Chapter 1, Positioning

1.1   Introduction

1.1.1 An Introductory metaphor, An Ordinary world

Everything happens perhaps to a greater or lesser degree, as it has always been. The sun rises, the sun sets. It is said we sleep away two thirds of our lives. Some might agree in addition, it seems most work away a third of their productive lives. The sun rises, the sun sets but in this repetition, there is a multiplicity of realities. According to screen writer Christopher Vogel (1999),[1] this *ordinary world* or otherwise called *world of common day* is the fountain of all stories. The reality of our *ordinary worlds* is embodied by our storied lives.

There are four ways in which this *ordinary world* metaphor is significant to the research: reference to Vogel (1999) was provided by one of the research participants.[2] An *ordinary world* implies in Valerian terminology a research *journey*, a journey that the reader is about to step into. An *ordinary world* suggests that characters might change, that a journey will do something for those involved. Lastly, an *ordinary world* serves as a metaphor for the intention of this chapter aimed at an academic positioning which will be explained shortly.

It is in the space between the rising and setting of chapter one the reader encounters an *ordinary world* where I choose to belong. This *ordinary world* embraces my affinity to the arts but also brings it in conversation with empirical academic inquiry. Exactly this creative interchange between affinity and epistemology underlying the research that provided a catalytic moment.

I am grateful to such a catalyst moment since, to my amazement, there are writers in some arts communities that eschew the foundational theoretical links to

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[1] Vogler's (1999) model is found in chapter four. It might be useful to the reader to glance over the proposed story movements and characters since I will refer to it often.

their practises; that are largely oblivious to their *ordinary worlds*. To the contrary, these should inform their practises. The scholar's world is 'ordinary' in the sense that academic communities, whether they realise this, or not are based on certain assumptions.   Largely it would not be practical to not have taken for granted truths; one would not get through with the daily duties before the sun sets. These assumptions make the world work for us, or they might not. In research, we should want to reflect on our assumptions since our assumptions inform our use of concepts like, objectivity, truth, knowledge and so forth. I agree with music therapist Garred that every practise has a theoretical foundation whether or not it is explicitly articulated; the structure of some underlying theory gives sense to what we are doing (Garred 2002:35). One cannot at all act without some conception, at some level, of what you are doing. Wanting to avoid being unmindful of a theoretical paradigm I reflect on my *ordinary world.* This reflection enables me to set out on this research journey with integrity.

In respect of a theoretical framework that we encounter in chapter one, some might use the following concepts congruently; used to describe various comprehensions of what informs our presumptions: tradition of thought, matrix, interpretational repertoires, and so on. I do not often use an array of similar concepts, so I do favour the notion of paradigm. The concept of paradigm is relevant to this chapter: Music therapist Garry Ansdell (2002:139) reflects on the work of Thomas Kuhn (1970) and his description of paradigm shifts. Narrative practitioners acknowledge such a paradigm shift in the broader tradition of its practises and especially therapy. This acknowledgement signifies a shift in the constellations of basic agreements within the discipline. The notion of paradigm suggests, "…theory is first and foremost *of its time and place* – never just an objective description of reality, but a pragmatic construction based on the experience and knowledge we currently possess. Its advantage is its usefulness, not its final truthfulness[2] as such" (Ansdell 2002:13). It is interesting to note that

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[2] Truthfulness in this context seems to refer to objectivist notions of truth. The way that this study will use this concept is in preference of the concept truthfulness as in a sense of integrity over against truthfulness as objectively true.

Hermans (2002: vii) is of opinion that social constructionism is not a paradigm in the Kuhnian sense at least. It is not clear why he says this, but whatever our interpretation of this word I agree with him that constructionist scholars share some presumptions about the nature of social reality and the way to analyze social reality in order to reveal its cultural and social dynamics (Hermans 2002:vii).

1.1.2 Overview to the research study

My 'ordinary' academic world, which in reaction to Hermans (2002:vii), I indeed regard as a paradigm – permeable at that – is that of social constructionism with emphasis on the storying nature of what it means to be human. This perspective bears consequence to theology, methodology and largely informs the author's understanding of the interaction between the arts and narrative practise. An illumination of what I experience to be the ordinary world communities (also my own) is vital since I know that readers might not share this worldview, but at least the reader will be *on par* with the informing ideas underscoring the research. I hope that the reader finds that all the chapters under mentioned are informed herewith and not just chapter one.

In chapter, one elaboration of an *ordinary world* entails the following: positioning in epistemology, theology, and the arts; relevant concepts are explained; my technical approach clarified (use of brackets, emphasis, and so forth); a methodological excursion is provided.

Suffice to provide this brief necessary inter mezzo to what we mean by positioning. I draw on a lecture from professor Demasure (2005/09/27) for this. Positioning is always situated in some or other discourse; we find academic discourses such as thoughts on social construction, gender discourses and so on. Discourses, says Demasure (2005/09/27) are furthermore addressed *to* someone (to the public, to students, etcetera). If we assume a position within some or other academic discourse (forthcoming), this brings us in a subject

position; we have a choice in presenting ourselves through this discourse to others. This brings us into a system of right and obligation. It is an active mode to locate oneself in a system of symbols, metaphors, a particular use of language, and so on. Positioning recognises both the power of the available cultural discourse while also allowing room for the person to engage with those discourses. Positioning entails long term consequences. It imposes commitment and moral implications. When assuming a position there is the possibility of historical critical analysis (not meaning this as objective), on which a person can reflect and so doing extends the choice as to which metaphors are accepted. However, this is not true with regard to all the metaphors available in a given discourse; some are fundamentally formative to a certain academic discourse. Operating without consideration of these is not a positioning in the discourse.

It is my intention that the entire thesis reflects something of the important considerations in this chapters positioning. What does this mean practically? I found it necessary in subsequent chapters to engage in discussions found here. By doing so, I attempted to stay positioned within my chosen paradigm and relate the aforementioned to the action field, namely the arts. In similar fashion, I enrich this chapter, generally speaking, about positioning with voices from the arts, which mainly belong to subsequent chapters (introduced in chapter two). These voices include co-researchers and relevant academic literature that have been pursued because of emergent themes from empirical conversations.

Chapter two is a prolongation of the methodological position found in this chapter. There I also rigorously account for the research design based on the methodological positioning and is more accurately referred to as practical method as apposed to methodology. There are no empirical research without proper method/-ology and no method/-ology without people. It seems natural in chapter two bestowing a courtesy greeting to the research participants that had profoundly affected this study. True to what has been said earlier several of these voices are already heard in the current chapter. The voices of participants

propel us into the story of this research. They present the reader with what in Voglerian terminology (1999) is called the *call to adventure*.[3] Likewise, if chapter one relates to an ordinary world, chapter two may well be referred to as the *call to adventure* after having accepted this call we meet participants, thus the movement tests*, allies and enemies*. The *call to adventure* refers to the platform where the arts and narrative practise meet while *tests, allies and enemies* provide conflict; conflict on which drama is said to survive (professor Hagemann).

Chapter three presents in-dept discussions with participants and exposure to relevant conferences. Lectures attended for research purposes are knotted in various arguments throughout. Employing Voglerian terminology, what happens in chapter three may be described by the movements *approach the inmost* cave and *the ordeal*: We grapple with layers of interpretation that the research process provided. These transcribed accounts offer rich descriptions of involvement in the arts whereby some kind of plot thickens.

Suffice to cursory state that the reader may have questions about the extent of exploration in the arts as witnessed in chapter three. Contextuality in narrative practise implies truthfulness to the particular, and faithfulness to chosen methodology. As such, we encounter richness of voices but within a particular community. The extent to which different themes in the arts are pursued is determent by research participants; therefore, a methodological consideration. Later this consideration will be explained as *situated* practise, situated in the local knowledge of a specific temporary research community.

Chapter four has been reserved for a specific part of *the ordeal*. While chapter three embraces all arts, chapter four focuses on the art of story. Story here refers to both narrativity as encountered in narrative practise and story in a literal sense; that is, speaking or writing a story. Insofar as speaking about narrative

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[3] Amongst all the characters mentioned in *The Writers Journey* the *hero* takes a prominent position. Please note in this study that the genders will be used interchangeably heroine/ hero. Accordingly a hero might be referred to as masculine or feminine.

therapy the distinction will be made between story as therapy (per formative) and story in therapy (speaking, writing). The reader may expect however, that a great deal will be said in this chapter about narrativity, story as performative since this is the principal contention of narrative practise. The emergence of story as art was one of the surprising moments in the research that I had not anticipated. It emerged as an important part of the research and so I dedicate chapter four to the journey of story.

Chapter five relates to Vogler's movement *seizing the sword.* The primary consideration has been to help the reader see, in a more refined manner, the ways in which the arts functioned in this study. I do so since I did not decide to reflect on the research thematically, but rather narratively; consequently, this might be confusing to some. It is not my intention to categorise – an intention that the thematic approach of chapter five seems to contradict – but to provide, as an aid, participant informed ways of interpreting the function of the arts.

Chapter six is our final chapter and signifies Vogler's notion of *resurrection and transformation* and the *return with the elixir.* The social constructionist does not believe that a researcher can be objective and that his 'discoveries' are the ultimate knowledge or representation of truth. Truthfulness, as will be explained in chapter two is different from objective truth and part of this truthfulness is exuding in personal reflections. Personal reflections in chapter six take as its focus critical reflections on the research process, but also personal remarks on what I have and others might gain from this study.

Let us resume with the primary intention of this chapter, that of positioning. The lenses resulting from this paradigm shift; the lenses through which this research world is looked at is not called Ray-band, Police, Silhouette or other seemingly popular brands but is most often referred to as social constructionism. Subsequently, as a modest start I will talk about social constructionism employing the reference of Tucker (2002:59); of the twentieth-century museum

dislodging paintings from its social, religious, and political context from which it was strongly tied up until the nineteenth-century.

1.1.3 Traces of an underlying worldview

It is interesting to note that most twentieth-century European paintings were made expressly for *display* and *contemplation*; that is, predominantly aesthetic intention (Tucker 2002:59). However, Tucker (2002:59) is of opinion that until the nineteenth-century, when the modern museum began to evolve, most works of art were made in the *service of* social, religious, or political rituals rather than for aesthetic pleasure alone. The arts therefore were imbedded in a *context rich environment*; the type of environment that social constructionists would make much of. The following quote about art is put to use, alluding to the relational and in-context descriptions of our realities.

> This is a peculiarly Western concept of art [art as a primarily aesthetic work, *insertion my own*], and a recent one at that. In books, galleries, and auction houses, these objects have been plucked out of their social lives and set down in the Western context of art history. Yet each object has a distinct biography, comprising its origins and uses, along with its owners, viewers, or worshipers. The expressive power of an artwork is more keenly felt and understood when its formal characteristics are seen within the context of the setting in which the object was produced.
>
> (Tucker 2002:59)

What follows are examples of ways in which I believe this study to be social constructionistic. In presenting these, I draw on the abovementioned quotation from Tucker (2002:59).   Only a bit later will we encounter more direct descriptions of what I understand under social constructionism.

It is important to me as a social constructionist informed researcher that the stories encountered are not "plucked out of their social lives." These stories come from participants' social realities. Their social contexts matters. The stories and art presented is situated in the social reality of participants' lives of which I became part. Participants became part of each other's realities by the reflective process described in chapter two. Though most participants did not meet, it is not a disqualification of this research being a social constructionist endeavour. The validity of the process is not situated in physical contact, but to what extent discussion was stimulated in this temporary virtual community.

I understand professor Demasure (2005/09/27) to be saying that for Paul Ricoeur *action* is of utmost importance. The social constructionist will most often agree that action is the result of socially constructed realities. It is then also my understanding, hope and intention that this research should not only be about being displayed in a kind academic museum where those of acquired academic taste pay attention to what is hung on the practical theological gallery wall of the year 2005/6. This thesis is prime in its aim of situating this research in a kind of social life or action wherein people continuingly come into being.

Social constructionism is also noted in the various currents of interdisciplinarity and even intradisciplinarity and not only because of having its base in actual people's social realities, or being aimed at action that results from social interaction. In this regard drawing on Virginia Woolf (*A Room of One's Own*), Tucker (2002:59) asks about the conditions necessary for the creation of works of art (or research for our purposes); I answer to this that the condition for creating works of research as art involves interdisciplinary discussion; an inquiry into the social fabric of other conversational partners' realities. This necessitates reflection not only on epistemology (about social constructionism), but also probes into one's own theological home along with primary metaphors used in the *ordinary world* we inhabit.

What we've done so far is taken a look at the introductory metaphor of an *ordinary world* stemming from Vogler (1999) and from this explained the purpose of the various chapters. For this I also started to employ Voglerian terminology. Given that the link has been made between the view about the construction of realities and knowledge with the concept of ordinary world. I then provisionally remarked on traces of social constructionism in this study.

The thesis will now elaborate on the kind of positioning needed in respect of various concepts and practises involved in this study before I can assume that I have arrived somewhere. One could also think of it in the following manner: Heading to Cape Town? We should first be aware of where we are; otherwise we may never get there! If the research topic is indeed an indication of where, more or less we are headed then this chapter is an indication, a reflection on where we are right now and where we've come from. Do accompany me in taking a good look at a map before; from the end of chapter two onwards we retrace the journeys of those about whom this research will tell us.

Subsequently I present a more substantial exploration of the way knowledge is created in my ordinary world.

1.2   Social construction

It is one thing to say what social constructionism involves; it is quite another to describe if viewed amongst related concepts like a) poststructuralism, postmodernism, postfoundationalism; and these in relation to b) modernism, structuralism, foundationalism, realism, constructivism and so forth. I do not intend for the following discussion to be a thorough exploration of these terminology.

Of all the post-enlightenment schools of/ and thought, postmodernism is probably the most used term. It is also the concept with which our study has the closest connotation. White (2000:102) avers that postmodernism has its roots in art and

literature, but then reverts to another term saying that narrative therapy owes much of its thinking to post-structuralist inquiry. One senses that it is almost used interchangeably. Gibbs and Coffey (2001) underscores that the term postmodern gained prominence in the 1960's and 1970's in reaction to modernism in art and literature. Gibbs asserts that the coinage of the term is found already in the 1930's whereby the emergence of a postmodern era is identified following the First World War. It was only until the 1980's that its meaning was stretched to cover an emergent comprehensive worldview embracing philosophy, the arts, politics and certain branches of science, theology and popular culture (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:28).

I do position myself in saying that I don't think all the posts are the same or as some terms are used, direct antonyms of others (structuralist versus poststructuralist and so on). While not heedless of my affinity towards all these concepts I do execute a preference for the notion of social constructionism. Therefore engage in discussion herewith.

After having done so I will reflect on social constructionism under several headings that should not be understood as four characteristics. The reader that seeks characteristics – if one can speak of it in this modernistic manner – will find these under headings such as: Polyphonic posts; (about relatedness in various concepts). Appreciative reflexive inquiry (about stance); Research as acquiring a new language (the role of language in constituting realities). Social construction of the good the bad and the 'ugly' (notions of time); and Deconstruction.

1.2.1 Polyphonic post's

Being informed by a music upbringing I encountered the reference to *polyphonic tones* in relation to music. The notion of polyphonic tones relates for instance to a keyboard that is able to play more than one note simultaneously.   This

simultaneous action presents some kind of chord; some kind of *harmony*, as opposed to *melody*, which relates more to one note, sequences.[4]

The post's relates to the jazz or blues chord (chord as in polyphonic sound). There are numerous such chords: minor 9th's, augmented 5/ flat 9th's, dominant or major 7th's and so forth. If one such chord is struck in a classical piece of music or even contemporary western pop or rock music the resulting sound may be experienced by some as terribly dissonant. My focus here does not lie in the use of jazz in a classical paradigm (meaning modernism over against postmodernism; although this makes for very interesting music), but the make up of the jazz chord itself. The jazz chord comprises of different notes/ sounds; put in a certain relationship while still being part of the scale system they present a very exciting sound. Some like it some don't. For our purposes it should be 'noted' that the individual sound of the *post*modern note, the *post*foundational note and so on construct a chord. These notes are not the same but in conjunction they all relate to a certain chordal sound that is very distinct from other major chords. Based on the tonic (I), sub-dominant (IV) and dominant (V) chords often used in western music.

1.2.1.1   Polyphonics; heed the warning and embrace the differentiation

These different polyphonic notes in the chord sounds related and so some use the post's interchangeably.   White (2000:103) maintains that even more distinctions should be drawn and thus we should embrace possible nuances. Depending on how a scholar uses these concepts certain problems may arise:

The first consideration involves the running together of distinct traditions and thought that White (2000:102) feels is unhelpful: It leads to the false representation of the position of different thinkers (White 2000:102).   In this regard White (2000:102) mentions that he has been thought of as an anti-realist

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[4] The violin, cello and especially the flute is considered to generally be melodic instruments as opposed to instruments with polyphonic capabilities such as the piano.

despite the fact that he has little sympathy for what is proposed in this tradition. His surprise is validated since he thinks the realist/ anti-realist debate to be irrelevant to what he understands as a poststructuralist inquiry and narrative practise.   He has also been represented as a social constructionist and postmodernist. He emphasises that although he can relate to a good deal of what is being said in this regard there is also a lot that leaves him unsatisfied.

Professor Hagemann notes there is a very interesting book called *Beyond Theory,* which is, as he says…

> …a kind of critique of the postmodern position; the idea that you have to respect all voices; and they say 'well it's actually my opinion and you're allowed to have your opinion' then as you move into the domain of ethics. At some stage you have to make a decision about certain contentious issues.   Then, the question comes; are there universal ethical right choices.   Therefore, when you insert the notion of human rights in narrative you have to make some kind of a decision and the problem might then be that the postmodernist does not push to some kind of consensus position.
>
> (Professor Hagemann 2005/05/19)

I strongly suspect that modernist scholars writing a critique such as this might often misrepresent the posts. It seems that they reveal an un-nuanced version of post/ -modernism, /-structuralism and so on.

He avers that postmodernism is now often employed to categorise any idea and practice that does not reproduce foundationalist thought. Even the specificity of different traditions of thought is at risk. He remarks that he has recently (prior to 2000) seen postmodernism represented as a form of 'anything goes' moral relativism; as the achievement of simultaneously holding multiple beliefs or views or theories about life, and even as a 'new eclecticism.' If this is true he remarks

that it is an unfortunate turn, because in it postmodernism has come to represent what it contradicts (White 2000:102).

Apart from the possibility of misrepresenting scholars because of undifferentiated thinking; as an outcome, discerning action in the name of therapy becomes impossible. Therapists are deprived of any clarity about the development of proposals for the further exploration of specific ideas and practices (White 2000:102). I concur with White (2000:103) saying that the untangling of enmeshed traditions is important, as it makes it more possible for all of us to see a way ahead, irrespective of our persuasions.

There are however another possible consequence; one stemming from making too rigid distinctions; too rigid embrace. White (2000:102-103) reflects on a quote of Minuchin (1992: 7,8,10) wherein Munichin says that constructivist practices that bracket the idiosyncratic story of a person with few exceptions obscures the social fabric that constructs it. His remark is situated in therapeutic practise with the intention of alluding to power relations. Minuchin (1992) makes certain assumptions here in respect of constructivist practices, but I agree with White (2000:103) that it is not clear if the position of the constructivist, whomever they may be, is reasonably represented hereby.

The risk here is also that of misrepresentation but because of too distinct boundaries. Rigid boundaries might not allow for a nuanced scholarly position. It will be showed later that not all who may view themselves as strongly drawing on social constructionist thought go along with an extreme reading of it. I can think that may often be true in respect of scholars in the Christian religion.[5] Therefore I present later what I refer to as *possibility theory* that tries to make sense of social constructionist thought relation to theology

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[5] Examples provided in Gergen (2002b:272-290) wherein he writes a reflective article on the papers submitted in contribution to the conversation between social constructionism and theology.

1.2.1.2   **Points of agreement**

Irrespective of how entangled or differentiated various concepts are being used by the scholar – and in light of absence of definitions, which may even be considered unwelcome in poststructuralism – there are prominent points of agreement that should be acknowledged.

Professor Demasure (2005/09/27) is also of opinion that poststructuralism and postmodernism are not the same, but is sometimes used interchangeably. Dependent on the context of the argument I maintain that they may on occasion be used interchangeably. Therefore, postmodernists will also oppose the idea of hidden structures that reveal the truth, which is a poststructuralist contention, but on the basis that they emphasise the co-existence of multiplicity and variety of situation dependant understandings of life. Their interchangeable use is thus credible within the context of their points of agreement.

All the post's is a reaction towards *Enlightenment, which* placed an emphasis on the search for truth and the nature of reality. The Enlightenment signified the idea that mankind could know truth and reality if they use their reason.

Science started to contradict the church, which undermined religious authority and notions of truth. Thus the Enlightenment saw a reaction towards God and the church since they stood for incorrect knowledge. Naturally if the church could not be trusted then whom could they trust? Science's answers were that of the individual. Demasure (2005/09/27) notes that scientists, for example Kant started saying that one can discover the truth and do say as an individual with an autonomous mind. Refute

1.2.1.2.1   **Refutation of essence**

As an outcome the search was on for the essence in things and people; along with it the notion that there are underlying structures embedded in things, which ought to be found.

Social constructionists in this regard relate to the posts; they set the relational self against a self contained self as one might find in modernism. In an essentialist way we think of personality as stable. Our traits are drawn together in a coherent way. Feeling and emotion are thought of as internal private experience. For the social constructionist personality is not stable; the notion of wholeness or stability is circumspect. This is based in part in the different ways people act in different situations almost as if consisting of different selves. The self is therefore fragmentised. Relating to the fragmented self is the doing away with the idea that people are containers. People do not contain certain traits separate from the relational. Outside the relational there is no personality. Some people might be described as friendly, gentle, and so forth but outside the relational these traits do not exist. What we then describe as the traits of a person is in effect a reflection on relations in the past, present, and expected future.

For these reasons professor Demasure (2005/09/27) maintains that social constructionists will not indulge in descriptions of personality or character; they would rather speak of identity. This identity is constructed within a certain culture. How it is constructed is dependent on the types of discourses available in the culture. For this reason Demasure (2005/09/27) is of opinion that it is beneficial to travel, watch movies, reading, get exposure to different cultures etcetera. Such activities present us with additional discourses and as a result the better chances we have in developing or choosing our own identities. One can choose from a plurality of discourses or draw on several and construct one's own discourse.

It is by drawing on different discourses that we make up more or less consistent wholes. There is then some kind of coherence; it is not advocating of a kind of schizophrenia. The consequent question is now directed at how this coherence is kept together. For some the answer lies in memory but this leads to questions

about what it means if someone experiences memory loss. Professor Demasure (2005/09/27) asserts that for Gergen however there is no coherence; our identities are ways of telling a multiplicity of stories. According to her reading of Gergen we construct our realities with the aim of gaining acceptability and secondly to exert a voice through a multiplicity of identities.

If my understanding and representation of professor Demasure's (2005/09/27) opinions are approximately true I have only this one concern: Having referred to constructivism already I feel that one should be extremely careful when it comes to the agency of the subject as she herself alludes to.   At times if one is not careful social constructionism might by some be equated with constructivism. She refers to the worth of travelling, exposure to culture and so forth; that this aids the construction of identities since one can choose from various discourses what works for oneself. She does say that it is not as easy as choosing; it is not that we can easily talk ourselves into a different reality. The reason that she provides refers to social structures being linked to dominant discourse. She provides this example: It is one thing to say that it is okay for women to work, but there might be very few places in the vicinity where one can leave a child under the age of five. Alternative constructions even if it was as easy as choosing need social structures to sustain them.

My reflection on Demasure is therefore just a cautionary remark that one should not assume a level of conscious reflection whereby one can exert a preference for some kind of positive identity that one pick from this or that discourse that one has been exposed to.

1.2.1.2.2   *Refutation of hidden structures*

Besides the movement away form essentialism the next point of agreement between the posts is that they move away from the presumed structures underlying the world. These structures are truer than what we see it is said; inquiry into hidden structures renders a deeper reality underlying the surface and

so *the* truth is discovered.   Professor Demasure (2005/09/27) relates the following examples: There was a structure in arts and finding that structure became more important than looking at beautiful statues; There was structures that could be found in economics (She refers to Karl Marx); There was structures in the psychology of people (She refers to Sigmund Freud).   Julian Müller (2005/09/27) then adds that in the field of biblical sciences we have the practise of structural analysis, which is based on the idea that underneath the text there is a true structure. In opposition, the truth in a text does not relate to what you hear or what it is saying to you.   In this regard postmodernism says professor Demasure (2005/09/27) emphasises is the opposite; don't look for anything behind or underneath; you have what you see what you see is what you get. Those then in the social sciences and humanities who postulate such structures are known as structuralists.

Science was so preoccupied in discovering the essence and underlying structures that render truth that the idea was taken further: It was not enough to confine the discovery of a certain structure to, say in economic; the whole of society was read against these structures. This results in what is referred to as grand-/ or metanarratives. So those that refuse this reading of society against structures are known as poststructuralists.

1.2.1.2.3   *Interrogating definitions*

Hermans (2002:xii) shares professor Demasure's view that there cannot be a definition of social construction when he says that a definition of social constructionism has evaded scholars from the coinage of the concept used by Berger and Luckmann (1966) talking about taken for granted knowledge which is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann 1966:3). Therefore, it is from 1966 up until now, with numerous self proclaimed social constructionist studies that a definition has evaded us. Professor Demasure (2005/09/27) however, says that the idea of social constructionism has emerged mostly from Gergen's 1973 paper on social psychology as history.

Defining social construction would be an oxymoron since social construction is by its own logic socially re-described, renegotiated, reconstructed in ongoing discussions of what it might entail. Following professor Demasure's remarks (2005/09/27) social constructionism metaphorically relates to a family; a family being connected in some way does not always agree with each other.

