shape their communities and the young to be creative citizens of their country and the world.

## V

This raises the question on the production and reproduction of (African) intellectuals. Mafeje (quoted above) referred to intellectuals as associated 'with more than an average level of formal education'. In what kind of institutions are they produced and reproduced? What is the ethos, the ideologies and thrusts of these institutions? In the colonial period, universities in Africa were extended colleges of European universities created to produce civil servants for the colonial regime. Students were educated to be servants of the colonial regime. These universities were outcome-based. The curriculum was European, the language of instruction and the methodologies that underpinned every facet of intellectual production were European. Post-colonial/ post independent universities were also created to produce government policy makers teachers and lecturers. Even these new institutions of higher learning were, in Althusser's word, 'interpelated' into Western discourses and a Western ethos. The major aims of the colonial project was to paralyse the cultures of Africa in order to effect total domination; put differently, the aim was to create docile servants (a task that not long ago was more closely focused not on education but on the brutal extraction of labour from African slaves. Is this continuing Western hegemony not just another manifestation of a different kind of slavery? Is this alien education not continuing to cripple the sense of order and meaning the colonised subject was subjected to? Is it not so that every person draws on that culture that he or she is located in, for their inspiration, imagination? Why should it be different for African people?

African universities as appendages of Oxbridge and the Sorbonne reflected the dependency syndrome that pervaded our political and economic corridors. The slogan of our universities was 'Academic Freedom'. Yet, the truth of the matter is that this avaunted freedom to pursue truth in research, the transmission of knowledge in publications, lectures and seminars, transfer of skills in the class room and laboratories without censorship or political dependency, remains elusive.

Ali Mazrui (1994) captures this phenomenon graphically when he writes:

the African university was born as a subsidiary of a cultural transnational corporation—the Western academic establishment .... The African

university was conceived primarily as a transmission belt for Western high culture rather than a workshop for the transfer of Western high skills. African universities became nurseries for a Westernized black intellectual aristocracy.

Mazrui continues to argue that the paradigm of the African university which advocated academic freedom found itself entangled in the practice of intellectual dependency.

He further exposes the stark contradictions between theory and practice, dream and fantasy—he reminds us of our earlier neo-colonial leaders who indicated Left and turned Right—when he argues that the ideology of these institutions was pluralism, however, the impact was global Westernization.

The ideology was diversity—the impact was global uniformity .... the missing factor was a change in the conception of the university itself and what its purposes were (Mazrui 1994).

The consequence of this dichotomy was that the world view of the products of these universities, the values, the attitudes, were alien to the environment in which they were sprung and to the populace they were meant to serve. The decision to carry out OUTREACH programmes by universities in South Africa should also be read within this context. (I will return to this to point out its limitations and possible remedies.) I cannot resist quoting Mazrui again. I have pointed out the levels of African mimicry of Europe, the intellectual dependency etc. Mazrui (1994) captures it more successfully 'It was not the traditional African that resembled the ape; it was more the Western one, fascinated by the West's cultural mirror'.

Where then do we locate South African universities in this labyrinth? Where do we locate South African intellectuals? Are our universities 'African Universities' or are we only 'Universities in Africa'. This is more than a semantic concern. It is an ideological problem. In our numerous policy documents on Transformation and in our responses to them, how much is written or spoken about re-curriculation beyond mere rhetorical knee-jerk responses? Whither Africanism? Aping the west has resulted in African people having a very jaundiced view of themselves. So thorough has been the demonisation of Africa and Africans that we ourselves even hesitate to speak of Africanisation or Re-Africanisation, and when we do, we begin with a litany of disclaimers!

The crop of us, 'intellectuals' in South Africa today, are impotent. We cannot breed 'works that wake the people. Can we speak truth to power? Is it more important to follow the status quo in educational paradigms than remain true to self and culture? Have we internalised the 'native' as incapable of reflective, reflexive

thought? Symptomatic of this general 'silence of the lambs' is, when our institutions are faced with looming crises, we turn a deaf ear to the voices of our student leaders risking their education, risking being 'black listed' in defence of colleagues rightly or wrongly'. We hear university managers defy these student leaders; we witness barricades being built to withstand the onslaught on both sides. We witness managers chaperoned by armed guards, security staff with teargas canisters, surveillance cameras in public halls where students meet. In a word, we experience the Orwellian nightmare with complete silence. The voice of the academics is nowhere to be heard!

