Essays on theology and the university after apartheid

Rian Venter & Francois Tolmie (Eds.)

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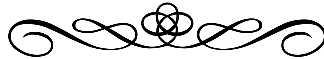
TRANSFORMING THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE



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SUN BONANI SCHOLAR

Transforming Theological Knowledge

Published by Sun Media Bloemfontein (Pty) Ltd.

Imprint: SunBonani Scholar

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First edition 2012
ISBN 978-1-920382-25-4 (Print)
ISBN 978-1-920382-26-1 (e-book)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18820/9781920382261

Set in Open Sans BT 9/10 pt
Cover design, typesetting and production by Sun Media Bloemfontein

Research, academic and reference works are published under this imprint in print and electronic format.

This printed copy can be ordered directly from: media@sunbonani.co.za
The e-book is available at the following link: https://doi.org/10.18820/9781920382261

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

CAN THE THEOLOGICAL LEOPARD CHANGE ITS SPOTS?
ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF UNIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE 9
Jonathan D. Jansen

THE CHALLENGE OF THINKING: THE UNARTICULATED
TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPERATIVE? 21
Crain Soudien

KNOWLEDGE, CURRICULUM AND TRANSFORMATION 31
Lis Lange

THEOLOGY, THE POST-APARTHEID UNIVERSITY AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL
TRANSFORMATION: INTIMATING THE SHAPE OF THE CHALLENGE 45
Rian Venter

THEOLOGY AND THE UNIVERSITY: HISTORICAL AND
CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES 73
Conrad Wethmar

THEOLOGY AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY 83
Bram van de Beek

THEOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN NORTH AMERICA 93
Harold W. Attridge

THEOLOGICAL FORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: CHALLENGES
AND OPPORTUNITIES 105
Allan A. Boesak

"TO LOVE GOD, THE POOR AND LEARNING": TOWARDS AN ETHIC OF
THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE 111
Rian Venter

STUDYING RELIGION IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES:
METHODS AND CHALLENGES 119
Martin Prozesky

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY: THE ROAD TRAVELLED
AND THE ROAD AHEAD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE 127
Kobus Schoeman, Martin Laubscher, Joseph Pali,
Jan-Albert van den Berg

DOING SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY IN THE POST-APARTHEID CONDITION 147
Rian Venter

INTRODUCTION

1. Background

Higher education, like the rest of the South African society, has not escaped the deep transformations since the advent of a constitutional democracy. New demographics, such as student and faculty profiles, are some of the visible changes. More complex challenges on the level of curriculum and knowledge have not received sustained attention, and could be considered an incomplete task. The rector of the University of the Free State, Prof. Jonathan Jansen, challenged the Faculty of Theology to engage transformation at this fundamental level – the epistemological. The first reaction by the Faculty was understandably one of uncertainty as to what this might entail. This volume of essays attests to the Faculty's journey to greater conceptual clarity.

A short historical note on the process of transformation at the Faculty may help to understand the background to these articles. For a period of six months in 2012, the Faculty of Theology explored the notion of epistemological transformation. At an initial meeting, Rian Venter presented a paper which intimates the potential form this transformation might imply for theology at the University of the Free State. This was followed by a number of presentations by scholars invited to address specifically identified themes. An attempt was made to listen to outstanding intellectuals and to voices from a variety of backgrounds. The papers by Crain Soudien, Lis Lange, Allan Boesak, Bram van de Beek, Harold Attridge, Conrad Wethmar and Martin Prozesky were part of this exploration. The initial phase of the process was concluded by a joint meeting of all Faculty members, during which heads of department presented papers suggesting what epistemological transformation might mean for the various theological disciplinary groups. The meeting was attended by Prof. Jansen, who responded extensively to the discussions. His paper in this volume is a systematic reworking of his crucial contribution to the on-going discourse. The articles on Practical and Systematic Theology are representative of this meeting.

It is important to emphasise that the Faculty is acutely aware that transformation is complex and open-ended. These essays convey only an initial moment of this process which is still underway. Not all the questions have been addressed, and the great task of implementing change has only started. However, the purpose of publishing these essays is both modest and ambitious: modest, because the volume does not pretend to offer exhaustive conceptual clarity; ambitious, because sufficient perspectives have been generated which might motivate and guide transformation.

2. Overview

In a seminal contribution "Can the theological leopard change its spots?", *Jonathan Jansen* offers clear and challenging guidelines as to what is at stake with transformation and how this could take place. He points out that knowledge should not be viewed as a topic, but as "the embodiment of values, beliefs, and commitments; it is a reflection of history, traditions and practices; it is a projection of ideologies and politics". What is required is "a knowledge that is broader, more inclusive, more generous and more embracing". Lamenting the manner in which transformation has been approached, he is of the opinion that deep conversations about the nature, purposes and politics of transformation have been neglected. His discussion of unsatisfactory approaches to transformation is particularly helpful. For instance, it is not a mere change of topic, because the very bedrock of knowledge – beliefs, values, and attitudes – is not challenged. Transformation is more than corrective content; it is about the 'baggage', the 'ideological moorings'. Finally, Jansen believes that change cannot happen "with the natives alone", advocating that academics from outside bring new ideas and perspectives.

Crain Soudien, who has vast experience of transformation in higher education, places the notion of 'transcendence' central in his contribution, "The challenge of thinking". At a university, this implies the insistent self-questioning and enlargement, that is, the inclusion of a greater number of intellectual options. He stresses the need to historicise, to question how disciplines have come into being during the colonial period, "how they are established as sites for coming to 'know' the other", and how they "are configured in exclusionary ways". The reproduction of domination should be resisted, and new identity possibilities be imagined in a post-racial manner.

The manner in which transformation of higher education has been approached since 1994 is also critiqued by *Lis Lange* in her article entitled "Knowledge, curriculum and transformation". The debate about the National Qualifications Framework, with its focus on modules, credits and levels did not challenge the internal workings of curriculum and its knowledge underpinnings. Like Soudien, she highlights the importance of the intellectual history of disciplines. For transformation, the following questions should be addressed: Where does the knowledge come from? What relations of power does it represent? What kinds of questions are explored? A particular contribution of Lange is her insistence on the relationship between pedagogy and transformation. At stake is a democratisation of knowledge, which encourages students to produce knowledge themselves and critique contrasting knowledge. Apart from this changed pedagogical relationship, transformation entails a review of the governance of knowledge, as well as an acceptance of the openness of knowledge, that is, welcoming complexity, contradiction and uncertainty.

In a wide-ranging contribution, "Theology, the post-apartheid university and epistemological transformation", *Rian Venter* expresses appreciation for framing the challenge for theological education in terms of epistemological transformation, and identifies no less than fourteen possible questions which should be addressed in order to gauge the full implications of this approach. To put it briefly, the challenge is one of knowledge and power, of plurality and otherness, and of restorative intellectual justice. The article enters into conversation with a broad scope of theologians who find it difficult to address related questions. Venter argues

for a distinct theological response which values transcendence and catholicity. Theologising the challenge would entail exploring primary Christian symbols, such as the trinity, the kenosis of Christ, and the various metaphors for salvation, for their transformative potential.

Conrad Wethmar, a theologian who has published extensively on theological education, reflects in his contribution, “Theology and the university”, on the relationship between theology and the university, and the possibility, desirability and form of such a co-existence. He points out that the notion of the university is not an immutable given factor, and describes the ideals from the medieval to the modern period. Assuming faith and church to be the preconditions for the existence of theology, Wethmar quite uniquely explains the implications of the classical characteristics of the church for theology; for example, the catholicity of the church requires a theology with ecumenical openness. In a final section, he argues for the location of theology in a university context, and insists that it is possible to accommodate both confessionality and ecumenicity in the practice of theology.

Former Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Free University in Amsterdam, *Bram van de Beek* acknowledges that theology tends to become sectarian and exclusionist, and stresses that all religions should be accommodated at a public university. Central in his article, “Theology at a public university”, is the notion of ‘filled neutrality’, which refers to the critical assessment of religions in terms of their own internal standards. This, however, does not exclude openness for mutual questioning of other religions. Because theology’s subject matter deals with the Ultimate, Van de Beek resists the suggestion that theology be located in the humanities at a university. Theology’s independence is for him a marker of the limits of the human intellectual enterprise.

To learn from other contexts how theology, church and higher education could be configured, the Faculty invited *Harold Attridge*, Dean of the prestigious Yale University Divinity School, to share experiences and insights. In his article, “Theological and religious studies in North America”, he identifies two extreme positions on a spectrum – from independent schools of theology to denominationally based seminaries. A number of insights emerge from Attridge’s description of practices in the United States of America. There is not a single normative configuration in existence. Often a distinction between theological faculties and religious departments is found, and the relationship could be one of competition and/or co-operation. An array of partnership arrangements with churches is of vital importance. Some of the most prestigious university-based divinity schools in the United States of America are ecumenical and non-denominational.

In his contribution, “Theological formation in South Africa”, well-known activist and theologian, *Allan Boesak*, situates theological education in the concrete social dynamics of South Africa. Arrangements still in place at faculties of theology are the result of agreements of the past, and these are still favouring the Reformed tradition. The transformation project is also embraced with reluctance. He suggests that transformation should probe the meaning of diversity, and that hermeneutics should be central to the entire endeavour. In a provocative section, he raises the question “What matters for theology”? He highlights Africa as respected partner in theological discourse, diversity as invitation for embrace, and the need for religious solidarity.

In his article on "An ethic of theological knowledge", *Rian Venter* theorises the position of theology at a public university in terms of knowledge, virtue-ethics, phronesis and the other. He explicitly interprets the challenge in terms of the relationship between knowledge and otherness, which calls for an examination of the ethical dimension of knowledge construction. The neglected reality of character in decision-making is retrieved, and the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis* – that is, thinking well for the sake of good communal life – is recommended as possible practice for contemporary theology. *Phronesis* is reinterpreted in terms of otherness; this allows virtuous thinking to be directed towards communal life and social well-being. In a concluding theological section, Venter argues for divine ultimacy as the very condition for knowledge, virtue, *phronesis* and embracement of otherness.

Any reflection on theology at a public university renders the attention to religion as a human phenomenon inevitable. Well-known scholar of religion, *Martin Prozesky*, argues in his article entitled "Studying religion in South African universities" for a broad understanding of religion which covers as subject matter not only adherence to, but also rejection of religion. Such an approach to religion warrants a multi- and interdisciplinary study. For the future study of religion, Prozesky in identifying some gaps in the knowledge of religion points to ethics as an area of scholarly neglect. He advocates the need for a critical ethics which explores "the verified harm flowing from or even present" in religion. If these concerns were addressed, it could result in what he labels "an epistemology of creativity".

The contribution by the group of Practical Theologians – *Kobus Schoeman, Martin Laubscher, Joseph Pali* and *Jan-Albert van den Berg* – testifies to the changes which some theological disciplines have already experienced. A clear shift has taken place from a narrow diaconiological to a more hermeneutically oriented approach. The focus moved from church to public, from scripture to experience, and from deduction to induction. The article argues for a turn to Africa, suggesting an internalisation of African experience and identification with African struggles of the colonial and apartheid past. As part of concrete transformation envisioned by the Department, the authors identify "greater appreciation for and celebration of diversity and complexity".

To address detractors of transformation who often regard 'transformation' as too vague a notion to be employed fruitfully, *Rian Venter* in his final article entitled "Doing systematic theology in the post-apartheid condition" refers to the 'grammar' of epistemological transformation, that is, a task with a specific referent: racial discrimination which was legitimised by the intellectual resources in the past. In other words, transformation is the pursuit of intellectual justice. Historically, Christian theology is confronted by a three-fold exclusion: other religions, other Christian denominations, and other voices, that is of women, race and class. Venter proposes a critical Systematic Theology which is informed by a transformed habit of mind: one which prioritises the God-question, and notions such as relationality, alterity, and hospitality. Such an orientation may implicate teaching and learning, research and even other academic practices such as international networking.

3. Perspectives

It is not possible to distil the surplus of meaning conveyed by the various articles in a few propositions. The very nature of the transformation process is complex, and it should be acknowledged as such. Recurring and prominent motifs could, however, be identified which may also function as guidelines for faculties of theology pursuing transformation. The following perspectives can be mentioned:

- The transformation process at institutions of higher learning in South Africa has not been completed and the manner in which it has been approached is not beyond legitimate critique. Deeper probing into the dynamics of the curriculum is still an incomplete task.
- The very nature of *knowledge* should be interrogated. An antenna for its ideological character, its relationship to power should be in place, and an appreciation for its openness and ethical quality. No transformation could take place without an explicit account of the politics of knowledge.
- Artificial, shallow and inadequate attempts at transformation should be unmasked. A *specific grammar* functions in the discourse of epistemological transformation. At stake are inclusion, justice and otherness, as well as ideological moorings at the deepest levels of knowledge production. This is no abstract negotiation, but is firmly grounded in a specific history of social pathology – apartheid.
- The *genealogies of disciplines* and their complicity to colonialism and apartheid deserve intensive scrutiny, especially how they functioned to perform and legitimise exclusion.
- *Pedagogical strategies* play a critical role in the democratisation of knowledge and the formation of students, and warrant creative attention.
- The relationship between *theology and university* remains contested. Not only should theology carefully take note of the shifting ideal of the university, but also construe fresh arguments for its location at such an institution and its precise home within its organisational structure.
- The life of the *church* remains a primary condition for the exercise of theology. Changing times necessitate not only new interpretations of attributes such as catholicity, but also correspondingly a new understanding of the nature of theology. Mono-ecclesial governance of theology at a university is a remnant of the past; only those institutions that are relatively free from ecclesial control and an ecumenical openness will thrive.
- Theology should develop a sensitive antenna for what *really matters*. Prioritising a theological agenda and attending to social exigencies go hand in hand.
- Each religious tradition should examine its own traditional resources to create *theologies of transformation* which would project tradition-specific visions of human flourishing.

- The *process of transformation* is difficult and complex and requires strong leadership and new people with creative ideas.

4. Future

Reading the collection of articles one, inevitably, realises that so many potential questions and areas of reflections have not been addressed, and may justify further thinking and even a second volume of essays:

- Interpretation is central to the task of theology. Reading and interpreting the past, the context, academic texts, and sacred scripture require developed hermeneutical skills. Further reflection on *Hermeneutics* is imperative. However, even this discipline is not immune from change. A study of Hermeneutics should take place in the context of the wider study of developments in Philosophy and Cultural Theory. Without a critical hermeneutical intuition, theologians cannot address transformation.
- This volume includes articles by only two disciplines – Practical and Systematic Theology. All the *theological disciplines*, especially Old and New Testament, Church History, Ethics, Missiology, Preaching and Religious Education should investigate their intellectual histories, map the changes which have been taking place, and suggest new avenues for future responsible academic practice.
- To theologise with an explicit sense of belonging and responsibility to *Africa* remains a contested intellectual task. The challenge is to respect Africa in her multi-layered identity, to be aware of the dangers of representation and construction, and to avoid essentialising and binary thinking. For over sixty years, African theologians have insisted on a unique approach to doing theology; this project, and its manifold trajectories, should be studied carefully and critically.
- *Pedagogy* has often been regarded as incidental, and not constitutive to the formation of students. This should change. The manner in which various pedagogies could function transformatively deserves careful study.
- An interrogation of the *research agendas* of lecturers and postgraduate students is long overdue. The question of significance, of meaning, and of “what matters” should be addressed with courage and openness.
- A study of the *intellectual traditions* of the various Christian denominations and religions has not yet been undertaken. Reference to and insistence on inclusion may remain meaningless if these are not substantiated by factual knowledge about attitudes towards intellectual reflection and articulation. Accepting the challenge to map the various intellectual traditions could address a huge hiatus in our present state of knowledge, but also contribute to social transformation.

- The final challenge to theology is a constructive one: to develop creative *theologies of transformation*, theologies that construe symbolic worlds that account for justice, diversity, otherness, and for attitudes to the arts and to scientific development. There is an urgent need for new and motivating visions of social well-being

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South Africa

CAN THE THEOLOGICAL LEOPARD CHANGE ITS SPOTS? ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF UNIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE

Jonathan D. Jansen[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

It is easy to change the racial demography of the student body in the former White South African universities. It is a little more difficult to change the staffing demographics, especially at middle and senior levels of academic appointments. And it is with great difficulty that any university changes the core knowledge that constitutes the formal curriculum of that institution.

One of the most impressive changes in South African higher education has been the rapidity with which Black students moved into former White universities in the 1990s. In those universities where the Afrikaans language is a barrier to African student enrolments, in particular, the demographic shift has been slower (as in Stellenbosch) or *transplaced* (as in Potchefstroom) to a separate Black campus without disturbing racial dominance in the original White campus. However, in universities such as Pretoria, the Free State and the Witwatersrand, the combination of urban demographics and parallel-medium or English-only instruction facilitated rapid shifts towards larger and even majority Black enrolments. For reasons of both perception of lower quality education and prejudice, the historically Black universities have remained Black in student registrations. It is in the former White universities where the changes have often been dramatic, especially in those institutions where mergers took place, such as Johannesburg.

Staffing changes at former White universities take on two distinct trends. Workers at the lower end of the job rankings are mainly Black. Secretaries and administrative staff are mainly White. Academics become less colourful as one moves from junior lecturer to full professor. The reasons are simple: staff is appointed for life and in South Africa, there is no system of tenure tied to rigorous evaluations of academics and academic work after initial appointment. Unless you kill a student, or something of that order, you have a job for life even if the routines of administration might suggest some form of job evaluation after three

1 Prof. Jonathan D. Jansen, Vice-Chancellor, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa.

or five years. For many White colleagues, the job at the former White university might be their only occupational option, given the end of White job reservation in the broad public sector and the clear signals sent in this sector that favour Black employment. Consequently, staff does not move unless the individuals, of all complexions, are academic stars.

The real difficulty for transformation is the review and overhaul of what counts as knowledge in universities, especially in the older, former White universities. It is my view that one reason why the transformation of knowledge—or what my colleagues in the Faculty of Theology have usefully called *epistemological transformation*—is so difficult is that it strikes at the core of what constitutes the university in social, cultural, and intellectual terms. This is, therefore, the real transformation and not the mere changing of the racial face of a higher education institution, for reasons I will shortly explain.

2. WHY IS DEEP CHANGE IN KNOWLEDGE AND CURRICULUM NECESSARY AFTER APARTHEID?

The change from an apartheid government to a democratic government represented a radical shift in politics, economics and society. From a society obsessed with race and White domination, to a constitutional democracy premised on the dignity and rights of all citizens, one would at the very least have expected significant changes in the institutional curriculum from schools to universities. Those changes have been most profound in public centres of education such as museums and exhibitions; less so in formal education, an observation itself worth pursuing at another point.

The amazing thing is that this shift in state and governance was not accompanied at all by a change in university curricula. In fact, many professors and universities teach exactly the same old knowledge that they did under apartheid. There was no overhaul of curriculum that accompanied the overhaul of government, and that is a serious problem. We need to prepare a new generation of South African students with a knowledge that is broader, more inclusive, more generous and more embracing than what we inherited from the past.

In the case of the Afrikaans universities, it should be remembered that the apartheid *institutional* curriculum was Christian-theocentric, positivist, confirmatory (rather than critical), pseudo-scientific (for example, theories of race, and the pretence of knowledge neutrality), instrumentalist, essentialised in respect of matters of race and ethnicity, insular and insulated from critical streams of intellectual work in the rest of the world, and language-restricted in its core emotions and ideas.[2]

The long years of isolation through the formal and informal academic boycott did not help, steering academics towards what seemed to be ideologically and umbilically connected universities in Germany, The Netherlands and Belgium — affinities that remain strong to this day despite the leftward turn after the war in countries such as The Netherlands. The standard texts that buttressed this epistemological orientation were initially, to a large

2 For a fuller exposition of this analysis, see Jansen (1991 and 2009).

extent, in Afrikaans and, therefore, reflected the conservative world view described, and even in English bypassed the most critical intellectual texts of the time.

This is not, let me clear, a commentary on individuals within those universities who as minorities often thought and acted differently with respect to curriculum matters — sometimes at their peril.[3] What I am describing, more broadly, is the institutional curriculum, that broad and pervasive sense of what counts as the acceptable knowledge codes of a particular university.

The English universities built an institutional curriculum around affinities to their own umbilical origins in the United Kingdom. In training and academic exchange, their primary orientation was towards English-speaking Europe where Oxbridge institutions stood as the standard bearer of what these universities aspired to become. It is for this reason that the English South African universities are so intent on expressing their Africanness (as opposed to European Englishness, 'a world class African university' in one instance) as if this was necessary, given the realities of geographic location. In language and in orientation, the epistemological rootedness of these colonially inspired universities has managed to escape the brunt of knowledge criticism (the Afrikaans universities are easy targets as White nationalist conspirators from the apartheid era) in that they presented their curriculum practice as normative — until, of course, someone (such as Mahmood Mamdani) from completely outside the institutional curriculum enters the English knowledge oddity to spark what became known as the great curriculum debate. He had to leave, and whatever the administrative and personal dilemmas between the University of Cape Town and the Makerere/Columbia university professor, what Mamdani was doing was to threaten a knowledge settlement (*sic*) that would not budge in the face of a critical, outsider encounter.[4]

The historically Black universities are more recent creations of apartheid, with the usually cited exception of the University of Fort Hare; an 'institutionalised curriculum' that is less well-defined in these varied institutions. The distinctly leftist orientation of the University of the Western Cape in the south, for example, is something quite different from a still emergent institutional curriculum of, say, the University of Venda in the north. All the Black universities nevertheless carry the epistemological scar tissue of apartheid knowledge, something that is powerfully expressed in certain fields such as education where White, conservative Afrikaans lecturers and texts often dictated the kinds of knowledge available for examination; an entire generation of Black teachers were, in this way, qualified through the University of South Africa, based on the standard texts of fundamental pedagogics. It is possible, though, that historically liberal, conservative and some radical ideas intermingled in these institutions depending on what particular department or professor or programme was in question.

A fuller account of the institutionalised curriculum in the historically Black universities has yet to be written. My focus in this chapter, though, is on the White institutions and, in particular, the former White Afrikaans-medium universities and their knowledge complexes.

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3 See Mouton (2007).

4 See Mamdani (1998) and the articles in Muller (1998).

Given the embeddedness of the apartheid institutional curriculum,[5] albeit in various expressions through these three kinds of universities, why did we not take the opportunity of social transition to embark on fundamental changes to the knowledge foundations on which these institutions rested?

3. HOW WE MISSED THE CURRICULUM WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

We tend to think of knowledge as a topic or thing that can be included or replaced in the curriculum or taught to students or tested in an examination. However, knowledge is much, much more than that. It is the embodiment of values, beliefs, and commitments; it is a reflection of history, traditions and practices; it is a projection of ideologies and politics. To think of curriculum change, therefore, as simply a replacement of one kind of content with another is a serious mistake.

The first moment missed was, of course, the political transition from apartheid to democracy; here was an ideal opportunity to bring autonomous universities into an open conversation about how the institutional curriculum could become the focus of a deep transformation of knowledge. Unfortunately, South Africa passed through this transition with a political framework that reduced knowledge to structures, the kinds of design arrangements that fit into a prescribed qualifications framework with a rather rigid architecture and obtuse language in which specified outcomes articulated at a particular level of sophistication with the requisite credit hours constituted the sum total of 'curriculum' work. What happened next shut down opportunities for genuine, deep and sustained conversations about what was worth knowing in the first place.

Those universities that most needed to engage with the nature, purposes and politics of knowledge in the wake of apartheid led this qualifications industry with a level of technical proficiency and industriousness that allowed them to avoid the kind of epistemological transformations so urgently required in institution and society.

One of the Ministers of Education, Kader Asmal, understood, I think, that the universities had to engage knowledge at a deeper level of sophistication, but he had neither the theoretical insights nor the political generosity to open that conversation beyond party hacks and favoured academics to know how to take these curriculum debates into the messy realities of twenty-three public institutions.

There was a second moment since democracy that once again reflected the shallowness of curriculum thinking in South Africa. It was a crisis instigated by a racist incident at one university that led to a commission established to investigate incidents of prejudice and racism at all public universities. Without any insight from curriculum theory, the recommendation, driven by a determined politics of retribution, was to instruct institutions to teach against racism and other evils. In other words, include in the curriculum the kinds of topics that instilled in the youth the kinds of anti-bias and anti-racist sentiments that could prevent similar catastrophic incidents from recurring. Of course, nothing changed, for

5 Liebowitz et al. (2012:6-8); see the excellent collection and especially the introduction.

genuine curriculum change as an institutional matter requires much more than knee-jerk responses to crises; it demands a much deeper interrogation of, for example, the kinds of values, attitudes and beliefs that sustain offensive behaviour across universities. Of course, the notion of modular intervention is one part of the intervention puzzle; but it is hardly enough when, again, we view curriculum as an institutional concern.

Once again an opportunity, sparked by a crisis, was missed to inspire institution-wide curriculum conversations. As a consequence, many of our universities believe that, on the one hand, compliance with state regulatory frameworks, and on the other, evolutionary changes in 'topics' in themselves satisfied the signals for knowledge transformation. It should be no surprise, therefore, that the content, values and beliefs in respect of disciplinary knowledge have hardly changed since the 1990s. Students from the 1970s with a sense of the discipline would recognise the same strictures and ideologies that constrain and carry knowledge in the present-day curriculum.

4. WHAT EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION IS NOT

As indicated earlier, the transformation of knowledge is not a change of topics. The curriculum can be updated to reflect new ideas or trends in the field, but the same kinds of beliefs, values and attitudes could form the foundation or bedrock upon which teaching, learning, assessment and examination rest.

I like the geological metaphor in this instance. As I wrote elsewhere, there are at the older (1900) and younger universities (1950s) sedimentary layers of knowledge that have remained undisturbed by the waters of political erosion that have swept over universities since the mid-1990s. At the older universities, there were generations of professors from chemistry to sociology to law who laid down particular perspectives and passions in the disciplines that were handed down from one class of students to the next, from one decade to the next. Theoretical imaginations and methodological preferences were sedimented in departmental and faculty cultures.

Books were written, journal articles published, doctoral students supervised and graduated, and professorial reputations established based on these particular perspectives. Year after year another layer of sediment confirmed, extended, and confirmed again preferred knowledges with their unshakeable beliefs, values, traditions and commitments. What from the outside might seem odd and antiquated, on the inside is taken-for-granted, rational and common sense. That knowledge, however strange from the outside looking in, is part of a value system deeply held and long established.

This is what is meant by curriculum as an institutional matter, and what explains the complexities of change. Just as sediments of rocks formed over geological ages cannot be easily moved, even if what lies deep below carries great intellectual riches for the archaeologist or historian, in the same way the institutional curriculum contains many layers of reinforcing beliefs and values that do not change simply by official instruction.

Epistemological transformation is not necessarily, therefore, a change of staff, that is, in who teaches. There are other good reasons, such as equity and fairness, in former White

universities to bring in more Black and women professors into the academy. However, I have seen enough damage done by this necessary correction on political grounds when the Black or women staff are as conservative and closed-minded as the people they replace or join. This is especially the case when the new staff themselves earned doctorates under the supervision of conservative professors locked inside the same traditional universities with a limited understanding of the powerful and liberating currents of knowledge from other regions of the world or inside contrarian epistemic communities. There is little difference between a single-paradigm, outdated ideology of a White academic and a Black academic. Neither can generate the kinds of constructive upheavals in knowledge so necessary for transformation.

Epistemological transformation is not compliance with pre-specified outcomes. This is and was the danger with outcomes-based education. It held curriculum content — its claims, assumptions and silences — constant by only asking whether the outcomes had been demonstrated to be achieved in a technology of integrated assessment. However, different institutions can take their students through vastly different educational experiences (the knowledge transactions inside, around and outside the classroom) and yet achieve the same formal, measurable, accreditable outcomes.

Epistemological transformation is not 'additive content' to an otherwise unchanged curriculum. In several of the former White universities 'Africa' is discovered and added in often the crudest ways while keeping the standard curriculum more or less unchanged. An 'African perspective' is added on everything from political science to anthropology to education, raising the question as to exactly what perspectives were being taught previously. Africa, in especially the former Afrikaans universities, is ethnic Africa or Black Africa or non-White Africa, to put it bluntly. What happens in this additive model is not simply added content but racially minded content which works on the same old apartheid assumption that there are biological essences that define behaviour, beliefs and values.

What the additive model does further is to separate White Africans (retained as essentially Western or European) from Black Africans (defined as essentially African) rather than recognising the African character of all citizens. To make matters worse, '*Ubuntu*' is then added as a perspective that is quintessentially African in its ethnic sense. There is no understanding of the tribal origins and politics of *Ubuntu*, only its commercial and populist sense as being what is in essence the 'real' African and 'real' African values.[6]

Take another example: the uncritical use of 'Africa South of the Sahara'. This is never questioned, the colonial or constructed notions of what constitutes Africa. And in the quiet assumptions of Africa being Black Africa, again with the phenotypical preferences of racial reasoning, an inclusion of Africa that on the face of it sounds progressive is often, in fact, limiting. There are many other examples from various disciplines that demonstrate the minefield of knowledge problems that come with the additive model of change.

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6 For a critical and philosophical account of knowledge problems in either African- or Afrikaner-centred notions of knowledge, see Horsthemke (2010:28-51).

This is precisely, then, what is meant in the argument that knowledge transformation is much more than corrective content; it is the baggage that comes with our understanding of knowledge, its ideological moorings and value propositions.

Epistemological transformation is not the replacement of one set of knowledges (conservative) with another (liberal or radical). It is, in a university context, at the very least a treatment in curricular terms of the many different understandings of knowledge (in the broadest sense) in the disciplines or multi-disciplines being taught or researched.

Let me say by way of interruption that one of the great tragedies about epistemological and ideological histories in South Africa over the past century was that there was never a genuine conservative movement in South Africa in which classic ideas of conservatives were added to the rich mix of radical and liberal traditions. In this country, conservative always came to mean racist, an association with right-wing, offensive thinking restricted to White politics. There was never a systematic interrogation, for example, of Black conservativism, especially socially, which, of course, explains the offensive attitudes recently in high places and among ordinary Black citizens towards gays, capital punishment and expressive art.

It means, in my view, a critical interrogation of received knowledge, especially the apartheid knowledge system that, to this day, has its fingerprints in what and how we teach in South African universities, for example Fundamental Pedagogics in Education or Volkekunde in Anthropology or Dutch Reformed Calvinism in Theology.

As indicated earlier, Fundamental Pedagogics, the theoretical foundations of teacher education under apartheid offers a fascinating study in how the translation of liberal ideas, by the Dutch scholar Langeveldt, was translated to fit the ideological and racist propositions of an emergent education theory under the White nationalist government.[7] This has to be part of a new curriculum that carries the ambition of epistemological transformation as the exposition so far has tried to make clear.

Epistemological transformation is more than paradigmatic inclusion. A conservative faculty of theology could, for example, claim that it now includes in the survey of great traditions African American civil rights theology or Latin American liberation theology. Fine. But this can be engaged in the sense of coverage — we covered (in the double entendre used by Edward Said in *Covering Islam*) the topic. A genuine knowledge engagement seeks to understand, to engage, to grasp context, to draw out lessons, to compare, and to gain insight. It is emotional involvement with the comparative texts, not simply 'this is what people elsewhere think' and then moving back to emotionally safe territory.

This is what can be called curriculum mimicry — the outside signs of change are there, but the deeper more meaningful change, emotionally and intellectually, simply does not happen. In defensive institutions, mimicry is easy and students, teachers and external academics can easily be misled into thinking that what they are seeing is epistemological transformation when it is simply the superficial pretence of change.

[7] See Suransky (1998).

5. SO HOW, THEN, DOES EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION HAPPEN?

The first thing to say is this: with great difficulty. You cannot instruct changes in knowledge for reasons outlined earlier — knowledge is emotional, political, historical and personal. When you shift the knowledge foundations of an established university, you challenge the values and beliefs on which that knowledge is founded. When you do that, the intervention will rattle the emotions of those with a vested interest in the knowledge status quo; such fallout has to be carefully managed.

But, of course, epistemological transformation can and must happen.

To begin with, the bad news. Knowledge cannot change fundamentally with the natives alone. This is one of the strongest reasons for greater diversity in the professoriate. New academics from outside the established universities potentially bring in new ideas, new theories, new methodologies and new perspectives on the disciplines. When you recirculate academics from the same closed group of universities (the old Afrikaans universities or the old English universities), you cannot get the kinds of changes that transform knowledge; the kinds of changes that disturb the sedimentation of existing knowledge.

If, for example, the only academics appointed in a law school believe in a positivist understanding of law favouring literalist and establishment understandings of the discipline, then there can be no renewal of knowledge. But, if in the diversity of academics appointed there are strong proponents of critical legal theory that question establishment law, then new questions and new approaches to the study of law become possible.

It is for this reason that we need to break young academics into universities outside of their ideological and epistemological comfort zones; it is important that staff pursuing doctorates and postdoctoral experiences should not do it in the same universities or the same class of universities in which they received their initial qualifications. Received knowledge must be challenged, extended, engaged and enriched by other perspectives on knowledge. And the best way to do that, in sum, is through the appointment of academics from outside of the institution, or similar institutions, and through the immersion of upcoming academics in new worlds of knowledge.

In addition, you cannot change an institutional curriculum one module at a time, important as that might be over time. You need a core curriculum that brings all students into a new understanding of knowledge, society and change. A core curriculum for undergraduates that is innovative, cross-disciplinary and cuts across established beliefs and traditions begins to erode the certainty of institutional knowledge and opens up universities to fresh and renewed perspectives on society.

However, this knowledge renewal must also happen within faculties, and often a single, innovative curriculum within a faculty can be the catalyst for change in other courses and modules that still rest on traditional, often conservative traditions of knowledge.

A very good example is the proposed Masters in Reconciliation Studies in the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State. Professors from within theology will combine with professors from other faculties, other disciplines, and other perspectives to offer an

interdisciplinary curriculum on knowledge, change and conciliation that broadens and enriches our understandings of faith.

Another example, though extra-institutional (a short-term intervention not regularised within the normal curriculum) in some ways, is the innovative module called *Community, Self and Identity* in which fourth-year students from the Universities of the Western Cape and Stellenbosch learn "to interrogate their own identities and histories, and make links between these and their future work as professionals" in the service professions.[8]

The best universities in the world have an institution-led process of curriculum review, such as the review of the undergraduate curriculum or the doctoral programme in which academics ask critical questions of the kind posed by Herbert Spencer more than a century ago: 'What knowledge is of the most worth?'. If done with critical outsiders as part of the review, such bold attempts at self-criticism of inherited knowledge go a long way to establish the kinds of epistemological and indeed institutional transformations envisaged.

That said, changing the knowledge architecture of an established university will take strong leadership at the centre that can motivate and inspire change among ordinary academics. Often older professors, who have an emotional investment in the status quo and who for many, many years found themselves steeped in a particular knowledge set, find it very difficult to change; for such colleagues, to change fundamentally their assumptions about knowledge and society can be disorienting and destabilising, especially in the case of social science knowledge as opposed to, say, physical science knowledge. Hard as it is to say this, given limited time and energies, a leader might have little choice but to shift attention to those willing to change, or at least consider change, and to build a critical mass of change agents that combines natives on the inside and newcomers from outside the knowledge system of a faculty or a university.

6. CONCLUSION

I cannot think of a more difficult encounter with knowledge than through faculties of theology in South Africa. Still tied to the establishment church of apartheid through the training of dominees, for example, knowledge in such a context is even more tied to emotions, spirituality, traditions and belief than, say, knowledge in chemistry or physiotherapy. When liberation theology was attacked for decades as the theology of godless communists, it is very difficult to open up an honest and accommodating dialogue with new intrusions into the curriculum.

The entrenchment of a male-centred theology with scriptural justifications cannot readily give way, in more than a manner of intellectual recognition, to a feminist theology that challenges, at its androcentric roots, the 'natural order of things' when it comes to male leadership in church and society.

8 Liebowitz et al. (2012).

The kind of epistemological transformations envisaged here is, in brief, not simply a curriculum debate during the week of lectures. It is a matter of Sunday worship with, for some believers, eternal ramifications.

Hence my question: Can the theological leopard change its spots?