Through ensuing uses one might loosely refer to any endeavour as socially constructionistic if they reveal one or more of the following key assumptions irrespective of if Shotter, Gergen, Foucault and others differ in some regards. I will mention these key points here but they will be taken up in different headings. The key considerations that one may look at in figuring wither someone might be writing within a social constructionist point of view are: (1) What is their conception of knowledge (hence relating to epistemological issues); (2) What is the conception of language?; (3) How do they consider the self (relating to identity), and; (4) Where do they position themselves in the realism/ relativism argument.

My contention is similar to Hermans and professor Demasure with this augmentation that I don't think we can altogether be rid of definitions how helpful or unhelpful it might prove to be. For practical and academic conversational purposes some might in future risk a definition that touches on all four key considerations. If the social constructionists themselves do not come up with a definition other paradigms probably will as they might need to in order to speak about it.

Yet I think it is more worthwhile to speak about descriptions as opposed to definitions although many colleagues will also be circumspect of this word. Acknowledging that to describe has a modernistic heritage I feel however that social constructionism reminds us that the meaning of words are in any case culturally dependent and continually renegotiated. I reiterate; if there is no

language about the 'what is' of social constructionism then it does not exist. One should for instance at least on some level of interpretation be able to put forth how *social* constructionist understandings might differ from other *social* science endeavours. By way of extending the example Hermans (2002: vii) emphasises that social constructionist scholars share some presumptions about the nature of social reality and the way to analyze social reality in order to reveal its cultural and social dynamics. Social constructionists differ as an example with social sciences whether there is a reality that is independent of our discourse about reality. This according to Hermans is the most contentious battle ground (reality that is) between social constructionists and some social scientists (Hermans 2002: vii). Some form of coherence is expected to emerge if one agrees, as I do with Hermans' observation (2002: vii) that there is a rapidly growing body of publications with the term *social constructionism* included in their titles.

1.2.1.3   Useful differentiation – social constructionism versus constructivism

The constructivist approach resonates – note, resonate and not resemble – with what I understand as positive thinking. Suffice for a moment to reflect on my life wherein I appear to have at times revealed an affinity to constructivism. However let me state up front that I do not think it is as easy as choosing a positive attitude or working at a certain constructed reality and disregarding the social fabric in which our realities are situated. You may remember the comment of Munichin (1992) above. He is opposing the constructivist approach in therapy since it appears to him to obscure the role and power of the therapist, but mostly since it leaves the impression that the constructivist ignores the very social fabric that construct our realities.

I've come to view constructivism as a more complex form or theory of the notion of positive thinking. The latter has come to me through one or two books; books like, *The Positive Principle Today* (Peale 1980), and *Mind Power* (Kehoe 1987). Such popular writings emphasise the role of positive thinking to construct our

worlds. The medium for this positive thinking is often the imagination, which is said to encompass an act of human creativity. Creativity in turn brings us face to face with authors – they are non-academic – that are world renowned; Edward de Bono and locally Kobus Neethling. I have referred elsewhere to Edward de Bono since his writings was presented to me by a research participant. In addition, with regard to our discussion here on the construction of realities through the likes of imagination, and so on I mention this book, *Dink soos Jesus* (Neethling, Rutherford & Stander 2000). [6] The point of convergence in constructivism and positive thinking (the latter which in popular writings includes in its arsenal the role of the imagination and creativity), is the regard for the autonomous individual. Surprisingly this brings us back to the Enlightenment.

Now, my contention is that there might not have been said enough with regard to the post's and constructivism; surely I do not attempt to do that here. Allow me these provisional remarks: There are two ways of viewing the relation between the post's and construct*ivism*. In the left corner we wind the post's resisting the kind of notion where hidden structures reveal reality and truth. Also in this corner we find constructivism that would probably oppose ultimacy since the individual is in a position to construct her/ his own reality. Yet, if this is the constructivist's reason, then the post's surely opposes constructivism since this reason is largely situated in the autonomous self-directedness typical of modernistic optimism.

Our useful differentiation then comes when juxtaposing construct*ivism* with social construct*ionism*.   Maybe it is also the readers' understanding that social constructionism belongs to the realm of the posts. It is here where I do agree with Hermans (2002: vii), that social constructionism is not a paradigm in the Kuhnian sense. What I mean by this, and it is not clear in Herman's article (2002: vii) if he would agree, is that social constructionism is not all of a sudden this new revelation on how knowledge, meaning, truth etcetera are created by social interaction; it may be that it brought a new appreciation. Rather this is the

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[6] In English this would translate literally to, *Think like Jesus.*

way that it must have been since, well forever. Understand me correctly; this is not the same us the discovery of some kind of structure or essence. The contention is that if you add one person to a one person equation you will have knowledge, truth, and meaning that are socially constructed. Therefore, we find the idea of socially constructed meaning, truth and so on, even prior to postmodernism, prior to modernism and even prior to premodernism. So while there may be room in a postmodern paradigm for constructivist notions – ironically so due to the emphasis on the autonomous being – certainly social constructionism effected to its logical conclusions (as in Kenneth Gergen) leaves very little scope for constructivist notions.

Professor Demasure (2005/09/27) is of opinion that *constructivism* differs from *social constructionism*. There differences derive from views on the agency of the subject. In constructivism people are seen as actively engaged in there own phenomenological world. Each person perceives the world differently; actively creating his or her meaning. Actions are described in light of the construction of a person's world. People have the capacity to change their constructions and thereby create new capacities for action.   The difference between social constructionism and constructivism is therefore largely the role of the subject. In constructivism the subject has a much more active role in the construction of the truth of his visions.

1.2.1.4 Levels of social constructionism

There is yet another differentiation to be made, but this time it involves social constructionism itself. A distinction is made between *micro* versus *macro* social constructionism. For this differentiation professor Demasure (2005/09/27) draws on various scholars that I will not all refer to fearing that I may do injustice in spelling their names incorrectly (as it is listened to on the audio recording I took of the lecture).

First professor Demasure (2005/09/27) speaks of *micro* social constructionism. This relates to social constructionism from the tradition of thought linked to several scholars. Gergen and Shotter serve as good examples in this regard. This current focuses on micro structures, of especially language and is in this sense related to discursive psychology. They see social construction (of truth, reality, and so forth) as taking place in everyday circumstances where people interact. It is something of a micro social constructionistic understanding that this study is embedded in.

Griffith and Griffith (2002:75) draw our attention to metaphors, which I think, is relevant here. They say that in public conversation, the officially sanctioned metaphors of the culture predominate, and the unique metaphors of each person's private experiences might never be guessed. In a sense this illuminates macro versus micro social constructionism in that the everyday circumstances or our daily social fabric entails the use of localised metaphors. It would often be the stance of macro social constructionists (forthcoming) that the culturally informed dominant metaphors overshadow the localised metaphors. How does this happen? Each culture encourages use of certain metaphors while discouraging use of others. Cultural values, institutional rules, poetic traditions, and social situations all play their roles in this selection (Griffith & Griffith 2002:75).

Macro social constructionism is demonstrated in especially the French philosophers Derrida and Foucault. The focus is on macro linguistics and social structures; institutions and so on.   Their attention is directed to societal discourses. Why? Partly the answer is found in the potential of discourses to be deployed ideologically. When discourses become ideology it presents itself as providing only one option. Such discourses frame our social and psychological life. Above authors acknowledge the constructive power of language as affected in everyday life, but rather see it as derived from social construction, social relations, and notably, institutionalised practises; the emphasis is on the formative power embedded in the social structures of society.   Professor

Demasure (2005/09/27) state that macro social constructionists following Foucaudian ideas will acknowledge power in the smaller sphere of interaction; it is not that humans in everyday practises does not have power.

Despite this last statement macro social constructionism will tend to obscure the ability of the smaller sphere of human social interaction to create a desired future. They would not accept that people can exert an effective amount of power against the powerful social structures. This notion of a person almost being continually tossed around by social structures naturally opposes construct*ivism* where the individual is absolutely in a position to choose, to construct his/ her reality. Macro social constructionism lends over to the death of the subject. Accordingly there is no subject anymore, we are the process. The total of our realities emerge form social structures, institutions and so on.

People that had been exposed to the above philosophers may easily think that social constructionism advocates relativism. This is not the case, nor the intention. On this macro level social constructionism, as could expected, engages in critical inquiry, deconstructive practises in order to see how the power relations in social structures (discourses) operate.

1.2.1.5   Realism versus relativism; can they co-exist?

I have alluded to the different levels of social constructionism; micro versus macro social constructionism. Our thoughts on social constructionism is now further stimulated by the group discussion but more specifically a discussion between professors Müller and Demasure (2005/09/27) on the above concepts. I juxtapose realism with relativism asking the question whether one can indeed harbour both in social constructionist thinking.

By way of introduction: Professor Van Huyssteen (2005/08/01) says that it is only natural to assume that our faith means something. That to the Christian God means something. This premise is situated in the kind of argument that I will look

at here. Important for the moment is that professor Van Huyssteen further notes that this brings us to realism. Prior to around 1985 he made strong arguments for a type of critical realism. At the lecture he explains this: Around 1985 he says he referred to realism in an epistemic way; he did not try to make a strong statement in terms of metaphysical forms of realism. He now asks: "How do we know what we believe? What is it that theology enables us to know and how does it help us to believe what we believe?" Since then he says he qualifies this in a model that relates to pragmatic realism; which makes room for the very pragmatic movement that postfoundationalist theology is about.

He alludes to another kind of realism saying that if one looks at the way in which humans have evolved, and the way we know the world is embedded in that process then it is very interesting to discover that evolutionary epistemologists talk about hypothetical realism, and what they basically would mean by that; as life forms have evolved (including humans) we've responded to construction and constraint, both to the environment and in terms of genetic material (Van Huyssteen 2005/08/01). If this could be true he asks, shouldn't we rather trust our history of origins? If we have the kind of bodies we have now, if we have the kind of brains we have now then we should trust that there's good reasons that this body and this brain survive. This to Van Husteen does refer to some form of objective reality although not necessarily in a metaphysical sense.

According to professor Demasure (2005/09/27) most social constructionists accept a kind of realism as seen above, yet there are those that don't. However, those that do would say, there is something outside the text, only, one cannot get access to it. There may be something outside the text but the closest we could get to is through language; called critical realism. This is not relativism where we would say there is nothing.

The predicament that we find ourselves in, in effecting relativism is that we have no grounds for moral and political action. The reasoning: If everything is equally

true as relativism supposes then how can we choose for any moral stance over another; position oneself with this and not that political party and so on.

Professor Demasure (2005/09/27) suspects that most researchers know that effecting relativism to its full consequences is not plausible. Consequently the emphasis shifts to the acknowledgement of the existence of reality, but they say then that one cannot know it. Demasure (2005/09/27) remarks that some have tried to reframe the debate by advocating a kind of synthesis. The proposal is that reality versus construction is a false opposition; that one should not think in dichotomies, or binary systems. This either or type of thinking whereby two concepts is made to oppose each other resembles to her modernistic thinking.

In trying to reframe the debate she refers to various possibilities. She notes that some do accept a transcendent reality. This means that there is something outside us, a transcendent reality, *but*, we cannot get to it. We can however have different perspectives on this one reality. This is not to imply that there are altogether different constructions (Demasure 2005/09/27). This stands in contrast to what most social constructionists might say, that there are indeed different realities. The idea that there are different perspectives is indeed owed to these different realities. Still others according to Demasure (2005/09/27) think that we are provided with rough material only. This says that there is again something outside us, but it provides rough material that humans then refine in a social constructionist process of living.

Demasure (2005/09/27) cautions us to remember that scholars don't speak in the same manner about reality. A distinction is made between three different uses of 'reality': Some talk of *reality* as truth against falsehood, others of materiality versus illusion, and lastly essence as opposed to construction. One should be able to see in writing whether scholars mean reality as truth, materiality, or essence.

Take note of the use of the word truth in artistic communities, which relates more to this studies intentions, and understanding of the concept.

Rookmaaker[7] 1970:236 rightly asks: "What does *truth* mean in art? Certainly it does not mean that art is or has to be a copy of reality." According to Rookmaaker (1970:236) art is never a copy of reality, and cannot be. Art always gives an interpretation of reality; relating to the thing seen, the relationships, the human reality experienced emotionally, rationally, and in many other human ways. Art always shows what man – the artist and the group to which he belongs, the time in which he lives – sees and experiences as relevant, as important, as worthwhile. If this was not the case Rookmaaker (1970:236) argues that otherwise the artist will never try to depict it (Rookmaaker 1970:236).

What is meant by saying that art can never be a *copy* of reality? Rookmaaker explains:

> [T]ruth in art does not mean that every detail has to be true in a physical, historical, theological, and scientific or any other non-artistic way. It is artistic truth! Hamlet may never have lived – but Shakespeare's Hamlet is true insofar as Shakespeare has been able to make the figure he created true to reality, to human character and potential. If you are going to criticize Hamlet you must show inconsistencies in his character or in the way he is acted. You cannot object that Hamlet was probably never really like this historically… [S]o too fairy tales can be true, if they show human action and behaviour in keeping with human character – within the framework of fairy tale reality.
>
> (Rookmaaker 1970:237)

The view that truth means that art is conceptually in accordance with reality is a rationalistic view of truth. Rookmaaker (1970:236) directs our attention that over

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[7] An arts student referred me to this specific writing of Rookmaaker as she felt that it relates to my (at that time) intended study.

against this rationalistic view of truth the Bible speaks of *doing* the truth, acting in love and freedom, according to the relationships God wants for man. In a way art does the truth often, more than it *is* true in the sense that it portrays reality according to its conceptual reality (Rookmaaker 1970:239).

In professor Demasure's lecture (2005/09/27) I presented a question that asks about social constructionist implications for the idea of the existence of God as an extra-linguistic reality. I judge that this question encompasses all three notions of reality; truth, materiality and essence. This sparked a conversation in the group that is important to our discussion here. Professor Julian Müller remarked: Isn't it safe enough to say social constructionism is as such a correction to total relativism, over against constructivism? Here constructivism relates to relativism in that everyone's construction of reality is true; 'as long as it works for me' is the assumption. Here the subject is the norm. The correction of social constructionism lies in the descriptive 'social.' As such an absolute relativistic position is not possible in a social constructionist understanding since it is always corrected in some way by the social forces at play.

It is hopefully clear that we cannot speak about relativism and critical realism without referring to constructivism and social constructionism. This link is seen in the following arguments: For professor Demasure (2005/09/27) social constructionism is not necessarily a correction on individuality and relativism as Müller (2005/09/27) emphasis. For her constructivism focuses on the personal input in constructing stories; social constructionism in her opinion is only a correction in putting the social structures forth. It says: "Pay attention you are not alone at construction and you are not so active in constructing; there is a social current which influences you" (Demasure 2005/09/27). Looking at Derrida and Gergen however that is positioned to the contrary she says that she thinks there are relativists saying everything is equally. If social constructionism is a correction to anything, professor Demasure (2005/09/27) says, it is a correction on the agency of the subject.

She complicates the debate by saying that in her opinion one may find realism and relativism in social constructionism as well as in constructivism. For professor Demasure (2005/09/27) then, there is enough scope to think of social constructionism as harbouring both relativism and realism. She supports her contention by saying that there is no definition of social constructionism and that there in fact cannot be a definition since social construction is always constructed.

For this reason we had this short interlude on the concept of definition. Müller would probably agree that one cannot really provide a definition for the idea of social constructionism, at least not in a fixed sense. However he maintains that there is no advantage for linking relativism (within a strict understanding thereof) with social constructionism. I perceived that he recognizes that professor Demasure's contention can only be marginally true if it is to be understood within the context of saying there is room for various interpretations or nuances of viewing social constructionism.

Apart from this professor Müller (2005/09/27) maintains that relativism is as such corrected the moment one speaks of social construction. Assistant to professor Müller with regard to the PhD group, Lourens Bosman (2005/09/27) proposes that social constructionism could then be viewed as a correction maybe to subjective relativism since the pocket of the descriptive 'social' can be small. Professor Müller then maintains that there is no possibility of having small pockets of relativism; social constructionism as such is always open and looking for other social structures and social systems; a never ending process.

I concur with professor Müller's contention; as a group (say consisting of those that attended the lecture) one cannot at the completion of the lecture say that now we have socially constructed our truth, or that this lecture – even being open to discussion – has been a social constructionist process. This event (lecture) is

situated in the broader elapse of time and academic dialogue: It is part of ongoing socially created understandings, in this case of concepts like social construction itself. A social constructionist process is therefore not a closed process since construction never only takes place in a specific space and conversation (lecture hall, discussion group's etcetera); the entire social world is at play.

Professor Demasure (2005/09/27) sums up professor Müller's line of thought by saying: "You have community, the community entails moral agency, and moral agency is the end of relativism because there is consensus." Professor Müller replies that if by moral agency is meant that it is a social agency and not therefore claimed by the individual then it is the end of relativism.

1.2.2 Appreciative, reflexive inquiry into a foundational basis

The heading is derived at by drawing on the concept of appreciative inquiry primarily relating to facilitative work in organisations and reflexive inquiry a concept used by Gergen (1999:115). Primarily, it directs attention to the position or stance of the researcher, therapist, and so on. This research process is one of reflexive inquiry. This inquiry, especially into cultural stories, is important since our cultural stories determine the shape of our individual life narratives Freedman & Combs 1996:32).

We also want to be reflective and critical. By way of example professor Demasure (2005/09/27) says that she has always found the notion of reading the whole world in terms of power – as might be the case with many social constructionist's – very reductionistic. This critical reflexive function in this study involves a co-research team, scientific community, literary sources, personal interpretations, lectures, conferences and more. The involvement of all these help us to reflect critically and appreciatively on our condition, our traditions, institutions, and relationships (Gergen 1999:115). When consequently inquiring into foundationalism I do so on the one hand because reflexivity is an integral

part of this study but also appreciatively; Gergen (2002:12) reminds us that much constructionist inquiry is itself indebted to an empiricist heritage.

For this reason the social constructionist offers humble contributions since s/he cannot escape that the idea (and this is ironic) the way in which social constructionists think about the world provide a foundation for understanding. This paradox lends itself to an unassuming stance. An overconfident social constructionist is in my opinion a wolf in sheep's clothing. The foundationalist and modernist world is governed by red and green lights, occasionally amber; the social constructionist will avoid traffic lights at all. This does not mean that there are no rules; the social constructionist will move in the realm of reality and knowledge descriptions, in terms of ordinary traffic signs. Cultural and historic specificity will have him/ her stop at a stop sign. However, in some traditions for instance (however local they may be) it might be acceptable not to stop at a stop sign late at night for safety reasons. To a large degree I would say the social constructionist traffic sign manual consists of mostly yield signs.

 Our appreciative and reflexive inquiry is however implicitly part of our conversation about the specificities of social constructionism. When the social constructionist claims that reality is a social construction it does so in part because the foundational religion believes in objective truths and structures of reality. Although it might be said that the social constructionist's thoughts about the construction of reality ironically constructs a new foundation; foundationalist claims differ in that this stance often silences conversation. The difference then is not situated in whether indeed there is a foundation, but the difference is found in what is believed about the ultimacy and universality and the kind of realities that this foundation present.

A PhD narrative scholar small group, who might also be referred to as a focus group, formed part of this study. It is to their inquiry I refer here. I was

academically accountable to them and appreciate[8] their involvement. I am in-debited to them in revealing an apparent contradiction in my writing with regard to epistemology and theology. I might have also included their voice under a forthcoming heading that deals with broadening our conversation; however, although their remarks are critical – as could be expected from an academic focus group – it is presented and received from an appreciative stance.

Their comments pertained to truth and reality. Initially in my writing up of this chapter, thoughts on Theological positioning were mentioned first and much later comments on social constructionism. Parallel to my colleagues' remarks and true to narrative methodology and social constructionist epistemology I agree that I cannot write about theology objectively. Therefore I was erroneous in situating Theology before explaining the underlying paradigm. I should reflect and do so now, first on how, from a paradigm that I indeed have chosen, knowledge is created. This paradigm reflects on how we think the world holds together along with how we relate to each other as human beings. As a result let me be as transparent as possible: Stated forthrightly, come Theological positioning later in this chapter, those remarks will undoubtedly in some instances unknowingly but also consciously be informed by this epistemological tradition or base of reasoning that follows.

Considering then where to begin; my first move in this game of chess (a metaphor that I will revisit later) begins with a rather bold move. However, though bold I gladly work with this following weighty premise, since it is born of a conversation with the arts: Reality lies in the *possibility* of socially constructed truth.

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[8] Gergen (1999:176) refers to the idea of appreciative inquiry in how conflict is handled in the life of organizations. It is not in this regard that I use the word here. However, by using it I do want to hint to what is still to come since Gergen in that chapter (seven) refers to a profusion of practices - amongst others, ideas such as *appreciate inquiry* used in facilitation with organizations – that are seen as congruent with a social constructionist perspective.

1.2.3 Research as acquiring a new language

When we now direct our attention to social constructionist's views on language we do so from the view of micro social constructionism; social construction takes place in everyday interaction, and most often so language.

The metaphor with which I introduce the aspect of language in social constructionism is fittingly that of what happens when having to learn a new language. In learning this language one should realise as professor Demasure (2005/09/27) says language, as is knowledge, is not only seen as part of a culture but products of a culture. In this regard I employ an illustration from scholars in the field of missiology:[9]   Kritzinger, Meiring and Saayman (1994: 68-72) talk about the bonding process involved when a missionary moves into a foreign culture.[10]

In narrative research/ therapy [11] the other is always unfamiliar, even foreign (in missiological description) to our perception and understanding of the world. Even if we think we know we should situate ourselves within a *not-knowing position*; it would be ridiculous to assume that we know a foreign language when in fact we cannot even ask directions in this language. On a light hearted note, the dictum is true:

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[9] Suffice to state here, not having done so yet, that this study favours intradisciplinary discussion and thus the sporadic use of Church history, Old-Testament studies, Missiology and so forth. Note however that it is beyond the scope of this research to conduct empirical research within these fields as it relates to our theme. The principal reason I do voice some interdisciplinary literary contributions is found in (1) that themes emerging from participants' conversations directed me to it and (2) that these fields formed an integral part in my academic story. (Relating to this; see the following footnote)

[10] One member of the PhD narrative focus group questioned Kritzinger, et al (1994) from the field of missiology as source. We do not know from what worldview they write it is argued. However, I welcome the interdisciplinary discussion (Kritzinger et al writing from a missional perspective). In addition their experience of mission work is as an example very illustrative of the social constructionist's ideas. If this argument of my colleague would be elevated to absolute truth then I would have the problem of having to disregard most of the arts: Kirsten Meyer (2005/03/16), the dramatherapist who's work I attended at an arts and reconciliation conference affirms that drama therapists are predominantly informed by the traditional background of psychotherapy/ psychoanalysis and furthermore being situated in modernist ideas such as the self-contained individual and so forth. Wouldn't this also be a problem since dramatherapy then seems to be informed by a different paradigm? Interdisciplinary voices are welcomed. I would indeed go so far as to assert that in my experience conducting this research it seems that interdisciplinary departments starts to interlock: This is the case it seems everywhere where *post-* thoughts, referring to post-/foundational, /postmodernism, /structuralist, /colonialist have come to be valued. The proposed idea of fading borders between certain themes in varying departments (theology, drama, arts and other especially, so called *human* sciences) is reflected on in the closing chapter, chapter six.

[11] What is said about therapy also relates to research and other fields as we are talking about a profusion of practices in this study that are underscored by the very specific worldview in which this study is situated. See the topic on the choice for narrative practice as opposed to making a specific choice for talking about narrative *research* or *therapy* etcetera.

'Assume' makes an *ass* out of *u* and *me* (read: ass-you-me). We might think we know a language but are we thoroughly acquainted with the differing dialects. If I spoke German I should further familiarise myself with the dialect of West Germans or east Germans depending on what part of the country I visit and come from. I don't have this problem since I am truly not-knowing about the German language and don't intend to ass-u-me. It is our undertaking to learn more about a certain language, even only one circumstantial research communities dialect about arts as informed by selected people whom we'll hear from officially in chapter two.

A vital aspect of *bonding* is learning the new (foreign) language. The authors Kritzinger, Meiring and Saayman (1994: 68-72) propose that learning a new language, not as we intend to think, is a social rather that an academic process.[12] In the same manner narrative research believes that knowledge formation entails a truthful social constructionist process. If it is so that "[m]illions of people have studied languages without acquiring them…" to me then it's evident that there is a world of research, claiming to objectively acquire and understand the nature of objects and relations. Narrative research as opposed to this does not try to be objective. We emerge ourselves in the social process. It is subjective in that the research initiator is constantly aware that a research co-authoring partnership is being constituted; a system of communication is developing within the relationship. It is as Bornedal (1996:6) describes: "Systems invent their own conceptual universe. They develop a certain economy and logic for this conceptual universe as their concepts become mutually self-defining and self-determining. Within the system, concepts lose their reference to the everyday world as they gain a pure system-specific meaning." Aware of my own involvement I must let the co-researchers decide in what foreign fields of art we will venture. In venturing we will learn a language in the process of communicating with the co-researchers. With the focus on the process rather than a misguiding hypothesis, through the narratives of the co-researchers a bottom-up approach to research is propagated as opposed to a top down hierarchical approach.

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[12] In learning this new language, of special importance is what Rubin & Rubin (1995:19) calls 'cultural definitions', for culture affects what is said and how the interview is heard and understood (Chapter two; forthcoming).

In this process the researcher is situated wilfully in a decentred position. This is important since everything that has been said here suggests that language is constantly changing. Meaning in words is therefore always arbitrary. Hereby we construct the world through language and not in the first instance represent it. Learning this new language then does not entail being taught about grammar, nouns, and verbs etcetera, but about situating oneself in fluid culturally embedded meaning.