This brings back echoes of Kenya and Uganda in the 1970s and 1980s. Perhaps we fear to suffer the fate of the Ngugi wa Thiongo's of this world, the Wamba-dia-Wamba's, the Nabudere's and Wole Soyinka's who spoke truth to power and were forced into exile. They could not stand idly by or be mere witnesses to the erosion of hard-won and fought-for freedoms. We have models to emulate in our immediate history. Nelson Mandela, Mangaliso Sobukwe, Steve Biko, I.B. Tabata, Govan Mbeki, A.P. Mda, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Urbania Mothuping, Albertina Sisulu and numerous others. Intellectuals who stood firm for their beliefs.

There are those who paid the price of exile with its gruesome uncertainties, reflections and silent agonies. South Africans have won their independence. We must defend it, even at the risk of being imprisoned for it!

In the unfolding struggles on our campuses: Who hold the monopoly of Truth? What is contested? The students argue that 'The doors of learning and culture must be opened'. It was a promise that the ruling party must keep. The university managers argue that subsidy levels are low. They cannot keep university doors open when there is no money coming in. When students cannot pay their fees, where will the bulk of the money come from? University staff calls attention to low levels of pay and demand wage and salary increases.

University managers call for the de-registration of those students who are not achieving. No rational person can defend a student who is in his/her sixth year of a three year degree course! The students counter—why are they not achieving? Is it because they are dull? Is it not because the university alienates them? Is it not because they do not have money for food or travel or residence fees? Is it universities policy to punish the poor by exclusions? Students continue to demand that bridging courses be increased to help the stragglers. The university management counters—where is the money going to come from? One of my students recently told me, looking over her shoulder, 'We have entered into the arena of class struggle now. The rich will be educated and the poor will be relegated to the doldrums of our history'.

There are no easy answers. But this does not mean that intellectuals must swallow stones, be silent like proverbial lambs. They need to enter the fray on whatever side, to contribute to change.

## VI

What role do intellectuals play in other countries—especially in those countries that our South African intellectuals are interpellated from? To begin to understand the possible role that intellectuals can play in bringing about the consolidation of freedom and further change, we must turn to the Italian Marxist political philosopher and activist Antonio Gramsci, imprisoned by Mussolini from 1926 to 1937. Gramsci saw intellectuals divided into two types: (a) the traditional intellectual priests, teachers and administrators; and (b) organic intellectuals, those directly connected to struggles, to classes with organised interests. The latter's aim is to gain more power, or to consolidate it. Gramsci cited capitalist entrepreneurs who create among themselves, industrial technicians and specialists in political economy. They organise new cultures, new legal systems, new industrial relations practices. He believed that organic intellectuals are actively involved in society, that is, they constantly struggle to change minds, mould progressive systems of thought, and expand markets—unlike traditional intellectuals who seem to more or less remain in place, in a repetitive mode and doing the same kind of work all the year round, year in year out. I will argue that the bulk of our intellectuals belong to the first category—that of the traditional.

For Julien Benda (1980), intellectuals are a numerically small group of personages or figures whose public performances do not allow themselves to be compelled into some slogan, orthodox partyline, of fixed dogma. Benda cautions intellectuals against careful silence, uncritical patriotic bluster. He further argues that real intellectuals should not conform, they are supposed to risk censure, risk being burnt at the stake, imprisoned or ostracised, or be crucified.

Edward Said extends Gramsci's point by arguing, saying that late twentieth-century realities suggests to him to insist that

... the intellectual is an individual with a specific public role in society that cannot be reduced simply to being a faceless professional, a competent member of a class just going about his/her business.

He continues to argue that the role of an intellectual must involve a sense of the dramatic and of the insurgent, making a great deal of one's rare opportunities to speak, catching the audiences' attention, being better at wit and debate than one's opponents. And there is something fundamentally unsettling about intellectuals who have neither offices to protect nor territory to consolidate one's guard: self-irony is therefore more frequent than pomposity, directness more than hemming and hawing .... It is a lonely condition, but it is always a better one than gregarious tolerance for the way things are.