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THE CHALLENGE OF THINKING: THE UNARTICULATED TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPERATIVE?

Crain Soudien[1]

Since 1994, South African higher education has repeatedly subjected itself to examination about its character, its demographic composition and about what it should be focusing upon. The higher education sector, emerging from over a hundred years of discrimination against people of colour, against the poor, and against important segments of society such as rural people, women, linguistic groups, and so on, by way of conferences, symposia and public debates, has been considering how it will manage the questions of inclusion and exclusion. In contemplating their commitment to change, the majority of those in the sector take their cue from the commitments made to the democratisation of higher education by the post-1994 government. The most important articulation of this commitment was made in *Education White Paper 3* published in 1997. It committed the new system to the following:

- Promot[ing] equity of access and fair chances of success to all, … while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequities.
- Meet[ing], through well-planned and co-ordinated teaching, learning and research programmes, national development needs … [for] a growing economy operating in a global environment.
- Support[ing] a democratic ethos and culture of human rights ….
- Contribut[ing] to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, and in particular address[ing] the diverse problems and demands of the local, national, southern African contexts and uphold[ing] rigorous standards of academic quality. (*White Paper 3* 1997:14.)

It is important to understand how the higher education sector has engaged with this commitment. I argue in this article that the majority of universities and the state itself have focused on the first element of this commitment, namely access. The problems signified by the challenges of access facing the country are indeed significant. A detailed analysis of enrolment trends, including participation, success and graduation rates, suggests that, while Black students now constitute the majority of students in absolute terms in the sector,

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significant inequities continue to characterise their participation. Two features of this participation reveal the nature of the challenge:

- In 2006, the participation rate, in other words, the proportion of the relevant age cohort enrolled in higher education, was 12% for Africans, 13% for Coloureds, 42% for Indians, and 59% for Whites. Therefore, White and Indian students continue to benefit disproportionately relative to their African and Coloured counterparts.
- In terms of success rates, African students continue to under-perform in comparison to White students. In 2006, the success rate of African students in the system was 65%, while that of White students, against a target of 80% set by the Department of Education, was 77%. The gap between African and White students' success rate is further confirmed by a cohort analysis of first-time entering undergraduates in 2000, which indicates that the average graduation rate for White students is double that of African students. By 2004, some 65% of African students in this cohort had dropped out and only 24% graduated, while 41% of White students dropped out and 48% graduated.

What these two issues suggest is that not only are Black students finding it difficult to access higher education, but when they do they also have immense difficulty in exiting it successfully. These problems have received a great deal of attention (see, *inter alia*, Scott 2009). What lies behind them is clearly complex and has much to do with the struggling schooling system. Compounding these challenges, it may be suggested, is the continued domination of the sector by academics who have insufficient understanding of the nature of the students being admitted into their classrooms. That these academics remain, to a large extent, White may be an issue (the headcount of Black in other words, African, Indian and Coloured staff had increased only marginally from 36% in 2003 to 39% in 2007), but this is not borne out by the reality that the number of Black staff members in historically disadvantaged universities, which generate the high failure numbers, is not insignificant.

Given this focus on access, it is clear that the pre-eminent approach to transformation in the system is that of representivity. Its essential concern is for the attainment of racial equity. Notwithstanding all the undoubted symbolic and political value of racial representivity, I argue that this approach lends itself, in the first instance, to a managerialist understanding of what the university is all about and, in the second instance, that this approach compounds the difficulty of the university to engage with the challenge of transforming in deeper ways. What are these deeper ways?

The major challenge for the South African higher education system, I argue, lies in the particular way in which its essential purpose has been ontologised. An ontologisation of purpose has taken place which has led to a narrow conception of the ideal educated subject. There is widespread agreement, virtually everywhere, that the purpose of higher education is critical thinking. Even self-declared right-wing commentators on the university such as Black (2004:318) understand how important critical thinking is: "A proper university education is about forming the habits of mind that allow young men and women to see beyond the trashy and transitory ...." He does not use the word 'transcend' but this is

essentially what he is referring to. Transcendence is what Heidegger (2008:27) had in mind when he was bemoaning what had become of academic disciplines and the university in a lecture in 1923: "The situation of academic disciplines and the university has become even more questionable. What happens? Nothing". The 'nothing' to which he was referring was the failure of the disciplines to open up questions of the self. I will return to Heidegger later, but the point bears emphasising how the university experience is premised on its promise to produce young men and women who are able to go beyond – transcend – the identities that their social histories have ordained for them. What the ontologising of the purpose of the university does is to acknowledge this fundamental commitment to transcendence, but to interpret and give it effect within the very narrow confines of a hegemonic narrative of the self. What this does, I argue, is to normalise the alignment between social and epistemological domination and so, ultimately, to refuse the full promise of the university. In a country such as South Africa, this ontologising of purpose becomes racial. Therefore, the central objective of the transformation of the university must be, I argue, the deracialisation of this ontology.

1. WHERE TO BEGIN?

In contemplating the transformation of the new South African university, it is important to build the argument around transcendence. Heidegger (2008:5), in explaining his concept *Dasein*, captures the essence of transcendence as a state of 'being-there', not running away and "never, to be there primarily as an *object* (his emphasis) of intuition … as an *object* of which we merely take cognizance and have knowledge. Rather, Dasein is *there* for itself in the 'how' of its inmost being." It is this 'how' of the 'being-there' that is important to understand. It is a 'how', as Heidegger (2008:5) explains, which 'opens up and circumscribes the respective 'there'" (2008:5). One might understand this 'opening-up' in many ways. For the purposes of this discussion, I would like to think of it as the capacity to understand oneself, or what Heidegger (2008:12) calls a "wakefulness". It makes possible the opportunity of thinking radically, "without having to be guided by the traditional idea of man" (Heidegger 2008:13). As Heidegger mentioned, this is what the disciplines have failed to actualise.

When Bill Readings, now famously refers to "The University in ruins" (Readings 1996:21), he is prompted by the same anxiety as that of Heidegger. He comments about the easy way in which the universities have slipped into the language of 'world class' and 'excellence', and urges that we deconstruct the terms we use and how we use them. His central thesis is that 'excellence' is an empty signifier based on key performance indicators that themselves depend only on activity: "all that the system requires is for activity to take place, and the empty notion of excellence refers to nothing other than the optimal input/output ratio in matters of information" (Readings 1996:39). The university, he states, has "now lost all content" (Readings 1996:39). It has become another bureaucratic corporation. It has failed, he argues, to pay attention to the "preservation of the activity of thinking" (Readings 1996:192). Thinking in the university, he states, is an ethical responsibility. If the university is to preserve anything, it is the necessity of ensuring that "thought takes place beside thought, where thinking is a shared process *without identity or unity*" (Readings 1996:192) (my emphasis).

It is the final part of Readings' appeal that is important to take up – the necessity for thought to take place besides thought "without identity or unity". How this might happen, according to Wortham (1999:9), another scholar of higher education, is by coming to understand the psychology of the "good' university". Wortham mentions that the university as an institution has never historically been in symmetry. It is always in a state of "disorientation": "I shall argue, … that *dis*orientation (his emphasis) is the condition, the starting point, of a leverage by which such orientation is sought". "Disorientation", in response to the anxiety that it is a debilitating condition, is a productive quality. It arises, Wortham argues, from the "deep structure" (Wortham 1999:10) of the university. What does he mean when he talks about "deep structure"? Essentially, it is the way in which the university is organised to resist its automatic reproduction. It is, in the ways in which it inducts and takes in those who become its citizens, to produce the consistent potential for dissent.

An extraordinary feature of this "disorientation", based on its "deep structure', is the capacity of the university to abolish itself. It is the one institution in society which is not constituted, either *ipso facto* or *sui generis*, around the principle of preservation. It has the potential, always, to be calling itself into question. It is here, as Readings (1996:192) says, that "thought lies alongside thought", with one always in engagement with another. It contains within itself the constituent elements for the deconstruction of its own making and the possibility for reconstituting itself. And, in many ways, this is what regularly happens. The changeover of intellectual regimes in departments signals exactly this – the demise of one logic, or even of approaches to the logic, and its substitution with another. The university is the one institution that rehearses, on the one hand, the practices and the modalities for deconstruction – the deconstruction of the self and, critically, those of community – but also, on the other, for the reconstruction of self and community. Self and community, as they are found to be wanting, as they are found to exclude and hierarchalise, are subjected to insistent questioning. It is this that defines the university's transformative agenda. As a place of knowledge-making, it is constantly holding up its own knowledge to questioning. It is asking of the knowledge it professes questions of its self-interest and how it can engage with new interests. It is this that defines the transformative university.

Of course, those who are within the university regularly organise their participation within it to secure their privileged positions. They are able to undo or manoeuvre its deep structure so that preservation rather than revitalisation is the dynamic that animates the university. The deep structure then becomes an authorising force. I want to argue that conceptually this is not what its base purpose is. When this happens, the institution is no longer a university. It becomes something else. It has to be, ideally, set up to interrogate its own logics in such a way that the possibility for abolishing itself is always present. A strategic way of holding this ideal aloft is presented in the mission statement for the SARCHI Chair in Development Education at the University of South Africa. The essential position taken by the community of scholars around this chair is in what it calls transformation by enlargement. But what does transformation by enlargement mean and how is it intended to be operationalised? For Howard Richards, one of the key scholars in this initiative, it is not about displacing one intellectual hegemony with another. It is about, as he says, enlargement: "(i)t is a mistake to make the argument that the university should cease teaching social sciences derived from

and embedded in the dominant paradigm" (Richards 2011:7). He argues that this is not what transformation by enlargement is all about: "It is not about excluding options. It is about becoming more rational by considering a greater number and variety of options before making a decision. [It is about] making us less dependent on a single logic, a single dynamic, a single metaphysic" (Richards 2011:8).

Understanding this, the metaphor of 'deep structure' is important for thinking about where we are in our institutions and in our specific disciplines. It is important in thinking about what our disciplines are set up to do and the kinds of responsibilities they imagine for themselves.

2. MOVING TOWARDS A HISTORICIZATION

Bowden and Marton (1998:280) argue that a way to engage this question of structure and responsibilities is for the university to come to know itself. Now I think that we are making progress in locating our institutions historically. We are at the point in our analysis of our institutions where we are historicising the South African university and recognising our institutions and their structures as historical artefacts. Towards doing this, let me suggest, first of all, that there are deeply important developments unfolding in South African higher education. There are discussions taking place in the South African higher education sector, unlike most other higher education sectors elsewhere in the world, which are helpful in coming to understand the very particular challenges, and indeed opportunities, which it is confronting. The discussion is about transformation and what universities should be doing in social spaces that are in transformation.

In this discussion, we have the state, the sector itself and a number of important forums, including donor organisations around the country, that are working through the questions of how the sector ought to be positioned in relation to key questions that the country is facing. The National Ministry of Higher Education and Training convened a national conference in April 2010 where transformation in the sector was the major focus of discussion; three key reports were published in 2011 which bear on the relationship between the universities and development and, in 2011, at least four national conferences took place where issues of the sector were discussed, including one organised by the Minister of Higher Education focusing on university responses to the *Ministerial Report on Transformation and Social Cohesion in Higher Education* and another conference which examined issues of social responsiveness. The three reports are themselves and indeed even by themselves exemplary of the kind of ferment in the sector. The first was an important enquiry undertaken by the Academy of Sciences into the future of the Humanities in South Africa in 2010 as part of its study on the state of Humanities in South Africa.[2] This has come to be called the *Consensus Report*. The second was the appointment by the Minister of Higher Education and Training of a Ministerial Committee of Enquiry into the state of the Humanities under the leadership of Prof. Ari Sitas and referred to as the *Charter for the Humanities*. The third was a comprehensive report on the future economic development of South Africa by the National Planning Commission

[2] See http://www.assaf.org.za.

headed by Minister Trevor Manuel and which included a detailed diagnosis of issues of capacity and development in the higher education sector.

In reviewing these developments, several observations can be made not least of all that at institutional levels the sector is in a state of intense introspection.

3. THE WORK THAT HAS YET TO BE DONE

But the process of deconstructing our institutions also has to take place within our disciplines. Earlier I mentioned the ontologising of the disciplines. Lewis Gordon (2006:4) is also helpful in making the argument for historicising how the disciplines have come into being, and suggests that "the emergence of disciplines has often led to the forgetting of their impetus in living human subjects and their crucial role in both the maintenance and the transformation of knowledge-producing practices". The results of this forgetting, he argues, are a special kind of decadence. He calls this "disciplinary decadence":

> Disciplinary *decadence* is the ontologizing or reification of a discipline. In such an attitude, we treat our discipline as though it was never born and has always existed and will never change or, in some cases, die. More than immortal, it is eternal. Yet as something that came into being, it lives, in such an attitude, as a monstrosity, as an instance of human creation that can never die. Such a perspective brings with it a special fallacy. Its assertion as absolute eventually leads to no room for other disciplinary perspectives, the result of which is the rejection of them for not being one's own […] Such work militates against thinking (Gordon 2006:4-5).

In this instance, thinking especially about my own discipline, that of sociology, but also in the range of disciplines which have to do with issues of space, location and context, including the study of belief, we have a great deal of ground to make up and where we have to make an appeal to thinking. What I think we have not done sufficiently is to historicise the arrival and indeed the process of institutionalisation of our disciplines. We have not asked the questions of how our disciplines have taken root and come to be domesticated in the very particular social dynamics of South Africa. The point about a historicization, and it applies to any field, is that it would need to place in time and space the problematics which come to give any field of enquiry its character. It would need to understand what intellectual questions are being asked and confront the large ontological puzzle of the applicability, the integrity of the modes of enquiry and indeed the relevance of the field, as it is constituted in a particular space and time, to the space in which it finds itself. It is the great question of the presumed universality of the perceptions and precepts that characterise a field of enquiry.

A key issue in coming to terms with South African higher education and with the disciplines is that they arrive in the country, and indeed in most parts of the world, at the very moment when the world is working through the momentous issues of colonialisation and empire-building. The Berlin Conference, where the world's great colonial powers assembled around a table and parcelled out among themselves the continent of Africa, for example, took place in 1884, at about the time that the disciplines of sociology and anthropology and

later political studies were beginning to take form. The conditions of their formation are illustrative. The fields of anthropology and archaeology, to emphasise the point, essentially come to provide the intellectual authorisation and substantiation for the colonial project. Anthropology as a discipline is born in the colonies. Its scholars have the task of explaining the 'culture' of the natives. In South Africa, anthropology is yoked firmly behind the project of colonialism. Its central mission is to justify the authority of the British Empire. The means by which this is done is the twin projects of biology and cultural studies. They set out to show that the 'native' brain is smaller than that of its European counterparts and resultantly is inferior in its capacity for thought to that of the European. The project failed utterly. It revealed no difference between the brain sizes of people thought to be Black and those thought of as White. Sociology has somewhat different origins and is set to work in the colonies differently. Unlike anthropology, it is born in the crucible of the social revolutions that took place in Europe from the late 1600s to the early 1900s. However, in its languages of description, its terms, its concepts and its modes of analysis, all of which derive from a very particular European experience, it came to give the new world upon which it looked its essential morphology. The categories of classification, nuance, and distinction which begin in the formality of European philosophy are used to explain social environments that operate according to different logics. The 'native' in the process is rendered inarticulate. S/he is not accorded the capacity to account for him-/herself. S/he is accounted for. His/her claim to humanity is mediated through the frameworks of colonial thought. S/he is rendered comprehensible not in relation to him-/herself, but to a norm established by the colonial order. His/her logics are never referred to. They are not a resource. Instead, they are an affliction, that which needs to be rooted out. His/her inferiority is unavoidable. A similar process of disenfranchisement to that of anthropology is achieved. In the process, a new social imaginary is wrought. The 'native' is only intelligible through lenses ground in a high-culture European way of seeing. What this achieves is an ontological disenfranchisement. From it flows epistemological disenfranchisement.

Strikingly, more technical fields are similarly determined. The field of surveying is an interesting example. The field has its genesis in the immense contestations that begin to shape up between social classes in post medieval Europe, when the principle of private property is enshrined in the law and comes to be constituted as an ontological dictum of how human beings conduct their relationships with one another spatially. Significantly, one of the earliest qualifications that the South African College begins to issue, when the foundations of the University of Cape Town are first lain down, is that of land surveying. In this instance, it provides the supposed authority for the dismemberment of the land.

What is the significance of all of this? There are many facets and dimensions of the history of these fields. The key issue to which we need to pay attention is that of how they are established as sites for coming to 'know' the 'other'. It is not just that they seek to know 'the other', it is how they come to understand the 'other'. Fundamental in this approach is their point of departure. Whether it is in anthropology or sociology, which as I have argued, have very different stimuli for their beginnings, these foundational fields begin with their orientations in their own experiences. They start from their own normative points of departure. Their languages of description, their categories of distinction, their

logics of elucidation all begin in their own sociologies and the problematics thrown up by their own social contexts. Understood dialectically and, in this instance, the work of Hegel is determinative in providing a direction for how European philosophy is to function, the beginning, the thesis is European, and the antithesis is non-European. The first, that which takes precedence, is in the image and the normative character of Europe. As the first, it is entirely positive. By contrast, the second, the antithesis, is irredeemably negative. It has meaning only in relation to the precedent, the thesis. None of the disciplines begins with a sense of what one might call autochthonous integrity. Origin is not possible in that which is deemed to be the antithesis. And so, the native's categories of distinction, her languages of description become not sites through which the boundaries of human understanding and wisdom might be explored, but essentialised cultural curios measured against the normative example of Europe.

Why is this important? It is important in considering what is lost in not allowing people to speak for themselves. The problem with dominant ways of knowing is the pretension within them to universalism. They cannot understand that they emerge out of very particular sociocultural settings. The loss is the opportunity to begin a dialogue across ways of knowing. The central point in thinking in this way is fundamentally that of, what Kader Asmal called, cultural justice. It is not about one view of the world being better than another. It is about producing ways of seeing which create the opportunities for the multiple ways of knowing which characterise human diversity to be brought into a commons.

The question, then, is: How does one create a commons? How does one create the intellectual conditions in which learning is possible which does not begin in a logic of 'natural' precedence?

It is here that we are now as universities. We are having to confront the incredible reality that the histories of our intellectual legacies are configured in exclusionary ways. We do not have, as Readings asked for, the possibility of "thought alongside thought without the pretensions to unity" (1996:192). Instead, we have the normative university in which its 'deep structure' has been temporally conditioned to essentially reproduce itself and to produce a disenfranchised 'other'. It begins from a normative ideal – the 'normal' – which is imposed upon as a 'natural' given.

Now, thinking about any discipline, in the ways in which it comes to frame questions, there will, undoubtedly, always be value. We need to be extremely careful about the claim that it exhausts the issues defining our humanity or, to use a description which has come to be applied to architecture, is *total*. That it has a comprehension, a grip of the range of the ontological or sociological puzzles that are known and not known within and among us, or indeed come to provide a universalistic frame for what is of consequence in how we manage our relationships with each other, is a conceit that must always be approached with scepticism. The trouble, unfortunately, is that this is exactly what has happened in many disciplines practised in the South African university. The kind of scepticism that is called for has not materialised and what has happened, instead, is that disciplines have degenerated into dictums, suffused with orthodoxy. Their registers are too often that of the assertive – of what the issues are, how things work and how they fit together. In their elaboration into

the wider interstitial social fabric, in coming to inform public understanding, they become constitutive. From being interpretations they become naturalised embodiments. That they have ethnocentric origins is forgotten. They develop a power to actually constitute reality. Bowden and Marton argue that disciplines construct social reality in very particular kinds of ways.

For this reason, we need to be concerned for our disciplines. We need to be concerned about their constitutive power. They come to constitute places not as they are but as the available language of that discipline might allow.

4. CONCLUSION

What is our task now? Our task, recovering the strength of the academy – its deep structure – is to deconstruct the normative ideal and to historicise it to show its ethnocentric impulses. We need to begin to open up our discourses, to liberate them from their historical origins and to ask what a post-racial imagination might look like.

Towards realising this, we need to work with the contradictions that surround the university's constitutive character. These contradictions are fundamentally about defending and cultivating the status it holds in society and, simultaneously, about fulfilling its obligation to be open and accessible. How it cultivates its distinctiveness, even its selectiveness, without defaulting to, and so deriving its membership and the content of this membership – its identity - from the structures of domination in the society in which it finds itself is a basic tension with which it is constantly confronted. In the South African context, this tension takes a particular form. At its heart is how it produces a self-conscious intellectual elite that is, firstly, acutely aware of the hierarchies of nation, people, community, race, class, gender, language, region and religion that surround it and give it its character, and that, secondly, is prepared through its commitment to intellectual freedom to struggle against those hierarchies. And so a question that is asked in this paper is that of how the university is able to resist attempts to appropriate it for the reproduction of domination. How, when the very history and sociology of those who teach and learn within it are implicated in the making of political and economic hegemony, do these 'citizens' of the university refuse to avail themselves for that purpose, or, minimally, come into the challenge of that space fully aware of the role they can play. The challenge is intense and involves a re-imagination of the university, and particularly what it believes to be its mission, its 'natural' ambience, the intellectual ether on which it subsists. How it does this in the South African context, I will argue, is by deliberately seeking out and imagining identity possibilities – languages and frameworks of self-description beyond the vocabularies of race and hegemony - that are not yet known, that are yet to be described, and that await construction.

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KNOWLEDGE, CURRICULUM AND TRANSFORMATION

Lis Lange[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper forms part of a larger reflection on curriculum as well as teaching and learning elicited in the context of an institutional review of the undergraduate curriculum at the University of the Free State. It was requested by the Faculty of Theology as a contribution to their review of the theology curriculum and, therefore, it will, at times, engage directly with specific concerns of this Faculty at the University of the Free State. The argument of the paper develops three propositions: curriculum as a particular selection and organisation of knowledge cannot be separated from the effects of power that knowledge has in terms of both domination and emancipation; this conceptualisation of knowledge and curriculum has serious implications for the manner in which higher education is understood and practised; and the transformation of teaching and learning as well as curriculum can only take place if there is an understanding of the knowledge base informing them both. The paper is organised into three sections which focus on knowledge, curriculum and transformation. The conclusion reflects on the necessary conditions and limits of institution-based curricular reviews.

2. KNOWLEDGE

> When we talk about knowledge in higher education, we refer to scientific knowledge, the type of knowledge that emerged and developed in Europe between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The majority of disciplines and professions taught in higher education emerged during this period. This is particularly true for the Humanities and Social Sciences and for disciplines such as engineering, psychiatry, law, demography, criminology, and social work, to mention but a few. Knowledge in higher education refers to both the content of teaching and the focus of research in every discipline and profession. This composite aspect of knowledge in higher education was infused with a new orientation in the context of the massification of higher education and the expansion of the complex economic, political and sociocultural phenomena grouped under the rubric of globalisation. The importance of knowledge as means of

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> production and a commodity in the new knowledge economy singled out universities as the engines of society with an ever greater responsibility in relation to national competitive advantage in the global market (Castells 2000).

South Africa's democratic transition took place in this context and its policy blueprint reflects the impact of global trends in the local conceptualisation of sector-specific policies (Singh 2011). The most important framing documents for higher education and science and technology policy in South Africa take globalisation and the legacy of apartheid as their point of departure to describe the nature and goals of national development. The National Commission on Higher Education, the subsequent White Paper, and the Green and White Papers in Science and Technology highlighted the role of knowledge in the simultaneous task of becoming globally competitive and redressing the injustices inherited from apartheid. The clearest formulation about the role of education in the process of reconstruction and development stated that higher education was responsible for human resource development, high-level skills training, as well as the production, acquisition and application of new knowledge (DOE 1997:1.12). The vision of the transformed higher education system is well known: it has to promote equity of access and success; offer teaching and learning programmes as well as research that meet national development goals and global demands; support democratic ethos, critical discourse and creative thinking, and support the advancement of all forms of knowledge (DOE 1997:1.3).

However, no higher education policy document, unlike the science and technology policies which choose to privilege Mode 2 knowledge (DACST 1997; DST 2002), went any further in specifying the type of knowledge that was required and whether or not the knowledge being offered at the time by South African universities and technikons was appropriate for the goals proposed by the democratic government. In fact, as Ensor (2004:348-350) has shown, higher education policy from the National Commission on Higher Education to the Higher Education Act of 1997 were contradictory when it came to definitions of knowledge and curriculum.

Higher education policy and implementation were far more concerned with broadening access to tertiary education, the identification of the high-level skills, and the overall human resource development required in the country. Yet this did not mean that the 1994 policy development did not focus on certain aspects of the 'knowledge question'. The kernel of the decade-long debate about the conceptualisation and implementation of a national qualifications framework was about knowledge (that is, curriculum) and power: what knowledge is valuable and recognised; who has access to knowledge, and who assesses the suitability of knowledge. As Ensor (2004:340) aptly put it:

> [The] NQF encapsulates the desire of policy makers to erode three sets of boundaries: between education and training; between academic and eveyday knowledge; and between different knowledges, disciplines or subjects within the academic domain.

With these motives the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) introduced new notions about portability, articulation and lifelong learning that reflected a particular understanding of knowledge and which had long-lasting consequences for higher education institutions.

I want to point out three effects of this policy on the university curriculum. First and foremost, there was the modularisation of courses, and the notion that a programme was made by combining a variety of modules, thus enabling students to accumulate the required number of credits at an appropriate level. This was possible based on the role of unit standards in the architecture of the National Qualifications Framework (Ensor 2003, 2004). Secondly, the preoccupation with skills and applied knowledge encouraged higher education institutions to design ever more vocation-oriented programmes and advertise ever more interestingly named programmes as responding to specific market needs. This resulted in what Ron Barnett calls, in the context of the United Kingdom, the vocationalisation of higher education (Barnett 1997:80). Thirdly, these changes indirectly created a market for the products of knowledge in the form of academic credentials that was, in turn, supported by a new accounting of university degrees. Marketable programmes attracted students who paid their fees per module, creating an internal political economy in which service courses and popular modules cross-subsidised less popular modules and programmes, at least for some time. The impact of the policy, of course, varied from institution to institution. Not all public tertiary institutions followed the proposed path; some did and retracted after a while (University of Cape Town); others refused to change and adhered to more traditional ways of organisation (Rhodes University), while others followed the winds of change and, like the University of the Free State, took the policy to a dangerous extreme. Informing some of the arguments about the National Qualifications Framework debate, there has been another, much more intricate, dispute in the field of sociology of education which focused on what constitutes knowledge; what are the conditions under which scientific knowledge is produced; the basis for objective/real knowledge; the possibility of truth, and whether and how the possibility of truth is modified by the position of people in society. The arguments put across by postmodernists, poststructuralists, social constructivists and critical realists, although in many respects profoundly political, did not redirect the discussion about the National Qualifications Framework to sociological, epistemological and disciplinary knowledge issues (Moore & Muller 1999; Muller 2006, 2009; Young 2008; Hall 2010). The ideas developed in this debate have remained in the ambit of the academia, without influencing policy development at a national level.[2]

Besides the long and protracted debate in relation to the conceptualisation and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework, between 1994 and 2001, which did not actually challenge the disciplinary knowledge content of the higher education curriculum, there were three relatively short-lived debates that took different aspects of the relationship between knowledge, curriculum and transformation seriously. First, there was the debate about Mode 2 knowledge itself (Scott *et al*. 1994; Gibbons 2000). The notion of Mode 2 knowledge introduced in the science and technology policy framework, in particular, was to some extent responsible for the multiplication of inter- and multidisciplinary undergraduate

[2] See, for example, the debate between Hall and Muller (Hall 2010).

programmes, the eviction of discipline majors, the dissolution of many discipline-based departments, and the marriage (not always happy) of new and old disciplines (Kraak 2000; Muller 2000; Cloete *et al*. 2002; Ensor 2004). The debate about Mode 2 knowledge grappled with issues such as the possibility and advisability of inter- and multidisciplinary education at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, and the advantages and disadvantages of straight disciplinary education.

The second debate was short-lived in the public arena, but has continued simmering under different guises; it was the debate about what would it mean to Africanise the curriculum (Cloete *et al.* 1997), what global (Western) knowledge was, and how to include local knowledge and experience in the curriculum. This debate focused on issues such as the changing nature of Western knowledge in the postcolony; what it means to Africanise the curriculum in the global knowledge economy; what the relationship was between knowledge and identity, and why this was important in the context of the democratisation of higher education. This debate has re-emerged under the rubric of the indigenous knowledge systems and their place in curriculum and research agendas (Odora-Hoppers 2002).

The third debate, which was built around a research project launched by the Centre for Science Development (CSD) of the Human Sciences Research Council in 1995 under the name *Transforming the Disciplines*, was even shorter lived. This project explicitly acknowledged that the new policy framework had neglected to examine the location and distribution of the power and control of knowledge production and its insertion into a critical South African intellectual milieu. The framing of this project provides interesting bases for the conceptualisation of any review concerned with the knowledge bases of the curriculum.

The object of the Centre for Science Development research was to analyse the epistemological and organisational structure, character and trajectory of educational knowledge in the critical tradition. The elements of the framework designed to empirically analyse this problem were:

- The scope and object of education research and teaching in the critical tradition.
- The political, social and intellectual determinants of definitions of boundaries, objects and content of 'relevant' knowledge production and teaching.
- The theoretical approaches, concerns and debates (including the Africanisation/ Eurocentrism debate) and the manner in which these are contextualised as priorities for the transformation of higher education.
- The emergence of new knowledge and the shifts in science and higher education policy and funding in this regard.
- The relation between enrolments, the changing composition of students and debates about quality and standards, and the form and content of teaching (Unpublished project file, CSD 1995).

In my view, this project was set to focus on the three most fundamental aspects of a critique of knowledge in higher education: the interrogation of the knowledge tradition; the

interrogation of the organisation of knowledge, and the interrogation of the teaching and learning in the discipline.

Besides this aborted project,[3] debates about disciplinary knowledge have surfaced in the public domain from time to time in the past 15 years. Critiques of the epistemological and political basis of knowledge in specific disciplines were enacted in the acrimonious debate between Mahmood Mamdani and the University of Cape Town apropos the notion of African studies (Mamdani 1998), and have also occasionally emerged in the internal discussions of professional associations, with historians and sociologists being among the most vocal. An unsatisfactory hint about disciplinary knowledge and epistemologies was included in the recently published *Humanities Charter* (DHET 2011) and the characterisation of the Humanities in South Africa as stagnant in the Academy of Science of South Africa report (ASSAF 2011) refers to the orientation and content of Humanities research in the country, but no substantive critique of this aspect of the problem was included in the report.

As for tertiary institutions themselves, the revamping and reorganisation of programmes and departments to respond to the demands of the new policy framework and the exigencies of management often left the disciplinary content unchanged. To my knowledge, neither historically Afrikaans universities nor their White English-medium colleagues, nor the previously designated historically Black universities have undertaken a systematic review of their curriculum, much less attempted to write an intellectual history of their disciplines and academic departments as a way of coming to terms with their own history and intellectual traditions.[4]

Why should this matter? After all, disciplines evolve, paradigms change, new approaches and knowledge build on or displace older ones, depending on the disciplines. Academics who participate in the discourse of their disciplines follow these movements and are usually part of them organically. Yet the kind of exploration I am referring to in relation to South African universities' curriculum focuses not only on tracing change but also on identifying the regime of truth of the disciplines and their effect of power specifically in relation to the construction of apartheid. This is a debate that falls outside Moore & Muller's (1999) critique of postmodernity and the emergence of 'voice discourse' and identity politics. It investigates the role that the institutional organisation of knowledge as well as the nature of disciplinary knowledge itself had in relation to the construction of apartheid and the consequences that this had, and still has, in the inclusion and exclusion of people (students and academics) and knowledge at tertiary institutions. No tertiary institution in the country can claim 'innocence' in this respect. English-medium universities should account for their cautious openness while participating in a discriminatory higher education and science and technology system, not to mention the acceptance of discriminatory and humiliating practices in relation to their few

[3] The project was discontinued when the Centre for Science Development and the Foundation for Research Development merged to constitute the National Research Foundation in 1999. Only a publication on the discipline of Sociology saw the light of day. Hundreds of pages of transcripts of interviews with academics in the Humanities and Social Sciences remained as untapped evidence of the thinking of academia in the early days of the democratic transition.

[4] This does not mean that there were not some individual, as distinct from institutional, efforts at writing the history of academic department and/or disciplines.

Black students and the unexamined exclusionary nature of the knowledge embedded in their curriculum. Historically Black universities mostly taught uncritically a prescribed curriculum imposed by the state-controlled university management. Afrikaans-medium universities' knowledge presents a more immediately perceived problem for the outsider. Institutionally, they contributed to the development of the conceptual, philosophical and theological bases of Afrikanerdom and apartheid (Van der Westhuizen 2007:12). In this context, an examination of knowledge is not simply an exercise in epistemology; it is the investigation of a genealogy of accepted and suppressed knowledge, the historical circumstances in which these surfaced, the different institutional forms that it acquired, and their effects of power in the education of university graduates (Foucault 1980:83-85).

In the case of a historically denominationally exclusive faculty of theology located in a public university, this genealogy is a necessary condition for any serious attempt at reviewing the curriculum. I am not proposing a public recantation of the University of the Free State or of its Faculty of Theology. Public gestures which are not accompanied by rational and systematic thinking of a problem seldom provide more than ephemeral symbols that give expression to emotions. What is required is an investigation of the interface between knowledge and politics and ideology that took place especially, but not only, in the Humanities disciplines in order to understand, judge and change both the content and the outcomes of this education and the type of teaching and learning practices to which it has given rise. My contention is that no real change is possible unless there is an active and systematic identification of the continuities and discontinuities, both conscious and unconscious, of the disciplinary knowledge and pedagogic knowledge that inform both curriculum and teaching and learning. Put differently, an exploration of the origin of the knowledge taught in the curriculum, what relations of power it represents and sustains, what kind of problems/questions the curriculum allows to be explored is a necessary condition to challenge academic disciplines as well as pedagogic orientation.

Curriculum implies choices about what knowledge is valuable, what students can and should learn, and what students can and should do. In this sense, what students learn at university conditions, to a large extent, how they will think and be in the world. The next section of this paper focuses on whether and how curriculum changes, and how this relates to changes in knowledge and power.

3. CURRICULUM

A simple definition of curriculum is that it is an organisation of knowledge that establishes what is to be known, in what order and to what purpose or results. It also indicates how to measure the successful acquisition of that knowledge (Pinar 1995). This definition is deceiving, in the sense that it makes curriculum uncomplicated whereas curriculum is a very complex issue. Knowledge is contested: Who governs what knowledge? Who decides what constitutes knowledge in the disciplines and professions? Who has access to it? Who can distribute it? Whose knowledge is included in the curriculum? As socially organised knowledge, curriculum reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control and reproduction in a given society (Foucault 1980:98-99).

In many respects, contestation about knowledge and curriculum has been present in higher education since the constitution of the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium* (Muller 2009). One of the latest manifestations of this controversy revolves around the notion of the responsiveness of higher education to societal needs, and it involves the content of the curriculum, the rules of progression within it, as well as its outcomes. The different resolutions of the contestation are far from being a theoretical problem only, as they define the extent and focus of government funding for different university programmes/subjects and, therefore, entail an official sanction as to what knowledge matters. Interestingly, the changes in higher education curriculum that have taken place in the majority of tertiary systems in the past 20 years are less about knowledge *per se* than about the skills and competencies required by the new workers in the knowledge economy.

As mentioned earlier, in South Africa the greatest changes in curriculum came hand in hand with the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework and the hype around Mode 2 knowledge. These changes, as Jansen (2009:128) has argued, more often than not focused only on the external aspects of the curriculum, that is the structure of fundamental, core and elective modules, as well as the number and level of credits. The internal workings of the curriculum, the knowledge to be privileged, were not subject to fundamental revisions. The focus on the outer aspects of the curriculum has allowed the disguise of old content under new forms and often, as in the case study presented by Jansen (2009:129-139), seemingly new curriculum is being presented without examining its old (knowledge) assumptions. Old curriculum whose exoskeleton has been changed and new curriculum whose knowledge assumptions have not been revised share the same characteristics: they are fixed, certain, positive, controllable, linear and predictable. They refer to 'scientific' knowledge that eschews ideology and politics (Jansen 2009:133), and yet they are profoundly political and ideological.