Shotter (1993:1) describes the communication process (also between myself and the co-researchers) by asserting that people are not merely putting their ideas into words: "Primarily, it seems, they are responding to each other's utterances in an attempt to link their practical activities in with those of the others around them; and in these attempts at coordinating their activities, people are constructing one or another kind of social relationship that gives meaning to their lives (Mills 1940 and Wittgenstein 1981:135 cited in Shotter 1993:1; Gergen 1999:129). This is what Shotter understands as a rhetorical responsive version of social constructionism (Shotter 1993:6).   In a rhetorical responsive view of social constructionism words are themselves a form of social practise ('words as social practise': Gergen 1999:142).

Professor Demasure links language with thought in social constructionism. We have seen above that the meaning of words is never fixed. Now it is further contended that since we grow up in language there is no such thing as thinking before language. The way we think has to do with our cultural journey and the social learning of language, which in turn constitutes discourse.   In social constructionism the consideration is not whether there were persons who intelligibly started to talk; and that they then used language as a carrier for thinking and feeling.   Social constructionists argue for the emphasis on construction of thinking and feeling through language. They advocated a kind of ontology, a sense of coming into being. Professor Demasure (2005/09/27) state it quite strongly when saying one thinks because of language.

Discourses (forthcoming) which are constructed through language are systems of meaning. They present our socially constructed realities, thus ourselves and inform largely what we say, what we feel, desire and do. It is with regard to the latter, our doing (human action) that Demasure (2005/009/27) says social constructionism relates Austin's speech-act theory. This theory relates to the view in narrative practise that stories have a performative nature. Returning to the speech-act theory; Demasure (2005/09/27) explains: "We don't realise it but in language we do not *describe*; language is more functional, we are performing something, we realise something." To say: "I take you as my husband" is performative; something is different. Hereafter the married couple will not lead separate lives. Language is an enactment or realisation: "I am thirsty" implies a desired act. Professor Demasure (2005/09/27) notes further that in social constructionism knowledge, language and social action goes together. There are a number of ways in which construction are possible. Each way of constructing knowledge, primarily through language different kinds of action is brought forward. So then it matters how you call a certain thing or person. The way you construct things, in this way you also act.

1.2.3.1   What, language again?

Critique against Gergen (1999) as an outright social constructionist is that too little has been made about the interaction that do take place between people even when they are not necessarily speaking or uttering words so to speak. This is something that Gergen himself professes by alluding to a type of *linguistic reductionism*: The persistent focus on discourse or conversation obscures the significance of non-verbal signals; facial expressions, gaze, gestures, posture and so forth (Gergen 1999:85). Adding to the conversation Goffman (1959, referred to by Gergen 1999:77) whom suggests that what we view as the real and good, in addition to language is constructed in the interchange of gestures, dress, bodily markings, personal possessions, and the like.

Van Huyssteen (2005/08/01) puts it beautifully when saying that we are embodied people. So then we are not just our words or appearance. Our human rationality, the way that we are able to reason is not an isolated act, not something that floats from the air; we are embodied persons with embodied minds and embodied intelligences.   Van Huyssteen (2005/08/01) acknowledges that we communicate discursively, but even more importantly, non-discursively; body language, desires, moods, likes, dislikes and so on.   All this adds up to what it means to be embodied, contextual, and communally oriented in terms of our approach to theology, disciplinary practises, and life in general.

I acknowledge that what Gergen (1999) refers to is not in the first degree an argument for the use of art. However, these non-verbals do give some form of legitimacy to the arts and oppose that meaning is derived at primarily by reducing our social practises to language. This happens via arts that embody facial expressions, posture etcetera. As soon as we acknowledge this we step into the realm of artistic realities, which are not in the first instance reliant on the spoken words. The arts open up vistas of opportunities in acknowledging the interchange and possibilities of unspoken practises such as, dance, painting, drama, media, and other; wherein we find expressions of posture, facial expressions, exert a choice with what we dress ourselves. In disregarding the role or use of the arts (and here also, gestures, posture, expressions and so more) in our social realities it is rightly noted as being reductionism to language and nothing else as medium for the realities that we socially create.

Forthcoming in our study we hear from Ewald van Rensburg who spoke at the Verantwoordelik Vernuwing [13] conference (2004/08/24-26).   I attended in augmentation of this research endeavour. We share the same tradition of Reformed Protestant theology wherein the appropriation of the Word takes place primarily through spoken language. This mostly happens by means of sermon points, concepts, doctrine, and so forth. Ewald is of opinion that since we have

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[13] Roughly translated to Responsible Renewal.

learned to stand behind a podium in the Reformed tradition, we have been strengthening the supremacy of the spoken word as opposed to non-verbal expression such as the arts. Standing behind a podium only the upper half of the body is visible. Hereby we have been teaching our audiences that we are busy with *head* things.   He contends strongly that audiences easily connote the podium with rational ideas, theories, and explanatory concepts all through the verbal medium of speech. Hereby we verbally send information through which we understand audiences to merely be like containers for our verbal statements. To the contrary if we still choose for the primacy of the spoken Ewald notices that we should learn to preach with our entire bodies, which would allow for total communication as opposed to unilateral communication.

Even apart from non-verbals in the sense of body language, facial expressions and so on the *material context* should be taken in consideration. In this sense "[m]y clothing, for example can add or subtract significance from my words; so can the object in my hands (a bouquet of flowers, a book, a knife), the space in which we talk (a classroom, a pub, a forest), or the shape of the weather (bright sun, rain, a snowstorm). All impact or deny significance" (Gergen 1999:85). Lastly also the *medium* should be taken into consideration as for instance "[w]edding vows communicated by telephone or e-mail would scarcely count as serious" (Gergen 1999:86).

The social constructionist researcher is aware of and interested in this social relationship and so being with whatever degree of verbals or non-verbals this relationship is constituted. I hope that it is clear that at this point, concerning process and social relationships, social constructionist research dissociates itself from other manners of doing research. If we are so much part of this relationship, carrying ourselves into the research with subjective integrity, we cannot but understand that "...people's expressions of life [which is here not only understood as language, *own insertion*] which are actually shaping or constitutive of their lives, are units of meaning and experience, and these elements, are inseparable" (White 2000:9).

1.2.3.2   Discourse

The word discourse seems to have become such a popular word. Even in our church ministry environment everybody seems to start using it. It is sometimes confusing; it is not often clear what is meant by it. I refer to it here since discourse can almost be described as the focus of social constructionism.

Professor Demasure (2005/09/27) starts referring to discourse by saying that it is a linguistic subject matter. In this sense it refers to a specific context or linguistic interchange or even an event in time. This could be seen in the use of the word in reference to *discourse analysis*; the approach of the empirical study of written and spoken texts. In psychology one may think of *discursive psychology*, *the* connotation here refers to the situated use of language in social interaction. Often discourse relates, but does not only have to (as with texts), to spoken interaction.

For those that adopt a more deconstructionist approach the meaning is much more complex and definitely abstract or intangible. The focus here lies beyond the immediate context and is situated in processes. Deconstructionist's use it to refer more to the limits that language sets upon us in what we think, say or do.

Professor Demasure (2005/09/27) offers this following description on a deconstructionist's use of the concept: Discourse she says is "…a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements, [beliefs and practises, *own addition*] and so on…" that used together, in some way produce a particular version of an event/s. She firmly avers that surrounding any event there may be a variety of discourses and that each of these discourses claim to be true. The truths that allude to some kind of discourse emerge in things said and written and are therefore dependant upon the way in which they appear.

"In fact everything that can be read for *meaning*, art and so on, can be thought of as a manifestation of one or more discourses and can be referred to as a text"

(Demasure 2005/09/27). She states further that since there is virtually no aspect of human life exempt of meaning everything can be considered contextual. Objects and events come into existence. As meaningful identity through their representation in discourses. Stated inversely anything can become meaningful if it is the object of a discourse.

One can also refer to discourses, whether political, gender, religious or other discourses, in terms of interpretation repertoires. Interpretation repertoires are likewise to discourses a set of metaphors, images, stories and so more. Everything we see can be viewed in light of these interpretational repertoires. Professor Demasure (2005/09/27) states that in different cultures, different interpretation repertoires may be found.

Being a practical theologian herself professor Demasure (2005/09/27) asserts to the importance of realising that every person we encounter has interpretation repertoires.   One then interprets the world through the limits of one's own interpretation repertoires. Although the concept of discourse and interpretation repertoires seem very related one could also see each discourse as having a certain interpretation repertoire. Interpretation repertoires are then used within a certain discourse.

1.2.3 Social construction of 'the good the bad and the ugly'

It was ages ago as a boy that I watched the cowboy film *the good the bad and the ugly.* Please note that I am not referring to the concept 'ugly' at all in relation to art informed language. In some sense years later from watching the movie I've come to suspect that people owe their visit to me in my therapeutic or pastoral capacity informed by a way they temporally[14] experience difficulties: It would be fair to describe my experience in the following manner; people's yesterday's often encompass the good memories of the past, while something

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[14] It is only later that we will look at narrative practice. However realize that this concept of time that here relates to social construction is also important as one might think in a narrative metaphor.

has eroded meaning in their present which informs them about a personal ugly future. The quilt work that interweaves the interpretations of the past, present and future makes this a social constructionist study.

In a sentence or two I would just like to reconnect with the notion of language by saying that when people come to see me they don't tell it as it is, they are in effect constructing their life or problem in the way they tell it. Their understanding of something does not come from the nature of the event but from the culture that surrounds them. People in this culture are part of the past, present and expected future. A person that comes to me is born into other people's stories and descriptions of reality, of what is bad or good and so forth. Throughout their lives, embedded in the culture they grow up in, they are provided with conceptual frameworks and categories that already exist in, and are used by the people. As one develops you acquire these categories by starting to use language. For this reason, descriptions and interpretations on how things are linked and what we think about things is informed the language in the conceptual framework of the culture. What this implies is that language is a precondition for thought.

We should however be cautious in thinking that *meaning making* as far as constructionist's are concerned is just about the past, past experiences, past circumstances and people in the past. This sounds dangerously close to traditions and theory informing psychoanalysis.

In contrast herewith Niebuhr (1963:92) explains that the past and the future are not the no-longer and the not-yet; they are extensions of the present. They are the still-present and the already-present. According to this understanding my interpersonal past also is with me in all my present meetings with other selves and multiple emotions. In is in the now that the future, the no-yet is present in expectations and anxieties, in anticipations and commitments (Niebuhr 1963:92).

In the research "[W]e enters into stories; we are entered into stories by others; and we live our lives through these stories…. [I]t is through stories that we are able to gain a sense of the unfolding of the events of our lives through recent history, and it appears that this sense is vital to the perception of a 'future' that is in any way different from a 'present'" (Epston 1998:11). Therefore Müller (2000:9) states that when we tell something from our past it is nothing other than an attempt to construct our future. Maybe this is what is meant by saying that life is a series of collisions with the future; it is not a sum of what we have been, but what we yearn to be (José Ortega y Gasset, Spanish philosopher quoted in Bridges 1997:95).

Lester (1995:44, cited in Müller 1996:133) asserts that our fragility, fears, anxieties, losses, emotional anguish, and suffering, inevitably connects with disintegrating future narratives. It is at this point where narrative practise situated within a social constructionist worldview diverges from psychoanalytical models.[15] The latter gives precedence of stories and experiences in the past and does not involve the imagination in respect of the future (Müller 1996:133). Human, Liebenberg and Müller (2001), dedicate an article on the role that imagination plays in human decision making. This relates to the arts in the sense that artistic activity accesses the imagination. It requires an envisioning activity, which could be acknowledged in especially looking at Moré's participation later in the research. In this regard Andersen-Warren and Grainger (2000:219) situate personal healing of all kinds in the role of the imagination. Through this role of imagination we come to see ourselves as person who may contribute to our own healing. Aptly put: "Drama therapy uses imagination to promote realism" (Andersen-Warren & Grainger 2000:219). The flexibility of drama therapy in relation to the role of the imagination comes from the fact that it is based on a fundamental human principle — the way in which we use imagination to transform and humanise the world we live in (Andersen-Warren & Grainger 2000:222). Drama therapy involves "…the public use of creative imagination, to join not to divide, bringing us into healing contact with

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[15] For a concise overview of the major psychological approaches to personality view Sternberg (2001:478-509).

one another and with ourselves. In drama therapy we find ways of contacting life, getting a grip on realities that need to be seen as a whole, as part of being human. The structure of drama therapy presents life within a context of meaning and purpose — things which for human beings are intrinsically bound up with and dependent on imagination (Andersen-Warren & Grainger 2000:222). "Our ability to 'co-imagine' with other people so that we actually create a shared scenario introduces us to a way of knowing in which we experience life by participating in it, rather than just thinking about it. These experiences must be consolidated and established as part of our own individual history, our sense of being people who have done certain things and to whom certain things have happened" (Andersen-Warren & Grainger 2000:224)

Andersen-Warren and Grainger (2000:224) guard against using drama therapy approaches and techniques haphazardly. They do say by referring to the role of imagination that in drama therapy hangs together as a complete happening, with a beginning, middle and an end. "To divide it up is to take away its impact and reduce its power to heal. The world of imagination which comes into being as a result of the decision to imagine together is something which must be consciously and deliberately entered upon, and just and consciously and deliberately left behind afterward" (Andersen-Warren & Grainger 2000:224). This is important in light of the fact that in drama therapy things are not only remembered they are most often relived.

> The process of co-imagination and co-creation allows us to draw nearer to the things we are beginning to re-remember than any amount of talking about them can do; the ability to embody our free associations within a living context of other people gives them an immediacy and vividness, a sense of personal significance that belongs only to drama, the medium in which we do the meaning of things, rather than just thinking about it and trying to describe it.
>
> (Andersen-Warren & Grainger 2000:228)

It should be noted that this imagination in therapy, organisations, artistic performance and the like is not an attempt to construct a future so much as it signifies a movement from an interpretation from the future back to the present (Müller 1996:133). The case study in Human, Liebenberg and Müller's article (2001:311) suggests that it is in the *here and now* that decisions are made. When reflecting on the role that imagination plays in arts and decision making it is stated that "[w]ithin the multiple stories and multiple possibilities of the postmodern *multiverse*, we forfeit the belief that there are any *essential truths* (Freedman & Combs 1996:34).

Our discussion on how the world is configured or being configured as it relates to personality, relationships, human nature, truth and other topics is expanded from the world of the arts. Horton (1994:25) runs parallel to our argument by noting that as the twentieth century winds down, perhaps we have become too self-conscious in that we in the West have come to think of character (thus our "selves") in basically Freudian and post-Freudian psychological and psychoanalytic terms as opposed to other models (religious, historical, cultural). He then proposes that we think of character as *process* and *discourse* – a view beyond usual psychological labels and categories and a more open-ended view of ourselves and the world around us (Horton 1994:25). This view, stemming from the arts (drama especially), reverberates with the spirit of a social constructionist view, that of this narrative research.

The following excerpt of a reflection letter I wrote to professor Hagemann clarifies my standpoint still further.

> The question of epistemology also came to the fore a couple of times and with it the question of speaking about morality from a postmodernist perspective. In this regard I believe you said that stories do not have conflicting moralities. I truly believe that a social constructionist perspective does not imply that anything goes as would [now I'd rather use *might*] a constructivist approach or a radical postmodernist

perspective.   According to my understanding our realities are socially constructed and therefore are preferred realities according to our different cultures and sub-cultures.   These realities, truths are real in the same sense that a dream might be real. We have referred to a body experience and our realities to me is exactly this; similar almost to how discourses is brought to life and have a very real impact in people's lives. Discourses aren't some kind of objective reality but like a film still renders a body experience captivates the immediate reality of any given situation. One cannot choose as an individual that this or that discourse is not real and that it will not have an effect on my life. Being aware of the discourse however certainly is of great help but it is socially constructed, reified through ages. From this perspectives our stories to me is also socially constructed and there are usually actors (family, enemy etc.) that act in to discourses that sustain certain problem saturated stories.

In later interviews professor Hagemann referred to stories not having conflicting moralities and sometimes not having beginning and endings. This study's use of *character* should also be seen as fluid; read against the epistemology found in this chapter not as some might used the word of character as fixed. I relate the following excerpt from professor Hagemann as an indication of how we should understand character but also story and other concepts within our epistemology

Professor Hagemann:

I am referring to post-modern theory, which questions the notion of the well made play, beginning – middle – end.   Postmodern theory interrogates the modernist concept of an over arching meta-narrative that explains the world and the notion of a temporal causality; who constructs this narrative – from which position – how does late capitalism and globalization construct the normative – who holds the power etcetera. It introduces the notion of rupture – (opening up the surface of appearance), commodified objects and people, questions the inevitable and the notion

of one history. However, you are right when you say events unfold into contexts (more than one) but are we sure that every event has a consequence. Sometimes there are endings – full stops and new beginnings.

(Email received 2004/07/16)

1.2.4 Deconstructing the 'one truth' assumption!

By way of introduction I will make a few general remarks to provide a framework for our discussion. Thereafter I will consider a question about truth asked to Professor Wentzel van Huyssteen whom situates himself in a postfoundational paradigm. Then I will draw closer to the understanding of deconstruction and social construction.

I would first like to remark that deconstructionism is not in my view a movement, paradigm, and tradition of thought on so on. Deconstruction is understood in light of epistemological paradigms such as postmodernism and so on. Deconstructionism is especially understood in light of macro social constructionism as exemplified by Foucault and Derrida (Demasure 2005/09/27): According to this understanding human reality is constructed through constructions of language and ideology.

The central concept is that of an enlarged understanding of text, inclusive of and amongst other things the oral and visual aspects of humanness. In respect of the physical text, deconstruction relates to critical analysis such as in Foucaudian discourse analysis. Even the existence of something is deconstructed if there is no interaction with the text, visual object, oral tradition and so on. In respect of a text for instance Demasure (2005/09/27) says that if a text is not read and interpreted it does not exist; a text means or is nothing if it isn't read. Used in these ways deconstructionism is directed at interrogating power structures; it is about the historical can cultural specificity of knowledge and the possibility of action and power.

Upon reading the above paragraph one might understand deconstruction to have a relativistic agenda.   In my understanding of deconstruction it does not necessarily means undermining the foundation, taking away norms and so forth. It is in effect about *adding*, or augmenting possibilities and not necessarily about the *taking away of*, about pluriformity.

Thus, the main arena for deconstructive inquiry is that of accepted ways of knowing, of reality, or structures; these I would like to all encompass in speaking here about truth. Some of my colleagues (PhD focus group members) have said that this idea of deconstructing the 'one truth' assumption contradicts my thoughts as a social constructionist theologian.   I disagree with them but postpone the argument (Forthcoming: Possibility theory).

Deconstruction is the acknowledgment of the idea that the realities we embody are constructed and is thus especially related to the idea of social construction. Yet, deconstruction relates to all the traditions or paradigms of thought that is situated over against the kind of enlightenment legacy. Al these which is to an extent reactionary philosophies (postmodernism etcetera), share the idea of deconstruction as a critical stance to what is accepted or taken for granted. So postmodernism is to a large degree a deconstruction of monologic (amongst other things), but so also poststructuralism, social constructionism and so more.

At a lecture that Professor Wentzel van Huyssteen gave, this question was addressed to him: "How does postfoundationalism see truth? Is there truth out there that people interpret in different ways or do people construct the truth." Huyssteen then says that he should answer this in a local or contextual sense. I present his remarks: It depends on what it is you are talking about. We all have opinions about the truth; of what a good marriage is truth about bad politics and good politics. There are all kinds of notions of what is good, bad, right, wrong, true, or untrue in terms of the daily praxis of our lives and the daily praxis of our

intellectual lives.   But then I think that in a slightly broader context it would depend on the intellectual strategy or on the discipline, if I were a mathematician I would talk differently about truth than I would when I'm a psychologist or a chemist or a physicist so in each of those cases what we see to be true and how we arrived at the truth would be shaped by the nature of the kind of discourse.

So, what does this mean for theology? In theology Huyssteen says one needs to distinguish between ultimate religious truths which is something that one cannot prove or disprove. This notion of ultimacy, these ultimate convictions, some of us believe and some of us don't, and all of that is embedded in deeper paradigms of thought and different traditions and different churches.

Within that context of accepting the ultimacy of God, in the sense that he exists separate from our human interpretations Huyssteen notes that he would not make strong truth claims. (This relates to the section: Appreciative inquiry). For him the dilemma does not lie in the existence of God but in the ways we have conceptually embodied those truth claims: You can unfold it negative by saying the way that the church have talked about the position of woman previously, and other discriminatory practises or injustice was the negative embodiment of our interpretations about God. He notes that he has learned much from feminist and liberation thinkers about the role of woman. This to him signifies that there is an increase in biblical truths about discrimination and finding a democratic space for all kinds of people and different identities of humanness. Likewise when we talk about theology and truth the oppression of minorities will always be wrong. Light heartedly he remarks: "I don't think that fifty years form now we're going to rediscover the wonderful world of chauvinism.

He provides these examples to say that in a negative sense one can make strong truth claims; against oppression, discrimination and so forth. However he does not think that one can make equally strong truth claims in a propositional sense.   This means we are more at liberty to say: "Discrimination, racism

etcetera *is not* right" but more problematic to say "This or that *is* the way it should be." One can only hope he says things will become increasingly better and that we may discover truths about discrimination and problematic issues that will reinforce even stronger what we see as the biblical viewpoint. Professor Müller adds to this that the foundational stance is about proclaiming the truth for the reason that you believe you have access to the truth over against the construction of truth.

An essential attitude of social constructionist research is seated in that this worldview does not see the world in 'either or' one truth categories, or as professor Hagemann asserts "…interrogates the notion of an over arching meta-narrative that explains the world." For this reason I engage in discussion here on our assumptions with regard to how our human realities are created. Sweet[16] (1999:204) states: "Postmoderns [as in people belonging to a postmodern *era*; *own insertion*] rely on…, metaphors for truth, and myth for direction. Postmoderns live in metaphors and dwell in parables." The account of Jill Freedman's electricity class in Freedman and Combs (1996:20) serves as a good example: "The teacher went on to say that our understanding of electricity is a theory, not a truth, but that when he's fixing a broken television set he drops that distinction and, during that time, for him the theory is true. Otherwise, he explained, the task of fixing a television set becomes too confusing."

The modernistically acknowledged theory about electricity becomes... shall we say a shocking reality not because of the objective validity of the theory but because it is a reality "...that our societies have surrounded us with since birth" (Freedman & Combs 1996:16). Relating our discussion with congregations in a postmodern era Sweet (1999: 214) is of opinion that postmoderns don't come to worship for something to believe in. They believe in everything and anything… they don't even come to church to explore the words, 'Is it true?' but to explore "Is it real?" (Sweet 1999:215). For this

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[16] We'll also hear from professor Sweet in a later chapter due to his contribution his voice as a secondary but indeed co-participant to this study.

reason Sweet (1999:214) argues that some authors (for example Hal 1997) make a case for the *return of the real* as opposed to truth in art and theory.

The Postmodern era is experienced first hand in people believing that there are limits to the ability of human beings: measuring and describing the universe in any precise, absolute, and universally applicable way. They differ from modernists given that exceptions interest them more than rules. "They choose to look at specific, contextualized details more often than grand generalizations, difference, rather than similarity" (Freedman & Combs 1996:21).

Claims to essential truths tend become legalistic so "... [W]hile modernist thinkers tend to be concerned with facts and rules, postmodernists are concerned with meaning" (Freedman & Combs 1996:22). "Meaning is not carried in a word by itself, but by the word in relation to its context, and no two contexts will be exactly the same. Thus the precise meaning of any word is always somewhat indeterminate, and potentially different, it is always something to be negotiated between two or more speakers or between a text and a reader" (Freedman & Combs 1996:29). This negotiation of truth is perhaps clearly explained again from the world of the arts:

> [T]ruth in art does not mean that every detail has to be true in a physical, historical, theological, and scientific or any other non-artistic way. It is artistic truth! Hamlet may never have lived – but Shakespeare's Hamlet is true insofar as Shakespeare has been able to make the figure he created true to reality, to human character and potential. If you are going to criticize Hamlet you must show inconsistencies in his character or in the way he is acted. You cannot object that Hamlet was probably never really like this historically… [S]o too fairy tales can be true, if they show human action and behaviour in keeping with human character – within the framework of fairy tale reality.
>
> (Rookmaaker 1970:237)

These last few words "…within the framework of fairy tales" reverberates with Gergen. The word *framework* is used in the same manner as Gergen (1999:34) alludes to the word *game*. Gergen refers to the *game of truth* that we play; for our purposes, in a while, a game of chess. In the traditional view of language, language is seen as mirror or a reflection of the world, even a picture or map of events and objects. Weiser (1993:6) involved in phototherapy asserts we use words and language attempting to categorise and code our experience so that it is accessible for ourselves but that what is described as raw experience isn't necessarily translatable into words for full description. The view that language can be a reflection of the world is incontestably linked to the assumption that truth can be carried by language and therefore that some languages (and chiefly those, which are scientific) are closer to the truth than others (Gergen 1999:34). From the theological field of missional studies in his seminal work *Transforming Mission,* Bosch (1991:353) writes that we should recognise that "…language cannot be absolutely accurate, that it is impossible finally to "define" either scientific laws or theological truths. To speak with Gregory Bateson (uncited by Bosch 1991*)*, neither science nor theology *proves*; rather, they *probe*. This recognition has led to a re-evaluation of the role of metaphor, myth, analogy, and the like, and to the rediscovery of the sense of mystery and enchantment."