Said concludes by stating that:



The intellectual does this on the basis of universal principles; that all human beings are entitled to expect decent standards of behaviour concerning freedom and justice from worldly powers or nations, and that deliberate or inadvertent violation of these standards need to be testified and fought against courageously.

If what Said says above is true, and indeed it is so, where does it place us as intellectuals? What will be the future of our country and its beautiful constitution? We only have to look up to the rest of our continent and despair. But also remember that many of us have been shaped by the ideas of those very few who dared to speak, dared to raise awkward questions—intellectuals like Ngugi wa Thiong'o and to a lesser extent Mazrui and Soyinka.

I have argued above, however briefly, that we are silent in the face of crucial and critical questions raised within our institutions, faculties, departments and circles. If this is the case, then, what is the degree to which our silence can be heard within the broader community, in our region, our country, continent and in the world? In our discourses, we emulate Western experts but fail to inherit their critical stances. We study Noam Chomsky, Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard, Virilio, Helen Cixous, Simone De Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf but without the insight and the courage to speak truth to power.

Within this maelstrom of silence, how can we intellectuals mentor our juniors and they in turn mentor their postgraduate students? Further still, what of those young idealistic students who believe vigorously and strongly in justice, prosperity and education for all. For the role of the intellectual is, amongst others, the propagation of the principles and philosophy of Ubuntu. I have quoted Edward Said at length for he best exemplifies a revolutionary intellectual who expresses universal truth to power. Academic, activist, philosopher, critic. Said describes himself as an amateur, for, as an amateur, he has the capacity to raise awkward questions.

The fact that the intellectual ought neither to be so uncontroversial and safe a figure as to be but just a friendly technician nor should the intellectual try to be a full-time Cassandra, who was not only righteously unpleasant but also unheard. Every human being as held in by a society, no matter how free and open the society, no matter how bohemian the individual. In any case, the intellectual is supposed to be heard from, and in practice, ought to be stirring up debate and if possible, controversy. But the alternatives are not total quiescence or total rebelliousness (Said 1994).

The Makgoba Affair is a case in point. Professor Malegapuru Makgoba himself—rightly and wrongly—has raised and continues to raise his voice, stirs debate and

controversy. This keeps the concerns of the public in focus. I will argue, in fact insist, that we be critical, keeping a vigilant eye and ear on the whole spectrum of society—i.e. to safeguard and extend our freedoms. To rely on others for transforming South African society into a just and democratic society will not do. A democracy does not come about by itself. It should be 'work-shopped' regularly and by all. If not, our democracy will end up jaundiced, arthritic and sterile.

## VII

The major task of an educator is to break the vicious circle of ignorance, and liberate the mind into a continuing spiral of knowledge whose power shapes the nature of the universe in which we live. It is the educator who has the task to mould a society in which human relations are governed by principles of love, care, concern and justice—in a word, a society in which *Ubuntu* thrives.

In pre-colonial society the role played by modern intellectuals was in the hands of healers, divine queens and kings, priests, healers in initiation schools and secret societies. These personages still exist and still wield large influence. However, there is a rupture between them and present day intellectuals—a rupture between pre-colonial and colonial/ post-colonial African intellectuals.

In the 1940s, an attempt was made to create a black middle class in South Africa. Based on formal educational qualifications, these Amazentiti—'the Exempted ones'—were allowed to drink whiteman's liquor by license. Subsequent updates were made under Magnus Malan and P.W. Botha. Their total strategy document articulated a programme which had as aim to create a black middle class (with the help of TNC's) which was to serve as a buffer against revolutionary forces. Do South African universities continue this legacy? Do they continue rupturing South African society splitting it ever more into divides of urban/ rural, urban formally educated blacks/ and urban 'uneducated intellectuals'?

Professor Herbert Vilakazi (1996) captures this legacy more clearly when, like Mazrui and Mamdani, he writes:

African education, hence forth, became an appendage of Western civilization. Educated Africans were educated as part of the Western civilization. A hiatus, a discontinuity emerged between African intellectuals, on one hand, and principles and patterns of African culture and civilization became lost in the consciousness and mental sets of African intellectuals.