At the same time, this curriculum functions as an institution. In this sense, the curriculum is a socially embedded idea defined by the university in ways that include not only the syllabus itself, but also the character, content and boundaries of the knowledge that comes with being at the university (Jansen 2009:126). Thus the knowledge embedded in the curriculum is transmitted not only through the syllabus content and therefore in a tangible manner, but also in an intangible manner through classroom practices and the overall discourse of the university. In other words, curriculum as an institution operates by establishing what we can talk about and who can talk about what. From this perspective, a review of the curriculum as syllabus is one aspect of the review of the curriculum as institution, that is the syllabus and its attendant pedagogy, and the institutional culture that shelters it. This type of review turns its gaze to knowledge itself, how content is taught, and the type of relationships between students, lecturers and knowledge that are established in the lecture hall, the tutorial class, or the online space.

In this regard, the relationship between curriculum and pedagogy, the nature of the educational relationship, cannot be separated from the nature of the knowledge being taught. Put differently, a knowledge that is conceived of as 'fixed, certain, positive, controllable, linear and predictable' can only be taught in a manner that excludes doubt, adheres to one authority, and clearly establishes the hierarchy between those who know and those who do

not know. This reflects an understanding of the nature and purpose of university education as the transmission of 'truth' and authority.

A curricular review then requires as its point of departure a certain notion of the purpose of education. I would like to invoke Ron Barnett's notion of critical being. According to Barnett, the purpose of teaching in higher education is to help develop students into persons who can exercise critical reason, critical self-reflection and critical action. Each of these activities is exercised over a different sphere: critical reason operates in relation to knowledge; critical self-reflection is exercised on the individual/the person, and critical action defines the relationship between the individual and the world. The integration of these levels of critique into the person is what teaching in higher education is about.

Nothing could be further removed from this understanding of education than the addition to an unmodified curriculum of a module on critical thinking, as is often the case. Critical thinking is not "a single set of actions, skills and propensities" (Barnett 1997:3), the performance of which should be assessed at the end of a module. Against this, he proposes a more complex understanding of criticality that goes from critical thinking skills through critical thought to critique, each of which represents more complex levels of contrasting modes of understanding.

Given the topic of this paper, I would like to develop further the notion of critical reason that is exercised on knowledge. In order to educate a critical being in relation to knowledge, Barnett suggests, we need to provide the space for students to become themselves, to bring their knowledge to bear on situations and in the process understand their position and their own limitations. The vocabulary of student-based learning, problem-based learning is hopeless in this task. What is required, according to Barnett, is a vocabulary that includes becoming, action, interaction, interpretation, emotion, insight, judging, and dialogue (Barnett 1997:108). This can only happen in the field where academics live their own identities (Belcher 2001) more fully and can reveal themselves to their students. This happens in the field of research in the discipline (Barnett 1997:109) that implies familiarity with and interrogation of propositions, methods, theories and, therefore, organisations and interpretations of the world pertaining to the different disciplines. It requires a clear sense of the manner in which disciplinary knowledge is constructed, of its theory or syntax (Moore & Muller 1999:201). Introducing students to this type of knowledge requires both moral and intellectual courage, as well as the ability and commitment to live with the uncertainty of knowing. And particularly, but not exclusively, in South Africa, it requires the awareness that universities are introducing students not only to the knowledge of the disciplines but also to the rules of sense-making within the different disciplines (Boughey 2005), to their knowledge structures and procedures. For the challenge of the fixed and controllable curriculum to be pedagogically effective, it is necessary that lecturers recognise their students as persons who embody the potential to unify knowledge, self and action. This implies accepting that the pedagogical relationship becomes uncertain, because students will also have something to say and possibly question the certainties put to them (Barnett 1997:110).

What would be the litmus test of the success of the educational enterprise in South Africa (assuming that there is only one)? Not only whether students graduate with disciplinary/

professional knowledge and skills to earn a living, but also whether they leave higher education with a more complex, richer, broader world of reference than that with which they started off. In preparing this paper, I came across a website called Faith and Heritage, in which a young graduate from the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State published a defence of apartheid and ethno-nationalism based on a particular reading of history and of the Bible.[5] While the University of the Free State cannot be held directly responsible for the intellectual and moral choices of its graduates, the content of the website raises important questions about a curriculum which was evidently incapable to help disrupt the 'knowledge in the blood' and the armoury of poor science and methodological approaches that support the arguments put across in this website as rational discourse.

4. TRANSFORMATION

In the early 1990s, the concept of transformation was being debated among progressive intellectuals in the democratic movement and, already then, there was a consensus as to the elusiveness of the definition, the multiple uses and interpretations of the term, and of the need to spell out the contextual uses of a concept that was becoming shorthand. Two decades later, transformation is used and abused to define everything and anything, and it has almost become a cliché that replaces real reflection about social processes (Motala 2005).

As noted earlier, 'transformation' in South Africa has also been associated with knowledge and curriculum. What are the meanings of transformation in relation to these two notions? In order to answer this question, it seems necessary to examine some of the 1990s debates.

While transformation as a noun designates a change in the state of something which affects its very nature (transformation of ice into water; transformation of capitalism into socialism), Singh (1992:50-51) suggested that the introduction of transformation in the South African political vocabulary was also a sign of the switch from oppositional to negotiated settlement and, in that sense, it could already be regarded as a degradation of radical views of change in the country.

In most areas of social, political and economic life, transformation in South Africa tends to mean a change in the nature of society that clearly marks a break with the apartheid past. Yet, as was pointed out in the 1990s debate (Singh 1992:49), transformation is a process, a mechanism and a goal. In this sense, it seems constitutive of the very notion of transformation as used in South Africa that it is necessary to continue questioning the subject, the object, the means and the motives of transformation in each area of society where it is proclaimed or sought.

The first two sections of this paper dealt with the subject and object of transformation in the field of teaching and learning. This section will focus on three mechanisms and goals of transformation, namely openness of knowledge, democratisation of knowledge, and knowledge governance.

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5 faithandheritage.com [2012, 7 February].

4.1 Openness of knowledge

In the field of knowledge and curriculum, it would be disastrous if we had a clear route and point of arrival to our 'transformed' knowledge. The transformation of curriculum is not about homogenisation and the creation of a new 'politically correct' orthodoxy to replace a reactionary one. The very act of knowing implies the eventual necessity of radical breaks with the paradigms within which we operate. This is the way in which knowledge develops. Thus, the first mechanism in the transformation of knowledge/curriculum is the process of opening up knowledge to itself. This implies welcoming complexity, fluidity and the coexistence of breaks and continuity, the possibility of tension, contradiction and paradox, and the anguish and uncertainty of the search for truth. Transformation in the field of knowledge implies the willingness to step out of naivety or wilful dissemblance in relation to the 'neutrality' of knowledge and to accept its sociological and historical dimensions.

4.2 Democratisation of knowledge

The democratisation of knowledge is the external movement that complements the openness of knowledge to itself. The democratisation of knowledge opens it to others and implies a fundamental change in the pedagogic relationship. This is far removed from the postmodern idea of the equivalence of all knowledge. It involves the conscious facilitation of access to knowledge by all students, by those who grapple for the first time with concepts and modes of knowing that are new and possibly alienating, and by those students who come to university steeped in inherited, seemingly unmovable world views. It implies the encouragement to produce knowledge instead of regurgitating information; it requires the development of the ability to critique contrasting knowledges. It is informed by the celebration of Barnett's critical being.

4.3 Knowledge governance

The last area for knowledge transformation focuses on the institutional structuring of knowledge. At universities, faculties, departments and academic journals constitute institutions that govern knowledge and can determine in subtle and not so subtle ways what constitutes acceptable knowledge; what conversations can be had within the discipline and what cannot; among whom knowledge circulates; who is appointed to a position; what books are available in a library, and who and what is published in the institutional journal. Finally, organisational structures such as faculties and departments have a powerful role in the institutionalisation of the curriculum. In this sense, no review of the curriculum can take place without an implicit and explicit examination of the role of institutions in the production and reproduction of knowledge, and how particular forms of knowledge governance (which include the structure, for example faculty, school, department, and the name attached to the structure, for example humanities, arts, philosophy, physics, neuroscience) might entail specific assumptions in relation to the boundaries of the field of study itself. Turning now especially to the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State, it is important to ask whether a transformed Faculty of Theology should continue functioning as a denominationally exclusive space, focused on the training of church ministers for various Christian churches

despite being located in a non-denominational public university funded by the State. Should a transformed Faculty of Theology be institutionally associated with any particular church? Should not the transformation of curriculum and knowledge be reflected in, for example, the creation of a school of religious studies in the Faculty of Humanities centred on the exploration of religion as a spiritual, historical, and philosophical concept present in all cultures, as is the case in most universities worldwide? A review of the curriculum that does not deal with the locus of power of knowledge and the institutional relations that support such location will be an exercise in futility that will change nothing.

5. CONCLUSION: THE CONDITIONS FOR CHANGE

This paper has shown how, despite the existence of concerns about knowledge in the policy debates that took place in South Africa in the early years of the democratic transition, no systematic examination of knowledge took place. It has also shown how the concerns with procedural and formal change left the knowledge underpinning the higher education curricula mostly unexamined. Finally, the paper has argued that a transformation of the curriculum can only take place in the context of a changed pedagogical relationship, the review of the institutional power bases of knowledge, and in the acceptance of the open-endedness of the process itself.

From the point of view of the management of change, a curricular review can be initiated by university management, but can only be carried through by academic staff. This almost obvious observation begs a fundamental question about transformation as a process and as a mechanism. If curricular change depends on academics and, in some institutional contexts, academics themselves are the bearers of the knowledge that needs to be interrogated, what chances of success does curricular transformation stand? There is a very narrow road that needs to be walked by universities' leadership, whether at institutional or faculty level, between the exercise of academic freedom and the endorsement of the status quo. Negotiating this space in a manner that is intellectually rigorous and morally acceptable has two necessary conditions: a constant engagement between academics and their disciplinary discourse and between universities' management and academics; and the continuous asking about the subject, the object, the means and the motives of transformation.

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THEOLOGY, THE POST-APARTHEID UNIVERSITY AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION: INTIMATING THE SHAPE OF THE CHALLENGE[1]

Rian Venter[2]

1. INTRODUCTION

Faith and reason have always been joined at the hip for theology: intimate, conflicting, yet inescapable. Theology is merely *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding. Each historical period, from the Middle Ages through the Enlightenment to our Postmodern era, has painted this relationship differently, especially for theology in terms of the university. At present, our profile in South Africa comes from a unique social condition: the transformation of the public university after apartheid. Faith and reason, theology and the university – the question is how to theorise the problem in South Africa. The Rector of the University of the Free State, Prof. Jonathan Jansen, issued a challenge to the Faculty of Theology: transform *epistemologically*. What does this imply for doing theology at a public university?

Epistemological transformation elicits at least three basic questions: *why*, *what* and *how*? This article will narrowly *focus* on the *what*, that is, on an exploration of the *implications for theology*. The rationale for transformation in post-apartheid South Africa is in a sense so obvious that a motivation may be simply banal. The article assumes the basic fact that the imperative for transformation speaks for itself. The implementation and management of change and, in this instance, the Faculty of Theology, opens a different set of questions that warrant a separate treatment.

The study will briefly situate the challenge of epistemological transformation in the context of existing discourses. The main section of the article will attempt to identify the *shape of the challenge*, or the *various contours* of such a change in terms of knowledge production. *Issues* will be formulated and *challenges* identified. Finally, transformation will be envisioned as a journey of living the Christian theological vision itself. The *background* of the investigation will

1 Originally presented at a working session on 'Theology and epistemological transformation' as a discussion document to the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State, 18 January 2012.

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be the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State, which will also function as the case study for discussion. Care will be taken to represent the institution as fairly as possible. The *aim* of the article is explorative, and intends to stimulate discussion. However, it is not possible to provide a univocal answer to what epistemological transformation entails; this would only defy the complex nature of human and institutional change. The contribution will identify *fragments* of insights.

2. CONTEXT OF DISCOURSES

Doing theology in South Africa in the twenty-first century will always be associated with a reminder of suffering; theology will be post-apartheid theology. The 1994 caesura is a real historical transition from one political dispensation to another, but it is more than that. It is also a tensive symbol signifying two radically different social visions. It is unlikely that the discourse on apartheid as a totalising ideology penetrating all spheres of life, from the sexual to the economic, and employing all possible rhetorical legitimisation, in particular the religious, will ever reach closure. The legacy of injustice visibly and painfully scars the South African landscape. The more insidious tentacles are slowly emerging; how it has polluted identities, minds and scholarship. The definitive history of the state of knowledge during apartheid has arguably not yet been written.

Official documents such as the *Education White Paper 3* of 1997 and the 2008 *Soudien* Report[3] give an indication of the wide-ranging nature of the required transformation at South African tertiary institutions. A stream of publications, especially by educationalists, has explored various aspects of transformation. Of particular interest are those that focus on epistemology[4] and knowledge.[5] The work by Jonathan Jansen, and the central place of knowledge in his thought, should be noted.[6] The debate on *new modes of knowledge production* is critically relevant.[7] My impression from a quick glance at the literature is that transformation is multi-layered, that constructive work in terms of epistemology has already been done, but also, sadly, that theological education as theorised discourse has not adequately taken note of this. An interdisciplinary conversation between theologians and educationalists is overdue. The available resources could assist theology in coming to terms with the challenge.

Pointing to a lack of dialogue does not imply that theology has been unreflectively practised in South Africa. This would distort the facts. Since the late 1980s, a number of publications give evidence of an endeavour to charter a course for theological education in changing times. Potgieter (1988) studies the development of curricula for theological faculties; Bosch (1991) weighs the well-known three publics of Tracy for theological education; Brown

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3 See Chapter 6 in this report on the 'knowledge experience'.

4 On epistemological shifts, see, for example, Le Grange (2009).

5 On knowledge and diversity scholarship, see, for example, Cross (2004). The questions he formulates are: What counts as knowledge? Who produces and disseminates it? Who accesses it or utilises it? What is its space in the curricula?

6 See especially his work *Knowledge in the blood (2009)*.

7 This is the so-called *Mode 2 debate*, influenced by Gibbons. See the important volume by Kraak (ed.), *Changing modes* (2000).

(1994) compares seminary education to that of a faculty;[8] Burden (1994) seeks a model for the future among various contemporary ones, and Conradie (1997) speaks of the 'ABC of theological education', exploring three models – that of Athens, Berlin and Calcutta. More recently, Karechi (2002, 2003) and Naidoo (2008) have focused on the need for formation as part of theological education. The volume of UFS conference essays on *Faith, religion and the public university* (Venter 2011) strikes a different chord: it investigates the problematic nature of theology in relation to interdisciplinarity, hermeneutics, politics, and secular notions of transcendence, for example. A thorough genealogical account of South African discourses on theology, education and the university is long overdue. My impression is that the earlier debate was ecclesially oriented,[9] and that formation remains a matter of continued concern, but that there is an increasing realisation of the complex and problematic nature of theology at the public university. A twofold form of alienation is obvious in the subtexts: alienation not only between theology and the church, but also between theology and the wider academic world and society. In the literature overview, I could not find a specific thematising in terms of epistemological transformation.

Reference should be made to wider global discourses on theological education. The steady stream of publications points to a practice which is in a state of uncertainty, if not crisis. The following authors deserve attention, namely Farley (1983) on the fragmentation of the theological disciplines, and Kelsey (1992 & 1993) on the notions of the Berlin and Athens approaches to excellence, and on what makes theological education theological. The volume by Evans *et al*. (1993) on globalisation and theological education includes constructive essays on justice, gender and race, as well as interfaith dialogue, and is of relevance to the South African context. In his work, Banks (1999) offers a comprehensive alternative to existing approaches with his suggestion of a missional approach.[10] More recently, the volume by Esterline and Kalu (2006) addresses multiculturalism as a challenge to theological education. The vast work developed under the auspices of the World Council of Churches – *Theological education in world Christianity* (see Werner 2010) – is of historical significance. It is not only comprehensive, but also representative of global voices. It also discusses issues rarely treated previously, such as interfaith dialogue, disability, HIV/AIDS, women, race, power, migration, and post-colonialism. This book warrants careful study because of the shifts in reflection on theological education. Despite its virtual encyclopaedic nature, some omissions are conspicuous: epistemology and the dilemma of theology at public universities. Although theological studies are seldom theorised in terms of epistemological transformation,[11] the problems addressed in the books referred to earlier, could be used as resources when placed in a different framework. There is a clear awareness that theological education cannot escape social realities and conflicts, and that new conditions require new approaches. Unfortunately,

[8] This article provides relevant and interesting historical material.

[9] For a thorough discussion, see Wethmar (1998).

[10] This book gives helpful overviews of major studies already done.

[11] The article by Martin (1998) on epistemology and theological education should be mentioned as one of the few examples of scholars discussing epistemology as such. He suggests that Polanyi's post-critical philosophy could be productively employed by theology.

most of the earlier debates were still ecclesio-centric and displayed little concern for global phenomena and interests.[12]

Framing the challenge of theology at a public university in terms of epistemological transformation is thus a particularly unique and insightful formulation. This may open possibilities to generate new perspectives and to make a contribution to a wider debate. It is still a task for theology in South Africa to come to terms with the 1994 caesura and the ensuing transformation debate. We find either unreflective continuation of epistemic practices, or cosmetic and opportunistic adjustments. The unique shape of the country's social horizon calls for an equally unique response. Although one can learn a great deal from the global discourses on theological education, the country's own creative chartering of a new course may be imperative.

3. EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION – IDENTIFYING THE CONTOURS

3.1 Legitimate knowledge?

A first basic question should be raised as to whether there is adequate motivation for the production of *this* kind of knowledge – religious and theological – at a public university. The issue at stake is one of *epistemic legitimisation*. Is there a public need for such knowledge, and does it contribute to the common good? The state of the contemporary university is substantially different from that of the past: in a post-Christendom world, the medieval rationale for the inclusion of theology has lost its persuasion; on the other hand, in a postmodern horizon positivist disqualifications of religion have also lost their force. There is neither automatic privileging, nor outright dismissal, only vulnerable opportunity.[13]

The so-called 'turn to religion',[14] or in the memorable words of Habermas 'an awareness of what is missing',[15] generates unique challenges with regard to the question of religion/theology and the university. Reasonable expectation on the part of the university may presuppose that such knowledge may open new insights into the human and cosmic condition, that it may contribute to social well-being,[16] and be aligned with its mission and vision of non-discriminatory inclusion. Any religious community seeking partnership with a university for professional training can hardly expect epistemic privileging, and should be prepared to share the public ethos of a university.

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12 See, for example, the two articles which attempt to map the terrain: Kohl (2001) and Wingate (2005).

13 D'Costa (2005) offers a perceptive overview of the shifting fate of theology at a public university since medieval times. He indicates how theology has moved from the queen of the sciences to a contested discipline, "the laughing stock of the Arts Faculty" (D'Costa 2005:152).

14 For an informed and helpful discussion of the so-called post-secular condition and the new visibility of religion, see Ward (2009:117-158). He distinguishes three forms of the visibility: fundamentalism, deprivatisation and commodification of religion.

15 For his more recent appreciation of religion and his view of the relationship between faith and reason, see Habermas (2010). The volume also contains a number of important discussions of his thought by Roman Catholic scholars.

16 For a discussion of religion in the public sphere by four seminal thinkers, namely J. Butler, J. Habermas, C. Taylor and C. West, see Mendieta & Vanantwerpen (2011).

A historical account of the establishment of the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State will most likely disclose a narrow *ecclesial motivation*, the advancement of one Christian tradition, and more particularly one with deep conservative intuitions. The University of the Free State is no singular exception in this regard; a genealogical study of theology and the university in South Africa will most likely reveal denominational exclusion and privileging.

It is not difficult to identify the *transformational challenge*. A rationale is to be developed as to why the University of the Free State needs religion and theological knowledge at all.[17] The original motivation should be revisited and be argued in much broader terms. Such a reflection can only be mutually beneficial for both the University and the Faculty. If this is framed in terms of the dialogue between faith/religion and science, the University is protected against narrow sectional pursuits, and the Faculty against perennial devaluation. A university without the production of religious and theological knowledge will contribute to the impoverishment of the human mind; religion and theology without public rational scrutiny to the triumph of fundamentalism.

3.2 Nature of knowledge?

The previous aspect has already intimated the next and equally central question: What is the nature of knowledge as assumed by theology and religion? The issue in the focus of *epistemic self-reflexivity* addresses the crucial problem that human rationality and knowledge have been subjected to radical re-visioning in the twentieth century;[18] the study of theology and religion cannot escape such developments.

It is obvious that the intricate philosophical narrative since Kant's Copernican revolution, with the concomitant shift from metaphysics to epistemology, cannot be recounted in this instance. Suffice it to say that the twentieth century has witnessed a radical self-critique of Western modernity by philosophy, philosophy of science, hermeneutics, feminist and post-colonial studies. *Knowledge is not stable, objective, neutral and innocent.* Scholars such as Heidegger emphasised that interpretation is not optional, but Dasein's very mode of being in the world, Habermas that knowledge is always deeply intertwined with interests, and Kuhn that epistemic progress is not linear but takes place in the form of paradigmatic revolutions. For the exploratory purpose of this article, *four contributions* will be highlighted – that of Foucault, Said, Levinas and Hadot – which may have some clarifying relevance for theology and the issue addressed in this article.

In order to appreciate the nature of the challenge of epistemological transformation, no intellectual may be more helpful than the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Notions such as knowledge/power, episteme, discourse, archaeology and genealogy, advanced by him in *The archaeology of knowledge* and *The order of things*, demonstrate how

17 For a helpful discussion of three substantial recent books by Hauerwas, Shank and D'Costa arguing for inclusion of theology in a university's curriculum, see Kelsey (2009).

18 For an excellent overview, see Part 1: 'Understanding the epistemological predicament of the contemporary West', in Kirk & Vanhoozer (1999). See also Chapter 5: 'Reason in question', in Delacampagne (1999).

knowledge functions and determines the character of social institutions. His studies of psychology, medicine, law and sexuality reveal how knowledge functions as *social power and control*. Knowledge forms part of structural relations, in other words an episteme, which determines how facts are interpreted in specific cultural epochs such as, for example, the Classical and the Modern Age. The development from one era to another takes place through leaps and ruptures. What is exceedingly important in Foucault is his argument that knowledge is not only *embodied* in texts, but *in practices* and complex *systems of institutions*. Foucault can help one understand the role of a 'kuratorium' at a faculty of theology, and how the culture of an institution has developed over time.[19]

Edward Said (1935-2003), a Palestinian and post-colonial critic, acquired international fame with his work *Orientalism*, describing how the East is represented by Western scholarship. *Representation of the 'Other'* is fraught with the danger of prejudice and stereotyping. In his 1993 Reith lectures, he develops his understanding of the intellectual in terms of *representation*: the intellectual has the vocation of representing, especially those that are routinely forgotten or swept under the carpet.[20] The implications for theology and religion are obvious: representation forms a major part of intellectual endeavour. The question, however, is how does our knowledge accomplish that? Theology is intrinsically engaged in representing: it represents the Bible, history, views of theologians, the various Christian traditions and world religions.

Arguably no other thinker has placed the Other so central in his thought than the Lithuanian French scholar Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995).[21] In major works such as *Totality and infinity*, and *Otherwise than being*, he developed the notion that the traditional philosophical pursuit of knowledge is secondary to a basic ethical duty to the Other. *Responsibility for the Other* precedes any quest for truth, and founds the human subjective being-in-the-world. First, for Levinas, philosophy is ethical; it is responsibility. The face of the Other confronts the 'I' with an imperative. Knowledge in Levinas is not power, not so much representation, but responsibility. The implication of this for theology is profound: it grants a singular ethical orientation to knowledge.

Another scholar from whom much could be learned is the French historian of ancient philosophy Pierre Hadot (1922-2010).[22] In major works such as *Philosophy as a way of life*, and *What is ancient philosophy?*, he develops the central thesis that *philosophy is a way of life*, and that it consists of the practice of spiritual exercises. The widely diverging metaphysical epistemologies of ancient philosophy were merely hiding the common denominator: the question of living in the present. His work issues a serious critique of much of contemporary philosophy which distorts this original therapeutic effect. Ultimately, knowledge is in the *service of the good life*. This is no strange thought to theology, but renders the question acute: What effect does theological knowledge generate, and who or what is served?

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[19] Foucault's importance for education is widely recognised. See, for example, Dussel (2010).

[20] See the beautifully written *Representations of the intellectual* (1994: especially 9f.). The task of the intellectual is to unearth the forgotten that belongs on the same side with the unrepresented (Said 1994:17).

[21] The online *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* offers an excellent treatment of the philosophy of Levinas.

[22] For a brief but good summary of his life work, see Chase (2011).

3.3 Locating knowledge?

The question is often discussed as to whether theology and religious studies should be studied in a separate faculty or whether they belong intrinsically within the Humanities. Various configurations are also found in South Africa: separate faculties, schools in Humanities, departments in Humanities and even a divorce between a separate faculty for theology and religious studies as part of Humanities. The kind of *arguments* underlying these diverse arrangements should be carefully studied. Are they based on pragmatic administrative considerations – student numbers and financial implications – or are more fundamental convictions concerning the distinctions and interrelations between disciplines operative?

The small number of students studying theology and religion is a general phenomenon and rarely exceeds 3% of the total student population. To group these disciplines in a separate faculty is obviously problematic, but a deeper concern may be voiced: such an arrangement contributes to the *insular position* of theology and religion, and to perpetuating the old *split* between *faith and reason*. The typical medieval university arrangement rests on an episteme of human rationality which is not currently tenable. The insistence on the unity of human knowledge may promote a different constellation of disciplines.

To locate theology and religion as a school in the home of Humanities may generate a *number of advantages* which are worth considering. Such an epistemic arrangement relaxes the singular ecclesial focus, and develops an antenna for the *other publics* of theology; it deconstructs the myth that theology has access to *sanitised rationality*, and subjects theology to similar rigorous conventions of rational argumentation of the other sciences; it may potentially contribute to greater *multi-* and *interdisciplinary conversation* and *integration* between life and ultimate beliefs, and it holds the promise of advancing *other careers* related to theology and religion than only ordained ministry. The challenge and implication of locating theology and religion at a public university crystallises exactly here: *inclusive publics, accountable model of rationality, epistemic integration and career options*. If theology and religion should maintain a separate home, even for pragmatic reasons, these concerns cannot be ignored. Immunisation and privatisation of theology and religion can hardly be defended.

3.4 Whose knowledge?

The question about epistemological transformation finds its critical dimension in the dilemma of whose knowledge is to be produced? The Foucauldian coupling of knowledge and power can hardly be better illustrated than in the discussion on the reach of theological and religious knowledge. Two sets of problems crystallise: which *Christian denominational traditions* should be epistemically privileged, and which *religious traditions* should be served?

In a democratic South Africa with a multidenominational population and a non-discriminatory constitution, this set of questions becomes acute at universities funded by the state. This is, however, not a typically South African challenge, but one of the most widely contested areas

in public theological education internationally.[23] A brief survey of the situation in Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America will show diverse attempts to cope with deep historical Christian divisions and even deeper religious alienation. In Germany, the separation between Protestant and Roman Catholic theology is still stark. In the Netherlands, a success story has been accomplished at the Free University with ecumenical and multidenominational education.[24] In the United Kingdom, a fairly inclusive arrangement between Christian theology and non-Christian religions has been accomplished.[25] In the United States of America, a range of options are exercised: private seminaries, divinity schools at universities providing professional training for churches with separate religious departments. There are few truly inclusive and ecumenical institutionary examples.

The contours of the *challenge* are fairly clear: *just knowledge* is to be combined with *strategic knowledge*. This implies *space-making* for the religious and denominational Other, and extending hospitality to non-Christian religions and non-Reformed denominations.[26] The particular history of the Faculty and its unique social location in the Free State cannot be ignored. Ecclesial concentration and religious demographics should obviously be considered in this space-making. Strategically, the challenge will be to create a knowledge space that will uniquely serve the people of South Africa.

Fortunately, there are excellent intellectual *voices* that could serve as guidance in this transformation. Schüssler Fiorenza, from Harvard, has investigated the position of theology at that University in several articles and has established himself as a major scholar in this field. He questions the conventional understanding which views the relationship between theological studies and religious studies as a contest, assuming the one designates subjective faith and commitment, and the other objective and disinterested impartiality. In light of contemporary hermeneutical theory, this is no longer possible. He still distinguishes between them, in terms of different tasks, but emphasises the necessity of both. The one should focus on the reconstruction of the identity of a specific tradition, and the other on the representation of diverse religious traditions.[27] The importance and relevance of the work of David Ford from Cambridge cannot sufficiently be stressed. Writing with a conspicuous sense of wisdom, he advances the notion of 'New theology and religious studies'.[28] Against a background of the waning of church domination, and the unacceptability of secularism, both theology and religious studies are required at universities. The distinction between the two rests on two different tasks: one addressing normative and practical considerations and the other being descriptive, analytical and explanatory.

The easy part is to identify the epistemic challenge; it is much more complicated to intimate the concrete implications for transformation. Briefly, the following can be pointed out:

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23 This obviously excludes privately funded denominational seminaries.

24 Additional denominational specific training is provided for the PCN, for instance.

25 See the important report *UK Benchmark Statement on Theology and Religious Studies* (2007). Available online.

26 An important clarification should be added. This does in no way imply the continuation of present power relations. 'Extending hospitality' and 'space-making' mean that previously excluded voices become part of the central and dominant discourse. Power and a-symmetrical relations are redefined.

27 For a full discussion, see his 1991 article.

28 His 2011 work, *The future of Christian theology*, is exceedingly important.

- Theological and religious 'space-making' amounts to an *epistemic 'rupture'*, that is, shift of paradigm, or episteme. It will require a new look at the world, new habits of mind – post-colonial and post-imperialistic.
- A major ecclesial partner will have to re-conceive its relationship to public universities in South Africa. The traditional role of a church '*kuratorium*'[29] is untenable: how could one church supervise the production of knowledge at a public institution?[30] In defence of kuratoria, my impression is that there is a difference between what happens *de facto*, and what is expected *de jure*. For example, the Dutch Reformed Church in the Free State shows evidence of a clear understanding of the complex nature of the professional relationship between one denomination and the university.
- A challenging move takes place from *whose* knowledge to concrete *which* religions and denominations. The intellectual traditions and professional training conventions of some religions and churches preclude any expectation of involvement. For example, Judaism and Roman Catholicism do have private institutions. Any open invitation will inescapably involve *strategic positioning*. In the Free State, for example, demographic patterns cannot be ignored. One possibility is to explore African (traditional) religions still being practised in the region, and various forms of African Initiated Churches.
- New teaching *appointments*, representing new 'faces', will have to be considered as a priority. Persons from non-Reformed churches, but also practitioners of non-Christian religions, will not only attract people from non-traditional markets, but also contribute towards establishing a new identity for the Faculty. There is a simple educational theorem: faces attract students.
- The Department of Religious Studies offers unique opportunities for exploring 'space-making'.
- The most obvious place to start transformation is the *curriculum*. Curricula are spaces of contestation, and power plays. Space-making needs to start here.

It may be instructive to observe the *inspiration* of people and scholars who have travelled the journey of space-making. One such person is the well-known Roman Catholic scholar Hans Küng. During the Vatican II Council, he made substantial contributions. His critique of papal infallibility placed him on a new ecumenical and eventual inter-religious intellectual and personal trajectory. In his scholarly work, he not only explored the identity of Christianity, and fundamental questions such as the existence of God and eternal life, but also wrote comprehensive volumes on Islam and Judaism. He became well known for his notion of a 'global ethics'. In his old age, he even ventured into the faith-science debate. His ability to probe the truly 'great questions' of our time, to critique his own tradition and still remain

29 That is the ecclesial committee overseeing theological education of ministers for Reformed denominations.

30 See the informative interview: Question: "Wie beheer die teologiese fakulteite?" – Answer: "Die instansie wat namens die N.G. kerk oor 'n teologiese fakulteit toesig hou, is die kuratorium". See Nell (2010).

Catholic, to embrace with respect the Other, and to make global ethical contributions, could serve as an inspiration for many.[31]

3.5 Whose knowledge, once again?

The provocative title of philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre's work *Whose justice? Which rationality?* (1988) can equally apply to the academic study of Christian theology and religions. To argue for the broadening of knowledge representation in terms of other Christian denominational traditions and other world religions does not exhaust the challenge of the Other. Such an expansion may continue to dominate discourses and conceal the subtle power dynamics at work in the epistemic production process.

Attention to insights of educational studies, especially *Critical pedagogy*, may be advantageous to theology and provide keys to unlock new perspectives. In particular, a critical approach to *knowledge and curriculum* is important to the present discussion. Bernstein's (1971:47) statement –"How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control" – is particularly relevant also to theology and religion, and warrants careful reflection. Curriculum is 'socially organized knowledge' to use Young's apt description;[32] education is not a product, but is about selection and organisation of available knowledge involving conscious and unconscious choices, and is not divorced from wider social process. 'Truth strategies'[33] are continually applied to select, control and legitimise knowledge. The Christian church and theology have, over centuries, developed truth strategies to control so-called 'orthodox' knowledge, from the Inquisition through the present-day Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to the Reformed 'kuratorium'. The important point, in this instance, is not the control, but that legitimisation is not isolated from power relations in society. The deeper subtext of the alleged concern about orthodox knowledge tells a story of the struggle to resist social transformation and the relinquishing of power. In the South African context, the notion of 'behoudend' has always had two connotations – one theological and one social.

Theologically, a number of scholars and approaches have made contributions which should be considered when addressing the problem of epistemological transformation. Three of these can be highlighted. The fundamental theologian Johann Baptist Metz has theorised the notion of the 'theological subject'.[34] According to him, theology reflects middle-class religion, and is determined by the needs of privatised lives. As critic of bourgeois religion, he develops a 'political theology of the subject'. Prominent perspectives in his thought are 'memory of suffering' and 'solidarity'; he refers, for example, to the dangerous reminder of the freedom

31 See his short work *What I believe* (2009). This is essential reading for theologians who are in the process of contemplating epistemological transformation. The work also contains a list of his voluminous writings; see p. 201ff.

32 For a most enlightening discussion of the 'socially constructed character' of education, see Young (1975). The curriculum is a thoroughly political reality.

33 For a discussion of this, see Donald (1986:276f.).

34 See his major work *Faith in history and society* (1980).

of Jesus Christ. Since the 1970s, de-privatised theologies have been developed by various streams of *Third-world theologies*, especially those associated with EATWOT.[35] A fundamentally *different way of doing theology* was proposed, which amounted to an 'epistemological break'. Four emphases have crystallised:[36] the contextuality of all theology; the dialectic between theory and praxis; solidarity with the poor, and the epistemological significance of theology. Mainstream theology has severely resisted much of this, and the agendas have also shifted to other interests. However, it may be productive to return to some of these theologies; the concerns raised and the perspectives opened have not lost any of their significance. Especially the link between method and power remains applicable. A third suggestion for consideration is the more recent work by Joerg Rieger, *God and the excluded* (2001). Against the historical background of theology's successive developments – from a 'turn to the self', a 'turn to the Wholly Other', a 'turn to language and the text' – he advocates a turn to Others. Arguably, *this turn to the 'excluded' may be theology's most urgent and challenging agenda*.

Another way to formulate the challenge, distilled from the few theological examples given, is to speak about *epistemic compassion*.[37] Doing theology can basically occur in one of two spatial directions – from above and from below. A *theology from above* assumes – unconsciously or intentionally – that knowledge is neutral and objective; on a deeper level, this kind of theology is a-pathetic and sanctions existing social power relations. A *theology from below* recognises the decisive historical character of knowledge and the conflicting nature of social relations. Such a theology is willing to side with those who have been ignored and excluded, and values the notions of memory and recognition. For the sake of justice and compassion, the multiple ways of forgetting will be resisted. The following paragraphs will explore examples of possible *retrievals for Christian theology of the neglected Other.* It does in no way purport to give an exhaustive list.