What then, following up on Bosch (1991) if words do not carry authentic truth is the status of scientific knowledge? How can we say that drinking and driving is a dangerous combination? Wouldn't I rather trust a trained physician above a witch doctor or a child? As an avid chess scholar having played provincially for many years I enjoy the following metaphor. Gergen (1999:34) reflects on Wittgenstein (1978:108) to whom we trace this specific metaphor of truth and a game of chess. Consequently, asking what a *word* really is is equivalent to asking what a piece in a game of chess is. In a game of chess two opponents take turns in moving pieces of various sizes and shapes across a chequered board. Explicit and implicit game rules govern, or provide the framework for the acceptable legal moves (explicit) and proper social conduct (implicit): I cannot

therefore curse or spit at my Western-Transvaal board number one counterpart even less so when playing in *team* formation on the Natal squad.

Each piece in the chess set acquires its meaning from the game as a whole. As such a *cluedo* game piece is useless in a *chess* set. The reverse is also true in that no, even international *Staunton* standard, chess piece means anything outside the game of chess. Be wary however that once in the game of chess seemingly insignificant *pawns* can topple *kings* and *queens*. It is said that words with which we create our preferred realities acquire their meaning in the same way.   If we are in the midst of a heated academic argument on scientific paradigms, and I suddenly calmly say, "good morning," you could possibly be puzzled or might even think I've lost my mind. The utterance of "good morning" gains its meaning from a game-like relationship in which we take turns in exchanging mutual glances. Outside of the academic argument you could reply with "how are you" and, informed by our type of relationship, few other options are possibilities all of which would be constitutive of legal moves in the greeting-game.

1.2.5 Possibility Theory

The theory that I put forth here is situated in the debate of whether a social constructionist can say God is ultimately real, or can the social constructionist not escape the radical proposal that God is only real in the sense that he is a social construction. Accordingly others might say that there god is real and so this leads to a sort of relativistic picture wherein every culture or religion has its truth.

1.2.5.1   Raising questions about God

It should be noted that it seems a bit of a circular argument to in a social constructionist paradigm refer to God on the one hand of being true and otherwise socially constructed. I have struggled extensively on this. In some

sense the idea of cognitive dissonance[17] that one encounters in psychological writings applied to me. Being a Christian pastor, reasoned that I'm not willing to abandon the belief in God as objectively true while in extreme readings of social constructionism this would entail an incongruency between position and belief since God would then merely be a socially constructed idea. I have come to think of this dilemma as having both a very complex but also an uncomplicated answer. At this point I will start writing in the direction of an illumination of this dilemma.

1.2.5.2   Background to academic pursuit

Note first however that this theme is interwoven with my personal narrative. In reflecting back on my academic undertakings I realise now that I was in some way predispositioned to this theme of social constructionism. I remember having an internal controversy whether I should do a final year study in the department of Practical Theology or that of Old Testament studies. I made the choice in favour of the Old Testament studies. The interesting part is that I chose a theme that in my understanding resonates strongly with social constructionism: *Die wording van God in die Ou-Testament.* The idea in Afrikaans of *wording* could loosely be translated to, *coming into being* and really has plenty to do with the idea of social construction which of course I had no understanding of at that time. I was only later in my practical theological inquiries exposed to such ideas.

That which my final year BD-dissertation acknowledges and tries partly to trace is the following: From the earliest biblical times in various cultures, that which people have come understand about their gods was informed by the social contexts and interaction in their everyday lives. Even then ways of thinking about God in the lives of our biblical characters and people (Israel) was constructions resulting form interaction with various cultures, beliefs and so forth. In this sense Israel's understanding of God was informed by a multiplicity of practises. I did

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[17] Sternberg (2001:430) describes cognitive dissonance as a person's disquieting perception of a mismatch between his or her attitudes and his or her behaviour. In my example this also relates to a perceived mismatch between epistemological positioning and inherited belief system.

still assume however that God – in spite of our constructed language about him – that he is an extra-linguistic reality. If I were to choose an appropriate topic for an Old Testament endeavour in similar spirit as our study here I might refer to it as Michael Northcott (2000:154) does in a paragraph heading: *The Social Construction of God…* and then just include, *in the Old Testament*.

What I would like to further state is that I probably would not have done the dissertation in Old Testament studies if I had not had that specific promoter. The reason for this was that the professor was situated firmly in a postmodern perspective in which I also then, maybe because of felt at ease with. To the contrary to the previous years' studies he taught me that the Old Testament was not just about structural analysis that truth was not to be found in the underlying structures. He predisposed me to the narrative postgraduate studies by making much of the story of the Old Testament and its people. I started to understand something for myself of the world in which I live through the narrative filter of looking at the Old Testament.

So then both the idea of narrative *meaning making* and the idea of *coming into being* in the Old Testament inspired me to enrol for practical theology that shared these semantic possibilities.

Currently I still see that our thoughts about God is socially constructed but I acknowledge that we can only confine focus our inquiry into how we humans understand God but that no one can on the basis of any philosophy prove or disprove God.

1.2.5.3   Broadening the conversation

At professor Demasure's (2005/09/27) lecture I asked her how she would position herself as a practical theologian when considering the implications for the existence, (truth, etcetera) of God in the social constructionist tradition.

This question that sparked the notion of critical realism and relativism in respect of social constructionism alluded to elsewhere. It seems that to her this is not too problematic. She did not hesitate that as a Christian – professor Müller asked whether I ask this as a Christian or a minister – one cannot accept every position taken in social constructionism.   To her this reading of extreme social constructionists is relativistic and she noted that in Christianity hundred percent relativism is not possible.   However, critical realism is very Christian; critical realism speaks from the notion of the relational self, which she offers as an example to our discussion.   The notion of relational self over against the contained self is very Christian she says. Our whole religion is about alliance situated in the covenant between man and God. However, once again a totally fragmented view in her opinion is not possible in Christianity. She maintains that although the extremes are circumspect there are alignments in social constructionism with Christianity; she mentions the idea of the silenced voices and so on.

Professor Müller (2005/09/27) furthers the relational argument by saying that our relationalness is what the community of believers is about; listening to each other, forming norms and living through our socially constructed views on God. It is not objectively revelatory but relational.   There is no problem for professor Müller for a practical theologian or Christian minister to be situated in social constructionist thought. To the contrary it is to him the philosophy that comes the nearest to the community of faith and their theological understanding of pneumatology.

The importance of the relational aspect of living came to the fore in conversations with professor Hagemann that remarks here on individuality versus community. Professor Hagemann notes that there is a desperate need for community and communitas especially in Europe and America. This could be seen especially in big events such as the coronation of the Pope, when Lady Diana died and so forth where people revealed the need to be part of an event other than through

the media. People have moved so far towards individualism to such an extent that they can't see another person. He refers to the 9/11 events and says that such events pull a nation together and that the problem could arise that the sense of community becomes a sort of nationalism, and nationalism tends to dictate.

Naturally, if this is true then in reaction towards individualism, people may rediscover and value the relational aspects of living; consequentially one finds constructed realities. However, what does this say about God?

In my view, the relational situatedness is very helpful but only to a degree. We don't have an argument with Nietzsche (admittedly not considering context), but when he says, "God is dead" it presupposes that he was at a certain time also living. This is different from saying God does not really exist he is only a construction of our social realities.

Van der Ven's (2002) develops the relational aspect of the argument further and later remarks on our dilemma. Van der Ven (2002:34) alludes to various articles in the reader on social constructionism and theology pointing out that Gergen (which is also a contributor to the book) allows little scope for reflection on religion in his social constructionism. I agree with Van der Ven (2002:34) that there are no reasons not to critically assimilate Gergen's insights into theology. "The question is, however, whether his theory creates adequate conditions for the God talk which he himself does not engage in nor needs to engage in, but which is a crucial part of theology" (Van der Ven 2002:304).   The first consideration is whether religious statements refer to an extra linguistic reality, which is God, or does social constructionism dismiss this question as irrelevant and absurd, because referential truth is declared nonexistent?

According to Van der Ven (2002:304) religious statements should be seen as religious speech acts or religious performances, which display illocutionary /

perlocutionary attributes and which, like all speech acts, can be classified into five categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives (Van der Ven 2002:304). Thus we confess that God exists (assertive), we ask him to bless us or challenge him, as Job did (directive), we promise that we will be faithful to his word (commissive), we express our gratitude to him or our sorrow at his absence (expressive), and, lastly, we declare that this word is the word of God, or that this bread and this wine are the body and blood of his son (declarative). Now *within* these illocutionary/ perlocutionary speech acts, he says, there is a locutionary aspect with a propositional load. This propositional load does not exist independently of the speech act but is embedded and implicit in it. In other words, our religious speech acts most definitely *contain* a reference to God but it does no lie outside them.

I would remark that Van der Venn's argument (2002:304) is situated in critical realism as argued also by professors Demasure and Müller (2005/09/27). Hence, Van der Venn (2002:304) declares that we know God only insofar as we confess him (assertive). We know him only insofar as we ask him to bless us (directive). We know him only insofar as we promise to remain faithful to him (commissive); we known him only insofar as we express our gratitude or sorrow to him (expressive). We know him only insofar as we declare this word to be his word (declarative). "After all, how could we know God except in the relationship that we establish, maintain, and develop with him through our speech acts? How could we possibly know God outside this relationship? How can I know my lover outside my relationship with him or her?" (Van der Venn 2002:304).

He extends the argument further:

> This does not detract from the fundamental social constructionist tenet that we can apply to this problem, namely that the religious self-definition contained in these religious utterance, like the religious identity to which they give rise, is a product of social construction. In my religious speech

acts I address God or put myself in his presence *because* I learned to do so in my early religious socialisation, *because* there are people around me who engage in a similar kind of talk and thus provide social plausibility for my utterance, and *because* there are people around me who engage in a similar kind of talk and thus provide social plausibility for my utterances, and *because* my interaction with them and our environing culture puts me in a state of constant development and change. All this is true, but the polyphonous reality of religious speech cannot be reduced to this alone, and *one* aspect of that reality is the reference to the extra linguistic reality, which is God, to whom I am actually addressing myself *in* my religious performances.

(Van der Ven 2002:304-305)

I agree with him that this argument also creates tension in the distinction between reference and representation. Used in this argument the latter concept adds a certain modulation to the first one. He argues that reference is not unmediated but representative reference. Representation means that the actual object being represented is not present (Van der Ven 2002:305) while at the same time it *is* represented, implying that it is present at least *in* the representation, *in the mode* of representation.

He emphasises that this simultaneous present/ absent ambiguity not only applies to religious language but to language in general. In its propositional orientation the locutionary aspect embedded in illocutionary / perlocutionary, speech employs images, which partly indicate the absence of something (which is God in our argument) and partly represent it as present *within* the images. (Van der Venn 2002:306)

He concedes that the images themselves are products of social interaction and cultural construction (as social constructionism avers); but this does not detract

from the fundamental fact of a dialectic between absence and presence, and hence from representative reference (Van der Ven 2002:306).

Finally, Van der Ven (2002:306) asks: "Is God himself a social construction?" After having explained, his position above he views this "as a silly, nonsensical question. He then further aligns to Gergen's (2002:3-22) metaphor of a dance and says:

> If – I repeat, *if* – social constructionists were to reply, "Yes just that and nothing besides," then I shall for now refuse the invitation to join the dance; I would even refuse an invitation to a dance deferred to a later occasion. But I don't think the social constructionist' answer is that silly. Of course, the images that religious people employ in their religious speech acts, and even the form and content of the speech acts themselves, are social constructions.
>
> (Van der Ven (2002:306)

> If I take the question of whether God is a social construction independently of, and separately from, the illocutionary/ perlocutionary religious speech acts I perform, then I am bound to say that outside religious speech acts I can neither affirm nor deny God's existence. As one who performs these speech acts I, I deny and must deny that God is only a social construction; but beyond these religious speech acts, I leave the question open.
>
> (Van der Ven 2002:307)

Professor Wentzel van Huyssteen (2005/08/01) maintains that Christians have to accept some prerogatives in the faith tradition. With these acknowledged presuppositions. The next important consideration would be to think of how we make extra-linguistic reality part of us. Do we do this in a propositionalistic way, autocratic, authoritative, or do we put forth our suggestions humbly? (See on this topic: Appreciative inquiry). Van Huyssteen (2005/08/01) refers to his earlier work

in the 1980's and says that he has argued very strongly then for *critical realism.* He says: "What I meant then and still do is that once you find yourself within a Christian paradigm it only makes sense to presuppose the fact that we think God is real; and that in that sense the *central metaphors* of our faith mean something; that our *faith* means something, and that says our language about that [our faith: *own insertion*] has some significance…"

1.2.5.4   Possibility theory employed from the arts

It is around the concept of *possibility*, from Rookmaaker (1970) that the world of art and this practical theological study interlocks. Rookmaaker (1970) is specifically important to us since he writes on the interface between faith and art. I use the term *possibility* in relation to social constructionism by saying that it is believed that reality lies in the *possibility* of socially constructed truth.

I claim that even social constructionism is something for which God created the possibility. If one does, as I do view God as extra-linguistically real then we could occupy ourselves with the idea that God might *not* have chosen to create the possibility for the construction and awareness of some reality. What does this mean? The problem that this theory wishes to address is that of our human conception of God. The way in which we make sense and interpret God being present or absent in our worlds. Some might refer to it as the immanence/ transcendence ambivalence whereby God is either God with us or God that created (initiated) and then withdrew from creation. My contention encompasses both. God created; instilled in creation is the seeds of possibilities; God is present in our interaction with these realised possibilities or meaning that we construct.

For our purpose, I want to introduce the textual academic voices of some scholars both from the arts and from social constructionism Gergen. These voices were not plucked from the air since I like them or feel they are of benefit. Rather they were in some way or another viewed as beneficial to this study by

the research community (scientific community or general co-research participants). Informed by the social constructionist idea of relational selves as opposed to separate individuals these scholars' voices have already been present in our conversation in that I come from a community in which some voices are regarded as more helpful than others.

Consequently let me illuminate my understanding of *possibility*. Rookmaaker (1970) has been very helpful especially in having dedicated a chapter to *Faith and Art*. He suggests that "there is no marriage, no economics, no prayer, no art but for the fact that they were made *possible* [italics; *own emphasis*] by God in His creation: He created the possibility" (Rookmaaker 1970:225). These possibilities create certain realities and blossom through our social interaction. Through the fruition of possibilities (through which preferred realities are created), the seeds for new possibilities are birthed. We interact with those, and so new possible horizons draw near. In the realisation of these possibilities, we participate in creating meaningful lives. Whatever truth we uphold therefore stems from these culturally determined, rather temporary structures. Since I accept the belief that God is a creator God on the one hand but also that our truths weren't just clearly fashioned in a creational act; I infer that God being the creator God created possibilities for things to come into existence, to come into being. The way in which you and I construct our worlds is a result of the possibilities that exist for me to be someone in relation to you. From our relational selves a meaningful past, present and future is constructed and within it, certain cultural structures of reality such as art, marriage, economics, and so forth are birthed. To advocate certain truths as absolute would imply metaphorically speaking that (and speaking at first materially) an airplane, cars, ovens, but also the Bible, ethics, sexuality and so more just appeared from heaven as either a curse or a blessing to humanity. Underlying this argument of 'everything were just created' we find a disregard for the process of coming into being, a disregard for future possibilities (God as continually creating) and a disregard for alternative stories that might help us with regard to morality, ethics,

justice which for maybe for most is pivotal issues to humanity. In a sense, I believe *possibility-theory* if I might coin it as that, is an argument situated in post-foundationalism owing to the dialogical relation of its reasoning: Firstly, it does not throw the premise of a foundation away (which is culturally and historically defined) while also not maintaining a fundamentalist perspective in which God ultimately governs and defines truth.

A post-structuralist positioning is inviting to interdisciplinary work. Seeing that this study relates to the arts I invite Rookmaaker (1970) again to contribute to the discussion on truth or reality: "What does *truth* mean in art? It certainly does not mean that art has to be a copy of reality – in fact, art is never a copy of reality, and cannot be. Art always gives an interpretation of reality, of the thing seen, the relationships, and the human reality experienced emotionally, rationally, and in many other human ways. Art always shows what man – the artist and the group to which he belongs, the time in which he lives – sees and experiences as relevant, as important, as worthwhile; for otherwise he will never try to depict it" (Rookmaaker 1970:236).

In relating the idea of epistemology (in this sense meaning the possibility of socially creating knowledge) to the arts I find myself alongside Bornedal (1996:5) in that I presuppose that one approaches a text (in this context: people) without prejudice, implying that one does not pretend to understand its core concepts before their contextuality are read and examined. "One, for example, does not pretend to understand critical concepts such as 'nature,' 'beauty,' 'imitation,' or 'inspiration,' as if these concepts are constituted as eternally the same, outside the context and function of the particular text in which they occur. This implies that one understands concepts not according to the dictionary…" but according to their contextual function (Bornedal 1996:6; see also Gergen 1999:33-61). Likewise and very aptly put Stige and Kenny (2002:24) uses the description *situated practice*: "The lexicon of postcolonial, postmodern, deconstructive, / constructive intellectual debates and discourses have given us 'situated

practise.'" Relating the above to their own field of study, namely music, which is significant to this study as music is one of the arts, they assert: "Music is more than a stimulus or a "drug," and music therapy practise more than a collection of techniques and procedures in a culture-free space. The *meanings* of thoughts and actions depend on their socio-cultural and the relational character of experience and learning."

1.2.5.5   A PhD focus group interrogation

It is pertaining to *possibility theory* that my colleagues in the PhD focus group scrutinised my earlier attempt at writing this chapter. I start of this discussion by inviting the small group participants back and sharing here our collaborative understandings of and underlying worldview, possibility theory and related issues.

The PhD small group members have noted that on the one hand I talk about God as if he is standing objectively outside the universe while on the other hand social constructionism extended to its full conclusion suggests that one cannot talk about God as being objectively real, outside of interpretation or discourse. According to my assumption, I situate everything with regard to human action, natural, or social science etcetera as stemming from the seeds of possibility that I believe God created. I acknowledge that God is implicated as being objectively, existentially, extra-linguistically true in the way I write, which of course is the small group's dilemma since they experience this contradictory to social constructionist thought.

In answer to the most welcome scrutiny from my colleagues then the following remarks: Even if we position ourselves within a certain paradigm there will always be threads of that which has influenced us so greatly. Let me refer to these threads as traces of modernism. Within a constructionist perspective, this voice is part of who I am and how I think. This being so whether we are cognisant or uninformed of its influence! We can scarcely do more than try to be

transparent about it, constantly illuminating our culturally inherited presuppositions and being in continuous dialogue. With this then I validate to some degree the apparent contradiction noticed by the narrative academic focus group.

However, I could further answer that this idea of an objective, real God is *my* belief. If I should stop here at this contention of being *my* belief, it would merely resonate with ideology of a construc*tivist* approach as opposed to a construc*tionist* perspective. However, we do not halt the horse here. The latter, the constructionist (including myself) might remark that this is my belief, but it is so *along* with millions of other people across time, language, race and culture whom share this specific tradition. In this tradition, God is accepted as being the creator God revealing himself in the embodiment of Jesus Christ. Being positioned in this long standing and to those in it existentially meaningful tradition does not exclude the possibility that I may at times question what might also in this tradition be labelled as peripheral issues. Why? Well I realise that this belief system come from a Judeo-Christian perspective, a culture existentially different from my own. It would be rather presumptions to think that I understand that culture as my own. Everything in the tradition might not be objectively true especially since there are numerous denominations based on that Judeo Christian world. The margin of error is too great and neither one of the sub-traditions could claim, even in its own paradigm of modernity claims hundred percent accuracy.[18] Thus, I choose to position myself within central conjectures of the tradition that of the belief in a creator God incarnated in Christ. Exactly how the world holds together beyond these beliefs is in most sub-Christian denominations based on presuppositions that I would like to elaborate on here.

I should however caution my colleagues, this being my second remark to their input: As I understand it there is no means by which anyone situated within the epistemology of social constructionism can *prove* or *disprove* the existence of

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[18] The notion of accuracy and objective truth is used here interchangeably. These notions will be debated in this chapter further on.

one supreme God. In a sense, this argument would result in a dog chasing its tale. However, the existence of a creator God (irrespective of *how* He actually created) is central to this chapter and I accept the reality that tradition presents to me.

If I have to situate my belief in some kind of logic with regard to the existence of a supreme God, I would start with looking at the following irrationality: How can there be a piece of architecture without an architect. How can big chunks of steal just miraculously forge together over an irrelevant (for our purposes) amount of years until we identify it in our language as a ship and so forth? However, I do think my own argument to be rather reductionistic. Yes, it is also the modernistic application of the time old *art* of rhetoric. As for not wanting to function within this modernistic paradigm, I relapse to the idea of accepting the tradition as true within the context of a certain culture that sustains the tradition. For this research, although open to discussion I ask you the reader to do the same.

Thirdly, I feel that the whole idea of social constructionism has more to do with the way we think about our material-/ and human social -reality or interaction. In my view constructionism is the focus of social interchange, which holds significant implications for therapy, education, organisational work, the justice system and many more fields. These fields take place here on earth after all. Therefore the rhetorical question and let me be daring at it: Who will be able to judge whether or not our thinking about 'how the world holds up' is relevant at all to other life forms on other planets. Let alone even to the thoughts of an omnipresent God whose being (if he were perhaps objectively inescapably real in another dimension). We can't begin to imagine or conceive. So in saying that there are no structures of objective reality; that could verifiably confer that this also relates to God as I have come to know him within certain cultural tradition?

A further sub note to this argument: Within this Christian tradition, God is not referred to as a structure of anything, but as an entity. Thus in referring to a

structure of objective reality, we can merely talk about our human interaction and how truth and meaning is created *between us* and how we react to this created truth, or acquire scientific knowledge, and so forth.   There is no structure of reality there is only God. In a sense the Christian faith tradition redefines truth in terms of personhood and not in terms of concepts; I am the way the truth and the life Jesus says (John 14:6). So when Jesus says in this much quoted verse "[y]e shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32 KJV) he does not refer to knowledge as a concept but to relationship as John 8:36 (KJV) indicates when qualifying 8:32 (KJV): "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."[19]

When we talk about structures of reality and that in relation to human interaction, we are really talking about ways of knowing. Gooch (1972:522) as followed by Tillman (2002:10) suggests that there are two ways of knowing inherent in human personality. The first voices the current dominant discourse. In my view relates to enlightenment tradition resulting in modernism: objectivity, impersonal logic, thinking and thought detachment and discrete categories of knowledge, which is based on proof and scientific evidence. As opposed to the subdued and devalued ways of knowing that favours *being*, subjectivity, personal feeling, emotion, magic, involvement, associative ways of knowing, belief and non-causal knowledge.[20] Western post-enlightenment culture is said to still be the dominant culture, viewing reason as paramount (Tillman 2002:10). This culture has tinted the way in which music is regarded (Tillman 2002:10). In the dominant discourse with the desire to see the world 'as it really is' as its ultimate goal has marginalised the arts and the artists that once played a significant role in their communities (as is the case with music, Tillman 2002:10). Thus, art is seen as

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[19] Two academic books have been particularly influential in my understanding of truth personified in Jesus; truth therefore having relational implications: They are *The gospel according to John* (Carson 1991) and *Johanese perspektiewe* (Du Rand 1990). See References for full bibliographical accounts.

[20] Tillman (2002:11) provides references to contemporary scholars in various and diverse fields, such as quantum physics or cybernetics, feminist theory and certain branches in psychology that acknowledge the importance of these subjugated ways of knowing. This study is also in favour of these alternative ways of knowing.

an escape from the real world. Tillman (2002:10) refers to the dichotomy between two worlds that exist in shamanic thought where it is less clear, "…which is the 'real' world - everyday reality or that of the altered state of consciousness." I suppose that coming from my Christian tradition I could make the same conjecture. Therefore, to revert to the initial dilemma I feel that social constructionism, although holding implications in its extremity for the existence of God-related themes, is unhelpful when in fact constructionism is more clearly aimed at ways of knowing in *this* world.

Fourthly, I would like to refer briefly, to what I experience as the inherent modesty of a narrative social constructionist approach. This is also true of theological discussions. I hope that this will surface throughout the thesis. Yet, I refer to it here in relation to the small group's comments. I will try to reflect something of the intention of constructionists that they don't want to be another objective truth claim. Rather we enter the discussion humbly for we know that a *you* are needed in order to create some kind of truth in relation to a *me.* The second idea with regard to modesty raises the question of whether we want to position ourselves entirely within any paradigm. Keep in mind even discussions about supposed paradigms are linguistic and socially constructed ideas. This in actuality suggest that we could not, even if we wanted to, position ourselves entirely in any paradigm since there are no objective decree on what this or that paradigm absolutely entails. We are always constructing its supposed or imaginary boundaries through discussions and practices. Again, arguing to the other side: If we could position ourselves *entirely* in a paradigm, the potential are enormous for reverting to black and white statements. Consequently, power dictates which voices are heard. Isn't there a case to be made for trying to be sensitive and modest, trying to position ourselves then within the *general* spirit of what we (a certain community) believe to be this or that paradigm? In temporary conclusion to this paragraph: Professor Hagemann dean of the drama department at the University of Pretoria on my research team referred me to the writings of Edward de Bono. De Bono (2004:10) shares two continuums

applicable to our *entirely-paradigm* argument. He says that there are many gradations between *none* and *all* in frequently spoken English language, a) none, a few, some, many, most, the majority, by and large, (and) all. Similarly (2004:23) he refers to the whole spectrum of utterances between what is said to be *just possible* and what is *certain*, b) impossible [*own addition*], just possible, possible, likely, very likely, probable, most probable, (and) certain. It seems that we should remember that concerning a linguistically influenced understanding of *paradigm* we might never be able to say *impossible* and *certain*, or *none* and *all.*

1.2.6 Interlude: How do you play the game?

Following, it will be evident that the moves that narrative-/ practise, research, theology, therapy, facilitative work, historical inquiry etcetera make are governed by an understanding of epistemology advocated in this study.