He describes how knowledge and principles and patterns of African culture and civilization refused to die and remained very much alive among ordinary 'uncertificated' African men and women. He enjoins us to move forward, relentlessly forward, and to design a proper system of education for twenty-first century Africa.

He calls for a cultural revolution that will transform the African intellectual into anthropologists, working among men and women in rural and urban areas for a major re-education of themselves, to acquire familiarity with the principles and patterns of African culture and civilization.

I totally concur with him that, unless such a venture is undertaken, as African intellectuals, we cannot even begin to design a proper system of education relevant to a changing and globalising Africa. The memory of this fissure, this rupture between pre-colonial and colonial/ postcolonial knowledge systems requires us to re-member our community.

Examining the background of the current stand-off positions within our tertiary institutions, bearing in mind the questions from students and university/ technician managers—how do we move forward? Considering the silence on these issues by academics, what chance do we have of succeeding? It is here where a group of dedicated intellectuals can initiate innovative programmes in the quest for groundwork for the African Renaissance. The project, this cultural revolution, could be a catalyst for revolutionary change and development. It will help us to question and problematise the limits of eurocentric ideas, liberate them from their context and re-present them to Europe with an African freshness. Whereas knowledge industries are made to serve Western thought—even as they draw on African (and Eastern) thought to enrich their own cultures, this has to be done from a new angle—an angle that must mainly benefit African knowledge industries.

What Vilakazi (1994) refers to can be a significant aspect of the African intellectual's outreach programme. 'Outreach' should simultaneously be 'In-reach'. Certified intellectuals must not assume an imperialistic stance and extract knowledge from uncertified intellectuals in the interests of careerism. There need to be an intellectual interaction which must be reciprocal and mutually beneficial. Certified and uncertified should participate in research together and on an equal footing. And research drawn from African knowledge systems must not only bring new insights to the certified. Community intellectuals must also benefit from the university as institution.

The modern African intellectual is a de-centred being, operating in a post-modern environment. Reconnecting with one's alienated culture, re-centres, offers a base, a centre, from which one can speak without the spectre of anti-podality:

... that feeling of being neither here nor there. It is an experience of identity in relation to the other in which the relation always appears more strongly to consciousness than either the identity it founds or the other it projects (Wark 1997).

Most modern African intellectuals define themselves in relation to an elsewhere ... always define themselves in relation to a powerful other.

We are no-one, whoever we are, always oscillating in antipodality with elsewhere (Wark 1997)

As African intellectuals, we are heirs to particular historical moments and historical contexts with their variety of problems, pathologies, peculiarities and triumphs. It behoves us to know ourselves if we are to be found suitable in reaching for fitting answers to the questions our present situation or historical conjuncture poses.

Elsewhere in Africa (West Africa), new histories of the continent are being written. Archaeological excavations reveal layers of evidence of past civilisations that Europe was silent about. Our own South African history is fast emerging under the pick-axes of archaeologists. Hand-axes made over half a million years ago, 27,500 antelopes discovered in the Apollo caves in Namibia, excavations in Sterkfontein, Thulamela and other areas testify to origins of life from within our own context.

The challenge for African intellectuals is to embark on a

relentless [research into] sources of history and knowledge, exhuming buried documents, fossils, reviving forgotten (or abandoned) histories to arm ourselves for the momentous task of designing a relevant and meaningful education system capable of helping uplifting African masses economically, socially and politically (Said 1994)

To achieve this goal, we shall need, as Makgoba (1996) tells us,

a new leadership. It can only come from the students and the youth who will spearhead the new struggle for transformation.