Over the past forty years, Black and Feminist theologies have raised consciousness about sexism, patriarchy and racism, and have suggested alternative ways of doing theology and of construing the Christian vision. Despite the intellectual achievements, the question can be posed as to what extent these academic contributions have become part of mainstream theological education and have acquired curricular space.[38] Are these voices only treated as new trends to be dealt with apologetically and polemically, or are the *historical realities of patriarchy* and *racism* merely ignored? The disturbing reality in South Africa is how the dynamics of race/racism, as perennial challenge, are not on the theological agenda. Epistemological transformation implies changing this. An acquaintance not only with Critical Race Theory,[39] but also with the entire history of Christian theology struggling with the racial and ethnic Other, is an imperative for doing theology in South Africa[40].

35 EATWOT – The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians.

36 See the excellent article by Frostin (1985), especially p.134ff.

37 The notion of *vulnerability* is also worth exploring for epistemology. On vulnerability, see the new work by Culp (2010).

38 For a good treatment of curriculum and emerging voices, see Haworth and Conrad's article *Curricular transformations: Traditional and emerging voices in the academy* (1995).

39 See, for example, Gillborn and Ladson-Billings's article in *Education and critical race theory* (2010).

40 For a magisterial discussion, see Carter's recent work *Race: A theological account* (2008).

For over fifty years, the notion of 'African Theology' has been discussed, explored and advocated in theological circles. Whether it has really acquired the status of mainstream theology at universities in South Africa can be debated; it has remained a beloved stepchild. For this reason, it is discussed in this section as a voice that does not prevail in theological conversation. Epistemological transformation could imply positioning *African voices* centrally in theological discourse. There is a wider historical reality than the attempt to translate the Christian faith in African cultural and social idiom. Andrew Walls was one of the first scholars to draw attention to the demographic shift of gravity from the North to the South in Christianity.[41] Philip Jenkins's work[42] developed the insights by Walls, and explored, in particular, the theological significance of this shift and the greater prominence to typical pre-modernist features such as, for example, faith-healing and exorcism. When one compares the percentage of Christians in, for example, 1910 with that in 2010 in Africa, one realises that something significant has taken place.[43] The implications of this shift for theological education, especially in South Africa, have not yet been properly considered. One may even suggest that the constellation of challenges of epistemological transformation could find a *fulcrum* here: to allow *a radical African turn in theology*. This may imply reading with African eyes, retrieving African agency in church history, construing the Christian vision in dialogue with an African symbolic world, and pursuing African rhetorical patterns for preaching.[44] The pressing challenge is to develop African Christian scholarship.[45]

These retrievals highlight two important requirements for doing responsible theology, namely *theoretical frameworks* and *curriculum practices*:

- The face of the Other renders naïve realism with its twin sister – positivism – inadequate as framework for doing intellectual work. Most theological work is trapped in this deceptive theoretical paradigm that knowledge can be sanitised from wider social conflict. The nature of the current state of scholarship on human rationality, and the social imperatives in South Africa require more sophisticated practices: knowledge should be interpreted in theoretical frameworks. Critical Theory and Post-Colonial Theory are particularly applicable to the South African context.
- The Other should be accorded curricular space, not only as 'recent trends', but also as dominant perspective. All the curriculum practices – learning outcomes, learning experiences, learning material, for example – should reflect this respect of the Other. The operative canon of textbooks clearly speaks of exclusion. At the most basic level textbooks should be changed.

41 See the interesting and informative interview with him – Stafford (2007).

42 See especially *The next Christendom* (2002).

43 The 2011 Pew Report gives detailed statistical analysis for Africa – 1.4% in 1910 and 23.6% in 2010; for Europe – it has decreased from 66.35 to 25.9%.

44 Maluleke's article (2005) gives an impression of how diverse and complex African theology has become.

45 See the seminal article by Walls, *Christian scholarship in Africa in the twentieth century* (2002).

3.6 What knowledge?

As one of the primary functions of the university, *research* deserves careful scrutiny when epistemological transformation is investigated. The question to be addressed is: What knowledge should be generated? My basic conviction is that research has an ethical component which is sadly neglected, and which moves into focus when radical transformation is at stake.

The Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State has always been proud of the number of doctoral theses completed, and the number of annual accredited research outputs. It would be particularly revelatory if a databank could be compiled of completed research over a period of thirty-five years, and the research problems and alleged academic contributions be analysed. My hunch is, allowing categorically space for notable exceptions, that the research will be riddled with a pattern of disturbing features: lack of conspicuous research foci in departments; reproduction and reconfiguration of existing knowledge; intradisciplinary and intra-ecclesial concerns, and negligible impact and recognition. In brief, after three decades of toil, what *significant new* insights in the human condition and social exigencies have been generated, and which have been recognised as such?

It is easy to identify the challenges. A *research ethos* has to be cultivated which faces courageously the *ethic of departmental research agendas*, and a *criteriology* to be articulated which delineates qualifications for *significant* research. Counting research outputs and refining procedural matters do not penetrate to the root of the challenge. Two capacities are obvious requirements: the capacity to discern the 'cries of our time', and the capacity to command comprehensively the state of scholarship in the respective disciplines. Minimally, 'significant research' in theology and religion will signify research which demonstrably advances the state of scholarship on identified problems, and contributes to new insight into fundamental existential, social and cosmic challenges. Because theology and religion claim to deal with ultimate reality, such ambitious language is entirely appropriate. The notion of 'big questions' should be rehabilitated.[46] What should count as a 'big question' will obviously be contested. At least, the matter deserves serious theorising.[47] The challenge could be conveyed as a shift from quantity to *depth*: this spatial metaphor will then refer not only to intellectual rigor, but also to the very nature of the problems pursued.

The shift from the trivial and provincial to the significant in research is not a smooth linear process. It will require expansion of mental worlds of scholars, an escape from the confines of intradisciplinary problems, and an effort to relate intellectual work to the wider human quest. For theology, which purports to address ultimate realities such as cosmic origin, Transcendence, evil, salvation, and *telos*, this *shift to the significant* is imperative. This will obviously involve that individual subject disciplines be relocated to a wider intellectual

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46 It is instructive that an intellectual such as Terry Eagleton, with strong Marxists sentiments, advocates that questions that *really matter*, such as love, evil, death, morality, metaphysics and religion, be addressed again. See his *After theory* (2003).

47 The work by K. Ward, *The big questions in science and religion* (2008), should be noted as an example of how this could be done. He raises fundamental questions and then addresses them from a (natural) scientific and multi-religious perspective.

debate on natural science, technology, politics, economics, and ecology. If this does not happen, the theological subject disciplines ossify in futile self-occupation. Epistemological transformation implies this relocation.

3.7 Identifying knowledge?

An expansion of a faculty's range of knowledge production inevitably highlights questions about *identity*. An epistemic rupture understandably destabilises traditional identity makers. The 'naming' of theology becomes a logical enterprise after knowledge has been broadened. What theology will be produced at the Faculty? This is *the issue* discussed in this section.

Historically, at the University of the Free State, the impulse was to add some kind of qualifier to Reformed. For many – whether ever officially decided or not – it was 'behoudend', that is conservative. The 2004 Strategic Plan described the theology produced as 'Evangelical Reformed'; with the 2008 Plan the notion of 'behoudend' was intentionally avoided, and the kind of theology practised was named 'Classical'. It can be questioned whether these attempts at naming the theology with a single 'label' did in any way determine the actual theology produced, and whether there has been a uniform understanding of what these labels represent. My impression is that individual departments have started probing new avenues of doing theology regardless of these labels.

The critical issue, in this instance, is how does *identity construction* concretely take place. Institutional selves are like personal selves: complex realities which are evolving and socially constructed. An attempt to reduce a self to a single essence contributes to a distortion of identity. A productive way of thinking about identity may be offered by the so-called 'turn to relationality': the self cannot be thought of without relation to the Other. The implication of this anthropological insight, when applied analogously to a theological institution, may be profound. Is a *theological identity* construed by way of *exclusion* of the Other – denominationally or religiously – or by way of *inclusion*? Few theologians have written with the same acumen about identity and Otherness than the Croatian Miroslav Volf.[48] Notions such as 'inclusive identity', 'embrace of the Other', 'community of embrace', 'space making for the Other' have gained currency with his work. Thinking about theological identity along these lines may be profitable.

I *suggest* the following for identity formation in light of epistemological transformation:

- That the effort to identify theology with a *single label* be dropped as a futile venture.
- That a clear *distinction* be made between *self-identification* and *public perception*. Experience has taught that well-intended self-constructions can widely differ from perceptions held by stakeholders. Energy should rather be spent on reflection about *image projection* and *perceived identity*. Various academic and intellectual practices form public perceptions and these may be crucial for the future of a faculty.

48 See his article *Living with the Other* (2002) which succinctly summaries his thoughts.

- That the *threefold 'publics'* of theology identified by David Tracy – church, society, academia – be considered to give direction to the development of a *spacious theology*.[49]
- That, instead of a single adjective or denominational descriptor, rather a number of *epistemic values* be identified which could guide theologising and image formation. The following could be considered: ecumenical openness, multi-religious respect, social concern, African orientation, and multidisciplinary dialogue.
- That the kind of issues, the *intellectual problems* which a faculty addresses will ultimately determine identity. One example from South Africa may serve as illustration: it may be instructive to ask why a South African theologian such as John de Gruchy has such an international stature. Arguably, not only the quality of his scholarship, but also the very problems he addresses within a specific social location can account for this. To chart his theological biography in relation to social developments in South Africa may be illuminating.[50]
- That the *language* a faculty speaks contributes decisively to identity. The linguistic turn has raised awareness that language works, that it performs, and that it construes mental worlds which we inhabit. When words such as 'hospitality', 'embrace', 'vulnerability', 'complexity' are used, new ways of viewing the world, new ways of being in the world emerge.
- That the notion of *public theology* be carefully weighed as an approach to doing theology in South Africa. Public theology has gained prominence and credibility over a wide front.[51] The question to be answered is whether it can sufficiently address the challenge of diverse Others, and the perennial social conflicts.
- That the intensely *polarised horizon* of theological reflection in South Africa be duly recognised. The social shifts and the concomitant mental disruption have either led to disillusionment or hardened fundamentalism.[52] Both these religious pathologies should be avoided when situating a theological course.
- That Schüssler Fiorenza's *question* deserves to be carefully pondered: 'What kind of theology is appropriate to the university?'.[53] This question conveys an important insight: not all theology is necessarily valid within the borders of a public university. Fiorenza's approach is an extended hermeneutical model, which advocates the presence of both theology and religious studies.

49 See the article by Bosch (1991) for an application of the three publics to theological education.

50 See, for example, how he views his own intellectual journey in *Constructing a South African theological mind* (2008). He employs key terms such as 'confronting heresy', 'restoring justice', 'celebrating freedom', 'affirming humanity', 'living in hope'.

51 For informative discussions of the state of scholarship on Public Theology and the diverse understandings associated with it, see Koopman (2009) and Thomas (2011).

52 This is well illustrated by two recently published books: *Die Trojaanse Perd in the N.G. Kerk*, and *Hier staan ek* ... These two books represent two entirely different paradigms of doing theology.

53 For a comprehensive discussion, see Schüssler Fiorenza (1993:35).

To argue for *space-making* at a faculty of theology may create a number of serious and valid questions which should be carefully addressed: Is knowledge production in a faculty with various traditions possible? Would space-making mean the end of Reformed Theology? Not emotional arguments, but the study of tradition as such should be invited to the conversation. For example, work by MacIntyre and the South African project on 'Transforming traditions'[54] may be fruitfully employed. Traditions are not fixed and petrified realities that should be transferred intact from generation to generation, but they are vibrant and living worlds in which human beings live, open to evolution. The factual situation at a faculty with a dominant confessional character is that incremental changes have been taking place. Bibliological studies have freed themselves from a confessional paradigm with the emergence of historical consciousness; hybridisation in various other disciplines such as, for instance, systematic theology and practical theology, is under way. De- and re-traditionalising are subtly taking place, rendering fears of losing Reformed Identity, for example, slightly misplaced. Two matters should be distinguished: the actual practice of theology and the confessional 'control' of a faculty in terms of teaching appointments. There is no need for confessional monopoly on teaching appointments to have students trained for a specific confessional vocation. A model which allows for a broad-based ecumenical intuition complemented by houses of study of particular denominations may be the future of theological education. With creative curriculum developments in terms of core fundamental and elective modules, space can be created for various traditions. The deep irony of monopolising faculties can be observed in a denomination's inability to come to terms with the Other and with plurality in South Africa. Knowledge has revenged itself once again. Space-making at university level contributes to space-making in social life. Identity is formed with the Other, in relation to the Other.

3.8 Encyclopaedic knowledge?

A wide range of theological disciplines have developed in the course of history, each with its own ecology – object of study, internal methodologies, academic societies – and rather impenetrable borders of demarcation. Much of this has become ossified, and to question the rationale of disciplines is a futile attempt. The internal organisation of theology[55] or, in other words, the encyclopaedia has become a matter of contention. Influential models, like those by Schleiermacher[56] and Kuyper,[57] have been developed.

Voices have emerged which question the fragmentation,[58] and have advocated an 'end of the theological encyclopaedia'.[59] The decisive influence of modernity and its pluralising tendencies are undeniably at work in the traditional encyclopaedia. The dangers of compartmentalised knowledge, devoid of any meaningful integration of deeper human issues and the retreat into

54 See the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 2011*, issue 139. Vosloo's work on MacIntyre is especially relevant for this discussion.

55 For a sound discussion, see Pannenberg (1976: Chapter 6).

56 See Crouter (2005).

57 For a general discussion of Kuyper and theological education, see Bratt (1996).

58 See Farley (1983).

59 For a brief and sound discussion, see Osmer (2008:231-240).

intradisciplinary problems have become too real to ignore. The adverse effect on theological students is particularly obvious when, for example, a central task such as preaching is to be undertaken. From an educational point of view, this fragmentation can be validly questioned.

The argument is often advanced that nothing is gained by discussing the issue of departmental contraction from six to, for example, three departments. A re-organisation of the entire scope of knowledge, transferred and generated, may have substantial material advantages. If theology is *contracted to three departments*, namely Religious Literature, Religious Praxis, and Religious History and Thought, there will still be adequate scope for denominational and religious specificity, as well as traditional disciplines. This will promote the integration of knowledge, interdisciplinary exchange, and potentially deeper probing of fundamental human and religious issues.[60]

3.9 Programming knowledge?

It is obvious that students do not study isolated subject disciplines, but pursue *programmes of study*, which are carefully constructed units of diverse disciplinary modules aimed at achieving specific outcomes, most often in light of career options. The way in which these units of study have been 'assembled' reveals a great deal about a faculty of theology's self-understanding of its *primary function* and about *deeper interests* influencing decisions: how education as such is perceived, and which constituencies are primarily served. At the University of the Free State, the structure of the B.Th./B.Div. and the M.Div. programmes has been developed for one specific church's professional needs. When such programmes become structurally exclusive, it is obviously problematic.

The *challenge* is not difficult to point out: to identify under- and postgraduate programmes to be offered will require a consideration of the actual social and ecclesial needs and imperatives, and of strategic positioning. Such construal should be based on the results of empirical studies, on the discernment of the exigencies in society, and on creative strategic thinking.

The following *suggestions* give an indication of what epistemological transformation may signal:

- The *number of programmes* offered should be balanced with available capacity and potential student numbers. It is, on both accounts, ethically irresponsible to offer too many programmes which cannot be developed with quality and to attract so few students that there is no intellectual interaction in the classes.
- To penetrate *non-conventional markets* will require that dormant programmes such as the Dip.Th., Adv.Dip.Th. be re-developed. The Faculty is probably at a juncture where the traditional flagship programme should be changed.
- Unique postgraduate programmes to explore *niche markets* – M.Biblical Spirituality, Jonathan Edwards Studies, and Pastoral Therapy – are already offered. Similar unique programmes can be further developed. An M.Phil. or Adv.Dip. programme

60 The following work was not available to me, and may be worth consulting: Welker, M. & Schweitzer, F. (Eds.), 2006, *Reconsidering the boundaries between theological disciplines* (Münster: Lit Verlag).

in Reconciliation Studies will address a distinct social need and strategically position the Faculty.

- A programme in Religious Studies, which may open *non-conventional career options,* should be investigated. This will require a sensitive antenna for shifting needs in society.

3.10 Preserving knowledge?

It may come across as idiosyncratic to single out library development as a substantial element of knowledge transformation; a second look may confirm the importance of this. The *question* is: What knowledge and whose knowledge are deemed to be important for preservation and for future generations? An audit of library collections for various disciplines may terrifyingly reveal a great deal about ethical attitudes of departments towards the collective human quest for truth and wisdom. Reminding oneself of the central role of the book and libraries in the rise of Christianity,[61] one cannot dismiss this critical element in epistemic revitalisation. My impression is that library development for departments is a fairly *ad hoc* practice, with little long-term and strategic planning.

The challenge is not too difficult to name: knowledge preservation with an acute ethical sense of responsibility to the common good. This will *minimally* imply the following: acquisition of standard academic work, respect for a range of voices of the Other (especially non-Protestant Christian traditions, non-Christian religions, African scholarship), and thematic work relevant to the South African dilemmas. Library development is not only a crucial part of scholarly responsibility, but it is also an exercise in ethics: What knowledge is valued for future generations? Framing the task in such a manner – of ethics and the Other – conveys the intrinsically ideological nature of library development.

3.11 Networking knowledge?

In his magisterial work on intellectual change in great civilisations – *The sociology of philosophies* (1998) – Collins emphasises one basic condition: the critical importance of networks and intensive conversation. His work deserves attention by theology. Theological faculties do have networks – churches, other theologians and institutions, as well as academic societies. The question is whether these networks and societies contribute to intellectual inbreeding, or whether they stimulate the generation of new knowledge.

In South Africa, reformed theology has always been oriented to the Netherlands and, to some extent, Germany. Individual theologians at the University of the Free State have started to make overtures to colleagues in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. An analysis of these relations demonstrates a love for the Same: White, middle-class men from mainline Protestant traditions.

61 See, for example, the fascinating work by Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the transformation of the book: Origen, Eusebius and the library of Caesarea* (2008).

The challenge in light of epistemological transformation would include at least the following possibilities:

- Maintain existing relations, but initiate courageously *non-conventional ones*, with institutions and scholars, women and men, from the Southern Hemisphere. Interaction with some Black theological institutions in the United States of America, for example, may provide new intellectual insight and enrich our very humanity.
- Engage in rigorous *interdisciplinary conversation* with colleagues at the University from, for instance, Philosophy, Sociology, African Studies, and Feminist Studies.
- Shift *benchmarks*. Institutions compare themselves with others in order to gauge their success. This has also happened with Reformed institutions in South Africa. In this case, comparison has always been to fellow Reformed institutions in the RSA, or in The Netherlands and the USA. Perhaps the range of what constitutes success should be expanded, and should include institutions in other parts of the world.

3.12 Embodying knowledge?

That knowledge is not dead blocks of propositions, but living cognitive engagements with historical reality, which result in symbolic universes and determine practices, is distinctly obvious in organisational life. The knowledge we value and live by is embodied in appointments, hierarchies, spatial arrangements, tea-room culture, and treatment of the stranger. Foucault has convincingly argued and demonstrated this in his work.

A knowledge dispensation that is honest about the pervasiveness of power and respectful of Otherness will transform the face of the organisation accordingly.

- *Spatial design* will be intentionally re-organised to exude hospitality.
- *Appointments* of lecturers and administrative personnel will reflect the rich diversity of human and faith traditions.
- *Practices* will intentionally seek community and a sense of belonging by all, especially students.

3.13 Imaging knowledge?

The public images of institutions are complex realities; they are formed over time and are exceedingly difficult to change. Theological institutions have similarly acquired images in South Africa and often led to public labelling. Fundamentally, the knowledge *produced* and *organisationally embodied* establishes these perceptions. Knowledge functions powerfully in the image business. Imaging implies much more than mere effective marketing. The following all contribute to form public perceptions: programmes offered, curriculum design, postgraduate research, publications, appointments made, guest lecturers invited, conferences organised, and public opinions voiced in newspaper columns.

The basic question to be answered concerns primary stakeholders and their legitimate expectation. To play to the audience of fundamentalist and reactionary people who resent

post-1994 developments and who harbour subliminal racist sentiments will be fatally toxic to any institution, and ethical problematic. Only an image which is built on justice, inclusiveness, and an embrace of the Other will secure an institution's future.

3.14 Performing knowledge?

During the twentieth century, the performing effects of language and knowledge have been decisively realised; they do not merely inform, they also work. We do things with words and knowledge. This has naturally generated a close link with Ethics, and scholars such as Zagzebski even developed *virtue epistemologies*.[62]. A number of prominent thinkers such as MacIntyre and Ricoeur explored the link between knowledge, morality, community and phronesis (practical reasoning).

The issue and the challenge are clear: What personal identities result from our theological knowledge production? Do our disciplinary knowledges cement forgetfulness, prejudices, myopic visions, or insular practices? Or do we facilitate *identity formation*, enabling people to live with practical wisdom, appreciating their contingency, embracing the Other, contributing to the common good, and accepting historical ambiguity? When Appiah refers to the 'Ethics of Identity',[63] universities and their subject disciplines cannot escape this responsibility to their students. The question is: Who are theological graduates? Have 'catholic persons' been formed to use Volf's beautiful description?[64] Epistemological transformation implies raising these questions to the level of reflection and intentionally account for it.

4. EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION – PICTURING THE CHARACTER

The question does persist: What is transformation? The various dimensions, contours, and aspects identified in the previous section bring some clarity. An additional way to conceptualise it is to suggest two positions, as transformation implies a movement from one position to another. These 'positions' should be understood as a heuristic device, a manner of contributing to problem-solving. They could represent two ways of viewing life, two interpretations of reality, and two 'habits of mind'. These two positions ultimately represent two epistemological postures, which are embodied in educational practices and promote two social visions.

These multiple ascriptions to the two positions are intentional: at the basis is an assumption that 'epistemological transformation' is *equivocal*, and will resist an attempt to reduce it to a simple essentialist proposition. It encompasses a habit of mind, includes practices, and results in structural dispensations.

62 See her work *Virtues of the mind* (1996).

63 See his 2005 work.

64 *See After our likeness* (Volf 1998:278ff.). It is significant that Volf links Otherness and Trinity in his work.

Knowledge 1	**Knowledge 2**
Self	Other
Controlling	Hospitable
Exclusive	Inclusive
Insular	Ecumenical
Bourgeois	Liminal
Forgetting	Remembering
Above	Below
Simple	Complex
Intradisciplinary	Interdisciplinary
Closed	Open
Foundational	Web-like
Certain	Ambiguous
Indicative	Subjunctive
Polemical	Dialogical
Therapeutic	Disruptive
Fearful	Hopeful

This table may be helpful to plot the culture of an organisation. Reality is obviously ambiguous and complex, and much of life happens in the 'grey areas', in-between. However, organisations have *basic orientations* which allow labelling in terms of K1 or K2 character.

5. EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION – MAPPING THE CURRENTS

The resistance to identify 'essences' is currently so overwhelming in scholarship and intellectually persuasive that one should not succumb to the pressure to name the crux of epistemological transformation in a few propositions. However, to point to *currents* flowing beneath the contours discussed earlier may be helpful to advance discussion. The following can be highlighted:

- The current faith/reason challenge is no longer so much in the stranglehold of modernist rationality; it has typical postmodern features. It is no longer about faith within the bounds of reason, as it is a question of *knowledge and power*. Put differently, the finger of Kant was replaced by that of Foucault. This creates a different challenge to which one should respond. *Ethical accountability* has eclipsed empirical evidence.
- The controlling metaphor for thinking is most likely spatial.[65] The challenge for theology is expansion, an outwards movement. To translate this spatialising moment in theological terminology: it is a *catholic moment* for theology; in other words, seeking the *wholeness* of religious and Christian truth. This spatial journey, living the catholicity of the truth, should go into various directions: sideways, downwards, and upwards.

65 It is fascinating that the first chapter in the comprehensive *The Routledge international handbook of the sociology of education* deals with 'spatializing the sociology of education'; see Robertson (2010).

- The challenge has a face: the *Other*. Denominationally oriented theology can no longer escape the faces of the Other – Christian traditions and non-Christian religions. Epistemological transformation should come to terms with *plurality and Otherness*.
- The faces of the Other do not encounter us as generic faces, but in their uniqueness, *suffering* and vulnerability. The Other has a name – I am a woman, I am Black, I am disabled, I am an African. Epistemological transformation implies acknowledging *historical conflicts* and *scholarly exclusion,* and embraces *curricular restorative justice.* The challenge is to think of space and justice jointly for the practice of theology and religion at a public university.[66]
- The contribution theology can make in the public sphere is to remain true to the heart of religion: *Transcendence*. Theology should seek an ever-increasing movement towards the Mystery of the world. For Christian theology, this is a journey to a deeper appreciation of the fullness of the triune God, and to a more creative understanding of all of life in this Love. Epistemological transformation calls theology out of the confines of bourgeois research to significant 'deep interpretation', to the great questions of our time. Theology should be *the-ology* – the scientific word about the divine under current conditions.

6. THEOLOGY TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE

The occasion for epistemological transformation at the University can be viewed as managerial pressure, or as a call to probe internal theological resources. *Theologising transformation* is dialectical and a hermeneutical project: it is receptive to social imperatives of otherness, inclusion, ultimacy, and so on, and responds by narrating the Christian vision, and by retrieving and reconstructing corresponding traditions. The faith answers may transform the very social imperatives. Only a few fragments can illustrate what this theological project may entail.

- The heart of the Christian vision is a specific understanding of Transcendence, the divine – the *triune God*. This basic confession of divine identity speaks of hiddenness, fullness, love, relationality, hospitality, and space.[67] The inexhaustible implications of this have been realised in twentieth-century theology. One of the valuable trajectories is an exploration of this religious pluralism.[68] The Christian vision of God is not hostile to other religions.
- The narrative of *Jesus Christ* tells the story of kenosis, of table fellowship with the Other, of resistance to empire. The incarnation is the embrace of the ultimate Other

66 Soja's notion of a 'spatial theory of justice', which he explores for city planning, can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the study of theology and religion. See his 2010 work, *Seeking spatial justice*.

67 This was the genius of Barth to view space as one of God's perfections. For a recent discussion of this Barthian contribution, see Rae (2011) on the *The spatiality of God.*

68 For an informed overview of this discourse, see Kärkkäinen (2004) – *Trinity and religious pluralism.*

– God assuming human nature. Death on the cross invites vulnerability into the very life of God-self.

- The *Holy Communion* places the memory of suffering centrally in the heart of Christian ritual. The Christian faith is a religion of remembering.
- The narrative of the *Holy Spirit* is the story of divine agency in its inexhaustibility. It speaks of God doing ever new, impossible, and beautiful things – constantly crossing boundaries.
- Christian *salvation* is pictured in a vast range of metaphors: becoming members of the kingdom, new life, justification, liberation, redemption, reconciliation, rest, and so on. The metaphoric range signifies the surplus of meaning: a restored relationship with the Ultimate Ground of being brings *healing* to every dimension of human and cosmic life. The Ephesian moment – peace and unity between alienated people – demonstrates the *historical nature* of restored relations.
- The *catholicity* of the church is a reminder of universalising and spatial thinking from the beginning of Christian history. These marks should be located in the conflicts of our time so that catholicity includes partisanship to the oppressed.[69]
- The final *telos*, the final cosmic hope is not a 'pie in the sky' but a city, welcoming nations upon nations. The Christian eschatological vision is incredibly inclusive and aesthetic. The kings will bring their treasures into the city and God's beauty will fill the city.

These few fragments of the rich Christian vision resist any closure, any exclusion, any forgetting. This vision destabilises our myopic epistemic systems and invites us to more beautiful identities, and to greater community. Also at the University.

69 See the magnificent treatment by Moltmann (1977) of the marks of the church. He interprets catholicity in terms of partisanship.

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THEOLOGY AND THE UNIVERSITY: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

Conrad Wethmar[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

It is self-evident that the traditional relationships between theology and the university that prevailed at the historically Afrikaans universities in South Africa earlier on in the twentieth century would inevitably be placed under pressure as a result of the political reconstitution process that occurred during the nineties. A constitutional dispensation that favoured Christianity was replaced by one that assumed an impartial position in respect of religious matters. At the same time, the question arose as to whether Christian theological faculties could still be maintained at state universities. If this question is closely analysed, it would seem that it is not only concerned with the institutional organisation of tertiary education, but that it is far more comprehensive in scope, and needs to be dealt with at a more fundamental level. The process of political reconstitution referred to above was embedded in, and accompanied by a comprehensive cultural-historical development which is not only a local, but also an international phenomenon. It is not only characterised by the political and economic elements observable at the forefront of events, but also, likewise, by cultural-historical factors that are fundamental to such a process, and which feature as concurrent phenomena during the course thereof. The cultural-historical forces referred to here are phenomena such as modernism, postmodernism, pluralism and secularisation. Currently, anyone who wishes to determine how the relationship between theology and the university in South Africa should be dealt with at this point in time, will need to take account of the influence of the mentioned cultural-historical factors on this relationship.

It is important to take note that these factors not only have an influence on theology, but also on the university as an institution. Any problematic aspects that arise in respect of this relationship cannot simply be attributed, in a one-sided manner, to one partner in the relationship. The question is thus not only that of whether theology belongs at the university in an epistemological or ideological sense. It is equally a question of whether, at a given moment, the university is the appropriate space where theology, as a discipline of faith, can come into its own, and where church officials can receive the career orientation that they need.

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In starting out by focusing on the fundamental question as to whether it is at all possible to link theology and the university in a compatible manner, it is necessary to determine, firstly, the characteristics that are peculiar to a university, and secondly, the defining characteristics of theology, as a discipline that presupposes faith and the church as the basic conditions of its existence. Only then can an attempt be made to find out how theology and the university stand – or should stand – in relation to one another.

2. THE MEDIAEVAL IDEAL OF THE UNIVERSITY

When one endeavours to arrive at a clear picture of the notion of a university, it is meaningful to do so not only by means of an abstract and systematising analysis of the nature of such an institution, but also by considering the way in which the university ideal developed historically. In this way, perspectives that would otherwise have remained concealed come to the fore.

Right from an early point in the history of the church, it was clear that the Christian faith did not preclude an intellectual culture. As a matter of fact, it is precisely in this regard that Christianity occupies a unique place in the history of religion. More than any other faith, Christianity became a reflective religion. This factor cannot be considered in isolation from the intellectual demands that are made by the fundamental role of Holy Scripture with regard to faith. The form of Holy Writ, along with its religious content, makes high demands on the ability of those who read the Scripture in earnest, to understand and to reflect on what is written therein (Ebeling 1981:6).

In the light of this factor, it is understandable that Christianity was involved in the coming into being of the university system. The first universities, namely those at Bologna and Paris, were established in the twelfth century; and by the end of the Middle Ages, there were approximately eighty universities in Europe (Ebeling 1981:8). And the striking factor is that, alongside of all the differences that existed between these universities, they all had one aspect in common – namely, a Christian character.

Naturally, this does not imply that the university originated from Christianity, or that the various sciences grew out of theology. What is indeed true, however, is that theology played a key role in the vision of unity that was prevalent in the mediaeval world-view (Vogel 1957:723). This can be ascribed to the fact that this vision of unity developed from a synthesis between the works of Aristotle, which were rediscovered during the early phase of the Renaissance, and the traditional doctrine of the church that had been passed down through successive generations. On the basis of this vision of unity, as practised in the mediaeval *studium generale*, the *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* came into being.

It is notable that this entire process was embedded in a historical-political development during which both the church and the feudal overlords started to lose their powerful grip on society. Studies began to be conducted in a broader context than the monastic and church schools to which they had been confined until then (Lategan 1989:28). Lay persons increasingly gained access to cultural development; and university graduates progressively began to form a new kind of aristocracy. In addition to the powers of *sacerdotium* and *imperium*, a third factor

developed which contributed to the harmonious and orderly functioning of the mediaeval *corpus Christianum,* namely the *studium* (Kasper 1982:20-21). The state, as well as the church, realised the importance of establishing centres of relative autonomy, in order to protect society against violations perpetrated in the name of patriotism or piety. They therefore purposefully made room for the university as a third factor of authority, so that there could be an institution in place to remind both the state and the church of their boundaries, in order to maintain the welfare of the entire community.

The characteristic elements of the university culture, as it had developed up to that stage, can be summarised in the following terms:

2.1 Universality

The work that was performed at universities was ecumenical in nature, in the sense that people of any nationality could take part therein. University procedures at the organisational and academic levels were more or less the same everywhere, and holders of academic degrees were permitted to provide tuition at any locality.

2.2 Diversity

Not only were a multiplicity of subjects studied at universities, but provision was also purposefully made for different accents and approaches within subjects. This was the case even when subjects overlapped with each other. Within the context of reflection on the relationship between theology and the university, an obvious factor that can be pointed out is that the coexistence of the doctrines of theology and philosophy was condoned. At that time, the term “philosophy” indicated those subjects that were determined by means of reason. As a matter of fact, it was precisely this grappling with, and involvement in philosophy that contributed, to a large degree, to the development of theology.

2.3 Community service

The mediaeval university did not interpret community service as something *additional* to its normal activities, but rather as something that flowed from the composition of the university itself. The faculty of the *artes liberales* formed the substructure for the “higher” faculties, namely those of medicine, law and theology. In this way, the university gave expression to the fact that it took the basic needs of human beings seriously. These needs pertained to liberation from illness; the struggle against injustice; and salvation in order to obtain everlasting life. The professions of the physician, the legal expert and the church minister corresponded to these needs. The university aimed to make a contribution in respect of the preparation required by persons who wished to serve in these capacities. Even the general preparation for the specialised studies required for these professions, as offered in the *artes liberales*, was regarded as a service to the community. At that time, *artes liberales* referred to the skills needed by a free citizen in order to function in society in a meaningful way. From the faculty of the *artes liberales*, the faculties of mathematics and physical science, as well as the humanities, would later develop (Meuleman 1991:1).

3. THE MODERN NOTION OF THE UNIVERSITY

A clear turning point in the development of the classical ideal of the university was reached with the founding of the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin in 1810. In accordance with this neo-humanistic-idealistic view of the university, thinkers such as Wilhelm von Humboldt and Johann Gotlieb Fichte took a stand against a development that had come to the fore in France since 1806, in terms of which the Napoleonic university was deprived of its autonomy and placed directly in the service of the state. In conjunction with this turn of events, vocational education was deemed to be the actual task of the university, with a view to promoting the stability of the state. In opposition to this development in the French context, Von Humboldt and his supporters developed a university *"im deutschen Sinn".* By this, they meant that the practice of science in a university context is not merely aimed at inculcating students with practically useful knowledge. The social purpose of the university is best served when the science that is practised there is pure science, in the sense that the truth is sought therein for the sake of truth itself. The exposure of students to the practice of science, in this sense, must lead to the unfolding and moral deepening of their personalities. This clearly implies that at this type of university, the values of freedom and independence are regarded as important. Truth can only be found in freedom, while objectivity always presupposes independence.

Another thinker who rendered an important contribution to the formulation of the modern notion of the university was John Henry Newman. He was convinced that the transmission of knowledge is not so much concerned with increasing the amount of information or the number of facts that a student is expected to be conversant with, but rather with the development of a "habit of mind" that remains with the student for the rest of his life, and which is characterised by "freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation and wisdom". In terms of this view, the transmission of knowledge is concerned with the cultivation of a "gentleman's" attitude to life. In the light of the foregoing notions, it is understandable that Newman defined a university as a place of education rather than a place of instruction. This also implies that a university should not be reduced to an institution that merely consists of a number of disconnected professional and technical training units (Newman 1982:108).

In the twentieth century, the university concept that was associated with the names of Fichte and Von Humboldt was expounded and elaborated on by, in particular, Karl Jaspers. He, too, emphasised the fact that it is important for a student to develop an aptitude for scientific thinking. This can be achieved by allowing the student to participate in the process of scientific investigation. The scientific disposition that Jaspers had in mind always has an moral dimension. By this, he meant that it goes hand in hand with a striving for objectivity, along with an openness to criticism, the exercise of independent judgement, a sense of responsibility and an awareness of the fact that one's own insight always has its limits.