Different people will use different chess openings. They will deviate from the textbook openings at some or other move. Some might play aggressively or could be described as exciting players others play passively which some might judge to be equal to strategic playing. However, the game will only work if we accept the rules of the game. Within these socially constructed rules, there are incalculable possible moves.

Before I 'move' on, to a theological positioning, I judge it to be of importance to reiterate what I have been doing up until here: I have situated myself as a chess player does in some kind of opening. This opening relates to how the pieces move on the board; how knowledge is created, language is used and so on. I did not attempt do give an elaborate description on what postmodernism is in relation to modernism, how the prior might relate to post-structuralism, that in relation to post-foundationalism, constructivism as opposed to social constructionism and so forth. More importantly, I also did not try to write categorically or thematically or sum up the so-called seven points of this or that. These important remarks

were taken up in the larger body of what speaks to me about epistemology, what social constructionism is and so forth.

Up until now, the reader might have noted important distinctions to the way she or he plays the game of chess. In asking in the heading how the reader plays, the game I do so, so that the reader is reminded that what follows, namely a theological positioning relates to the moves I have made thus far.

1.3   Theological positioning

Drawing on the Van Huyssteen lectures, our theology does not want to be a-contextual. Some theologies professor Van Huyssteen remarks conceptualise ways of looking at the world or God and then use that as a timeless foundation for developing the rest of the theological ideas. He uses a metaphor for foundationalism saying it is a like a museum of ideas where you see wonderful truths, like going to a fantastic art gallery to see beautiful paintings. The museum is called the museum of theology wherein you will find different rooms where all the timeless truths are displayed. In one room, we may find doctrine of creation, in another the doctrine atonement, selection, trinity, and so forth. The contention is that there is no interaction. There is no experience of what is happening other than seeing what is in this one room.

We don't want to contribute to the museum of timeless truths but to find our role in constituting theology in a new context. "I think that is what theology should be about, embedded in contexts and communities and reading faithfully the kind of problems that come from the community and therefore move forward in terms of that context that practise and those kinds of real life issues" (Van Huyssteen 2005/08/01).

Unequivocally this is a theological study wherein the link between theology and the action field namely arts are closer to each other than what one might think. The arts had in fact had an irrefutable influence in the faith story through the

ages. Apart from the fact that this theme has been stirred by the co-research team, to not refer to this link would, in my opinion, leave this study ailing.

1.3.1 Theology or Practical Theology

Mind however that it is my personal view that we cannot talk about theology separate from practical theology. Humanity[21] can never objectively study God. To a marginal degree, we can say that we attain knowledge of God through nature, our human interaction or according to Reformed theology primarily through the Bible. However, our knowledge of God attained from the so-called 'sources' can never eschew human interpretation. In this regard owing to the notion of interpretation (a human activity); our primary study is always our thoughts about the Logos of the Theos *in relation to* the community and the practical considerations resulting from their situatedness in the story of God.

In this regard, Professor Wentzel van Husteen (2005/08/01) remarks that one of the liberating things that postmodernism brought about is the breakdown of rigid disciplinary boundaries. However, do not confuse this with what has been said elsewhere in this document by White (2000:103) that we should draw more distinctions between traditions of thought (not alluding here to distinctions in practise of various disciplines but to epistemological traditions). Modernism produced disciplinary islands and went hand in hand with hierarchical distinctions between *natural, social* and *human* sciences some of which might but often did not include theology. Over against rigid boundaries and a hierarchical structure, a postfoundational metaphor is derived from a laser show. Professor van Huyssteen refers to a laser show around a fountain at Disney world he had experienced: One finds a beautiful display of colours where the lasers randomly cross.

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[21] This study does not wish to partake in the discussion of the gender of God. Consequently God is referred to as masculine but it is acknowledged that some might choose to refer to God as feminine.

This is postfoundational view of disciplinary differences. Interaction is contextual since disciplines overlap differently at different times. One should be very concrete in this intradisciplinary laser show. One should ask: What should the dogmatic do – note, not the discipline in general – or what should I as a practical theologian – note, not all practical theologians – as I put forth my theological laser. Professor Van Huyssteen feels that one should try to anticipate where the disciplines might overlap, and notes that this can only happen with communication.

One of the Huyssteen lecture attendee's noted that he came across these rigid distinctions in his study. He notes that the problem he has encountered is a situation where Systematic Theology is just taught as a bunch of information, knowledge. The impression is left that what is said is "This is Christology; this is Soteriology do with it what you will." He asks: Shouldn't we be dealing with theological issues with the deliberate aim of applying it? Does it not mean that when a systematic theologian is post foundationally situated that he should come down the corridor, from the lecture hall to the practical theologian and vice versa. They should be accountable to each other: "How do you teach practical theology using my doctrinal stuff and how do I teach doctrine using your practical methodology?"

Professor Müller was curious about this wondering how other theological disciplines might handle contextuality different from practical theologians. He rightly asks what then the differences between disciplines are if contextuality[22] is such a central issue to the whole of theology. The provisional argument is that practical theology focuses on the theology of the praxis. Dr. Lourens Bosman[23] (2005/09/27: Demasure lecture) says that according to his reading of Don Browning, all theology should move from praxis to theory to praxis. That's why, it

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[22] *Contextuality* is used here to indicate a movement away from theology for the sake of theology; rather, theology taking into consideration the practical lives of faith communities.

[23] Dr. Lourens Bosman is involved in the PhD postgraduate study group as an assistant to Prof. Müller.

is said, we move further than the faith community because the practical theologian believes s/he has task broader than the church that God can also be found in more places than the faith community does.   This is one of the challenges of practical theology Lourens Bosman says; we should not only ask how do we think about God, but how do we relate to people who think about God in ways in which we don't even understand yet.

What Van Huyssteen (2005/08/01) then refers to as a postfoundational metaphor does not only relate to intradisciplinary inquiries; we move beyond the arena of the church and the theological faculty to interdisciplinary fields.   By way of example: At the Van Huyssteen lecture (2005/08/01) we were discussing human uniqueness. Professor Huyssteen remarked: Given the lively scientific inquiries into contemporary cosmology, big bang theories, the age of the universe and everything that goes with the expansion of the universe. The theologian should never be able to teach the doctrine of creation again (in a theological institution) without in some sense acknowledging what is happening where people are also talking about the origins of the world. One should try to integrate this information and having the discussion with science whereby we are learning and enriching what we mean by God as creator. Van Huyssteen says that we can either abstractly think about what it means to be created in the image of God, or theology can go to the natural and human sciences. By doing so we can discover what it means to be human in a broad, rich embodied sense. We are not only then constructing our realities in terms of what it means to be created in the image of God; according to professor Van Huyssteen we are also rediscovering on the basis of insight from other disciplines, from our own ancient histories as informed by palaeanthropology, what it means to be created in the image of God.

Whatever field of interdisciplinary inquiry we venture into, practical theology according to Hermans (2002:viii) following Osmer (1999:126) will show these three elements that sets it apart from dogmatic theology and Christian ethics.

Namely: a *performative orientation* relating to questions of how to best perform a particular practise or activity in concrete circumstances. A *theory of formation and transformation* that guides the Christian life over time. Lastly a *practical theological hermeneutic* of the field in which an action or practise takes place. This locates the actors involved in moral time and space.

For the practical theological enterprise engaged in conversation with social constructionism a move away from defining the discipline as applied theology is noted (Hermans 2002:vii). All theology, as will be explained is in a sense practical theology. In this movement in the social constructionist, understanding of practical theology the concept of action or practice plays a central role (Hermans 2002: vii). Apart from the contention that one cannot dislodge theology from its description as practical, I state my choice for the idea of practical theology over pastoral theology. Following abovementioned remarks, I assert my choice for – note, not *practical* theology – but *praxis* theology. Consequently, our theology is not one of practise but praxis (actionary). I would also be comfortable with the notion of theology of practise but add the cautionary remark that we cannot apply theology to the realm of social interaction (praxis or practise). This could easily be understood wrongly by some paradigms that theology is an autonomous discipline and has something objectively to say about the way people socially interact. No, practical-/ or then rather *praxis* theology – note not, theology of…) connotes the idea that theological thinking is not autonomous, but indeed situated. Our theological thinking is thus greatly informed by our social relatedness, our interactions, and interpretations on our relation to God.

Part of Professor Karlijn Demasure's story relates to practical theology and I recount for it here since attending her lecture (2005/09/27) has had an impact in this study. She remarks on her book, which I translate as being *Verdwaal in Liefde, Mag en Skuld* (Lost in Love, Power, and Guilt). She wanted to do another doctoral thesis on the sexual abuse of woman and children she could also

develop a model for pastoral care, for the children and the perpetrators of sexual abuse.   There is literature in abundance aimed at children, but not much on paedophiles, incestuous fathers, and so forth.   Contemplating and working hereon, she realises that in Leuven they don't have a model alongside which such studies can be conducted.   This is in part owing to the fact that the university where she lectures as a practical theologian is a Catholic University. Pastoral care was in this context for a very long time reduced to sacramentology; sacramental care.   There's only recently been a shift due to a lack of priests. Now they have the phenomenon that many educated lay people is taking up responsibilities in the church.   Since they are not allowed to administer the sacraments, they now have to reframe or follow another way of thinking.   Since they have no tradition they turned to the protestant tradition that has a model of working with conversation since to her in protestant theology the concept of _Word_ (capital signifies personified divination) but also uncapped, _word_, is very important.

In turning to Protestantism she mentions there have been a great deal of critique against their dominant therapeutic models.   She later came to follow the writing of Paul Ricoeur whom is also a protestant.

She then started to think about a model that could be used both in the Protestant tradition but also in the Catholic tradition.   Hence she considers that practical theology is fundamentally ecumenical in that it draws on both Catholic and Protestant traditions.   Professor Müller (2005/09/27) expands on this by commenting that Practical theology is presumably much more comfortable in ecumenical settings than other theological disciplines (referring to Church history and Systematic theology).

Following the use of a drama therapy concept, I suggest that theology (not only Practical Theology) should be (if it is not) about the _space between us_ and also between God and us.   Therefore all theology is Practical-/ (meaning relational) theology.   According to this understanding, scientific inquiry into Theology would

have been of no use if it did not relate existentially to human interaction, the space between us. Andersen-Warren and Grainger (2000:223) refer to the structure of drama therapy that relates to relationality. Saying, it is designed to encourage us to create the kind of shared space we need in order to present ourselves in situations involving other people. In which we may be able to reveal the living truth about us – the quality of our present and past experience. Rather than relying on descriptions of ourselves, either other people's or our own, whose main virtue often seems to be the ease with which they fit into categories used to explain human behaviour (Andersen-Warren & Grainger 2000:223)

1.3.1.1   Theology and Art: an already established link

Howard (1990:37) refers to the arts and Christianity being causally linked between the fourth and the twentieth centuries whereby "[n]o account of history in the last sixteen centuries is possible without an understanding of the Christian contribution." However, Bolte and McCusker (1987:14) asserts: "We won't kid you on this [referring to a biblical base for drama and comedy, *own insertion*]. If you're looking for a direct scripture verse that says something like: "And he went among his kindred, performing drama and comedy to the glorification of the Lord, and the blessings of the multitudes were upon him" (1 Opinions 2:3), forget it. Such a verse doesn't exist. But that doesn't mean drama and comedy are somehow unscriptural" (Bolte & McCusker 1987:14)

It is very natural that Christianity should have deeply affected art as it is rooted in real history as its central events occurred in the times of public figures such as Caesar Augustus and Pontius Pilate (Howard 1990:37). "Even the 'post-Christian' art and literature of the last two hundred years in the West emerges from Christian roots – and often involves a more or less conscious repudiation of Christian categories, and an attempt to forge new forms, free of Christian influence" (Howard 1990:37).

Since the need for conscious repudiation of anything exists it attests to that thing's influence. So too the primary reality of this research is situated in a theological matrix given that theological studies has formally been part of most PhD Theology scholars' lives for roughly eight years and more. This study is also in a sense a repudiation of some of the theologically accepted truths in that notions of reality, objectivity, and so forth are interrogated.

Accordingly informed by such interrogation or deconstructive questioning, it would be naïve to assume that the story of this research with its emphasis on the arts started with the commencement of this project. It would furthermore be naïve to presume that this or any other study would only span its allotted two to four years. Let me clarify myself still further: We have just heard Howard (1990) speak of how the arts have influenced Theology from the fourth to the twentieth century. This research story and its following case for the link between the arts and theology is not a new story in light of Howard as reference. I would even go further than Howard to state that some form of art as a creative, imaginative act of human beings probably could go back as far as human time could go. It should already be clear that given the idea that we socially construct our lives through language the term art or arts is in this case a relatively modern ascription to thousands of years' old rituals such as trance dancing, rock art, and so forth.

It is exactly in this tension of linguistic constructions, of what art is or isn't that I believe the idea of creativity aids us well. This will be addressed in more detail as we start turning to a theological positioning. For now let me voice an idea that has been shared by some in the arts focus group [24] in the congregation. Creativity has much more to do with the way in which we survive in life as opposed to a narrowly defined field such as dance, drama and other arts. Whether the electronic company Hi-Sense realises this or not, creativity might indeed have more to do with life than lingo. This company assert with their slogan that *Creativity is Life.* Through my lens this becomes more a theological

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[24] Shortly I refer to them as CAM, the Creative Arts Ministry which is the ministry that I head at the congregation.

statement than a slogan for an electronic company. Creativity is exemplified in the way people 'negotiate' for themselves a better tomorrow in response to the seeming cul-de-sac, and in others times exhibited in innovative solutions to challenging circumstances. From this perspective dancing is partly seen as a creative way of bridging the gap between the spirit or forefather[25] world and the earthly dwelling; paintings on rock partly becomes a way of communicating with animals; participation in making music with neurological patients becomes validation of peoples' sense of self-worth. I cannot but reiterate that God created the possibility for humans to construct different helpful realities in this way. What we understand under the arts is therefore situated in the larger notion of creativity.

Apart from the link between art and theology that Howard (1990) asserts to, but also informed by arts' foundational link with the notion of creativity I now turn to a key reason for why I believe the arts should be linked with theology. This is situated in the view of God as being the creator God

1.3.1.2   Theology, arts and creation

Before taking a closer look to the link between arts and creation as such I linger a while on remarks that were exchanged at the Van Huyssteen lecture pertaining to creation and human uniqueness. I was convinced by Van Huyssteen that one cannot talk about creation without to at least on some level reflect on what is happening in the broader context inclusive of the sciences. This is useful since the biblical doctrine of creation should not be confused with any scientific theory of origins (McKay 1982:245) since the purpose of the biblical doctrine, in contrast to that of scientific investigation, is ethical and religious (McKay 1982:245). I will not as such explore the theological doctrine of creation in this thesis since it is the idea *that* God created that relates to this study. However theological remarks are included drawing on the Van Huyssteen lectures (2005/08/01).

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[25] For an excellent exploration on traditional religions, though in Afrikaans, see Crafford (1996:1-24) in Meiring (ed), (1996).

I welcome this idea of taking a look at the broader discussions in science since our research favours empirical 'data,' which opens up the possibility to raise academic literary voices.   Not only this but many popular writers (that congregations are exposed to) read and develop theories around this:

According to Stephen Covey (1989) for instance our human self-reality can be changed on the merits of having been given the four basic human endowments: conscience, free-will, imagination, and self-awareness (Covey 1989:147).   I briefly refer to it here as I experience that people in my congregation favour Stephen Covey. At a certain time this book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* was an international best seller.

There are similarities with the subsequent heading on human uniqueness. Note however that in my theological matrix I am circumspect about the idea of *the* seven habits or *the* ten this, five that and so forth; understandably so keeping in mind my position in a type of possibility theory. These human endowments that Covey considers sound interesting but are also unsettling as they are born of individualism. The premise is that I am a self contained, autonomous being with these innate possibilities of free-will, conscience and so forth. These four human endowments could however be redefined from within a social constructionist perspective. I hope that this will become evident as the reader progresses. Let me just give one illustration: A useful metaphor might be that of *Lego* blocks which most of us are thoroughly familiar with from childhood. That which we call conscience is made up of a kaleidoscope of *Lego* blocks: Experiences meshed with people coupled with a certain culture gives voice to conscience. Furthermore even staying with one ingredient namely culture we could be more specific and local as this metaphor of an internet address suggests: http:/www.religion/christian/judeo-christion/reformed/dutch-reformed/pierrevanryneveld_afrikaans_2005

1.3.1.2.1   Human uniqueness and the imago Dei

Along with Professor Van Huyssteen I also find it interesting that theologians in all the Abrahamic faiths as well as scientists seem to have in the last few years spoken easily about human uniqueness. Is it at all credible to do this? Van Huyssteen notes that palaeanthropologists are again talking about uniqueness and one wonders if this is what we mean when we as theologians talk about human beings created in the image of God and therefore in some sense special at least. All of the remarks here reveal Professor Van Huyssteen's views as he explained this at his evening lecture.

Van Huyssteen believes that humans have a stunning uniqueness shared only marginally with dolphins and chimpanzees. He refers to self awareness: Each day, as he says we start out with the face in the mirror experience; a sense of a new day; we are the focal point of our own world. This is revealed in our concern with happiness, fulfilment, and appearance; things that are overwhelmingly important to us.

We should realise however he says that the notion of uniqueness does not only apply to humans; snakes shed their skin, while cats don't, dogs bark at night fish don't, bears hibernate, but lions and tigers don't etcetera. Van Huyssteen calls this specie specificity. There are however a great deal that makes humans unique; we build cities and museums, we speak a stunning variety of languages and chimps that we share ninety-nine percent genetic material do not. In considering what makes us human it is probably not any one thing but all of these: language, consciousness, self awareness, our imagination, our moral awareness.

Furthermore there are two things that relate to human uniqueness when referring to pre-historic imagery. The first musical instruments (flutes made from bones) are discovered hand in hand with paintings. Natural music and the human voice are therefore also truly unique. The second thing that these paintings go hand in

hand with is the first occurrence of the true burial of the dead. This is fascinating because in the same valleys in France you'll find Neanderthal burial sites. Neanderthal buried in very shallow graves, which suggest that they were just worried about scavenging animals whereas Homo sapiens buried properly, and also buried their dead with ornaments much like Egyptians would thousands of years later, with ornaments and food and clothes, all of which suggests a journey and religious consciousness. Therefore, the symbolic nature of our minds also explains Van Huyssteen believes why mystical or religious inclinations can be, and is regarded by almost anyone today as an essentially universal attribute of human uniqueness. Van Huyssteen mentions that he has read a wonderful book on the philosophy of art by Gordon Grey that argues pre-historic religious consciousness.

In Abrahamic religion our uniqueness is tied directly to the *Imago Dei,* based on Genesis 1. While we have constructed a massive doctrine about the *Imago Dei* over the past thousand years there are few texts[26] in the Old Testament that speak about this. Have ideas about this stayed the same? Van Huyssteen (2005/08/01) argues that dramatic shifts in history have taken place.

He mentions that we can learn a great deal from palaeanthropologists. The concern for human uniqueness is shared by various disciplines problem. This goes hand in hand with questions about the origins of humans. Our human capacity can be seen as the so called crowning achievements of our species. Moreover, what we see as uniqueness implies deep moral choice implications. We are not merely biological, but also cultural creatures; we have the remarkable ability to determine who part of us is.

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[26] Besides referring only of the Old Testament Van Huyssteen had probably thought only of texts that deal directly with creation since there are ample references to creation/ creator that I suppose must have made a large contribution in the doctrine of creation in any tradition. See McKay (1982:245) for references.

Now an interesting part of our self perception is that the often less material aspects of the history of our species fascinates us most; we seem to grasp at an intuitive level that language, self awareness consciousness, moral awareness, imagination, symbolic behaviour and mythology are probably the defining elements of what makes us human. Yet these elements that most elude to our humanness are on a prehistoric level often least visible because they don't fossilise. Thus, palaeanthropologists have focussed wisely on more indirect but equally plausible material pointers to the presence of symbolic behaviour and symbolic human mind in early human history. Arguably most spectacular of the earliest evidence of symbolic behaviour in humans, although not the only, or earliest[27] is the famous paintings of south west France and the northern regions of Spain. These were painted about 32,000 - 12,000 years ago.

What has emerged form the work of various scientists that are of primary interest for Theologians working on anthropology is that human mental life includes biologically unprecedented ways of experiencing and understanding the world; experiences from aesthetic experiences to ethical experiences to spiritual contemplation.

Palaeanthropologists like evolutionary epistemologists link the full emergence of human consciousness and symbolism directly to artistic and religious behaviour. This is obviously not an argument for truth of religion or God but indeed for the integrity of the earliest forms of religious awareness whatever exactly that might have been.

Now as far as Christian theology is concerned Van Huyssteen (2005/08/01) says he has recently argued that Christian theology has traditionally always assumed a radical split between human beings created in the image of God and the rest of Creation. This split was mostly justified by traits like rationality, intelligence, and abstract notions of relationality.   Van Huyssteen suggests that a theological

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[27] The earliest date for art is said to be 77,000 years old and cited at the Blombos caves in South Africa.

appropriation of these rich an complex results of science at the very least should inspire the theologian carefully to trace and rethink the complex evolution, of promotion of human uniqueness and therefore the notion of the imago dei.

Thinking in tones of embodied imagination, symbolic propensities, and cognitive fluidity may enable theology to really revision his notion of the image of God as an idea that does not entail that we are more superior or of greater value than other animals or of earlier prominence. These qualities might express a specific task and purpose to set forth the presence of God in this world. Professor Van Huyssteen (2005/08/01) says that he argues for the for the rethinking of the notion of the imago Dei in ways not overly abstract and too exotic but which acknowledge our embodied existence, our close ties with animals human ancestors while at the same time focussing on what our symbolically cognate fluid minds might tell us about the emergence of embodied human uniqueness, consciousness and personhood and the propensity for religious awareness?

Homo sapiens are not only distinguished by its remarkable embodied brain, by a stunning mental cognate fluidity as expressed in the imagination, linguistic abilities etcetera, but as real life embodied persons of flesh and blood. We are therefore also affected by hostility, arrogance, ruthlessness, and cunningness, which we have come to call good and evil. This experience of good and evil and theological distinctions of evil, moral failure, sin tragedy, and redemption are beyond the empirical scope of science. It is certainly our bodies that are the awareness of human uniqueness and it is certainly this embodied existence that confronts us with the realities of vulnerability, tragedy and affliction.   For scientists that seek the whole picture theology may offer an understanding of the profound tragic dimensions of human existence but also why religious beliefs have provided our distant ancestors and us with dimensions of hope, redemption, and grace.

Humans are walking representations of God. Taking up the Aristotelian ideas of human reason and rationality; the early Christian fathers Augustine and Thomas Aquinas saw the imago dei as located in human reason, our rational abilities. These notions says Van Hasten became famously unpopular because of feministic criticism who showed that women were not perceived to be really all that rational and that Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, early church fathers and others did not always see women as completely created in the image of God. However in 1981 the world council of churches issued a statement that says it is possible that the doctrine of the image of God have been most destructive of all the Christian doctrine. After this kind of substantionalist definition of what the image of God means understandings changed to a functionalist perspective: We are made in the image of God because we are suppose to do something; care for the earth, rule the earth, multiply and so forth.

Then comes Karl Barth and others who talk about a more relational view of the image of God. The image of God is reflected in the relationship we have with God, relating to the trinitarian position. This was still very doctrinal and was amended when it was said that this relationship is a relationship of love; it was made more concrete, more embodied.[28] The contention is that we are not created in the image of God because we can think rationally but because we are embodied minds, human persons with minds in terms of our own sexuality in terms of our own fertility and in terms of whatever else we can combine in the body/ mind dimensions. Van Huyssteen emphasises a tremendously significant return back to the embodied notions of humanness where our sexuality, our embodied moral awareness are tied directly to our self; embodied self transcendence of creatures who are predisposed to religious belief. From a scientific point of view human uniqueness has evolved into a highly contextualised embodied notion; contextualised embodied notions that are tied directly to the kind of symbolising minds of our prehistorical ancestors as physically manifested in the paintings of the prehistoric caves.

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[28] Here Van Huyssteen (2005/08/01) refers to amongst others Philip Hefner.

It is interesting to note that even atheistic palaeanthropologists acknowledge that once you have the human symbolic mind, once you have human imagination you already had artistic ability an therefore religion in some basic form. This is to Van Huyssteen (2005/08/01) a very good argument for what some call the naturalness of religion, religion as being part of who we are. Indeed some archaeologists and palaeanthropologists according to Van Huyssteen argue that one could not have had high quality symbolic paintings if humans were not already talking. This kind of mind must have been the kind of mind who could talk, tell stories and painted long lost mythologies (Van Huyssteen 2005/08/01).

Knowing the prehistory of the human mind will provide us with a profound understanding of what it means to be human. In addition, it helps us to understand the origins of art, technology, science, of religion and how these cultures' remains are inescapably linked to the cognitively fluid symbolic mind.

1.3.1.2.2   Arts and Creation

Earlier under social constructionism and throughout I have alluded to the power of language in constructing realties. We have even heard about the theory that contends to the use of language in our prehistoric ancestors. Accordingly, language is not in the first instance a vehicle for emotions, thought and so on, not descriptive of reality, but constructive to realities. To me there is an interesting link between creation and language. In Reformed theology, the idea that God is the *creator God* is important. Yet, notice the link between creation and language; in the first creation narrative: "And God said, Let there be…." light, a firmament etcetera (Genesis 1:3, 6, 14 KJV). Throughout Jesus' miracle works there was a certain power in his words. I do not put this link forth in a theological sense nor do I want to legitimate the social constructionist idea that language constructs realities with the use of the bible. To do so here would raise too much questions; would this link not be closer to a constructivist approach where one is much more directly (in the moment) busy constructing your life? I only offer this here by

means of introduction whereby I say (not in my capacity as a theologian) that the idea of a link between construction of realities and language might not sound far fetched to the faith community.