It is these students, currently engaged in protracted struggles with university managers and government, that must be fashioned into a new crop of leaders for our country. But then, we need to ask them to answer some questions. Where do we intellectuals stand in this struggle: Are we 'midwives or assassins'? What then is the role of young intellectuals, the students in terms of this reality? What do they see as their contribution to Africa's regeneration? Those studying commerce, how are they using their skills to help the poor uneducated street vendors to form co-operatives in order to buy products in bulk, thereby saving money? Those who study street law, what are they doing to help the street vendors who are daily charged with trespassing? What are the areas of their research, are they relevant to South Africa in

transition? What creative projects which can help needy students can they propose, other than running to management or even blaming management? Have they organised fund raising projects to help alleviate the plight of needy students or are they still caught in the trap of the culture of entitlement? What resources do they collectively have that can contribute to the reversal of the slide to complete dependency? What was the role of the youth in our past, within our communities, in areas of struggle and leadership? Now, on a different terrain with new challenges, do they continue the resolve and imaginative leadership of the student leaders of the past?

It is imperative for intellectuals to begin a systematic drive to re-visit some of the models that pre-colonial Africa practised to help guide future processes. This is the project that Sankofa Centre for the African Renaissance seeks to achieve. We are concerned with the past because we are very concerned with the present. (I do not expect you to agree with me, in fact I advise against it, for if you do you will not be able to think beyond my thoughts and discover yours!)

Nietzsche (quoted in Schrift 1994) was right when he wrote:

The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently

And, like Foucault (quoted in Schrift 1994),

I have a dream of an intellectual who destroys self-evidences and universalities, who locates and points out in the inertias and constraints of the present the weak points, the openings, the lines of stress, who constantly displaces himself (sic), not knowing exactly where he'll be or what he'll think tomorrow, because he is too attentive to the present.

## VIII

'Speaking truth to power' can mean many things. In general, however, this phrase can also indicate the three domains present when one is emphasised and the other not. In the rhetorical domain - which is also the domain of self and o/Other or ethics/morality - truth and power are never absent. In the arena of truth or science, ethics and power are never absent. And the same is true of power. In the arena of power, ethics and science are never absent.

Part of modernity's legacy - which also still determines too much scholarship in South Africa - is that these domains have been kept apart. It is the challenge of the next generation of scholars to analyze and transform these relations among science, politics, and ethics.

On the one hand, what needs to be done is to consciously study the processes which have 'interfered with one another in the formation of a scientific domain, a political structure, a moral practice' (Foucault 1984:386). In the current transformation processes, the challenge, similarly, is to not transform blindly for the sake of transformation but to be knowledgeable collectively and interactively about not only the formation of the new sciences, their objects, but also the de-formation of the existing sciences and the what, how and why of processes which impacted on science, politics and ethics but also their interrelation. To change political structure - to democracy for example - also impacts on changes in the ethical and science domains. The new relations of power in South Africa also impact on the games of truth and the dissolution of truth the scientist plays as well as the forms of relation the researcher has, establishes or develops to self and other (Foucault 1984:387).

On the other hand, because the researcher is always too close to that which is studied consciously, the degree of objectivity will be determined by the degree and the nature of the problematisations one works with. If the domain of objectivity and truth is not separated from power and ethics, it follows that the degree of objectivity is not determined by the degree objectification distances itself from power and ethics. Rather, the degree of objectivity is determined by the degree to which the researcher is able or willing to problematise in such a way that power and ethics are objectified as part of the problematisation. How this is done is not in actual practice first and foremost, but in thought. 'Problematization' is essentially a thought process.

What distinguishes thought is that it is something quite different from behavior; it is also something quite different from the domain of attitudes that can determine this behavior. Thought is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it its meaning; rather, it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and question it as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem (Foucault 1984:388).

The question, however, is to identify that which has to be or should be problematised. On the one hand, there is a history of problematisation or we can say a 'history of thought' within the disciplines as they developed, and even before they came into being. Good researchers - especially post-graduate students in Africa - will:

- \* know this history of problematisation within the discipline and between the disciplines;

- \* be conversant with the dialogues and alternative research perspectives which the problematisation and its research-findings lead to;
- \* be adept as to how renewed problematisations arose from older ones, as well as there occurred paradigm-shifts in and between disciplines when some central problematisations in a discipline were debunked as irrelevant (i.e. in terms of power as well as ethics) and radically different problematisations were posed;
- \* be able to understand and analyse the conditions under which a particular discipline problematised particular issues and why - towards which purpose and goal, they occurred;
- \* be knowledgeable of the expectations and future outcomes researchers foresaw or scenarios they created, for their particular problematisations.