In addition, Jaspers emphasises the premise that all knowledge, at its profoundest level, comprises a unity. This proposition links up with the fact that the reality which comprises the focus of knowledge is, in the final instance, a unified whole. Precisely for this reason, it is important that the different sciences should be investigated and taught within the unified context of the university. Since the teaching and learning process conducted at the university

is, according to Jaspers, inextricably linked to scientific inquiry, the university should not be too prominently involved in vocational instruction or professional training. However, this also means that the university should be surrounded by an entire constellation of institutions that focus specifically on vocational skills (Meuleman 1991:7).

This brief overview of the most important views that have been fundamental to the development of the university system in modern times makes it clear that the notion of the university is not an immutable given factor, but that it has undergone a history of re-interpretations that have found expression in a number of inherited characteristics that have effectively and persistently become associated with the university as an institution. To the characteristics of universality, diversity and community orientation that came to the fore in the mediaeval ideal of the university, the modern notion of the university has added the insight that the factor of community orientation, which chiefly finds expression in tuition, must be handled in such a way that it always occurs in close association with free and independent inquiry. Such inquiry should be conducted in a context where the unity of truth is presupposed, so that all the sciences, in principle, form a unified whole. In the Middle Ages, this presupposition was borne out by the fact that the university system arose in conjunction with theology, which proceeded from the premise that the whole of reality derives its existence, and the meaning thereof, from God. Although this point of departure came under pressure as a result of the secularising effect of the *Aufklärung*, it still continued – though in a weakened and anonymous form – to have an effect, in the form of the confidence in rationality and truth that has been displayed in the modern age (Kasper 1982:29).

The perspectives that have been presented thus far obviously do not comprise an exhaustive discussion of the notion of the university. It has already been pointed out that such an exhaustive treatise is not possible in principle. A perspective that has been omitted here, but which warrants urgent attention, is the question as to what implications the digital revolution that is currently being experienced would hold for the notion of the university as a community.

Furthermore, it is also true that the hereditary characteristics of the university invariably function within the context of a specific cultural and political dispensation – hence the fact that the reflections in this contribution have been presented within the framework of the current insistence of the South African education authorities on epistemological transformation in tertiary education. However, it is not my task to respond at length to this insistence, but only to make a few observations regarding the question as to whether or not the close coexistence of the university and theology is possible and desirable, in the light of the mentioned hereditary characteristics of the university, and if so, what form this coexistence should assume.

4. THE CHURCH AND THEOLOGY

An objection that is often raised against the presence of theology at a university is that it gives rise to inappropriate intervention in academic matters on the part of the church. According to this standpoint, church involvement in, and control over, the practice and teaching of

theology places academic freedom, as well as the multi-faceted methodological approach to the study of this discipline, under threat. One receives the impression that the advocates of this standpoint view the basic role of the church in respect of theology as the exercise of restrictive control, as applied by the church through the mechanism of confessional creeds.

In order to respond to the question as to whether this objection against church involvement in academic theology is valid or not, and to examine the general implications of church involvement for the nature of theology, it is necessary to engage in a closer investigation of the relationship between the church and theology.

The notion that the relationship between the church and theology could be problematical, is an idea that originated relatively recently. From the time of the early church, up to and including the period of the Reformed Orthodoxy of the seventeenth century, there was a close and self-evident relationship between the church and theology. Shortly after the *Aufklärung* of the eighteenth century, a discourse arose surrounding this matter, which, in the liberal theology of the nineteenth century, even led to the deliberate propagation of a secular theology. The Dialectical Theology of the early twentieth century responded to this by means of a purposeful programme of church theology, in which the *Kirchliche Dogmatik* of Karl Barth played a significant role. There are differences between the respective ways in which the relationship between the church and theology is explained and accounted for in the Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions. Since this contribution is presented within a context that reflects the Reformed tradition, I will confine my discussion to this tradition.

In the Reformed tradition, too, faith and the church are regarded as a precondition for the existence of theology. Thus, according to this view, the basic task of theology is the systematic explanation of the faith of the church and the critical evaluation thereof in the light of Scripture (Vroom 1998:420). Conversely, it is also true that the church's association with Scripture is mainly theological in character, in the sense that it also makes use of the methods and procedures of theology. Since theology, in the Reformed sense, chiefly consists of the study of Scripture, it is fundamentally hermeneutical in character. This hermeneutical theology forms part of the process whereby the message of Holy Scripture is proclaimed, and is thus also part of the chain of events in which the church fulfils its function as the church of the Word. Thus, in this context, theology is not viewed as a luxury, but as a necessity in the life of the church. And for this reason, the theological training of church ministers has been regarded as a matter of priority since the beginning of the Reformation. In this regard, however, a clear distinction was never made between a purely scientific theology, on the one hand, and a non-academic church theology, on the other.

But what significance does the association of theology with the church hold for the nature of theology? An answer to this question can be found by taking note of the implications of the classical characteristics of the church for theology.

On the basis of the first characteristic of the church, namely that of unity, the confessionality of theology can be inferred. The faith of the one church of Christ is a faith that is in search of, and is expressed in, a common creed in which the commitment to God that is shared by all the faithful can be articulated. Theology presupposes such a commitment – otherwise it merely

becomes a neutral and detached science of religion, in which belief in God is discussed, but in which there is no expression of actual faith in God, or of a relationship with Him.

In view of the second characteristic of the church, namely that of holiness, church theology is always linked to a particular spirituality (Van de Beek 1996). The sanctity of the church is associated with the fact that the lives of the faithful are an expression of the holiness that they receive in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. As a result thereof, their lives are bound together by a deep spiritual experience and moral concern. The possession of theological knowledge, which always implies being taught by God, also brings about a spiritual and moral orientation. In this regard, theology thus finds resonance, in formal terms, with the Socratic motif that is present in the classical ideal of the university, in which the cultivation and transmission of knowledge always go hand in hand with personal development and moral guidance.

The third characteristic of the church is its catholicity. Theological truth is closely linked to the catholicity of the church, and can only be realised if the church continues to strive, in an ecumenical context, towards the all-embracing eschatological truth of the gospel. In this striving, the creed of the church is both final and provisional at the same time – final, in the sense that it articulates a decisive bond between the believer and God, but provisional in the sense that God always transcends and exceeds anything that can be said about Him at any place, or at any time. And in view of this provisionality, our insights always remain open to correction. This correction occurs in the context of a dialogical process in which the perspectives of all times and places reciprocally affect each other, and in which orthodoxy becomes established as dialogical orthodoxy. This is a chain of events in which both confessionality and ecumenicity play a decisive role, and must be taken into account in the institutionalisation of the cultivation and transmission of theological knowledge. Before going into the question as to how this should be effectuated, it is firstly necessary to accord brief attention to the fourth dimension of the practice of theology, which corresponds to the fourth characteristic of the church, namely its apostolicity.

From the apostolicity of the church, the scientific character of theology can be inferred. The dialogical development of theological truth, in which opposing claims of truth confront each other from time to time, is dependent on a criterion on the basis of which these claims can be evaluated. According to the Reformed tradition, this criterion is provided by Holy Scripture. This implies that, in essence, theology is a hermeneutically scientific discipline whose main purpose is to provide a historical, systematic and practical interpretation of the Biblical text as the source and enduring basis of the Christian faith in God. The on-going challenge that confronts theology is that of preserving the identity of the Biblical message through ever-changing contexts, in such a way that the message retains its relevance for those who hear it. The study of ancient texts and the investigation of modern contexts, as well as the examination of the process whereby these two aspects are successfully brought into relation with each other, constitute a task which makes scientific demands of the highest order.

5. THE UNIVERSITY AND THEOLOGY

Now that the most important hereditary characteristics that gradually became associated with the university as an institution, as well as the way in which church affiliation influences the nature of theology, have respectively been considered in the foregoing sections, attention can be accorded, in conclusion, to the question of whether it is possible to bring the mentioned two factors into relation with each other in a mutually beneficial manner. This does not imply that it should be assumed, in advance, that a university faculty comprises the only possible form of institutionalisation for the practice and teaching of theology. A variety of institutions have been developed for this purpose over the centuries. In the early church period, they took the form of catechetical schools; during the early Middle Ages, there were monastic and convent schools; while from the twelfth century onwards, universities fulfilled this function. When universities became secularised and nationalised during modern times, independent seminaries and academies developed. I have already pointed out earlier on that it is not possible to make a watertight distinction between university theology and the theology that is practised in other institutions. In this regard, one could say that there are a multiplicity of possible types of institutionalisation for the purposes of theology, extending across a continuum ranging from a university faculty that is entirely independent of the church, and in which theology tends to develop in the direction of science of religion, at one end of the spectrum, to a seminary that is totally controlled by the church, where failure to do justice to the role of theology in the church may possibly come into play, at the other end. And in between these two extremes, there are a variety of possible ways in which the characteristics of a faculty could be combined with those of a seminary. An overarching category for these possible combinations, namely the *duplex ordo*, was developed in the Dutch context (Vroom 1998:429-431). Yet it would seem that the question as to whether theology is to be practised at a university or at a seminary is not a matter of principle, but rather an issue that is mostly determined by political, cultural or economic circumstances.

When one compares the various options with one another, however, there are a number of considerations as to why it is meaningful for a church to be involved in the practice and teaching of theology in a university context.

The first consideration that can be mentioned has actually already come under discussion. The church's hermeneutical task that goes hand in hand with the Reformed ideal of the church setup, in terms of which it must be the church of the Word, requires scientific work of such a nature that a university faculty, with the facilities that are available therein, is actually highly suitable for the purpose.

In the second instance, it may be said that when a church allows theology to be practised at a university, it thereby emphasises the importance of the Christian faith for society in general, since it places the knowledge pertaining to the faith within a context where the best knowledge that is available in a community is developed. By withdrawing from the university, the church would contribute to its own marginalisation in society.

As far as society is concerned, one would have to say, in the third instance, that not only does a factor of such historical and cultural influence as that of Christianity deserve to be studied

scientifically, but, for the sake of society itself, it should also be accorded the opportunity to render an account of itself at the highest level of academic excellence. In this way, religion can be prevented from becoming fundamentalist and fanatical. Apart from this, it is also in the interest of society as a whole that church officials should carry out their professional tasks with the highest degree of competence and accountability. In order to be able to do so, they must have access to, and undergo the formative influence of, the best knowledge available in the community. Normally, it is at university institutions that this is possible.

Furthermore, it is also important that theology, if it is really to serve the church in its endeavour to be a church of the Word, should have a certain degree of freedom in relation to the official structures of the church. Only then can theology serve the crucial function of the Word in relation to the church. The university traditionally offers a particularly favourable environment for the exercise of this freedom. This is because the university comprises that space within which knowledge is pursued for its own sake, where alternative standpoints are explored and where propositions and axioms are reconsidered.

Precisely in this regard, the question immediately arises as to whether the university context, with its ideal of academic freedom, can be reconciled with the confessionality that was mentioned earlier on. This question would only be answered in the negative by someone who equates confessionality with legalism. But in a Reformed context, the confessional creed has validity as the form in which the Holy Scripture repeatedly brings its authority to bear in new contexts that arise all the time. It is a dynamic, doxological and spiritual train of events with a liberating, rather than a restrictive effect. The Reformed tradition, with its ideal of *semper reformanda*, has no difficulty in reconciling firmness of faith with the open-mindedness that comprises a fundamental precept of academic freedom. If confessionality and freedom do not mutually exclude each other, would this not also apply to confessionality and ecumenicity? The anti-church sentiment referred to earlier on views these two dimensions as mutually exclusive. Yet it is a fact that true confessionality also includes a leaning towards ecumenicity. The Reformed tradition strives to be catholic, in the authentic sense of the word. For this reason, it should be possible to accommodate both confessionality and ecumenicity in the practice of theology in an institutional context.

In the light of the few factors that have been considered above, it would appear that it is indeed possible and justifiable to practise church theology in a university context. The procedures and methods of theology appear to be reconcilable with the hereditary characteristics that have gradually become associated with the university. Should the relationship between the university and theology become problematical at a given point in time, owing to the effect of the cultural-historical factors that were mentioned in the beginning, an endeavour can be made to resolve the problems by investigating various forms of co-operation between a university faculty and other institutionalising mechanisms that are peculiar to ecclesiastical and religious institutions. However, this issue raises a problem that needs to be dealt with separately (Vroom 1998).

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THEOLOGY AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

A. van de Beek[1]

1. WHY THEOLOGY AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY?

Some voices argue that theology should be excluded from the public university. Theology is labelled as exclusive and its claims are considered to be not verifiable (Adriaanse1987). Thus, theology cannot produce valid knowledge. There are, however, strong counterarguments to such a stance. Historical arguments should not be neglected; since theology formed the basis of universities historically, it is intriguing to investigate how modern scholarship relates to theology. There must be something in its founding enterprise that nourishes and provokes the knowledge production in the wide range of present-day disciplines. We should thus not too easily discredit theology.

A quite direct argument is that religion plays an enormous role in human life. Though not all human beings are religious, most of them are so in varying degrees. This could be stated even more compellingly: religion has a huge impact on political and even economic decisions in the twenty-first century. For instance, contemporary political constellations cannot be understood without taking into account the impact of Islam. Candidates for the presidency in the United States of America regularly use religious arguments to strengthen their position, because they are important to the voters. Germany's president is a former minister in the church, and its prime minister is a clergyman's daughter. After all its sustained efforts to erase religion, Chinese leadership is now convinced that they cannot establish a stable and tenable society without recognising a role for religion. They now promote religion according to their own standards, of course. Nevertheless, it is about religion as a reality and a significant practice. In addition, one does not yet take into account the role of religion in all other aspects of human life of the billions of people who have religious beliefs.

If universities aim to produce knowledge about reality, they cannot exclude this phenomenon that religion has a great global impact. This means that a university which takes its mission seriously cannot do without taking religion into account, and thus—since theology is critical reflection on religion—without the discipline of theology. A public theology that does not make room for theology makes itself sectarian. This implies that an influential part of reality is wilfully excluded from its research and education programme. This means not only that

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this part as such is simply excluded, but also that it impacts on the other fields of research and training. Reality does not consist of isolated entities. Rightly then, modern universities opt for interdisciplinarity. The reverse side is that it will impact on all other disciplines if legitimate fields are excluded. This is especially so if theology—as the reflection on religion—is barred, for religion is a major determinant in human life.

2. WHOSE THEOLOGY?

The debate should thus not be so much about the presence of theology as such at a public university, but about the *kind* of theology. Theology itself has a tendency to become sectarian and exclusionist. It was—and still is at times—often restricted to one specific religion or even one denomination that used its position at the university to propagate its own convictions. It was a theology of self-affirmation and thus uncritical. It was used as an ideological underpinning of power and positions.[2] This idiosyncratic approach is not the way in which theology can be organised at a public university, nor the way in which it should be allowed to operate. If a public university is really public, it must accommodate research and training of all religions indiscriminately. Only a pragmatic selection can be made if specific religions are not present in the relevant field in which a particular university operates; for instance, East-Asian Shamanism will not likely be a first option for research at a South African university. However, specific religions should not be theoretically excluded. No religion can be principally excluded, and no religion should have specific preferences. As a public institution, the university should be neutral with regard to religious claims. Only if, after thorough research, it might appear that religions do not meet the same standards as other religions do (and this will not be an easy project, in my opinion, because prejudice is always part of human research), can the results of such investigations be published, but this does not imply that they should be *excluded*, for they belong to human reality.

3. WHICH THEOLOGY?

Academic research usually begins with data and descriptions. In our case, this implies that religious studies is the first step of the theological discourse. All aspects of religion can be investigated and it is obvious that soon comparisons will be made. How do different religions operate in the fields of ethics, politics, and rituals? This is the easiest way for public universities to deal with religion and it is indeed the main focus of many institutions. One hundred years ago, when history dominated in the humanities, this took on the shape of history of religion; thus, origins and developments were the focus of scholarly research. At present, a sociological approach prevails: What is the function of religion in society, in shaping communities, in contributing to the wider society, in solving or creating conflicts, and so on? Both approaches make sense and can contribute to the description of the phenomenon of religion as variations of religious studies.

2 Examples are not only the South African universities in the time of apartheid, but also Roman Catholic universities in South European and Latin American countries as well as liberal protestant faculties in northern Europe a century ago, and Islamic universities in the Near East.

However, research at a university should go further and raise critical questions. Description is not neutral. The selection of materials is a choice and is steered by the interests of the researchers. This is even more so with respect to the skills of interpretation and comparison. What determines the making of comparisons? It makes a difference if one focuses on fear of the holy in comparing religions, or instead on their contribution to political ethics. Religion is about the deepest convictions and motivations of human beings; one should thus not easily overstep this issue.

Another question with regard to religious studies as an academic discipline is that it can describe religions, but that it cannot do so critically. As soon as researchers criticise religious convictions or practices, they call upon their own convictions—which they value higher than the religious convictions they investigate. At that very moment, they go beyond the neutral stance that a public university should have. So-called 'objective' researchers cannot judge the subjects of their investigations unless they do so from their own religious or meta-religious moral framework. If a university accepts such a critique, it opts for a specific religious or moral value system—and a public university should not do so.[3]

The formerly White South African universities are a good example of this. Previously, theology operated as an idiosyncratic system in support of the power of a specific group in South African society. Mere description without critique would imply that this specific group, now deprived of its dominant exclusive position, cannot be blamed for its convictions and practices. From a neutral point of view, apartheid is just as real as reconciliation. It can only be described, but not judged. If these universities, however, would make a U-turn and deal with all religious communities and meet the academic requirement of *critical* assessment of these religions, for instance their contribution to a multicultural society, it takes on a (meta-) religious stance itself and thereby loses its required academic neutrality. It will become itself idiosyncratic. The paradigm may seem more sympathetic at present, but structurally and methodologically it does not differ from the time when a specific value system judged all other systems. One can choose to do so, of course, but then one should do so consciously and admit that the university is not a place of independent academic critical research and training of students, but a servant of dominant societal philosophy. Once again, one can indeed do so, but one must make it clear that one does so and that the university now opts to serve a different ideology.

This leads to a dilemma: a public university should make provisions for the study of religion, in order to prevent sectarianism with regard to the reality it investigates. Yet, as soon as it responds to its academic calling to do so critically, it risks becoming idiosyncratic—and thus sectarian in a different way.

3 The volume published by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences and Humanities on theology at a university (Hilberink [ed.] 2004) provides good insight into the ambiguous approach to theology by academic scholars. See especially the contribution by Paul Schnabel.

4. FILLED NEUTRALITY

Considering this dilemma, I developed the idea of *filled neutrality* (Van de Beek 2000:38; KNAW 2000:20).[4] It is not a kind of neutrality that merely offers descriptions in the way that traditional scholars of history of religion once thought they provided. Being uncritical, they were not aware of their own presuppositions in collecting, selecting and interpreting their materials. In other words, they were not able to critically assess the religions they studied—or at least they should not be able to do so—even though they often did so because of their own prejudices. The proposed stance of filled neutrality also escapes from (in order to be critical) judging religions from an outside perspective, and thus falling into another idiosyncrasy.

Filled neutrality means that the public university makes provision for all religions and philosophical worldviews that need to be present at a university. They are not assessed by external criteria, but they are challenged to develop their own internal critique. The subjects of academic investigations should not be judged by outsiders with other religious or meta-religious moral frameworks, but by criteria of their own internal critical power.

A filled neutrality implies that religious communities are invited to enter the university and to contribute to its research and education. In order to be accepted as such, they must fulfil the normal academic standards of critical analysis and rationality. Otherwise it is impossible to communicate and assess academic standards.

Furthermore, besides the academic attitude of the persons involved, such a placement requires the possibility of internal critique within the religious community. If it were merely to develop as it goes, and no standards or other criteria are accepted or present, a critical assessment would be impossible. In that instance, such a religion cannot participate in a university. Most religions, however, have standards that must be adhered to. These are often written or oral sources. By referring to these standards, one comes to theology in a proper sense: the present practices and expressions of the believers are critically assessed with regard to the standards that are part of the tradition. How these standards should be applied depends on the specific character of the community and is to be part of its internal critical process. However, it is a hermeneutical process, for theological researchers are critically assessing the present praxis in light of the standards.

The impact of such an internal critique should not be underestimated. It is the classic reformed adage, borrowed from the Renaissance: '*Ad fontes*'. The consequences of an internal critique can be noted in the sixteenth-century reformation, in both its Protestant and Roman Catholic form. If the theological faculties in South Africa would have dared to do the same some forty years ago, it would have caused an enormous crisis in theology at that time. For, if professors and students would have traced the beginnings of Christianity 'from the sources' and their first interpreters, instead of using their time and energy for idiosyncratic

4 The advices in Van de Beek (2000) are, to a great extent, implemented in the Netherlands, not through solid policy, but due to the urgency of historical developments. The multi-religious and multidenominational faculty of VU University functions as the main centre of theological research and training with the faculty of the University of Groningen as an alternative for classic protestant theology and religious studies and the Catholic University in Tilburg for Roman Catholic theology, next to a couple of specific denominational theological institutions.

underpinning of a specific form of Neo-Calvinism, they would have discovered, for instance, that early Christianity was ultimately pacifist and sought to steer clear from political issues (see Van de Beek2005; 2008: 241).[5] They would have discovered that exclusion, for any other reason than not belonging to Christ, was condemned as breaking the bonds of the one Spirit and the one body of Christ. Likewise, if radical Moslems would not only follow their present political interest, but also critically investigate the sources of Islam, a radical re-orientation of Islamic thought would be unavoidable.

Not only written sources can provide the critical tools for theology. It might also be the oral tradition of life-orientating stories as in African Traditional Religions. Or it might be a set of classic values or rituals that a religion keeps. It suffices if there is merely a certain distance between the lived praxis and a critical standard to which the religion itself calls its members.

A critical approach is impossible if such a standard is lacking, and consequently a fitting place in the academy is impossible. This does not imply a condemnation of that religion, but only that it cannot have a place in the academy, because critical assessment is the very business of the latter.

Questions can originate from the internal dynamics of religions and can also be raised by outsiders. If a religious community wants to operate in a public university, it must be willing to deal with any question. This is normal academic practice: any discipline has to respond to critical questions raised either from its own dynamics, or from related disciplines, or from the wider society. This does not mean that these outsiders should answer the questions. This would relapse into another idiosyncrasy. The questions should be answered in the perspective of the community itself, even though they should be answered in such a way that the responses can be communicated with the questioner. This manner of operating is an enormous challenge for theological communities at a university. Yet it is one of the main sources for the production of theological knowledge: What does religion, in this instance this specific religion, mean in the present context in the confrontation with a critical presence of other religions and worldviews? Religions that are present in a university will and should be challenged to answer questions and to put questions to each other. This is not so much in order to convince each other of his/her own right, but in order to critically understand what is really at stake for them. This process is not only applicable to research, but also to teaching and training. Students should be exposed to the critique of people from other traditions, other worldviews and other convictions, and not be allowed to answer with a mere "This is just what I believe". They should be challenged to answer *why* they believe this and what it means. As an example: Christians cannot suffice by traditional answers to the question

5 See especially Origen, *Against Celsus* 8,73-75, and Tertullian, Apologeticum 38:

> Ought not Christians, therefore, to receive not merely a somewhat milder treatment, but to have a place among the law-tolerated societies, seeing they are not chargeable with any such crimes as are commonly dreaded from societies of the illicit class? For, unless I mistake the matter, the prevention of such associations is based on a prudential regard to public order, that the state may not be divided into parties, which would naturally lead to disturbance in the electoral assemblies, the councils, the curiæ, the special conventions, even in the public shows by the hostile collisions of rival parties; especially when now, in pursuit of gain, men have begun to consider their violence an article to be bought and sold. But as those in whom all ardour in the pursuit of glory and honour is dead, we have no pressing inducement to take part in your public meetings; nor is there anything more entirely foreign to us than affairs of state.

of why they believe in a Trinitarian God if confronted by Muslims in the same class who interrogate them on the topic. What does it mean to believe in one God who is Trinitarian? Why does one believe so and how is this seemingly square circle possible? Muslims have to answer the question of how an absolute monotheistic God can interact with a world outside God. And both have to respond to how a call to kill people who do not belong to one's own community (such as Deut. 7 and Sura 2:191-193) relates to a God who is called 'Love' or 'the Almighty and Merciful'.

Such a *filled neutrality* is a real contribution to academic knowledge in the understanding of religions from the perspective of their own self-understanding, challenged by their own sources and by questions of outsiders. It will also contribute to mutual understanding in society and avoid caricatures of other people. It will be a remarkable step forward if the imam and the reformed minister of a town know each other from the classroom setting, understand each other's language, and teach the people in their communities to do the same. It will be a step forward if the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, the Pentecostals, the Reformed and the Roman Catholics are trained in the same school and have learned to be criticised by the same sources as well as the broader Christian interpretation of community of the entire world and of all centuries. One must wonder whether these Christians can even keep to their separate denominations and should not be convinced that they should be one body—if they at least do their academic work well and critically deal with their own sources that are decisive for Christianity. It is up to these communities to put the results of their own research into practice. With respect to their research findings, it might be of interest to share theological research with the psychologists. Why is it that human beings do more easily act according to the results of physics in the application of technical knowledge than to the results of medical investigations, for instance about lifestyle? And why do they listen even less to the results of theological research for church practice? It seems that the closer known wisdom gets to human foundations of life, the less likely people are inclined to take the academy seriously. There are few quacks such as Uri Geller in physics, and nearly everybody perceives this as a trick. There are many quacks in health, and the number of quacks in religion is uncountable.

With regard to mutual accountability, one should deal very critically with contextuality. Of course, contextuality is a great good. It takes seriously that people have their own social and traditional home. However, as soon as contextuality turns to isolation and escape from accountability, it is a different matter. In that instance, it opens the gate to an uncritical escape from any obligation: I do it my way—and you should not interfere in my affairs. Contextuality that started as a gate to new critical perspectives is now at risk of becoming a door that can be closed in order to keep out difficult questions and the people who personify those questions.

The requirement of openness to mutual questioning can be another threshold for entering a public university. Some religious communities explicitly refuse to be interrogated by outsiders or to expose their students to their arguments. The most conspicuous example is the Roman Catholic Church which keeps to its own catholic institutions. By doing so, this church navigates itself into a sectarian position of which Rome has always been at risk from

the very beginning.[6] Early Christianity chose a different track. Even a theologian such as Tertullian entered the public debate. His famous slogan, 'What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?' (*Prescription against heretics* 7), is not against a debate with Rome and Athens or against willingness for accountability, but is a rejection of a kind of Christianity that confused its own identity with pagan matters. 'Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition!' (*Prescription against heretics* 7). This is not a refusal to enter into the discussion, but the very result of understanding. For a confrontation of Christianity with Hellenism only shows that the latter kills its enemies[7] and does not take care of the poor and the weak.[8] One should not make a deal with such a philosophy. It is not a lack of openness or idiosyncratic isolation that brought Tertullian to his exclamation, but it is the result of a thorough critical understanding.

Another problem for religions to enter into the filled neutrality may also be raised. Although they might be willing, they may not be able. This is, for instance, the case of the Jewish community in The Netherlands. They do not have sufficient human resources left after the Holocaust for academic work and not enough muscle to enter into debate with Christians and Moslems who call them to accountability as to their beliefs and practices. History has battered them enough. It is not so much the university that excludes them but they cannot endure the burden of history once again in the theological debate that does not avoid the most critical questions.

The religious community is called upon to give their own answers when challenged by questions. Nobody else can answer in their place. If a religious community propagates sacrificing children, a public university cannot claim that this religion is false, unless it chooses to adopt a different worldview. But, in that case, it must be clear that this is ultimately against the public character of the public university (unless it can prove that it is against the very character of any religion, not of a specific religion but of religion as such, to sacrifice children). The same applies to a religion that defends other violence such as war or punishment to death. It is not the task of the university to exclude those communities from its public domain. However, the state can do so. The Phoenician state called for children sacrifices and excluded those who were not willing to adjust their opinion to this view. The present South African state will react differently. However, this is not a matter of the results of theological research, but of public moral convictions.

5. WHERE THEOLOGY?

A last question in our context concerns the positioning of theology within the university. A fair number of universities presently opt for a department of religion within a faculty of humanities. I am of the opinion that this does not do justice to the specific character of theology or to the specific contribution it can make to the university and society. In general,

6 A striking example is Bishop Stephanus who excommunicated nearly all his colleagues so that Firmilian of Caesarea wondered who was actually excommunicated from the universal church (Letter to Cyprian in: Cyprian, Epistles 74, 24).

7 See his argumentation in *De corona* 9.

8 See Justin, *Apologia* 14.

one can distinguish four types of realities, each with so specific a character that methods and instruments for research differ: lifeless nature, life, human and divine. I believe that each type needs its own approach. Biology can be taken to the natural sciences, but research of living nature requires a different approach from the repeatable experiments of physics. To live is about change and about development. The products and activities of humanity are often divided into social studies and humanities in a proper sense. I am of the opinion that this is artificial, for present-day society is only the last version of an ongoing historical process. In as much as human beings and their behaviour are similar to other life, anthropology can be made a part of biology. However, where typical human expressions and relations are the subject of research, a strict division is artificial. All research and study of humanity as expressions of being typical human can be combined into one faculty. This might well be of interest to both the traditional humanities and modern anthropology. However, to bring theology into this same department does not do justice to its totally different character. Theology is about the Ultimate. God is not a mere aspect of the human brain or its functioning. Religion itself considers God as Being that is of a different kind from all other beings. Thus, if one takes religion seriously, one cannot make theology part of the humanities, just as one should not make the study of art a part of chemistry.

A distinct faculty is needed not only with regard to the subject of theology, but also in the interest of the university itself and of society as a whole. By stressing the specific place of theology, it is clear that this discipline is about the Ultimate and that, consequently, no other entity can make ultimate claims. The independent status of theology is a marker of the limits of human enterprises and is a guard against absolutist claims made either by specific academic disciplines or by state institutions. Theology is a means to unmask any such claims.

The independent position of theology is also a call upon theology to keep such distance. She should not compromise herself by making herself dependent on any discipline or external power. The past history of theology in South Africa is an example of how theology can betray herself and thus make herself superfluous. Such a theology is useless and does not make any sense. It is in constant danger of only serving to support absolute claims of the state, and that is a human institution. Such a faculty is not up to the standards or calling of what theology should be.

This does not mean that theology has access to absolute truth. She should know about her own limitations. Her position is rather one of humility and a permanent and persistent call to others to be so. As soon as theology comes to seats of power, one must ask, ‘Is it really about God that you speak or is it about human absolutist claims?’

6. CONCLUSION

A public university that takes its own aims seriously cannot do without a faculty of theology. Otherwise, they opt for a specialist character, such as technikons do. They can do so, but it must be clear that this is a choice for specialism and not for the universality of a university. In a formal sense, a technikon does not differ from seminaries of theology. A real university covers the entire field of reality and critically reflects on issues of all disciplines. Theology cannot be excluded from this as a critical reflection on a major factor in human reality.

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THEOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN NORTH AMERICA

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I am delighted to be part of the process of reflection on the shape of theological study at the University of the Free State. I understand that my assignment is to give some insight into the ways in which theological education and religious studies are conducted in the United States of America. I shall attempt to do so by offering a sketch of the overall enterprise and then telling something about the institution I happen to know best, Yale Divinity School. I shall also draw on my experience at some other major institutions in the United States of America, where I have either served as a faculty member or administrator, or where I have been an outside assessor or consultant.

First, the situation as a whole. Let me begin with theological education proper. The world of theological education in the United States of America and Canada is encompassed by the Association of Theological Schools. The Association consists of over 250 institutions that offer professional theological degrees, which are normally understood to be a credential necessary for professional ministerial service. These institutions also do other things, but their essential defining characteristic is their involvement in the preparation of men and women for professional ecclesial leadership.

Despite the common focus, there is a very broad range of institutions embraced by the Association of Theological Schools. At one end of the spectrum stand independent, usually denominationally based, schools of theology or divinity. At the other end of the spectrum are the schools most relevant to our current concerns, university-related schools of theology.

Let me spend just a few minutes on the "independent" end of the spectrum. Many of these schools are small and some, though long established, have faced enormous challenges in the difficult economic times of the past several years. Some, however, are fairly strong and influential. Examples of the latter will be no doubt known to you. They include Princeton Theological Seminary which, despite the name, is not a part of Princeton University. Their Faculty of Theology split from the University over a century ago, because of what was perceived as the liberal or secular character of the University. Princeton Theological Seminary took its endowment with it and that endowment was well managed for many years by Sir John Templeton. His stewardship, and the generosity of many Presbyterians, has resulted in the best endowed divinity school on the planet. Like virtually all the independent,

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denominationally based schools, Princeton retains its confessional character. Its primary mission is to educate men and women for service in the Presbyterian Church, and a very high percentage of its Faculty are Presbyterian or Reformed, although it does have faculty staff and students from other traditions, including Catholic and Greek Orthodox traditions.

Other strong, free-standing institutions include Virginia Theological Seminary, which is one of the eleven recognized seminaries of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Its denominational ties are also fairly strong and its resources are also formidable.

Another venerable independent theological institution, Union Theological Seminary in New York, founded in 1836, manifests a more ecumenical paradigm. In many ways, Union resembles Yale Divinity School. Union also emerged out of the main line Protestant tradition, but by the mid-twentieth century was very much a center of ecumenical theological study. Its unique situation on the upper east side of Manhattan, near Columbia University, the iconic Riverside Church, and the headquarters of the National Council of Churches, has enabled it to create an array of partnership arrangements. Its relationship with Columbia University gives it some of the advantages of the university-based divinity schools, but it does remain independent, with all the challenges that status entails.

If we move along the spectrum, we encounter other types of institutions. Some independent divinity schools retain their denominational identity and their strong relationship to structures of their sponsoring ecclesial bodies, but participate in larger ecumenical consortia that enable their students to take advantage of a wider range of educational opportunities than would be available in a single-denominational setting. One example of this kind of arrangement is the Boston Theological Institute, which includes both University-related divinity schools (Harvard, Boston University, Boston College [Roman Catholic]) and independent, denominationally based divinity schools (Andover Newton [Congregational, Baptist], Episcopal Divinity School). Another example is the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, California, which is a more integrated operation than the counterpart in Boston. The GTU consists of nine institutions, of which three are Catholic and six Protestant (Baptist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Multidenominational but with Congregational roots, Presbyterian, Unitarian). Looser consortia of divinity schools are found in other major urban centers, such as Chicago and Atlanta. Consortial arrangements allow for a broadening of curricular offerings and deepening Faculty strengths. They can also provide economic benefits from cost-sharing arrangements, but this does not seem to be a possibility in this instance.

At the other end of the spectrum stand the university-related divinity schools. Ten members of this group stand out for various reasons. Each has interesting and often unique characteristics and histories, and each can provide hints at possible configurations of your own engagement with theological education.

The general set of university-related schools falls into two major subsets, those with significant denominational ties and those that are decidedly ecumenical. In either case, there is usually another university partner with which the divinity schools collaborate, usually a department of religious studies, housed in a faculty of arts and sciences. The presence of such departments provides another way of construing the study of religion,

highlighting other phenomena for investigation and offering a breadth of methodological tools and approaches.

Let me comment first on some of the schools with significant denominational ties. These would include the “southern tier” of universities with ties to the United Methodist Church, one of the largest main-line denominations in the United States of America. These institutions include Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta; Duke Divinity School at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, and Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, in Dallas, Texas. Vanderbilt Divinity School emerged from the same tradition, although it is now an ecumenical school of theology. In each of these institutions the distinction between the Theological Faculty and the Department of Religious Studies obtains. Each has its own way of connecting the two for shared purposes, usually at the level of doctoral study. The institutional distinction allows the Faculty of Theology to focus on its mission of professional education within a context of relationship to a particular ecclesial body while engaging with the broader realm of religious study that one finds in a ‘secular’ or non-confessional academic context. The tension between the particular commitments of a single religious tradition and the explicitly non-sectarian character of much of academia is, in the case of most of these institutions, softened by the fact that the larger university was created by and maintains ties with a particular Christian religious denomination. The existence of a Department of Religious Studies provides resources for the study of Christianity, particularly in its relations to other religious traditions that often are not available in a smaller, independent divinity school. Similar arrangements, by the way, obtain at some Roman Catholic institutions. My own *alma mater*, Boston College, a Jesuit University, has both a Department of Theology and a graduate professional School of Theology and Ministry, created from the amalgamation of a Jesuit divinity school, Weston School of Theology, and a lay leadership program at Boston College. I recently served on review committees for both Candler School of Theology and Boston College. The issues of relating the two entities within each University were strikingly similar. How does a school of theology negotiate a relationship with another unit of the university that overlaps and intersects with it, while sharing differing commitments and some different presuppositions about how to engage in the academic enterprise?