Informed by this characteristic of a creator God, I see people as works of art ever in process, or Godly creations. God is the creator-God with interesting semantic possibilities in the English language with regard to the word creator such as creature and creativity. It is this creator God whom has referred to himself on several occasions in the book of Revelation as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last (Revelation 1:8,11; 21:6; 22;13): He is accepted in the Christian faith community as the over-arching ultimate reality. This makes the study of Theology and linking it here with creativity (which alludes to the arts) a time old study. Our human imagination, as Howard (1990:37) signifies, "…reflecting on this picture of things [God's image, incarnation, and creation], was roused to shape and express its vision in visual musical, narrative, and dramatic forms."

It is not contested here however that theology is art or art is theology. The arts link up with theology through that which, but ultimately, *who* makes it possible, namely a Creator. One could have, for instance described God in terms of the great scientist wherein the possibility of science is also an act of creativity. However, I use this as a working metaphor. According to my story of God's influence in my life narrative, it is the best analogous metaphor to the way it seems that arts could be used in narrative practise. Accordingly the arts draws its potential to be helpful to such practices from the imaginative creative acts of human beings and in this way simulates God's act of creation. Human beings thus owe this *possibility potential* to God.

To follow up on crea*tion,* crea*tivity,* crea*ture* ideas we turn to Rookmaaker: "There is no marriage, no economics, no prayer, no art but for the fact that they were made possible by God in his creation: He created the possibility"

(Rookmaaker 1970:225). God the creator, through his creative being created the possibility for everything to come into existence, to be experienced as reality. It is to Rookmaaker that I owe this notion of situating the arts in creation or otherwise stated, making a case for the positioning of the arts in this study in Theology.

In considering further, what makes this study involving the arts valid from within the faculty of Theology is first that of what we might call the *master story* (Webb-Mitchell 1995:218), the creative Creator's story of human involvement. Some postmodernist thinkers might say that there are no more meta-narratives and thus again assert to a contradiction in terms of a positioning within a post-structuralist perspective. Once again, as earlier mentioned if this study were to be situated in a constructivist perspective, I could argue that this idea of a master story is my reality. However, I find this approach to be silencing of other voices, irrationally competitive, and relativistic. To the above postmodernist thinker I would rather situate myself within the tradition of millions of people that believe in this master story. Take note though that this is not an argument that I want or need to win and therefore modernistically revert to numbers. Rather the validity lies in the impression that for this however large, though significantly large number of people it is constitutive of their lives. This master story is a socially constructed reality and its influence in peoples lives over ages has been very real and life altering. It is transformative owing to the notion of relationship as it is presented to us in drama therapy, we are relational beings. Drama therapist Andersen-Warren and Grainger (2000:7) emphasize: "To be human is not simply to be and organism, a mind, and body obviously interconnected, holistically united, but functioning on its own in a relational vacuum." This relational aspect is possible in the first instance based on the Creator that longs for a relationship with his creatures.

I acknowledge that this theory could be shared by other religions since the Christian tradition is not the only religion that believes in a creator God.

However, the notion of redemption fits perfectly with the idea that Jesus Christ as the perfect creative solution to the challenging circumstance of sinful nature. Even apart from the discourse and reformed doctrine of sinful nature Jesus Christ stays the most creative and perfect answer to mans desire to know God and inversely acknowledged, Gods answer in paving the for Himself to stand in a more intimate relationship with His *crea*tures.

In this master story, my personal story is embedded. My personal story entails the belief in the social reality of God incarnated in Christ. For these but also consequent motivations, this study is not situated in an educational, philosophical, medical, psychological or whatever else –*ical* approach. The story of God that I bring to this research is one that acknowledges that all "…norms or structures are 'possibilities'" (Rookmaaker 1970:225), that God instilled in creation.

1.3.1.3   Theology, and the personal narrative

Apart from the above what we could refer to as a type of genesis theory (Possibilities created by a Creator), secondly this study is theological, given the context of relationships. It is principally[29] in the pastoral theological matrix that I am established as a person. As Jernigan (1991:224) rightly notes that pastoral identity evolves from the context of relationships with other people, it is validated by a community and is brought into existence by means of relationships and community. Moreover, my academic narrative developed in studying Practical Theology, and the practical theologian focuses his/her attention on the practise of Christian living (my community) and that pertaining to society (Ballard & Pritchard 1996:1,145). What's more is that even my theological but also my personal story has been informed by the white Afrikaans speaking family culture that has me resorting to a certain way of thinking and a particular use of language.[30] I am therefore irrevocably connected to a certain culture and tradition that uphold

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[29] I say 'principally' acknowledging the social constructionist worldview that we are relational beings, that we have relational selves (Gergen 1999:131).

[30] Brown (2002:86) refers to a model called ADRESSING, which is an acronym for nine cultural factors to which helpers should be sensitive: age, disability, religion, ethnicity, social status, sexual orientation, indigenous heritage, and gender.

certain truths, some for the good and some unhelpful. I have yet to read something that better describes our relational beings and connectedness from where our world is socially constructed than this quote from Hildegard of Bingen[31] (1098 BC -1179 BC). The reason I like it is that it starts with the assumption of the existence of God while hinting[32] at the way knowledge, truth, meaning and so forth is then further created:

"God has arranged all things in consideration of everything else."

The primary manner in which humans consider each other is through their linguistic constructions stemming from the notion of community. The Theologian George Lindbeck proposes three models for doing theological work. His third model greatly resembles all that has been said thus far about social constructionism and consequently it is here that I position myself. In effect, I have already done so when I spoke about *research as acquiring a new language* and, well… really throughout. For this reason, I will not venture into a deep exploration on Lindbeck. I offer it here briefly as an integration of epistemology and theology.

This is a *cultural linguistic* positioning as opposed to his first described model of *propositionalistic* theology. In the latter informative propositions or truth, claims are made about objective realities. The cultural linguistic positioning is also different from *experiential expressivism*, which is said to have its roots in the turn toward the self in the coming of modernity. This latter model is flawed in that it conceals from people the social origins of their conviction that religion is a highly private and individual matter. (Lindbeck 1984 cited in Gerkin 1997:106-7)

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[31] See Tillman (2000:10).

[32] I do not know the original context of these spoken words and it is not clear whether Tillman (see previous reference) does. However in using it here I mean to recontextualise it and tint it social constructionistically as the way in which it is said is very significant for a Theological, social constructionist positioning.

In the cultural linguistic model "…religions are seen as comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualised, which structure human experience and understanding of self and world" (Lindbeck 1984 cited in Gerkin 1997:108). Seen in this way, if one belongs to a religion it means that one adopts a certain grammar, a way of speaking (Lindbeck 1984 cited in Gerkin 1997:108; Gergen 1999:124). Within the postmodern perspective, it is acknowledged that social and cultural reality, and the social sciences themselves, are linguistic constructions (Brown 1994:13).

The arts cannot function loosely from these social and cultural realities as Howard (1990:37) refers to the enormously wide range of expression in Christian art.

> This results from the central paradoxes of the Christian faith. They [the range of expression in Christian art], include the paradoxes that arise when human imagination tries to function on the frontier that runs between time and eternity, between the transcendent and the immanent, or between the spiritual and the material. Theological language [our linguistic constructions] staggers on this borderline; the arts have similar difficulties.

> (Howard 1990:37)

Thus, within this theological position that I situate myself, I have only these paradoxes, these differing realities of the uncertainty and certainty of linguistic constructions.

1.3.1.4   Theology informed by a reflexive community

Now to turn from my own understanding of the perceived influences on my personal story we turn to the faith/reflexive community. In Practical Theology we need to situate ourselves within the lived experience of every day Christians negotiating meaning from their experience through which they also try to make sense of God. As Sweet (1999:213) states: "Making moments, memories, and meaning is the fibre of the Spirit's webbing." Our metaphors of *narrative* and *social construction* attempt to understand the makings of human experience, resulting in our enquiry within the

matrix of meaning and interpretation[33] in every day life circumstances. Accordingly, our metaphors signify a natural progression from where we position ourselves in interpretational understandings within practical theologically.

Aligning myself with Gerkin (1991:13), and risking over emphasising the already stated, I'm of opinion that the inquiry to be undertaken in this dissertation is best designated as *practical theological inquiry*. These practical theological concerns are aimed at a faith community not only as audience but as vital partakers otherwise, there would not be such a study such as Practical Theology. Along this line of thinking, the purpose of our research has to do with theological concerns on the one hand, and practical considerations on the other and so doing in relation to my own interpretations as well as those of the faith community. Following Swinton (2000:10), we could say that it is in these practical considerations that we need to differentiate between practise and praxis. As a result, succinctly, praxis entails reflective action, *critical* reflective action (Browning 1983:13).   Consequently looking at the hermeneutics involved in doing theology practical we are moving beyond the practise-theory application model by differentiating between understanding, interpretation, and application being the three elements in the interpretive process (Gadamer 1975:274). Extending this argument, Müller (1996:1) states that he works from the mode of practical theological wisdom ("*prakties-teologiese wysheid*").   Herewith associates himself with Don Browning's model (1991:34 cited in Müller 1996:1), which defines the practical theological scientific process in terms of practical wisdom, but further stretches the importance of the theological integration of theory and practise (Müller 1996:3-4).

In clarifying the above, we could say that Practical Theology is both a hermeneutical and an empirical undertaking. It is hermeneutical as it relates to the interpretation and eventual application of biblical teaching and narrative (Herholdt 1998:451), acknowledging the cultural-historical differences between contemporary society and biblical times (Ballard & Pritchard 1996:64). It is also

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[33] See (Epston 1998:11) for a list of social scientists whose work is oriented by the 'interpretive method' embracing the text analogy.

empirical by design; enquiring about the actual situations of communities (Heitink 1999b:266). I would however argue for the redefinement of the word empirical for merely the idea of being a structured, focused process. I say this since we should caution ourselves to think that practical theology could empirically reveal or observe ultimate truth: Gadamer (1975) argues that prior to the development of any method of interpretation, there is always a conception of truth – or a pre-understanding… [I]t is the pre-understanding of truth that produces methods [for empirical study, *own insertion*]" (following Gergen 1999:144).

In summarising my thoughts on theology and more concisely practical theology, I temporarily adjourn explicit discussion in aligning myself with the following remark: Practical theology is an ongoing systematically structured hermeneutical process that endeavours to enlighten and renew human acts that relates to the narrative of the Christian faith community (Müller 1996:5).

1.3.2 Pastoral positioning

Probably only a personal modish distinction but *pastoral* theology to me is not necessarily equivalent to *practical* theology as Müller (2002:3 unpublished lecture) seems to assume in his insert from Willows and Swinton (eds) (2000:42). This research is both positioned in a pastoral and a practical theological approach. Note however the preference for the word pastoral in the theme.

The descriptive *pastoral* as opposed to *practical* to me is attached to personhood, to the role of a pastor or shepherd and so forth. In this sense, I am a pastor to some and not practical theologian. I relate to them as a pastor above the idea of being a practical theologian. My intuitive feeling and choice for a distinction between pastoral versus practical theology was verified by the same authors, Pattison and Woodward but only this time in (2000:1-20) wherein they give a broad overview of the basic considerations under these themes. Although I think that they at times refer to these concepts, interchangeably one still finds

that they deliberately often include both concepts in one sentence to suggest thereby a differentiation.

The abovementioned authors note that Pastoral Theology is the older use of the two. It denotes something of a relationship when they assert that far into the history of the Christian community this referred to the need to guide, heal, reconcile, and sustain the community (2000:1). This concept draws on Old Testament imagery that Jesus himself uses such as the good shepherd guiding his sheep. In this sense, a pastor looks after his flock. Early Christian leaders were therefore described as pastors. Theologically speaking this entails the reflection and underpinning that guided pastoral care directed towards ensuring the individual and corporate wellbeing and flourishing of the Christian "flock" (Pattison & Woodward 2000:2). They note, as does professor Demasure (2005/09/27) that in the Catholic tradition many people use the term *pastoral* theology to describe the theological activity that guides an informs practical pastoral action. In this regard, we think of distributing sacraments, marriage preparation, burying the dead, etcetera.[34] *Practical* theology refers to the term that emerged via the German protestant tradition. This tradition specifically related to the academic theological curriculum in the eighteenth century (Pattison & Woodward 2000:2). Pastoral care was seen as an important element in practical theology which extended its considerations to specialist interest in worship, Christian education, preaching and church government (Pattison & Woodward 2000:2). This grasp is in my opinion still limiting to the reach of Practical theology.[35] I think of all the topics in the PhD group, including my own and realise that as the ship of Practical Theology sails to the setting of the sun so the horizons keep expanding. However, one should be cautious to set sails and not know from which harbour the ship has sailed and where it might dock. I say this since practical theology is said to relate theological principles to concerns

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[34] The authors are in this statement informed by other academic sources not included here. What I would like the reader to witness is that narrative practice favours empirically generated voices and thus includes professor Demasure's reference in this regard.

[35] Our discussion here relates to the question, what Practical Theology benefits from a study like this, found in our reflective chapter six.

such as worship, preaching, and so on (Pattison & Woodward 2000:2). Important though: The scope of practical theology is not tied to these considerations but is indeed almost infinite. I think that in recent times, given more enthusiastic research themes, practical theological research ships might not account for the fact that they are *practical theological* in the first instance in which case the absence of theological considerations on some or other level leaves the journey ailing. It is as Pattison and Woodward (2000:8) notes that a practical theological study should hope to contribute to Christian theology and understanding. Hereby practical theologians may be able to help alter, deepen, or even correct theological understandings.

In the context of this study, I feel that this distinction is validated (as it seems it is being used in the American tradition) and its interchangeable use, as in the British tradition (Pattison & Woodward 2000:3) will be used minimally. Given the differentiation made above, I see this research as being conducted within the broader framework of practical theology. Still, take into consideration that in my own understanding, to the communities involved in this study I am both; at times a pastoral theologian and for others a practical theologian.   The specific community confirms my primary relation. This evidently relates to the notion of relational selves to which Gergen (1999:115-141) dedicates an entire chapter. To the individuals and the CAM community I am more so viewed as a pastor since they know nothing of the distinction anyway. In their minds, strongly informed by protestant tradition, the pastor is the shepherd to the sheep.[36]

Still within a social constructionist understanding of identity I include the following differentiated heading of Pastoral positioning; hereby not in the first instance relating the discussion to theology but to relational ways of being. Consequently, it serves as an auxiliary discussion to prior comments about practical theology.

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[36] I agree with Pattison and Woodward (2000:2): It is unfortunate to refer to contemporary believers as sheep.

With what has been said in relation to the interchange between practise and theory, and a distinction between pastoral and practical theology this study by no means dangles loosely. It is rooted in the story of a community, a church, and focus groups[37] revolving around the arts in a specific church. In this community I am seen by the congregation but more so to some, as a pastor. For these people I am not merely head of department of the arts ministry but also a minister, but then a minister not only fulfilling traditional Act 9 duties (*Die Kerkorde* 1994:3). Hence, even though the arts are my primary interest in this study, it is done unquestionably from a *pastoral* position. I suspect that their understanding of my role is also determined strongly by the aforementioned Afrikaans speaking white legacy. This might even more so be the case in the community where I live having a strong pre-1994 military background.[38]

Tillman (2002:37) offers a musical perspective through which I believe the relational aspect of humanity (also the pastor/ congregant relationship) is further illuminated. Some in the abovementioned tradition might just have burnt Tillman for saying this since to me it argues more the relational communal importance of the worship song than its theological:

> The chief loss resulting from the decline of Judaeo-Christian theology in our culture may not be the *theology* but the whole community coming together once a week to make music. No Sunday morning DIY [do it yourself; *own insertion and emphasis*] activity done by a single person in

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[37] Their individual roles with regard to this study will be clarified where specifically referred to them in the thesis.

[38] My understanding of the Afrikaans speaking Dutch Reformed church discourse: Prior to the first democratic election in 1994 when Nelson Mandela was elected president; the Dutch Reformed Church had a notable influence in state affairs. Power was therefore also situated in the church's clergy. The general appearance and interaction with congregants of influential clergy along with the manner in which they spoke, beliefs that were propagated and so forth left a legacy in the church. I find that views on the ministerial role as far as it informs congregational members' behaviour is still prevalent. So much the more I believe this to be true in my community. Many church members' still hold notable positions in the military; the military base being just right next to the community. Two notable and very contextual references concerning the Dutch Reformed tradition and Apartheid is advised for reading; these are *Selfs die kerk kan verander* (Jonker 1998) and *Reis met apartheid* (Algemene Sinodale kommissie van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1997). See References for full bibliographical accounts.

an individualised dwelling can replace the community-building power of the hymn or worship song.

(Tillman 2002:37)

Some might differ greatly but I suspect I'm more a pastor to a community of faith than an authoritarian guard guarding theology for individuals. To sum up these last few paragraphs. This is a research endeavour done unquestionable from a pastoral position. This view on pastoral positioning helps this research to be situated in communal dialogue rather than monologue.

In a PhD narrative small group discussion, I was questioned about especially the work of Sweet (1999) that I cite. Why do I reveal this? Well, I do not agree with their assumptions about the relevance of Sweet (1999). This also relates the academic voice of Gibbs and Coffey (2001), and De Bono (2004). The first mentioned scholar's work is situated in what it means for the church to minister in a postmodern society. Firstly then these voices are important since they influence the relationship constituted between myself as a pastor - wanting to understand the broader discourses on my congregation that these sources write about – and the people in the congregation to who I am a pastor.

Secondly but most importantly, these sources are a direct consequence of co-participants referring them to me in light of the study that I undertook. As far as this study tries to be acknowledging of participants' influences these voices are, dependent on the context indeed important. Many of these participants are situated in the context of church ministry. If this study is truly local (situated/ in-context) as I would hope, as opposed to un-grounded leading to grand generalisations based on statistics, then the context of church ministry and its popular scholars do indeed have a place. This does not say that the authors cited necessarily are South African; citing them alludes to churches' interpreted meaning of them.

Hereby I try to acknowledge the influence of the people that I'm surrounded with by consciously focussing on being contextual and situational. We choose to steer clear "…of the past grandiosity of many theological enterprises which have sought to control and order the world rather than to understand it…." (Pattison & Woodward 2000:42).

1.3.2.1   Researcher versus therapist-pastor

The idea behind focussed ministries in corporate churches, that I will subsequently explain, comes to my aid. On the one hand, I relate to some congregants as a pastor while simultaneously having the specific purpose and opportunity to develop the arts in the community of believers. I explicitly mention this since for some qualitative research traditions the idea of a minister conducting a study in his own congregation unquestionably discredits the objective validity of the research (forthcoming: chapter two). From a social constructionist understanding this dual role becomes part of the research process and is not understood as compromising to research validity.

The above heading is owed to Ansdell and Pavlicevic (2001) whom ask questions about conflicting interests from the world of the arts therapies. It seems that most arts therapies conducting research with clients has the same dilemma in that they wear two hats namely that of therapist and researcher; the latter who are then researching some part of the therapeutic relationship with their own 'clients.'

Research[39] suggests (Mann 1998) that the organisational structure should fit the life or type of ministry that a congregation holds. A distinction is made between four types of congregational models which are based on the size of the congregation, i) family size, a group centred organism ii) pastoral size, a pastor centred organism iii) program size, a group centred organisation and iv) corporate size, a pastor centred organisation.

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[39] This relates to a course in facilitation that I chose to undergo with the aim of finding out more about the grounding beliefs behind facilitation that I believe have many similarities with narrative practices but is aimed at an organization as entity.

In our corporate size congregation, the church body could have assigned my occupation to people in a number of arts related vocations such as the theatre manager, director of photography, film producer, creative director, and so forth. However, they chose to assign it to a minister whom had to a certain extent been exposed to the world of the arts. The emphasis is placed on passion and gifts and accordingly as a minister with a passion for the arts that is where I relate predominantly to the people closest to me in ministry.

Resulting from this I am of opinion that the conflict of interest dilemma is not so pervasive to the study since participants relate to me not only as a pastor but as a fellow artist. Although I might give a sermon several times a year, my 'voice', and that of the creative arts, ministry participants are heard through the arts often when a minister speaks from a podium. Seen in this way the artists on my team become ministers and I become co-artist. Many of the research participants have some connection with the creative arts ministry. In this relationship, I believe the power that is supportive to the 'dominie' discourse is being deconstructed beneficially to the research.

Consequently, although for some co-participants our conversations might prove to be therapeutic, I strongly differentiate between my role as a researcher and that of a therapist/ pastor. The reoccurring guiding question in conversations with co-participants is: How does the effects of the questions that I ask relate to this study wanting to explore the interaction between the arts and narrative practise. Often I have noted and refrained from pursuing certain therapeutic directions that conversations could have taken.

Nonetheless, note again that within a social constructionist process I don't perceive it to be a problem if sometimes in hind site a conversation would prove to have had more of a therapeutic effect to the research participant than otherwise. The reason for this is that knowledge is sustained by social

processes. People construct it between them socially as professor Demasure rightly notes (2005/09/27). I am part of this social process whether this is as researcher or as a pastor and whatever the outcome it is introduced back into the research for reflection.

I do however think that one should continually acknowledge and reflect on the process as being a *research* process and not a therapeutic process. This being a cautionary remark since it is clear that no one (researcher or otherwise) could ultimately design any process that one could before hand give assurance whether a participant will derive some sense of therapeutic value from it.

Ansdell and Pavlicevic (2001:101), in their book, *Beginning Research in the Arts Therapies* state that they are comfortable with the role of a therapist also being a researcher. Pivotal to this is the manner in which the researcher attempts to differentiate between the two hats that s/he carries. This is also the premise of this research concerning conflict of interest.

Having to be successful however in trying to differentiate between researcher and therapist or pastor as described above is not the ultimate goal in narrative research. In this regard Smythe and Murray (2000b:319) aptly states, "Conflicts of interests due to multiple relationships are virtually unavoidable in narrative research, especially when the research takes place in a naturalistic setting." The aforementioned authors refer to numerous incidents of role entanglements from various fields concerning research. Gottlieb and Lasser (2001:33) argue to the contrary when including the *conflict of interest* argument in writing a respectful critique of narrative research.

1.4   *Surveying the research theme*

Suffice to say that according to custom in most arts circles arts could imply and refer to any of the following: dance, drama, music, media, and fine arts as described in the Australian curriculum for the arts (Australian Educational Council

1994). It is therefore not just, as the common discourse on the arts dictates that we are speaking of drawing or painting beautiful pictures and such. I also advocate a broader understanding and applicability of the metaphor of *narrative* since it is mostly mentioned in the context of therapy. Take note that Narrative *Practise* relates to any field such as research, therapy, history, organisational development, education, and so forth that adopt as its grounding metaphor the idea that people are essentially creating meaning through the inherent storying of their lives.

Before proceeding to methodology, let us first explore relevant concepts within the theme of this research. Separate thought will be given to the notion of art under a positioning within the arts.

I argue that Narrative Research relates to Qualitative research only broadly. Narrative research should be judged according to its own internal logic because it is thoroughly situated in social constructionist epistemology. McClintock, Icon and Arson (2003:721) speak of research as narrative in much the same fashion that we later (chapter five and throughout) speak of arts as therapy as opposed to arts in therapy. However, I understand Narrative research as being in spirit with general social research criteria. In this regard, I refer to Neuman. Neuman (1997:18-21), indicates that within the sphere of social research methods three broad purposes of a study can be determined, being explorative, descriptive and explanatory.

This study firmly aligns itself within the purpose of being explorative. One should be cautious of objectively trying to describe or furthermore explain something as opposed to exploring. The possibility in coming across as authoritative in descriptive or explanatory models (especially in quantitative studies) becomes too great. From a broadly stated aim for this research, as being explorative, one can at best suggest guidelines or reflect that our descriptions cannot be other than subjective and situated in a specific research community.

Subsequently, Neuman (1997:20) present six goals for exploratory research, all of these to a greater or lesser degree is an indication of what this study would like to achieve as a by-product of being engaged with people with regard to their lives. These will not be explained here. Some of those ideas could however be founded in the following exploration of our theme.

1.4.1 Explorative

This study would like to become *familiar with the basic facts, people, and concerns* involved in our theme. A *well-grounded mental picture* of what is occurring in the research will be developed. Many *ideas will be generated* along with tentative theories and conjectures. The *feasibility of doing additional research* will be determined. *Questions will be formulated* and issues refined *for inquiry that is more systematic*. Techniques (within the narrative, rather *guidelines*) *will be developed* resulting in a sense of direction for future research.

1.4.2 Interaction

In referring to the *exploration* of any interaction between two ideas I acknowledge that those ideas are not necessarily naturally to be united. This study is above all a narrative social constructionist study. Therefore, any function that the arts could have should adhere to grounding values that narrative practise set forth. The question therefore is not can the arts interact with narrative practise but; what is the implication of the principle values of narrative on the use and functioning of the arts within its ideas. Several indications will be made to arts and others such as play-/ or sandtray therapy in relation to therapy and how advocates of these acknowledge that therapists does not seem to work solely within one theoretical framework. Practises and techniques are being used as if purchased at an online global therapeutic ideas shop. Wilson, Kendrick, and Ryan (1992:17) in the field of play therapy describe this as piece mealing. They refer to the importance of Axline's work to what is called non-directive play therapy around the 1940's and how writers seem to cite her work but eschews much theoretical exploration. In this respect Wilson, Kendrick and Ryan (1992:3)

has the following to say, which also relates to the dissemination of boundaries (forthcoming: chapter six): "We recognize that in writing about one particular method of working… we are to some extent breaking with tradition. Practitioners in Britain have by custom and perhaps by inclination tended to draw selectively on theory rather than adhering strictly to one conceptual approach to intervention."