In this regard, Foucault (1984:389) said:

... the work of a history of thought would be to rediscover at the root of ... diverse solutions the general form of problematization that has made them possible - even in their very opposition; or what has made possible the transformations of the difficulties and problems of a practice into a general problem for which one proposes diverse practical solutions. It is problematization that responds to these difficulties, but by doing something quite other than expressing them or manifesting them: in connection with them it develops the conditions in which possible responses can be given; it defines the elements that will constitute what the different solutions attempt to respond to. This development of a given into a question, this transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response, this is what constitutes the point of problematization and the specific work of thought.

We believe that there is a huge challenge for the African scholar to engage this area of the 'history of thought' in research and that it was to Africa's detriment that scholars from within Africa has miserably failed in this area.

On the other hand, in the different conditions post-independent and of late, democratic Africa, has to operate, students and scholars are confronted with the challenge to identify and problematise challenges which have not received adequate scholarly focus. Since these issues are not only to be identified and problematised scientifically but also in terms of the relations of power and ethics they form part of, this poses the challenge to think through each problematisation in terms of the networks of power and ethics its research resolution will form part of and impact upon in the present. Obviously, it should also deal with the points identified above.

In the humanities, one of the main problems of the imperial, colonial and apartheid eras was that problematisation from within African life and experiences were not registered - or not many. Many of the problematisations with which even the current disciplines do battle, are ones of which the conditions were those of these three discourse complexes. Alternatively, these problematisations derived from imperial, colonial and apartheid discourses looking for solutions for the benefit of the European home countries. The challenge now more than ever, is to problematise from within (South) African realities. This means that, ultimately, problematisation must be with, in and for community. If this moral decision - which is a historical one - is taken, it also means that it must be embarked upon with a view to do the hard work of implementing findings - or in Foucault's words above - to not only know,

what has made possible the transformations of the difficulties and problems of a practice into a general problem for which one proposes diverse practical solutions (e.a.).

But to know too, how to create 'conditions in which possible [practical] responses can be given' (e.a.).

In its broadest sense, then, 'speaking truth to power' means that the science we practice must inform our interaction in the public domain. If the public domain is constituted by the whole intricate network of power and knowledge relations, then to interact truthfully with it, means that one's science informs how one acts and interacts here. Further, if science does not inform public interaction, if it is found - from this perspective - to be inadequate to inform public realities, to problematise those realities which have still remained outside the scope of the disciplines, or to bring existing (central) problematisations in the public domain into the centre of research, it is in need of transformation so that it does.

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This issue of *Alternation* was brought together by Ptika Ntuli and Jannie Smit. Within the context of the multiple challenges the 'African Renaissance' pose, it was compiled to reflect some issues and problematisations which have not received adequate attention in scholarship.

Debipersad, Rambilaas and Sookrajh illustrate how oral style elements as proposed by Michael Jousse have been used to accentuate the recital of mantras during the performance of the yajna - mimism, bilateralism and formulism. These mantras and the yajna itself have their roots in the Vedic scriptures which have been orally transmitted from generation to generation. The yajna is practised in most Hindu homes within the ambit of the sixteen sanskaras (sacraments) and is performed during festivals and ceremonies.



S.J. Malungana addresses three problems - that often voiced by the elderly within African culture, namely that they observe the uncultured rules of morals, bad manners, lack of accepted etiquette and lack of respect among youths; the fact that indigenous South African languages and their traditions have not received adequate attention in education, research and study; and that publishers do not publish indigenous cultural materials. All three these elements, he argues, hang together, causing the marginalisation of African indigenous culture in South Africa.

G.V. Mona argues that the new national identity which is enshrined in the new constitution of South Africa is a phase of development of a discourse that has occupied the minds of Xhosa poets as far back as the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The article furthermore argues that the poems that were written during the period 1880-1900 embodied a then marginal position. However with the new dispensation the philosophy that is contained in the poems has assumed a central position of dominance.