There are some university-based divinity schools that benefit from the presence of a larger academic whole, yet find themselves in a tensive relationship with parts of that whole. They are, however, affirmed in their fundamental mission by the identity of the university as a whole.

Another group consists of university-related divinity schools, where neither the schools nor the larger institution, of which they are a part, have a commitment to any particular ecclesial body. Three divinity schools are prominent in this group: the University of Chicago Divinity School, Harvard Divinity School, and Yale Divinity School, my home institution. These are probably the most prestigious university-related divinity schools in the United States of America, although our colleagues at some of the other denominationally connected divinity schools might have another opinion.

The University of Chicago was found 120 years ago by a devout Baptist, John D. Rockerfeller. A magnificent chapel graces the campus of the University, and the Divinity School stands in the middle of the central quadrangle defining the institution. It was no doubt the intent of the founder to enshrine main-line Protestantism at the heart of the University that he founded. The Divinity School at the University of Chicago still benefits from the vision of its primary benefactor, from the financial support of his endowment, and from the good will of the administration of the University. Nonetheless, the general atmosphere of the University of Chicago is a far cry from a religiously based institution. The University is dedicated to rational inquiry and the unprejudiced applications of its results.

The Divinity School at the University of Chicago does not collaborate or compete with a specific department of religious studies. It does collaborate with a variety of programs, departments, and institutes that deal with various aspects of the study of religion. Its primary intellectual and institutional commitments are to research and to advance knowledge of things religious. In that commitment they embrace a variety of methodological perspectives, namely philosophical/theological, historical, and social scientific. I know this model of theological enquiry from my days as a Faculty member at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, where the graduate program, in particular, had been designed by graduates of the University of Chicago. As a new member of that Faculty, I was called upon to teach in my own area of specialization, namely New Testament and the history and literature of the early Church. Among other things, I was asked to lead a pro-seminar for doctoral students, one of four that all students in the doctoral program were required to take. Each was based on some method or approach to the study of religion. The course assigned to me was the history of religions, western traditions. I knew something about Greco-Roman religion, Judaism, and early Christianity, but I was an absolute neophyte in the study of Islam. The curriculum of the doctoral program, influenced by the University of Chicago model, required a breadth that was not part of my disciplinary preparation, but somehow I managed to teach the course and stay at least a week ahead of my students.

Chicago's model of what a divinity school is and does puts a heavy emphasis on research and methodological sophistication in the ways in which the study of religion should be approached. It is less focused on the professional preparation for religious leadership than most of the denominationally related, university-based divinity schools, and it is probably the smallest program of professional education among the major university-related schools. The M.Div. program at the University of Chicago is a small proportion of the total enrolment.

The second test case to consider is Harvard University, the institution where I pursued my doctoral study. During my time at Harvard, I participated as a teaching fellow in courses designed for both undergraduates and professional level students, and I had the opportunity to remain at the university as a postdoctoral fellow in the Society of Fellows, after obtaining my degree in 1975. I have the highest regard for Harvard and its Faculty, despite the fact that, for the past 15 years, I have been at Harvard's archetypical "other", Yale.

In considering the configuration of theological and religious studies at Harvard, it is useful to reflect for a moment on the history of the institution. Harvard was founded in 1636 by the Calvinist 'pilgrims' who came to the shores of New England in the early stages of the

tumultuous seventeenth century. For the first hundred and fifty years of its existence, it preserved to some degree the ethos of its initial founders. However, colonial America evolved during that period and the religious sensibility of the populace changed dramatically by the end of the eighteenth century from where it had been in the first half of the seventeenth. By the end of the 1700s, the Enlightenment winds from Europe were blowing on the shores of North America, and the old-time religion of the pilgrim fathers and mothers was being subjected to a vigorous rationalist critique. The result was the emergence of Unitarianism, a rationalist doctrine that rejected many of the hallmarks of traditional Christianity, including belief in the Triune nature of God or the divine nature of Jesus of Nazareth. Unitarianism gained traction in Boston at approximately the same time when there was a movement in American universities to provide a new institutional framework for professional education by distinguishing whatever was done for doctors, lawyers, and ministers from what was done for undergraduates. In the case of Harvard, the result was the creation of a graduate program in Theology in 1811, which had a distinct Unitarian flavor. This tilt of the scales toward the new rationalism led some members of the Faculty, committed to a more traditional Calvinism, to go their separate ways and found a new, independent divinity school, Andover School of Theology. That traditional Congregationalist school later merged with a Baptist seminary, Newton College, to form one of the independent theological schools in the Boston Theological environment, Andover Newton Theological Seminary.[2]

All of this early nineteenth-century history is relevant to the tale that needs to be told about Harvard. The Unitarian tilt of the School continued as rationalist religiosity proceeded to develop in the general environment. The heirs of the old congregational Calvinist churches in New England soon became Unitarian Universalist. In these churches ancient creeds were *passé*; truth is to be found in all religious traditions and all should be embraced and studied. The divinity school that served as the primary place for preparation of ministerial leadership of rational religion eventually came to embrace what that meant for theological education. During the tenure of George Rupp as dean of Harvard (1979-1985), who happens to be a graduate of Yale Divinity School, the School's curriculum was reformed to embrace the reality that the School had become. Before Rupp's day, the curriculum at Harvard was still, to some extent, in the traditional form inherited from nineteenth-century German Protestantism. The new curriculum now focused on comparative study of the phenomenon of religion as the way in which both academic and pastoral students were to be formed.

Harvard's theological curriculum for post-baccalaureate, professional students is a striking and bold model. One can speculate on the variety of challenges that such a model might face, and the curricular reform of the 1980s has subsequently been modified in various ways. I am not concerned at present about those modifications, but about the ideal type.

One other institutional factor needs to be borne in mind when considering the development of theological education at Harvard. Unlike most of the other university-related divinity schools mentioned earlier, Harvard Divinity School has not had as a partner or competitor a Department of Religious Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Religious Studies at both

2 The departing traditionalists left a large section of their library behind at Harvard, where the theological library is known to this day as the Andover Harvard Library.

the undergraduate and the graduate levels is administered by a Committee on the Study of Religion, an interdisciplinary body that draws on the resources of various departments in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

The reasons for the lack of a formal religious studies program at Harvard are complex, but the major one seems to me to be the very modern commitments of the wider University Faculty to ideals of objective scientific inquiry, free from any dogmatic commitments. Allowing a Department of Religious Studies to form would be the camel's nose inside the tent of a decidedly secular University.

Without a department of religious studies, a good portion of the kind of comparative and analytical study of religious phenomena that often takes place in a department of religious studies found a home in the Divinity School, which of course welcomed such because of its theological commitments.

How, one might ask, does a school such as Harvard meet the concerns of denominations other than Unitarian Universalist? The answer is the same in this case as it is in the case of any non-denominational school that has a denominationally diverse student body, which is the situation at almost all university-related schools, irrespective of their relationship with ecclesial bodies: the school creates spaces in the curriculum in which students of specific traditions can explore those traditions, and the school provides the faculty resource to enable that exploration.

Harvard, then, is an interesting model of the divinity school that shapes its curriculum for all of its students in ways that seem most appropriate to an objective study of religion. It accommodates those with professional interests in ways appropriate to their ecclesial commitments, but its primary commitment is to the rational examination of the phenomenon of religion.

I turn, finally, to the institution that I know particularly well, which I have had the privilege to lead for the past decade, Yale Divinity School. As in the case of Harvard, it is appropriate to begin with an historical sketch.

Like Harvard, Yale was initially a creation of the amalgamation of Church and State of the colonial period. Founded in 1701 at the instigation of a group of local congregational pastors, in part because of dissatisfaction with what was going on at the time at Harvard, Yale's mission was to educate young men for service "in church and civil state", as stipulated in the founding document. For the first hundred years or so of its life, the two parts of the School's mission were carried out simultaneously. Young men studying for the ministry read their theology alongside youths studying law or medicine. All went into apprenticeships after their collegiate experience and then transitioned into their adult roles. The situation changed at Yale, as it did generally in United States of America higher education, in the early nineteenth century, with the creation of separate schools for the various professions. That happened at Yale a little later than it did at Harvard, with the creation of a Department of Divinity in 1822. Over the course of the next several decades, that Department gradually became the School of Divinity, which was given its own physical home on what was then the edge of the College campus. That home lasted until 1930, when a new facility was built, farther from the center

of the University, on a hill high above, and somewhat removed from the rest of the University "downtown", as we say.

The program housed in this Divinity School was very much in the mould of standard Protestant theological education, with its grounding in scripture, theological tradition and practical theological skills. Until the post-World War II period of the 1950s, the flavor of this program remained markedly Reformed, after which things started to change. One of my retired Faculty colleagues, David Kelsey, likes to tell the tale of having been at four different divinity schools over the course of his career, without ever having moved his office. When he arrived at Yale in the late 1950s, the Divinity School was still in its more or less traditional mould, catering primarily to white men from main-line Protestant traditions. There were some women on campus, but for the most part they pursued degrees in religious education. There were racial minorities in the student body and, in fact, there had been African American students at the Divinity School since the late nineteenth century, but their numbers were few.

Things began to change in the 1960s. Political and social developments in the United States of America no doubt had an impact. This was the decade in which the civil rights movement peaked. It also became the decade of the Vietnam War, with all the political turmoil which that conflict created. In the sphere of religion, it was also the decade of the Second Vatican Council, which generated new ecumenical openness on the part of Roman Catholic students, who started to attend traditionally Protestant divinity schools in large numbers. In the following decade, the Divinity School also appointed Roman Catholics to the Faculty, namely Aidan Kavanagh, a Benedictine specialist in liturgy, and Margaret Farley, a sister of Mercy, who obtained her Ph.D. from Yale in the field of ethics.

In the early 1970s, two other institutional developments dramatically altered life at Yale Divinity School. The first was the gift to Yale University of the Institute of Sacred Music, which had previously existed at Union Seminary in New York. Economic pressure and some disagreement with the administration of Union led the leadership of the Institute, backed by a wealthy industrial family from Indiana, to seek a new home. The benefactors were primarily Clementine Miller Tangeman, spouse of a deceased professor at Union, and her brother J. Irwin Miller, a Yale College graduate. They found the home at Yale, and the Miller family provided a substantial endowment for the Institute, which supports Faculty, students, and programs in Music, Liturgy, and Religion and the Arts. I need not detail the administrative arrangements of the Institute. I should simply note that the benefactors carefully crafted their gift to Yale to preserve the independence of the Institute from depredations of the greedy deans, like me, who benefit from its presence.

At roughly the same time as the Institute of Sacred Music arrived at Yale, another institution approached the University with an intriguing proposal. Berkeley Divinity School was an independent Episcopal seminary, founded in 1854 in Middletown, Connecticut, about an hour's drive away. It moved to New Haven in the 1920s and gradually developed collaboration with Yale Divinity School. By the 1970s, also feeling economic pressure, Berkeley reached agreement with Yale to enter into a formal affiliation agreement. According to that agreement, Berkeley ceded to Yale its right to admit students, grant degrees, or appoint

Faculty. Revenue from its endowment is used to support Episcopal students and Faculty at Yale. Berkeley continues to provide the structure for formation of students in the Episcopal/ Anglican tradition. Berkeley remains a distinct legal entity, with the right to withdraw from the affiliation agreement at any time. Despite some occasional hiccups, the partnership between Yale and Berkeley has proven to be a success. As a legally distinct institution, Berkeley has standing in the Episcopal Church, which is happy to send its ordinands to Yale. The resources of Berkeley enhance the resources of Yale Divinity School and provide valuable services, particularly in the realm of spiritual formation, as well as other specialized programs.

To return to David Kelsey's narrative, by the 1980s what had been a rather traditional Protestant divinity school with a heavy preponderance of students from the reformed traditions, had become a broadly ecumenical school, not only with Protestants of various stripes, but also with a large representation of Catholics both on the Faculty and among students. At the same time as the denominational spread of the population of the Divinity School broadened, the gender composition of the student body shifted. What had been a predominantly male institution, where women were grudgingly admitted in small numbers since the 1930s became, under the influence of the feminist movement in both church and society, an increasingly balanced population of men and women. By the beginning of the current century, the student population was almost equally divided between male and female. The percentage of women on the Faculty increased more slowly, but it is now roughly 40%.

During the past decades of the twentieth century, as the population of the Divinity School changed in denomination and gender, its educational program continued to evolve. One of the most significant developments was a gradual shift in the enrolment in degree programs. For most of its history, the basic degree of the school was the professional ministerial degree. Previously named the B.D., it became the M.Div. in the 1960s, when the nomenclature of all professional degrees in the United States of America system was modified to reflect the fact that they are post-baccalaureate programs. In addition to the B.D./M.Div. degree, the Divinity School had for some decades offered a Masters in Religious Education, a degree that appealed primarily to women, whose roles in many denominations had been limited to the realm of education. As various denominations allowed women to be ordained, female students coming to the Divinity School increasingly enrolled in the M.Div. degree and the M.R.E. withered.

During this same general period, another phenomenon created a demand for new degree programs. The 1960s saw the rise of Religious Studies as a distinct Humanities discipline. The Department of Religious Studies was created at Yale in 1963, initially with the appointment of several Faculty members from the Divinity School. The Department was charged with the responsibility for serious undergraduate education, replacing what had been rather loosely structured courses in Bible taught by the University chaplain. The Department was also made the home of the doctoral study in religious fields, a function that had previously been located at the Divinity School. Although not without controversy, this structural change proved to be very positive, both for the field of religious studies and for the identity of the Divinity School. The Department was ultimately allocated new positions covering various world religions, and

the Divinity School was able to focus on professional education. Divinity Faculty continued to participate significantly in the doctoral program, although the administrative structure for that program was housed in the Department. The division of responsibility remains in place to this day and generally works well.

These larger institutional changes influenced the development of the curriculum and the configuration of degree programs at the Divinity School. In addition to the M.Div. degree, and in place of the M.R.E. degree, the school instituted a class of new academic master's degrees, labelled the Master of Arts in Religion. These degrees were designed to prepare students for advanced study in one or another of the traditional theological disciplines, such as Bible, Systematics, Ethics, Church History, and Missiology. The program also provided a venue for the pursuit of new areas of study of Religion, such as Feminist Studies or the exploration of African American Religion. The degree also took into account the presence of the Institute of Sacred Music and the specialized interests that it represented, such as Religion and the Arts and Liturgical Studies. Finally, the degree also provided an option for a general foundation in theology, without as much pastoral preparation as was required for the M.Div. This version of the degree replaced, to some degree, the function of the M.R.E.

The proliferation of new degree options clearly responded to student needs and, as time progressed, new tracks were created in collaboration with colleagues in Religious Studies, specifically in the study of Judaism and Asian religions. A continuing challenge for the Divinity School has been to integrate and serve appropriately the two student populations drawn to the two major degree programs. On many occasions, the Faculty has affirmed its commitment to the M.Div. as the basic degree and more than 55% of the student body is enrolled in that degree. The interests of that core of the student population definitely form the ethos of the School, but we are regularly reminded that many of our increasingly diverse student body have diverse interests in what they are studying.

To return briefly to the little narrative of David Kelsey about the four schools he inhabited in his career, all of the curricular developments that I have described contributed to a further diversification of the community that makes up the Divinity School. The new academic master's degrees attracted students from religious traditions other than the traditional Christian denominations. Currently, in addition to some 40 different Christian traditions, there are students who identify as Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Mormons, Unitarians, and 'none of the above'. Three years ago, a student group from the last category ('atheist, agnostic, or seeking'), which named itself the 'Left Behind Society', organized the talent show for the school, appropriately named, 'Divinity Idol'. The Faculty now includes not only Protestant and Roman Catholic, but also Jewish and Muslim scholars.

Despite the diversity that has come to characterize Yale Divinity School, the institution remains avowedly Christian. In 1991, it adopted, for the first time in its history, a mission statement. This was popular at the time in the United States of America, and the exercise of hammering out a mission statement does have some utility. Our mission statement, revised a year or so ago as part of our regular and required self-study exercise, affirms that the school is in business to "foster the knowledge and love of God through scholarly engagement with Christian traditions in a global, multi-faith context". Fostering knowledge and love of

God involves a faithful commitment not generally characteristic of the disciplines of religious studies, although in the postmodern age there is more of an acceptance of commitments than was the case a generation ago. Nonetheless, it is not individual commitments that are involved, which might be acceptable in a contemporary department of religious studies, but an institutional commitment that is in play.

That institutional commitment, which, as the mission statement affirms, has to be balanced with existence in a "global, multi-faith context", works itself out in several ways, but let me focus on two of them. Perhaps most important in the life of the School is our focus on worship as a central part of the life of the community. Chapel services are held daily. For four days there is a service of word and/or song. Fridays are reserved for Eucharist, always celebrated as an ecumenical event, with an open table. Chapel services normally last half an hour, followed by a time for fellowship over the sacraments of coffee and doughnuts (or for the dietary correct, juice and granola bars). No classes or committee meetings may be scheduled during that hour.

Leadership of the worship program of Marquand Chapel is the responsibility of a dean of chapel, who is also an adjunct Faculty member of the Institute of Sacred Music. She is assisted by a staff and a group of student interns who plan and coordinate the daily liturgies. This staff team assists students from various denominations to creatively adapt their own tradition to an ecumenical environment. Given the resources of the Institute of Sacred Music, there is, as you might expect, an abundance of musical talent. Attendance at chapel, which is not required, is robust, with normally 90-120 students, Faculty, and staff present. Worship is a major community-forming process as well as a laboratory for learning. I often hear from students who have been accepted at Yale and at other institutions that their decision to come to Yale was based, in part at least, on their experience of the School as a worshipping community.

The second major way in which we manifest our commitment to the mission of engaging with the Christian tradition is through our involvement with the various ecclesial bodies that are represented among our students. As an ecumenical, non-denominational institution we are under the authority of none of those denominations, but we teach, usually with adjunct Faculty, the doctrine and polity of all the major church bodies. We also provide internships for students seeking ordination in these denominations, and we organize a portion of the students' curriculum into "certificate" programs, indicating that students have had a foundation in the history and faith traditions of the denomination.

With all of its attention to professional education and denominational concerns, Yale Divinity School operates within the context of a major research university, and it embraces the scholarly values of that institution. Members of our Faculty are expected to maintain the same high standards of research and publication that are required of all Yale Faculty. Part of that mission statement that I read to you insists on the "scholarly" engagement with the traditions of the Christian churches, and we take that part of our lives very seriously. Yet we also take quite seriously that fundamental commitment to "foster the knowledge and love of God". Doing both is challenging in many ways, but to balance those commitments well

enables us, I believe, to make a major contribution to both the life of the Church and the civic life of the United States of America, and increasingly, the globe.

THEOLOGICAL FORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Allan A. Boesak[1]

1. OBSERVATIONS AND REALITIES

The framework of this discussion paper is the general and ongoing discussion on the necessity of transformation at the Faculty of Theology, not only as part of the University of the Free State, but also as part of the larger project of transformation of South African society. This is not a formal paper, but presented in the form of propositions and questions. Its intention is not philosophical theorising even though that cannot be totally avoided, but more to elicit direct engagement with the responsibilities of theological formation within the South African and global contexts. It takes the ongoing interdisciplinary and curricular conversations on philosophical and epistemological matters for granted. This paper works with the assumption that this Faculty is, in fact, serious about transformation and what it implies within this context.

Generally speaking, theological formation in South Africa has become a serious problem for the churches, certainly, but increasingly also for the government.

Our formal theological training is, as it stands, a remnant of the apartheid era, with its vestiges strongly in the realities of that apartheid past: inequality, racism, ideological servitude, and unjust power dynamics.

All arrangements and contracts between universities, faculties and the State still in place are as a result of political power arrangements governed by the past. Within the framework of those arrangements, theological formation served ideological purposes and preserved unjust relationships. Because of that, their validity, politically as well as ethically, is under question. This is one reason (but only one) why the very presence and necessity of theology faculties are being debated.

There are perhaps two major reasons why DRC theology faculties survive. They benefit from accumulated wealth in the Afrikaner community from colonial and apartheid eras, and they benefit from the politically negotiated arrangements and economic pacts from 1992 to 1994.

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Both these factors have become serious matters of contention and equally serious factors of pressure within the ruling party.

Theological training, as we know it at universities, profits mainly one religious tradition, namely Protestantism, and within that tradition mainly the churches of the Reformed tradition and within those church formations mainly one denomination, namely the White Dutch Reformed Church. There is a serious question as to whether the agreements with the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa with faculties of theology at Stellenbosch and Pretoria do, in fact, constitute genuine transformation. Equally, as present arrangements stand, if one is to seek models of transformation, ecumenicity and diversity, one has to probe the meaning of 'diversity' and/or 'ecumenicity' at these faculties. The situation at North-West University is even more difficult, and far less defensible.

The strong perception with some outside observers is that these faculties participate only with great reluctance, or merely superficially, in the country's transformation project, or even that they are resisting that project altogether.

The DRC represents, historically, politically, theologically, ecclesiastically, and morally, the heart of South Africa's colonialist and apartheid project and its success in the past, and as a result represents much of what is experienced not merely as its legacy but as its (covert) continuation in South Africa's life.

The DRC and its theological views and convictions were essential to Christian Nationalism, politically, educationally, and morally.

When apartheid was conquered politically, Christian Nationalism lost its power to determine broad policy direction (including education), lost its control over state resources and its influence over public discourse.

However, I do not believe that Christian Nationalism has been totally overcome, nor do I believe that it has conceded significant loss in any of the spaces where it matters. It has simply retreated to what it regards as safe places – perhaps not completely unassailable, but certainly defensible. One of those safe places is the DRC and its places of theological formation.

Furthermore, it has simultaneously relocated the battlefield for continued influence from Parliament (after the end of the Government of National Unity, and the residual political cohesion of the old National party had been seriously disrupted and dispersed) to those spaces where Afrikaner ethnic mobilisation, because of the huge backing of Afrikaner economic resources, continues: the Afrikaans media, exclusively White Afrikaans civil mobilisation (for example, AfriForum and Solidarity), Afrikaner-controlled economic entities, Afrikaner cultural mobilisation and the White Afrikaans churches.

Christian Nationalism, like its practical political programme, apartheid, was all-encompassing, multi-layered and multifaceted. It came with a package deal: race and racial superiority; political power and control of economic resources; systemic hierarchical, patriarchal power structures; a specific understanding of masculinity; social and cultural dominance; a specific understanding of the ordering of society and public policy, and social structures. Central

to the efficacious working of the package deal was theology, the church, its preaching and pastoral practices.

Fundamental to all this, in my view, were two things: first and foremost, hermeneutics, the way the Bible was read, understood, and interpreted and, secondly, the fact that the DRC's relationship with the apartheid State was effectively an imperial relationship, a church/empire relationship, a relationship of throne and altar.

Finally, one should understand and bear in mind that, throughout all this, theology, and theological formation in the DRC were virtually done in isolation, internally as well as externally. The DRC had placed itself outside the circle of ecumenical theological discourse, debate, and activity, which means that it had placed itself outside of the possibilities of ecumenical contribution, influence and correction. This is perhaps summed up best, if tragically so, by Dr. Koot Vorster's infamous 1970 statement: "Ons volg die Bybel. Die wêreld is verkeerd".

2. WHAT HAS CHANGED?

Simultaneously very much and too little. Apartheid is off the statute books but apparent, and resiliently so, in nearly every other facet of our national life.

South Africa is now a constitutional democracy – a Constitution leaning heavily on the spirit and principles, if not the actual words, of the Freedom Charter. Central and crucial are the values of democracy, equality, respect for and embrace of diversity in all its aspects, non-racialism and non-sexism, justice, human rights, and national reconciliation. *This should be embraced with great enthusiasm and, because it places the issue of justice so central, considered a most natural connection for Biblical theology. It challenges us on the meaning of religious diversity, freedom of religion and the freedom not to believe, as well as the meaning of interreligious solidarity facing global challenges.*

We are part of the world now; every single wall of isolation and isolationism is broken down. We are sovereign, but interdependent; serving national concerns aware of global realities and demands; aware of present imperial realities (United States of America/Europe), but understanding the probabilities of future imperial realities (China) seeking strategic alliances with the global South. *That is a great privilege and opens us up to a worldwide discourse on the changing nature of political, economic and social realities and their impact on peoples worldwide and on our people specifically, and to renewed ecumenical participation and a much more direct understanding of the global South on a basis of equality and commonality.*

We understand ourselves to have special responsibilities in Africa, and to be serious about seeking African solutions for African problems. Africa is not our backyard, but our home. Sharing the lot of Africa is sharing the lot of family. The implications of this are huge, not only for the purposes of international relations, but also for our national attitudinal dispensation. *Theologically, that opens up Africa as a partner in theological discourse, the sharing of experiences and a new understanding of the church in Africa, and the role of theology in the church and in society*.

In a real sense, we can consider the Constantinian captivity of the (Dutch Reformed) church as over, and this offers a new opportunity for prophetic witness, as well as an understanding of the role of, for example, the churches of the Reformed tradition within the context of the role which other churches are seeking to play in the ongoing search for the proper relationship between church and State in South Africa.

Since the coming of democracy, we have achieved a great deal, but face still great challenges: poverty and our vast inequalities; poverty and its generational challenges from the past and of the future, and justice and equality beyond race for women, people with disabilities and LGBTI persons.

As a separate issue, I should mention anger: the growing anger (at the loss of power and privilege, on the one hand, and at the lack of opportunity and justice, on the other); at the lack of service delivery, because it exposes disrespect and disdain for the poor; at the abuse of trust (in democracy and our democratic institutions); at the abuse of faith (in the reconciliation process), and at corruption (because it is abuse of power and abuse of vulnerability).

Furthermore, we face several challenges: The challenge of greed, crass materialism, the need for instant gratification; the lack of social cohesion. The challenge of racism, ethnic nationalisms and ethnic mobilisation; xenophobia; crime and the propensity toward violence. Finally, the lack of understanding the nature of a pluralistic society and embracing the gift of diversity.

These realities pose real challenges to the way we think, speak and do theology, to what determines our theological training for the church and our theological agenda for the world in our conversation and confrontation with the world. They also expose the great and resilient divide in South African society and raise questions about which side of the divide we are on.

3. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The old cliché holds: every challenge is an opportunity. Pivotal though is the question: What matters for our theology and our theological education? The “does-it-matter” form used in this instance is not merely for oratorical effect. The questions themselves are deadly serious. The form in which they are put means to underscore the importance of these questions for theological formation at this Faculty, our theoretical and philosophical framework, and should be directly related to our discussions on curricular transformation.

- Does it matter that our theology is steeped in a White, South African version of Eurocentric thinking, even though that thinking was developed within a dangerous isolationism so that the Eurocentrism that we desire constantly evades us?
- Does it matter that Africa, while now a vast market to be eagerly exploited, is at the most still an object of missionary desire, if not endeavour, and not a respected partner in theological discourse and theological endeavour, our relationships poisoned by generational mouldings of inequality and paternalism?

- ► Does it matter that we serve a church that cannot speak prophetically to our people, because we have not dealt effectively and honestly with the past and its guilt; we have no meaningful political or social insight, because we are effectively still isolated and isolationist, and we simply have no theology for the public responsibility we are called to?
- ► Does it matter that we have not yet thought of what theological thinking should be after the declaration that apartheid was a false gospel, a heresy and a blasphemy, and that we have not come to terms with the fact that the version of Reformed theology that has dominated South African church and societal life for nearly three centuries has been exposed and discredited and should be discarded?
- ► Does it matter that we have not yet developed a theology beyond the theology of apartheid?
- ► Does it matter that we have not yet developed a theology that presents Christian faith to, and from within a culturally, racially and religiously pluralistic society, where diversity is not an excuse for separation but an invitation for embrace?
- ► Does it matter that we train people theologically in a country where 60% of the population think that the Constitution should be replaced by the Bible as highest law of the land?
- ► Does it matter that the majority of Christians reject the Constitution, because of its calls for justice for all South Africans, irrespective of race, colour, creed, sexual orientation, ability, and gender? That they prefer the Bible, because they are of the opinion that the Bible does not call for that justice?
- ► Does it matter that in South Africa one out of every two women is raped; that one out of four women is sexually harassed or violated before the age of 16, and that every six hours a woman is murdered by her husband or partner?
- ► Does it matter that studies find that most damaging in these matters is the view that women must be submissive, silent, and suffer without complaint, because it is God’s will, or the “order” of God’s creation, and that the church is by far the biggest culprit in this?
- ► Does it matter that global terror, global state terror, and the “war on terror” are all driven by religious fundamentalisms almost always couched in the language of a kind of pious patriotism that, in turn, have religious roots?
- ► Does it matter that the next waves of global wars will not be about oil or the preservation of global capital but about land and water resources?
- ► Does it matter that officially one billion people currently go to bed hungry at night, without having had anything to eat all day?
- ► Does it matter that human trafficking is a modern form of slavery, and that it is now a 32-billion dollar business and that South Africa seems to be a convenient conduit for such trafficking?

- Does it matter that we are living in a most decisive phase of struggles for democracy and that we have little or nothing of interreligious solidarity?
- Does it matter that the growth of Christianity is fastest in Latin America and in Africa, but that this Christianity represents a post-colonial religious colonialism, a toxic mix of right-wing politics and Christian fundamentalism not indigenous to Africa at all, but imported and funded from elsewhere, and currently so embedded in Africa and in the "immigrant churches" in the United Kingdom and Europe that African colleagues speak of the "nigerification" of the church; that it brings with it the same "package deal" so characteristic of Christian Nationalism, apart from the issue of race?
- Does it matter that it is estimated that less than three per cent of the preachers (and owners) of the new wave of Charismatic and Neo-Pentecostalist churches in South Africa are seminary-trained, and that the growth of in-house, single-church-based "Bible schools" is unprecedented?
- Does it matter that there is a growing realisation that the future of the Reformed tradition, and Reformed theology, no longer lies in Europe or North America, but in the global South?
- Does it matter that any theology that is not cognisant of the globalisation of our world in all its aspects is doomed to irrelevancy?
- Does it matter that, like in biblical times, our faith is at present confessed and lived in the context of empire; that the message of the Bible is therefore more relevant than ever, and that fundamental to all of this is our hermeneutics: the way we read, understand and interpret the Bible?

"TO LOVE GOD, THE POOR AND LEARNING": TOWARDS AN ETHIC OF THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

Rian Venter[1]

A small addition to one of two titles which are virtually similar forms the focus of this paper. Leclercq (1974) names his fine study on monastic culture "The love of learning and the desire for God". In his collection of essays on the modern university, Hauerwas (2007) writes an article, entitled "To love God, the poor and learning", on Gregory of Nazianzus. Gregory used his vast classical learning and skill as rhetor in the service of the poor and the lepers. This third element in Hauerwas's work – the poor – may provide the avenue for reflecting on the state of theology at a public university. In my opinion, the poor signals, metaphorically, the ethical challenge to knowledge construction and generation by theology at the university. When theology is sensitive to this and embodies an accountable educational and research agenda, can it claim legitimacy at a secular institution of higher learning?

1. THE DILEMMA – KNOWLEDGE AND THE OTHER

The particular challenge and dilemma facing theology at universities in South Africa can be diagnosed in different ways, and not all the situations and approaches at the universities are similar. *One way* to do so may be to conceptualise the problem in terms of *knowledge and otherness*. Historically, the space of theology has been characterised by conspicuous privilege, and the knowledge transferal and generation reflect this very religious, confessional, gender, racial and class profile. Myriad proposals are offered to redress this historical imbalance, and some notable attempts at transformation are being pursued. My suggestion in this article focuses on the *ethical dimension of knowledge construction* by theology at universities.

The question relating to the ethical is obviously a complicated and multi-levelled one. On the basic level, the ethical can refer to stakeholder preference, that is, which churches are served, and to lecturer profile. This is usually the visible face of theology and often battles are won or lost in this instance. The ethical is present in these instances and, particularly, in the form of power embodied as resistance or openness to change. On a different level, the ethical is less conspicuous but decisively influential: the choice of the primary public, the preference to certain paradigms and interpretative communities, and the selection of

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research interests. The issue in this instance is the intentional omission or inclusion and the final ends pursued. The reality of the other is always present, especially in the form of an epistemic neglect. Knowledge is constructed and for this very reason it becomes an ethical matter. This second level is of interest in this short article.

The question concerning the ethical presents itself as difficult in another way: What ethical theory will be operational in the reflection? The fact that knowledge construction is made by individuals and their deliberation, which affects the lives of others and the community as such, calls for a virtue approach.[2] The validity of more deontological or consequentialist approaches is not denied, but the nature of the dilemma of theology at universities may profit from a different approach. Character is central in the entire debate: how decisions are made, and how community is promoted. The option for a virtue approach may open fresh perspectives.

2. THE BACKGROUND – KNOWLEDGE, CHARACTER AND VIRTUE

An option for a virtue-oriented discussion is connected to the travails of rationality in the twentieth century. The critical stance to modernity and the acceptance of post-foundationalism have given knowledge a more human and embodied face. The hubris of objectivity, certainty and universalism has been replaced by a greater humility.

Coupled with this, there is a clear sensibility, a clear insistence that *knowledge* should be connected to *life,* to *transformation,* to *morality,* to *character* and *to community*. Knowledge is no longer the clinically sanitised commodity distanced from everyday reality. For the entire argument of this paper, the following works are exceedingly relevant: Hadot on ancient philosophy as "a way of life", "a cultivation of the self"; MacIntyre and Hauerwas on the priority of virtue in ethical theory, and Schüssler Fiorenza and a number of others on the ethics of interpretation. Work by Charry on the pastoral function of doctrine; by Thiselton on transformation and hermeneutics of doctrine, and by Vanhoozer on sapiential theology signal the same concern. For a host of thinkers on theological education, the imperative of formation is critically urgent (Naidoo 2008).

Coupled with these insights and concerns, *the history* of the relationship between theology and institutions of learning forms a relevant background to this article. D'Costa (2005:148) refers to the present "Babylonian captivity" of theology at the secular university. The queen of science has not only been marginalised and contested, but it has also integrated the instrumentalist culture of modernity (D'Costa 2005:152). Part of this process has been the loss of an antenna for the ethical.

What is required is a form of reasoning for which one is held morally responsible. Rationality is to be considered a form of the ethical; ethics and epistemology should be connected. Exactly this is advocated by *virtue epistemology*. The work of, for example, Zagzebski (1996) has become well known is this regard. Two commitments unify this emerging field with a great deal of internal divergence: epistemology is a normative discipline, and intellectual

2 Cf. Porter (2001) for a good general overview.

agents are the primary focus of epistemic value and evaluation.[3] The implication of virtue epistemology for reflecting on theology at a university is critical. Realities such as character and transformation that are often ignored in discussion on knowledge, come into clear focus. Deane-Drummond (2007:178) proposes an alternative to the utilitarian ethos of contemporary universities – one that is governed by the tradition of wisdom and prudence. Central to this vision is the conviction that morality and rationality should be governed by *phronesis* as mediating virtue.

3. THE PRACTICE – VIRTUE AND *PHRONESIS*

Aristotle's work on *phronesis* is well known; he defines it as "... a reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regard human good"; it is deliberation ánd capacity to act about what sorts of thing are "conducive to the good life in general" (Nicomachean Ethics 1140a 26-28; 1140b 20). *Phronesis* has been translated in several ways: practical reasoning, practical wisdom, moral discernment, and prudence. It aims at answering the following question: What should I do in this situation? At stake is the ability to think well for the sake of living well. *Phronesis* is a third kind of reasoning in addition to the speculative and instrumental: it is practical. It is about forming judgment in situations where there is no guaranteed theory, method or technique (Vanhoozer 2005:325); it concerns proper human action. As a form of reasoning, it is specific, directed to a particular situation, and it is teleological – it is about the good life.

Phronesis is considered an intellectual virtue. It is about making judgment in particular situations "from a developed intelligent disposition" (Annas 1993:73). There is a close relation between intelligence and virtue: intelligence requires virtue, whereas virtue requires an intellectual basis (Annas 1993:74). In the case of *phronesis*, the moral and the intellectual virtues cannot be separated; they fulfil a unifying function. For Annas (1993:76), *phronesis* "underlies all the virtues"; according to Zagzebski (1996:229) *phronesis* "governs the entire range of moral and intellectual virtues".