For this study, it is important to note that it seems most of the working methods of other therapeutic practises are indeed in some way or another different from social constructionist ideas. Note however the contrary that there are common characteristics between social constructionist ideas and some practises. I provide a related clarification: Wilson Kendrick and Ryan (1992:21) explains that a discussion of the Pre-Raphaelites as a school of painting may emphasize common characteristic of these painters (brilliant colours, realistic representation of the natural world) at the expense of commonalities which they share with painters in their recent past. In the same way, Rogerian psychotherapy, although having certain distinctive characteristics, has also much in common with other psychotherapeutic orientations.

What ever could be said about the arts in narrative practise is also much reliant on the process, which gave birth to such statements or guidelines. Thus, it is imperative that this study be situated within social constructionist understandings trying to differentiate where this approach is similar or different from other approaches.

1.4.3 Narrative practise

Since I do elaborate generously on the narrative metaphor further on, suffice to start talking in this direction with cursory remarks, which will include a reflection on a lively discussion between Professor Karlijn Demasure (2005/09/27), Professor Julian Müller, and Dr. Lourens Bosman.

Narrative research sets the ideal to conduct research on a small-scale basis. This is done beneficial to, and in collaboration with those whose actions and stories are the focus of the investigation (Lartey 2000:73-74). Practical theologian, Emmaneul Lartey (2000:74) elaborates by emphasising that we should ask questions about who it is that benefits from what is done, who is excluded by the way things are done and who are oppressed by it. Furthermore, our research should ask contextual and experiential questions and should challenge historical formulations in a quest for more inclusive and relevant forms. This research is a corporate, collaborative endeavour, which listens to many different voices (Lartey 2000:75).

Demasure (2005/09/27) notes that narrativity as she calls it came to Practical Theology primarily via two roads; these are the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur and secondly via social constructionism. Professor Karlijn Demasure (2005/09/27) then says that she does not no whether these two (Ricoeur and Social constructionism) can be reconciled and her consideration to come to South Africa had to do with her thoughts on this. Naturally, views on narrativity are under consideration as is evident in the following discussion.

Dr. Lourens Bosman (2005/09/27: Demasure lecture) remarks that what one can appreciate about Foucaudian ideas is the idea that marginalised voices reveals the way in which discourses function. This is also dangerous says Demasure (2005/09/27). Some take a limited case as found in the marginalised voice I try to put forth a certain position in society based on this limited case. She explains by alluding to the pro-abortion against abortion debate. A girl might have been raped for instance and based on her marginalised voice a certain opinion is propagated. Dr. Lourens Bosman (2005/09/27: Demasure lecture) remarks that the idea of listening to the marginalised voice is not in the first instance to pass it through as normative. Rather, it forces one to step away from the dominant discourse. Professor Müller then adds that the idea is therefore to help you see

the relativity of norms in certain instances. The aim is thus not to try and make the marginalised voice in turn the dominant voice.

Demasure (2005/09/27) responds to the idea of Dr. Bosman that the marginalised voice helps one to step away from the dominant discourse. She remarks that insight alone does not liberate a person. Professor Müller is in agreement herewith but with the following alteration. Insight is not liberating if it is left un-storied. If the new insight is storied in alternative imaginative ways then it can become reality, which is based on the idea that stories, therefore language construct reality. For this reason the narrative metaphor is so crucial; it is not about listening to new stories but to co-create new stories. Herewith we are creating new realities and changing existing ones. We also have to be realistic says professor Müller and don't think we can change the world. Professor Demasure remarks affirmatively by saying that sometimes we are too optimistic about our narratives. Demasure feels strongly that as practical theologians we also have a political mission and should therefore not only keep to "the small little stories." Dr. Bosman feels differently and maintains that it is often in the incidental story where there is often more power for change…"when storied," adds professor Müller. Professor Demasure again differs by concurring with what she asserts Ricoeur might say: "[I]f we are going to change the best way to get a disclosure is to tell stories... any stories [not just particular contextual stories: *own insertion*] because in stories you use metaphors and symbols." Metaphors and symbols reach deeper ground than concepts; it touches on a deeper level of our humanness and so evokes change.

1.5   The Delta area – discovering other narrative disciplines

Smythe and Murray (2000b:314) refers to the narrative study of lives as a growing, multidisciplinary tradition of research. This is based on the in-depth autobiographical interviewing of research participants, involving "listening to people talk in their own terms about what had been significant in their lives" Joss Elson (1993:ix).

Smythe and Murray (2000b:314) is of opinion that Narrative research is situated within the broader domain of qualitative social science research, which, in turn is a subset of all research conducted with human participants. Even though narrative research indeed reveals similarities with social qualitative research, narrative research is not congruent with the paradigm from which qualitative research ideas were formulated. In Müller and Schoeman (2004:7-8) we find arguments for the evaluation of narrative research against the narrative discourse and should be viewed against the background of social constructionism. For instance, and as throughout referred to, narrative practitioners will not often talk about *data*; in narrative practise data becomes life stories.[40]

Consequently, although the idea or art of storying is situated in the practises of entertainers, journalists, parents telling bedtime stories, and faculties such as drama, it is viewed by narrative practitioners as inherently embodied by human nature. Thus, figuratively speaking people engaged in the performance of their life narratives could be found in the genetic makeup of our human race. For this reason story is being used as grounding metaphor in *post-structuralist* qualitative human science research.

1.5.1 Narrative practise

Subsequently, the ideas behind narrative practise will be put forth extensively. Suffice to say that the choice for the word narrative *practise* has wilfully been made. This study does not want to explore this topic only within a therapeutic context. Even though, admittedly I enter this research conversation from a predominantly therapeutic background. The choice for narrative practise as opposed to confining it to narrative therapy is made possible on the basis that narrative is shaped from a certain worldview, social constructionism as explained earlier. This worldview or paradigm governs our thoughts on the interaction

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[40] In addition to Müller and Schoeman (2004) see also Smythe and Murray (2000b).

between people and the realities they inhabit and is related to diverse fields; therapy, history, research etcetera. It might be true that, that which has come to be known as narrative were made conscious or in certain places popular *especially* in therapeutic spheres and writings of practitioners such as Michael White and David Epston.

Nevertheless, the informing ideas to narrative therapy have flooded other enterprises such as research for instance. Smythe and Murray (2000b:315) refers to Josselson's 1996a volume that refers to "…leading narrative researchers from a variety of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and history." Gergen (1999) who's views I favour, predominantly writes from this above-mentioned worldview.   He exclaims (1999:167-194) that this worldview has enormous merits for a profusion of practices. In this regard, he gives cursory examples of such ideas in other fields: Therapy as Social Construction (1999:169), Making Meaning in Organizations (1999:175), Education: Collaboration and Community (1999:179), and lastly he asserts to this paradigm's worth in Scholarly Representation (1999:184). One of the fields that I encountered in this study has to do with corporate facilitation. It was most interesting to note that this enterprise, as I understand it, greatly resembles the paradigm formative to narrative practise: I am referring to ideas such as the notion of transparency, the not-knowing [41] position to content-knowledge as opposed to process-knowledge and so forth (elaborated on elsewhere). It seems a terrible loss to confine the source fields for this research to therapy alone. Rather, input is received from therapy, corporate fields, and so forth, where and only if it relates to the arts. Might I reiterate that my own background is predominantly that of therapy and theology and as such, in this study, will be given a louder voice.

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[41] Brown (2002:87) follows readings of De Shazer (1985) and states that in his opinion it is best to follow a constructivist approach to goal establishment "…where the client is the experts of his/her life and the [music] therapist is the expert of the therapeutic process" It is said that this is not always possible as music therapists amongst others work with physically handicapped people that aren't in a position to talk for themselves. In this case a collaborative effort is made family members to "…establish appropriate, meaningful goals that are sensitive to the client's values" (Brown 2002:87).

A second reason for the choice of narrative *practise* as opposed to therapy (other than that *narrative* share the same paradigm to some practises) consists of an inadvertent deconstruction of what therapy is presumed to entail.   I ask myself: "What in therapy relates to voices of other practises such as facilitation or drama that I have invited as companions to this research journey?" Most things could be therapeutic, though not necessarily therapy. "Who am I…" to further enquire "…to decide what people should experience as therapy or not?" Within a social constructionist, narrative paradigm I could only describe therapy as a specifically informed way of *being* with another being in a particular context that the person might or might not find therapeutic.   In a sense when looking at facilitative questions in the profession of corporate facilitation (forthcoming: chapter three), a certain way of doing facilitation runs parallel to what I have just described as therapy and more so even similar to practises of especially narrative therapy. So then, choosing for the wider description of narrative practise as opposed to therapy makes more sense in that it certain practises or professions is closer to narrative practise than to other arts therapies informed by worldviews radically different than that of narrative practise.

In this broader yet helpful association with relatively similar practises, it seems better to relate to semantic structures that consist of words like growth as opposed to normal health, like the drama word catharsis or movement as opposed to a predefined psychological outcome, well-being[42] as opposed to interventions towards appropriate behaviour. Healing as a process rather than a destination and in the end possibly facilitation with subjective integrity rather than therapy.

In acknowledging the underlying worldview in narrative practise but also a profusion of other fields, without writing an addendum to the Bible let me refer to

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[42] See Tillman (2002:13) on *Notions of Well-being, Models of Heath* (2002:16), *Healing as Process* (2002:14) with a specific aesthetic and culturally informed description.

some of the most important ideas and assumptions behind narrative thinking akin to a social constructionist paradigm.

At the forefront of our ventures in doing research, being pastors or therapists within the narrative framework are the following notions adapted from Müller (2002)

- *Respect for the participant.* Hence, I will not speak of 'research objects' or 'research population' but rather refer to those involved as research participants, co-researchers, conversational partners and so forth. Underscoring this notion is the regard for the interests of those involved as opposed to serving my own objectives as researcher.

- *Emphasis on the now.* This entails that as the very first step we take a good empirical look at people and the action in which they are involved. As a result, we stay predominantly within the local experience of our conversational partners and do so within the context of the stories that describe and reflect their preferred realities. Thus, research is being performed as practical wisdom (Graham 2000:109; Müller 1996:1; Browning 1991:34) with an interest in the *habitus* of people, "which refers to a kind of practical knowledge within which human social action enacts and constructs culture – a synthesis of structure and agency. A 'system of structured, structuring dispositions… constituted in practice and… always oriented towards practical functions" (Pierre Bourdieu 1992:52, according to Graham 2000:109).

- *A not-knowing position.* It is hoped that people experience choice rather than settled certainties in therapy as a process. This is promoted by taking a not-knowing position about the content and meaning of people's lives (Bruner 1986, Anderson & Goolishian 1992) with regard to the realities that they inhabit (Freedman & Combs 1996:44). There is earnestness with the researcher to

facilitate a situation where conversational partners can tell their stories un-interrupted, enabling them to speak in their own way and voice (Müller 2002, unpublished lecture).

▪ *Interpretation instead of analysis.* "The concept of *analysis* is a legacy of the positivistic approach to research" whereby only the expert can analyse data acquired from the 'research objects' (Müller 2002, unpublished lecture). This is something done mostly *to* the 'respondents'. Interpretation goes beyond that which Ansdell and Pavlicevic (2001:145) talk about in the process of research in the arts therapies, namely *observation*, *description*, and *interpretation.* Narrative values extend the idea of individually interpreted data to *co-constructed* interpretation, being conducted *with* the so-called respondents on equal basis. This co-constructed interpretation is often referred to as the paradigm of social constructionism.[43]

▪ *Seeing the whole.* Although the focus of narrative practise lies on co-constructed reality and interpretation instead of structural analysis we go still further. Seeing the whole requires that, the story interprets itself (Müller 2002, unpublished lecture). Out of respect for the storyteller, the emphasis is put on the meaning of the story as a unit by not breaking down the story into portions with different themes.

This in part relates to the controversy between critics and artists as referred to by Bätschmann (1997:52):

> In the course of time, art criticism and scholarship brought to light an insoluble conflict. As works of art came to be more closely analysed, the old opposition surfaced between two different approaches to

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[43] A social constructionist perspective is by no means the same as a constructivist approach, which it could be confused with. Social construction does not say that it is as easy for a person to pick an attitude from a type of *rational bureaucracy* and accept it as reality. Hereby the individual grants himself the freedom to uphold any given opinion largely ignorant of culturally informed behaviour (Vos 1995:214, cited in Müller 1996:58). See also Müller (1996:77-81), and Freedman & Combs (1996:1-8).

interpretation, that which is true to the letter and looks for correctness, and that which is true to meaning and looks for truth.

(Bätschmann 1997:52)

In peoples retellings, we relate to their exibited stories as being truthful; capturing meaning and truth[44] rather than correctness.

These values, as far as models are sought, leaves us therapeutically naked with only three narrative stances with which we interact with 'experience exhibitions'[45] i.e. conversational questions, a not-knowing position, and responsive active listening (Boyd 1996:220, cited in Müller 2000:68).   This research is not a therapeutic endeavour but a research endeavour; we have to somehow translate values accountably to method. For this reason, we now turn to methodological themes.

1.6   *Methodological positioning*

Take note that here we will only have a cursory look at methodology since chapter two is reserved for amongst other topics, the practical methodological form that the research embody.

By way of introduction, I draw on Farley (2000:119) whom situates practical theology as being an interpretive endeavour.   He claims that all human beings exist and act in situations and engage in interpretations of situations.   It is meaningful to understand that this interpretive dimension does not cease with faith and with life in the community of faith (Farley 2000:119). With our *taken for granted stock of knowledge* as he refers to it we undergo the weighting of what to us is important. Thus, faith and the faith community shape our interpretations, which is in turn a firm consequence of the epistemological reasoning of social constructionism.   Even more important than situating practical theology in the

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[44] Not referring to an obsolete notion of truth.

[45] The notion of an artist exhibiting his/her work requires a sense of courage as it is put forth in public eyes. See Bätschmann 1997: 17 and further; Satisfying public taste; Public patronage; Exhibition pieces 29. In the same sense we put our emotions on the canvas to be reacted to in some sense by friends, therapists and so on.

interpretive enterprise note that Farley (2000:119) refer to interpreting *situations* as opposed to *texts*. This emphasis is made in a footnote where the word *action* comes into play. Remember however, that text does not exclude human interaction or in our case art, which text is also. I encountered this inclusion of action and art as text in professor Demasure's lecture (2005/09/27) where she elaborates on Paul Ricoeur's influence in her thinking. While Farley distinguishes between the interpretation of text and situation he does acknowledge in his argument the writings of Paul Ricoeur and especially so his work, *The Model of Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text* (1981).

I emphasise here that practical theology is an interpretive enterprise and I do so to sensitise the reader that the kind of methodology that ensues practical theological research is then also interpretive. Up to this point the logical flow, the structure of this chapter is expressly structured to imply that our epistemological and ontological understanding (interpretation) shape our theology which in turn gives birth to a certain methodological position.

I will here situate methodology in what I regard as a primary metaphor for the human specie. I have cursorily remarked on practical theological views on methodology but I will not facilitate in this research in-depth discussion on these since I have chosen for a distinctly narrative approach, which requires extensive involvement.[46]

Effectively a choice has been made to stay within the metaphor of story for research procedure. This choice has partly been informed by the belief that the arts elicit stories, most obviously revealed in the art of drama. Stated differently the arts also favour *story* as a meaningful grounding metaphor. As such, there is intrinsic value in adopting story as a methodological model for doing research.

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[46] In this regard for a very meaningful exploration of the approaches and methods in Pastoral and Practical Theology the Blackwell reader for Pastoral and Practical Theology is advised which is edited by Woodward and Pattison (2000). Articles have been placed and some commissioned specifically for illumination on approaches and methods (2000:73-148), including scholars Alastair Campbell, Don Browning, Elaine Graham, Edward Farley, Emmaneul Lartey and Stephen Pattison.

Acknowledging that there are other models for doing research, some even related to narrative ideas[47] I have still chosen to follow a model that has come to be known colloquially as the ABDCE approach to doing research. ABDCE is the acronym for the not-necessarily sequential proposed movements in narrative research Action, Background, Development, Climax, and Ending (Müller, Human & Van Deventer 2001). I could have also chosen to adapt Vogler's (1999) ideas on story construction to a research model as all these models use some kind of story theory to embody, explore, and develop rich human experience. Take note that Müller, Van Deventer and Human (2001) derive at the ABDCE approach from art, that of views in fiction writing from Anne Lamott (1995). A research design based on Vogler (1999) might have established yet a more exciting local link with the thesis topic and the co-participants. However, at the onset of this research I was not aware of the work of Vogler since I only heard of him from one of the research participants. Keeping to *story*-methodology is therefore also a way of acknowledging the role of the arts in this study but more locally honouring the voice and input of research conversational partners.

In itself, this is probably a less than adequate explanation of methodology. Two things should however be noted: Firstly, intricate discussion on methodology is reserved for chapter two. More importantly, in fact what follows – a positioning within the narrative – is already incontestably entangled with methodology. Thus, in referring to narrative, theoretically and otherwise in this chapter I am already writing extensively on that which informs methodology. Contrary to the first statement of this paragraph, referring to "a less than adequate explanation"; if one chooses to work within the narrative metaphor, no amount of writing about methodology can replace the narrative metaphor's input and resulting illumination of methodology. For this reason, I now turn to a firm positioning within the idea of narrative.

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[47] Refer to Mischler (1986).

1.6.1 Positioning within the narrative

Leading up to and throughout this research I was confronted on how narrative practise as I have come to know it is distinct and similar to so many other therapists, researchers, and institutions that utilise the significance of story (narrative). I'm of opinion that most people can tell a story to much amusement of an audience, client, and co-participant and so forth as far as we refer to story as a kind of a tool in aim of a desired outcome.

One can expect that there may be a great deal of misconceptions about the practise of narrativity. I illuminate by providing the following example that emerged at the Van Huyssteen lectures (2005/08/01). I first present the attendee's question and thereafter professors Müller and Van Huyssteen's remarks:

Attendee: I just want to ask about the whole narrative approach especially in counselling [read: psychology] because I'm working in that field. Is the assumption of the narrative approach that now we have found a way to find the truth of somebody when he is telling his story; whereas we know, just thinking of one example, the *past memory syndrome* where people dish up stories; we all have got grids through which we look at our history. So to follow the narrative approach and to assume that you have now unearthed the wisdom there must be deconstructed in the sense that I don't know about my own past. I can only remember certain things I want to remember

Professor Müller humouristically remarks: I don't know which narrative approach you are talking about. The narrative approach I know does not work with that assumption at all. To the contrary, the narrative approach will not try to work with any assumptions about a story behind the story, the truth story, the real story; but work with the stories as it is told. We work with that story. We do not go digging as a detective might for the other story somewhere behind the story that is told. The narrative approach does not work with the idea that it can produce the truth.

Professor Van Huyssteen: As I see it, the narrative approach would work as a heuristic devise. It's a kind of a device that you use via something else (interpretations and assumptions) to get into a very specific problem and it is not understood that the story is always a good story or a true story. He remarks humouristically: It could be an awful story but it allows you to get into the material at the order of the discussion.

Professor Müller: (Picking up on the above sentence) …and by telling it you are constructing a new story.

Drawing on these remarks it is incorrect to say – and I'm circumspect of Professor Van Huyssteen's notion of a heuristic device – that the narrative metaphor is in any instance merely a tool (device) for anything; whether this is to derive at some truth, surfacing emotions or anything else. I understand the metaphor of narrative practise to link still closer to epistemology or methodology than we might think and therefore it is addressed here. Narrative (story) practise is inextricably linked with a certain view, an epistemology of reality: I argue that one's views on epistemology are revealed in one's understanding of the notion of character. It can primarily be seen in how narrative practitioners view people. The narrative practitioner's view of people is similar to how Horton (1994:25) from the world of arts in the following excerpt describes the notion of character. Roland Barthes (1974:64) comments that character is a product of combinations, an ever changing adjective rather than a thing or noun. "Even though the connotation may be clear, the nomination of its [character] signified is uncertain, approximate, unstable" (Roland Barthes 1976:90).

Horton (1994:25) then sums up by saying that character is never complete, set, finished, but always glimpsed in motion from a certain perspective. "What is character?" thus leads to "Who is asking, how, why, when?"[48] How greatly this resounds with the social constructionist perspective?!

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[48] In Tillman's idea of a *model of self* (2002:25) character is also described as being in process between ever changing polarities: community/ individualism, containment/freedom, expression/ confidentiality, unity/diversity, challenge/nurture, excitement/ relaxation, embodiment/

1.6.1.1   "Let there be stories," God said.

In subsequent paragraphs, I embark on a more substantial introduction to, and a positioning within the ideas of narrative practise. I do so at liberty, hopefully having made it clear that narrative practice/s, such as the use of externalisation,[49] is not to be understood merely as a tool.[50]

Griffith and Griffith (2002:59), with regard to peoples' experiences in their spiritual lives and relationships refer to some common forms in which spiritual experiences is expressed: The following they think of as genres for expressing spiritual experiences 1) Metaphors and other tropes, 2) Stories, or narratives, 3) Beliefs, 4) Dialogue, 5) Rituals 6) Ceremonies, 7) Practices, and, 8) Community.   Henceforth they aver that there are *sociobiological differences* among the genres of spiritual experience:

> Various forms of symbolic expression play distinct roles in human life. Of particular relevance for psychotherapy, different forms work differently in coordinating a person's language and relationships with his or her physiological state. Metaphors and other tropes, for example, play a key role in coordinating mental and physiological processes of perception. Stories are particularly important in the organization of a sense of self and other processes of identity formation. Both ritual and conversation help choreograph the experience of community. Spiritual practices and ritual can engage bodily experience in ways that genres relying more on language cannot.

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transcendence.. To Tillman (2002:24) this is important as they express polarities that somehow mirror the process of living and is related to the nature of music.

[49] Externalisation entails a way of speaking about a problem that separates the person from the problem. Often this involves personifying the problem (or belief, or practice, habit, incident etcetera). In its most basic form one would thus speak of Problem, Anger etcetera in capital letters for example: How has Anger wormed its way into your life? It could easily be used as a tool. However in narrative practice this way of speaking is really situated in the belief that the problem is the problem not the person. Not used in this way can easily lead to the experience of the participant as trickery.

[50] One sometimes find that therapists and psychologists refer to themselves as working eclectically whereby some tools of one method is freely used alongside tools of another.

> Life in community orchestrates all the other expressive forms in a grand movement that enables culture to come into being.
>
> (Griffith & Griffith 2002:61)

Although the genres are distinctly different, the expressive forms are almost inseparable. They proclaim that most of them appear within any given therapy interview whereby the conduct of therapy is therefore a sequence of aesthetic compositions. "Questions weave back and forth among these expressive forms as a dialogue is composed during a session. One does not necessarily take priority over another, although each opens a different avenue for therapeutic change" (Griffith & Griffith 2002:61). It is by systematic effort of *multichannel listening* that these modes of expression are heard as they appear spontaneously in an interview.

For most of us, tropes – metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony – are figures of speech that exist only as vague memory traces from a high school English class. Tropes as literary devises are used to express meaning poetically (Griffith & Griffith 2002:62). There could therefore something be said for the use of poetics as a form of art as therapeutic devise. Anthropologists have long utilized tropes as a coherent conceptual framework to describe how people express meaning through activities and events of daily life (Griffith & Griffith 2002:62). In conversations with professor Hagemann, we spoke about how story requires the plotting of memory. This also relates to dreams in relation to story he said: Anything might happen in a dream. Once we wake up, it doesn't matter how bizarre it is, we will try to sort things out, linking it in sequence across time. A type of "critical reflecting mode" kicks in, in the retelling of the dream. Professor Hagemann explains this default mode (our innate storying ability) as some kind of a genetic code. Hence, the heading "Let there be stories." From this perspective human's ability for storying our experiences is almost embedded in a type of collective Jungian memory.[51]

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[51] For an elaboration on this interesting and controversial theory see Meyer, Moore and Viljoen (1988:33-34), or Jung (1960:112).

In literature, tropes are used to convey more vividly to the reader the writer's personal experience. A particularly evocative metaphor therefore communicates more strongly than the mere facts of the matter – "I feel lonely" versus "My life has become a sepulchre."

However, what anthropologists have noted goes beyond the emotive or shall we say sculptural use of language. This *going beyond* is the reason for this study to be situated in the narrative social constructionist metaphor. This is also the primary reason why Griffith and Griffith (2002) seem to write enthusiastically of these modes of expressions: People not only use tropes when writing and speaking words to others, they *perform* tropes, that is, enact them in behaviour as well as in spoken words. The performance of a trope weds unseen meaning with behaviour that is visible to others, thereby providing a vocabulary for the unspoken communication of meaning. Maybe we can read the sentence again substituting the words 'a trope' for 'the arts' thereby preliminary touching on resulting chapters.

Through the performance of tropes, meaning becomes incarnate. When a trope is performed, a particular cultural world opens… Tropes differ from referential uses of language, that is, when words – like "car," "dog, " "brown" – denote specific objects or qualities of an object. Particular words or expressions, of course can be used in either manner. Consider "There are a lot of cars on the freeway" versus "Public transportation have lost its battle with the car."