Characterising Mazisi Kunene as visionary poet, Sandile C. Ndaba argues that his visionary commitment entails the utilisation of resources from the Zulu cultural matrix and Zulu oral tradition. His poetry draws on Zulu cultural references and allusions while at the same time impacting on contemporary issues. This article examines Kunene's visionary commitment as manifested in his book: *Ancestors and the Sacred Mountain*. It situates Kunene's visionary outlook within the arguments raised by Soyinka in his article: *Cross Currents: The New African after Cultural Encounters* and examines to what extent these arguments are relevant to Kunene's work.

Arguing for the importance of the literatures of particular cultures, Zola Sonkosi gives a cursory overview of a selection of folk- and culturally informed literature in Xhosa. He also proposes ways in which these literatures may be used in education and learning processes but also in cross-cultural research.

M.C. Hoza compares a selection of poems by Jolobe and Mema with regard to their critical analyses, linguistic and literary skills in depicting the African woman. It is the poets' artistic skills and their manipulation of the Xhosa language, he argues, that reveals a striking diversity of opinion in their view of the African woman. Whereas Jolobe's images and metaphors communicate feelings of love and affection for the woman, Mema's imagery serves as a tool for satire, over-dramatisation and contempt. And while Jolobe largely transcends cultural stereotypes and embraces foreign cultural influence, Mema remains faithful to the tribal culture in his vehement rejection of Western cultural influence.

Focusing her article on *Nervous Conditions*, Hershini Bhana speaks of the many nervous conditions people excluded from Western culture suffer. It not only documents the structures that produce these conditions but the different ways in which ill-health manifests. Central to the novel, she argues, is a discussion of food

and the eating disorder of anorexia and bulimia that Nyasha develops. In addition, the article focuses on several of the negotiations that the characters in the novel attempt around various overlapping discourses and the dis-eases they can result in.

In the face of the current crime wave and non-political violence in South Africa, Dumisane Ngcobo addresses the issue that this phenomenon is over-coded by race and class, with the majority of 'offenders' and victims coming from groups previously excluded. He addresses the subjective factors that have an effect on crime - from culture and psychological perspectives - and the conditions from within which nihilism is born.

Focusing on presentations of the Khoisan in South Africa English Poetry, Annie Gagiano addresses the multiple ironies in them but also perspectives and political choices of the periods in which they were composed. Her article is generally chronological and analyses the presentations as interpretations of interpretations. She argues that if each of the cited poems documents political (in other words, *power*) realities, each reference and preference expressed, do the same.

In his reply to an earlier article of Mabogo More, W.J. Ndaba addresses the questionable claim to superiority of Western rationality and what the philosophic challenge is for doing philosophy in and for Africa. Appreciating More's own contributions, he nevertheless argues that accounts of Western denials of African philosophy neither advances debate on issues in African philosophy nor that they illumine the nature of African philosophy itself. As More's paper challenges the positions of Shutte (1993) and Rauche (1996), he also reassesses the contributions of these two South African teachers of philosophy.

M.E.S. van den Berg addresses the communarians' accounts of human rights in Africa as conceived by scholars writing on the African experience. She explores their understanding of the notion of equality, and their ideas on human rights in terms of a proclaimed African communitarian ethos and proceeds with a critique of these notions. Despite many African thinkers' insistence that African communitarianism does encapsulate a respect for the individual's rights, dignity and liberties, communitarianism (whether it be extreme or moderate), she asserts, does not enfold a paradigm of individual human rights-claims, but instead embraces an authoritarian and sexist paradigm.

M.A. Masoga problematises the transformation potential of the cleansing effect of symbolic ritual in South African context. The death and suffering which befell South Africa during the apartheid era, he argues, have not abated. Pointing to the instability past injustices still effect in society, he addresses the issue of continuing reconciliation in the context of ritual cleansing.

In the two review articles, Rembrandt Klopper reviews two books on Outcomes-based education and Jannie Smit, Wallerstein's *Unthinking Social Science*. Klopper argues that the problems unpacked in Jonathan Jansen's and Pam

Christie's edited volume are to a large extent constructively engaged in Helen van der Horst and Ria McDonald's *Manual*. In his contribution, Smit provides an overview of Wallerstein's process-thought of ten years on the Social Sciences, and makes a few suggestions for the framework within which the social sciences should have operated in post-independent Africa and the research challenges lying ahead.

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