At least three different, but related interpretations of *phronesis* are possible (cf. Noel 1999: 275): the rationality approach is interested in the deliberative strategies; the situational understanding in discernment in a particular situation, and the moral interpretation in the virtuous character of the *phronimos*. Education, which values *phronesis*, attempts to further all three elements, that is the quality of reasoning, situation-analysis, and virtuous living (Noel 1999:284).

Vanhoozer is one theologian who has particularly retrieved the importance of virtue epistemology and especially phronesis for doing theology. Theology in a postmodern context should reorient itself to wisdom rather to knowledge (Vanhoozer 1999:132). The truth of a claim is not only a matter of propositional content, but it is also a way of life. Vanhoozer's project of a phronetic theology entails the explication of a theological notion of *phronesis*; the theologian is an interpreter - martyr - a truth-teller, a truth-doer and a truth-sufferer: "To

3 *Virtue epistemology* (2010:1). [Online.] Retrieved from http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology-virtue/. [Accessed on 20 March 2010.]

stake a theological truth claim humbly yet hopefully, is, finally to *be* a truth to one's neighbor" (Vanhoozer 1999:156). Theology is ultimately a matter of right judgments, not concepts (Vanhoozer 2005:344). Theologically, *phronesis* is an "effective *pneumatic* conciousness" (Vanhoozer 2005:330).

In this article, a qualified use of *phronesis* is proposed. It is not merely a deliberation in circumstances concerning the most productive course of action, or a way of doing theology in general, but a proposal about the character of practising theology at universities in South Africa. It is a focused application of the Aristotelian concept.

In addition, the virtues that should be mediated by *phronesis* and the good that should be pursued by reasoning have a direction, a content: the other. It entails negotiating the virtues directed to the other. At least one precedent exists of a thinker who has remarkably connected *phronesis* with the other – Ricoeur (cf. Wall 2003:323ff.). Openness to the other as other, in its irreducible singularity, is a dimension of *phronesis*. The goal of *phronesis* is the mutual recognition of self and other; the mediation of the incommensurability of others into new social relations (Wall 2003:338). This connection of selfhood and otherness is a development beyond Aristotle's concept.

4. THE ORIENTATION – *PHRONESIS* AND THE OTHER

Tracy (1994:108) described the postmodern moment aptly: the face of the other. The other is not only the exotic in distant places, but also the reality that confronts us in our environment: the person of another religion, race, culture, class. This may pose one of the most urgent tasks for theology: to articulate a "theology of the other" (cf. Kuschel 2005), because throughout history the other has not only been the stranger, but also especially the one who poses a *threat* (Kapuściński 2008:58).

What otherness may imply for theology is far-reaching. One should examine and face the fact of the (in)ability of one's theological tradition to deal with otherness. Speaking about otherness implies speaking about identity. Volf (2002:13, 16) argued convincingly for an inclusive understanding of identity; embracing otherness should not imply diminishment, but potential enrichment. His notion of "embrace of the other", that is, making space for otherness in one's own identity (Volf 2002:21), is crucial for theology. The embrace for Volf is always predicated on the assumption of the maintenance of boundaries, and identity of the self, albeit, permeable and dynamic (Volf 2002:14, 22).

The work of Levinas is important and relevant, and in this limited space only brief reference can be made to his seminal insights. His philosophy of responsibility for the other, who meets us with an irreducible difference, who challenges the self in its complacency, and confronts us with Infinity, has immense implications for theology which so often suffers from forgetfulness of the other.

The notion of the other may question the adequacy of conventional ethics. Caputo's (2002) proposal about "the end of ethics" is relevant to the argument of this paper. Far from advocating anarchy, it is a challenge to "ethical ethics" which moves beyond limits and boundaries, beyond laws and duties, to heed the call from the other. It is concerned about

the other as wholly other, who meets us in singularity. The end of ethics is a moment of honesty about the inability of traditional ethics to respond to the other. According to Caputo (2002:121), it is essential to think in terms of the *gift* and *giving* and to favour the *model of excess*. In the encounter with the other, we should move *beyond* what we have or ought to do. He also recommends Aristotle's idea of *phronesis*, in order to cope with the changing circumstances of singularity, but he is critical of the emphasis on moderation; the new discourse operates in terms of excess. By doing this, a certain contact with the kingdom of God is made. According to Caputo (2002:126) Jesus belongs to the tradition of those who call for an end to ethics.

5. THE IMPLICATION – THE POLITICS OF THEOLOGY

The major obstacles to educational change are fear of loss of control and a different social order, but also a-historical perceptions of the curriculum. Sociology of education (cf., for example, Young 1975) has convincingly indicated that knowledge and education are socially controlled, organised and constructed. Education is the result of conscious choices made and an analysis of the "politics of the curriculum" can easily indicate how knowledge functions as a means of social control.

Suggesting a phronetic approach oriented to the other as answer to the current dilemma in theological practices implies the advocacy of specific perspectives. It involves deliberation, from case to case, for the good of the social life. *Phronesis* is connected to the *polis*; all virtue negotiation has implication for social arrangement. The end of *phronesis* is community.

The typical virtues such as open-mindedness, industriousness, courage, and justice need to be integrated in a *willingness* to embrace the other epistemically in their full agency. Secondly, the other should be *named*, for too often the other disappears as an abstraction. Finally, respect and responsibility for the other should be embodied in *curricula*. Far from being naive or anarchistic, it is an open and complex process which should be virtuously negotiated. Virtues of courage, of justice, of charity, and of open-mindedness should all be mediated phronetically.

One specific example can be given. Research undertaken by postgraduate students and by lecturers is particularly susceptible to ethical scrutiny. What research is pursued by a department and by a theological faculty as such is especially indicative of the operative ethical consciousness. If research is placed in the context of the common good, and the question is raised about interests served, embarrassing answers may come to light. Research agendas should be accounted for in terms of care of the other.

6. THE POSSIBILITY – TRIUNE GOD AND THE OTHER

To theorise the position of theology at the public university in the frame of knowledge, virtue, *phronesis* and the other does not establish anything distinctively theological about the argument. The reality of God has to be raised as meaningful to the entire discourse. Speaking about God in the public and academic area is theology's sole claim to uniqueness; no other discipline has this responsibility and burden. The tragedy is that this exclusive mandate has

often been eclipsed by myriad other fascinations. For the Christian tradition, the Ultimate Other is the very *condition* of knowledge, virtue, *phronesis* and the embrace of the other.

To theologise theology is to allow the Trinitarian mystery to inform intellectual practice in a consistent manner. To the very identity of God belong otherness, gift, and love. In the Christian tradition, this sheer event of ex-static excess is what we call God. The Christian narrative of incarnation and Pentecost celebrates the embrace of the human other, of *kenosis*, and the gift of discernment. To reflect ethically about theological knowledge is to remember the gift of Christ and the gift of the Spirit.

The generosity of Trinitarian agency creates the possibility of human *mimesis*, of becoming a sign of this divine hospitality. The eternal deliberation of the triune God – to share life with a creation, to welcome the alienated sinner back into divine communion – creates the possibility of human *phronesis* and welcoming of the other. A *Christian redefinition* of classical *phronesis* is thoroughly Trinitarian: it is a virtuous disposition *for* the other in Christ and through the Spirit towards greater community in the life of God.

The unsettling irony is that the practices of theology at institutional level often defy and betray claims to orthodoxy. The logic of power as protection prevails. The other is polemicised instead of welcomed. There should be at least a *minimal coherence* between our confession of God as triune and our epistemic and institutional practices. The God who is *for us* calls us to be *for others*.

With reference to Gregory, Hauerwas argued that he rhetorically construed an alternative social world to that of the Roman emperor Julian. The poor and the disfigured lepers became the centre of God's city. May our love of God, our love of learning contribute to a love of the other – to an alternative community, a society of love of the neighbour.

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STUDYING RELIGION IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES: METHODS AND CHALLENGES

Martin Prozesky[1]

This paper is presented as an epistemology of creative anxiety, a phrase adapted from some words by New Testament scholar Marcus Borg (1994). It should be sufficiently obvious that it involves epistemology, for this paper discusses our modes of knowing the data of our religions. Creativity arises because a great deal of work still needs to be done about this issue, with new demands on the scholarship devoted to it, as will be shown later. Old approaches will be shown to be insufficient. But why should there also be anxiety? The reason lies in the very limited and perhaps dwindling resources available for the work that needs to be done, aggravated by rising financial pressure on all the Humanities at South African universities, and indeed in some other countries as well. In addressing the topic of the study of religion at South African universities, the structure of this paper follows its subtitle. There are three sections. The first discusses religion in South Africa; the second discusses methods, and the third examines the challenges which, according to the author, face this field of study.

1. RELIGION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The epistemology of creative anxiety arises foremost from the field of data comprising South Africa's religions. What counts as a religion? The answer is part of the challenge we face, and calls for its own measure of scholarly creativity. I will return to this in the section dealing with challenges. Let us be guided by the common usage of the word 'religion' as indicating a complex of beliefs and practices focused on faith in some or other believed supernatural or spiritual power.

Having adopted this common-sense approach, we immediately face, if we are sufficiently creative, another decision: whether to adopt a narrow or a broad approach to the topic covered by our working definition of religion. The narrow approach comes immediately to mind, and refers to spiritual traditions such as the Christian churches, African Traditional Religions (ATRs), Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, the African Initiated Churches (AICs), and so on.

However, the enquiring, creative, scholarly mind might well think at this point of realities such as the criticisms of religion voiced by those who reject it from the ranks of our Marxist communists, secular humanists and scientists who accept the current aggressive new

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atheism as championed by Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and others (Dawkins 2006; Harris 2008). Surely, such a mind might say that good scholarship requires the fullest and most comprehensive coverage of its subject matter, which will include not only religious belief and practice, but also an awareness of the criticism and rejections of them. In this paper, the broader approach is adopted because it is accepted as more thorough than the narrow one and thus better able to discern the full truth about religion in our region.

Having made this choice, the subject matter may now be summarised as *all* the phenomena in South Africa, present and past, concerned with religion either through membership (however active or inactive that may be) or through rejection. In this instance, the anxiety surfaces again, for the subject matter is vast and very complex. The African Initiated Churches alone number some thousands of distinct churches. Our African Traditional Religions have a history and prehistory dating back thousands of years prior to the arrival, in South Africa, of the religions from Europe and Asia. Recent excavations of a human presence at Pinnacle Point near Mossel Bay date back at least as much as 60 000 years and may include material that could indicate the presence of religion in the lives of those people, perhaps through excavated evidence suggestive of ritual burial of the dead.[2] There is the rock art of the San peoples, of which some thousand sites are known and which some scholars regard as having religious significance in line with our working definition of religion (Lewis-Williams 1981).

The phrase 'religion in South Africa' is short and sounds simple. What it refers to is vast in both form and history, and in principle all of it calls for understanding.

2. METHODS

When we turn our attention to the methods of studying religion, a starting point is that it is a multidisciplinary field of study, not a single discipline such as history or philosophy. Let us consider one familiar example such as the Reformed Church in Africa or the Roman Catholic Church. We discern beliefs and doctrines, rituals such as Holy Communion/Mass; patterns of behaviour such as going to church on Sundays; group activities such as church bazaars, buildings, music; artworks such as stained glass windows; books, magazines and other publications; the officials and the roles they play; interactions with parts of the secular world such as politics, business, sport and entertainment, and more.

The study of religion embraces all of these things in all the many forms of our religions and by those who reject them. In order to be as comprehensive as possible, religion should therefore comprise at least the following disciplines (in alphabetical order): Art, Education, Ethics, History, Languages (for instance, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Zulu, and so on), Literature, Phenomenology, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, the study of sacred writings, Theology, and even the Natural Sciences, for we are now learning that human brain science and physics have implications that affect religion (Van der Walt 2010; Hamer 2004; Murphy & Ellis 1996).

2 Pinnacle Point. In: *Wikipedia*. [Online.] Retrieved from http://www.wikipedia.org. [2012, June 5].

All but one of these disciplinary approaches will be familiar to most readers. The exception is the phenomenological method, which will be briefly explained. Two measures are used in the study of religion. One is the deliberate identifying and setting aside of personal preferences and dislikes, in order to minimise the risk of unconscious bias. This is known as bracketing. The other is empathy, which is defined as the ability to feel with those with whom one empathises; it requires a sound understanding of them and their situations, and the imaginative ability to use one's own, similar experiences in order to develop a sense of what it feels like to be where they are (De Gruchy & Prozesky 1991:3).

Thus, the sheer size and complexity of the subject matter calls for a range of disciplines that far exceeds the scholarly ability of even the most energetic and brilliant polymath or well-funded academic department. The result is a subject matter of considerable social, political, religious and personal importance – an importance as real for those who follow a religion as for those who do not, because religion affects the whole society and not merely its believers – with very little of the comprehensive interdisciplinarity it requires.

This is also cause for scholarly anxiety and for creative solutions to the many challenges that are involved.

3. CHALLENGES

What counts as religion?

The first challenge was introduced earlier: how to demarcate the field of study. What counts as religion and as relevant to the best understanding of it? Few scholars will seriously dispute the position outlined earlier as an ideal goal, namely to approach religion in a broader rather than a narrower way, and thereby include critics and religion's impact on secular society. The problem, in this instance, is of course sheer practicality. Our South African university departments where religion is studied are and have always been small at best. The handful of scholars working in them severally, or even on their own, cannot possibly be expected to be trained in more than a few of them.

An expert on the history of the Dutch Reformed churches in South Africa, for example, will perforce have to focus his/her attention on a particular period or region if the work is to be of world class, as it must be. There simply will not be time to have more than a merely adequate grasp of other periods and regions, and at best a very basic and probably superficial grasp of some other, relevant academic disciplines.

The first challenge identified in this instance is therefore how best to address the need for a wider range of disciplines in the study of religion than the present resources, both individual and collective, permit.

Can any of us really understand the subject matter, and how can we minimise the problem of disciplinary silos?

This brings us to a second, related challenge. How should we, who study religion, respond to the fact that none of us can validly claim to understand the subject as fully as it requires? To this, I immediately add a third challenge. How best can we overcome, or at least reduce, the problem of what I call disciplinary silos? In this instance, I refer to the way in which those who study religious phenomena nearly always do so in separate academic departments and faculties – these are the silos – with little and at times even no contact and cross-fertilisation with other disciplines.

Interdisciplinarity is what is needed, and this is not the same as multi-disciplinarity which we already have in those scholarly silos, although there is not enough of it to research the entire subject matter. Interdisciplinarity arises when scholars from the various disciplines collaborate and become, broadly at least, aware of one another's findings and are able to relate them to their own work.

Let us consider an example from the history of Christian missions. Such a scholar will surely know Nosipho Majeke's thesis that the European missionaries paved the way for the military conquest and seizure of the land of Africans (Majeke 1952). However, in order to test and perhaps refute Majeke, our historian of missions needs to know a great deal about the secular history of the clash between Europeans and Black Africans in South Africa, such as the fact that large-scale conversions to Christianity tended to follow, not precede, military conquest, starting with the Mfengu (Davenport 2000) and, in Lesotho, happened without the devastation of military invasion and extremely severe loss of land suffered by the Mfengu people at the hands of King Shaka of the Zulus (Davenport 2000; Couzens 2003).

Is there a religious bias in our studies of religion?

The fourth challenge arises from the way in which most if not all of our departments for the study of religion emerged, not only in South Africa, but also in other countries such as Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States of America where English is the medium of academic life, and arguably also in Germany, Italy, Israel and the Netherlands where it is not. A good many of those who pioneered and developed the comparative study of religions, above all in the second half of the twentieth century, were trained first in Christian theology. Others were active members of various religions, especially Christianity and, to a lesser extent, Judaism.

Given this background and, in South Africa, the enormous domination of Christians at about 80% of the population over the past half-century and longer, is there not a religious bias to our study of religion and, if so, how can it be overcome? Is it not possible, or even likely, that scholars with, say, a very strong Anglican connection might be insufficiently critical of their own tradition, and over-critical of others on a topic such as the relations of the churches to political power under apartheid?

At the end of this paper there is a methodological proposal about how to counter the presence of personal religious (and anti-religious) bias in scholars, who do not cease to have the usual human subjectivities and limitations when they obtain their doctorates.

Identifying and handling gaps in our knowledge of our religions

Turning to a fifth challenge, we need to answer the following questions: What are the most important gaps in our knowledge of religion in South Africa, and how can we best minimise, if not overcome them? It is obvious that there are gaps. It is such a vast and complex phenomenon, with so many academic silos and so few scholars working in them, not least in departments focusing on religion, who cannot claim to have researched the entire field. The important issue, in this instance, is to identify the most important gaps. In order to do so, it is helpful to identify what has received most attention.

My hypothesis is that the past has received more attention than the present; that internal religious matters such as beliefs, rituals, institutions and leaders have received more attention than the interface of religion and secular society, and that perhaps the most neglected facet of religion in our research and publications is ethics, above all critical ethics in the form of an exploration of verified harm flowing from or even present in any of our faiths. We need to consider other topics than merely sexual misconduct much more widely and searchingly. This is, however, my impression formed from many years of work on religion, not a detailed study of published research which others may view differently. This, at least, lends itself to future research.

Is the study of religion in South Africa insufficiently critical?

A sixth challenge follows logically from the fifth one. It involves the perception that the study of religions is insufficiently critical. Such a critic could say that, while the student of politics or economics has no hesitation in probing and exposing the political and even personal faults of politicians or of economic systems such as socialism or capitalism, scholars in Religion Studies, or whatever similar names it has, seem unwilling to do so in relation to the leaders of religious bodies, or of the ways in which religious bodies conduct themselves, and even of their teachings and how they go about spreading them.

An exception to this evident lack of sufficient, critical evaluation comes from philosophy of religion. At least as long ago as David Hume, the noted Scottish thinker who died in 1776, there is a strong tradition in philosophy of criticism of religious beliefs, for example, belief in a perfect divine creator of the universe (Hume 1779, 1960). Nearer our own time, William James, best known for his studies of religious experience, authored a devastating critique of the traditional metaphysical attributes which classical theists believe characterise the Deity in whom they believe (James 1902, 1960). And even nearer our own time, the British philosopher Antony Flew was not shy about exposing religious beliefs to relentless criticism and, in his case, unlike that of William James, to an initially outright rejection (Flew 1974).

It might, of course, be objected that the business of the student of religion is to investigate and present data in a carefully disinterested way, not to question its ethical and intellectual

qualities. I have no objection to individual scholars who perform such valuable work, but as one whose priority is to promote the well-being of society (and the environment) through the resources of the academic world, I have grave problems with such a view being accepted as the only duty of the study of religion. We academics are part of a world greatly harmed by destructive forces and structures, and we all know that religion has been and still sometimes is seriously implicated in evils such as violence and unfair discrimination. To deem the question of religious evil out of bounds for the study of religion strikes me as a means of evading moral responsibility and gravely damaging the credibility of our academic endeavours, at least in the eyes of the more ethical members of the wider society.

The study of religion neglects ethics

We come now to a final challenge: the accusation that the study of religion in South Africa, even in a narrow interpretation of the field, neglects the ethical dimension of religion – that aspect of all religions involving their values and how they go about imparting and practising these. I recall the late Ninian Smart's helpful view of religions as exhibiting seven dimensions, as he called them, receiving different degrees of emphasis, depending on the religion in question (Smart 1997:10ff.). They are the following, with my own examples:

- Ritual and practical (for example, prayer and pilgrimages).
- Experiential and emotional (for example, revelatory experiences and feelings of joy).
- Narrative and mythic (for example, parables or stories about creation).
- Doctrinal and philosophical (for example, creeds and apologetics).
- Ethical and legal (such as the 8-fold path in Buddhism, or the Torah in Judaism).
- Social and institutional (such as churches, monastic orders and ashrams).
- Material (for example, buildings, artworks, calligraphy and sculptures).

In South Africa, it is at least arguable that the study of religions has been dominated by scholars with Protestant and Islamic backgrounds and affiliations. To this author, it appears that these two religious traditions emphasise matters of correct belief, as they view it, more than do our Roman Catholics, Hindus or African traditionalists. This, in turn, has perhaps led to a scholarly emphasis on what religions believe and teach, with noticeably less interest in the values embedded in and imparted by our religions. This perception can be verified by scanning the articles in relevant journals over the past few decades.

4. CONCLUSION

If this review of the subject matter, methods and challenges of the study of religion in South Africa is at least, to a large extent, valid, it leads to the following concluding observation as we take the subject further into the twenty-first century. For its own credibility and even survival at a time of growing pressure on the academic rand, most

of all in the Humanities (another source for an epistemology of anxiety), the study of religion must prioritise four matters:

- The creation of structures for sustained interdisciplinarity.
- Much greater attention to ethics both in the religions and about them.
- A policy of focusing more on religion as a powerful present-day force in the lives of individuals and society (for better or worse), than on their foundational pasts, central though these will be from within some religious perspectives where there is a founding figure.
- The adoption of the phenomenological method as the best way to minimise personal and religious biases and achieve maximum objectivity.
- Achieving these four goals would allow the epistemology of anxiety to take second place to an epistemology of creativity. That would surely be first prize for Religion Studies

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PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY: THE ROAD TRAVELLED AND THE ROAD AHEAD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Is there room for theology and, more specifically, practical theology, at a public university such as the University of the Free State? This discussion will try to answer this question by providing preliminary but evolutionary perspectives with reference to the following themes:

- Epistemological transformation in higher education in South Africa with reference to practical theology.
- The reflection that has taken place in practical theology over the past two decades.
- Epistemological transformation of practical theology: Towards an African approach.
- Concrete transformation that may take place over the next few years in the Department of Practical Theology at the *University of the Free State*.

It is important to emphasise the preliminary character of the documented research in this paper. The reason for this sensitivity is to be found in the evolutionary nature of the research. In this regard the paper focuses strongly on various perspectives from literature, the results of which will only be empirical describable once it had been implemented within a specific context.

2. EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

It is *obvious* that the place of practical theology at a public university in South Africa will have to be reconsidered. Not only is this a question that is internationally important, because

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of intense globalisation and secularisation,[2] but it is also *obvious* that reconsideration (in particular, as it is practical theology, with an ambivalent past[3]) is important, because of the *radical socio-political transformation that occurred in South Africa at the end of the twentieth century*. It is *obvious* that all institutions of higher education in South Africa will consider this, because there is, according to the *Soudien Report* (2008:13), not a single institution in South Africa that does not have a critical need to transform. Ramphele (2008:205-208) argues broadly and convincingly regarding the "why and where to" of both historically White *and* Black, as well as Afrikaans *and* English higher education institutions. Obviously the challenge of readdressing the inequities of the past also needs to be set in close collaboration with our response towards the demands of an economically competitive global society in which the emerging knowledge society is increasingly driven by a knowledge economy (Le Grange 2009:103-119).[4] It is *obvious* that we do not only have to do this right now, but also on a continuing basis, because knowledge, in fact, never happens in neutral, static vacuums or ivory towers, but is always temporary, changeable, contextual and open to (self-)criticism.[5] It is *obvious* that what is happening in practice (in the community and in society on all levels) will be part of the prophetic dialogue of the Department of Practical Theology. In brief, it is *obvious* that this Department, of this Faculty and this University, wishes to seriously consider this matter, because Bloemfontein is viewed as a place where things do not only happen, but also where direction-determining contributions are made in both the academic-human and the community fields.

2 For an excellent critical and in-depth view of the general state (of crisis) of the modern university, see Readings (1996). Concerning the position of theology in particular at *this* modern contemporary university, leading Dutch theologian Bram van de Beek, for instance, starts his public lecture delivered at the University of the Free State in March 2012 (see Van de Beek's contribution elsewhere in this volume) by acknowledging that the study and investigation of theology at a public university is by no means any more self-evident in *our* multicultural and multi-religious societies (of which The Netherlands and post-apartheid South Africa are obviously good examples to cite).

3 For an excellent critical and insightful discussion on the role practical theology as discipline played within apartheid South Africa, see Smit (2009).

4 Recently, the World Council of Churches Oslo Report on "The future of theology in the changing landscapes of universities in Europe and beyond" (6-8 June 2012) made a number of very insightful remarks in this regard. Firstly: "Some view the crisis not so much as a crisis of theology as such, but as a crisis of a reductionist understanding of education, formation and broad based concepts of university models as a whole. A concept of a university which tends to reduce the range of human knowledge to those disciplines which are marketable, income-producing, of commercial value and of economic relevance would follow a reductionist concept of human knowledge and social development as such" (WCC 2012:5). Therefore many are currently of the opinion that: "The crisis of theology in some contexts is related to the general crisis of humanities in the universities. The churches should care not only for the fate of theology, but also engage in a critical debate on the general understanding of human knowledge in the universities. Today we need not only theology of liberation, but the liberation of theology (and the critical disciplines of humanities) from the iron laws of the market-place and economist concepts of life." (WCC 2012:5.) And lastly: "Some also mentioned that Christian theology is not merely concerned about its own survival or church-related interests. Christian theology is called upon and entitled to put into question a reductionist trend in the concept of education itself. Higher education and understanding of human knowledge cannot be reduced to what can be commodified or to what has commercial impact. Christian theology has to constantly address questions of epistemology and methods, of hidden value orientations and implicit assumptions in dominating university agendas, some of which may also threaten basic human values and deprive human dignity. Where higher education is forced to solely focus on the output for labour markets and universities are 'deviated to but job training factories', the disciplines of humanities, philosophy and religion that do not immediately orient themselves at the laws of the labour market are gradually marginalized and may totally disappeared from the universities soon" (WCC 2012:7).

5 See in this regard especially the work of Jonathan Jansen (2009).

This means that practical theology (also) obviously would not only wish to reflect *contextually-publicly*, but also in a *radically critical* manner. Therefore it can simply not be characterised in any other way than as *post-apartheid theology,* on the one hand aware of the past, and on the other addressing it in a constructive way. This means that, within practical theology, we must engage not only *content-wise* with this discriminatory and exclusive legacy of apartheid, but also that we no longer wish to approach these questions separately and/or homogenously as a *group* of (practical) theologians. An open-inclusive-integrated approach demands an openness, not only to these public themes, but also to other themes. This approach would imply the following:

- Practical theology is involved in, and when necessary takes the leadership regarding, *intra-, inter- and multidisciplinary approaches to the production and learning o*f knowledge. In the academic field and in practical theology, one gains increasing insight into the fact that this openness means cooperation across disciplinary boundaries. Thus, one could say in all modesty that the university needs practical theology and that practical theology needs the interdisciplinary context of the university.
- Behind this development in terms of greater openness with other disciplines lies the insight that there are *more sources of sense-making and knowledge than simply the limited traditional. Although these other and new sources of sense-making* are not perceived as revelations that can function independently, they are of such a nature that they cannot exist in isolation from one another, and the relationships between them will naturally have to be considered in a different/more open way.
- This requires a *comprehensive empirical analysi***s** and investigation of reality, as well as new methodologies, and the development and broadening of the present ones.
- It implies that the department *will be interested in a concrete (public and practical) reality* which will prim*arily be open to others from the beginning, and in which not only an* exclusive group has an interest and will derive advantage.
- Inevitably, this implies an interest in questions of significance (Jansen 2011); it is not only about how many articles we can produce per year (quantity), but also about with what kind of articles we serve university and kingdom (quality and high impact) (Le Grange 2009:115).
- Being caught up in a very specific religious paradigm (and especially with only one specific denomination) appears to be unsupportable: from undergraduate lecturing regarding student composition to the type of research questions to be investigated and the service to be delivered to the community. *This does not at all mean that there will be a breakaway from a specific denomination or from the church in general*. Everything but, in fact, because greater openness with and for others will also help the church in her unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolity (see Wethmar 2012).
- Of course, this openness is first of all not only of an ecumenical nature, but by implication also inevitable *openness to other religions.* The challenge of practical

theology worldwide, and therefore also in South Africa, is to keep in touch with the practice of theology (or, in more inclusive terms, faith, religion, and spirituality) within its specific context/demography, and to start together as fellow students and researchers to practise society on a small scale.

Against this background, the aim of the Department of Practical Theology may be described as follows: to practise theology from *empirical, critical and hermeneutical perspectives*. Practical theology attests to the conduct of a search aimed at "tracing the sacred" in the "hermenuetics of lived religion" (Ganzevoort 2009:1). (Practical) [T]heology can only serve the general if it thinks from the point of view of the specific. Consequently, openness to the margins and edges (the marginalised) is exactly the place that will give theology itself a margin and an edge. It is exactly such openness to the edge that *can* give practical theology an edge. It is *at* the boundary that the boundary is moved. It is exactly the critical distance that will not only give us critical insight, but also critical viewpoints.

3. THE REFLECTION THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES WITHIN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Some of the following critical questions have been reflected upon over the past two decades:

- What *epistemology* is used? Is Scripture the only and/or normative knowledge source for this field of study? What role does context play in good practice for practical theology?
- What kind of *methodology* is used? Does empirical research have a role to play and what role should it play within the field of study?
- How wide is the *study field* of practical theology? Is it only about the offices and the church, or also about the broader community? Is it only the pastorate that is important, or are other subdisciplines involved?
- How does practical theology communicate with *other academic disciplines* and what role do 'non-theological' disciplines play in practical theology?

The story of practical theology at the *University of the Free State* began in the early 1980s with the *diaconiological or confessional approach*. Jonker (1981:39) defines the purpose of this approach as "die lees en verstaan en vertolking van die Heilige Skrif, maar tans onder die gesigspunt van die vraag na die kerklike *diakonia*, die diens van die kerk aan die omgang met hierdie Woord." [… the reading and understanding and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, but currently from the point of view of the demand for religious *diakonia*, the service of the church to the association with this Word.] According to this approach, the Word of God is studied with a view to the service work of the church, and Scripture is regarded as the only knowledge source of practical theology. According to this approach, only the study of Scripture can be viewed as theology (Pieterse 1993:103). In this regard Janse van Rensburg (2000:76) points out that Diaconiology uses the Word of God as its epistemological point of departure. The following characteristics of this approach may, among others, be mentioned (Burger 1991a:59-60):

- A strong emphasis is placed on Scripture as the only knowledge source and norm for theology in its entirety, practical theology included.
- Practical theology is practised in a deductive manner as theoretical theologising, with a view to the *practice* of theology. Little emphasis is placed on empirical research.
- There is a strong focus on the church and official church service work.

Although not at the *University of the Free State*, during the 1970s and 1980s, the active science *or correlative approach was developed.* This approach led to a broadening of the field of study of practical theology. The approach was no longer based only on the religious *diakonia*, but rather on the community in the broadest sense, from a Kingdom perspective (Pieterse 1993:107).

Along these lines, Heitink (1993:18) defines practical theology as follows: "Onder praktische theologie als handelingswetenschap wordt hier verstaan de empirisch-georiënteerde theologische theorie van de bemiddeling van het christelijk geloof in de praxis van de moderne samenleving." [By practical theology as active science we understand empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of the modern community.] It is thus an empirically oriented approach that takes empirical evidence seriously. To this the view of Browning may be added. According to him, (Browning 1991:3) practical theology should be regarded as a critical theology. It may begin with the establishment of faith, but ends with the reasons and justification for practical practice. Browning's process "goes from present theory-laden practice to a retrieval of normative theory-laden practice, to the creation of more critically held theory-laden practices" (Browning 1991:7). According to him, there are four sub-movements within theology: "descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology and strategic practical theology" (Browning 1991:8).

In terms of methodology, practical theology works with an empirical methodology (Pieterse 1993:25; see also Zerfass 1974). In this regard, Van der Ven (1993a:31) provides an important contribution by pointing out that empirical theology is about hypotheses that must be verified: "These hypotheses must then be tested within the framework of carefully controlled research projects".

The following characterises the active science approach ("handelingswetenskaplike benadering") (see Burger 1991a:60):

- Practical theology does not, in the first place, study a book, but rather an act or actions; faithful communication of the gospel in the world.
- The Scriptures are respected as knowledge source and norm, but they function in an indirect rather than a direct way. There is room for theological insights from the experience of faith and other sciences to be expanded upon and enriched.
- Inductive rather than deductive methods are used.
- Although the church and its work remain the main focus, the general direction is much broader.

The *contextual approach* does not feature directly within the traditional field of practical theology at the three Afrikaans reformed departments. The work of Cochrane, De Gruchy and Petersen can be mentioned in this regard (Burger 1991a:116). This approach links up with documents such as the Belhar Confession, the Kairos document and the Evangelical Witness in South Africa. The central idea of the theological perspective that relates to this approach is solidarity with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalised. This is also found in Latin American liberation theology (Burger 1991a:119). The most important characteristics of this approach are the following (see Burger 1991a:61; Pieterse 1993:126):

- Context plays a dominant role in the practical-theological process, and emphasis is placed on a thorough knowledge of the situation within which the subject is done.
- Practical theology is practised with a view to changing or transforming a given situation.
- Even more than in the previous approach, the focus is on the world rather than the church and its work.
- The role played by the Scriptures or tradition will differ from person to person. This leaves room for selective use of the Scriptures.

Perhaps too one-sidedly, this approach highlights the prophetic role of the church. This also means that the critical and prophetic role of the church and the faith community must be considered. In practising a post-apartheid theology this approach should be reflected on in the work that the department is doing.

In addition to this, and as a further development of the active science approach, a *hermeneutical approach* developed. The two approaches probably represent the broad framework for the epistemology of practical theology that has been practised since the 1990s. The Department of Diaconiology of the University of the Free State became, over this period, the Department of Practical Theology.

In order to understand Christian theology as an academic discipline, one should rather think in the direction of hermeneutics, namely as an interpretation of the meaning of the relationship between God and reality from the perspective of the Christian faith (Louw 1998:48). From a hermeneutical point of departure an approach is sought in which Word and context may be meaningfully taken into account. For Louw (1993:78), practical theology is the hermeneutics of God's meeting with humans and his world. This meeting of God and humankind finds its objective in communicative acts of faith. The hermeneutical model is theological, whereas the object of practical theology is not communicative acts of faith in the first place, but rather the sense and the meaning of the encounters of salvation. In practical-theological hermeneutics, the movement, in other words the hermeneutical circle (backwards to the message, forwards from the message and the text to the context) is coupled with an entirely unique methodology: asymmetric in the midst of symmetric (Louw 1998:60). Theology is, in itself, a critical discipline that is always criticised by the issue itself, the reality of God.

What are the object and task of practical theology? Practical theology studies the meaning and sense of the God-human-meeting and the religious service forms (functional ecclesiology) operating with a view to building up the community and designing effective ministry structures and ministry strategies (Louw 1993:81-82). Theology is, therefore, practical when it considers not only merely the ecclesiological context, but also the community and the public sphere (Louw 1998:54).

Over the past two decades, there have been far-reaching changes in the field of practical theology. Van Gelder (2004:69) puts it as follows:

> Some may still long for the days when it was possible to assert an objectively formulated view of scriptural teaching on the basis of an epistemological foundationalism. But it is now evident these days are long over for the church in the aftermath of: (a) the rise of modernity, (b) the collapse of foundationalism in relation to an Enlightenment-shaped epistemology, (c) the development of the hermeneutical perspective, and (d) the emergence of the postmodern condition. There is no going back.

This means that theory and practice have moved towards each other and led to

> collapsing the Enlightenment divide between theory and practice and with it the unnecessary and unfortunate marginalization of practical theology. The proposed reconstruction was toward finding some way to reintegrate theological knowledge (theory) with practical wisdom (*phronesis*), and for these to be shaped by personal and communal formation (*habitus*) (Van Gelder 2007:100).

New realities have ensured a shift of emphasis, from epistemology to hermeneutics:

> [T]his new reality of diverse methods, complicated by differences in social location, is related to the postmodern turn where we have experienced a shift from an emphasis on epistemology – how do we know something, to an emphasis on hermeneutics – how do we interpret both how we encounter and what we encounter (Van Gelder 2004:45).