Tropes serve a key role in human life as points of junction where physiology and language meet. Tropes engage the body as much as the mind. When one lover says to another, "You are my sunshine!", the beloved feels in her body the warmth of the sun's rays. Tropes shift attention, posture, voice, heart rate, and blood pressure in ways that ready the body for specific action or expression – to love, to fight, to flee, or to reflect quietly (Griffith & Griffith 2002:63). The performance of tropes is instrumental for constructing a society (Griffith & Griffith 2002:63). They put together a world that holds meaning and orients people in their relationships with one another. Tropes help

create possibilities for spiritual experience by enabling a person to perceive every thing in the world as connected in some way to every other thing, which is a key aspect of spirituality across most cultures (Griffith & Griffith 2002:64).

1.6.1.2   Metaphors and Narrative

Since we have chosen for *narrative* and *social constructionism* and they work as type of metaphor for our involvement with people, we now turn specifically to this type of trope, namely metaphor.[52]

1.6.1.2.1   Narrative and social construction as metaphor

"[M]etaphors are not júst metaphors. They are the software of thought. Metaphors do more than add to the cognitive impact of language. Metaphors are the stuff of which our mind is made to begin with. In our mental encyclopaedia, concepts like "chair" are not based on abstract sets of necessary and sufficient conditions, but on… images" (Sweet 1999:201).   "Metaphor is Metamorphosis" as Professor Sweet (1999:204) describes. Griffith and Griffith (2002:64) links with Sweet in saying that metaphors play a critical role in people's lives by posing abstract concepts in terms of images and events drawn from daily life.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, in Griffith & Griffith 2002:64) allude to this process as mapping from a *source domain* to a *target domain*.   "Source domains are familiar life experiences, mostly taken from the physical world, that are well understood and easy to think about….   [T]arget domains are abstract conceptual domains, like love, happiness, or spiritual experience." An example of this transference form one to the other domain would be to say: "My life with God is a long journey." Seen in this way our life experiences are source domains and *story* as such becomes our target domain. I would further content drawing on professor Hagemann's views that such a mapping from source to target domain almost instantaneously involves us in the plotting of memory. Furthermore, story according to professor Hagemann is akin to

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[52] A metaphor, plainly stated, as the reader might recall entails conceiving one thing in terms of another: Consider "My life is a sepulchre" instead of "I feel dead" or "Our relationship aren't growing!" with the implicit biological metaphor of plants that needs oxygen, sunlight and so forth to grow. In this study we will not dwell in the depths of metaphor as it relates to language; spoken or otherwise. For meticulous detail on this subject see Ricoeur (1977).

experiences of life (source domain) although it is not the experience in itself and therefore requires a target domain (our stories). In this sense a narrative is in itself a metaphor seeing that it maps from experience that is well understood to experience that is not (Griffith & Griffith 2002:64). As such, "…a metaphor is perhaps the most useful way we have for comprehending partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness" (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:36, cited in Griffith & Griffith 2002:64).

"Metaphors, like poems [in addition stories and the arts: *own insertion*], present multiple levels of meaning, reverberating differently with different aspects of experience" (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, cited in Griffith & Griffith 2002:64). Griffith and Griffith (2002:64) are in accordance with research participant's professor Hagemann and Talitha from the CAM community in saying: "By amending cognition and body experience, a particular metaphor opens possibilities, while obscuring alternatives." As a metaphor highlights important love experiences and makes them coherent, it masks other love experiences; the metaphor gives love a new meaning. Explained in this way by Griffith and Griffith (2002:64) metaphors are appropriate because they sanction actions, justify inferences, and help us set goals (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:141, cited in Griffith & Griffith 2002:64). Any given metaphor can therefore help or hinder the expression of experiences. Paul Friedrich (1991:24, cited in Griffith & Griffith 2002:65) attests this by saying that a trope may mislead in exact proportion to the amount it reveals; that is the price of any revelation. At least in therapeutic involvement with people's spiritual experiences Griffith and Griffith (2002:65) claims that the two-sidedness of this equation – metaphors enable, metaphors constrain – lies at the heart of work conducted with metaphors.

In accordance with Griffith and Griffith (2002:67), it can safely be said that any single metaphor, no matter how compelling, is too unidirectional to illuminate fully the richness and complexity of a lived experience.   Fortunately, where there is one metaphor, there are many" (Griffith & Griffith 2002:67). This leads me again to enquire as to what the dividends of the investment in the arts coupled with narrative

practise are: One might say that it assists organisations and individuals in structuring their lives.   Utilising the arts in this research process enables omni directional reception or telling; meaning, the arts becomes a metaphor able to speak from different perspectives.

Theoretically at this point then what this means for the narrative practitioner; being open to the voice of the artist in an organisation, congregation or individual, arts as metaphor enables one to get a richness of description from where meaning is co-constructed (forthcoming: chapter three and four).

By now, it should be clear that within a social constructionist worldview the grounding metaphor of story as opposed to being a research or therapy tool becomes an interpretive resource privileged in narrative conversations (White 2000:9; Epston 1998:11).   Smythe and Murray (2000b:315) augments by saying that methodologically, narrative research is an essentially interpretive enterprise. With White (2000:9), I assume that the structure of narrative provides the principle frame of intelligibility for people in their day-to-day lives. To tell a story, we make choices (based on interpretation) about which connections to highlight, which paths to follow and which details to focus on (Kopett 2002:85).   These choices are the focus of our inquiry.

1.6.1.2.2   *Metaphor in comparison to symbols and signs*

Our remarks here are informed by Demasure's (2005/09/27) views on Paul Ricoeur's use of the concepts in question.

Paul Ricoeur has the desire to understand our basic humanness. As a starting place, he considers the notions of freedom and sin. He believes that humans are ontologically fundamentally good.   Sin is introduced in the narrative after the good creation of humans. Consequently, our free will has been damaged (not destroyed).   In trying to describe free will and evil, he turns to our concept of symbols. If we want to talk about something as profound as sin people have

resorted to symbols. A second step is then taken in telling about such concepts in myths such as the lost paradise for instance. Only now, we get to the concept of original sin. To Ricoeur then sin as a concept is a symbol of the third degree.

Hereby he acknowledges that although symbols touch on the profound in life people do not understand symbols anymore, that symbols need interpretation and recontextualisation. This need for interpretation and recontextualisation is the result of the surplus of meaning in things. In baptism, for instance, we use water but we still need to explain our actions since water have a surplus of meaning; water can cleanse but one can also drown in water.

A symbol also has a double dimensional structure a literal and a spiritual connotation. It is this spiritual connotation that one cannot invent but the latter is based on the first. So the idea of washing away sin is situated in the quality of water to cleanse. The relationship between the two is therefore natural. On the contrary, a sign has arbitrary meaning. A sign is arbitrary based on the contention that links the signifier (word) and the signified (concept). So a sign is situated in consensus much in the same manner as people have decided what the various colours in the traffic light system means. The first meaning in a symbol belongs to the physical world and the latter to the existential. There is a given meaning in a symbol, which is called a donation, but this donation is not clear in the first moment. Because of the surplus of meaning, the process of interpretation is sparked.

Symbols are the reason that narrativity is important to professor Demasure (2005/09/27); embedded in narrative we find symbols and in working with these people can change.

Research participant Danie du Toit and I had talked in our discussions about symbolism and rituals, which prove to be relevant here. Danie noted that it's interesting how often symbolism and rituals go hand in hand with art. We noted

that rituals and symbolism, which are connected to the arts, strongly focuses our attention on God. Performing a ritual connected to an artwork such as a painting creates interaction between art and person thereby giving personal significance to the person. In so doing, a stationary work of art becomes alive through the local significance a person derive from it. This meaning is however not always only personal as we have heard in people's responses to works created in the congregation by the CAM community. There is also some kind of collective understanding or meaning ascribed to the work. This takes shape largely by the conversation with the artist or a speaker alluding to its intended contribution to the worship service. The voice of the artist directs people's attention to the intended significance whereby involvement in ritual and symbolism is promoted. However, in ritual and symbolism the personal meaning supersedes the collective understanding although it may initially be informed by it.

In relation to metaphors, symbols are pre-linguistic phenomena while metaphors belong to the linguistic realm. Demasure (2005/09/27) quotes Ricoeur in saying: "A metaphor occurs in the already purified universe of the logos while the symbol hesitates on the dividing line between bios (life) and logos (language)." In this sense a metaphor is considered richer than a symbol because it encloses the implicit semantics of the symbol, it explains something. Conversely, it is also poorer since it draws on a symbol. Metaphors are just the linguistic surface of symbols and they owe their power to relate the semantic surface in the depths of human experience to the two dimensional structure of the symbol.

A metaphor is a category mistake in that the two concepts, which do not belong to the same semantic field, are brought together. In the clash of meaning, something new emerges. Now we call it a semantic impertinence since a coat is not sadness while at the same time being a semantic innovation since you look at something in a new way.

There is also important to realise that it is typical for metaphors to elicit emotions and visualisations; not so with mere concepts. The tension exists not in the two terms but in the interpretation of the two terms. Logical structure of the language is challenged it is thus a category mistake.

The metaphorical interpretation presupposes a literal interpretation, which self-destruct in a significant contradiction. The choice for the combining elements has to do with resonancy and differentiation: It is in the clash of similarity on some level while obvious semantic dissimilarity that something new emerges. As with symbols the literally meaning should be replace by a second-degree reference. What we discover is not something literal, it provides us with a new perspective, but the reference is in second degree. This means that through language, metaphor as poetic language and through interpretation, a new reality emerges. A metaphor thus destructs an existing order to create a new one.

1.6.1.3   Differentiating between performing narratives and story-tools

It should also be clear that what the above paragraphs entail does not suggest that narrative practise is in the first instance a tool. It is much more intricate than that. As a tool, a corporate facilitator could use Vogler's (1999) story movements and characters to analyse conflict, a teacher could write a school play based on it and so forth, all with utter disregard for the storying nature of our human existence.

I personally uphold (elsewhere elaborated) that story above any other art form is the best metaphor for subjectively understanding the human web of experiences. Weiser (1993:9) directs us to the awareness of this argument in her field. Namely phototherapy in relation to art therapy: "There is a long-standing debate as to whether art therapy is a set of techniques that all therapists (psychologists, family counsellors, psychiatrists, and so on) can learn to use, or whether it is a separate model, with a distinct underlying conceptual basis." She states that good arguments can be made on both sides but that to her phototherapy is rather

a set of interactive techniques useful for all therapists regardless of their preferred theoretical modalities. [53]   The idea of story could also be such a technique to some although a story tool *without* a conceptual framework of storying beings is not what is advocated in this study. Rather, the question will be discussed throughout: What differentiates the use of the arts in narrative practise as opposed to the use of arts situated in different theoretical modalities? It seems that we should also acknowledge that therapists in the arts caution to use something as an adjunct to verbal analysis. In this regard Dora Kalff (1981:xiii),much involved with the development of sand play which is said to have originated around 1911. (Thompson 1981:5) writes in the Foreword to *Sand play Studies; Origins, Theory, and Practise* (1981) that when sand play is used as an adjunct to verbal analysis, it may very well further the therapeutic work. However, in her opinion it doesn't lead to the same types of experience that she has seen to be possible through a continuing use of sand play as the main emphasis of the therapy. The same could also be said about the use of *story*.

Some disciplines seem conflicted about what the appropriate manner is in how to use music, art, dance and so forth. Using the arts in therapy is a relatively new idea, owing its more formal approaches to have been developed over the past fifty to sixty years (Ansdell 2002). It seems that people involved in the arts or other means by which with to conduct therapy nowadays (sand play etcetera), did not in the first instance evolve within a conscious theoretical foundational framework. In a sense, these practises are arrows that don't know from which bow they came. For me it seems that such artists with an inclination or formal exposure to therapy only fairly recently started asking questions about the bow from which they practise. For this reason some approaches are referred to as techniques for whom the underlying worldview it is not as critical a consideration. Thompson (1981:5) for instance states: "[T]he present volume attests; sandplay is a very individual matter and is used differently by every therapist."

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[53] A side comment at this stage but I do think that every kind of practice allude to some kind of underlying theory. The manner in which she explains her work seems to be very much in line with a social constructionist paradigm although it might not be consistently so.

Surveying research theory it seems that this type of standing on your head rather than your feet approach relates to a *grounded theory* approach or study (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:154). Leedy and Ormrod (2001:154) states: "Of all the research designs… a grounded theory study is the one that is *least* likely to begin from a particular theoretic framework. On the contrary, the major purpose of a grounded theory approach is to *begin with the data and use them to develop a theory."* *T*he term *grounded* refers to the idea that the theory that emerges from the study is derived form and *grounded* in data that have been collected in the field rather than taken from the research literature (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:154). It is said that this approach has its roots in sociology but is now used in anthropology, education, nursing psychology, and social work (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:154).

I emphasise that there should be a consistency of approach in terms of epistemology, whether we speak of story as it relates to narrative human identity, or story as a tool (or for that matter art, dance, music, and so forth as tools). The idea stays the same: It should at least be situated in some kind of understanding of the theoretical framework from which one might work. There is a thin, almost intuitive differentiation between the two 'applications.' Maybe, it's the latter (story as tool) that tries to be an objective application of the twelve steps in Vogler's, or other writers' story movements. Henceforth, let me clarify some key concepts in what is regarded as a good story regardless of application as tool or grounding metaphor. Then I will start differentiating between the ideas of *performing* narratives over above the idea of story *as a tool* as one might find in eclectic working methods.

"At the most basic level, the quality that differentiates a story from a mere sequence of unrelated events is meaningful connection" this happens by means of reincorporation (Kopett 2002:85). The idea of reincorporation entails bringing back later what one has introduced earlier in a story or film such as cutaway shots of objects and scenery in a motion film. Applying this idea to our research,

reincorporation could mean sporadically touching on related subjects at various places in the document. Naturally, the topic isn't handled in depth everywhere but the use of concepts in different conversations I believe gives the reader a better understanding into what is meant by a concept or topic. This could be explained by weaving a type of understanding. It is as Müller (1996:139) suggests that the concept of story is a concept that has to do with connections, patterns, and metaphors. He further draws on Bateson (1979:13) who describes a story as a little knot or complex of that species of connectedness, which we call *relevance.*[54]

However, how then is story relevant? Here, as I will do at various places we touch on performing narratives: It is cultural stories that determine the shapes of our individual life narratives (White 1991 cited in Freedman & Combs 1996:32). People make sense of their lives through personal narratives they construct in relation to cultural narratives they are born into. In any culture, certain narratives will come to be dominant over other narratives. These dominant narratives will specify the preferred and customary ways of believing and behaving within the particular culture (Freedman & Combs 1996:32).

Hence, may I reiterate that the task of Practical Theology is to journey with the faith community, helping them make sense of personal life narratives and read them against the background of dominant narratives.

1.6.1.4   Narrative in reaction to…

I have stated my deliberate choice for the narrative metaphor. Suffice to briefly motivate what this choice stands in reaction to. In concurrence with Müller (1996:20), I realise that there are analytical philosophers and some sociological theorists that rely heavily on research methods that divide human existence into compartments. Over against this, narrative theorists build their anthropology on the premise of the unity of human experience. The narrative metaphor invites us to think about people's lives as

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[54] This will not on its own do for a description of what story is or isn't. Please refer to chapter five for more in-depth discussion.

stories and to work with them to experience their life stories in ways that are meaningful and fulfilling.

Opposed to this favoured unity of human experience as elsewhere reiterated: It seems that art specific therapies are often informed by depth psychology and psychoanalysis in particular.[55] In this model, I frequently came across statements such as the following from the field of art therapy: "This book, then, is at root a suggested method for deciphering the language of pictures. As the reader proceeds, he will discover how the unconscious contents of this picture were made known to me as the student of the picture" (Furth 1988:xix), and "like dream language, the language of pictures is the language of the unconscious, and it speaks when the conscious voice fails" (Kübler-Ross, forward to Furth 1988:x), and

> The drawings allow for interplay of information between the various expressed or repressed areas of the individual psyche. The analyst establishes a rapport with his patient that goes beyond conscious interaction to include an unconscious dialogue between his intuition and the often-secretive unconscious language of pictures. For this reason, however, proper training is essential, since that analyst's tendency to project onto a drawing often goes unrecognized by both him and his colleagues.
>
> (Kübler Ross, forward to Furth 1988:x)

Now it is interesting that in light of these examples Furth (1988:13) notes that [t]he idea is not to decipher with accuracy what is within the picture – in order to predict the person's future – as much as it is to ask concise questions as to what the picture may be communicating (Furth 1988:13). I wholeheartedly agree with this mode of *asking* about art; so I notice this discrepancy and wonder what to make of it. I cannot but think about addendum ?? Wherein Jo (the narrative therapist) remarked that, some of the statements smacked of modernism. Furthermore I realise that throughout the research I have noted in the PhD small group also notions that seemed very

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[55] Specific reference in this regard is made to depth psychology with reference to Sigmund Freud (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen 1988:34-78).

modernistic. As the contradictions are revealed, so the plot thickens. Readers may even find statements in this thesis, which is a social constructionist (situated more in the posts) thesis. Vogler (1999), an important author in this thesis may be viewed as extremely modernistic but I hope I have answered this (in the thesis as a first round) to the satisfaction of possible interrogators. I've come to the tentative conclusion that one should really try to determine what the general gist of the work involves. I think one can get far fetched and almost find modernism under every rock (word) so to speak. I've come to realise that people live their lives making use of the available metaphors and language to them. To find modernism under every rock also numbs conversation. One should remember that the posts or social constructionism does not say that everything in a certain paradigm is evil. For an extended period, most people have and still do live in a modernistic world. Rather critique should be aimed at the crucial consequences to those whose voices are not being heard. To live the radical critical (even sceptical life) is indeed isolating, it again situates the power in the individual and so we have come full circle back to modernism; meaning radical postmodernism or post this or that is almost again a type of modernism. Returning to Furth (1988), I'm of opinion that the general gist contrary to his latter remark is situated in the kind of knowledgeable interpretation that narrativity would try to avoid. I do include the questions that he uses in interpreting drawings (see addendum ??) but these will be used very tentatively by the narrative practitioner.

Narrative research/ therapy/ practise therefore inquires rather about the continuity of life wherein units of experience and meaning are created, acknowledging that "[e]very telling is an arbitrary imposition of meaning on the flow of memory, in that we highlight some causes and discount others; that is, every telling is interpretive" (Bruner 1986a:7 cited in Epston 1998:12). The stories that we hear are descriptions as well as explanations, based on interpreted reality, for why things are as they seem (Müller 1996:21; Rubin & Rubin 1995:31). The proposal is that people must engage in acts of the interpretation of experiences when they make expressions about their experiences of the worlds they live through. Not only do these interpretive acts make it possible for people to give meaning to their experiences of the world, rendering life

sensible to themselves and to others, but these acts also shape their expression of this lived experience (White 2000:9).

Please take note, this does not say, meanings people construct in these acts of interpretation are radically invented. Meanings are not independently derived from out of the blue or from inside people's heads. As an outcome of unique thought, or out of some singular consciousness that provides for people an apprehension of the world 'as it is,' whatever that world might be (White 2000:9).[56] Rather according to our understanding "...meaning is at once a personal, relational, and cultural achievement" (White 2000:9; Gergen 1999:131), an "…emergent property of coordinated action" (Gergen 1999:145).

1.7   *Positioning within the arts*

May I reiterate what we might understand when using the term arts. As point of reference is taken the Australian arts curriculum (Australian Curriculum Council 1994) that includes in the concept of art: drama, dance, music, multimedia, and visual (fine) art. Note that story (literary art) is not included in this description and I cannot imagine why not since it should be. Its omission is for our purposes made to signify the foundational practise of story (as identity) for remember that we are told a story, we engage much more of ourselves than we do when we are presented with mere facts. I contend that this is true of all the arts. Our emotions are triggered, associations are stimulated and memories are activated (Kopett 2002:84).   The premise is that the use of the arts is conducive to such a rich context.

What I would like to contend for the moment is that the debate in the arts communities around that which might be labelled as art, opinions about the arts needing a purpose, asking about what it is that makes art so called Christian art; these considerations to my knowledge concerns all art forms. Therefore I'm of the opinion that what we might say about drama and narrative practise might also

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[56] See footnote 48.

depending on the context in which we speak relate for instance for music and narrative practise.

Thus far, two very important matters have been raised that are essential to the research process, namely that of the metaphors narrative and social construction. As an artist, in this case having had some formal training I come from a musical home with specific art engagement in the past. I must say that the abovementioned metaphors have had a considerable impact on my personal understanding of the arts: I find in all art forms the common denominator of communication. Art speaks, it communicates! Does it necessarily *want* to convey something? It's an open question that I will elaborate on elsewhere. However, even if it doesn't have a specific aim or intention it communicates to me by appealing rationally to my senses as well as my emotion. Mostly, however Rookmaaker (1970:231) is of opinion that "…artists, almost without exception, do strive to express something in their art, and only rarely are happy with the aesthetic element alone."

In a PhD narrative small group discussion one of my colleagues, also conducting a study in one of the arts (recreational fine art), were uncomfortable with this remark. The question has been asked whether there is always *intentionality* in works of art. Do artists indeed want to say something? This colleague shares the experience that participants only afterwards reflect that this or that was therapeutic. To experience art as therapy was therefore not there initial intention. I am in agreement with this colleague. However, I am under the distinct impression that Rookmaaker (1970) refers to artists, by implication professional artists (professional: not referring to quality but that their arts provide their income). It then comes to one's experience put directly opposite the other, the typical constructivist's clash of relative opinion. I for one share Rookmaaker's opinion from my own experience: Something is being said, something is being performed, maybe not so intentionally. This something is not directive to a kind of underlying structure, but it is a *coming into being* which in my opinion relates to

the idea of the *absent but implicit* of Michael White (2000:35-58). From a social constructionist perspective neither is wrong if one understands that sub-culture plays a significant role in determining meaning, purpose, creating truth and the like. That which is said through the arts (either prior or by means of reflection) is always derived from the interchange between the personal and communal interpretation.

For this reason, I believe that in all art a story could be found close by. This implies that in participants there was a sense of wanting to convey something, which is elicited by reflexive questions put to the artists (conversational partner). This line of reflexive questioning could entail: Tell me about what this artwork is doing with you? Is this dance similar to your life or not? Where and with what person did you relate to in the drama? What do you make of your affinity to that role being played by the actor in relationship to the crisis the organisation is currently experiencing? Also, keep in mind that there are times when the spoken or written word is necessary; at other times silence, music, painting, drama will be more appropriate ways of conveying an emotion or an insight (White[57] 1997:8).

The arts therefore brings me from point A to point B, there is motion, some kind of development! This leads me to my next contention: Involvement in the arts has much to offer a social constructionist process in that meaning is experienced through interpretation whereby art could become part of the storying of people's lives.

Art has always been part of my own familial story; studying music, fine art as subject in school, involvement in performing arts ministries, being head of department Creative Arts ministries in our congregation and so forth. My curiosity stems from my involvement in narrative practise which I would also like to endow with the term art: The art of storying! Even if a work of art has only

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[57] Take caution in remembering that White (1997) is not narrative therapist Michael White alluded to throughout the research.

aesthetic intention there will always be a story to be told about the process of creating the artwork.

It should be noted that in order for the narrative practitioner even from a pastoral perspective to use art it does not necessarily need to be Christian. The debate behind this signifies that "…what is Christian in art does not lie in the theme, but in the spirit of it, in its wisdom and the understanding of reality it reflects" (Rookmaaker 1970:228). Likewise being a Christian does not mean going round singing hallelujah all day, but showing the renewal of one's life by Christ through true creativity, so a Christian painting is not one in which all the figures have haloes and (if we put our ears to the canvas) can be heard singing hallelujahs (Rookmaaker 1970:228).

1.7.1 A definition of the arts?

Rookmaaker (1970:230) reminds us that the modern division between the fine art – drama, poetry, literature, music, painting, and sculpture – and the applied arts such as pottery, tapestry and so on, is of fairly recent date. The lure of a world rooted in modernistic insights asks for an array of definitions on what is considered art. The mere word *definition* is a modernistic idea.[58] Concepts of the arts will be explained sporadically but please note that what I refer to as a description is still far from a definition. However, let's state the question as I hear it often: "What then is art in a postmodern context." My answer: It depends on whose asking and from what community s/he comes. I for one feel that all things could be art depending on your culture; Natural Science could be art. Well isn't it? Let me explain:

I would like to draw from my theological positioning once again. Everything that comes from the hands of the creator; everything for which the possibility was created is art. In this sense the linguistic concept of creativity lies very closely to the word art. I admit that I have also started of initially with the view that the arts amounts to selected art forms (as the curriculum suggests) which is done by, as I said earlier

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[58] See Derrida (1997).

payroll artists. The more I got involved in this study the more I was convinced of the contrary.

Up to date the concept art, as with many other concepts perhaps more on a contentious level, sex, and marriage has become fluid (Pienaar 2002). So every time I hear the question on what constitutes art, I simultaneously am reminded of the strong discourses in our western society shaping our views on what art entails. Ansdell (1995:15) asserts that contemporary culture puts the arts at arms length from most people's lives, a matter for the professional, the gifted, and the creative. Art becomes consumed rather than experienced.   However, what of our own involvement, of making art ourselves, or more radically, of making ourselves art.

In a sense, on the one hand I as the primary initiator of this study am sensitive to the marginalised voices of those whom call themselves a professional artist and what s/he can offer. On the other hand in this study we encounter the deconstruction of the notion that the arts is for the professional, the elite, the first world, western culture, the gifted and the like.

To sum up, what for the modernist must be a very frustrating closure for the moment; Gergen (1999:63) puts it exceptionally well when saying that communities meet within me; I become a conduit for mutual understanding. Consequently when we both stand before, listen to, admire, smell or touch a painting, a dance, a building and so forth, both of us as conduits of mutual understanding, maybe informed by similar culture, constitute what we adore as art or not. To me then having to adopt a certain reality in order to achieve anything in this study; classical art, performing art and crafts for the purposes of this research is viewed as art.