An important question is whether the possibility exists, within practical theology as a hermeneutical process, that certain key tasks or functions can be identified. Osmer (2008:10) gives the following answer: “Doing practical theology is a hermeneutical process that comprises four core tasks: descriptive-empirical, interpretative, normative and pragmatic”. These four tasks are used within the Department as broad guidelines for doing practical theology. According to Osmer (2008:12), the advantage of this method is that this interpretation leads to the following important benefits:

- bridging the subdisciplines of practical theology;
- bridging the academy and ministry, and
- understanding the interconnectedness of ministry.

Besides the emphasis on hermeneutics in the practice of practical theology, a further important consensus has developed recently in this field of study:

> Among the various perspectives regarding how to understand God, and God's work in the world as made known through Scripture, there is one in recent years that has seen a significant level of convergence among a wide range of Christian faith traditions. This is a missiological perspective. It involves understanding God's work in the world as the *missio Dei* – the mission of God, which takes place in relation to the redemptive reign of God in Christ – the Kingdom of God. The convergence around this understanding includes Christian scholars from such diverse faith traditions as Ecumenicals, Evangelicals, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and even Pentecostals (Van Gelder 2004:50).

The Department of Practical Theology at the University of the Free State must take into account the consensus regarding a missionary perspective that holds important implications for the practice and focus of practical theology.

4. EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: TOWARDS AN AFRICAN APPROACH

The practice of practical theology in Africa has to acknowledge the African context. The Department of Practical Theology is situated at a South African university within the African context. To understand the African context, one has to grasp the meaning of an *African identity.* To many people, the concept of Africa suggests fixity of identity while for others it calls for inclusion and exclusion of some (Kalua 2009:25; Ndhlovu 2009:18). To some, historical African identity implies glorification of blackness, and it appeals to the continent's mystique and spatial location (Kalua 2009:27). In contemporary Africa, however, it appears that African identity is fluid or shifting and is no longer defined by race. Suddenly, European and Asian immigrants adopt African identity, thus further complicating the issue. In addition, Field (1998:46) argues that identity emerges in a context of relationship with four other entities. First, one may describe one's identity in terms of race, biological or physiological structures. Secondly, one may understand one's identity from a personal or communal experience of life. Thirdly, one may define oneself according to the context to which one relates. Lastly, one may use one's own narratives to delineate oneself, one's context and one's relationship to the context. However, it must be understood by both Black and White South Africans that to be African nowadays does not involve race and exclusion of the other. According to Field (1998:52-56), being African, or rather the turn to Africa, implies being rooted in the African context, that is internalising the experiences of Africa, identifying with African church struggles and discernment of the past history of colonisation and apartheid.

What is implied by *a turn to Africa*? For African Christianity to lead in the ecclesiastical debate, practical theology in African Christian institutions have to focus on Africa. To understand what is meant by a 'turn to Africa' in practical theology, the following metaphors are used: African theology of reconstruction; the quest for wholeness; deep grassroots African theology; African lived experience, and decolonisation of theory and practice of practical theology. These concepts will be discussed briefly.

Gathogo (2007:99) argues that a turn to Africa emphasises *African theology of reconstruction* (ATOR). Gathogo (2007:100) defines ATOR as a theology that emphasises the knowledge of post-colonial Africa, or in South African terms, post-apartheid South Africa. In other words, it is a theology that focuses on neo-colonialism, refugee crisis, debt crisis, enculturation of the gospel, and the plight of the marginalised. ATOR is a kind of theology that uses Nehemia's rebuilding project of the wall of the holy city.

In his discussion about *quest for wholeness*, Ngong (2006:519) suggests that it is not necessary for the religion of Southern Africa to imitate the religion of the West. Instead, African Christianity, including practical theology, must contribute to the human quest for wholeness in Africa. Ngong (2006:519) calls this approach a New Christianity that may lead to the next Christendom. Ngong (2006:20) further states that new Christianity is characterised by a holistic world view in which there is no distinction between the secular and the sacred. For example, land in the African context is sacred and, therefore, it has to be treated with respect and honour for it to be productive. Secondly, a New Christianity can be practised within the context of a devastated economy, poverty and a post-colonial environment. This practice will make practical theology more contextual.

Sales and Liphoko (1982:167) propose that theology in Africa should engage students in *deep grassroots African theology w*hich they nickname People's Theology. It is a theology that invests in the human capital in society by developing relevant skills to solve the needs of the local community through home study, group meeting as well as practical work in a society. Similarly, Heyns (1997:31), Louw (1998:22), and Cilliers (2000:53) had long proposed that practical theology in South Africa should focus more on the praxis which refers to the transformation, renewal and development of society. African theology of reconstruction, New Christianity and grassroots African theology all try to emphasise what Fashole-Luke (1974:387) argues when he pronounces that Christian theology should be made meaningful in African context and that it should affirm the universal gospel message by translating it into particular thought forms of African societies.

How do these metaphors of a 'turn to Africa' affect practical theology as a theological discipline at African theological institutions? Ganzevoort (2009:3-7) defines practical theology as a study of the field of the lived religion in order to understand the process of life and to construct meaning. This definition has a great deal of affinity to the definition of the African practical theologian Ikenye (2008:38) who understands practical theology as a theological discipline that must be descriptive of *African lived experience.* From the definitions of both Ganzevoort (2009:3-7) and Ikenye (2008:38), it can be seen that lived experience or religion refers to any religion engaged with practical theology, including aspects such as culture, society, politics, economy and historical forces. This implies that a 'turn to Africa' in practical theology in

Africa has to acknowledge and strive to understand the background of African indigenous religion, history of colonisation and African culture if it intends to bring about genuine and relevant solutions to African problems. Ikenye (2008:38) and Kasambala (2005:300) argue that practical theology in the African context has to help reconstruct a communal self as part of the living Christian community.

Ikenye (2008:2) further argues that a 'turn to Africa' can be achieved through *decolonisation of theory and practice of practical theology*. According to Ikenye (2008:21, 22), decolonisation of practical theology simply means integration of understanding of the Western practical theological approach and the needs of the African relational self in a community, within the context of the theology of grace in Christ. Theology of grace in Christ with regard to the African context implies understanding the images of Christ in Africa such as Christ as a liberator, healer, and king. Since its advent in Africa, practical theology has, to a great extent, been controlled by the Western practice of theology which is characteristic of the individualistic approach and the pastor-centred ministry. Dreyer (2010:3, 5) even adds that research in practical theology was more of a White-reformed approach, not representative of the religious demographics in South Africa. This practice has to change and practical theology has to be inclusive of other denominations, religions and races and must be communal in its approach.

Ikenye (2008:23) emphasises that for practical theology to be relevant and responsive to the African Christian it has to discern the problem of the African being and the principle of engagement of practical theology with the African Christian. This entails at least the following:

- Practical theology has to diagnose the personality structure of the African being. The world view, religious beliefs, cultural aspects and the role of the individual in relation to the community are all essential in drawing up a practical theological approach to deal with African issues.
- Practical theology has to reflect upon the conversion experience and its implication. This aspect will address the issue of relationship between culture-gospel and social transformation.
- Practical theology needs to reflect upon the experience of colonisation. It has to critique the evil practices of the Western missionaries who collaborated with the colonisers and applaud sincere practice by White missionaries during colonisation.

In Ikenye's (2008:21) words, for practical theology to be responsive to African Christians, the identity of practical theology has to approve and accommodate the personal identity of the African Christian. In brief, a 'turn to Africa' in practical theological terms implies also recognition of ATOR, practice of New Christianity in Africa, and grassroots African theology. It is necessary for practical theology in South Africa Africa and in particular the Department of Practical Theology at the UFS to take its praxis as the African context.

5. CONCRETE TRANSFORMATION THAT MAY TAKE PLACE OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

This aspect may be answered by reflecting upon important future perspectives for practical theology within a South African context. Dreyer (2012:513) indicates the following important markers for *a future orientation*: (i) that practical theology should be more representative of the South African context with regard to race, gender and religious affiliation; (ii) that practical theology as a discipline should develop a unique South African character in which the 'turn to Africa' is represented, but in which international relationships are nevertheless nurtured; (iii) the development of regional networks of practical theology in Africa; (iv) the development of research capacity that is more ecumenically representative, and (v) the development of an established public practical theology that is capable of facilitating involvement in contextual challenges.

A more integrated approach is sought. It is difficult to keep maintaining the rationale according to which a distinction is drawn between teaching, research and community service. These fields should rather be presented as an integrated unit, as emphasised by the words of the renowned David Tracey in the 1980s: "society, rather than academy or church, as practical theology's primary audience" (Miller-McLemore 2012: Kindle Edition). The integrated nature of the aspects is indeed also supported by actuality in the development of a public practical theology and with that the development of the description of "lived religion" (Ganzevoort 2009: electronic source).

What then, in conclusion, is the way forward for practical theology? The following four aspects or markers may be highlighted in moving forward in the Department of Practical Theology.

5.1 Aims and points of departure for practical theology

Practical theology wishes to work hermeneutically from a critical point of view, both contextually and inductively. This includes the evaluation of old practices and the forming of a new praxis that is contextual and relevant to the Southern African community. Practical theology should engage students in deep grassroots African theology so that, upon completing their studies, they are able to solve theological challenges and issues in the villages, townships and cities through teamwork ministry and empowerment of the laity, especially women.

In the light of this, the following threefold purpose has been formulated for the Department of Practical Theology:

- to develop a critical and contextually relevant theological praxis through community interaction;
- to assist people with a vocation to be part of God's mission to the world, by developing the following as followers of Jesus Christ:
  - spiritual maturity and awareness of calling;
  - theological and hermeneutical abilities;

- character and personality development;
- ministry understanding and skills, and
- contextual sensitivity,

so that they can be of service within the faith communities and in the broader society;

- ► to make a contribution, through relevant, timely and high-quality research, in cooperation with other partners and networks, to the understanding and transformation of the community and society.

5.2 The student studying practical theology

There is a commitment to a greater multifaceted diversity in the composition of the university students and lecturers (race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs and language). This incorporates a greater appreciation for and celebration of diversity and complexity. There is a reconsideration of the way in which language can exclude within a parallel medium system, for example, students who are encouraged to work out and deliver ecumenical services.

Students are to be exposed to a diversity of class teaching, student population and theologies to enable them to develop personal competence in the ministry within an African context. Who is the student on whom the Department is thus focusing? The Department strives towards the following:

- ► not to train only students of a specific denomination or church society;
- ► to train more people than merely the full-time entrants to the ministry, and
- ► to be inclusive as far as possible and to display a diversity of faith communities in its student corps.

5.3 A transformed institutional culture

The institutional culture is transformed wherever note and action are taken in respect of the so-called non-curricular (in other words, that which is not talked about or worked on). This includes the fellowship with each other outside formal academic classes. For example, from a stronger weekly religious service (which celebrates communion) in the Faculty to a cafeteria in the Faculty where the diverse corps can eat together, have coffee or just chat. Borders can be "eaten away".

In addition, the transformation means that year groups enjoy greater practical exposure (reading of poems, discussion of current news, watching films, attendance of a variety of religious services, ecumenical tours, and so on). As such, students can be assisted in learning to think for themselves. This forms critical independent thought. Ideas that may play a role in this regard, include the following: Religious service as public theology – Barth on Sunday as the most political deed of the week! Don't have a public theology or a social ethic (Hauerwas), but be it! The liturgical space as so-called third space between private and public where we help to actually build the bridge between private and public. Teach students to solve a

problem so that they will also be able to solve other problems – or at least be able to live with them.

Theology learned at this theological institution should facilitate personal changes in the students so that they may know themselves and learn to integrate theology and their competencies in specific and concrete situations. In addition, Huizing mentions that theology (including practical theology) should bring about change of inner character and outer behaviour of students so that they can also integrate personal self and professional self, cognitive and affective behaviour and context in their everyday life. This could result in that more career possibilities than merely that of minister to a reformed church/denomination can be offered. In addition, other career options/paths can be involved in unpacking the curriculum.

5.4 Research focus and networking/partnerships

The aim is to expose students to the context as well as to wider academic discussion. The development of current and new research themes within departmental activities is, therefore, important and can make a relevant contribution. An example of this is the development from the emphasis in the pastorate on the original understanding of humankind as a "living human document" to the recent development of a so-called "network society" in which human beings are understood as a "living human web" (Miller-McLemore 2012: Kindle edition). Focus can further be placed on the exposure of students to other important discourses within practical theology such as feminist theology, for instance.

In order to further extend and develop these points of emphasis, students in the study field of practical theology should be part of an intra- and interdisciplinary discussion and exposure:

- Intradisciplinary discussion: by presenting some of the themes or modules jointly, for example poverty (on undergraduate level) and leadership (on postgraduate level).
- Interdisciplinary discussion: by taking part in joint research projects, for example, sustainable development (at the University of the Free State) and identity-forming (Free University, Amsterdam).
- To move further away from the traditional silo-mentality, a preference is expressed for intra-, inter- and multidisciplinary cooperation.

6. CONCLUSION

Informed by views from literature, preliminary perspectives which not only accommodate but also facilitate epistemological transformation were entertained and reflected on. These perspectives form the cornerstones upon which the proposed epistemological transformation can be evolutionary developed during the next few years, within a specific and concrete context. Since these perspectives are only theoretical at this stage, further future research may reflect the implementation and impact of these proposed developments in an

empirical way. It is envisaged that the evolving practice of these developments will further contribute to the creation and opening up of new vistas for a contextual sensitive, relevant and pragmatic practical theology at the University of the Free State.

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DOING SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY IN THE POST-APARTHEID CONDITION

Rian Venter[1]

This article is a modest contribution to an institutional process of self-reflection at the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State on present academic practices and future orientations. The reason for this undertaking is the realisation that the process of transformation at tertiary institutions in South Africa has been incomplete. The activity has been thematised in terms of epistemological transformation. This short exploration focusing on one discipline – Systematic Theology – will be structured to address *five issues*: attitude towards epistemological transformation, brief overview of developments in the discipline, constructive personal proposals concerning the nature of the subject field and potential impacts, the need for a turn to Africa, and practical suggestions for change.[2]

1. THE GRAMMAR OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

Intellectual activity occurs in specific concrete social circumstances, and mutual influence between thinking and context is inevitable. Human knowledge is both contingent and performative. Subjecting an academic discipline such as Systematic Theology to scrutiny is to acknowledge complicity of the past and to accept responsibility for the future. Doing theology in South Africa, especially after 1994, is to face both of these dynamics, and to embrace the category 'transformation' as legitimate. The *Soudien Report on Public Higher Education* aptly states that "epistemological transformation is at the heart of the transformation agenda".[3] To theorise the moment of disciplinary introspection for theology in terms of 'epistemological transformation', as has been suggested by Jansen,[4] is potentially fruitful and challenging.

As apartheid was such a totalising ideology and practice, requests for a univocal *definition* for 'epistemological transformation' should be resisted. In a previous article,[5] I intimated a number of articulations regarding what this might entail for theology as such at a public

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2 These five perspectives formed the basis for a Faculty discussion in June 2012. All departments presented proposals addressing epistemological transformation of their respective disciplines.

3 *Soudien Report* (2008:89).

4 In discussions between the Rector of the University of the Free State, Prof. J.D. Jansen, and the Faculty of Theology in 2011.

5 See the first article by Venter in this volume,

university. 'Inclusion of knowledges' may be a shorthand manner of capturing the essence of the challenge facing theology, in particular Systematic Theology. In other words, addressing the imperative of epistemological transformation for an academic discipline is merely pursuing *intellectual justice*.

This rather abstract denotation should in no way obscure the *specific nature* of the task. Epistemological transformation has an explicit frame of reference: a history of social pathology, which can be identified in terms of time, place, and an array of corresponding practices. It is about *racial* prejudice, discrimination, exclusion and violence, and how intellectual, academic and disciplinary resources were co-opted for legitimisation. This *specific referent* to epistemological transformation should be a compass direction throughout discussions. Once this primary reference has been established, attention can be drawn to related notions such as gender and class. Subsequently, second-level reflection will grapple with adequate categories for understanding this social pathology, for example, otherness or relationality. Strictly speaking, there is a twofold specificity in this instance: a continuous history of racial pathology with its hydra character, and the fundamental question of *what it means to be human*. It is significant that a theologian such as De Gruchy initiated an interdisciplinary project on 'New Humanism' as urgent task in the post-apartheid condition.[6] Apartheid was a fundamental distortion of being human; a new democratic dispensation must explore what it means to be authentically human.

Interrogating the position of Systematic Theology at the public university in South Africa considers this double sensitivity: a specific history of social aberration, and the hope of a new community. For this discipline, a *threefold exclusion/inclusion* is at stake: that of religions, that of Christian denominational traditions, and that of the perspective of the traditionally excluded Other. Systematic Theology is, genealogically speaking, an academic discipline oriented towards Christianity; the possibility of an inter-religious approach cannot be treated in this article.[7] The other two forms will be discussed in this article. In South Africa, with the majority of the population adherents of the Christian faith, the question of *whose knowledge* is represented at a public university is a valid and acute one. Formulated simply, Systematic Theology is a discipline that gives a coherent account of the cognitive truth claims of the church, or *what* Christians believe. Inevitably, the question should be framed in terms of *justice*: Whose Christian faith is represented and constructed? As such, this elicits a pregnant ethical sense.[8] This raises the question of the history and current position of the discipline.

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6 See De Gruchy (2011) for the volume *The humanist imperative in South Africa*, containing relevant and important essays.

7 Inter-religious Systematic Theologies are rare intellectual pursuits. The proposal by Smart and Konstantine – *Christian Systematic Theology in a world context* (1991) – may be mentioned; this is a deliberate attempt to relate the Christian tradition to the milieu of religious studies. D'Costa (1992) speaks about the 'end of Systematic Theology', referring to the need to take an entire new range of dialogue partners seriously, especially the world religions. My impression is that this challenge has not yet been seriously considered internationally.

8 The claim by the ethicist Schweiker (2011:209) is worth quoting: "Arguably the most profound moral crisis in societies is a crisis of human perception: people do not see or sense the claims to justice that arise within the vulnerabilities of lived reality."

2. PLURALITY AND AMBIGUITY[9] OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Epistemological transformation of a discipline requires a stocktaking of current scholarly practices. However, this cannot be done without a sense of historical development. A comprehensive intellectual history of the academic study of Systematic Theology in South Africa has not yet been undertaken and is an urgent outstanding task. A study of the discipline at public universities, of major theologians and their literary output, of academic societies, of journals, of postgraduate research and of research institutes is overdue.

In this brief discussion, I will limit myself to the Reformed Tradition: my justification will be the dominant role that Calvinism has played not only in the country and in church life, but also at university level. In a sense, Systematic Theology in South Africa is the story of the Reformed tradition.[10] The many faces of this tradition have been mapped by Smit,[11] and the so-called dogmatic line has been drawn by Strauss.[12] Histories of Systematic Theology at specific faculties have been written.[13] For heuristic purposes, I will briefly focus on two generations and their work, and draw some generalised conclusions. Only those scholars with a fairly significant corpus of published work and an identifiable academic profile will be highlighted.

An older group of scholars such as J. Heyns, W. Jonker, J Durand and A. König played an influential role and dominated the field of Systematic Theology. Textbooks such as *Op weg met die teologie*[14] and *Introduction to theology*[15] played a crucial role in conceptualising a certain understanding of theology and of Systematic Theology. The impact of material and comprehensive treatments of Systematic Theology such as Heyns's *Dogmatiek*[16] and the series *Wegwysers in die Dogmatiek* by Jonker and Durand can hardly be overstated. These scholars and their textbooks established the contours of the discipline for Afrikaans-speaking theology students. Despite diverging approaches, the works of these scholars excel in solid and respectable scholarship. A re-reading of their output, with contemporary sensibilities, however, reveals weaknesses: a detachment of historical location and social conflict, orientation to Europe, neglect of the African reality, limited interdisciplinary conversation, separation of ethics and Dogmatics, and conservative intuitions. Their attitude towards apartheid is a complex reality: not only does it differ, but it should also be sought in different expressions, for example, their public statements, synodical contributions, and work on

9 See the title of Tracy's work (1987) for this apt description.

10 Stating this does not in any way ignore the important work done by scholars from other denominations. For example, a person such as Klaus Nürenberg, a Lutheran, should receive prominence in a more elaborate treatment of the history and state of Systematic Theology in South Africa.

11 See, for example, one such article – Smit (1992).

12 See, for example, Strauss (1995). One should point out that this project by Strauss has a specific focus, and does not include the dogmatic line of Gereformeerde (Potchefstroom) and Hervormde (Pretoria) theologians.

13 See Wethmar (2009).

14 See Heyns & Jonker (1974).

15 See Eybers, König and Stoop (1974). The chapters by König on Theology (Chapter 1) and Systematic Theology (Chapter 7) are relevant.

16 See Heyns (1978).

ethics. My impression is that, even in the work of a scholar such as Durand with undisputed anti-apartheid sentiments, apartheid has not been engaged in material Dogmatics.

The scholarship by J. de Gruchy exemplifies a different engagement with the social location of the theologian. His work is a sustained and imaginative effort to relate the Reformed tradition to both the apartheid and democratic state of affairs in South Africa. An example of re-visioning the matrix of a specific Christian tradition to address social exigencies is found in his *Liberating Reformed Theology.*[17] This work demonstrates how the Reformed faith can be interpreted along liberationist lines. Theology can be faithful to a tradition while simultaneously being contextual and emancipatory. The entire oeuvre of De Gruchy deserves careful attention by any epistemological transformation process in Systematic Theology. His work may be iconic of responsible and creative theology in the South African context.

Works by a younger generation of Reformed scholars[18] such as D. Smit, C. du Toit, N. Koopman, P. Naude, E. Conradie, and D. Veldsman are markedly different from the previous generation of systematic theologians. Systematic Theology and ethics are more intimately related, and the social function of theology is pursued in a new key – that of Public Theology,[19] and an explicit interest in interdisciplinary engagement.[20] Exciting and creative new research issues are investigated. Despite the impressive research profiles of these scholars,[21] there is a lack of a number of avenues in the work: a sustained engagement with the African reality, prominence of race as continued theological challenge, dialogue with the various expressions of the Arts and with non-Christian religions, and in-depth exploration of traditional doctrinal themes.[22]

Despite exciting developments, one cannot but notice the virtual absence of women and African scholars producing any significant body of work in Systematic Theology.[23] The encouragement and empowerment of women and African scholars specialising in Systematic Theology remains a particular challenge.

3. THE ORIENTATION – TRIUNE GOD AND SUBALTERN VOICES

An overview of historical and contemporary approaches to Systematic Theology as an academic discipline should lead to an intimation of one's own construction proposal: How

17 See De Gruchy (1991).

18 The work by the generation of scholars such as P.C. Potgieter, S.A. Strauss, C.J. Wethmar and P.F. Theron cannot be discussed in this article.

19 See, for example, Koopman (2009) for a good overview of the state of scholarship on Public Theology.

20 The work by Du Toit at the Institute for Religion and Theology at the University of South Africa on faith and science, for instance, that by Conradie on ecology and that by Veldsman on religious experience should especially be mentioned. As early as the 1990s, Du Toit (1996) advocated adjustments in Systematic Theology in light of changing contexts.

21 This is not the occasion to pursue these in detail. One may mention the work on hermeneutics, confessionality and public theology by Smit and that on the Belhar confession by Naudé.

22 The strength of the older generation of scholars was their material focus. There is, for example, a neglect of a sustained and in-depth development of the Christian vision on God, on Christ and the Spirit. No one has published a comprehensive statement of the Christian doctrinal vision.

23 This claim is not made in an attempt to belittle theological work by women and African scholars in general. The issue is significant productivity and demonstrable influence in the field of Systematic Theology.

should this field of study be envisioned at a public university in South Africa in this post-apartheid context?

My approach to Systematic Theology has been influenced by the dialectic of *identity and relevance* formulated by the German theologian J. Moltmann.[24] In my early doctoral studies, I pursued this challenge in terms of resurrection and liberation. During the past decade or so, I explored this with the central symbol of the Christian faith, that is, the trinity and the philosophical turn to relationality. In various articles I employed social models of the trinity to address social challenges.[25] Retrospectively, I realise that one single intuition, albeit manifested in different guises, keeps recurring: the importance and centrality of the *God question*. My theological approach is captured by the striking fable told by the philosopher Isaiah Berlin about the hedgehog and the fox: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing".[26] Systematic Theology should be about one "big thing": God.

Two cardinal questions are being addressed with this reference to God: the *core task* of Systematic Theology, and the potential *public contribution* of this discipline at a university. The so-called 'turn to religion', the 'turn to spirituality' in society and the new interest in transcendence in philosophy or religion all underline the human quest for ultimacy, for the sacred. The Christian faith contributes to this by *naming* transcendence, and by recounting a narrative of Father, Son and Spirit. Systematic Theology has given comprehensive rational accounts since early Christianity – starting with Origen in the third century[27] – of what this 'strong name' implies for understanding divinity and reality as such.

By focusing on 'God' as central religious symbol, Systematic Theology addresses not only one of the most powerful influences on human behaviour, but also one of the potentially most destructive. God-talk in the twentieth century has witnessed not only aggressive and outright rejection, but also authentic critique of the violence inherent in classical theism by women, Black people, and poor people. *Two movements* have contributed a great deal to a new paradigm of speaking of God: an openness to subaltern voices, and a rediscovery of the Trinity. Increasingly, one encounters a discourse of God which emphasises mystery, relationality, gift, hospitality and beauty as conveying the identity of the Christian understanding of God.

The promise of these developments is fourfold: it strengthens *ecumenism*, because it is found across denominational enclaves; it allows the construction of a comprehensive Trinitarian *symbolic world*, which bespeaks exuberance; it encourages *self-formation* in terms of relationality, and it encourages an *ethic of embrace* of the Other. Exactly here the public contribution of Systematic Theology is found. No other academic discipline has this express task: to account for a Christian notion of God, and to offer an ontology informed by this.[28] If

24 See Moltmann (1974:7-31).

25 See, for example, my 2004 study in which I explicitly investigated the link between a Trinitarian imagination and doing Systematic Theology in a post-apartheid South Africa.

26 See Berlin (1978:3).

27 See Fiorenza (2011) for a good account of the history of Systematic Theology and contemporary challenges.

28 Traditionally, Systematic Theology has been constituted by "doctrines" – that is of creation, of providence, of the human being, of sin, of Christ, of the Spirit, of salvation, the church and the last things. These can be translated in

a re-visioned notion of Transcendence is developed, it may potentially have a huge impact on a person's self-understanding and on social relations.

As this section is central to the entire treatment of epistemological transformation, the basic features presented in a dense and truncated way in this instance should probably be put differently for the sake of clarity. I advance a notion of Systematic Theology which considers the *doctrine of God* as the central theological task, an understanding of God which is decisively informed by trends such as the turn to relationality and alterity. Secondly, a *catholic*[29] *vision* of the Christian faith should subsequently be developed from the perspective of God, treating each locus or doctrine consistently from this *theo*-logical perspective. Thirdly, the character of theology should be determined by the very perfection of the triune God as *hospitable*. Hospitality would imply openness to neglected voices, and to the insights of other academic disciplines. Such a hospitable view would have a double effect on Systematic Theology. It would be *critical*, in the sense of power relations and the need for epistemic disruption,[30] and it would be sensitive to what really matters or, in other words, to the *big questions.*[31] Often both of these sensibilities are missing and the discipline is practised as if it can distance itself from social injustice; it addresses research issues which are embarrassingly insignificant in terms of wider existential issues.

Such an understanding of Systematic Theology obviously presupposes a specific conception of its nature: it is constructionist and consciously performative. It is pursued with ethical effects in mind. During the past few decades, many studies focused on the effect of God-images on people. At stake in this brief proposal is the question of the impact of the entire Christian vision determined by a specific construal of the God symbol. My hope is that a *theo-logical, catholic* and *hospitable* Systematic Theology may disrupt self-centred, myopic and violent alternative interpretations of reality.

4. AN INCOMPLETE TASK – THE 'TURN TO AFRICA'

Since the mid-1950s, African Christians have been pleading for a theology and for theological education that would reflect the African reality, and that would not continue imposing Western culture and modes of thinking on Africa. Over the past sixty years, there has been a growing body of literature on contextual theology, proposing various paradigms of doing African theology. Although a recent article mentions "the coming of age in African

terms of fundamental human questions: of origin, of self, of evil, of mediation, of transformation, of community and of ultimate destiny. By exploring imaginatively each one of the traditional "doctrines" or fundamental human questions from a Trinitarian optic, one basically constructs an ontology, or comprehensive symbolic world.

29 Wethmar's notion that the classical marks of the church should also inform the nature of theology is pertinent in this instance. Theology can be nothing but catholic, embracing the global faith of the church.

30 The volume *Constructive Theology* by Jones and Lakeland (eds.) (2005) is a good example of a Systematic Theology open to traditional approaches and an array of new voices. The alternative reading of theologians, from non-conventional perspectives, in the volume *Beyond the pale* also deserves attention. See De la Torre & Floyd-Thomas (2011).

31 The value of doing theology in an interdisciplinary manner is being realised. The volume on anthropology – *In search of the self* – compiled by the South African theologian at Princeton, Van Huyssteen, evidences exactly this mutual enrichment between theology and the other sciences. The Yale theologian, Tanner (20.10:41), correctly argues that a shift is taking place in theology which stresses this concern about the bigger questions.

Theology",[32] the nagging impression is of a field of study that remains a kind of appendix to the standard account of Systematic Theology. The importance is widely recognised, but it never permeates the structure and material content of the comprehensive representation of the Christian faith. There is hardly a more apt illustration of the relation between power and knowledge than exactly this. Because academic theology serves predominantly White churches, African theology continues to be regarded as a theological trend to be taken note of, and not the primary mode of doing theology. Apart from material arguments that all theology should be local knowledge, simple demographics dictate that the African reality and experience be the point of departure. For the 'turn to Africa' to be effectuated I suggest the following.

A basic *commitment* to Africa is required. The first act in doing theology is an act of solidarity. Liberation theology taught us that the first act in theology is an act of spirituality – the option for the poor. Something similar is required in this instance: an option for this continent.

This immediately raises the question "Which Africa?". 'Africa' is fundamentally a *construct,*[33] and most often it is a racist and colonialist construct. The associations and connotations to the referent 'Africa' betray deep-seated affinities. An interpretation is required which removes the distance of otherness, and bespeaks of belonging, agency and value. A qualification may be justified in this instance. To further the importance of 'Africa' as theological subject is in no way a relapse in questionable binary or essentialising thinking. Exactly the opposite of such a potential rebuttal is intended: the agency and identity of those who have been historically marginalised is at stake.

Theology should engage a new circle of *interlocutors* – that of the *African intellectual*. A simple question may illustrate this: Which theologian has, for instance, entered into dialogue with Mbembe's work?[34] Conversation with these scholars will convey a different perspective on Africa to theologians. Perhaps we will be less enthusiastic about the missionary legacy; perhaps we will learn new categories to understand the present, and have different hopes for the future.

The full extent of the *rich and complex religious reality* on the continent should be appreciated. The new volume – *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to African Religions*[35] – conveys something of this and should become required reading for all theologians.

The important *initial explorations* of the field should be carefully studied. In South Africa, the work by Tinyiko Maluleke[36] deserves careful attention, especially his understanding of the challenges facing theology.

Comprehensive systematic treatments of the Christian faith in Africa have not been undertaken. Certain doctrinal issues such as Christology have been treated in depth.

32 See Mashau and Frederiks (2008).

33 See the important work by Mudimbe (1988) – *The invention of Africa*.

34 See, for example, his 2001 seminal work – *On the postcolony*.

35 See Bongmba (2012).

36 See, for example, Maluleke (1997). His entire oeuvre, consisting of a large number of substantial essays, warrants in-depth study.

The *material challenge* is daunting. It may entail a complicated encounter between two religious traditions on their respective construals of the divine and an engagement between two cosmologies – Biblical and traditional. Furthermore, what particularly complicates theological construction is the presence of both traditional and modernist elements in religions. Embracing the turn to Africa will require imaginative ways of translating traditional Systematic Theology into an alternative metaphoric world, for example, how does one speak about 'salvation' so that it makes sense in Africa?

5. A TRANSFORMED HABIT OF MIND AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

A valid question may be raised: What should change in the Department of Systematic Theology? The danger is to treat this atomistically. I suggest that the notion of a 'habit of mind'[37] should receive attention prior to all kinds of practical suggestions. Change is the result of a disposition, of a new direction chosen, and of continual discernment in each moment of the educational process. Change is wrought through nurtured intellectual intuitions.

Epistemological change obviously requires a personal frame of mind: a conviction that change is necessary, an openness to learn from others, and a willingness to question oneself. It is a personal journey. For Systematic Theology at the University of the Free State, I suggest a specific intellectual disposition, a specific habit of mind: one that thinks consistently *theologically* (in other words, trinitarianly), respects the *catholic breadth* of the Christian tradition, justly favours *neglected voices*, and prioritises the *African reality*. Such a vision can sufficiently account for the direction of transformation of a discipline such as Systematic Theology in the post-apartheid condition.

Re-visioning *teaching practices* will obviously consider the various and typical design elements – outcomes, learning experiences, learning themes and material. In a sense, the identification of (new) learning themes and study material is the easier part of transformation. At the Department this process *is underway* and will continue. Care will be taken that students hear a greater variety of voices and encounter more challenging views. For example, do we include adequate reading by African woman scholars? The development of more imaginative and disruptive *learning experiences* warrants much greater attention in future, and this I regard as one of practical areas for transformation. Greater acquaintance with the variety of educational options, for example, approaches advocated by Paulo Freire, should be intentionally pursued. The fundamental question is: How do students come to share in a similar habit of mind, one which values and respects sacredness, hospitality and justice towards the Other, and a commitment to Africa? A great deal of creative work should be done in this regard.

Research by postgraduate students and by lecturers obviously forms an important part of a discipline's identity. *Three specific questions* deserve careful consideration: What determines *significant* research?[38] What *theoretical framework* should be followed? What research *foci* should be advanced? I become increasingly convinced that a great deal of theological research

37 See Gerrish (1999) for an informative discussion with specific reference to the Reformed Tradition and education

38 See Jansen (2011) for a comprehensive discussion of the notion of 'significance'.

is extremely questionable: time and energy are wasted on research of limited relevance. Theology should ask the unavoidable question: What knowledge do we need at this time and in this place of the South African history? What unresolved questions are there? Secondly, the choice of theoretical framework is a neglected area of attention at the University of the Free State, and I suggest that the fruitfulness of *post-colonial approaches* be investigated. Thirdly, the identification of research foci is of crucial importance, not only to position the Department both strategically and uniquely, but also to make a discernable contribution to the scholarly community. Such focus is obviously based on consultation, the expertise of teaching staff and an evaluation of contextual needs. For the University of the Free State for the immediate future, I propose that *four areas* of research be pursued: Reconciliation Studies,[39] African Theology, conversation between theology and the arts, and the doctrine of God. Some research projects by Ph.D. students are already in process on these themes, and full-time lecturers have also published in these fields.

Transformation of an academic department entails more and includes a *range of related practices*. The same 'habit of mind' should obviously be applied to international networking, organising of conferences, and discussion groups. For example, guest lecturers should be carefully selected to fit the profile of the Department and to contribute to the research foci. Interdisciplinary conversation, especially with University of the Free State colleagues from other disciplines, should be valued, and mini-conferences can be organised annually. In addition to these, the mentoring of a new generation of young theologians should be prioritised and intentional steps be taken to encourage young people to develop their research skills.

6. CONCLUSION

To address any uncertainty as to what epistemological transformation for a specific theological discipline in South Africa might entail, this article suggested that a specific grammar be employed, that is, rules for speaking that emphasise intellectual justice, and that are sensitive to historically excluded voices. Systematic Theology was situated in a historical state of scholarship, critically appreciating what a previous generation has accomplished, and attending to creative explorations of the present practitioners. Both strengths and weaknesses were pointed out, which might form the basis for discussion about future directions for the discipline in South Africa. A personal proposal was articulated, advocating a strong theo-logical, catholic and hospitable orientation, which might meet the imperative of epistemological transformation. Attention was drawn to one specific direction, namely a much greater openness for the experiences of Africa. The article concluded with an appeal to a transformed habit of mind as key to redress teaching practices and research in Systematic Theology. Embracing epistemological transformation as legitimate challenge opens the possibility of an exciting intellectual journey.

39 See Carrey who considers reconciliation a fourth paradigm of doing theology in Africa following inculturation, liberation and reconstruction.

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